**Case 2: Bulk Distribution Operation**

**Doubling of per capita throughput without capital investment through team building and effective management of internal customer expectations**.

Having achieved some good results in another role in this business I was moved into a department that was seen by seniors as struggling. A new role was created and I would be taking responsibility for the day to day management of a vehicle loading operation.

The Departmental Manager was to be my immediate boss, whilst much of his responsibility would move to the new role to allow him to focus on specific aspects of the operation, particularly transport.The new role had been advertised (in accordance with the company’s rules) and two of the unsuccessful candidates were operational supervisors who now found themselves in my report.

I was welcomed into the department by almost all of those involved and a number of factors became clear in the first few days.

* The workforce and supervision were, to put it mildly, a little jaded.
* Practical organisation within the department was effectively non-existent.
* There were many justice issues for the workforce
* The department’s internal customers had no belief in its managers and in some cases were aggressively negative about a history of failures impacting on their own operations’ performance.

Arguably most critical was the fact that the Department’s credibility was at or perhaps even below zero.

It would be overstating things to suggest that I formulated a recovery plan or instigated a change program. More accurate would be that I decided to begin by putting right all the stuff that seemed “most wrong” and then work out further steps as this initial clean-up progressed.

Universally applied and meticulously fair rostering of staff across all tasks and more accurate recordkeeping and fair distribution of overtime gave us the chance to address performance.The Supervisors were taken off the floor for a day and asked what was needed to bring the Department round. Their list of 11 items matched my own list of a dozen, the exception being the development of the supervisors!

As these issues were resolved performance became much more measured and the level of firefighting began to reduce with predictable improvements in service delivery.

Throughout this early period (around 8 weeks) we also set about bridge building with our customers. I stuck firmly to a “do it don’t say it” approach and refused to commit where I didn’t see that we could meet a promise. As time progressed this approach paid dividends and various regional depot managers saw service levels improve. They then began in turn to improve presentation of loads coming back into our department. This eased our workload and so the cycle of improvement continued.

Within six months the hourly throughput of the department had improved hugely, with reductions in error rates that represented a significant improvement in service.

*This role was hugely enjoyable in the early days. The department developed a positive team ethic, and the improvements were visible, tangible and measurable. There was more than a hint of the Bunker Mentality as we all fought to recover the reputation of the department.Again there was no silver bullet, no golden key, just solid management practice and a lot of effort. If the above strikes a chord and you think that we might be able to help you move performance on or resolve issues, please get in touch.*

*AP 2016*