



PM MAGAZINE

MARCH 2008 • VOLUME 90 • NUMBER 2



Bringing a Higher Level of Productivity to the Fire Service — Tales of Two Cities

Fire departments demonstrate that looking beyond the traditional roles of the fire service and seeking cooperative ventures with law enforcement and other agencies can lead to significant opportunities to greatly enhance fire service productivity. Public safety and firefighter safety can also be enhanced. Leonard Matarese, Buffalo, New York; Kenneth Chelst, Detroit, Michigan; Frank Straub, White Plains, New York; Robert Forezzi, Albany, New York.

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Managers Strengthen Iraq's Representative Government

Local government managers are making a difference in Iraq's provinces. Margaret Rogers, Baghdad, Iraq.

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Richard James, Integrative Management, Inc., King City, Ontario, and Wayne L. Kost, Global Performance Partners, Winter Park, Florida.

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PM MAGAZINE

COVER STORY

Bringing a Higher Level of Productivity to the Fire Service — Tales of Two Cities

by Leonard Matarese, Kenneth Chelst, Frank Straub, and Robert Forezzi

We all know that the fire service fills a critical need in all communities. Fire departments were organized at first around fire suppression activities, but during the past several decades the activities of typical fire departments have increased dramatically. At the same time, the number of fires occurring and the number of resultant fire deaths have decreased.

Much of this reduction is the direct result of the success of the fire service in implementing and enforcing more stringent fire codes, including the increased use of sprinklers in not only commercial but also residential properties. Legislation regarding the flammability of children’s clothing and furniture also has contributed to this reduction in fires, as has greater public awareness of the importance of fire alarms.

As the call-for-service workload for working fires has decreased, many fire departments have taken on emergency medical services (EMS) that provide first responder or advanced life support capabilities, or both, and that often include ambulance transport. Since September 11, 2001, fire departments also have engaged in a wide range of antiterrorist and emergency management activities.

Even with the addition of EMS and emergency management activities—and even considering fire departments’ nonsuppression activities like training and maintenance—all but the busiest of fire departments still have large blocks of uncommitted time. Fire departments are usually actively involved in uninterruptible duties for only 5 to 10 percent of duty time.

Those departments that do not perform EMS response have a far lower level of committed time. One department that does not provide EMS services was recently studied by ICMA Consulting Services and was found to be busy for approximately one hour each 24-hour day.

The call-for-service workload information usually seen by local government managers and elected officials rarely communicates clearly the actual demand for services. Workload data are often presented in aggregate form: the number of certain types of calls is one example.

When these data are further analyzed, the picture often changes dramatically. One city the ICMA team studied, for example, reported 161 fire calls within a 16-week period. As the workload was further refined, however, the reported 161 fires actually included 13 fires involving or in a structure and 29 not involving a structure.

False alarms also produce a distorted view of fire workload, particularly in communities that have not enacted legislation requiring alarm registration and penalties for numerous false alarms.

Local government managers have long attempted to find appropriate activities for firefighters during the periods of time when they await calls for service. Fire personnel, for example, have been assigned to lawn maintenance, hydrant inspections, and crossing-guard duties. One department that ICMA works with operates a printing shop in one of the fire stations, where it produced city forms and documents.

The most dramatic and often controversial use of firefighting personnel in nonsuppression duties is the establishment of public safety departments where some or all personnel are cross-trained as police officers and firefighters. ICMA has produced a number of reports concerning such merged agencies. Efforts to increase fire service productivity can be met with organized-labor opposition that spills over into the political arena.

This article focuses on the efforts of two fire departments; each has improved its agency’s productivity by maximizing the services provided to the respective communities. This has occurred, in large part, because of the aggressive efforts of appointed and elected officials who have sought to establish operations that include constant review of activities

focusing on measurement and continuous improvement. Both agencies are located in New York State, which has strong, pro-labor legislation in place.

Albany, New York

Albany, with a population of just under 100,000, is the capital of New York State. As the seat of state government and the location of most government buildings as well as a number of colleges, universities, hospitals, hotels, businesses, a sporting arena, and nanotechnology and research complexes, the population swells to well over 200,000 on a typical business day. The city also comes alive on weekends and evenings with a year-around schedule of special events, arts, and music.

Albany has a diverse infrastructure of historic buildings, traditional row houses, and new construction. The state government complex—the Empire State Plaza—includes the 40-story Corning Tower, the tallest building in the state outside of New York City. Albany is also located along the Hudson River and includes a busy receiving and shipping port.

The city is served by the Albany Department of Fire and Emergency Services (AFD), a full-time career department composed of 260 firefighters and eight firehouses strategically located throughout the community. The department has eight engine companies (one of which is a paramedic engine), four ladder trucks, one heavy rescue, and three paramedic rigs. In 2006, it responded to nearly 19,000 calls. AFD also is charged with responding to all hazmat calls throughout the 523 square miles of Albany County.

The department performs the types of services typically found in fire agencies, including EMS, a dive team, CPR training for all city employees, use of automatic external defibrillators, and an Explorer program to expose youth to career opportunities in the fire service. This department was one of the first in the United States to provide both basic and advanced life support EMS. All firefighters are required to be emergency medical technicians upon appointment and paramedics within five years of appointment.

AFD has been able to assume additional responsibilities through a combination of solid elected official leadership from Mayor Gerald Jennings, professional management within the fire service, and the vision and leadership of local union officials who agreed to expand responsibilities of their membership. This has resulted in an exceptionally high recognition by the public and elected officials of how varied the contributions of the fire service are. As one former public safety official stated, “It’s hard for the city to say no to the firefighters since they have taken on so many additional responsibilities beyond the traditional roles of firefighters.”

The fire service in Albany dramatically enhances its productivity beyond that of a traditional fire department in the area of code enforcement and building inspections, which is considered to be a major function of the agency. The department, which is responsible for all city code enforcement, includes the codes and buildings division, which is staffed by 30 civilian employees.

In 1996, Albany enacted legislation to require all rental properties, including single-family dwellings that are rented, to be licensed and inspected every 30 months; approximately 30,000 buildings are covered by the ordinance. To accomplish such large numbers of inspections affordably, AFD uses on-duty fire companies. Although some fire departments do conduct company fire inspection of public gathering places such as theaters and shopping centers, the Albany approach to inspections is far more comprehensive than that of the typical fire department.

All firefighters are state certified as code compliance technicians (CCT), permitting them to enforce all safety, building, and fire codes. The department has certified in-house code enforcement trainers, and the state of New York administers the CCT examination. Each day, the Buildings and Inspections Division transmits by computer the required inspections for the day to each of the fire stations.

Fire companies then conduct inspections between fire and EMS calls for service. While on an inspection, companies can interrupt their inspections for emergency responses and then return to the inspection after completing the high-priority call. Between 17,000 and 20,000 inspections are performed annually by department personnel.

Code enforcement not only keeps residents safe; it also enhances the quality of life and gives firefighters knowledge of existing structures. In addition to the inspections of rental property, all nightclubs and off-campus college areas are inspected by code enforcement’s Quality of Life Task Force, which includes a fire department code officer, a building inspector, and a police officer.

These unannounced inspections check for blocked exits, overcrowding, and other life safety hazards. The fire department also is beginning a New York State–mandated commercial inspection program that covers all public assemblies.

The department has recently expanded its efforts by instituting a vacant-building initiative that includes identifying, inventorying, and inspecting all vacant and abandoned structures. Each building is marked with its address, and those sites too hazardous to enter are noted and placed in the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system to ensure firefighter safety.

A new initiative recently established is the preplanning for possible fire responses for targeted, hazardous buildings. Preplans include placing apparatus; calculating gallons per minute needed; and checking all fire alarm, sprinkler, and standpipe systems. Simultaneously, firefighters check for code violations.

In addition to its other roles, the department is part of the Citizens Protective Services Team that addresses the needs of citizens at risk. The team consists of members of the fire department, the Albany police department, and social and community service agencies. AFD leads the program because, in the majority of cases, it is either the fire service or the police who discover people at risk and then activates the team to provide additional services.

Along with the American Red Cross of Northeastern New York, the department is partnering to prepare Albany's citizens for emergency situations with the Get Ready–Be Safe program. As part of the program, department members work with neighborhood associations and other community groups to reach Albany's citizens to teach them how to prepare for fires, power outages, extreme weather, flooding, hazardous waste accidents, terrorism and violence, and pandemic disease.

Simply put, the Albany Department of Fire and Emergency Services has greatly enhanced the agency's productivity by taking on roles far beyond those considered to be traditional fire department responsibilities.

White Plains, New York

White Plains set up a volunteer fire department in 1851 after several buildings were destroyed by a fire. In 1916, when the village of White Plains became an incorporated city and the department of public safety was established, the fire and police departments were brought together under a single commissioner. The commissioner provided administrative, budgetary, and disciplinary oversight to the department; however, the fire and police bureaus functioned autonomously.

In July 2002, one of this article's coauthors, Frank Straub, was appointed the public safety commissioner in White Plains, replacing his predecessor who had led the department for 30 years. Although fire and police personnel were generally highly qualified and displayed a solid work ethic, they were constrained by senior managers who were resistant to change, comfortable with the status quo, and risk averse.

Despite the city's rapid growth and the post-9/11 domestic preparedness issues, the department persisted in familiar behavior. Performance was low, morale was poor, and tension between labor and management was apparent. Clearly, the department's mind-set and business practices had to change.

During the new commissioner's first year, efforts focused on breaking down barriers, building trust, establishing credibility, identifying key personnel, and mobilizing support for change. Early in the second year, weekly "CompStat" meetings were started; they included both police and fire management personnel. The CompStat approach has been well documented for police departments, but it has rarely been used in the fire service; and it has been used even less frequently in a combined setting with police counterparts.

The White Plains Fire Prevention Bureau, like other public agencies, had been gathering information but was not using it to inform strategic planning or daily operations. A new management team began studying the data that were collected, determining which data were needed, and deciding how the data could be used to inform decision making and operations.

Now, during their weekly meetings, the department's executive, senior, and operations commanders use statistical data to assess the department's performance and operations, identify emerging trends and challenges, devise and implement strategies, and assess their results. Over time, CompStat meetings became the foundation for fire and police collaboration, problem solving, department-wide learning, improved operations, performance, and accountability.

CompStat was the catalyst for change, and it continues to drive critical thinking and innovation in the department. It has brought the expertise of fire and police personnel to the forefront and has been used to address the challenges of a growing city and the ever-expanding demands of public safety. During the past five years, both the Fire Prevention Bureau and the Police Bureau have achieved significant individual and collaborative results. For example, serious crime is down 40 percent and structure fires are down 17 percent.

One example of this collaboration is a multiagency Safe Housing Task Force to ensure safe housing for all city residents and to address quality-of-life issues through coordinated enforcement of building and fire codes. Task force members include the fire, police, building, and law departments; community development; the assessor's office, and the human rights office. To date, the task force has responded to 112 incidents, issued 1,006 violations, collected \$115,800 in court fines, and handed out or installed 151 smoke detectors.

Prevention

Fire prevention is a critical component of most fire department operations. In White Plains, the Fire Prevention Bureau and the building department meet regularly to review building plans and, upon request, provide information to architects and contractors concerning code requirements. Site, sprinkler, detection, and suppression plans are reviewed; buildings inspected; and equipment tests performed to ensure compliance with state and local fire and building codes.

Currently, 307 building "preplans" are on file. The deputy fire chief on duty carries a hard copy of the preplans in his vehicle, and they are available in the CAD system. Within the coming year, preplans will be available on mobile data terminals (MDTs) being installed in all fire vehicles and apparatus.

Each of the bureau's four groups is assigned to develop building preplans and enter the data into the CAD system. In addition to building preplans, MDTs will also provide incident command protocols, computer-aided management of emergency operations (Cameo), ALOHA and MARPLOT software for hazmat response, and fire codes.

The fire bureau has one cause-and-origin investigator assigned to each of its four groups, one of whom is the supervising senior investigator. One investigator is assigned to fire prevention, and two others are adjunct investigators.

The department engages in a unique community outreach effort that can be seen as the fire service equivalent of some law enforcement community policing efforts. In April 2006, a fire lieutenant proposed the creation of a juvenile fire setter intervention program. This program provides early identification of fire-setting behavior, assesses the risk of repeat behavior, and uses education to prevent future occurrences.

Through the National Fire Academy, the lieutenant received certification as an intervention specialist and formed a partnership with the Westchester Jewish Community Services of Hartsdale, a nonprofit organization whose mental health professionals provide advice regarding the program's methodology, procedure, and practice. The White Plains Fire Prevention Bureau is the only fire department in the county that has a formal juvenile fire setter intervention program. Since its inception, the program has assisted 16 residents and nine children living outside the city.

There has also been a major commitment to increased training, particularly specialized technical training. Fifty firefighters have been certified to the technician level as defined in the National Fire Protection Association 1670 Standard for Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents (2004), and these firefighters staff the bureau's Technical Rescue Unit, which operates around the clock. The rescue unit will be certified at a FEMA level after it completes the heavy rigging and swift water rescue training courses next fall.

One hundred and eleven firefighters have been certified to the New York State hazardous materials technician—basic level. Four have been certified to advanced hazardous materials technician, and 20 have completed Department of Homeland Security COBRA technical emergency response training in Anniston, Alabama.

The Westchester County career chiefs created the Westchester Special Operations Task Force to respond to hazardous materials, weapons of mass destruction, and technical rescue emergencies. Currently, six squad units have been trained and equipped to provide support and decontamination operations during a hazmat-WMD emergency.

The squads are designed to support the Westchester County fire department and Yonkers fire department hazmat response teams. The White Plains squad will respond with its hazmat-WMD response vehicle staffed with a lieutenant and five firefighters.

The White Plains Fire Prevention Bureau uses the Passport Accountability System developed by the Seattle fire department to set standards of responsibility for all participants on the fire ground. The system is used to identify firefighters and to track their movements during a fire incident within the "span of control" guidelines required by the incident command system (ICS). White Plains was the first Westchester County department to integrate the system, including plain language radio communications, ICS terminology, positions, and incident planning, into its daily operations.

All fire personnel are also trained to ICS 100, 200, and 700. Deputy chiefs are trained to ICS 300 level; the fire chief and deputy chief for special operations are trained to ICS 400 and 800 levels.

Today, the bureau's 170 firefighters, assigned to seven fire stations, provide a full range of prevention, suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services to the city in collaboration with the Police Bureau and contract EMS provider. CompStat has played an important role in transforming a department organized around separate disciplines and cultures into one that is organized and managed for results and rewards risk taking and initiative. CompStat has also provided a catalyst for continuous learning, collaboration, and cooperation as well as restructuring to remove impediments to high performance.

Tap Resources

The fire departments in Albany and White Plains demonstrate that looking beyond the traditional roles of the fire service and seeking cooperative ventures with law enforcement and other agencies lead to significant opportunities to greatly enhance fire service productivity. In addition, public safety and firefighter safety can be enhanced.

Managers seeking additional resources to address the increasing demands placed upon our communities may want to explore the large and often untapped resources in their existing fire departments.

Leonard Matarese, ICMA-CM, is director of public safety services, ICMA Consulting Services, Washington, D.C. (lmatarese@ICMA.org). Kenneth Chelst, Ph.D., is senior public safety consultant, ICMA Consulting Services, and chair and professor of industrial engineering, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan (kchelst@ICMA.org). Frank Straub, Ph.D., is senior public safety consultant, ICMA Consulting Services, and is commissioner of public safety, White Plains, New York (fstraub@ICMA.org). Robert Forezzi is chief, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Albany, New York (forezzi@ci.albany.ny.us).



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FEATURE

Managers Strengthen Iraq’s Representative Government

by Margaret Rogers

In a country where most news coverage has been of bombings and deaths or, more recently, of the decline in murders of innocent civilians, it is easy to overlook everyday heroes making a difference in Iraq’s provinces. City managers and ICMA members Jerry Calhoun, Paul Sharon, and Jim Gleason are classic examples of these unsung heroes.

Although the managers’ lives vary greatly, they have several things in common. Each accepted a one-year contract to provide technical assistance to local Iraqi government officials. Each left behind family, friends, and a comfortable home in the United States. And each sees his contract as an opportunity to serve his country as well as Iraq’s nascent representative government.

Jerry Calhoun, city manager, Port Richey, Florida, thinks of his work in Iraq as a chance to teach Iraqis “to be their own masters.” Working with the Iraqis helps him serve his own country. “I love my country. I’m proud to be an American and hadn’t had a chance to serve. I decided this was it! I want to give back.”

Based at Al-Asad Air Base in western Iraq, Calhoun trains leaders in five districts and their subdistricts, which are the “equivalent of counties and cities in the United States. Sometimes the results are evident immediately. This work is so exciting to me because I have seen firsthand the light turn on when the Iraqis learn something. They want more and more training; they are so eager to learn from us.”

Paul Sharon accepted his contract after retiring from a 35-year career in city management and serving as an ICMA Range Rider. He is assigned to Salahaddin Province. “To other ICMA members in the U.S., I say there are a lot of newly elected Iraqi officials whose skills we can enhance, teaching them processes to organize government, develop policies, and deal with the mundane day-to-day issues. What we deal with every day in the U.S. cities we serve uniquely qualifies us to teach Iraqis.”

“We need to empower the Iraqis to govern themselves,” said Jim Gleason, former city manager, Woodstock, Georgia, who felt a personal calling to help Iraqis attain self-sufficiency after serving his local community as an elected official and city manager.

Iraqis Learn to Build Strong Local and Provincial Governments

These three ICMA members work with Iraq Strengthening Local and Provincial Governance (LGP), a project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) through a contract with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI International) and subcontracted partners that include the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The mission of the project is to assist the people of Iraq by building the capacity of local and provincial governments and increasing citizen participation during Iraq’s transition to a democratic system.

LGP began in 2003 and was expanded in 2005. From its headquarters in Baghdad, LGP oversees operations of regional offices in Erbil, Hillah, Basra, and Baghdad, which serve all 18 Iraqi provinces. The program currently has a staff of 120 international employees representing 28 nationalities as well as more than 450 Iraqi national employees working throughout Iraq. LGP staff members are currently assigned to provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) in the provinces of Ninewa, Tamim, Babylon, Anbar, Diyala, Salahaddin, Thi-Qar, Basra and in the city of Baghdad.

Thanks to LGP, Iraqi municipal leaders are learning from practiced city managers from the United States. Manager advisers are especially critical now in Iraq. The U.S. government is increasingly focused on building capacity from the ground up, making local and provincial governments work in light of the challenges the central government in

Baghdad is having being effective.

ICMA members Calhoun, Sharon, and Gleason are indispensable to Iraqi officials learning how to serve their local populations. Under Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, the central government controlled all decisions. Now, under the burgeoning new representative system, local leaders are gaining a voice in the decision-making system. But they have little experience of their own on which to build.

LGP AND PRTS IMPROVE IRAQ'S STABILITY

LGP supports the PRTs' and embedded PRTs' efforts across Iraq by providing technical advisers who work alongside the military in governance, electrical utilities, public finance, agriculture, urban planning, water engineering, policy reform, economic development, and geographical information systems.

PRTs are joint civilian-military units that support local leaders and empower provincial authorities by working closely with the communities they serve. They are the primary interface between U.S. and coalition partners and provincial and local governments throughout Iraq.

Under the president's "New Way Forward in Iraq" announced in January 2007, the PRT program has expanded from the initial 10 PRTs established in 2006 to 25 PRTs now. Ten of the new PRTs are embedded with U.S. brigade combat teams. These civilian-led teams work hand in glove with brigade combat teams or regiments (of the U.S. Marine Corps) to support the military surge in Anbar Province and the greater Baghdad area.

These teams include U.S. diplomats, military officers, development experts, and other specialists in local government management, law, engineering, industrial development, urban planning, and agribusiness. The individuals come from many U.S. government departments and the private sector. The Office of Provincial Affairs within the U.S. embassy in Baghdad provides policy guidance and support to the PRT program.

The overarching goal of LGP and the PRTs is to empower Iraqi citizens and local and provincial authorities by helping them:

- Develop a transparent and sustained capability to govern.
- Increase security and the rule of law.
- Promote political and economic development.
- Provide the administration needed to meet the population's basic needs.

Managers are uniquely qualified to fulfill the mission. Their experience in organizing public meetings, operating city and county budgets, obtaining federal funds, and running essential services is invaluable to newly elected Iraqi leaders.

To his fellow ICMA members, Jerry Calhoun says, "These skills will carry on for future generations and the value in that is incalculable. How can one put a price on the value of teaching local government officials how to hold public meetings? The importance of public participation? Transparency in all levels of government? And how to lobby and work to compromise with the national government to achieve funding for local projects?"

The advice managers provide at the local level is especially crucial now, given the difficulties the central government in Baghdad is having serving its public. "City management is most important now in Iraq because the central government is not functioning optimally," Calhoun said. "We need to create capacity in the Iraqis to run effective local governments and sustain them over the long run. As a result of the efforts of the LGP program, we are starting to see local governments work."

City management requires skills in communication and conflict management. Paul Sharon learned both from his father, a former city manager who taught him the occupation is a "noble calling." It's better to improve the lives of others than seek personal gain, Sharon said. "My father told his sons 'if you ever have a chance to step in and change the lives of others, take it!'"

It was that motto and a line from a Bonnie Raitt song—"Life gets mighty precious when there's less of it to waste"—that led Sharon to work in Iraq after retirement. "Even though I am still young, I don't have as much time as I did 50 years ago. Anything one can do to enhance that precious time is going to be fulfilling and rewarding."

Personal Sacrifice, Universal Rewards

With the U.S. government's increasing focus on building capacity in Iraq from the ground up, the work that

ICMA Members Make a Difference in Iraq

ICMA members who help strengthen local governance in Iraq help elected leaders improve governmental management and administration, understand the roles and functions of government officials and agencies, increase the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, and train civil servants. Why do they do it?

"To be a part of history. To make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people."

—Jerry Calhoun, city manager, Port Richey, Florida

"To enable. The opportunity to help teach the Iraqis to govern themselves and to make their lives better was irresistible."

—Paul Sharon, ICMA-CM, former local government administrator and ICMA Range Rider, Jacksonville, Florida

"I felt a personal calling. I think I can make a difference as a city manager helping empower Iraqis to make decisions."

—Jim Gleason, ICMA-CM, ICMA-RTI Advisor Iraq and former city manager, Woodstock, Georgia

New Guide Outlines Iraq Government Structures, Responsibilities

A two-volume handbook published in December 2007 provides the first comprehensive overview of the organization and workings of Iraq's government systems.

technical advisers like Sharon, Calhoun, and Gleason provide is even more important. The rewards of strengthening a democracy, however, don't come without costs.

When Gleason departed for Iraq, he left behind friends, colleagues, and a wife of 27 years. At first, his friends didn't understand why he would go to work in a war zone. They responded with the typical "Are you crazy?" "Once I explained my reasoning and that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, they understood," Gleason said. "The irony is that if it were anywhere other than Iraq, say Paris, they wouldn't have hesitated in their support. But non-challenging places are not where our expertise is needed."

His long overseas assignment would mark the first time he and his wife would be apart for more than a couple of weeks. It would mean missing anniversaries, holidays, and birthdays. But perhaps it was the strength of the marriage that gave Gleason the courage to take on a challenge that would enrich both lives.

"If your marriage has lasted this long and withstood all the usual trials and tribulations, it will survive this year." Jim added with a laugh, "This might make our marriage last longer, giving my wife a break from me. I'm pretty intense to live with!"

Aside from a few trips to his wife's native country of Colombia and a short trip to Brazil, Iraq is Calhoun's first international experience. Now he regularly travels by helicopter between the Al-Asad Air Base, where he is assigned, to LGP headquarters in Baghdad. He is used to wearing the necessary body armor, a helmet, and a fire-resistant jumpsuit each time he travels.

Back home, Calhoun's family understands and supports his mission. "Without my wife's 100 percent support, I wouldn't be here," Calhoun said. "Lupe is Colombian and a naturalized citizen. She loves the U.S. and believes in serving her country, in giving back. As Americans, we take for granted everything we have."

Sharon's wife and children were sad to see him leave for Iraq, but they support his decision. "My wife said, 'I know you can make a difference. I don't want you to go, I'll worry every day, but I am proud of you!' My children are proud of me even though they are unhappy with the U.S. approach toward Iraq," he said.

Working in Iraq gives Gleason the opportunity to advise Iraqis how to build foundations for managing local representation and to learn from U.S. mistakes. "To my colleagues in the U.S., I would say we all work in challenging environments, even if we take our democratic form of government for granted. If they come to Iraq they could have an opportunity and unique challenge to actually advise Iraqis how to create city management that would work efficiently and avoid some of our mistakes made over the past 250 years. We can teach them best practices and use the many ICMA resources in our work here."

"My goal is to leave the leave a city a better place than when I arrived," Gleason said. "You need to be a bit of a risk taker; think outside the box rather than have the don't-rock-the-boat attitude or be someone who doesn't want to get out of their comfort zone. You have to be willing to fail; you won't like it but we learn so much from our failures. Life is full of lessons; we learn more from setbacks than successes."

HOW TO SERVE IN IRAQ

The work being performed by ICMA members Jerry Calhoun, Paul Sharon, and Jim Gleason is helping to create efficient and responsive local government in Iraq and is furthering the country's slowly emerging stability. If you want to serve in Iraq and experience firsthand this unique opportunity to teach Iraqis to build the foundation of strong local governments, contact ICMA's Ross Mallory for more information at rmallory@icma.org.

Margaret Rogers is governance adviser, public affairs, Iraq Strengthening Local and Provincial Governance (LGP), Baghdad, Iraq (lrger01@lgp-iraq.org).

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The *Republic of Iraq District Government Field Manual* describes Iraq's federal and local government structures in simple language, including information on Iraq's constitution, the roles and functions of various government structures, and information on public finance and economic development.

The handbook was developed by the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Iraq Local Governance Program (LGP), which has supported efforts to strengthen government in Iraq at the local, municipal, and provincial levels since 2003. LGP is being implemented by RTI International, with assistance from ICMA and several other organizations.

The 48-page first volume and the 100-page second volume of the manual are available for free download in both English and Arabic on the "Reports and Publications" page of LGP's Web site at <http://www.lgp-iraq.org>. For more information, contact the RTI International Office of Communications at 919/316-3596 or news@rti.org.





PM MAGAZINE

Libraries: Partners in Sustaining Communities

by Beth Pollard

He was the 25th in line to get online at our public library computer, where he wanted to apply for work at a local business. At the next computer, an unemployed mother was checking e-mail for possible job offers before walking a block to downtown stores.

Meanwhile, a librarian was helping a local business owner access a database on regional market conditions, the police chief was addressing a brown-bag forum on crime prevention, and residents from various countries were gathering for the weekly sing-along, where families learn English together.

This was the scene recently at the library in the city of Albany, California. Where has the hush-hush and tiptoeing in our public libraries gone?

Thanks to creativity, computers, and community outreach, today's library serves a vibrant and vital role in communities, providing essential information services that are otherwise out of reach because of cost or location or membership requirements. In fact, libraries are helping communities solve tough problems, reach disadvantaged populations, and increase the quality of life for all people.

Local government managers are finding that libraries are able to bridge economic, educational, and social divides that have continued to challenge their communities. Today's libraries are:

- The *only* access to the Internet for many disadvantaged residents in a world that requires online transactions and communications.
- A safe harbor and meeting place for immigrants learning English, high school dropouts preparing for their GED tests, youngsters completing homework after school, and citizens accessing social services and information.
- A civic and *economic* anchor that attracts not only residents but the small businesses that they frequent, such as dry cleaners, grocers, drugstores, coffee shops, and more.
- A delivery mechanism for city and county services, including literature about community programs as well as registration for sports leagues and support services for the homeless and substance abusers.

The role of libraries in communities has changed drastically during the past 40 years. No longer limited primarily to holding a collection of books to be checked out or used for reference, libraries today serve a broad range of essential community needs and constituents. Local government managers play important roles in leading local governments and their communities to ensure that libraries are well supported, adequately funded, and able to continue their critical work.

Role of the Public Library: A Portfolio of Community Assets

As one of the most visible symbols of every jurisdiction's civic presence, libraries are one of the best-known faces of local government. Located where citizens live, work, play, and shop, libraries define quality of life in many communities.

Public libraries provide free and open access to knowledge and services to all residents regardless of income, race, or age. They are a neutral, respected gateway to information and a safe place between work and home that offers equal access for all community members.

Because libraries touch every aspect of community life, they bring direct value to people's lives and support many aspects of local government. Through their services, spaces, and one-on-one assistance, libraries directly serve important technology, educational, social service, and economic development functions in communities across the country.

One-stop service delivery. Service delivery is challenging for local governments, and libraries can be good partners in meeting this challenge because they can deliver many services in one location. Libraries are a vital and critical asset that can be leveraged by city and county managers, departments, and agencies as a way to directly link with and better meet the needs of citizens.

Casper, Wyoming, City Manager Tom Forslund stresses the importance of aligning the library mission with community needs. In Casper, the library is involved in addressing two tough city issues—helping high school dropouts gain their GED certificates and providing space for a methamphetamine treatment program.

Although becoming a partner with the public school system and the local drug rehabilitation service is not a traditional role for a public library, these partnerships enable the Casper library to support two populations that negatively affect the local economy.

Economic development and neighborhood sustainability. In addition to the library’s role in supporting small businesses by providing research, databases, and seminars, a library can serve a business attraction and retention function. As Travis Rothweiler, city administrator of Jerome, Idaho, describes it: “Economic and community development aspects of libraries are important; librarians and libraries can be a critical bridge to unique populations that cannot be easily reached.”

A well-used library brings a high level of pedestrian traffic. If a neighborhood restaurant, grocery store, dry cleaner, and drug store are located nearby, library visitors are likely to take advantage of those services. An attractive library building can serve as the center of a neighborhood and offer local businesses services such as meeting space.

Some new libraries are part of mixed-use developments, with condominiums above and stores on the street level. The appeal of having everything in walking distance can be a great incentive for social and business activities.

The Indianapolis Marion County Public Library recently reopened after an extensive renovation.¹ With some of the characteristics of a Barnes & Noble or Borders bookstore, the library states that its goal during the renovation was to create a “community destination.” With great views, high ceilings, and lounge-like seating areas, the library has become a place to see and be seen.

When Seattle opened a new central library in 2004, visitors increased by 299 percent, and by attracting tourists and increasing sales at new businesses, the library contributed \$16 million in new net revenue.

Even Frommer’s travel guide lists the library as a destination: “It isn’t often that the library is considered one of the coolest joints in town, but Seattle’s downtown library, which opened in 2004, is such an architectural wonder that it is now one of the city’s highlights.”²

Free access to technology. For the millions of Americans who don’t have computers and Internet connections at home, public libraries level the playing field by providing a critical link to technology. Patrons can rely on the library for access to the essential online tools they need to seek information on health, education, employment, and government services and to communicate with family and friends.

They can also find training on how to use these technology tools effectively. For many, the local library is the *only* place where they can get computer access. Amy Eschleman, assistant commissioner of the Chicago Public Library, states that 50 percent of patrons come into the library for an Internet connection and not for book circulation.

Free online access is critical for job seekers and those submitting online applications, including e-government applications. Two years ago, when

ICMA’s Local Government and Public Libraries Partnership Initiative

Public libraries are the focus of an ICMA project that has been launched with the support of a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

As part of this ongoing initiative, ICMA has formed an advisory committee to explore the role of city and county managers as advocates for libraries and the relationship of libraries to quality of life and community sustainability. One specific long-term objective for the project is to increase awareness among managers and other local government officials of the value of public libraries.

Available on the ICMA Web site in the Reports and Resources section is the ICMA *Management Perspective*, “Local Government Managers and Public Libraries: Partners for a Better Community.” This is an executive brief that has been sent to all local government managers along with a suggestion that they use the *Management Perspective* as a focus for discussion with their community librarians.

About the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries Initiative

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s U.S. Libraries initiative works to help ensure that all people, regardless of their age, race, gender, or hometown, have equal access to the benefits of technology at their public libraries.

Today nearly every public library in the nation offers free computer and Internet access, but many are challenged to keep these services up-to-date and able to serve the growing needs of patrons. To help libraries sustain high-quality computer and Internet services for the millions of Americans who rely on them, the U.S. Libraries initiative supports libraries through technology grants, advocacy, and research.

The initiative recently launched a new program called Opportunity Online, which will provide computer matching grants to help libraries in 32 states replace and add computer workstations for patrons. These grants are available to libraries that serve communities with high concentrations of poverty and with technology services that are at risk of becoming outdated. Eligible libraries must provide local matching funds to participate.

For more information about the Bill & Melinda Gates

thousands of senior citizens needed to choose a pharmaceutical plan, public librarians helped interpret the alternatives and also helped seniors complete their online pharmaceutical enrollments.

According to a study conducted by the American Library Association, education and job-seeking services are the top two uses of public Internet services that librarians identify as critical to the community.³

Foundation's U.S. Libraries initiative, or to find out if your public library is eligible for an Opportunity Online hardware grant, visit the Web site at <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/USLibraryProgram/>.

Workforce development. Libraries often partner with local businesses to provide training or training resources for residents entering the workforce. Some libraries provide computer classes, and others serve as a resource center for training opportunities.

Sunnyvale, California, recently presented a workshop series on management training and counseling, access to financing, and access to federal government contracting opportunities.⁴ A series of podcasts is also available that covers launching, financing, and managing a small business.

The public library in the city of Watertown, New York, hosts one of the New York State ATTAIN labs. ATTAIN, which stands for Advanced Technology Training and Information Networking, is a "statewide technology initiative funded by the New York State Legislature to provide low income residents in under-served and under-employed urban communities access to state-of-the-art technology. Utilizing interactive software ATTAIN provides community residents educational, occupational, employability, life skills, and computer training. Through the technology resources of the ATTAIN lab community residents gain educational opportunities and critical occupational skills that can lead to career pathways and gainful employment."⁵

After school and youth engagement. For students in elementary and high school, computer skills are essential to success. Although technology may be the initial draw for a child coming to the library, often other programs offered by the library, such as assistance with homework, keep their interest.

Partnerships between libraries and teachers and access to tutoring programs provide help with homework after school—either in person or over the Internet. The Multnomah County Public Library in Oregon has a "Homework Center" that offers online chats with a tutor.

In addition, librarians are available by phone or e-mail to answer research questions. The Central Rappahannock Regional Library in Fredericksburg, Virginia, has online sections for "kids" and "teens" that are age appropriate, engaging, and offer book reviews, a poetry slam, an art show, and many other inviting options that can inspire a young person.

Education and early literacy. Literacy is essential to success in school and on the job. Libraries throughout the country have responded to the need for literacy programs for all age groups. The F.L.A.G.ship of Marin County, California (Families Learning and Growing) is a bus that travels throughout Marin and parts of Sonoma County as part of the Marin Literacy Program, which is jointly sponsored by the Marin County Free Library and the San Rafael Public Library.

The program offers education and health programs for adults who are caring for children five years old and younger. The literacy program offers several programs to encourage reading in families, including tutoring for adults, so they can read to their children. Adults in the program receive gifts of books for children.⁶

In Grafton, Massachusetts, "PAWSing to Read" engages children who have been difficult to interest in reading by having them read to dogs.⁷ The dogs are calm and friendly and settle in for a story, which the children read to them. The reading group leaders ask the children questions about the stories, which helps develop retention and strengthens learning.

Local governments need an educated workforce to attract new business and sustain existing business. Library computers can be used for distance learning and online coursework. Distance learning can be particularly important to individuals meeting their GED requirements or completing course work that enables the individual to become gainfully employed or to advance in a career.

An Internet user who types in "college scholarships" or "college financial aid" gets millions of hits. For students with no Internet access at home, the library computer can open doors to a college education that the student may not have found otherwise. The role that librarians can play in facilitating the college application process and directing students to financial aid resources cannot be underestimated.

A sense of place. Libraries, often located between work and home, provide a "third place." They are visible symbols of a local government's civic presence. Libraries are free. They are available to everyone and, in a sense, are the great societal equalizer, a manifestation of democracy. The rich and the poor can sit side by side at a reference desk, can check out the same books, and can attend the same book discussion groups.

Libraries are usually comfortable places where toddlers sit in a circle with their parents to hear a story, young children go to select their "own" books, teenagers go for help with a school research project or to investigate financial aid for college, recent graduates interested in starting a business attend workshops on business planning, and seniors learn computer skills, join a book club, or volunteer. Libraries are central to a community as a place for all people.

Leadership Is Key

Whether the library director reports to a city or county manager or to a board, librarians are essential partners in promoting the values that are necessary for sustainable communities. Libraries can often take advantage of their unique position in the community to help solve community problems, and city and county managers need to engage library directors and staff in this effort.

This synergy can happen only with adequate funding. Because the services that libraries provide to our communities are vital, funding libraries is vital. There are two significant expenditures: capital and operating. A capital investment in buildings and technology must be sustained through an adequate operating budget.

The critical role that libraries play in providing services that sustain community residents and businesses must be strengthened and preserved. Local government managers have a significant leadership role in ensuring that libraries receive enough funding to successfully deliver services to the community.

Managers must take an active role in articulating the value of libraries to elected officials, residents, and businesses. There are demonstrable returns on investment that library services generate and tangible and intangible benefits libraries provide to the community.

It is the manager who can form a partnership with the library director to educate the council during the budget process and demonstrate the need for a viable budget. By describing the multiple services that libraries provide and the constituencies libraries serve, managers can showcase the value that libraries bring to the community. Perhaps most critical is the fact that libraries are essential to community sustainability and community engagement.

Community Goals

Public libraries provide a diverse array of critical community services in a public space that brings together people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests seeking to improve their lives. In this way, libraries play a vital role helping to build more vibrant, successful, and sustainable communities. Local government managers are in a unique position to create strategic partnerships with libraries that can leverage community assets to support libraries and strengthen communities.

As local managers across the United States learn more about the evolving and potential role of libraries in their own communities, they will be able to better integrate the work of libraries in helping to realize broader community goals.

¹Erika D. Smith, "Can Library Remain Relevant in Digital Age?" *Indianapolis Star*, December 9, 2007, www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071209/LOCAL/712090346.

²"Seattle Central Library," Frommers.com, 2007, www.frommers.com/destinations/seattle/A33693.html.

³"Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2006–2007," American Library Association, 2007, www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=News&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=165393.

⁴"Free Small Business Workshops Offered at Sunnyvale Public Library," City of Sunnyvale, October 15, 2007, <http://sunnyvale.ca.gov/News+Releases/2007+News+Releases/10+02.htm>.

⁵"ATTAIN Lab Manager/Coordinator," New York City Housing Authority, 2007, http://home2.nyc.gov/html/nycha/html/about/job_opp_30.shtml.

⁶"MLP Programs and Services," Marin Literacy Program, www.marinliteracy.org/prog.html.

⁷"Small Daily Differences," Tufts University, March 19, 2007, www.tufts.edu/home/feature/?p=paws.

Integrate libraries and librarians into the whole of local government:

- Ensure that the library has a mission and programs that are consistent with the community's and the local government's mission and values.
- Facilitate aligning the library's efforts with broader community needs.
- Include the library director on the management team.
- Include libraries in master planning and strategic planning.
- Ensure that libraries are fairly and objectively considered during the budget process and allocation of resources.
- Foster communication and connections between the library and other departments.
- Look for ways to integrate library staff with other municipal and county staff.
- Facilitate a dialogue and shared understanding on what is excellence for the local library. Recognize that what is excellence in one library branch may not be the same for another branch.
- Be on the lookout for opportunities that have value and relevance for libraries. Keep libraries in mind!

Regardless of the governance structure, the library is always a core responsibility of the manager. The manager has the ability to see the big picture, to connect the dots to integrate the library into the mission, to ensure that libraries are a critical part of the community.

—Ron Carlee, county manager,
Arlington County, Virginia

Beth Pollard, ICMA-CM, is city administrator, Albany, California (bpollard@albanyca.org).

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of three *PM* articles on the importance of libraries in our communities. Coming in April is "Welcome to the E-Government Library of the Future – Today," and coming in May is "Public-Private Partnership Saves Public Libraries, Avoids New Taxes."

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<http://webapps.icma.org/pm/9002/public/feature2.cfm?title=Libraries%3A%20Partners%20in%20Sustaining%20Communities&subtitle=&author=Beth%20Pollard>[10/6/2015 4:09:53 PM]



PM MAGAZINE

DEPARTMENTS

Ethics

The New Elected Executive Wants to Clean House

Q. The newly elected county executive has announced plans to remove the chief administrative officer (CAO) and several other management staff when he takes office. One way he intends to do this is to build a coalition with sympathetic members of the board of supervisors to reduce the salary and responsibilities of key personnel.

Although the CAO has an employment agreement and intends to contact an attorney to protect her rights under the agreement, that is not the case for the other staff. In fact, in the past the CAO had persuaded some of these staff to leave the collective bargaining units to enhance their management standing in the organization.

The CAO wonders whether she has an ethical obligation to advise the employees to seek legal counsel. The CAO has the authority to hire and fire many of these staff, but she believes her days are numbered.

A. Because the county executive has made it clear he intends to remove senior staff, the CAO may offer them advice. The CAO can make it clear that she does not intend to fire them, but that she is likely to lose her own position so a new CAO may be asked to do that.

The CAO may want to limit her advice to outlining the options that are available to these employees and encouraging them to be prepared should they be pressed to leave.

Managers Caught in Service Agreement Differences

Q. Two cities have been working toward a joint service agreement to share purchasing expertise. For several years, the two cities have successfully worked together on a shared snowplowing service, and the elected leadership had been supportive of exploring new partnerships for shared services.

The city manager in one community works for elected officials who are enthusiastic about pursuing this strategy as a way to reduce costs and maintain services. The city council in the other community, however, turned over in the most recent election and now is split on the matter.

The manager who works for the supportive city council is considering whether to attend a council meeting in the community that has become hesitant about expanding the partnership. His purpose in attending the meeting would be to show support for the project and answer questions. Are there ethical issues regarding his participation in the meeting?

A. The city manager is wise to consider his relationship with his colleague in the neighboring jurisdiction. First, the manager should be sure that his elected officials concur that it would be a good idea to have a representative at the meeting and that the city manager is the best choice.

Second, if the city manager decides to attend the meeting, he should let his colleague know in advance. If his council has asked him to make a public statement, he should let that be known and give his colleague a copy of the statement in advance, ideally signed by the mayor.

Or, if the city council has asked that he be present in case there are questions, he can let his colleague know that he will be sitting in the back of the room. At the meeting, he also should make it clear that his only reason for attending is to represent the city council he serves.

Tenet 2 of the ICMA Code of Ethics reminds members that whenever they advise and respond to inquiries from elected or appointed officials of other local governments, they should inform the administrators of those communities.

—Elizabeth Kellar
Deputy Director

ICMA
Washington, D.C.
ekellar@icma.org

Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

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PM MAGAZINE

DEPARTMENTS

On Retirement

Congress, Regulators Focus on Retirement Plan Fee Disclosure

Congress and federal agencies debated during the summer and fall of 2007 the question of how much investors should know about the fees they are charged by employer-sponsored retirement savings plans. Although the spotlight is currently shining more brightly on private sector plans, changes in the law also could affect public sector 457 defined contribution plans.

The stakes are high because defined contribution plans such as 401(k), 403(b), and 457 plans have grown to more than \$3 trillion in assets, and they constitute an increasingly important segment of retirement savings for American workers.

Highlighting the issue is a November 2006 report released by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that cited studies showing 80 percent of retirement plan participants were not aware of how much they pay in fees.

Proponents of enhanced fee disclosure argue that plan participants must be made aware of the costs of many services included in their plans as these fees will have an impact on how much each participant accumulates toward retirement savings. At the same time, the rules for disclosure should not be so complicated and burdensome that they create additional administrative costs for both employers and plan providers but do little to inform plan participants.

Moving forward, both legislators and regulators face a number of critical considerations. Their goal is to develop uniform fee disclosure standards for plan sponsors and participants to ensure that participants have the straightforward information they need to clearly understand the costs of retirement plan services.

At a hearing in late October 2007, the House Committee on Ways and Means listened to representatives of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Securities and Exchange Commission argue that existing regulations grant them the authority to address any fee disclosure issues well before Congress would need to step in with new legislation. Both agencies are developing possible new regulations on fee disclosure.

However, the pace of their work may not suit a congressional election-year timetable. As a result, Congress could choose to enact new legislation during 2008. Throughout 2007, the House Committee on Education and Labor, which has responsibility for private sector ERISA plans, held hearings on the matter. But the October hearing was the first held on fee disclosure by the Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over governmental 457 plans.

The Senate held only one hearing in 2007. Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Herb Kohl (D-WI) introduced their Defined Contribution Fee Disclosure Act of 2007 in December. This is the first Senate bill to address the retirement plan fee disclosure issues; it covers only ERISA plans and so would not directly affect state and local government 457 plans.

Although industry practice and government rules and regulations provide stronger disclosure in the public sector, there is a place for careful changes in existing rules. The overall goal is to ensure that participants are aware of the fees they are being charged and understand what these fees pay for so they can continue to successfully build retirement security.

—Contributed by ICMA-RC Staff
ICMA Retirement Corporation
Washington, D.C.
www.icmarc.org

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MARCH 2008 · VOLUME 90 · NUMBER 2

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Profile



Maryann Courson isn't a stranger to challenges. The complete Orlando Sentinel article can be viewed at: <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/community/news/ucf/orl-vcourson2607aug26,0,5422565.story>

DeBary, Florida, Web site: <http://www.debary.org>

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Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

ICMA Management Perspective

October 2007

Local Government Managers and Public Libraries: Partners for a Better Community

Managers Can Strategically Use Their Public Libraries to Achieve Community Priorities

Once considered quiet havens for study and research, modern public libraries are creating a new niche for themselves in community life. From bridging the digital divide to offering solutions to societal challenges, the public library has evolved into the essential “go to” facility for young and old alike—both physically and in cyberspace.

How effective libraries are in achieving their potential varies depending on how connected they are to the needs and opportunities within a community. Local government managers can play a critical role in helping libraries understand and fulfill community needs and obtain resources necessary for success.

One potential barrier to library effectiveness and integration with the local government is the variation in governance structures for the management of libraries. Not all library directors report to the local government manager. The library may

have a separate authority or board, may be part of a regional entity, or may provide services under a contract. Regardless of the governance structure, libraries are essential to communities, making it vitally important that managers and library directors form strategic partnerships to provide dynamic and responsive community support services. “The central question we have before us is how to connect the library with the local government. One of our core responsibilities as managers within a community is to connect the dots, horizontally and vertically,

in order to achieve the community’s strategic objectives. We as managers need to think of public libraries as partners in this effort,” said Ron Carlee, county manager, Arlington County, Virginia.

Libraries can easily be overlooked or forgotten in local government strategic planning processes. Because of the “discretionary” nature of library services, they may also be among the last to be considered in annual budgeting and programming cycles. Yet time after time, libraries are rated very highly in the measurement of service quality in

ICMA Local Government and Public Libraries Partnership Initiative—Advisory Committee

Members of the ICMA Local Government and Public Libraries Partnership Initiative Advisory Committee are committed to gaining and promoting an understanding of the role and value of the modern public library. Composed of 25 members from communities all across the United States, the initiative’s advisory committee includes local government managers and public librarians. With a diversity of community size, type, and geographic location represented, the advisory committee provides the experience and reality check for ICMA and the Gates Foundation to explore the role of managers for the 21st century library. On August 16 and 17, 2007, at the Harold Washington Library Center in downtown Chicago, the committee met to discuss how local governments and public libraries can partner to improve communities. To see a full list of committee members, go to icma.org/public_libraries.

customer satisfaction surveys. The credibility that libraries have with residents provides a strong platform for their expanded roles. Al Roder, city administrator of Northfield, Minnesota, suggests that the challenge is to view libraries as a core “essential” function of local government. Libraries will thrive and find new and innovative ways to serve the community with the support and leadership role of the manager.

ICMA has formed an advisory committee designed to enable managers to explore their role as advocates for public libraries and as partners in enhancing community quality of life and sustainability, one of ICMA’s long-term priorities. Members of the Advisory Committee for the ICMA Local Government and Public Libraries Partnership Initiative, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will also work to increase awareness among other local government officials.

Manager’s role in supporting libraries

While the governance structure of a library strongly influences its relationship with the local government, its work still needs to be integrated with that of the broader community. In order to achieve such integration, the group defined the roles that the local government manager can take to provide greater support to public libraries.

Strategic Planning. The local government manager has one of the most comprehensive views of the community’s vision and future available. As such, he or she can play a pivotal role in advising the library director on how the library’s goals can best complement and reinforce the larger goals of the community. In particular, the manager can help the librarian determine if

the library’s mission is consistent with that of the local government’s. He or she can remove barriers to productive partnerships within the local government organization and encourage other departments, such as parks and recreation or social services, to work in conjunction with the library on projects. Finally, the local government manager can help align the library’s efforts to provide Internet access with the broader communication needs of the community, for example, offering WiFi access.

Funding. Managers have a clear role in insuring that libraries have an adequate and dependable source of funding, as well as a seat at the table when budgets are being prepared. They can also help libraries gain nontraditional sources of funding. As libraries’ roles evolve within the community, it makes sense that their ability to leverage resources with other local government departments that share the library’s mission may become more commonplace. And, by showcasing and celebrating the important contributions of local libraries, managers can help librarians attract funding from philanthropic, non-profit, and for-profit organizations.

Public Support. By publicly promoting library programs and services, the manager draws community attention to the importance of the library and its contribution to overall quality of life. For example, by reading to kids during a library’s story-time program, the manager lets the community and the library know he or she recognizes its worth. The manager can also function as a coach and mentor to the library director in garnering better community support—whether or not the library director reports to the manager. The manager can provide critical

opportunities for libraries to educate elected officials and residents about their work in public meetings, particularly helping them to do so in a meaningful way and using concise language. Likewise, managers can communicate with the library’s board of trustees to educate them on the needs of the community and facilitate communication and increased interaction with elected officials.

Accountability. Just as all local government departments must be accountable for the work they do, so, too, are public libraries. By listening and better understanding the library’s priorities, local government managers can assist library directors align their programs with the broad goals of the local government. Local government managers can help identify relevant performance indicators for the library and assure that the needs of all ages and other population groups within the community are being addressed.

The role libraries play and value they bring to a community

Michael Bryan, director of the Seminole Community Library in Florida, describes libraries as “the manifestation of democracy.” As the most visible, physical symbol of a government’s civic presence, libraries provide free and open access to knowledge and services to all residents regardless of income, race, and/or age. They are a neutral, respected gateway to information, a safe “third place”—a space between work and home—with equal access for all community members.

The Third Place. Libraries provide services for people of all ages and

needs. Seniors use the library as a social center, young children as a place to develop a love for reading and learning, and teenagers go there to study, use technology, and engage in constructive, fun activities. For new immigrants, libraries offer a means to learn about their new community and the local culture, or learn English. Libraries are a neutral haven where all people can feel comfortable and safe. Libraries can also provide a place to communicate information about local government programs, showcase local artists, and encourage civic engagement and discourse. Libraries function as a cultural center that celebrates diversity in the community.

Building Communities. Libraries are viable partners in community development projects and anchors for new retail centers and residential development. Libraries provide stability in neighborhoods, as well as symbolize positive change and local commitment when new facilities are built. They provide a means for individual residents and businesses to connect to their immediate community, as well as to the global world. Libraries are fundamental social and economic connectors in every neighborhood where they reside.

Education, Workforce, and Business Enhancement. According to a recent Urban Libraries Council report, Making Communities Stronger, libraries are contributing to their communities in many new and innovative ways. Libraries encourage literacy within the community in the broadest sense of the word. Early literacy programs help parents and child-care providers prepare children of all income levels for school. Adult programs build an educated workforce. Libraries facilitate workforce development by providing access to the Internet and technology training that helps local

residents learn new skills and apply for jobs. Many libraries are also offering technical assistance programs for small businesses.

Change Agent. Libraries are a focal point for neighborhood change. Several Chicago Public Library branches, have bridged affluent and previously blighted neighborhoods, helping to create new economic development, along with a safer, more stable community.

Libraries have become much louder places, just out of necessity, because people in neighborhoods need a library to be that third place, the place where they can come to find answers to questions they have.

Amy Eshleman, Assistant Commissioner
Chicago Public Library

In short, libraries can be important partners for local governments in improving the quality of residents' lives and increasing opportunities for all. Pete Giacoma, director of the Davis County Library in Utah, emphasizes the need for partnership, noting, "Equal effort is required on both sides. The local government manager and the library director must have a shared sense of excellence and be willing to work cooperatively with each other to provide services for the community."

The changing roles of public libraries

Libraries are a dynamic resource and play many roles in their com-

munity. They are no longer just a place to get books and quietly study. Community needs are evolving and libraries are changing with them. And libraries function inside and outside their four walls through literacy programs and bookmobiles, and form nontraditional partnerships with other government departments to better serve residents.

The rise of the Internet has turned libraries into a communication hub for everyone. The Chicago Public Library recognizes that 50 percent of their patrons come for Internet access. Adults and children without computers come to the library and learn to use the technology. Many libraries offer free WiFi, giving business people and students another place to work. Visitors and tourists are able to come in and check their e-mail. The Internet allows libraries to provide access to critical information and databases required by residents 24 hours a day/7 days a week. In Arlington County, Virginia, use of the library's Web site makes it the second largest branch in the system by use—all in a "virtual" world.

Libraries are designing and implementing unique ways to reach a tough community demographic—teenagers. Some offer gaming programs where teens can come in and use library computers for games with the provision that they also check out and read books. In Casper, Wyoming, City Manager Tom Forslund reported the public library has started to do prevention work to address two of that community's most pressing issues—drug abuse and high school drop-out rates. And from the Mathews Memorial Library in Mathews, Virginia, to the Carson City Library in Nevada, teens packed their public libraries for rock concerts.

Governance and community partnership models for libraries

There are many governance structures for libraries. Some library directors are on municipal executive management teams and report directly to the local government manager, others report to an appointed library board of directors, and several unique models were described at the advisory committee meeting, such as the two below.

The municipal library in South Burlington, Vermont, is physically located in the public high school and shares facilities with the high school library. The two libraries have separate budgets, with the public library paying the school \$75,000 per year for rent, utilities, and technology. The school provides IT and janitorial services,

while the municipal library provides most of the collection. The libraries have separate staffs, including two chief librarians who work together, one reporting to the school superintendent and the other reporting to the city manager. This relationship has been in place for over 30 years and works well for the community.

Corning, New York, and seven surrounding municipalities have created a public-private partnership with Three Rivers Development, a private, nonprofit economic development organization. A ten-year agreement was reached seven years ago to change the Corning Library to a free association library. The library became a nonprofit organization under the state education law. Three Rivers Development owns the library building and leases the space to the library; they are also the main funder of the library's endowment and the municipalities pay the

operating costs through their negotiated contracts. The municipalities' contracts define what services Three Rivers Development will provide and the cost of those services. The library's board of directors is made up of members appointed by the municipalities and Three Rivers Development.

Next steps

Local government managers across the United States need to have a greater awareness and understanding of the traditional, evolving, and potential role of libraries in the community. As this role continues to change and mature over time, local government managers need new information and tools to better integrate the work of libraries in helping to realize broader community goals. The advisory committee will be working in the coming months to develop a proposed plan for addressing these needs.

About ICMA

ICMA is the premier local government leadership and management organization. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing professional management of local government worldwide. ICMA provides member support; publications, data, and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to nearly 9,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world.



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. More information is available at: www.gatesfoundation.org.

U.S. Libraries Initiative

Computers and Internet connections have become an essential part of daily life in the United States. Millions of people, many of them in low-income communities, rely on public libraries for access to these technical tools and training. The foundation's goal is to help libraries continue to provide these services for the people who need them most.



PM MAGAZINE

Cost Reductions through Quality Reforms

by Richard James and Wayne L. Kost

The original quality movement of the 1980s was developed for the industrial world. Later the techniques and concepts slipped naturally into the administrative and service sectors. The urgency of the change in the United States was initiated by competition that threatened the survival of major industries such as the automotive industry. When given the choice, the consumer was no longer accepting products or services that were inferior or did not work right the first time.

This attitude on the part of the consumer has become even more prevalent today. Success in improving quality was attributed to management accepting its role in meeting customer requirements and managing the organization. Benefits were dramatic, and profits and customer satisfaction skyrocketed.

After initial customer complaints were damped, however, the management of organizations reverted to the traditional approach and so started the roller coaster ride that continues today. No system can simply be installed to make effective management happen. It requires both attitude and infrastructure to overcome the tendency to revert to conventional practice.

Movement Again

Now, almost 30 years after the quality reformation of the 1980s that focused on the private sector, a movement in that direction is becoming evident in local government. Why do local governments need to change? Competition, after all, is not really a factor in government.

Local governments traditionally receive most of their revenue through tax levies; grants; and transfers from county, state, and federal sources, and they use these revenues to supply services. Why shouldn't localities just continue doing what they've been doing for years: increase taxes, provide what they can, and hope that the population will continue to accept what they get. After all, as the saying goes, "it's hard to measure quality in local government."

In reality, the electorate is becoming more critical of the service being delivered and is less tolerant when these services are accompanied by increased taxes. Waste at all levels has become a concern. Citizens are beginning to demand accountability.

In New Zealand and the United Kingdom legislation has been introduced to provide that counties and cities put into place effective quality management systems (QMS) to cut down on waste and improve the delivery of basic services.

The question is simple: Do local governments wait until legislative mandates change the way they manage public funds or do they take the lead and do it responsibly on their own? No one likes to change, but certainly change is more acceptable when done by design than when decreed by default. The choice should be an easy one.

Business and Federal Government Responses to Demands for Quality

In the 1980s, when corporations around the world began looking at doing things differently, improved management was a way of trying to stay ahead of the competition. For those who decided to embrace change and establish a QMS, the rewards were gratifying.

Organizations like Milliken & Co., a privately owned textile manufacturing company, took the lead in setting up a QMS, and adopted a quality management approach along with modified personnel practices and a consistent commitment to change that led to the necessary improvements. *Time* magazine recognized Milliken when it noted that Milliken had slashed manufacturing errors by two-thirds. Milliken was quoted as saying, "It was startling to find that we could do so much better." Milliken won the Malcolm Baldrige Award in 1989.

Johnson & Johnson embraced a QMS to help support federal legislation that got tough on health care costs, and it saved millions of dollars that would otherwise have been wasted. In the early 1980s when Lee Iacocca was tasked with saving Chrysler Corporation, he first secured sufficient funding to take him through the difficult times ahead and then turned to the implementation of a QMS, which he touted as the savior of the company.

More organizations, both public and private, embarked on change. Within the U.S. government, several operations--USASOC, Naval Costal System Center, Fort Benning, Federal Law Enforcement Center, and several United States Postal Office Regions--have not only attained improvement, they have also been able to sustain this improvement and continue to improve in the face of economic fluctuations, technological advances, and increased customer demands.

The government continually faces higher operating expenses and lower budget allocations and therefore must continually change processes and systems to meet future needs. Any organization--private, public, or government--that embraces a QMS realizes:

- Reduced costs.
- Reduced employee turnover.
- Improved employee morale.
- Improved customer satisfaction.
- Increased productivity.
- A customer-focused philosophy.
- Improved profitability.
- Improved communications.
- More effective and efficient processes.
- Increased level of accountability.

A 12-year study of the implementation of quality management by the University of Texas, San Antonio, concluded that an organization effectively implementing this system could typically see a 600 percent return on investment over a five-year time frame.¹

Local Governments

Local governments are currently feeling pressure from all sides. The electorate is demanding more services and is less willing to accept tax increases. Recent state legislation to provide such property tax relief as that passed in Florida (Florida Property Tax Relief Act of 2007) has created a situation where local governments not only have to do more with less, they also have to cut back in order to live with the new revenue constraints.

Sources of new revenue are limited, so all effort needs to be put into examining how current services are provided and whether those services can be provided at the same or better levels for less money. Local governments, caught in the middle, can apply an effective management system, reduce costs, and provide services without increasing taxes.

Local governments can assess their quality management cultures and identify reductions of as much as 30 percent of operating costs. The reductions occur in the waste of doing things over or in eliminating non-value added activities. These costs have been defined as Price of Nonconformance (PONC) by quality guru Philip Crosby. As the organization identifies and eliminates the causes of quality-related issues in its service delivery, costs begin to reduce dramatically. The initial 25 percent reduction in price of nonconformance (PONC) generally comes from something as simple as understanding and effectively communicating requirements. Even the simple precaution of making sure that citizens understand the service and the when and how the service will be offered leads to improvement.

An additional 50 percent of the reduction in PONC is the result of the identification of constraints in the processes that prevent the service from happening correctly each time. Causes of these constraints can be relatively easy to find, and they are often simple to prevent.

Through an organizational understanding and focus on prevention as a culture, a local government can reduce its PONC by as much as 75 percent. When one-third of the local government's budget is PONC, a 75 percent reduction is a source of funds to do other things. With this type of goal, it is no wonder that local governments around the world are looking to the implementation of QMS as a way to increase stability.

Local governments are just beginning to implement effective QMS. They are also attempting the measurement of the process leading to more defined accountability related to managing government. Cities in New Zealand and the United Kingdom are currently registered for ISO 9001-2000, the standard used for the last 10 years to evaluate the quality maturity of organizations promulgated by the International Standards Organization in Switzerland, which has been adapted for use by local governments.

Challenges

Alignment is probably the most neglected part of any quality management process. If attention is paid to alignment, a significant return on investment is available. Local governments must ensure that all political and operational components of managing are in sync and supportive of each other. This implies that the overall plan includes performance measurements that allow the easy measurement of progress and support a defined and strategic improvement plan. Everyone needs to work within this framework to achieve the desired success. Success will lead to a

more cohesive and effective management team and workforce.

Determining when to establish and implement a QMS is key. If the initiative is not taken and a plan is not defined, then the closest approach takes over and everyone waits to see what and when things will change. Unless corrective action is taken to change ineffective processes, valuable resources will be wasted. Improvement and change, like everything, do not just happen overnight.

Quality Management Philosophy

Most of the problems of any organization are in the processes. An effective process is based on the fundamental philosophy that everything we do is an interaction between customers and suppliers, both external and internal. Reaching an understanding on managing a process means we must reach an understanding on what we call the absolutes of quality management. These absolutes were first developed by renowned quality guru Philip Crosby who wrote about them in his groundbreaking book *Quality is Free*, and his principles are still relevant today.

Definition of quality. If we are going to have a common philosophy of quality in our organization, we have to look at quality as our way of measuring how well we are doing our task, what ever it may be. What we do is perform work according to the requirements we have agreed. Therefore, *quality means conformance to requirements*. As we apply this philosophy and learn more about our processes, they will be improved to increase efficiency and productivity. This definition permits everyone in the organization to talk about the quality of work in exactly the same way and not make up requirements during the process.

Studies conducted over the past 20 years across public and private organizations by Philip Crosby Associates, Inc, have shown that just the correct definition and understanding of requirements in a process can reduce the PONC by 25 percent. Understanding and communicating requirements is the key.

“System” of quality. Most organizations do not communicate which system should be used for causing quality. It’s usually up to each person to “find and fix” or react to requirements that are not met. Prevention has to be the operative philosophy on how to cause quality. Teach everyone that taking proper consideration can prevent problems.

We are instilling the philosophy of developing error-free processes. Processes are thought through and practiced before they are implemented; requirements are discussed and approved; transactions are taught to those who must accomplish them; and measurement is continuous. Prevention is like teaching our children not to play in cardboard boxes with matches. *Quality comes from prevention*.

Performance standard. The question is simple: How good do we want to be? We could also ask, even more simply, How many errors do we want in our process? It would be surprising if anyone said they intentionally wanted errors. Management needs to establish a performance standard that cannot be misunderstood: *Make certain to have zero mistakes, errors, or defects*.

Measurement of quality. The true measure of quality stems from its definition. Using the definition of *conformance to requirements* means that quality is easily measured, and if requirements are not met, financial effects can then be assigned. We know, or should know, what it costs to do a task or a job right the first time. If we have to redo the job or any part of it, we should measure that portion and report it as PONC, representing what has not been done correctly the first time.

This consumes 30 percent or more of an organization’s revenues or operating cost. Unfortunately, most organizations do not measure this, and it gets lost among the rest of the financial numbers. *Quality is measured by the price of nonconformance*. A tragic example of the lack of prevention that led to massive PONC is the Great Chicago Flood of 1992; this remains a viable example today.

In September 1991, a construction company in Chicago was replacing old, decaying pilings. Because the original position was difficult to reach, the new pilings were driven down six feet off the original location, which proved to be about 12 inches too much. The new pilings now reached down into the tunnel some 14 to 19 feet below the bottom of the river.

On January 14, 1992, cable TV work crews videotaped leaks in the tunnel wall, but no one was concerned. On March 2, 1992, city workers inspected the tunnel. A month later, contractors presented an estimate of \$10,000 to repair the tunnel. City Hall decided \$10,000 was too much and requested more bids. On April 13, the wall gave way. What was the PONC of flooding 25 city blocks?

- Retail businesses lost an estimated \$1.5 million per day.
- The Chicago Transit Authority had repair costs of approximately \$600,000 per day, totaling some \$20 million.
- The plug work, with all the cranes, pumps, and earth movers, was \$100,000 per hour.
- For every 100,000 people put temporarily out of work, the city estimated a loss of \$80 to \$106 million in business activity. There were 200,000 people out of work.

The total bill for the flood was placed at more than a billion dollars. The city has since planned a project to prevent a disaster like this from ever occurring again.

Save the Date!

Wayne Kost will present an interactive ICMA audioconference on improving service delivery, March 11, 2008, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Watch for announcements and sign up information on the calendar section of icma.org.

This whole problem could have been prevented in the first place if the pilings had been put in according to requirements, that is, in the same place as the original pilings. A simple \$10,000 preventive maintenance solution could have prevented this, but the thought process was not in place. This disaster makes us ask: "What is the lack of prevention really costing each of us daily?" Often the seemingly small and insignificant items lead to the largest PONC.

Implementing a Quality Management System

Implementing a QMS must be a strategic decision to:

- Meet customer requirements and enhance customer satisfaction.
- Achieve, maintain, and improve overall organizational performance and capabilities.
- Maintain consistency with other organizational strategies.
- Integrate QMS with other management systems such as environmental, occupational health and safety, financial, and risk management.

Integrate QMS with other business strategies. Making a strategic decision to move forward with a QMS means that the basic principles need to be integrated into the philosophy of the work. The eight key principles that make up the foundation are:

1. Customer focus.
2. Leadership on purpose and direction.
3. Active Involvement of people at all levels.
4. Process approach to resources and activities.
5. Systems approach to management.
6. Continual improvement as a permanent objective.
7. Factual approach to decision making.
8. Mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

These principles form the basis of the ISO 9001 standard. Implementing these principles along with the Philip Crosby's four absolutes of quality management gives us the direction and the consistency of process required. When used as intended, they ensure that prevention becomes the utmost priority in our management style. We can then start to review our methods of working and start looking in a structured manner for ways of eliminating PONC from daily routines.

Implementation

The theories and philosophy of a QMS are only the foundation upon which success is built. Success and results come from the proper implementation of the complete system as needed by an organization.

The first step of implementation is the understanding of where we currently are. This is a bit like going to the doctor for an examination: it provides a baseline of understanding of all the parameters of a healthy individual. If the doctor determines that you are unhealthy in one or several areas, you can take specific action to address these. An organization is no different. It needs to learn from an outsider the baseline of its current position before it can be effective at succeeding. A business excellence assessment will identify areas of strength as well as deficient areas and will allow an organization to properly determine and deploy the resources necessary.

Any organization that is considering implementing a QMS approach should have a self-financing plan in mind. That is, the ability to pay for the QMS out of the savings that will accrue due to reductions in waste. This is easy if a proper PONC assessment is completed and the savings are used to deploy the process. This does, however, introduce a bit of an obstacle. As we become accustomed to going about our daily tasks in a particular manner, we may have to introduce nonconformance as a regular part of our routine. Many times workarounds and short-term fixes become integrated into our workday so that we can make things come out correctly. It is important that a proper, facilitated PONC assessment be conducted to ensure that all activities are questioned as being PONC or not.

Another step of great importance to implementation is educating everyone in the organization on what needs to be done and how to do it, along with the appropriate tools necessary for the job. We would not consider going out, picking up individuals from the street, and bringing them back to build our home. We would require qualified architects, engineers, and contractors. The same applies to the implementation of a QMS. We need to ensure that we have the correct human resources educated for the task at hand.

For local governments, there is another aspect to education that is critical: public and community education. The public needs to understand what is going to be done as well as the key benefits they will be receiving from this system. They can also be a great resource because they hold the key to requirements.

In essence, an effective QMS is the building of a culture base on the four absolutes of quality management. The base is supported by the eight key principles of the ISO standard to create a culture of preventive actions and continual improvement that is sustainable. Doing this leads to the reduction of PONC and a much more effectively run organization with more available, usable resources.

Return on Investment

An effective QMS has the process and requirements supported by education and training. This in itself is an obstacle for most organizations as there is always an uncertainty around the issue of value for money.

Can the effect of education and training be measured? A recent World Bank study discovered that the typical return on training investment is 24 percent. The study concluded that if employees were given only 10 hours of training per year that could be associated with a 0.6 percent increase in productivity.

Several governments around the world have identified a necessity to encourage and invest in training and education. Australia and Ireland, for example, have launched widespread training and education initiatives. Case studies have shown that there is a tangible positive impact of training in showing significant reduction of waste and employee turnover as well as increased outputs--a true cost benefit and return on investment (ROI). An Australian study showed positive returns ranging from 30 percent to 1,277 percent. Irish case studies showed a 32 percent to 800 percent ROI from education in supervisory and management skills.

So what does this mean for local government? In essence, with the properly defined requirements supported by a QMS and appropriate education, a local government can commence mining the revenues already in-house when traditional sources of funding are decreasing or becoming increasingly difficult to obtain.

Skeptics almost always consider funding for training and education as a discretionary expense. To put training and education into a simple yet proper perspective, however, just ask yourself: Is training children to drive an automobile a discretionary expense or is there an ROI value for money invested.

Tips for Implementation

Drive the process of change with both commitment and conviction. This is not a program where a few posters are hung and a newsletter produced. It requires top-level support, involvement, and commitment from both the elected and appointed leaders.

Do it for the right reason. Start out with an assessment of where your local government is in terms of your readiness and PONC.

Educate everyone about their roles. There is no point in starting a change process if staff do not understand their roles. Make sure everyone has some form of training.

Supply proper tools. Make sure there is a knowledge base of investigation and prevention tools to get the most from your efforts.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Look to what currently exists in the organization that can be built upon. It is much easier to modify than build from scratch.

Manage implementation as you would a new building project. That means goals, a project plan, timetable, and assigned responsibilities and goals.

Be consistent and persistent. Stay committed and be patient. Results will follow.

Signs of Failure

All too often valuable time and resources are allocated and successful implementation fails. Some of the typical indicators that failure is on the horizon are:

Lack of full management support and commitment. Management must make the implementation of a QMS a strategic decision with the necessary support for effective implementation.

Lack of a communication strategy. Everyone in the organization must be aware of and understand the intent of the QMS.

Lack of focus. Involvement is directly proportional to the interest of the senior management.

Lack of understanding. This QMS is not just doing what the senior management wants and getting the ticket punched saying that it has been completed. It is an ongoing process of managing the organization. It requires a full understanding of all of the implications.

Lack of follow-up. In organizations of all types, staff members are interested in what is important to the boss. Therefore, if the boss does not hold everyone accountable, the rest of the organization does not take the initiative seriously.

Simple Methodology

Local governments are just starting to implement change processes that private industry started several decades ago, although search and retrieve missions are under way. Some are beginning to change, and others will put this tried and proven process into a closet and wait until change becomes a demand.

Today's world is more competitive and more accountable, including at the local government level, than yesterday's. Budgets are getting tighter and the electorate (the customers) more demanding. The proven avenue of QMS can yield significant financial resources by reducing waste in processes.

The whole QMS process comes down to a simple methodology. In every industry are leaders and followers. Those who show leadership become icons of industry, and followers are criticized for not taking leadership roles. The only way to make things better is to change, otherwise "if we always do what we've always done, we'll get what we always got."

¹Brian Murray and Garry C. Raffaele, "Single-Site, Results-Level Evaluation of Quality Awareness Training," *Human Resources Development Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 3, Fall 1997 (San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass).

Richard James is business excellence assessor, Integrative Management, Inc., King City, Ontario, Canada (dickjames@look.ca), and Wayne Kost is a quality management expert, Global Performance Partners,

| Winter Park, Florida (waynekost@msn.com). Article copyright retained by Integrative Management, Inc.

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