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OBJECTIVES

The Handbook strives to deepen the understanding of Batho Pele

The broad objective of the *Batho Pele* Handbook on Service Delivery is to help improve public service delivery by supporting the transformation of the public service into a citizen-orientated organisation, through a deeper understanding and application of *Batho Pele*.

The specific objectives of the handbook are to:

- clarify the context of public service delivery;
- make *Batho Pele* a reality in public service delivery;
- help bridge the gap between "knowing" and "doing"; and
- put *Batho Pele* in action.

The Handbook strives to deepen the understanding and impact of *Batho Pele* by demonstrating that *Batho Pele* goes beyond the eight principles. It needs to be embedded in the core of service delivery, namely, in the envisioning and planning phases, from whence it can be woven into the very fabric of public service delivery.

The intended outcome of the Handbook is a fully functional public service that is able to deliver against the needs and expectations of the people. This will bring about a more positive perception of the public service by staff and citizens alike, which is the ultimate dynamic required to effect the transformation process. When the consumers of government services start saying that government is providing for their needs, the transformation process will be well entrenched.

Frontline service providers are the "face" of government

The general public everywhere in the world basis its perception of government on the nature and quality of the services it experiences at the hands of public servants. The "face" of government is the face and/or voice of the frontline service providers.

This is all people experience and if the service is poor or unfriendly, then government is immediately constituted to be inefficient and bureaucratic. If the service is bad, government is bad and if the service is good, government is good, it is as simple as that. This is true the world over and it is no different in South Africa.

By helping to instil a culture of efficient, effective and friendly service delivery in the public service, this Handbook hopes that the spirit of

Batho Pele will permeate the entire public service and put a smile on the "face" of government and its customers.

Your "smile" must come from the heart – it must not be a mask

However, the "smile" must not be an inane grin or a superficial "mask". It must be real. It must come from the heart. It must stem from a genuine desire to put "People First".

A CALL TO ACTION

In his state of the nation address in May 2002, President Mbeki calls on all South Africans to "Arise and Act – Vuk' uzenzele!" and makes the pledge that government "will strive to give real meaning to the strategic challenge facing the Public Service – Batho Pele!"

He stresses that "the struggle to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment in our own country is fundamental to the achievement of our own national goal to build a caring and people-centred society." This is how we need to understand *Batho Pele*. It is at this fundamental level of change and transformation that *Batho Pele* can make a real impact.

The President acknowledges that much has been achieved since 1994 and that, as a country and as a public service, we have travelled a long way down the road of transformation: "gradually, step by step, we are progressing towards the achievement of the historic goal of the eradication of a centuries-old legacy of colonialism, of racism and apartheid."
As a proud South African the President praises us of all that has been achieved, in health care, in welfare, in housing, in police services, in the provision of clean water and electricity, in education. But he reminds us that the recognition we have received from the nations of the world for having "established ourselves as a winning nation, as a people determined to succeed, places an obligation on us in fact to succeed."

" ***no one, and I mean no one, should do for us what we should do for ourselves"***

And he goes on to state emphatically that as a country we have all the ingredients to make faster progress, but emphasises that the most important ingredient "is our collective appreciation that no one, and I mean no one, can do for us what we should do for ourselves."
This is the State President's call to action: "in the spirit of Vuk'

uzenzele, we must arise and act in partnership across the nation" to build a citizen-centred public service and a people centred society.

Vuk' uzenzele means "arise and act" not "arise and talk" or "arise and think" or even "arise and plan". Clearly, talking, thinking and planning are all actions, but, in the spirit of the President's address, what he is asking us to focus on is "doing" things that will make a difference to people's lives.

The President's words are perfectly aligned to current trends in public management to move away from a submissive and even subservient public service, to a strong, self-confident public service that accepts the responsibility for the success and prosperity of the people it serves – a public service that is prepared to lead from the front, while being sensitive to the needs of the people.

What an opportunity for the public service to embrace the full implications of *Batho Pele and* answer this call with new commitment and heightened levels of service delivery!

The time is now and we must rise to the occasion with the full realisation that, as public servants, we can alter the course of history and prove to the world that we are a proud, successful and united nation that will not succumb to the legacies of the past.
Let us stand proud as public servants and commit ourselves "to enrich the quality of services we render and make people-centred and people-driven development a reality." Let us respond with vigour to the call – 'Vuk' uzenzele!'

Efficient and effective public service delivery will help lift from the shoulders of the people the intolerable burden of poverty and underdevelopment

The guides in this Handbook are intended to help managers implement strategies to improve service delivery. They are not intended to be prescriptive, but rather to help managers come to a better understanding of *Batho Pele* and guide them through some of the more important processes to improve service delivery. Managers are not expected to follow these guidelines slavishly, but are rather encouraged to be innovative in adapting these guidelines to suit their particular needs.

In order to assist managers the DPSA has introduced a help line to handle queries and uncertainties. Please call us on bathopelehandbook@dpsa.gov.za and we shall be only too happy to listen and help you with any issues that may be hampering the optimal performance of your component. We would also be very grateful for any comments you may have on the content, format or any other aspect of the Handbook. Our intention is that it should be as useful as possible and we welcome your views.

VISION AND MISSION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1

When the new South African Government was elected to power in 1994 it had a special mandate to provide appropriate services to all the people of the country. This was, still is and will continue to be a massive responsibility of government and one that requires total commitment by people at all levels of government, if it is going to be fulfilled.

A promise made is a promise that has to be kept.

The new government made a promise to the people of South Africa that they would serve the people without discrimination, respecting the dignity of all and ensuring that the needs of the majority of the population, who had been disadvantaged in the past, are met efficiently and effectively.

The nine Constitutional principles that are intended to guide the transformation of the public service from rules-bound to results-driven

This promise is unequivocally spelt out in the South African Constitution of 1996, which stipulates that the public service "must be governed by the democratic values and principles enshrined in the Constitution, including the following principles:

(a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
(b) Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
(c) Public administration must be development-oriented.
(d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
(e) People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.
(f) Public administration must be accountable.
(g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
(h) Good human resource management and career development practices, to maximise human potential, must be cultivated.
(i) Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation."

These principles are intended to guide the transformation of the public service, from being a rules-bound, bureaucratic entity, concerned with the administration of rules and regulations, to a dynamic, results-driven organisation, committed to delivering appropriate services to the people.

The Regulatory Framework is a body of enabling legislation to facilitate the transformation process

Since 1994 government has passed a substantial body of enabling legislation to create an environment conducive to the rendering of appropriate services to all the people of South Africa. This body of legislation is referred to as the Regulatory Framework.

Transformation is supported by the Public Service Management Framework

To support the implementation of the service delivery mandates contained in the Regulatory Framework, government introduced the new Public Service Management Framework (PSMF).

While the PSMF incorporates a range of integrated management interventions to help managers deliver the services promised by government, its fundamental message to all public servants is to consult with their end-users to establish their needs and how best to provide for these needs. It urges managers in the public service to be innovative in service delivery, rather than following existing procedures slavishly.

However, it soon became evident that, despite government's commitment to service delivery, its promise of a better life for all would not be met unless a culture of service delivery, which put the "customer" first, could be inculcated throughout the entire public service.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The objective of this guide is to explain the context of service delivery and the machinery of government to help operational managers plan, implement and monitor initiatives to inculcate *Batho Pele* and improve service delivery.

What you can expect to learn from this guide

This guide will give you an understanding of:

- the machinery of government;
- a service e delivery system for the public service;
- the context of public service delivery;

- the links between the Regulatory Framework and *Batho Pele*;
- the values that underpin *Batho Pele*;
- what *Batho Pele* is;
- the *Batho Pele* Revitalisation Strategy which will reveal the deeper meaning of *Batho Pele;*
- the opportunities that exist for operational managers and frontline staff to make the transformation of service delivery a reality;
- the Balanced Scorecard and how it can be used to enhance service delivery and;
- the citizen as customer.

Read the diagrams in conjunction with the accompanying text

Diagrams and flow charts have been included to provide a conceptual picture of the processes of service delivery and their linkages. These illustrations should be read in conjunction with the text to deepen understanding.

WHAT IS BATHO PELE?

To promote this notion of "putting people first" and to provide a framework for the transformation of public service delivery, government introduced the concept of *Batho Pele,* "people first" in 1997. This notion was expanded in the White Paper on Transforming the public service, also known as the *Batho Pele* White Paper, which provides a policy framework to ensure that *Batho Pele* is woven into the very fabric of government.

Simply stated, *Batho Pele* is an initiative to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement. It is a simple, transparent mechanism, which allows customers to hold public servants accountable for the type of services they deliver.

The *Batho Pele* White Paper signalled very strongly government's intention to adopt a citizen-orientated approach to service delivery, informed by the eight principles of *consultation, service standards, access, courtesy, information, openness and transparency, redress* and *value for money*. The *Batho Pele* principles are elaborated on page 12.

Batho Pele is not a "bolt-on" activity – it is a way of delivering services that puts the citizen at the centre of public service planning and operations

Batho Pele should not be construed as a separate or "bolt-on" management exercise that needs to be attended to on an annual basis. It needs to be embraced as an integral part of all management activities to ensure that every management process is aimed at improved service delivery and customer satisfaction.

The *Batho Pele* policy remains government's single most important campaign to achieve the necessary transformation of the hearts and minds of public servants and to put the citizen at the centre of planning and operations.

Every person who works in the public service should be proud to be a servant of the people and relish the challenge of providing improved services to all. *Batho Pele* is the soul of the public service and the heartbeat of the nation that will help us rise above the legacies of the past and drive us forward with courage and pride.

THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF BATHO PELE

The four pillars of the Batho Pele revitalisation strategy

The *Batho Pele* Revitalisation Strategy represents a framework within which efforts to intensify the *Batho Pele* campaign could be structured. It is supported by four pillars, namely:

- Re-engineering and improving the back-office operations of government;
- Re-engineering and improving the front-office operations of government;
- Internal communication; and
- External communication.

Each of these pillars is unpacked below.

Re-engineering and improving the back-office operations of government

This includes efforts to improve systems, work processes and institutional structures, which collectively make service delivery possible. Typical examples of re-engineering and improving back-office operations are:

- introducing effective performance management systems;
- revising organisational structures to support work objectives;
- re-organising work processes to use staff optimally and minimise inefficiencies;
- utilising appropriate forms of technology; and
- improving conditions of service.

Back-office operations often constitute the core of the machinery of service delivery. If they are ineffective or poor, the quality of services experienced by consumers is compromised. Although the consumer generally does not see these operations and is largely unaware of them, they are key to shaping and sustaining the nature and extent of the services citizens eventually receive. They represent the macro organisational issues that ultimately make service delivery improvement possible.

Re-engineering and improving the front-office operations of government

This is the actual interface between the public service and citizens. This is the “face” of government citizens see and very largely determines their opinions of government. Typical examples of these operations are:

- accessing health services at a clinic or hospital;
- obtaining passports, birth certificates or ID documents;
- applying for a housing subsidy; and
- admitting children to school and interacting with teachers and school authorities.

These operations are very visible and are mostly supported by back-office operations.

Internal communication

Customer satisfaction cannot be achieved without good internal and external communications

This involves efforts to promote communication within government about service delivery transformation and about the critical role that public servants play in the lives of citizens. The purpose of internal communication is to instil a greater sense of pride and even patriotism in public servants and to lift their morale. Good internal communication can build a strong organisational culture of customer service, promote a sense of belonging and a common purpose and make people proud to serve their country by serving their fellow countrymen and women.

External communication

The purpose of external communication is to find out what end-users need and expect in terms of service delivery and, once the services have been defined, to inform them what services are available to them and what their rights and obligations are in accessing public services. External communication is a two-way process, it involves listening to stakeholders, on the one hand and providing them with useful information, on the other. It helps to build constructive relationships that will support the process of improving service delivery.
The relationship between the above-mentioned four pillars of the *Batho Pele* Revitalisation Strategy can be represented graphically as indicated in the diagram on the following page.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF THE REVITALISATION STRATEGY - DIAGRAM

- In the third quadrant we implement actual service delivery. This is the coalface where public service frontline staff interface with the public.
- The organisational culture of service delivery is promoted and sustained in Quadrant 4 through good internal communication strategies.

The activities of quadrants 1 and 3 interact with the external environment, while those of quadrants 2 and 4 are part of the internal environment. However, activities in all four quadrants conspire to provide customers with improved service delivery.

The step-by-step guides provided in Volume 2 of this handbook relate to the four quadrants as follows:

- Self assessment – Quadrant 2
- Peer assessment – Quadrant 2
- Service Delivery Charter – Quadrant 3
- How to consult – Quadrant 1
- Handling complaints – Quadrants 1 and 3
- Setting service standards – Quadrants 1, 2 and 3
- Wayfinding and signage – Quadrant 3
- Delegations – Quadrant 2
- Translating strategic to operational plans – Quadrant 2

It is important to understand that each one of these initiatives impacts on the others. They do not occur in isolation. This would compromise the potential impact of *Batho Pele*. For example, setting service standards involves consulting with consumers of services and communicating the standards to consumers, both activities in Quadrant 1. It is something that happens behind the scenes and is part of back-office re-engineering in Quadrant 2. Finally it results in setting up a complaints handling mechanism, which is a front-office activity in Quadrant 3.

Service delivery is not a simple, single-track activity. It is a combination of several actions

This illustrates the point that service delivery is not a simple, single-track activity. It is a complex operation, involving a range of initiatives that ideally should interlink to provide “seamless” service delivery to the customer.

THE BALANCED SCORECARD

THE BALANCED SCORECARD

Another way of describing this harmony or balance that is essential to excellence in service delivery is to use the balanced scorecard. The balanced scorecard is a simple but extremely effective approach to providing customer satisfaction by concretising organisational visions and missions in a balanced and measurable way. It places the emphasis firmly on customer satisfaction, claiming that whatever we do, whatever structures, systems and processes we may put in place and whatever human, financial and physical resources we may deploy, must be informed at all times by the single consideration: “Does it provide customer satisfaction?”

This approach is illustrated in the following diagram and the similarity with the *Batho Pele* framework discussed above, is not

The scorecard works as follows:

- 1st Quadrant: In consultation with all stakeholders, especially customers, the vision is translated into service delivery objectives, with appropriate standards, to provide customer satisfaction.
- 2nd Quadrant: Structures, systems and processes are put in place, with relevant standards, to facilitate delivery against service delivery objectives.
- 3rd Quadrant: Human resources with the relevant competencies are recruited and/or trained and/or developed to man the structures and drive the systems and processes to deliver the agreed services at the required levels.
- 4th Quadrant: The necessary financial resources are made available, within approved budgets, linked to the MTEF, to fund the process of service delivery.

What the balanced scorecard makes very clear is that service delivery is a continuum. It is continuous and flows smoothly from one quadrant to the next without interruption.

CONTEXT OF SERVICE DELIVERY

The Regulatory Framework

Since 1994 the South African government has produced a substantial body of enabling legislation to promote the transformation of the public service from the old, bureaucratic, rules-bound organisation into a dynamic, results driven entity, focused on service delivery.

This body of enabling legislation is called the Regulatory Framework. It is informed by the Constitution of 1996 and includes the following Acts, Regulations, White Papers and bargaining council decisions, among others:

- **Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994**

This remains the principal piece of legislation governing the public service, as required by the Constitution. It has been amended and amplified by the following legislation:

- *The Public Service Commission Act, No 46 of 1997*
- *The Public Service Laws Amendment Acts, Nos 47 and 93 of 1997 And No 86 of 1998)*
- *The Public Service Amendment Act, No 5 of 1999*
- *The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, No 3 of 2000*
- *The Public Service Regulations*
- *The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995*
- *The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele), 1997*
- *The White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service, 1997*
- *The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service, 1998*
- *The White Paper on Public Service Training and Education, 1998*
- *Collective Agreements and Management Guides*

Other Legislation applicable to the public service, such as the:

- *The Public Finance Management Act, 1999*
- *Labour Relations Act*
- *Basic Conditions of Service Act*
- *Employment Equity Act*
- *Skills Development Act*

Every organisation operates within a specific legislative framework that defines its operational behaviour. For example, a factory in the private sector that produces chemicals, operates within a framework of laws and regulations that circumscribe its activities, spelling out what its responsibilities are to prevent pollution, ensure the safety of its workers and the community around the factory, etc.

This framework will also contain policies relevant to the particular industry, which mandate the nature and quality of the services and products produced by the company. In short, the framework defines the context within which the factory operates.

The Public Service Management Framework

The Regulatory Framework is supported by an integrated system of management functions, including strategic planning, human resources planning, service delivery improvement planning, financial planning, performance management and compensation management. These are the tools of transformation and the tools included in the *Batho Pele* Handbook or toolkit are part of this support system, which is known as the Public Service Management Framework (PSMF).

The body of enabling legislation or the Regulatory Framework, together with the support provided by the Public Service Management Framework, constitute the context of public service delivery.

Figure 3 is a schematic representation of the Context of Transformation, as defined by the Regulatory Framework and supported by the new Public Service Management Framework.

Note that the relationship between the Regulatory Framework and the transformation thrust represented by the central arrow, is ”Service Delivery” – that is what the framework has been designed for and it is the nature of that service delivery that *Batho Pele* intends to interrogate and define.

The relationship between the Public Service Management Framework and the central arrow of transformation is “Innovation” and this is the challenge to all public service managers – to be innovative in delivering services that meet the needs and expectations of citizens. The Regulatory Framework only defines “What” should happen, not “How” it should happen.

The guides in other chapters of this Handbook are intended to help with the “How” of service delivery, but they are merely guides and at the end of the day managers must deliver services within the limitations of the resources at their disposal and in a way that best suits the needs of their customers.

CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND *BATHO PELE*

Figure 4 below depicts the main elements of the Regulatory Framework that make specific provision for the promotion of *Batho Pele* in public service delivery. The diagram also illustrates how the legislative linkages to *Batho Pele* mandate service delivery through a range of supportive management operations, namely:

- How to translate strategic into operational plans.

PLANNING

- How to delegate.
- How to develop a Service Delivery Charter.

IMPLEMENTING

- How to develop standards for service delivery.
- How to consult.
- Wayfinding and signage.
- How to handle complaints.

MONITORING

- Self-Assessment.
- Peer Review.

Clearly, these are by no means the only support mechanisms to promote service delivery. As explained earlier, there are many front-office and back-office interventions, linked to effective internal and external communication, which integrate to provide “seamless” service delivery.

Batho Pele is not a separate and distinct process, it is and should be a guiding principle in all service delivery. Thus, whatever the intervention, be it part of back-office or front-office re-engineering or internal or external communication, it should be informed by the principles and spirit of *Batho Pele.*

THE CONTEXT OF BATHO PELE - DIAGRAM

LINKAGES TO *BATHO PELE* FROM THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The mandate for "putting people first" come from the Constitution

The mandate for service delivery contained in the Constitution has already been referred to above. While the Constitution spells out the fundamental principles that must govern the provision of services by the public service, it is by no means the only piece of legislation that supports the notion of "putting people first". The most important other pieces of enabling legislation that provide links to *Batho Pele* are the:

- Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994;
- White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, (*Batho Pele)* of 1997*;*
- White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995;
- Promotion of Administrative Justice Act No 3 of 2000; and
- Public Service Regulations, 2001.

We shall deal with each of these in turn.

The Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994 – as amended

The Public Service Act was formulated in terms of the Constitutional principles, to provide for the organisation and administration of the public service, the regulation of conditions of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members of the public service and matters connected therewith.

The Public Service Regulations, 2001

All public servants are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration has in terms of the Public Service Act, made the Public Service Regulations. In order to give practical effect to the Constitutional principles all employees are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct provided for in the Regulations and expected to perform him/her duties to the best of ability.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service and the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery

Clearly, the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*) is eloquent on the need to "put people first". The introduction spells out the relevance of the White Paper on the

Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) and it is worth quoting from the Batho Pele White Paper here:

"The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS), published on 24 November 1995, sets out eight transformation priorities, amongst which Transforming Service Delivery is the key. This is because a transformed South African public service will be judged on one criterion above all: its effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens."

The Batho Pele White Paper spells out "how" service should be provided

The purpose of the *Batho Pele* White Paper is to provide a policy framework and a practical implementation strategy for the transformation of public service delivery. It focuses on "how" public services are provided, rather than on "which" services are provided and its main intent is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which the services are delivered.

One of the salient points emphasised in the *Batho Pele* White Paper is that public services are not a privilege in a civilised, democratic society. They are the right and legitimate expectation of every citizen.

The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (AJA), No 3 of 2000

In line with the principles of Batho Pele, the AJA protects citizens' rights to redress

The Constitution, through the Bill of Rights, gives every citizen the right to take action against the state, if they believe their constitutional rights have been infringed, and the right to have access to information held by the state, which they need in order to take action against the state. These rights are echoed in the eight *Batho Pele* principles, which are listed below, especially the right to redress and the right to information.

Sections 33(1) and (2) of the Constitution stipulate that everyone has the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair and that everyone whose rights have been adversely affected by administrative action, has the right to be given written reasons.

Section 33(3) of the Constitution requires national legislation to be enacted to give effect to the above rights and to:

- Provide for the review of administrative action by a court or, where appropriate, by an independent and impartial tribunal;

- Impose a duty on the state to give effect to those rights;
- Promote and efficient administration.

Citizens have the right to be heard

Against this background, the AJA was enacted on 3 February 2000 to:

- Promote an efficient administration and good governance; and
- Create a culture of accountability, openness and transparency in the public administration or in the exercise of a public power or the performance of a public function, by giving effect to the right to just administrative action.

The provisions of the AJA have direct bearing on virtually all of the *Batho Pele* principles, but specifically it focuses on the following principles:

- Consultation;
- Courtesy;
- Information;
- Openness and Transparency; and especially
- Redress.

Section 3(1) of the AJA states that: “Administrative action which materially and adversely affects the rights or legitimate expectations of any person must be procedurally fair.” It goes on to state that in order to give effect to the right to procedurally fair administrative action, an administrator must give a citizen:

- Adequate notice of the nature and purpose of the proposed administrative action;
- a reasonable opportunity to make representations;
- a clear statement of the administrative action;
- adequate notice of any right of review or internal appeal, where applicable; and
- adequate notice of the right to request reasons for the administrative action.

Section 4 of the AJA states that where an administrative action materially and adversely affects the rights of the public, an administrator, in order to give effect to the right to procedurally fair administrative action must consult with the public by either holding a public enquiry or instituting other appropriate actions.

Section 5 of the AJA spells out citizens' rights to redress. It states that any person whose rights have been materially and adversely affected by administrative action and who has not been given reasons for the action, may request that he or she be provided with written reasons for the action. The Act goes on to state that any person may institute proceedings in a court or a tribunal for the judicial review of an administrative action and stipulates the procedures for such review and the remedies that may be implemented.

THE VALUES OF *BATHO PELE*

It is important to understand that *Batho Pele* is not a plan in the sense that one has strategic plans, operational plans, action plans and human resources plans, but rather an attitude that shapes the character of the public service.

The spirit of Batho Pele must leave its "foot print" on public service delivery

The eight principles of *Batho Pele,* as listed earlier in this guide, have more to do with human values and dignity than operational processes. *Batho Pele* is a way of conducting oneself in the presence of others, it is a preparedness to acknowledge their rights and needs and a willingness to help them add value to their lives. *Batho Pele* is a commitment to other people that echoes through the ages of human compassion.

Batho Pele acknowledges the fundamental vulnerability of the human condition, which unites the end-user with the service provider in their mutual quest for recognition, which can only be achieved through respect for the other's dignity as a person. And this is the real power and beauty of *Batho Pele*: it embodies the values that are enshrined in the Bill of Rights, namely each persons inalienable right to their dignity as human beings. From this fundamental right to be treated with dignity come all other "rights", such as the right to information, the right to access, the right to service, etc,

While it is true to say that *Batho Pele* is not a separate, bolt-on activity or just another management intervention, it is equally true that the mandate to implement certain activities can encourage and promote a change in behaviour that espouses the values and principles of *Batho Pele.*

By encouraging people to consult their customers on the services they need and the standards they can expect, by helping them to consider problems of access to those services and urging them to communicate effectively with their customers, one can prepare the ground and lay the foundations for a truly humane and totally effective and efficient public service.

The spirit of Batho Pele is the shield that protects the soul of the public service

The guides contained in of the *Batho Pele* Handbook are, as we have said elsewhere, recipes for improved service delivery, but at another level they are shields that protect the soul of the public service. And *Batho Pele* nourishes the soul of the public service.

Without a soul the public service will wallow in bureaucratic inefficiencies, in the mistaken belief that it is an end in itself. It is the soul that gives it and all of us a perspective outside of ourselves and makes us sensitive to the plight of others. It is the soul that humbles us in the larger scheme of things, but that makes us proud to serve our fellow beings.

The principles of *Batho Pele* are a constant reminder of our responsibility for the wellbeing of other people.

THE PRINCIPLES OF *BATHO PELE*

Each of the eight *Batho Pele* principles takes on special significance in the light of the deeper meaning of *Batho Pele* referred to above under "The Values of *Batho Pele*" and it is this new understanding of *Batho Pele* that the public service wishes to promote as it moves towards total quality management to achieve service excellence and "seamless" service delivery.

By "seamless" service delivery we understand an integration of services in a total package to meet customer needs. For example, the provision of housing should integrate subsidy applications, legal negotiations and housing delivery in one package, thereby helping the customer to ***Access*** services holistically and not as fragmented and disjointed bits and pieces.

Both the principles of ***Consultation*** and ***Setting Service Standards*** contrive to promote service excellence in that it is only through consultation with end-users that relevant services and appropriate standards can be determined. Once the standards have been set, they can be measured and measurement is critical in any attempt to improve service standards. Without monitoring and measurement we cannot know how well or poorly we are faring.

When the performance against standards is published to ensure that customers have full ***Information***, service providers are compelled to acknowledge and address any shortcomings in their service provision. The whole process of service delivery becomes ***Transparent*** and ***Open***, subject to close scrutiny by the public, who will act as watchdogs, demanding ***Redress*** for shoddy service and insisting that they receive ***Value for money***.

The above brief analysis of the *Batho Pele* principles illustrates their interdependence. They are not simply a "wish list" of nice-to-haves, but rather an integrated set of values that nurture excellence in service delivery.

THE CITIZEN AS CUSTOMER

Citizens, receiving public services, should be treated as customers

This concept is integral to the whole notion of *Batho Pele* and each of the eight principles reinforces and encourages the perception of the end-users of public services as customers, rather than simply as citizens.

In the private sector one often hears the phrase, "The Customer is King" and although some might regard this as a bit of an outworn slogan, it nevertheless remains the watchword of most successful commercial organisations that operate in competitive environments. Private companies, even the most successful ones, cannot afford to ignore the needs and wishes of their customers if they want to stay in business, because dissatisfied customers can easily take their business elsewhere. Knowing what the customer wants and being able to provide it quicker, better and more cost effectively than the competition, is essential to business success. The fundamental principle of "putting the customer first" holds as true today as it ever did and this is precisely what *Batho Pele* advocates, namely, "put the people first".
However, some might argue that this is not important in the public

service, as “customers” cannot choose to take their business elsewhere. For example, a person who needs a passport has no alternative but to apply to the Department of Home Affairs. Furthermore, it is claimed, many public services are not paid for directly by the “customer” and thus provincial and national departments that fail to satisfy their “customers” will not go out of business.

Moreover, it is sometimes argued, certain public services, such as the receiver of revenue and the police service are regulatory functions rather than service providers. They are accepted by citizens as essential for the maintenance of a safe and civilised society in which all have equal opportunity for social and economic development. Thus the concept of the citizen as “customer” may seem a little inappropriate.

Citizens are the reason why the public service exits

We cannot agree. In every instance public services impact the lives of people and this being the case, these people, rather than the public service, are the custodians of service delivery. Their circumstances and needs determine the nature and quality of all public services. Without them there can be no public service. They are the *raison d’être* of the public service and as such they are “king” or “queen” as the case may be. We should never lose sight of the fact that these “customers” have the right and the might to vote government out of power, if they are not happy with the services they receive.

To treat citizens as “customers” implies:

- listening to and taking account of their views and paying heed to their needs when deciding what services should be provided (**Consultation)**;
- ensuring that they are able to access the services provided easily and comfortably **(Access)**;
- treating them with consideration and respect **(Courtesy)**;
- making sure that the promised level and quality of services are always of the highest possible standard **(Setting Standards)**;
- providing them with good information on the services available to them **(Information)**;
- allowing them to ask questions and responding to their queries honestly and frankly **(Openness and Transparency)**;
- responding swiftly and sympathetically when standards of service fall below the promised level **(Redress)**; and
- adding value to their lives **(Value for money).**

It seems evident from the above that treating the citizen as a customer and treating the customer as king is synonymous with “putting people first” or *Batho Pele*.

THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

As mentioned earlier, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) calls on all national and provincial departments to make service delivery a priority. It provides a framework to enable national and provincial departments to develop departmental service delivery strategies.

To promote service delivery, both national and provincial departments are required, among other things, to develop and implement:

- strategic plans;
- integrated human resources plans; and
- financial plans
- operational plans;
- service standards;
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;

This can be translated into the following simple model for service delivery:

- Plan
- Implement
- Monitor

The diagram on the following page is a schematic representation of this service delivery model. It emphasises the cyclical or continuous nature of service delivery. The model clearly shows where the guides in of this Handbook on impact the service delivery cycle.
The monitoring or measuring phase is essential to successful service delivery as it feeds directly back into the planning phase, which has to accommodate the results of the monitoring exercise.

SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL – DIAGRAM

As mentioned earlier, one of the issues that has bedevilled service delivery in the public service is the problem of bridging the gap between “knowing” and “doing”. While the WPTPS attempts to address this vexing issue by making provision for the implementation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, departments throughout the public service continue to experience difficulty in moving from the planning phase to the “doing” phase.

One of the main objectives of the guides in of this Handbook is to address this issue by providing operational managers with simple, step-by-step manuals on how to implement specific, fundamental service delivery processes.

During the implementation or “doing” phase, it is critically important to ensure that the strategic objectives identified in the strategic planning exercise are cascaded down throughout the department and its components. Individual managers need to be given Key Result Areas (KRAs) that are aligned to the departmental strategic objectives, which in turn, should be aligned to provincial and national strategic objectives.

The machinery of government that has been put in place can facilitate this process, but it remains the responsibility of managers in the public service to ensure that their functions and responsibilities serve the public needs, in line with the provincial and national priorities.

A schematic representation of the machinery of government is provided on the following two pages.

The first diagram, “The Machinery of Public Service Delivery” depicts how the framework for service delivery is developed:

- First, certain departments at a national level, such as the Presidency, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and the Department of Planning and Local Government (DPLG) set a framework for government operations. These frameworks are not specific to any sectors within government, they apply transversally across all sectors. This is like developing the blue print or basic plan for government operations.

- Next, within these operational frameworks, national departments such as Health, Housing, Education and Social Development, develop frameworks for public service delivery. These frameworks are specific to each sector, for example Health or Education, etc.
- Then the relevant provincial departments of Health, Education, etc, plan and develop structures to deliver and monitor the required services, through the appropriate institutions, components, offices, etc.
- Finally, the services are delivered by the relevant institutions and offices such as hospitals, clinics, schools, police stations and labour offices.

It is only at this final stage that members of the general public who use public services experience “government”. For them this represents government, it is the “face” of government. Everything that precedes this is largely unknown to the public. All that matters to them is the quality of the service delivery they experience and if it is poor, then “government” is poor or useless or inefficient.

The public interface of service delivery can make a mockery of excellent planning

This public interface can make a mockery of the best strategic thinking and planning and the most sophisticated structures and systems in the world. That is why it needs so much attention.

THE MACHINERY OF PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY - DIAGRAM

THE MACHIENERY OF GOVERNMENT - DIAGRAM

Unless the spirit of Batho Pele pervades the machinery of government it is unlikely to be evident at the public interface

The diagram on the previous page, “The Machinery of Government”, illustrates how the national and provincial visions and strategic objectives are cascaded down to the frontline interface with the public. This is where *Batho Pele* kicks in tangibly. However, unless the spirit of *Batho Pele* pervades the machinery of government and the entire process, it is unlikely to be evident at the public interface.

It should be mentioned that, in an attempt to keep things simple, the third tier of government, namely, local government, has not been reflected in the diagram on the previous page depicting the machinery of government. In a fully comprehensive depiction of the machinery of government, local government would fit in between the “Provincial Level” and the “Operational Level” in the above diagram.

Strategic objectives must be aligned from national through to provincial levels and within departments

The left-hand side of the diagram, comprising the “National Level” and the “Provincial Level”, represents the structures of government at these levels. If we use the example of a ship, these levels would represent the body or hull of the ship with bridge where the captain sits plus all the various decks and rooms such as dining halls, bars and cabins.

The “Operational Level” on the right-hand side of the diagram would represent the engine room of the ship. This is where the action is. No matter how well the ship is built and how beautiful and seaworthy it may be, it cannot sail or move even one centimetre in a chosen direction, if the engines do not work. Without the thrust of the engines the ship will be at the mercy of the waves and currents and it will be tossed about like a cork on the ocean, never reaching its chosen destination to deliver its valuable cargo.

It is the same with government. If the “engine room” is out of action, there can be no service delivery, no matter how good the structures of government may be. And without the thrust of the engines to move forward in a particular, chosen direction, government and the whole country will be at the mercy of arbitrary societal opinion and pressures, just like the ship lost at sea.

If the “engine room” of government cannot deliver the appropriate services when its captain, the state president, calls for action, we shall all wallow in a fog of inefficiency and uncertainty, never being able to deliver the “precious cargo” which is the mandate government has from the people of South Africa.

The public service must provide the thrust for transformation in the form of citizen-centred service delivery

For government to move the country forward towards its vision of a free, united and prosperous South Africa, the public service must provide the thrust in the form of citizen-centred service delivery. For this to happen, *Batho Pele,* as an approach to service delivery, should inform all the processes of government, from Strategic Planning process right through all the phases of Integrated Planning, Performance Management and Compensation Management and it should be in abundant evidence every time a public servant interfaces with a citizen.

The blue shaded boxes in the second diagram, The Machinery of Government, highlight the main artery of *Batho Pele* that pumps the blood of “people first” into the system of public service delivery, from the Service Delivery Improvement Plans right down to the “Service Delivery Interface”. As it courses through the “system” it feeds into and nourishes all of the machinery of government.

The spirit of Batho Pele must throb in the arteries of all public servants

But the life giving blood of *Batho Pele* must not only course through the veins of the machinery of government, it must throb in the arteries of every member of the public service, if we are to transform service delivery and reap the considerable benefits of putting “people first”.

Strategic objectives and KRA’s must be cascaded down throughout departments

If the country is to move forward as a nation to achieve its goals, it is imperative that, where the responsibility for service delivery has been devolved to the provinces, all provincial and local visions and strategic objectives are aligned to their national counterparts. The strategic objectives must in turn be translated into Key Result Areas (KRAs) of managers and cascaded down from one level to the next.

This notion of cascading the visions, strategic objectives and KRAs down through the machinery of government is illustrated in the above diagram. Let us consider the following example, to illustrate the importance to effective service delivery of aligning KRAs to strategic objectives and visions.

If, for example, the Vision of the National Department of Health were “A healthy South Africa”, the vision of a provincial health department, say the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Healthy, might be “Optimal health status for all the people of KwaZulu-Natal”.

The strategic objectives of the National Department of Health might then be, among others, to:

- reduce morbidity and mortality;
- reduce the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs);
- contain the spread of HIV/AIDS; and
- improve the availability of potable water.

At a provincial level, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health might have the same strategic objectives, but restricted to the province. This would ensure that the provincial strategic objectives are aligned to those of the National Department of Health.

Within the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health, each component/institution would then define strategic objectives aligned to those of the Department.

In order to achieve the strategic objectives of the various components/institutions, senior managers would accept responsibility for certain Key Result Areas (KRAs), which, if achieved, would result in the Department achieving its strategic objectives. The KRAs of the senior managers would then be translated into specific activities or deliverables, which, in turn, must be delegated to the operational managers as their KRAs.

Thus, the provincial strategic objectives are aligned to the national strategic objectives and translated into KRAs of managers from the Senior Management Service (SMS) and from there they are cascaded down to the operational levels.

Delegation is not abdication

Managers must ensure that the people to whom they delegate tasks have the capacity or potential as well as the authority to perform the relevant tasks. Where necessary, appropriate development plans and training must be put in place to ensure that the work gets done at the expected level. However, managers must remember that the ultimate responsibility for delegated tasks will always continue to vest with them. Delegation is not abdication.

However, it must be clearly understood that, while authority for action can be delegated, one can never delegate responsibility. The responsibility for achieving strategic objectives always vests with senior management. To put is simply, delegation is not abdication.

The machinery of government comprises mainly:

- The structures, namely, the three tiers of government, comprising national government with national departments, provincial government with provincial departments corresponding to those at a national level and local government structures.
- The functions, such as health, transport, finance, education, housing, etc.
- The operations, such as planning, implementation and monitoring results.

The first two elements constitute "who" government is and "what" it wants to achieve, while the latter element focuses on "how" government will achieve its objectives.

Using the service delivery model discussed earlier, the range of activities or interventions, which, together, constitute the "How" of service delivery, can be grouped under the three elements of the model, namely, planning, implementation and monitoring.

Planning

Planning, Implementing and Monitoring – these are the basic elements of successful services delivery

Planning is largely the responsibility of top and senior management. It includes the following:

- Integrated Planning:
    - Strategic Planning
    - Human Resources Planning
    - Service Delivery Improvement Plans
    - Financial Planning – linked to the MTEF (Medium Term Expenditure Framework and informed by the PFMA (Public Finance Management Act).

This is the level at which the departmental vision, strategic direction and objectives are defined, aligned to the provincial vision and strategic objectives, which in turn are aligned to the national vision and strategic objectives.

Implementation

This phase focuses on activities that help to achieve the strategic objectives identified during the planning phase, such as:

- Translating strategic plans into operational plans;
- How to Delegate;
- Developing a Service Delivery Charter;
- Setting Service Standards;
- Consulting with customers to establish needs and confirm expectations and standards; and
- Wayfinding and Signage.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This phase keeps a check on progress to ensure that “what we set out to do is brought to pass” and that service delivery remains aligned to the strategic objectives. It feeds back into the planning phase to ensure continual realignment, growth and development. It comprises activities such as:

- Handling Complaints;
- Performance Management (for individuals);
- Self Assessment (internal); and
- Peer Review (external – outside-in).

The *Batho Pele* Handbook includes step-by-step guides or manuals on several of the activities mentioned above, especially those from the implementation and monitoring phases because it is at these levels that the public interfaces with government. This is where the footprint of *Batho Pele* is most visible and where the spirit of *Batho Pele* is most effective.

SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

In the diagram on "The Machinery of Public Service Delivery" we illustrated how national departments, such as Health and Education, set the frameworks for the delivery of relevant services by their provincial counterparts. The diagram of the "Service Delivery System" depicts the same process in a slightly different way, illustrating how provincial departments need to align their strategic objectives with those of their national counterparts and with the provincial priorities.

Batho Pele is the oil that lubricates the machinery of government

The provincial departments then develop the necessary structures, systems and processes to enable them to meet their strategic objectives, which will include delivering specific services, making use of institutions such as hospitals, clinics and schools.

Within each department there are such institutions, divisions and/or components, each tasked with a particular aspect of the department's service delivery commitment. Each of these units, in turn, develops its own strategic objectives, in line with the departmental strategic objectives. And each of them is tasked with developing a Service Delivery Charter to facilitate customer satisfaction.

Each unit utilises, teams and individuals to help it achieve its strategic objectives. Where considered necessary, in order to promote efficient and effective service delivery, a component may decide to "outsource" certain activities. For our purposes we shall simply assume that these outsourced activities are handled by a Private Public Partnership or a PPP. It is these individuals, teams and PPPs that do the actual service delivery. They are the public interface of public service delivery.

The performance of the individuals, teams and any PPPs must be monitored against the relevant standards and strategic objectives, to ensure quality service delivery. In the case of individuals, their performance can be appraised by implementing a performance management and development system, while the performance of teams can be monitored by employing internal and external assessments, namely:

- Self-Assessments (internal)
- Peer Reviews (external – "outside-in"))

Outsourced projects and activities are monitored in terms of their respective service level agreements.

If one cog jams, the whole machine stops working

All the different elements of the Service Delivery System intermesh like cogs in a machine, providing a system to deliver the services that have been identified. If any one of the cogs jams, the whole system seizes up and there can be no service delivery. Every system needs some form of lubrication to ensure that it does not seize. No machine or system can run smoothly without lubrication and *Batho Pele* is the oil that lubricates government's service delivery systems.

In the heat of day-to-day service delivery at the coalface, frontline staff often may not have a clear idea of where a particular process fits into the service delivery system. For example: "Is the formulation of a Service Delivery Charter the function of a department or of a component within a department?" Or "How do Self-Assessments relate to Performance Appraisals?"

In order to help staff "in the trenches" grasp the significance of a particular intervention and locate the activity and themselves within the "map" of service delivery, a schematic representation of a Service Delivery System is provided. This should assist, not only with orientating oneself within the service delivery environment, but with having a better understanding of the broader picture of service delivery and how it relates to the ultimate transformation objectives of government.

Planning phase

Within the diagram, the planning phase for operational managers will tend to occur just before components/institutions/divisions set their strategic objectives and this is where we have positioned the following two planning exercises:

- Translating strategic plans to operational plans; and
- Delegating.

Implementation phase

When the planning has been completed and the delegations formalised, it is time to move on to the implementation phase of service delivery. One of the first things that has to be done in providing services is to formulate a Service Delivery Charter.

In the diagram, formulating a Service Delivery Charter is located immediately beneath the strategic objectives of departmental components, as each component or institution has to develop and publish its own Service Delivery Charter, in line with the department's main charter.

While each component is at liberty to develop its own Service Delivery Charter, these must at all times be aligned to the departmental charter. The service standards set in a component's charter may be better than those of the department, but they can never be lower than the department's service standards.

In formulating a Service Delivery Charter, one has to identify the component/unit and the services it offers and one has to explain where the component/unit is located, what standards of service can be expected and how the component/unit will deal with customer complaints. Thus the following service delivery processes are directly related to developing a Service Delivery Charter and are positioned adjacent to it:

- How to consult on public services;
- Way-finding and signage;
- Setting service standards; and
- Complaints handling.

Monitoring phase

Once the plans have been implemented, progress needs to be monitored. Two of the most useful ways of monitoring the performance of a team or component are to conduct a **Self Assessment and/or a Peer Review. The latter tends to be more objective as it provides input from people outside of the project being assessed.** However, handling complaints effectively is a very useful means of monitoring performance on an ongoing basis.

Thus the following processes to monitor service delivery have been positioned towards the bottom of the diagram, beneath the monitoring phase:

- Self assessment (internal);
- Peer review (external – outside-in); and
- Handling complaints.

Knowing where these processes fit in within the Service Delivery System will help operational managers orientate themselves in their efforts to improve service delivery by planning, implementing and monitoring effectively.

SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Batho Pele is not a quick fix or a miracle cure for poor service delivery. It is not a separate and distinct management responsibility or exercise. It is not a bolt-on activity. It is an attitude and approach to service delivery that needs to be woven into the very fabric of public service delivery. It should pervade every planning session and inform each and every action aimed at providing relevant and appropriate services to the citizens of South Africa.

The collective energy of all public servants is needed to improve service delivery

To succeed in significantly improving service delivery, the collective energy of every individual needs to be harnessed. Much rests on the shoulders of operational managers to "make it happen!".

USEFUL REFERENCES

You may find the following references useful for further reading on *Batho Pele* and service delivery improvement:

- The South African Constitution, 1996
- The Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994 as amended
- The Public Service Regulations, 2001 as amended
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, No 3 of 2000
- The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995
- The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*), 1997
- Article: "A case of too little too late?" by Khaya Ngema and Mashwahle Diphofa in Service delivery Review – Launch edition – 2001
- *Batho Pele* Revitalisation Strategy
- Guide for the review of government functions and services – DPSA document
- State of the nation address by the President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, to the joint sitting of the Houses of Parliament, Cape Town, 8 February 2002

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The following training programmes are available:

- Improving Service Delivery; Senior Managers' Programme – SAMDI
- Excellent Customer Service: A Training Opportunity for Frontline, Back Office and Support Personnel – SAMDI
- Service Delivery Implementation: Operational Managers' Programme – SAMDI

Contact: SAMDI
Tel: (012) 314 7571; Fax: (012) 321 1810
Website: www.samdi.gov.za

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INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATING STRATEGIC PLANS INTO OPERATIONAL PLANS

One of the most frustrating aspects of government's commitment to the transformation of the public service from a rules-bound bureaucracy, concerned with the administration of rules and regulations, to a results orientated organisation, focused on effective and efficient service delivery to all citizens, has been the seeming inability to move from strategic planning to implementation, or to move from "knowing" to "doing".

This problem is by no means unique to the public service. It is prevalent wherever there is change. People, by nature, are reluctant to change and are much happier to remain in environments that are familiar to them and which do not pose a threat. They do not enjoy having their comfort zones disrupted. And this is precisely what happens when an existing dispensation has to be transformed.

Having to do something means exposing oneself to scrutiny and possible criticism and most people do not enjoy criticism. They tend to take it personally, instead of seeing it as a learning opportunity. The do not seem to understand that criticism of a piece of work they have produced does not necessarily reflect on their persons. People are scared to expose their ignorance or inability to do the things that will make the transformation of the public service a reality; not realising that learning begins with the statement "I don't know".

In an organisation as large as the public service, transformation is a massive exercise and will tend to be slow and ponderous. Government has established a body of enabling legislation, known as the Regulatory Framework, supported by a powerful set of management operations in the form of the Public Service Management Framework, to try and speed up the transformation process. However, until such time as all the individuals in the public service take ownership of the transformation process and embrace the need to provide appropriate services to all citizens, the transformation of the public service will happen in fits and starts.

When Louis Gerstner took over the leadership of IBM in the United States, many people predicted that he would not be able to turn the company around because it was too large and cumbersome and that IBM would remain a monolith in testimony to outworn "first wave" thinking that basically said bigger is better and that the company, not the customer, is king. This was translated by some pundits into the phrase: "elephants can't dance" meaning IBM was too large to respond effectively to the fast-changing business environment.

However, Gerstner disagreed and turned the phrase into a challenge by asking: "Who said elephants can't dance?" and today IBM is one of the most successful and competitive IT companies in the world and Gerstner gives all the credit to the people at IBM, whom he calls

IBMers. With remarkable humility he states that: “In the end an organisation is nothing more than the capacity of its people to create value.”

The trick is to get people to “create value”. But how? How does one get people to act or to do things that they have not done before? How does one move people from “knowing” to “doing”? The answer lies in helping them create meaning in their lives. Every one of us acts or behaves in ways to create meaning. We are constantly in search of meaning. Once people perceive certain actions as adding meaning or value to their lives, they will pursue them.

This is precisely what the *Batho Pele* Handbook on Service Delivery aims to achieve. Its main purpose is to inculcate a deeper understanding of *Batho Pele* among public servants and encourage them to embrace the transformation process and commit to improved service delivery to all citizens. This will help them discover meaning in delivering services to their customers and once this happens, they will be motivated to keep adding value, to their own lives as well s to the lives of their customers. Thus the value chain of service delivery will constantly be strengthened.

To make improved service delivery a reality, one of the very first things that has to happen is the translation of strategic plans into operational plans. If one cannot develop workable action plans, aligned to the strategic objectives, with clear activities and measurable standards, there is very little chance of significant change happening.

An example that may help to illustrate the need to perform a series of specific tasks in order to achieve an overall objective is that of changing the direction of an oil tanker. In order to achieve this, the captain must plan the new direction carefully and well in advance of the time he actually wants to be heading in a new direction, because it takes time for a vessel as large as an oil tanker to change course.

He has to spell out exactly what must be done, when it must be done and by whom it must be done. And it will involve every member of the crew, from the captain himself and the navigators and the pilot at the wheel on the bridge of the ship to the engineers in the engine room and the deckhands. All their actions must be integrated and aligned to the same objective of changing the ship’s course, otherwise the tanker will not veer from its present course.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

A strategic plan interprets an organisation’s vision and maps out the direction in which the organisation will move in pursuit of its vision. It defines the organisation’s strategic objectives and is subject to continual review based on the feedback received from the operational areas.

Unless the strategic plans are operationalised, strategic objectives cannot be achieved and there can be no forward movement and, despite the best intentions, service delivery will not happen. Strategic and operational plans are interdependent and are both critically important links in the value chain. However, s we have said before, any chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Thus it is not a case of either being more important than the other, but rather that they have to be equally strong to ensure powerful service delivery.

The aim of this guide is to explain the importance of operational plan as a means of achieving strategic objectives and to provide you with a frame of reference for formulating operational plans.

This guide will:

- explain what an operational plan is;
- give you guidelines for translating strategic plans into operational plans;
- highlight the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of operational plans;
- elaborate the links to legislation and to *Batho Pele;*
- identify some of the challenges to developing operational plans and the responses to these challenges;
- take you through a step-by-step guide on how to develop and implement an operational plan;
- offer some key considerations to think about during the process; and
- refer you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

It is advisable to read this guide in conjunction with Chapter One of the *Batho Pele Handbook*.

WHAT IS AN OPERATIONAL PLAN?

Operational plans provide definitions and guidance on specific issues that everyone in the organisation can understand and relate to. An operational plan gives life to a strategic plan by translating the strategic objectives identified in the strategic plan into:

- key result areas; and
- activities with measurable standards;

In addition it identifies:

- key performance indicators; and the
- persons responsible for performing the activities.

Operational plans must be monitored constantly to ensure that they remain aligned to the strategic plan's objectives.

Both the strategic and operational planning process should be integrated with all other organisational processes.

TRANSLATING STRATEGIC GOALS TO OPERATIONAL PLANS AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Translating strategic plans into operational plans offers you the opportunity to learn about service delivery and what needs to be done to make it a reality. The learning opportunities include finding out:

- About the context of transformation and aligning key result areas to strategic objectives.
- How to move from "knowing" to "doing".
- What being accountable and responsible means.
- How to deliver against customer expectations.
- How to meet expected standards of service delivery.
- What competencies you need to acquire.
- What your department's shortcomings are.
- The capacity and strengths and weaknesses of the various team members to deliver against expected outcomes.
- What is realistic and affordable in terms of service delivery.
- Who your customers are and who the most important customers are.

GUIDELINES TO TRANSLATING STRATEGIC GAOLS TO OPERATIONAL PLANS

The following guidelines will help to ensure that operational plans are effective and implementable:

- Ensure that the Key Result Areas (KRAs) identified in the operational plan are aligned to the component's and the organisational/departmental strategic objectives. People at the coalface sometimes lose sight of the strategic objectives and, when frustrated by a seeming lack of progress, can sometimes adopt the attitude that any action is better than no action and changing their KRAs to suit the situation. This could result in them doing things that have nothing to do with achieving organisational strategic objectives or that retard or even prevent the achievement of the strategic objectives.

  Thus, care should be taken to ensure that mechanisms are in place to monitor that KRAs remain aligned to the strategic objectives.
- Make sure that KRAs are tangible and "doable" and that they do not simply refer to vague areas of responsibility. For example, in a hospital or office complex, "Having responsibility for safety and security" is not a KRA. It is a responsibility. The related KRA may be something like: "To identify and implement a security system that will ensure the safety of staff."
- Avoid the temptation of being too ambitious when identifying KRAs. As mentioned, KRAs should be realistic and achievable and should be limited to not more than five for any one person. One or two modest achievements are far better than failing to achieve some grand plan. The "small steps" approach is highly recommended when defining KRAs. Seeing progress is a great motivator, whereas failure will destroy staff morale.

- Set realistic timeframes. Avoid forcing staff to work under undue pressure. Clearly there will be emergencies and crisis situations when you and other members of the team will have to work under pressure, but this should be the exception rather than the norm.
- Set S.M.A.R.T. standards for each KRA. In other words, the standards must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. Refer to the guide on Setting Service Standards for more information on how to set service standards.
- Delegate effectively by ensuring that the people to whom tasks or KRAs are delegated have the necessary competencies and personality traits or potential to handle the job. Where you believe that they might not have the necessary competencies, but that they have the potential to do the job, ensure that appropriate development plans are put in place, in consultation with the people concerned, to ensure that they acquire the relevant skills, knowledge and attributes.
- Communicate effectively when developing the operational plan and ensure that everyone understands it and how it will help achieve organisational strategic objectives. This will ensure their buy-in to the plan ad gain their commitment to service delivery. Communication is key to the success of operational plans. By involving everyone and listening carefully to their inputs, they will feel important and take ownership of the process. Once they perceive meaning for themselves in the implementation of the plan, their commitment will be unwavering.

THE OBJECTIVE OF TRANSLATING STRATEGIC GOALS TO OPERATIONAL PLANS

The main objective of translating strategic to operational plans is to improve service delivery by achieving the organisational strategic objectives. Other objectives are to:

- deliver on organisational mandates – to move from “knowing to doing”;
- identify areas that will have the greatest impact on improving service delivery;
- align daily activities with strategic objectives;
- institutionalise an accountability framework so that managers and staff are held accountable for service delivery;
- facilitate performance management by ensuring that all staff have agreed tasks with measurable standards;
- promote staff development to ensure that they have the capacity to achieve their delegated tasks;
- evaluate performance against strategic objectives and to publish these in annual reports; and
- ensure value for money and the optimal utilisation of resources.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

The Public Service Regulations, 2001

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration has in terms of the Public Service Act, made the Public Service Regulations. In order to give practical effect to the Constitutional principles all employees are expected to comply with the terms provided for in the Regulations and expected to perform him/her duties to the best of ability.

Part 111 of the Public Service Regulations stipulate that an executing authority shall and implement a strategic plan for his/her department.

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service

"The White Paper on the Transformation of the public service (WPTPS), published on 24 November 1995, sets out eight transformation priorities, amongst which Transforming Service Delivery is the key. This is because a transformed South African public service will be judged on one criterion above all: its effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of all South African citizens."

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LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The purpose of the *Batho Pele* White Paper is to provide a policy framework and a practical implementation strategy for the transformation of public service delivery. It focuses on "how" public services are provided, rather than on "which" services are provided and its main intent is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which the services are delivered.

One of the salient points emphasised in the *Batho Pele* White Paper is that public services are not a privilege in a civilised, democratic society. They are the right and legitimate expectation of every citizen.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following tangible evidence will indicate that strategic plans have been translated into effective operational plans:

- performance agreements are in place;
- job descriptions are in place;
- an affective performance management system is implemented;

- S.M.A.R.T. standards are implemented;
- customer complaints decrease; and
- customer satisfaction levels increase.

OUTCOMES

The effective implementation of operational plans will have the following outcomes:

- the achievement of organisational, provincial and national strategic objectives;
- strategy will be turned into action;
- improved service delivery;
- incremental improvement in service delivery standards;
- service awards achieved for excellent service delivery;
- greater commitment by all staff at all levels in the organisation;
- high levels of customer satisfaction are recorded;
- improved job satisfaction and staff morale; and
- better and more effective staff.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Any intervention to improve service delivery will have its risks and challenges. Rather than seeing these as deterrents to action, they should be viewed as opportunities to enhance performance. Developing operational plans from strategic plans may present the following challenges:

Challenge:

Operational plans often entail a change in the way things are done, which can lead to uncertainty and even resistance amongst staff.

Response:

Clarify the operational plan and explain how it relates to the organisational, provincial and national strategic objectives. Help people see the “big picture” and discover meaning in their roles. They will then tend to perceive the change as an exciting challenge and opportunity to add value, rather than as a daunting prospect that should be resisted.

Challenge:

An associated risk is that people may change Key Result Areas if they are not achievable or unrealistic.

Response:

Set realistic targets and make sure that people have the level of competence of to carry out the tasks. Remember the need for good, clear communication and the “small steps” approach.

Challenge:

People may feel that their mistakes will be very visible and that their incompetencies revealed through the tasks delegated to them in the operational plan.

Response:

Ensure that developmental plans are put in place where needed and encourage staff to see this as a growth opportunity that could enrich their lives and enhance their jobs and career prospects.

OPERTIONAL PLANS

STEP 1

CONFIRM THE STRATEGIC PLAN

An organisations strategic plan provides the direction for all components, teams and individuals within the organisation. As a starting point, ensure that the component's or institution's strategic plan is sound and addresses customer needs and is aligned to the departmental strategic objectives.

A strategic plan is a high level, integrated plan that forms the basis for all other planning. It describes the organisational vision and sets its strategic direction. It states the values and guiding principles, which support the organisational culture. It identifies the fundamental strategic objectives that the organisation seeks to achieve.

The responsibility to ensure that the strategic objectives are achieved rests with all staff within the department.

STEP 2

DEVELOP A PERFORMANCE/ACTION PLAN (OPERATIONAL PLAN)

The attached diagram, "From Strategy to Action" illustrates how strategic objectives are cascaded down to lower levels in terms of Key Result Areas (KRAs) and activities that will give effect to the strategic plan.

The second diagram, "Performance/Action Plan" illustrates how the KRAs and duties are incorporated in a performance or action plan. It is important here to notice that each KRA is broken down into activities and that each activity has four S.M.A.R.T. standards in terms of quantity, quality, time and costs. In addition the person responsible for the activity must be identified as must be the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so that there is a mechanism for monitoring progress.

The last column in the performance/action plans makes provision for comments, mainly related to possible risks and contingencies related to that particular activity. It is important that the responsible person and the person delegating the task manage the risks. The best way to do this is to identify risks in advance and develop strategies of coping with these risks

ACTION

ACTION PLAN

Strategic objectives should be translated into KRAs for managers - KRAs are the “must achieve” tangible objectives. They focus on the organisation’s output – on improving service delivery. As mentioned, each KRA must in turn be broken down into related activities that have to be undertaken to achieve the KRA.

For example, a hospital manager may have as a KRA to identify and develop a system that will guarantee the safety and security of staff and patients. This could be broken down into the following activities:

- Gate and perimeter security.
- Parking attendants.
- Night guards.
- Fire drills and extinguishers.
- Crisis communications.
- Building maintenance.

Standards have to be allocated for each of these activities. For example, if we take the activity related to appointing parking attendants, the standards might be:

- Quantity: Appoint two shifts of five parking attendants/car guards.
- Quality: They must comply with national norms in terms of qualifications and experience.
- Time: They must be appointed by the end of January 2003.
- Cost: The cost must be within the budgetary provision for this item.

Prioritise the KRAs

KRAs should be prioritised in order of the impact that each will have on service delivery.

Set standards

Standards should be set for each activity under each KRA. They should be:

- S.M.A.R.T; and
- aligned to the standards specified in the Service Delivery Charter.

See guides on Developing a Service Delivery Charter and Setting Service Standards

Define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Each KRA must have at least one performance indicator, which is a specific measure that helps to determine how well one is performing in a given KRA. It is the measure for that particular KRA.

The question one may need to ask here is:

- “What tangible evidence will demonstrate that the particular KRA has been achieved?”

Institute risk management measures

Identify possible risks that may be associated with KRAs and build contingencies to deal with those appropriately. In some instances risks may result from changes in the environment (an external locus of control) and this can affect achievement of KRAs.

Enter into performance agreements

Once KRAs have been set and agreed with managers (Senior Management Service), they are required to enter into Performance Agreements. The Performance Agreement serves as an instrument for monitoring individual performance. In addition it identifies training and developmental needs.

STEP 3

TRANSLATE KEY RESULT AREAS INTO ACTIVITIES FOR LOWER LEVEL STAFF

Once managers have identified their KRAs and related activities and agreed on their Performance Agreements, they need to delegate the activities their subordinates. In this way their KRAs are cascaded to lower levels in the organisation and everyone works towards achieving the organisational strategic objectives.

STEP 4

DELEGATE ACTIVITIES (refer to guide on How to delegate)

In the process of delegating activities, the persons to whom tasks are delegated must be consulted and the relevance of the task in the larger scheme of things must be carefully explained, to ensure buy-in and commitment, but more importantly to ensure job satisfaction and service delivery in the spirit of *Batho Pele*.

When delegating ensure that staff have the required competencies or show potential so that relevant training and development can be instituted. (See also the guide on How to delegate.)

STEP 5

IMPLEMENT – "DO"

Once the action plans have been developed, it is advisable to have them agreed on and signed off with the immediate supervisor. What remains is critical – you have spent much time and energy in both the strategic and operational planning processes – now work to the plan and "make it happen"

As mentioned, if you have explained to each person their significance in the larger scheme of things and helped them to discover meaning in what they have undertaken to do, they will be enthusiastic and will want to do it. This is the best way of ensuring action. All you, as the manager or supervisor will need to do is monitor performance.

STEP 6

MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Monitor performance against plans the agreed plans.

Performance management is key to successful implementation.
(Refer also to the guides on Self Assessment and Peer Review.)

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Sound strategic plans need to be in place before they can be translated into effective operational plans.
- Establishing baseline performance standards will help you to focus on targets.
- Help people discover meaning in their tasks by helping them to see the significance of their roles in the bigger picture.
- When allocating key result areas consider and use the strengths of teams that would contribute towards the achievement of the strategic objectives.
- KRAs are critical – they are the “must achieve” elements of operational plans.
- It is critical to have performance indicators.
- Link operational plans to total quality management – see it as an opportunity to focus on service delivery issues that have an impact on customers.
- Communicate carefully and clearly.
- Give constant constructive feedback and reinforcement.
- Take “small steps”, especially at the beginning.
- Adopt an incremental approach to improving service delivery.

USEFUL REFERENCES

You may find the following references useful for further reading on *Batho Pele* and service delivery improvement:

- The South African Constitution, 1996
- The Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994 as amended
- The Public Service Regulations, 2001 as amended
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, No 3 of 2000
- The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995
- The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*), 1997
- Measuring organisational improvement impact; R.Y. Chang; 1997

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE ON HOW TO DELEGATE

One of the hallmarks of democracy is the old war cry of the French revolution: “Government of the people, by the people, for the people!” Since coming into power in 1994 the South African government has worked hard to give effect to this dictum. One of the ways this has been done is to devolve responsibility for public service delivery to the lowest levels of government, for example, by devolving service delivery from national government to provincial government and local authorities.

Thus, health care, for example is the responsibility of provincial departments of health. So too, have the responsibility for housing and education been devolved to the provinces. And within the provincial service delivery departments such as health, housing, education and welfare, the authority for service delivery has been devolved to institutions such as hospitals and schools and frontline offices such as home affairs for the issue of identity documents and passports.

This devolution of service delivery has been based on the precept that the authority for service delivery should not be vested in autocratic, central institutions, far removed from the actual interface with the consumers of services, but that it should be decentralised and placed in the hands of those closest to the end-users.

The diagram, titled “The Machinery of Public Service Delivery”, (fig 1) illustrates this devolution of service delivery from central government to provincial departments and institutions. Implicit in this diagram is the need for provincial government departments to align their strategic objectives with the provincial priorities and with the strategic objectives of their national counterparts.

Thus, while the authority for service delivery has been devolved to provincial and local authorities, this has been done within national policy frameworks, which ensure that the strategic objectives of the relevant national government departments are simultaneously cascaded down through the various levels of government to the points of actual service delivery.

PUBLIC INTERFACE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you delegate tasks effectively to subordinates. It:

- defines what delegating is and highlights the importance of delegating;
- explains how delegating can be used as a learning opportunity;
- provides you with guidelines on how to delegate;
- outlines the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of delegating;
- explains the links to legislation and the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- suggests some of the possible challenges and responses to delegating;
- takes you through a step-by-step guide on how to delegate;
- offers some key considerations to think about during the process; and
- refers you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

WHAT IS DELEGATION?

Devolution and Delegation

The terms "devolution" and "delegation" are often confused. They are very similar, but there is an important difference. "Devolution" means "a handing over of powers" while "delegation" means "to entrust or commit" or "to send as a delegate". Another word for "delegate" is "depute" which means to "send as a deputy".

In simple terms, in the case of "devolution" power is handed over and the person or organisation to whom power is handed, has the authority and responsibility to handle that power. On the other hand, when one delegates a task to someone, one remains responsible for ensuring that the person to whom one has delegated can and does perform the relevant task. One always retains responsibility. Delegation is not abdication.

We do not wish to labour the point, we simply wish to point out that there is a difference between the two words and that for the purposes of this guide we need to understand very clearly what is meant be "delegation".

Delegation is a skill. It is something that a manager has to learn. Unfortunately, delegation is often used as an excuse for dumping failure onto the shoulders of subordinates. Properly understood and deployed, it is a dynamic tool for motivating and training your team to achieve their fullest potential.

Most people hear about delegation in the cradle as a mother talks earnestly to the baby-sitter: "Feed him at seven, if there is any trouble just call me". The mother has delegated the task of feeding the baby to the baby-sitter, but she has retained responsibility for her baby's wellbeing by asking the baby-sitter to call if there is a problem.

Delegation is primarily about entrusting your authority to others. This means they can act and initiate independently and that they assume responsibility with you for certain tasks. But if something goes wrong, you remain responsible. The buck, as they say, always stops with you.

As the one who delegates, you “carry the can”. You are responsible for any mishaps and you have sort out any problems if things go wrong. The trick is to delegate in such a way that things do not go wrong. The best way to do this is to make sure that the persons to whom one delegates tasks have the necessary competencies (skills, knowledge and attributes) to perform those tasks. If they do not have the necessary competencies, they must at least have the potential to be trained to perform the tasks and it is your responsibility to see to it that they get the necessary training, otherwise you are simply abdicating your responsibilities.

Delegation is a manager’s key to organisational effectiveness. It is considered a critical, unending management competency and to achieve the best results, managers must be aware of its benefits and recognise the barriers that can hinder its success.

Delegation can be viewed as an effective way of offering development/career pathing to employees. It empowers people and affords them the opportunity to test their ideas, exercise innovation and to develop their understanding and confidence.

“When a business owner thinks he or she is the only person who can do anything, you wind up with decision paralysis,” says human-resources consultant and career coach Rose Mihaly, of Bristol Associates in Bristol. “The result is a demoralised, under-utilised staff and a business that’s stuck at its present level of growth". To move the organisation forward, managers must manage their human resources optimally by recognising and nurturing potential through skilful delegation.

For transformation and improved service delivery to become a reality, managers must recognise and develop the effectiveness of their team members.

DELEGATING AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Delegating is a learning opportunity for both the person doing the delegating, the delegator, and the person to whom a task is delegated, the delegate.

In the case of the delegator, he or she will learn:

- what responsibility means;
- what the strategic relevance of a task is;
- how to plan effectively;
- how to communicate effectively;

- how to trust other people to deliver;
- what being accountable means;
- what the responsibilities of leadership are;
- how to identify and develop potential; and
- more about his or her own strengths and weaknesses.

The delegate on the other hand will learn:

- how to accept responsibility;
- how to take better decisions;
- how and when to use his or her own judgement and discretion
- what the delegated job or task entails;
- the skills required to perform the delegated task;
- what his or her own limitations, strengths and weaknesses are;
- how to keep to agreed deadlines;
- how to communicate effectively;
- how to be a useful team member; and
- more about the organisation.

Delegating can be used as a tool to facilitate an employee's growth through training and it affords them the opportunity to test their own ideas, improve their understanding of the organisation and the job and build their confidence.

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO DELEGATE

We shall discuss the following guidelines on how to delegate:

- Access to information.
- Provide limited authority.
- Define timeframes.
- Stagger tasks.
- Know what you are delegating.
- Communicate widely.
- Be objective.
- Monitor.

Access to information

The process of delegating can only be successful if the person doing the delegating ensures that the person to whom he or she is delegating has full access to all the information required to perform the task being delegated.

It frequently happens that the person delegating holds on to key information because it gives them power over others. We all know information is power. However, key information, necessary to complete the delegated task is not shared with the delegate, the work will not be done and both parties will suffer. This is a lose-lose situation. To create a win-win situation, managers must ensure that when they delegate work, the persons to whom they delegate have ready access to all the relevant information so that they can take informed decisions within the level of authority given to them in terms of the delegation.

Managers who are afraid or reluctant to share key information will never delegate effectively.

Provide authority

When delegating a task one should always be careful to ensure that one provides the delegate with the necessary authority to do the work. For example, If one delegates the security function for a particular event to a colleague, one must ensure that the security personnel are aware that he or she has the authority to brief them on security matters for that event.

Similarly, if one delegates a particular task that requires payments to be made against approved budgets, one must ensure that the delegate is able to authorise payments and budget draw-downs, otherwise he or she will become frustrated if permission has to be obtained each time payments have to be made. This will not only delay proceedings, but it will demotivate the person to whom the task has been delegated.

Clearly, the authority should be limited to the needs of the particular task that has been delegated, otherwise it could be abused.

Define timeframes

Timeframes within which the delegation is effective must be defined and communicated. If we take the above example of delegating the co-ordination of security arrangements for a particular event to someone, it should be made clear that the authority to deal with security matters has only been delegated for this particular event, otherwise there could be abuse of powers.

If the delegation is semi-permanent, for example, in the absence of a security manager, one might delegate authority for security matters to someone indefinitely, this should be made clear to all interested parties and stakeholders. In such instances care should be taken to put in place regular feedback sessions to ensure that abuse of authority does not occur.

Stagger the tasks

If one has to delegate a range of tasks, it is wise to do so in “bite-size chunks” – ion other words do it gradually over time, making sure that the person to whom the work is being delegated can cope with the added responsibility. If one simply dumps the whole lot on him or her all at once, it may appear that one is doing just that, namely, dumping and shedding responsibility.

The golden rule in delegating is that delegation is not abdication. The ultimate responsibility for the work delegated will always vest with the person doing the delegating. Thus it is absolutely critical that when one delegates something, the person to whom one is delegating is able and competent to do the work. It may be necessary to provide suitable training before delegating work to ensure that the delegate has the required competencies (skills, knowledge and attributes) to perform the tasks delegated to him or her.

Know what you are delegating

People often delegate tasks simply because they cannot do them themselves and are thus unable to delegate effectively because they do not know what is required to do the work. Make sure you know what you are delegating and that your expectations are realistic.

It is not necessary that one should be absolutely proficient in a task before one can delegate it. On the contrary, one should delegate tasks if one is not very proficient at doing them oneself. But, one must know what the significance of the task is and one should have a very clear idea of what skills and resources are required to do the work effectively, before one delegates.

For example, a manager may very well delegate a highly technical piece of work to a specialist in the field, but the manager must understand how this particular task fits into the bigger picture and what resources in terms of time and money are required to perform this task effectively and efficiently.

Communicate widely

As mentioned above, all interested and affected parties must know about the delegation – to whom authority has been delegated; what the limits of delegated authority are; for how long the delegation will be effective, etc.

This information must be clearly and well communicated to all concerned. There is little more frustrating and demotivating than to be given a particular challenge or opportunity to demonstrate one's ability, only to find that no one knows about it and it is thus impossible to perform.

In communicating the extent and nature of the delegation, staff and other roleplayers must be asked to support the delegate and offer assistance where needed.

Be objective

Delegation should be done in accordance with agreed standards. Be wary of setting standards unrealistically high at the beginning. Allow the delegate to gain expertise and confidence before increasing standards. Avoid the inclination to set standards initially at levels that you might expect of yourself or even higher. Discuss the standards with the delegate and agree on realistic and acceptable standards, using an incremental approach to raise standards over time.

It is very annoying to be asked to do something and then to be constantly reminded by the person delegating the task that he or she could have done it much better and faster.

The object of delegations is organisational effectiveness and improved service delivery. It is not an end in itself and it certainly is not an opportunity to blow one's own trumpet.

Monitoring

As mentioned before, delegation is not abdication. Thus, when one has delegated a task to someone, one must monitor carefully, without being patronising, to ensure that the work is going according to plan.

Appropriate monitoring enables you to identify lapses and mistakes before it is too late and while there is still time and opportunity to rectify matters. Failure to do this could be very embarrassing and to say that the delegate should have done better, is no excuse. If the person to whom you have delegated something fails, the failure is yours.

A good approach is to set up regular feedback sessions right from the start so that one is able to keep one's finger on the pulse and track progress without interfering or getting in the way.

OBJECTIVES OF DELEGATION

The main objective of delegating is always to improve organisational effectiveness and service delivery. Within this broad objective there are others, namely to:

- create time and space to focus on essential management functions such as strategic planning;
- build a more competent and effective workforce by empowering staff;
- enhance job satisfaction;
- improve team spirit;
- enhance organisational culture;
- expedite decision making;
- stimulate growth and create a learning environment;
- utilise human resources more effectively; and
- generate commitment by motivating and involving people.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

As mentioned at the outset, one of the main tenets of the transformation of the public service has been the devolution of service delivery to the lowest appropriate level.

Thus, government has encouraged the use of delegations to help the public service move away from prescriptive, bureaucratic procedures, governed by rules and regulations, realising that. effective delegation can cut through much of the red tape associated with public service delivery.

The White Paper on Human Resource Management (WPHRM)

The White Paper sets out the future goals for managing people in the public service and sees as its vision: “Human resource management in the public service will result in a diverse, competent and well-managed workforce that is capable of and committed to delivering high quality services to the people of South Africa”

The WPHRM states that both national and provincial departments will be responsible, within nationally defined parameters, for planning and managing their human resources to meet their own strategic and operational needs.

Delegating is a means of managing human resources more effectively so that staff feel empowered and confident to perform functions/duties that are delegated to them.

Public Service Regulations

Part 11 of the Public Service Regulations provides for a head of department to manage his/her department effectively and efficiently and allows a head of department to empower employees in the department by means of appropriate delegations and authorisations, where necessary.

If the Regulations confer a power or impose a duty on a head of department, he or she may, subject to the Act:

a) delegate the power to an employee or authorise an employee to perform the duty; and

b) set conditions for the exercise of the power or performance of the duty.

The Regulations further state that an executing authority shall record a delegation or authorisation in writing and may incorporate it in an employment contract for a head of department.

Skills Development Act

The purpose of the Skills Development Act is to:

- improve the quality of the life of the South African workforce, to improve the quality of life f workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility;
- encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment and to provide employees with opportunities to acquire new skills; and
- ensure the quality of education and training in and for the workplace.

Effective delegations can help achieve all of these objectives.

LINKS TO BATHO PELE

The *Batho Pele* White Paper states that a transformed South African public service will be judged on one criterion above all; its effectiveness in delivering services that meet the basic needs of all South African citizens. The White Paper places emphasis on specifically improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the way in which services are delivered.

Managers have a key role to play in delivering services through proper work organisation. One way of organising work efficiently is through the effective delegation of functions.

However, the most important link to *Batho Pele* is perhaps the implicit respect shown for the dignity of others by delegating tasks to staff to help them realise their full potential.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Improved team spirit and staff morale.
- Efficient work organisation as tasks are delegated.
- Enhanced staff development.
- Achievement of strategic objectives.
- Less overtime worked by senior staff and management.
- More time for managers to focus on essential management functions.

OUTCOMES

The most obvious outcome of effective delegations will be improved service delivery as staff outputs are maximised and human resources are optimally deployed.

Another important outcome will be evidence of respect for one another and a broad culture characterised by the spirit of *Batho Pele* as staff start to work as a unit, each one doing his or her best to maximise the team effort and support each other.

A third outcome will be clear evidence of improved management expertise as managers have more time to focus on strategic matters. When the workload is streamlined through effective delegations, the amount available for essential managerial tasks increases, allowing managers to look ahead, to plan more effectively and monitor progress.

As the process begins to work, stress levels decrease across the workforce, which leads to improved organisational health.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge:

Managers may find it hard to “let go”. This is often based on negative feelings of insecurity and mistrust.

Response:

Create a healthy organisation. Encourage managers to understand that the development of people is part of good management. Build it into their key performance areas and reward them for effective delegation. Let them see the benefits to themselves, to the organisation and to the customers.

Of course, some times people refuse to delegate or to delegate effectively because they wish to retain power and perceive delegation as losing control. Once they understand that quite the opposite is true and that effective delegation, while retaining responsibility, enhances managerial control, they will embrace delegation as a win-win situation.

Challenge:

Functions are delegated without the necessary authority or support.

Response:

Explain the importance of providing relevant authority and support structures to make delegation successful. And ensure that this is clearly communicated to all concerned.

Challenge:

“My way is the only way!”

Response:

Others are bound to do things differently from you. They are also likely to get things wrong and may seem slow to pick up certain skills as a result of past imbalances and not being afforded learning opportunities. Understand that new ideas and fresh approaches may actually improve performance and service delivery.

Challenge:

Delegating becomes an act of simply dumping responsibility on someone else.

Response:

Explain that delegation is not abdication and incentivise managers by rewarding them for effective delegation.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DELEGATING

STEP 1

ANALYSIS

The process begins with an analysis of what you as a manager could and should delegate and what you should do yourself. Visit you strategic plan, look at you strategic objectives and key performance areas. Now identify those activities you can delegate and those which you must undertake personally. The latter tasks will tend to entail some form of strategic input. The tasks to delegate are those which are fairly straightforward, self-contained and which have clear, measurable standards.

The easiest and simplest tasks to delegate are those with which you are very familiar, having performed them often yourself at a more junior level. These tasks will be easy to explain and you will have a good idea of the competencies/training required to do them well.

Use your experience to ensure that the task is done well, rather than actually to perform the task yourself.

What to delegate

Delegate tasks that might be tedious for you and time consuming, but which could serve as a challenge to other less experienced staff. This will stimulate innovation and provide an opportunity for staff to demonstrate creativity and the ability to rise to the occasion.

The task of a manger is to manage and not to get bogged down in technical detail, so delegate work that will set you free to manage effectively.

Examples of obvious functions that managers can delegate include:

- Administrative tasks – e.g. making logistical arrangements for meetings and focus groups, collating information, setting up data banks and office routines such as filing and maintaining records;
- Some communication tasks – e.g. daily correspondence, letters, telephone calls, acknowledging receipt of applications, organising functions, producing publications;
- Time consuming tasks – e.g. research.

Delegate to increase the strength and capacity of your group or team. Try to distribute mundane tasks as fairly as possible and allocate the more exciting ones as widely as possible.

What not to delegate

Do not delegate tasks:

- of a strategic nature that relate to policy, security or confidential matters;
- that involve managing or disciplining senior staff or peers; and

that are beyond the experience and competence of the person concerned, unless you

STEP 2

APPOINT A DELEGATE

This is a critically important step. If the wrong person is chosen, the delegation will fail.

Having decided what to delegate, consider the following:

- What knowledge, skills, behavioural attributes and experience are necessary for the task?
- Whose profile best matches the above-mentioned competencies?
- What further training or support would be necessary?

Look for people's interest in work they have not done before. They may have shown some aptitude in unusual circumstances, such as filling in for someone else or coping in crisis situations. Look for abilities that are exercised elsewhere even if this is outside the work environment, for example serving on community or sports committees.

Discuss the prospect of delegating the task with possible candidates to get their response. See how they respond to the challenge – this can take place at the appraisal interview. Begin with positive reinforcement, by highlighting the potential you see in them, point to jobs well done to build their confidence, Explain why you are delegating in terms of your needs, of the jobholder's development and of the imperative to improve service delivery.

To be fair and to exercise good human resource practices, make it known to the delegate that he or she has a choice of responses, he or she can:

- choose to accept and make a commitment to the request;
- decline the offer without fear of subsequent discrimination – explain that a request is not an order and in terms of fair labour practice he or she is entitled to decline the request. However, the person should understand that this is an opportunity to demonstrate his or her worth and ability;
- commit to accept later – where the person is given a chance to reflect on the proposals and inform the manager at a later stage; or
- make a counter-offer; such as I am not ready to do X, but I am willing to do Y and take one step at a time.

Never underestimate a person's potential. Delegate slightly more than you think the person is capable of handling. Expect him or her to succeed and you will be pleasantly surprised more often than not. But understand that you will have to provide training and support.

When choosing a delegate, assess whether the person is capable of performing the tasks within the available resources. And, having appointed a delegate, ensure that he or she has sufficient authority to perform the task.

STEP 3

BRIEFING

Having accepted a newly delegated responsibility, the delegate must be fully briefed on the following:

- the strategic direction and organisational mandates;
- the objectives of the task, the service standards (standards should be S.M.A.R.T – see the guide on Setting Service Standards), targets and performance indicators;
- the performance appraisal system;
- the policies, guidelines and regulations within which the tasks must be carried out;
- the limits of authority – these are critically important. The delegate must clearly know:
  - the limits of his or her authority – how far it extends and where and when it ends;
  - what powers he or she has to hire new staff or deploy existing staff;
  - his or her budgetary authority;
  - the resources available;
  - what access to information he or she has and the power to take decisions without referral/consultation; and
  - the channels of communication.

One must be careful that when delegating one does not simply throw the chosen delegate to the wolves and then blame him or her afterwards for failing. A clear and detailed briefing, with the assurance that the delegate can back at any time to clarify issues, is critically important to the success of delegating.

STEP 4

COMMUNICATE

A mark of good management is good communication, both internal and external. And internal and external communication are two of the four pillars of the *Batho Pele* revitalisation programme. Making sure that all stakeholders, including staff, customers and other interest groups are well informed at all times is an integral part of respecting their dignity and of a sincere commitment to improved service delivery.

Delegating cannot hope to be successful unless all stakeholders know:

- that the task has been delegated;
- to whom it has been delegated; and
- and what the limits of the delegated authority are.

This communication should not be left to chance. It must be carefully structured, using available resources such as circulars, newsletters, staff briefings and community consultation forums. In exceptional cases it may be necessary to involve the mass media, especially if the delegation affects people in remote rural areas who are difficult to reach.

It is important to remember that, when planning the delegation, provision must be made for the resources, including costs, required for effective communication of the delegation.

STEP 5

MANAGING THE INDIVUDUAL

It is important to give the delegate full support throughout the term of the delegation, but especially in the initial stages, so that he or she can develop an acceptable level of confidence to drive the process. Make it clear that you will:

- provide all the support that has been agreed between the parties;
- provide any training and development that may be necessary;
- set up a mentoring programme for the individual, if considered necessary and desirable;
- be available for consultation or advice on a personal basis; and
- advise all stakeholders of the functions and authority that have been delegated.

As the person becomes more confident, allow him or her to think about issues and questions before raising them yourself. Request that the person provides you with alternatives, perceived pros and cons and recommendations for action. This will help boost the delegate's confidence and is a good exercise in decision making, while secure in the knowledge that you will be there to check the outcome.

If you disagree with the person, discuss it frankly and without aggression or making the person feel inferior. Discussion is always a learning opportunity for both parties.

Agree on a monitoring or measurement procedure that will keep you informed as to progress on the project, because you will remain ultimately responsible for it and will need to know that it is progressing as it should. A good rule of thumb here is, if you can't measure it, do not delegate it because you will not be able to monitor it effectively.

Some useful tips

- Show confidence in the person to whom you have delegated the task, but at the same time keep an eye on him or her.
- Do not simply cast someone adrift.
- Always keep a life belt handy.
- Avoid wandering up at odd moments and asking for progress reports.
- Allow people space to work and learn.

STEP 6

APPRAISAL

Performance appraisal is a useful management tool to monitor the performance of people to whom one has delegated work. It is objective and the standards would have been agreed in advance. If properly executed, it is a non-threatening experience and should be conducive to the development of the individual being appraised.

If the person has done well – congratulate him or her. If things have not gone as smoothly as planned or did not work well, be frank and discuss possible reasons. Offer alternatives, based on best practices. During the appraisal, get the person to talk about his or her experiences, successes and areas of difficulty and how things might have been done differently.

At all times be sensitive to the delegate's predicament and avoid a high handed attitude and taking decisions that the person is quite capable of handling.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Delegating can often take on a whole new role – the delegate can experience job satisfaction and reward in the areas prescribed by the delegation. It gives the jobholder the opportunity to broaden his or her experience and skills in positions of greater responsibility.
- Managers have a key role to play in circumstances where delegates find difficulty in returning to their original posts, if they have been in an acting capacity. Re-entry needs careful planning and sympathetic management.
- Consider giving as many members of staff an opportunity to develop within the scope of delegations.

USEFUL REFERENCES

- Connecticut Business and Industry Association: Do it yourself? Or delegate? *Bonnie Kreitler*
- Starting to Manage: The essential skills; *Gerard M Blair*
- How to be Better at Managing People; *Alan Barker*
- The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People ; *Steven Covey*
- Essential Managers: How to Delegate; *Robert Heller*

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- Courses offered by business schools on Human Resource Management

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INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

Responding to the challenges presented by the legacy of the past and of having to rise to the legitimate demands of citizens to be treated as customers, as opposed to mere users of public services, has been acknowledged as an enormous and daunting task.

To help public servants rise to these challenges of transformation, government has passed a body of enabling legislation, known as the Regulatory Framework. To support the implementation of the mandates emanating from this legislation, government, through its structures, has introduced the new Public service Management Framework, aimed at making service delivery a reality for every citizen.

The Public service exists to serve the needs of the people. All citizens have a right to expect high-quality public services, which meet their needs.

The main challenge facing the public service is to move from "knowing" to "doing"

The main challenge facing the public service is to move from "knowing" to "doing". It has to discover ways of working that encourage new attitudes and organisational cultures and which develop new skills and competencies.

To help transform attitudes and the culture of the Public service from a "can't do" rules bound mindset to a "can and will do" service delivery commitment, government introduced the concept of *Batho Pele* – putting people first. The White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*) lists eight basic principles to enhance service delivery. These principles are listed on the following page.

All public servants are exhorted to internalise these principles and make *Batho Pele* a way of life.

PRINCIPLES

One of the main pillars of the Public service Management Framework is Integrated Planning and central to this process is the need to develop a Service Delivery Improvement Plan (SDIP). Such a plan will focus on strategies to bring the *Batho Pele* principles to life and to make successful, efficient and effective service delivery a reality.

Each department within the public service should have a SDIP, which includes a Service Delivery Charter.

It is not within the scope of this manual to discuss the development of a SDIP. Our aim is rather to help operational managers develop and implement a Service Delivery Charter for their department or component.

This will have an immediate three-fold benefit in that it will:

- reinforce the department's or the component's commitment to service delivery improvement for all end-users;
- help the department or component rise to the challenge of treating citizens as customers and meeting their demands equitable and fairly; and
- immeasurably enhance communications with customers.

Without the commitment and support of staff improving service delivery will remain a distant, idealistic dream

The responsibility for developing and implementing a Service Delivery Charter vests with the institutions or bodies responsible for delivering services to the public. Operational managers must involve their frontline staff in the process of developing a Service Delivery Charter. They must be encouraged to take ownership of the values and principles expressed in the Charter. In the final analysis, the responsibility of implementing the Charter vests with the individuals who are at the coalface, namely, the frontline staff. Without their commitment and support, improving service delivery will remain a distant, idealistic dream.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to introduce you to the Service Delivery Charter and to provide you with a frame of reference for developing a Service Delivery Charter

This guide will give you:

- A definition of Service Delivery Charter
- Explains how developing a Service Delivery Charter can be used as a learning opportunity;
- Provides you with guidelines and best practices on developing a Service Delivery Charter
- Outlines the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of a Service Delivery Charter
- Illustrates the links to legislation and the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- Suggests possible challenges and responses to these;
- Takes you through a step-by-step guide on how to develop a Service Delivery Charter;
- Offers some key considerations to think about during the process;
- Refers you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

WHAT IS A SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER?

A Service Delivery Charter is a statement of commitment

A Service Delivery Charter is a statement of commitment that a department or component makes towards service delivery. It should be developed to suit the needs of individual departments or components.

There is no rigid format, but it should address the following:

- The name of the department or component.
- The physical, postal and e-mail addresses of the department/component.
- The days and times that the department/component is open to the public.
- A list of the services provided.
- A statement of the service standards that customers can expect.
- An explanation of how queries and/or complaints will be dealt with.
- A statement of the customer's rights.
- A statement of the customer's obligations.
- A pledge to maintain service delivery standards.

SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Developing a Service Delivery Charter is a consultative process and affords managers an opportunity of learning about the organisation itself and communities it serves.

Consultation as such lends to the following learning opportunities:

- understanding the circumstances of your customers
- knowing what your customers need and expect;
- understanding one's own shortcomings;
- understanding one's own limitations;
- realising what is realistic and "doable" and what is not; and
- coming to a deeper understanding of *Batho Pele* or putting "people first".

Improving service delivery is a continuous, progressive process, it is never complete and as standards are met, new standards should be set. This on-going process allows for learning and improvement.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

The following guidelines should be borne in mind developing a Service Delivery Charter:

- get buy-in and commitment;
- set realistic targets;
- communicate widely; and
- reward staff.

Each of these will be dealt with in detail.

Buy-in and commitment

It is crucial to get involve staff in the development of a Service Delivery Charter so that you get their buy-in and commitment to improve service delivery. Encourage staff to become custodians of the process so that they can take ownership of the Charter.

Set realistic targets

When consulting customers, do it intelligently and realistically. Make them aware of resources and the bigger picture of the transformation process. Set realistic targets.

Communicate widely

Develop and implement a well-structured communication strategy to ensure that it serves as a vehicle for *Batho Pele.* Think creatively about imparting information to all audiences and again consider the cost implications.

Reward staff

Announce positive results of the programme and reward individuals who have been particularly instrumental in making the Charter come alive.

THE OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPING A SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

The objectives of developing a Service Delivery Charter are many. However, in the main, the purpose of such a Charter is to express a commitment to service delivery in which:

- published standards of service delivery are maintained;
- the treatment of all end-users as customers is encouraged;
- customers' rights are protected;
- relationships with customers are enhanced; and, finally,

the transformation of the public service from a rules bound bureaucracy to a results driven organisation is accelerated.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The *Batho Pele* principles have already been listed. It is clear that a Service Delivery Charter embodies most, if not all of these principles, in that it must:

- Specify the services provided, which must be decided in ***consultation*** with the customers.
- Provide information on where the services may be ***accessed***.
- State the customer's rights and obligations to facilitate ***courtesy***.
- Provide full ***information*** on what services are provided and where they can be accessed.

- State the standards of service customers can expect and give full particulars of whom should be contacted if there are any queries in order to promote ***openness and transparency***.
- Explain how complaints will be handled to ensure that customers have ***redress***.
- Reassure customers that they are getting ***value for money*** in the range, quality and availability of the services offered.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

Apart from the White Paper on Transforming Public service Delivery, which has already been mentioned, the most powerful mandates for the development and implementation of a Service Delivery Charter come from:

- The Constitution.
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act. No3 of 2000
- The Promotion of Access to Information Act, No2 of 2000.
- The Public service Regulations of 2001.

The Constitution

Section 195 insist that public servants should commit to provide services of a standard

The nine principles governing public administration provided in section 195 of the Constitution insist that public services should be announced and that public servants should commit to provide services of a standard that meet the needs of the customers.

The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act no. 3 0f 2000

This act confirms the customer's right to consultation and redress if his or her rights are adversely affected by an administrative action and a Service Delivery Charter should stipulate how these rights will be upheld.

The Promotion of Access to Information Act no. 2 of 2000

The Act gives effect to a citizen's constitutional right of access to information held by the State and any information that is held by another person and which is required for the exercise or protection of any rights, in order to:

- foster a culture of transparency and accountability in public services by giving effect to the right of access to information; and

- promote a society in which the people of South Africa have effective access to information to enable them to exercise and protect all of their rights.

A Service Delivery Charter is an important means of complying with these mandates and giving full expression to provisions of the law.

The Public Service Regulations of 2001

Part C of the Regulations states that an executing authority shall establish and sustain a service delivery improvement programme for his/her department that must include:

a) an identification of the type of actual and potential customers and the main services to be provided to them;
b) the existing and future arrangements with the department's actual and potential customers;
c) the customer's means of access to the services, the barriers to increased access and the mechanisms or strategies to be utilised progressively to remove the barriers so that access can be increased;
d) the existing and future service standards for the main services to be provided;
e) the existing and future arrangements on how information about the department's services are provided; and
f) the current and future complaints system or mechanisms.

An executing authority shall establish an annual statement of public service commitment (a Service Delivery Charter) which will contain the department's service standards that citizens and customers can expect and which will explain how the department will fulfil each of the standards.

All employees have a responsibility to implement the tenets of the Charter

Whilst the executing authority remains accountable for the service delivery of his or her department and the development of Service Delivery Charters by institutions or components within the department which interface directly with the public, all employees have a responsibility to implement the tenets of the Charter(s) and to improve service delivery.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Staff need to uphold the provisions of the Code of Conduct

In order to ensure that the implementation of the Service Delivery Charter meets our expectations as well as those of the customers, it will be useful to remind staff of the following provisions of the Public Service Code of Conduct, published on 5 January 2001, which requires frontline staff to:

- identify themselves to customers when rendering services;
- serve the public in an unbiased and impartial manner, without discrimination on the grounds of religion, colour, social origin or political affiliation, so as to create confidence in the Public service;
- be friendly and smile at all times when dealing the public;
- treat members of the public as customers who are entitled to
- receive good standards of service;
- address customers in the language they understand;
- provide services efficiently, without asking for favours in return for the services;
- provide the services within a reasonable time;
- provide full, accurate and up-to-date information;
- treat all customers with equal dignity; and
- satisfy the customer at all times.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- A Service Delivery Charter developed and displayed at strategic points;
- Standards are met and continuously raised – improved service delivery;
- An increase in the number of compliments or complaints – an indication that customers know what standards to expect.

OUTCOMES

The primary outcomes of successfully implementing a Service Delivery Charter will be:

- improved service delivery;
- greater job satisfaction for public servants;
- more satisfied customers; and
- the accelerated transformation of the Public service.

Secondary outcomes will be:

- greater consultation with customers;
- better communications with customers; and
- fewer complaints by customers.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

The main challenge to developing and implementing a Service Delivery Charter successfully are given below, together with measures to reduce the challenge.

Challenge: Getting buy-in and commitment from employees

Someone once said: “There is nothing more difficult to take in the hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.” This applies absolutely to the development and implementation of a Service Delivery Charter, especially against the backdrop of the pre 1994 public service, where addressing the needs of the people was not a priority.

Get buy-in and commitment, train and develop staff to drive the process

In all change there is a risk that the various means employed to achieve the change become the whole focus of attention and that the means are thus confused with the ends. It is not the Service Delivery Charter that is important, but rather the commitment of all staff to service delivery. It is crucial to get buy-in and support from all staff.

Response:

- The development and implementation of a rigorous Service Delivery Improvement Plan.
- Training and development programmes on *Batho Pele* and service delivery implementation.

Challenge: Unrealistic expectations of customers

The Charter, although implicitly a sound practice, can produce scepticism on the part of customers and staff alike.

Response:

Set realistic targets

- When consulting customers, do it intelligently and realistically. Make them aware of resources and the bigger picture of the transformation process. Set realistic targets.

- Make sure that management leads by example and lives the elements of the charter. If management is luke warm to the Charter, staff cannot be expected to take it seriously.

Challenge: Cost of developing the Charter

The development and implementation of a Charter cannot be done overnight or on the cheap, if it is to achieve its purpose and include *Batho Pele.* Consultation takes time and effort and consideration must be given to the specific needs of end users.

Response

Consider cost and time implications and work all phases into the costing – from scanning the environment to communicating the Charter.

Challenge: Communication

If no structured communication plan/strategy is in place, communication may not reach all audiences. Thus both the consultation process and the publication of services and standards may be jeopardised.

Response:

A communication strategy serves as a vehicle for Batho Pele

Develop and implement a well-structured communication strategy to ensure that it serves as a vehicle for *Batho Pele.* Think creatively about imparting information to all audiences and again consider the cost implications.

Challenge: People may become tired of buzzwords such as "transformation", "service delivery" and "*Batho Pele*".

People easily become inured to buzzwords and they can quickly lose their impact, especially if they are used indiscriminately.

Response:

- Adopt a fresh approach to the process. Encourage staff to become custodians of the process so that they can take ownership of the Charter.

Announce positive results of the programme

- Announce positive results of the programme and reward individuals who have been particularly instrumental in making the Charter come alive.

STEP 1

WHO ARE WE?

This is easy. The answer will take the form of: “We are the Department of …. “

STEP 2

WHERE CAN WE BE FOUND?

This is not quite as simple as step one. All the physical locations of the department where services are delivered to end-users must be identified and listed, clearly giving the address details.

In addition, telephone and fax numbers must be provided for each location, as well as e-mail addresses, if applicable. Where call centres have been established, these must be identified with their corresponding address details. It is critically important that the days of the week and times during which the services may be accessed are clearly stated.

It is preferable to provide all this information by geographical area so that end-users can establish the most suitable location for their needs. For remote locations it is advisable to provide full directions of how to get to the service point.

STEP 3

It is necessary here to list all the services provided by the department and then to specify which services are available at each location.

In addition, full information must be provided on what the customers need to do or take with them in order to access the services, for example, ID documents, birth certificates, photographs, medical histories, educational qualifications and certificates, etc.

A commitment to the *Batho Pele* principles will enhance the Charter. It is suggested that a statement along the following lines be included here: “The provision of our services will be based on the principles of *Batho Pele* and we undertake to honour these principles by … (indicate here how you will give force to each of the *Batho Pele* principles in delivering the relevant services)."

This is not a simple exercise and requires thought and discussion with staff as well as end-users. Some of the best ways to consult with staff and customers is by way of focus groups. These groups should be representative and often work best with a mixture of staff and customers. The facilitator must be a mature and preferably senior member of staff, well-versed in the services of the department.

It must be accepted that the findings of these focus groups may require the department to review or even revise some of its services and how they are provided.

Once the focus groups have been held it is useful to send out questionnaires to a cross section of end-users, asking the same sort of questions addressed during the focus groups. This may provide additional important information and will serve as a useful control mechanism.

The same focus groups and questionnaires can be used to provide the input to the next two steps.

STEP 4

OUR SERVICE STANDARDS

Having established realistic and relevant service standards through the focus groups each service should be listed with the standards applicable to this particular service. The standards may be introduced with the following statement: "We have set the following minimum standards for the level and quality of the services we provide:"

Remember that your customers, as a result of previous disadvantage, may not be in a position to articulate appropriate standards and may thus not expect much from you. On the other hand their expectations might be totally unrealistic. The focus groups should help them understand more clearly what they can rightfully expect from your department.

Times change and customers' needs may change with them. In order to monitor standards and customer satisfaction it will be necessary, at regular intervals to review the standards. Again, focus groups can be used to facilitate this process. However, a simple questionnaire at service points is a useful interim device to ensure that service delivery is still on track and meeting the needs and expectations of customers. This questionnaire can also be used to determine changed needs or new expectations.

STEP 5

HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH QUERIES AND COMPLAINTS
Here customers will be reassured about their rights by committing your department to *redress* procedures and *courteous* assistance.

If your department has set up a complaints/help desk, this must be clearly stated, with full particulars and an explanation on how to access this service, with full details, including the names of staff in attendance. You may wish to follow the following guidelines in completing this section of your Charter:

- When you write to us we shall:
  - Acknowledge your letter or e-mail within ( ) days of receiving it.
  - Provide you with the name of the person handling your query.
  - Provide you with a reference number, where applicable.
  - Tell you when you can expect a full response.
  - Provide you with telephonic and e-mail contact details, for example, "You can call or e-mail Mr/Ms … on (telephone number and area code) or at (e-mail address) between ( ) and ( ) from Monday to Friday.
- If you have a complaint:
  - Tell us.
  - We shall apologise and try to put things right immediately.
  - If you are not happy with our response you can contact Mr/Ms … on … .
- Please tell us what you think of our services and standards and whether you think we are meeting them. WE would appreciate any comments and/or criticism you may have. Please contact :
  Mr/Ms ( ) at: Telephone (..) Fax: ( ) e-mail (..)

Finally, under the heading of standards, it is useful to give an undertaking to publish the results of the department's performance in a publication available to the public. The following statement may be helpful: "We shall publish the results of our performance against our standards for the year 2002 in (name of publication) on (date)."

STEP 6 –

YOUR RIGHTS

Here you must list the customer's rights. We suggest the following:
You have the right to all the *Batho Pele* principles, especially the following:

- Courteous behaviour at all times.
- Full information.
- Prompt and efficient service.
- Redress and an apology for lapses in our service.

The above may need to change, depending on the department and the nature of the services provided.

STEP 7

YOUR OBLIGATIONS

While it is critically important that the Service Delivery Charter should spell out the rights of customers, they need to be reminded that service delivery is a two-way street and that they have certain obligations as well. For example, you may wish to remind them that they too need to be courteous and civil and respect the dignity of officials they encounter.

SOME KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Once the Service Delivery Charter has been completed it should be widely distributed to customers and displayed within the department, especially at service points.

USEFUL REFERENCES

Visit the DPSA Website for White Papers, Acts, and other useful information :

http://www.dpsa.gov.za/

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- Presidential Strategic Leadership Development Programme;
- Improving Service Delivery: Senior Managers' Programme;
- Service Delivery Implementation: Operational Managers' Programme;
- Excellent Customer Service: A Training Programme for Frontline, Back Office and Support Personnel

Contact: SAMDI
Private bag X759
Pretoria
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Tel: (012) 314 7571
Fax: (012) 321 1810
Website: www.samdi.gov.za

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INTRODUCTION TO SETTING SERVICE STANDARDS

Why should one set service standards? The simple answer is, because if there are no standards, it is impossible to measure whether one is succeeding in one's endeavours or not. Standards help one to measure the extent to which one is meeting one's set objectives. And if the standards are made public, as they should be, they allow others to judge our performance. If one does not make one's standards public, then others are not able to assess one's performance and there is there real danger of being subjective and acting as both judge and jury in determining one's own progress and achievements. Success is empty, if it is not acknowledged by others.

Setting standards for service delivery is in fact a fairly meaningless exercise unless it goes hand-in-glove with transparency. The other side of the transparency coin is consultation. If one is prepared to nail one's colours to the mast, in terms of setting standards and making them public, one must accept that the public have the right to comment on those standards, especially if the standards relate to the services they receive.

Thus, in setting service standards for the Public Service, one must accept the need to consult the end-users on their expectations and needs. And this attitude of empathy with the predicament of one's customers epitomises the very spirit of *Batho Pele*. It is the very essence of respecting the dignity of the people we serve and acknowledging their rights to those services. At the core of *Batho Pele* lies a deep understanding of the fact that the needs and expectations of our customers give meaning to our lives as public servants. Our customers are the reason we exist as public servants, they are our *raison d'être*.
Prior to 1994 this mindset of placing the citizen firmly at the centre of government was entirely lacking in the Public Service. It is the mindset that has to drive the transformation of the Public Service. Without it, our transformation efforts will be little more than papering over the cracks of past lacks in service delivery and as futile as rearranging the deck chairs on the titanic would have been in attempting to change its course and avoid the fatal iceberg.

The analogy with the Titanic is quite apt because, if we are not prepared to embrace *Batho Pele* in the fullest sense by setting and publishing service standards, we shall not succeed in transforming government and the dream of a new, free and united south Africa will disappear under the waves of underdevelopment and poverty, just as surely as the Titanic sank to the bottom of the ocean.

Service providers have both a legal and a moral responsibility to deliver the best possible services to the public, within a realistic and feasible framework. It is a legal responsibility because it emanates from the mandates contained in the Regulatory Framework. The moral aspect of their responsibility is underpinned by the eight principles of *Batho Pele.*

In both senses they are accountable for the delivery of appropriate services and, being accountable, means that they need to demonstrate that they are providing the services required by the end-users, both in terms of quantity and quality. This means the services must be visible and measurable. The only way one can measure anything successfully is to have recognisable standards and by recognisable standards we mean standards that other people understand and accept.

Within the context of *Batho Pele* providing quality services means putting in place a service delivery system that meets the needs of the people it serves. Quality assurance is a way of ensuring that a system is as good as it can be within the constraints of available resources, both physical and human. While physical resources such as money, can impose very definite limitations on service delivery, there is no reason why the human element should be lacking in terms of the quality of services provided. And this is precisely what the *Batho Pele* initiative wishes to emphasise by “putting people first”. No matter how meagre our physical resources may be, there is no reason why we should not accord our customers their proper dignity and give them our very best efforts. In fact, the less we have to give in a material sense, the more we have to give of ourselves.

Batho Pele demands from each public servant that he or she gives of himself or herself in rendering services to their customers. Only in this way will we overcome the legacies of the past and shed the intolerable burdens of poverty and underdevelopment and rise to the challenge of being globally competitive.

The quality of our service delivery depends on the extent we are able to internalise the spirit of *Batho Pele.* Quality refers to characteristics associated with excellence. These characteristics are the criteria for evaluating the quality of a specific service. Quality is associated with the following dimensions:

- Appropriateness – refers to the service the individual/community needs and expects;
- Equity – citizens expect a fair share;
- Accessibility – means services are not compromised by undue limits of time or distance;
- Effectiveness – the intended benefit is felt by the community/individual;
- Acceptable – when they are provided to satisfy the reasonable expectations of the client, community, taxpayer;

- Efficiency – means that resources are not wasted on one service or client to the detriment of another.

In order to receive the quality and quantity of services described in the service standards, customers or end-users must understand that service delivery is a two-way street. In other words, they must be made aware of their responsibilities e.g. they must provide information accurately, explain their situations honestly and undertake to behave courteously and respectfully towards the service providers, etc.

The process of developing service standards is evolutionary. It is part of a continuous improvement strategy and standards should be continuously reviewed and revised, as service becomes more efficient.

Standards should be set in the name of the Minister or MEC. In practice officials propose standards and seek approval from relevant Ministers or MECs, who take final responsibility.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to explain the importance of setting standards as a means to improve service delivery and to provide you with a frame of reference for formulating service standards.

This guide will give you an understanding of:

- what a standard is;
- the key guidelines to follow when setting service standards;
- pre-requisites for setting standards;
- the levels of standards;
- the levels of standard formulation;
- the approaches to adopt when setting standards;
- the importance of setting service standards and measuring your performance against targets;

WHAT ARE SERVICE STANDARDS?

Before we consider Service Standards, we must understand what is meant by a standard. The dictionary defines a standard as “a basis of measurement” and “a definite level of excellence”. For example, a metre is an accepted unit of measure, so when someone says that the standard length of a particular object, say a soccer field is 75 metres, we make sure that when we build a soccer field it complies with the standard and is 75 metres long.

Another example of applying standards is to define a distinction in a subject at school or university as a mark of 75% or better. All students then know that in order to achieve a level of excellence they have to get a distinction, which means they must get a mark of at least 75%.

The above examples illustrate tow important characteristics of standards, namely that they must be:

- specific and measurable. The statement that a soccer field must be 75 metres in length and not 73 or 78 metres, is specific and it is measurable; and
- agreed by all users of the standard, for example, everyone must agree that a soccer field must be 75 metres in length and not 1000 yards or 2580 feet. If there is no agreement or consensus, the standard cannot be applied because the result of the measurement will not be accepted by all parties.

Other characteristics of standards are that they must be achievable, realistic and time-bound. In other words it is no use setting standards that cannot be achieved. For example, stating that in order to qualify for the South African Olympic team sprinters must record three times of under 9,5 seconds for the 100 metre sprint in the past three months. As no one has ever run the 100 metres in under 9,5 seconds, the standard would not be "achievable" and, in fact, it would not even be realistic, even if it is "time-bound".

A simple guide in setting standards is to remember that they must be S.M.A.R.T. In other words they must be:

- **S**pecific;
- **M**easurable;
- **A**chievable;
- **R**ealistic; and
- **T**ime-bound.

What we have said above about standards in general applies equally to Service Standards. Service standards are specific, measurable statements of the level of performance required and promised, containing characteristics associated with excellence. These characteristics are used for measuring or evaluating actual performance or service delivered. This enables customers to judge whether or not they are receiving the standard of service that was promised.

Fundamentally there are four basic categories or types of standards, namely:

- Quantity;
- Quality;

- Time; and
- Cost.

In other words: “How much has to be done or how many have to be produced, complying with what quality standard, for example SABS compliant or in accordance with the specifications of he Public Service Regulations, etc, by when and at what cost or within what budgetary constraints.

The eight *Batho Pele* principles are sometimes regarded as being values that describe a desired attitude to service delivery, rather than standards. While we would not want to take issue with this point of view, we prefer to regard the *Batho Pele* principles as a “Quality” standard. We believe one of the essential tests of good service delivery should be whether it complies with the eight principles of *Batho Pele*.

CRITERION

SERVICE DELIVERY CHARTER

The service standards should be published in the Service Delivery Charter (SDC) of the relevant department/component/institution (see guide on Service Delivery Charter). The SDC should contain the following information:

- The name and address of the department/component/institution.
- A description of the services to be provided, at what level the services will be provided and the perceived benefit to customers.
- A clear statement of the standards of service delivery customers can expect to receive, focusing on Quantity, Quality, Time and Costs.
- In addition to other possible "Quality" standards, a statement to the effect that the services will be rendered in accordance with the *Batho Pele* principles.
- Specific service delivery targets for key aspects of service such as timeliness, access and accuracy.
- The cost to the customer for receiving the service, if any.
- The complaint and redress mechanisms that customers may use if they feel that standards are not met.

PRE-REQUISITES FOR SETTING STANDARDS

To set standards successfully managers and staff must:

- believe that standards are desirable and useful – that they will improve service delivery;
- have the knowledge to develop standards;
- have the resources to develop, implement and maintain them;
- promote standards once established and educate potential customers; and
- recognise that standards must be "tailor-made" for the specific organisation for which they are intended.

The number of standards set will depend on the type and complexity of the service, e.g. customers applying for a passport will want to know how long they will have to wait to receive one. As a general rule it is better to focus on a few, hard-edged, deliverable standards for major aspects of the service than a large number covering trivial matters. For example, it would be better to set a quality standard related to the *Batho Pele* principles, as suggested above, than to proclaim that telephones must not ring more than three times before they are answered. If the attitude is right, the service will be delivered professionally, courteously, with care and empathy, even if under pressure, the telephone sometimes has to ring four or five times before it is answered.

SETTING SERVICE STANDARDS AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Setting service standards offers you the opportunity to learn a lot about yourself and your customers. The learning opportunities include finding out:

- What competencies you have.
- What competencies you need to acquire.
- What your department's shortcomings are.
- The strengths and weaknesses of the various team members.
- What is realistic and affordable in terms of service delivery.
- What being accountable means.
- How to deliver against customer expectations.
- How to move from "knowing" to "doing".
- Who your customers are and who are the most important customers.
- How you perceive your customers.
- How your customers perceive you.
- What your customers need and expect.
- What your capacity for service delivery is.

An honest appreciation of your own limitations is a fundamental requirement for improved service delivery, because once you know what you don't know, you can start acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to deliver against your customers' needs and expectations. And you will quickly learn how to implement action plans, because setting standards is tantamount to making a promise to deliver certain services and once you have made a promise you have to honour it.

SETTING STANDARDS

Meaningful to users/customers

Standards should be:

- responsive to customers' needs;
- meaningful to customers using the service;
- relate to things or aspects customers find important; and
- expressed in terms customers can understand.

Standards that matter most to customers should be set, not those that are easiest for the provider to set.

Comply with national standards

Service standards should comply with national and provincial norms and standards and relevant legislation. Two of the key elements in successful service delivery are uniformity and predictability and this can only be achieved if standards are aligned throughout the Public Service.

It would be counterproductive and in fact could destabilise the entire service delivery environment, if some departments set standards that had no bearing on or relation to national standards.

Based on consultation

If end-users are not consulted on the nature, quantity and quality of the services provided, there can be no guarantee that the services we provide do in fact meet the needs and expectations of our customers. The only sure way of providing appropriate and relevant services is to consult with all the stakeholders. This ensures their buy-in and entrenches the process of continual review and improvement of service delivery. For more information on consultation, please refer to the guide on "How to consult".

Attainable yet challenging

As mentioned earlier, standards should be S.M.A.R.T. This means that, among other things they must be **achievable** and **realistic**. However, we should be wary of setting them too low or making them too easy to achieve, as this could begin a downward spiral in the levels of service delivery, where staff do not feel challenged or get sufficient job satisfaction in delivering the relevant services. To obviate this scenario and encourage an evolutionary or incremental approach to lifting standards and improving service delivery, care should be taken to ensure that, while standards are attainable, they are nevertheless challenging.

Affordable

Service standards should be **attainable** or **achievable** and sustainable within available resources. This means standards must be aligned to the departmental strategic plan and objectives and there must be a provision for setting, implementing and monitoring standards in the departmental budget, which must be linked to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

It is pointless and counterproductive setting standards that will be too costly to implement. For example, if setting a standard to increase productivity means that we have to acquire an expensive, computer-based system to produce and monitor timesheets and, in addition, staff would need to be trained and acquire the discipline to use the programme, it may not be worth it. A simpler and more affordable standard may simply be to agree specific targets with each staff member and get him or her to submit a progress report each week.

As in most things relating to service delivery, the key is to keep things simple. Adhere to the KIS (Keep It Simple) principle, and you won't go far wrong.

Owned by managers

Service standards are an essential management tool for effective and efficient service delivery. Managers and front-line staff should take ownership of them and use them as a means to improve service standards on a continuous basis.

If management and staff do not take service standards seriously, customers will soon sense the lack of commitment to standards and the whole process will be counterproductive, resulting in a decline in the levels of service delivery and staff morale.

Successful departments are easy to spot; they are full of happy, motivated individuals who take their service standards seriously and who are proud of their achievements. These are the true ambassadors of *Batho Pele*.

Communicated/Published in the Service Delivery Charter

Once service standards have been agreed and set, they should be communicated as widely as possible, inside and outside the Public Service, especially to current and potential end-user communities.

A clearly worded Service Delivery Charter should be displayed at service delivery end points and staff should be trained and capable of answering questions related to the standards.

Performance measured and reported

The performance of the department/component/institution should be monitored against the set standards and surveys should be conducted at regular intervals to establish the level of customer satisfaction. The results of these monitoring exercises must be made known to customers.

In cases where service delivery has fallen short of the set standards, apologies should be offered to the end-users and plans implemented to review the standards and to upgrade the levels of service delivery, always in consultation with all the stakeholders.

Reviewed and updated

Standards should be progressive and reviewed annually, in the light of performance and of customers' views, with the aim of raising the standards to keep improving service delivery.

LEVELS AND TYPES OF STANDARDS

It may help operational managers and frontline staff, tasked with setting standards, to differentiate between the different levels and types of standards. There are two basic levels of standards, namely minimum and optimum standards. For our purposes these may be defined as follows:

- minimum standards represent the lowest acceptable levels of service delivery; and
- optimum standards represent the highest achievable levels of service delivery.

When starting out to improve service delivery, we must ensure that we set at least minimum standards and aim to progress these over time closer to the optimum standards. It is useful to understand the framework or parameters within which we need to set standards and helps in the consultation process by preventing people from having expectations that are either too high or too low.

Within the framework of minimum and optimum standards there are three different types or categories of standards, namely:

- Structure standards;
- Process standards; and
- Outcome standards.

The first two deal with standards set for back office re-engineering initiatives to improve service delivery, while the last one deals with the standards set for the actual services experienced by our customers. To achieve sustainable improved service delivery it is necessary to set standards in all three areas.

Structure standards

Structure standards refer to the support system required for public services to be delivered. They apply to the resources we use to deliver the services, for example human, financial and physical resources. These standards specify the level of resource provision needed to achieve a particular level of service delivery. They may refer to personnel, equipment, supplies, buildings, systems, finance, supplies, facilities, etc.

Process standards

Process standards specify the level of activities that must be undertaken to achieve the specified level of service delivery. Process standards describe how specific actions should be performed. Like structure standards, process standards pertain to back office re-engineering to ensure that a certain level of service delivery is achieved.

Outcome standards

These standards specify the end results of service delivery and relate to front office activities. Outcome standards relate to the objectives of service delivery and address the results of what we do with the things we have

Outcome standards dictate the levels of structure and process standards, because once we confirm what our customers need and expect, we will know what structures and processes need to be put in place to deliver against these standards.

It is very important to understand that we cannot simply consult with customers and agree on S.M.A.R.T. standards, without accepting that there are definite ramifications for the re-engineering of back office structures and processes to make sure that we can deliver what we have promised. And naturally, this all has direct bearing on affordability and we must ensure that the necessary budgets, linked to the MTEF, are put in place to make it all happen.

SCORECARD

The scorecard works as follows:

- **1st Quadrant:** In consultation with all stakeholders, especially customers, translate vision into service delivery objectives, with appropriate standards, to provide customer satisfaction.
- **2nd Quadrant:** Put structures, systems and processes in place, with relevant standards, to facilitate delivery against service delivery objectives.
- **3rd Quadrant:** Recruit/develop human resources with the relevant competencies to man the structures and drive the systems and processes to deliver the agreed services at the required levels.
- **4th Quadrant:** Provide the necessary financial resources within approved budgets, linked to the MTEF, to fund the process of service delivery.

Setting service standards is virtually the very first thing that has to happen. Without standards, the whole system of service delivery will quickly degenerate into a chaotic, uncoordinated set of actions that all tend to be ends in themselves, vying among one another for prominence and recognition, instead of important and related means to achieving the set service delivery ends.

What frequently happens is that, if service standards are not defined at the outset, financial considerations tend to dominate activities and what is affordable in the eyes of the bookkeepers and accountants is what gets done, rather than what is necessary in the eyes of the customers.

LEVELS OF STANDARDS

There are two levels at which standards are formulated, namely:

- a generic/provincial level, also referred to as the macro level; and
- a domain specific level, also referred to as the micro level.

For our purposes it is sufficient to note that, as has been said repeatedly, all standards must be formulated in consultation with all stakeholders and the domain specific standards, that is, the standards at institutional or component level must be aligned to the provincial or generic standards.

One cannot simply go out and negotiate standards with customers, ignoring the broader standards that have been set at departmental, provincial and even national levels. It is good to remember that the system of service delivery must be integrated. It is not a stand-alone system, but gets its direction from the broader strategic objectives of government at national and provincial levels.

OBJECTIVES

It should be clear by now that the main objective of setting service standards is to improve the quantity and quality of public services, against a backdrop of transformational priorities, and to address the growing demand for public services in which customers can have confidence and of which all public servants can be justly proud.

In more detail, the objectives of setting service standards are:

- To improve service delivery by promoting high quality, high value public services that are vital to the well being of citizens.
- To provide value for money to taxpayers by ensuring that services are cost efficient.
- To articulate the commitment of public servants to the transformation process by delivering a high standard of service.
- To meet the growing expectations of the public for more information and active consultative processes.
- To ensure integrated service delivery by aligning departmental/domain specific standards with national norms and standards.
- To ensure a progressive and evolutionary, incremental approach to the quality of public service delivery.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

Public Service Regulations

Part C 1 of the Public Service Regulations states that an executing authority shall establish and sustain a service delivery improvement programme for his/her department, including amongst others;

- standards for the main services to be provided.

Departments are expected to publish their service delivery standards in an annual report or statement so that citizens will know what they can expect. The reports should indicate how departments will meet each of their service standards.

While the executing authority is accountable for publishing standards in the service commitment charter, all employees have a responsibility to implement and continually strive to improve service delivery.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The links of setting service standards to *Batho Pele* are self-evident. The second principle deals with service standards and states that citizens should be told what level and quality of public services they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect. This comes straight after the principle that urges us to consult with customers on their needs and expectations, so there can be no doubt that, within the spirit of *Batho Pele* setting and communicating service standards is critically important.

At a deeper level perhaps, as mentioned in the introduction to this guide, setting and publishing service standards is fundamental to the transformation process to move the Public Service away from autocratic complacency to being accountable to the people for the services it delivers. It is this notion of accountability that sets the new Public Service apart from the old, pre-1994 dispensation. And accountability has its roots in openness and transparency regarding the nature and quality of services that people can expect.

If we truly wish to "put people first", we have an undeniable obligation to ask them what they need and then tell them what level of service delivery they can expect. And, as we have mentioned, if we respect their dignity, we have to keep our promises. This is what *Batho Pele* demands of all public servants.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following indicators will show how successful we have been in setting and communicating S.M.A.R.T. service standards:

- The publication of a Service Delivery Charter.
- Service delivery targets are met within the predetermined turnaround times.
- High levels of customer satisfaction are recorded.
- High morale and levels of job satisfaction among staff.
- Incremental improvement in service delivery standards.
- Increased participation involving external stakeholders.
- Service awards achieved for excellent service delivery.
- More effective implementation of action plans.
- Improved ratings in individual and team performance assessments.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes of successfully setting service standards will include:

- Public Service departments and institutions are aligned with the strategic direction of provincial and national government.
- Service standards progressively improve each year. As standards are met and achieved each year, new targets are set and improving service delivery becomes a continuous, progressive

process. Power is pushed out from the hub to the spokes of the wheel, so that better services are delivered on the ground.

- Citizens are well informed about the services that they should expect – when people have more information they have more control.
- Customers will have realistic expectations of services to be provided.
- There is balanced development within departments, coupled with the efficient and effective delivery of public services within available resources – optimal utilisation of resources.
- There is greater end-user participation in the service delivery system and a growing recognition that user's rights should be balanced by their responsibilities.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge: Unrealistic expectations on the part of customers

Customers may have unrealistic expectations regarding the nature and quality of services to be provided.

Response:

When consulting customers help them understand the bigger picture of the transformation process. Make them aware of the available resources and the long-term plans for improved service delivery. Guard against making excuses for poor service delivery. Set realistic standards and targets and get their buy-in to the process of incremental service delivery.

Challenge: Cost of developing standards

Setting standards cannot happen over night. Consultation takes time and resources. Certain communities may have very specific and unique needs. Sometimes it may be necessary to run costly pilot projects. Communicating the standards can be expensive and one may need to make use of media and communication experts to communicate effectively with all stakeholders.

Response:

Keep in close contact with end-user communities at all times. Get them involved in the process of developing and communicating standards. Consider the cost implications carefully and work all phases into the costing – from scanning the environment to communicating the standards. A good rule of thumb here is to rather do a few things well and progress slowly than to try and do it all at once.

APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING SERVICE STANDARDS

People sometimes have a problem when it comes to the actual development of standards. Often meetings with end-users will help to define their needs and expectations and appropriate standards will flow from this process. However, it may be useful to operational managers to understand that there are basically two approaches to developing service standards, namely an empirical approach and a normative approach.

For our purposes we may summarise these two approaches as follows: the empirical approach looks at what standards are currently regarded as good practice in similar circumstances and takes it lead from there, while the normative approach adopts a more theoretical stance and, using the benefit of “experts”, attempts to determine what standards should be set.

Often a combination of these two approaches works best. The best approach is possibly to engage end-users and other stakeholders in an open and frank debate, interrogating all relevant issues and interests with the guiding principle being that we want to do the best we can at the moment and improve it over time.

Whatever approach is used it is always important to ensure that the standards that are developed are S.M.A.R.T.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO SETTING SERVICE STANDARDS

STEP 1

KNOW YOUR BUSINESS

Knowing your business entails:

- knowing who your customers are;
- knowing who your stakeholders are;
- knowing what services or products you provide;
- knowing what standards and levels of service are currently being provided;
- knowing what partnerships with other services providers need to be established; and
- knowing what is affordable

Know your customers

Public service institutions are accountable to internal and external customers. There are basically three types or categories of external customers, namely:

- the direct customer, who receives the output of the service;
- the general public, which receives the collective benefit from government services; and
- the taxpayer, who pays for government services.

In addition there are the internal customers, namely other departments within the Public Service with which the department or union has relationships in order to deliver its services. For example, a Department of Health will need to establish relationships with Departments of Welfare (for frail care for the aged) and Education (for AIDS education).

Each of these categories of customers has different perspectives and expectations. Managers are faced with the challenge of responding to all these expectations when setting service standards and balancing their different needs within an integrated service delivery system. Thus they all need to be represented or involved in the consultation process when service standards are being debated and developed.

Know your stakeholders

Apart from the internal and external customers, there are other stakeholders who have direct and indirect interests in the service standards provided by a service delivery unit. Stakeholders can be divided into two groups, namely, Direct stakeholders and Pressure or Indirect stakeholders.

As the name suggest, direct stakeholders are individuals or groups of people who can have a direct and immediate effect on an organisation. The most important direct stakeholders are:

- All staff and employees.
- All customers.

- National departments, in the case of provincial departments.
- The particular departmental structures in the case of units/components/institutions within departments.
- Shareholders and investors.

While the indirect stakeholders may not be able to have a direct impact on the organisation's service delivery, they are able to bring pressure to bear on the organisation. The main pressure or indirect stakeholders are:

- Other departments/institutions/components in government at a national and provincial level.
- Labour unions.
- Special interest groups and pressure groups, such as environmental organisations, etc.
- NGOs and CBOs.
- Community leaders.
- Local government structures.
- Schools and institutions of higher learning.

All of these stakeholder groups should be included in the consultation process when setting standards.

Know your services

A service is provided every time a customer deals with a public service department or component, be it receiving a social grant, issuing a birth, marriage or death certificate, providing identity documents and passports, granting a housing subsidy, being attended to at a hospital or clinic, attending school or simply responding to a customer's queries in face-to-face situations or telephonically or in writing, etc. In all cases there is some form of interaction or transaction between the service provider and the customer.

Always remember that customers have the right to services and to a certain quality standard. For example, they have a right to the quality treatment specified by the *Batho Pele* principles and they have a right to be addressed in one of the official languages that they can understand.

The key to identifying your services is to identify the various interactions or transactions you have with the public. The list of these is the list of services you provide and shows you where you should develop service standards.

When defining your services, you should bear in mind that, as mentioned above, public service departments also provide services to their own staff, to management and to other public service departments. The same service standards should generally apply internally and externally, otherwise one could be accused of discrimination.

Know what standards and levels of service are currently being provided

Before one is able to develop and set new service standards, one needs to know what the current levels of service delivery are. To determine you current level of service delivery, appropriate performance measurement and monitoring systems must be employed, for example, Peer Review, Self Assessment and customer surveys by way of discussion forums, focus groups and postal surveys. (See guides on Peer Review, Self-Assessment and How to consult.)

Setting service delivery standards may involve re-engineering certain aspects of your service delivery system or machinery, such as the systems and processes employed to deliver the services. This may involve costs and could take time to implement, however it can produce significant savings in the long term.

Know what partnerships with other service providers need to be established

Often public services are or have to be delivered in partnership with other public service departments or agencies from the private sector. The objectives of identifying partnerships are to increase the efficiency of service delivery and to provide more comprehensive services to customers. Where such joint or shared delivery exists, you will want to arrive at mutually agreed service standards.

The best and most effective way of doing this is to involve the “partners” in the whole process of setting service standards, especially when consulting with customers and other stakeholders.

Know what is affordable

Before consulting with customers on improving service delivery, it is useful to know both the costs of existing service levels and the major cost drivers. This knowledge will enable you to provide a reasoned response when consulting with your customer, but remember, as we said under the Balanced Scorecard above, financial considerations should not dominate the process of service delivery and setting service standards. In other words, the tail should not wag the dog.

However, having said that, financial constraints are clearly important and one has to operate within them. As suggested previously, one needs to plan over a longer period to achieve optimum standards and grow standards incrementally over a period of years. Planning must be integrated and linked to the MTEF.

STEP 2

CONSULT WITH YOUR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

This is perhaps the most important or critical step in setting service standards and you will find it useful to refer to the guide on How to Consult.

The main stakeholder groups have been identified above under “Know your stakeholders” and full details on how to consult are provided in the guide on consultation. Here we shall restrict our comments to a few remarks on the most important aspects of consultation to set service standards.

All stakeholders must be invited to participate in the consultation process and those who decline must be kept informed of the progress and outcomes at all times. The most important stakeholders to consult in setting service standards are:

- Customers;
- Staff;
- Partners; and
- Labour.

Consulting with customers

Consult customers to find out what is important, how satisfied they are with current service delivery, what is working well and what needs to be improved. By consulting customers about the services they receive, making them aware of the ramifications and costs of delivering those services and inviting them to suggest service delivery standards and approaches, it will be much easier to match their expectations with what is achievable and affordable.

Consulting customers is important for two main reasons:

- it puts you in touch with what actually matters to customers; and
- it allows you to modify unrealistic expectations.

As mentioned in the guide on consulting, customer satisfaction can be assessed in various ways, including by:

- providing suggestions boxes;
- monitoring the volume and the nature of complaints;
- conducting surveys;
- holding focus groups; and
- appointing customers to boards, for example, a hospital board; etc.

Consult with your front-line staff

Consult with you front-line staff to find out how they think services can be improved within existing resource levels. They interact with customers on a daily basis at the point of service delivery and are well positioned to generate innovative ideas for improving service delivery and setting service standards based on customer needs. Through open, honest consultations, such suggestions from staff can be aired and examined. In addition, consulting staff has the advantage of gaining their commitment and buy-in to any new processes and to the service standards.

Front-line staff should see their jobs as providing quality service to clients – service standards must enable them to do so.

Consulting with Partners

Clearly, where partners are part of the service delivery chain, they must be consulted on the standards of service delivery expected from them

Consulting with Labour

It is very important to ensure that organised labour buys in to the service standards to prevent later disputes.

STEP 3

SET CUSTOMER-SENSITIVE SERVICE STANDARDS

The statement of standards, as contained in the Service Delivery Charter, is the hub around which all the other elements of service delivery revolve.

Earlier in this guide we mentioned that the basic standards are those of:

- time;
- quantity;
- quality; and
- cost.

We strongly recommend that operational managers and frontline staff stick to these basic standards. This will prevent confusion and keep things simple and ensure that the standards are easy to monitor.

Research has shown that customers regard the following factors as critical to good service:

- **Responsiveness** – how quickly and effectively one is able to respond to a customer's request or enquiry – this can normally be accommodated with a time standard, for example, "we shall process passport applications within three weeks" provided one has competent and friendly staff dealing with the matter (see Step 4 below). Punctuality is also a time standard.

- **Competence** – the level of expertise of frontline staff – this can be set in terms of relevant competencies. Competencies are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes and can be measured against specific competency profiles Competence is a quality standard as it deals with the quality of staff. (See also Step 4, below.)
- **Ease of access** – this is part of wayfinding and signage (see guide on Wayfinding and Signage) and again, this is a quality standard.
- **Courtesy** – is part of *Batho Pele* and the whole of *Batho Pele* may be regarded as a system that deals with the quality of services. Thus, courtesy is a quality standard.
- good communication – may be one of the "competencies" required (see above). It is a quality standard, but can be a quantity standard, if for example, we are required to communicate specific information twice a week or four times a year, etc.
- **Credibility** – compliance with acknowledged quality standards such as ISO 9002 or SABS requirements promote the credibility of an organisation and/or service.
- **Reliability and accuracy** – These elements are often a combination of quality and quantity standards. For example, an internal standard requiring 70% accuracy in performing a certain task would be a standard of quality, but having to do something, say every week, which would be quantity standard, would inspire a sense of reliability.
- **Security** – if to provide a secure environment for customers we have to ensure that three security guards patrol the area every 15 minutes, from six in the morning to six at night, this would be a quantity standard, whereas, from the customer's point of view, a secure environment would add to the quality of the service he or she experiences.
- **Appearance of staff** – dress codes can be clearly spelled out. This and personal hygiene are quality standards.
- **User friendly environments** – this normally includes things such as good wayfinding and signage systems, secure environments, competent staff, responsiveness, punctuality, etc, which have been dealt with above. This is basically a quality standard from the customer's point of view, but to create it, we shall have to set standards of time and quantity as well. For example, the time taken to respond to customers' requests and the number of files/dockets that have to be processed each day (quantity standard) to be able to deliver against this time standard. Thus time and quantity standards can combine to provide a quality standard, such as a user-friendly environment.

STEP 4

EMPOWER AND TRAIN STAFF

Once the standards have been agreed and approved by all concerned, one needs to train staff, especially the frontline staff to deliver against these standards.

Staff competencies need to be assessed against the relevant competency profiles and appropriate development plans put in place or new staff recruited to meet the service delivery commitments of the department.

Staff cannot be responsive to customers, if they are overly restricted by rules and regulations, if the information they need in order to deliver good services is not readily available, or if they are not encouraged to be innovative and to take some measured risks.

STEP 5

COMMUNICATE SERVICE STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE TO CUSTOMERS

Every effort should be made to ensure that all customers are aware of the services and standards provided by a service delivery unit. The best way of doing this is to produce a Service Delivery Charter for the unit/department and display it at all service delivery points. It can also be mailed to customers through the post or electronically and placed in local newspapers.

Departments/units may also wish to produce posters, featuring their services and standards, for display in high customer traffic areas. The services of public relations and/or communication experts may be used to help with the communication of service standards, although this may prove expensive. However, in instances where end-users need to be educated in a particular new service and how to apply for it, for example, how the housing subsidy system works, it is strongly advised that the services of professional be used to effect these communications optimally.

If the services of professional public relations/communication people are used, they will normally help you prepare a communication plan, containing a variety of communication tactics, that will ensure maximum exposure, with the added benefit of free editorial exposure in the media, which will greatly enhance the credibility of the unit/department.

STEP 6

MANAGE SERVICE STANDARDS AND DEVELOP A SERVICE DELIVERY IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Operational managers should be actively involved in managing quality service delivery, including service standards. The good management of service standards includes:

- implementing your standards;
- measuring your performance against your standards;
- striving for continuous improvement; and
- developing a service delivery improvement plan.

Implementing service standards

Establishing service standards and making them an integral part of management will take time. Rather than wait until perfect and complete standards have been developed, standards should be developed progressively. We have recommended this incremental approach to setting service standards several times in this guide. Initially standards may be incomplete or embryonic in some aspects, as you gain experience you can improve these standards and extend the range of services they cover.

Measure performance

If the standards that have been set are S.M.A.R.T. as suggested, it will be relatively easy to measure performance against these standards. Performance against standards should be measured and monitored constantly. Measurement should identify any problem areas for which solutions can be found.

Continually improve service delivery

As standards are set and implemented and performance against them measured, shortfalls in performance and opportunities for improving service delivery will become evident. As a result it will be possible to develop and implement a service delivery improvement plan, linked to strategic objectives. Continuous improvement will allow you to set higher service standards and maximise client satisfaction.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The following summary covers the key considerations in setting service standards:

- Service standards should be viewed as a means to achieving customer satisfaction, not as an end in themselves.
- Service standards must be S.M.A.R.T.

- Service standards should target those service features that are most important to the customers, based on consultation with customers.
- Customer expectations need to be reviewed regularly as needs and perceptions change.
- Communicating service standards to customers is very important.
- Service standards must be supported by performance measurement and continuous improvement systems.

USEFUL REFERENCES

Batho Pele White Paper

Public Service Regulations

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INTRODUCTION TO HOW TO CONSULT

Consultation is one way of recognising the dignity of the person or persons with whom you consult. It demonstrates that you respect them and their needs and that you are interested in improving their circumstances.

And this is what the true meaning of *Batho Pele* is all about – respecting the dignity of the end-users. In the past, before 1994, the attitude to public service delivery was high handed and patronising, stemming from the belief that the authorities knew what services ought to be provided. There was little or no understanding of or concern for the needs and circumstances of the end-users.

The customer is "king"

Once the end-users are perceived as customers the whole picture changes. The customer, after all is always "king" and consultation becomes an imperative.
Consultation informs and legitimises decisions about what services should be provided and how they should be delivered. It clarifies customer expectations and fosters co-operation. It focuses the attention of management and staff on customer concerns and it helps to set priorities.

Consultation leads to sound planning and decision making

Consultation is integral to modern management and leads to sound planning and decision making. To achieve customer satisfaction, key stakeholders, especially customers, should be consulted in the early stages of strategic planning so that services are more responsive to their needs and expectations.

Consultation ensures that services remain relevant and realistic standards are set

All public service departments should consult their customers at least annually, when strategic plans are reviewed and evaluated and progress is monitored. Some departments may need to consult customers more often, particularly when services are undergoing change or when it is important to get opinions on current service levels. This will assure that services remain relevant and that realistic standards are maintained.

Apart from entrenching the spirit of *Batho Pele* and helping to assure customer satisfaction, consultation is undertaken for the following reasons:

- where there is genuine flexibility of an outcome and one needs to confirm the desired result;
- to allow for participative decision making;
- where government has needs to acquire more information on a particular issue; and
- where government wants to assess the impact of a possible decision.

WHY IS CONSULTATION IMPORTANT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE?

One may well ask why one should bother to ask one's customers what they want or think of the services they receive. In the private sector the answer is usually obvious – if customers are dissatisfied with the service they get, they go elsewhere. The business environment in the private sector is very competitive and there are usually several service providers to choose from. But the situation is different in the public sector. Customers often have little or no choice in service provider. For example, if one needs a passport or identity document, it can only be provided by the Department of Home Affairs. We cannot choose who to go to for our travel or identity documents.

So, if choice is limited and customers have to use us, why consult? One might answer, quite correctly, because it makes you a better manager.

But there are basically three key reasons to consult, namely:

- it helps you to plan, prioritise and deliver better services;
- it creates a working partnership with your customers; and
  it entrenches

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to point you in the right direction to start the consultation process

This guide is designed to point you in the right direction and help you get started on the path effective service delivery through consultation. It does not set out to debate the philosophy behind consultation and involving customers in the delivery of public services. Its intention is rather to provide some practical guidance on translating some of the principles of public service delivery into practice.

This guide:

- defines what consultation is and highlights why consultation is important;
- explains how consultation can be used as a learning opportunity;
- provides guidelines and best practices regarding the process of consultation;
- outlines the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of consultation;
- illustrates the links to legislation and the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- suggests some of the possible challenges of consultation and responses to these;
- introduces some of the more commonly-used ways of consulting users;
- sets out some of the key issues to think about when considering methods of consultation;
- explains the difference between qualitative and quantitative standards of service delivery;
- provides a step-by-step guide on how to consult;
- offers some key considerations to think about during the process of consulting;
- refers you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

WHAT IS CONSULTATION?

For the purposes of this guide, consultation can be defined as a two-way process whereby customers are invited to share their views on their needs and expectations regarding a particular department's services and these perceptions are discussed and taken into account in planning service delivery.

Consultation is not merely asking customers for their views, it involves listening and serious consideration of customers' perceptions. It is, as we have said, a two-way street.

It is a means of establishing service delivery priorities objectively.

CONSULTATION AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Consulting one's customers provides one of the best opportunities of

Consultation affords an opportunity to learn about oneself and one's own organisation

demonstrating one's concern for their well-being and winning their support and co-operation. But more than this, it is a wonderful opportunity to learn, not only about one's customers, but especially about oneself and one's own organisation.

In particular, it offers the following learning

- understanding the circumstances of your customers
- knowing what your customers need and expect;
- understanding one's own shortcomings;
- understanding one's own limitations;
- realising what is realistic and "doable" and what is not; and
- coming to a deeper understanding of *Batho Pele* or putting "people first".

It would be foolhardy to assume that your services are perfect. If you do not receive any complaints, it may well mean that customers do not know how to complain, cannot be bothered, or think that their views would not be taken seriously. The best way to find out whether your services meet customers' needs is to ask them.

Complaints may well increase as a result of consultation, but you should regard this as a positive. If customers who are unhappy with the service suffer in silence, it does not allow you the opportunity to improve. Use complaints to improve your systems and services, it is one of the cheapest ways to learn from your customers.

Use consultation as a learning opportunity to improve service delivery

Whatever response one gets from customers and other stakeholders during the consultation process will provide useful information. Even no response is an answer and tells one something about oneself, one's approach and the need to try harder. Remember, one could be investing considerable time, effort and other resources, including money, to provide a service that the end-users do not actually want, so use consultation as a learning opportunity to improve service delivery.

Do not assume that you will get agreement or consensus from all. customers, as this is highly unlikely. Everyone has different perceptions and consultation means discussion and negotiation and taking everyone's point of view into account. The department or component or institution will make the final decision, but this will be done from a better, more informed understanding of the issues and customers' views, if you have consulted first

GUIDELINES FOR CONSULTATION

Consultation needs to be planned and its effectiveness monitored

If consultation is to work for you and your customers, it needs to be planned and its effectiveness monitored. You will have a good chance of success if you follow these relatively broad guidelines:

- Get buy-in and commitment.
- Make consultation part of the integrated planning process.
- Ensure that consultation is regular and systematic.
- Be clear and give customers relevant information.
- Be sensitive and maintain confidentiality.
- Be realistic and ensure that the process is manageable.
- Make sure customers can access the consultation process.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the consultation process.
- Balance expectations with resources.
- Learn from others.

We shall deal with each of these guidelines in turn.

Get buy-in and commitment

Commitment from staff is central to effective consultation

Ensure that all staff are fully informed on the need for consultation and that they understand the issues involved and se it as a positive opportunity to improve service delivery. Commitment from all staff is central to effective consultation. It is a challenge that they should relish. In addition to understanding why it is important to talk to customers, staff must be prepared to respond to what is learnt and to make changes – even if what people want requires changes in working methods, culture or operation. To this end public service departments are encouraged to exercise innovation and creativity, using a minimum set of prescriptions, rules and regulations when delivering services – the shift is from a preoccupation with administration to effective and efficient service delivery.

Consultation and integrated planning

Build consultation into your planning cycle

Make consultation an integral part of the way your department works. Build it into your management systems and planning cycle so that service delivery improvement becomes a continuous cycle. Develop a consultation strategy to involve people as early on in your planning process as possible – once you've started planning services it will be much more difficult to stop or change things. It is the ideal way to weave the spirit of *Bath Pele* into your department's service delivery.

Consultation must be regular and systematic.

All public service departments should consult their customers at least annually, but many will need to do so far more often, particularly when services are undergoing change. The rule of thumb is that consultation should take place as often as it is thought that new information will emanate from the process. However, it should happen at least once a year, when the department's strategic plan is reviewed and evaluated, so that progress can be monitored and service levels improved.

Be clear and give customers relevant information

Give people information they need to make informed comments

Set clear objectives for consultation and make sure that these are clear to those you are consulting. Specify the areas you have the authority to consult on and what you cannot consult on. Give people the information they need in plain language to enable them to make informed comments. Customers may not be aware of all the issues, but it does not usually take them long to learn.

Be sensitive and maintain confidentiality

Ensure confidentiality, courtesy and anonymity wherever you can

In some areas such as health services or police services customers could be concerned about criticising services they consider as being essential. Ensure confidentiality, courtesy and anonymity wherever you can and make it clear that you welcome feedback, both positive and negative. Reassure customers that they will not be victimised or intimidated as a result of participating in the consultation process.

Be realistic and ensure that the process is manageable

Set realistic targets – be sure the process is manageable

Set realistic targets and be confident that the process is manageable. Do not put pressure on customers to get involved and do not expect too much from them. Consultation may mean reaching a wide range of people, so be realistic about how much time is available. Be realistic about the skills and resources that are available to carry out the process effectively. Be aware that the results obtained may be very different from those expected – do not be discouraged if this happens. Your credibility with customers will increase if you deal with the more difficult and unexpected results openly and honestly, rather than simply making the changes that are easiest for you.

Be prepared and willing to re-organise and re-structure so that the spirit of customer service is put into practice. Often excellent consultative processes are simply a waste of time because the organisation refuses to be flexible and change its structures to accommodate customers' views. This leads to a loss of credibility and customers will tend not to take the process seriously in the future.

Accessibility

It is essential that consultation should include the views of historically disadvantage communities and those who have previously been denied access to public services. Consider the illiterate and disabled and those living in remote rural areas and devise means to ensure that they all have the opportunity to participate in the consultation process. This may involve additional time and resources, but the results of consultation can easily be skewed by consulting only those groups or individuals that can be reached easily.

Be sure that the consultation process is accessible to all groups

The method or methods adopted during consultation must suit the characteristics of the customers. Whatever the method, consultation must cover the entire range of existing and potential customers and stakeholders. Reaching different groups of people increases the range of views received. Think about the needs of different groups and identify ways of making it easy for them to get involved.

Remember that some of those you wish to consult may be busy people. They may well be interested in participating, but do not have the time to get involved. Make it easy for people to participate. Think of ways to encourage participation by stakeholders.

Representivity

The sample must be representative of different groups

It would be a tedious and almost impossible task to consult with each and every stakeholder, but you can make sure that the sample you consult with is representative of all the different groups of people served by your department or institution.

Balance expectations with resources.

There should be a balance between what citizens want and what departments can afford

There should be a balance between what citizens want and what national and provincial departments can realistically afford – and have the resources and capacity to deliver. If customers are allowed to have unrealistic expectations, they will be disappointed and will not appreciate the services provided for them.

It is a good idea to adopt an incremental approach to service standards and explain to customers that the quantity and quality of services will be increase steadily over time, of course, always in consultation with them. This builds them into the planning process and reassures them that their needs and circumstances are taken seriously. (See also the guide on Setting Service Standards.)

Learn from others

Talk to other public service departments and institutions and learn from their experiences: What have they done? How did it work? What tips do they have? What pitfalls should you avoid? They may also have useful views on your services.

Consider using a simple peer-review to evaluate your consultation process. (Refer to the guide on Peer Review)

THE OBJECTIVE OF CONSULTATION

The main objective of consultation is to put the citizen at the centre of service delivery

The main objective of consultation is to place the citizen at the centre of service delivery. This speaks directly to the spirit of *Batho Pele*. By adopting a citizen-orientated approach to service delivery one is genuinely putting “people first” and ensuring that the services one delivers will address the needs of the people.

There is no clearer evidence of respecting the dignity of others than to ask them for their views on matters that concern them. It is the very opposite of the patronising approach so frequently adopted in the past which assumed that the authorities knew what was best for he people and so did not need to consult with them on their needs.

Other, secondary objectives of consulting are to:

- focus the attention of management and staff on customer concerns;
- improve work structures, processes and systems;
- use resources efficiently and effectively;
- understand customers better;
- inform citizens of their rights and obligations;
- ensure realistic expectations and service standards;
- enhance communications; and

  improve the image of the public service.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The *Batho Pele* White Paper states that all national and provincial departments must regularly and systematically consult their users, not only about the services currently provided, but also about the provision of new basic services to those who lack them.

The results of the consultation process must be reported to the relevant Minister/MEC/executing authority and the relevant Portfolio Committee and they must be made public, for example, by publishing them in the media.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

The principles in the Constitution that govern public administration stipulate that the public service must be accessible and responsive to people's needs. One of the best ways of making this happen is to consult with the consumers of services, namely, the customers of the public service.

The Public Service Regulations reinforce this message and urge executing authorities and service providers in government to consult with end-users and be innovative in responding to their needs. A sure way of finding innovative responses to customers' needs is to involve them in the process of service provision. Customers will often come up with new and effective ways of providing services.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

It will be evident that a service provider is consulting effectively with stakeholders if:

- services are delivered in line with customer needs and expectations;
- there are fewer complaints from customers about service standards and delivery;
- there is full participation be all sectors of the community in the consultation process;
- service standards improve from year to year;
- regular customer opinion surveys are conducted;
- there is evidence of suggestion boxes and questionnaires at

service points; and

- information desks are used to solicit customer opinions.

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

If consultation is effective, it will have the following outcomes

- There will be a balance or compromise between what citizens want and what national and provincial departments can realistically afford and have the capacity to deliver.
- Customers will be happy or at least satisfied with the quality and quantity of service delivery.
- Improved and improving service delivery.
- Above all, there will be mutual respect between service provider and customer and this is the ultimate outcome of service delivery driven by the spirit of *Batho Pele*.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge:
Methods on consultation may be inappropriate/inaccessible to users.

Response:

The method for the consultation process must suit the customers concerned

The method or methods adopted to involve customers in the consultation process must be chosen to suit the characteristics of the customers concerned. For example, it is pointless using written questionnaires to obtain the views of a community that has a high level of illiteracy or where the postal services are unreliable, especially if a large percentage of the community is expected to respond to the questionnaire.

Whatever methods are adopted, consultation must cover the entire spectrum of existing and potential customers. It is absolutely essential that consultation includes the views of those who have been previously denied access to public services.

Challenge:
Customers may have reservations/inhibitions about airing their views

Exercise sensitivity during the consultation process

Response:
The consultation process should be undertaken sensitively, for example, people should not be asked to reveal unnecessary personal

information and they should be able to give their views anonymously if they so wish. Interviewers and facilitators must be trained to help customers feel at ease and encourage them to participate freely and honestly.

Challenge:
Customers may be inclined to express unrealistic expectations or to make unrealistic demands on government.

Response:

Customers must be informed of what is realistic

While the consultation must be fair, frank and open, it must also be firm and it must be made clear to customers what is reasonable and what is beyond the capacity of government to deliver. As mentioned before, a good approach is to engage customers in a plan to improve service standards incrementally over time. The idea is to work with customers in a spirit of co-operation and not to have confrontational debates and discussions.

Challenge:
The consultation process may tend to drag on and hamper or even delay service delivery.

Response:

Good management - be Frank, be Fair, and be Firm

As mentioned above, while every effort must be made to consult sensitively, one must be firm. If customers are seen to be dragging the process out unnecessarily, they must be encouraged to reach a conclusion. The three Fs of good management are a useful rule in situations like this, namely, be Frank, be Fair and be Firm.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

When consulting stakeholders always bear in mind that the ultimate objective is to help you improve the levels of services you provide to customers. A useful mindset for consultation is that you need them more than they need you.

As is the case with all management interventions and processes to help improve service delivery, consultation needs to be:

- planned;
- implemented; and

- monitored.

For effective consultation, the following questions need to be addressed during these three phases:

Planning ("knowing"):

- What do I want to achieve?
- What do I want to know?
- Whom do I need to consult?
- What approach or methodology is best suited to my needs?
- What human, financial and other resources do I need?
- What resources do I have?
- What is the "gap"?
- How much time do I have?
- What are my priorities?

Implementation ("doing"):

- Was my planning accurate and comprehensive?
- Was I able to implement my plan?
- What needs to be changed?
- What form of analysis (of the results) is most suitable?
- What are my findings?

Monitoring:

- Are my findings valid?
- Will these findings help to improve service delivery?
- What must be reported and to whom?

STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL CONSULTATION

STEP 1

GETTING STARTED

Set clear objectives

For consultation to be successful it must be focused and directed and for this to happen, you should have very clear objectives**.**

For example, when consulting on setting service standards, your main objective will clearly be to improve service delivery. However, this is the desired outcome of the consultation process rather than a specific objective. In fact, the desired outcome of virtually all public service consultation will be improved service delivery.

Set clear objectives in line with the desired outcome

By setting specific objectives, in line with the desired outcome, you will be able to steer the consultation process towards this outcome.
The specific issues that you will be consulting on will relate to the quality and quantity of the services provided by your department/component/institution. So you will need to formulate questions around these issues, for example:

- "What services do you (the customer) need that you are not getting now?"
- "What problems do you (the customer) have with the quality of current service delivery?"
- "How can we improve the quality of our service delivery?"
- "What service standards do you think would be acceptable?"
- "Are you (the customer) able to access our services easily?"
- "Are our staff knowledgeable, helpful and friendly?'
- "Do you have to stand in long queues?
- "For how long do you have to queue before you are served?"
- "Is the signage to service points helpful and easy to understand (see guide on Wayfinding and signage)?"
- "How can we make your life easier?"
- "How often do you use our services?"

Know you business – be familiar with aspects of service delivery

In order to formulate useful and meaningful questions, you must know your business. You must be familiar with every aspect of your unit's service delivery and with the sort of problems encountered in the past.

Before you even think of contacting stakeholders to ask them for their opinions on the current levels of service delivery, make sure that you have a very clear idea of what it is you wish to discuss and what you expect to learn from the consultation. Set clear objectives for the consultation process right from the start.

Set realistic targets in terms of what you can afford and your capacity to deliver

Another important thing that you have to bear in mind when formulating questions is not to raise customers' expectations unrealistically. Make sure you do not give them the impression that they can have anything they want or that they can have five-star service delivery in terms of first world standards, when that is not affordable or achievable in the short to medium term. Be realistic in terms of what you can afford and in terms of your capacity to deliver.

The above questions relate to consulting in order to set service standards, rather than to how to consult, which is the topic of this guide. For more detailed information on how to set service standards please refer to the guide on setting service standards.

"What I hope to achieve" normally relates to a broad, overall objective or outcome, such as improved service delivery in the case of setting service standards. Answers to "What I need to know" will help us define specific objectives such as specific service standards.

It may seem like stating the obvious, but it is a helpful discipline to identify from the outset what exactly it is that you want to know. This usually falls into three categories:

- Things I have to know.
- Things it would be helpful to know.
- Things it would be interesting to know.

Answers to these questions will help you direct and focus the consultation process and not waste time and resources on largely irrelevant discussions. However, one should be careful not to be too rigid as you may find that there are things your customers wish to tell you that you had not thought of asking them and which could be very helpful in helping you to improve the consultation process and achieve your objectives.

Setting clear objectives is important as it sets the tone for the rest of the consultation process

Setting clear objectives is critically important as it sets the tone for the rest of the consultation process. Care should be taken to ensure that objectives do not refer to vague outcomes, but rather to tangible and measurable results of the consultation process. For example, if one were consulting to set service standards, the objective would be to come up with standards that are S.M.A.R.T., which, as we all know, stands for standards that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound.

If care is taken to ensure that one has specific and measurable objectives the whole consultation process will be simplified and it will be so much easier to evaluate and monitor progress

Apart from the specific objectives, there are general objectives that apply to all consultation processes. These objectives relate to effective consultation.

In this sense, what I hope to achieve is:

- co-operation and buy-in to the consultation process by all participants and stakeholders; and
- a constructive consultation process that yields good and reliable information.

And what I need to know might be:

- How can I get my customers' buy-in and co-operation to the consultation process?
- How can I ensure that the consultation process is constructive so that I am able to get good information? And
- What do I need to do to help my customers relax and participate freely and honestly in the consultation process?
- How will I prevent disputes and how will I resolve them if they do arise?

In relation to the last question, it is a very good idea to establish the ground rules of the consultation process with customers right at the outset. Agree with them what consensus means, how disputes will be handled and who will arbitrate if consensus cannot be achieved.

Some people have found that it is very useful to get all the key stakeholders to sign a protocol, which spells out the ground rules of the consultation process and stipulates how people are expected to behave. Then, when or if things go wrong, one can simply revisit the protocol. This can help to prevent avoid unpleasant situations from arising, as once the protocol has been signed by all key stakeholders, one has a basis for getting on with the job at hand without unnecessary interruptions and stoppages.

Implant the values of Batho Pele into your consultation process

The values of *Batho Pele* and the principles of *courtesy, information* and *openness and transparency* will be very helpful and relevant here and will ensure that the spirit of *Batho Pele* informs the whole consultation process

A good principle in working through these questions is to try to put yourself in your customers' shoes. Try to imagine what it is like to be one of your customers and how you would respond to consultation. Go through the process internally, using staff who will be involved in the process, and ask the sorts of questions as listed above for setting service standard objectives. Write down the responses. Discuss these responses among yourselves and then plan your consultation process.

Apart from being a very good way of preparing for the consultation process, this role-play will help to get buy-in and commitment to the process from your staff.

STEP 2

WHOM DO I NEED TO CONSULT?

Once the objectives have been set, it is necessary to define the target audience

Once the objectives of the consultation process have been set, it will be necessary to define the target audience of the consultation exercise very carefully. For example, if the purpose or objective of the consultation process is to establish whether people in rural areas are able to access your services satisfactorily, there will be little or no need to consult with customers in urban areas.

Thus the main question to ask here is:

- Whom should I consult and what are their responses likely to be?

Again, it is a good idea to role-play this question internally to prepare for the consultation process.
Make sure you define your stakeholders, including customers,

carefully, not overlooking any group or individual and taking special care to identify the following categories, of customers, among others:

- rural and urban;
- young and old;
- educated and uneducated or literate and semi-literate; and
- historically marginalised customers.

These different categories of customers might have very different needs and expectations and will certainly need very different approaches to the consultation process.

For example, semi-literate or illiterate customers will not be able to respond effectively to a postal survey unless special arrangements are made to provide interpreters to help them respond to the questions. The same may apply to children and old people. The elderly may not be able to attend focus group discussions or they may expect you to come to them rather than the other way around. The strategies employed to help children co-operate and feel at home and comfortable in the consultation process will be very different from those employed with adults.

Certain stakeholders will tend to be more important, depending on the nature of the issues being discussed. For example labour unions will tend to be more relevant to consultation on conditions of service and employment, while certain pressure groups may be more interested in issues affecting the environment and certain CBOs and NGOs will need to be involved in matters concerning the communities in which they operate.

The following are examples of issues that affect specific stakeholder groups and may be used as a guide to assist in deciding who should be consulted on certain issues:

- issues that directly affect a significant group in the community, for example the care for AIDS orphans or school entry levels
- a proposal that will significantly affect the rights and entitlements of community members;
- an issue that directly and significantly affects the natural environment;
- issues on which a significant number of people, or particular groups, are likely to have strong views;

- issues that are likely to affect the quality of life of citizens; and
- issues on which government has insufficient information to make a decision.

Talk to front-line staff
As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to involve staff in planning for consultation. Front-line staff are at the coalface of service delivery. They are close to your customers and should be well positioned to express their views on certain issues and on how to deal with customers in the consultation process. Make sure that they and their input is not overlooked when deciding who should be consulted.

STEP 3

WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH?
After defining one’s objectives and deciding who should be consulted, the question that needs to be addressed is: What approach is most likely to give me the best results, one-on-one interviews or group discussions or postal questionnaires, etc?

All sorts of considerations influence the method

There is no one 'right' method or approach that will work for any given circumstance. All sorts of considerations influence the decision on which consultative process to use and there are no guarantees that just because one method worked well once, it will do so again.

The methodology selected should suit the stakeholder/customer, not the provider of the service. In fact it is a good idea to ask your stakeholders what approach or combination of approaches would suit them best. In the end you will have to decide how you wish to conduct the consultation, but your stakeholders/customers will appreciate being consulted and are likely to be more co-operative as a result.

Using a variety of methodologies will normally provide a more reliable result, but, if you do this, be prepared for apparent differences to arise. These will have to be resolved in the analysis exercise.

The following are some useful tips when choosing your method of consultation:

- Use more than one method. This increases the chances of a better and more representative response – both in terms of quality and quantity.

- Be prepared to deal with seeming differences or contradictions if and when they arise. There is no single view that represents the "customers' view", and consensus between all customers is highly unlikely. The "customers' view" will need to be arrived at through a process of analysis, either statistical or interpretative.
- Knowing something about the stakeholders you wish to consult, will help you choose the most suitable method or combination of approaches. The table below gives some general advice on reasons and methods that can be used.

A summary of different consultation methodologies or approaches is provided below.

Opinion surveys

These are scientific and objective and are helpful in identifying overall customer concerns, establishing baselines and tracking changes over time. The surveys can take the form of postal surveys where questionnaires are sent to respondents for them to fill in and return or they can be based on face-to-face interviews. In the latter case far fewer respondents are used and the interviewer meets with all the respondents on a face-to-face basis and discusses the relevant issue(s) with them.

Postal surveys, involving a large number of respondents lend themselves to statistical analysis. This is referred to as the quantitative approach as the findings can be presented or expressed in percentages, such as, 65% of respondents would like clinics to be open in the evenings from 18h00 to 22h00.

Face-to-face interviews are better suited to determining people's perceptions and can be very effective if only a small group of people can be surveyed. In the interview situation the participant can be asked for his or view and why he or she holds this view. This type of probing is not possible with postal surveys.

This approach is referred to as the qualitative approach and the findings are based on interpretative analysis. Results are never expressed in terms of percentages and are more likely to be couched in the following terms: "There is a clear need for clinics to be open in the evenings to accommodate working mothers and other people who find it difficult to attend during normal working hours."

These types of surveys are best carried out by outside consultants as stakeholders, especially customers, often find it difficult to be frank with departmental staff and they require

The main advantages of postal surveys are the low unit cost of each response and the potential to achieve a fairly high volume of returns, increasing confidence in the validity of the final results.

Questionnaires for postal surveys must be kept short, should be couched in simple language and must be relatively easy to complete. Long, complicated forms will reduce response rates. Care must be exercised when constructing questions; they should:

- be written so that each respondent will read them and understand them in the same way;
- be neutral in tone so that the respondent is not led to a particular response; and
- flow logically, following a particular logical sequence and train of thought, rather than making abrupt changes in subject matte.

Care must be taken in introducing the questionnaire. A covering letter explaining the purpose of the survey and underlining what will happen with the answers will help those responding

Useful tips on developing questionnaires

- **Use simple everyday language**. In particular, avoid jargon and acronyms – no matter how familiar the terms may be to you, you cannot be sure your respondents will know what they mean.
- **Keep questions simple.** Do not use complex constructions and try to avoid negative statements where possible.
- **Be consisten**t. When developing possible response frameworks, go from extreme positive to the extreme negative, with a neutral answer in the middle and maintain that approach throughout. For example, offer respondents the choice between "Never", "Sometimes" and "Always" or between "Poor", "Average" and "Excellent".

Telephone surveys are being increasingly used as a means of collecting data quickly and at a
relatively low cost. They involve calling targeted individuals, usually without prior warning, running through a series of questions on the telephone and writing down the answers given on a prepared, standard answer sheet.

The main advantages are that a relatively high volume of data can be obtained fairly cheaply and at off-peak times of the day, which allows contact with people who might be hard to reach during working hours.

The principal, but very substantial disadvantage is that many people fear that these calls are
actually thinly disguised sales pitches and react badly to them.

A well designed telephone survey can actually combine data gathering and data entry, as the
response given can be captured immediately and the results can be generated very speedily.

Clipboard surveys involve approaching customers using public services and prompting them to answer a set of pre-determined questions. Clipboard surveys need to be kept reasonably short; as customers will not welcome being detained for extended periods. The questions also need to be fairy short and simple, capable of being understood without having to be read.

One major advantage of clipboard surveys is the opportunity they provide to show cards or other visual aids, which can be very useful in reminding people of possible answers.

Unless a substantial sample of customers can be surveyed, it is better to use a qualitative approach based on face-to-face interviews, which employs interpretative analysis rather than statistical analysis. Statistics can be misleading, especially if based on inadequate samples. The preferred methodology to establish customer and stakeholder perceptions is undoubtedly the qualitative and interpretative approach.

There is an old saying about statistical research that goes like this: “Be careful not to use statistics like a blind man uses a lamp post, for support rather than illumination."

Focus groups

These are small groups of stakeholders/customers, meeting together informally to discuss a particular issue with the help of an independent facilitator and without anyone from the organisation present. The group is brought together by invitation in a relaxed and informal setting.

The ideal number of participants in a focus group is between 8 and 12.

The facilitator takes the group through a series of questions that are deliberately designed to prompt discussion on the relevant issue and he or she tries to ensure the maximum level of participation from all members of the group. The facilitator may also use prepared materials to stimulate discussion. It is usually necessary to provide an incentive for people to attend in the form of a cash payment and refreshments are also normally available.

It is important that the facilitator is someone with proper training for this kind of exercise who is recognisably independent of the department/institution and the issue being discussed. This will defuse possible confrontations and will also help to eliminate the natural inclination of people to avoid the truth where it might offend.

Unskilled facilitators may find themselves drawn into the argument, rather than just prompting and observing. This can cause serious problems of objectivity and credibility.

Individual contact

Every exchange with individual customers provides an opportunity to find out what they think. Staff should be encouraged to use personal interviews, telephone calls and letters to seek customers' views. Follow -up interviews can also be used to find out how individuals feel about the consultation process and/or the services offered.

Public meetings

Public meetings are often presented as consultation, but usually fall well short of what is needed if one genuinely wants to seek the views of the public. Meetings with a good turnout there are usually too big to

allow for much discussion, so that the only views heard are those from the front or perhaps those of a vocal minority.
More often, these meetings have very poor and unrepresentative turnouts and attract only those with a special or vested interests. They can however serve as a platform to provide information to stakeholders and customers and this can be coupled with other methods of consultation, such as distributing and collecting questionnaires.

Panels

Panels are groups of people who have committed themselves to responding on a regular basis to consultation exercises. They are thus very useful to track changes in the way people see things
and because of the commitment involved they can usually guarantee a higher response rate than a fresh, random sample of respondents would. The main disadvantages of panels are the need to maintain the database of addresses and the possible perpetuation of any bias that may exist in the panel.

RATIONALE

VIEW

STEP 4

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Having decided what the objectives of the consultation process are, who should be consulted and what approach or approaches should be employed, one needs to resource the exercise.

Resourcing starts with determining what resources in the form of manpower, money and other physical resources such as vehicles, meeting rooms, etc, will be required for the consultation process. At this stage one should also establish the timeframes for the consultation – how long is it going to take and by when are the results required.

Once this has been done, one needs to check what resources one has available. This will enable one to determine the shortfall or “gap” in resources. Clearly the gap has to be addressed and one must determine to what extent and how one can “fill” the gap. For example, human resources may need to be trained and/or recruited, time frames extended and buildings hired.

All of these considerations have financial implications. If there are insufficient funds to do everything, one will have to prioritise the activities – see next section, Step 5.

Develop appropriate time frames

The length of time consultation takes is often underestimated. Different methods of consultation will require different timeframes. Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process from the beginning to have the best prospects of improving the proposals concerned and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.

Timeframes should be flexible to allow for the communities and community groups to consider and respond to consultation items. Talking to stakeholders and finding out about their schedule can be of assistance in this regard, so that you can be able to accommodate them.

It is advisable to allow:

- adequate time to design your survey instrument properly;
- more time than you anticipate you need for active consultation; and

- adequate time to analyse the consultation results and to write the report.

Develop a budget
Consider all aspects of the process and allocate funds so that that the process is sustainable.

STEP 5

SETTING PRIORITIES
As mentioned above, once one knows what is possible within available resources, one needs to set priorities for the consultation process.

For example, it may not be possible to recruit or train a person or to hire the services of a consultant through the tender process to conduct face-to-face interviews, within the prescribed time limits. This will mean either scrapping that particular element of the consultation process or deferring it. Either way, one will have to decide what should be done now.

In setting priorities it is useful to divide objectives into the following two categories:
- Must dos or Must haves; and
- Nice to dos or Nice to haves.

Things that have to be done are those that are essential to get a valid result. For example a set of face-to-face interviews, involving the services of a professional consultant. There may not be time to conduct an extensive postal survey to verify results or sufficient funds to conduct focus groups on particular aspects. In these circumstances one may well decide to go ahead with the face-to-face interviews, noting that focus groups will only be relevant if there are major discrepancies in the findings or if serious issues are raised that need to be resolved by way of focus groups.
If a statistical result is required, one may need to scrap the option of also conducting the interviews and focus groups and put one's limited resources into ensuring a sufficiently large response to validate statistical analyses.

Another example of setting priorities would be if one wanted to introduce a helicopter emergency medical rescue service in a rural area where there were no roads, one would not necessarily have to consult customers in urban or other rural areas. In fact, this may simply raise a whole host of issues related to customers feeling neglected in the light of the services being offered to the particular rural area. Thus, if time and limited resources did not allow for fully comprehensive consultation, one could decide to proceed as suggested.

In setting priorities, one should be careful not to base one's decisions entirely on financial considerations. Often, one or two relatively expensive exercises, delivering quality results, are preferable to a range of affordable, but less significant operations.

There is a saying in the field of management, which states that if money or finances are the only or main consideration in deciding what can and cannot be done, the tail will often wag the dog. Rather set priorities based on deliverable and desired results, than on affordability. It is often the case that one is able to do more with less, by which we mean, a few good results are worth more than a lot of dubious results.

Finally, in the case of improving service standards, always consult customers when setting priorities. They will guide you on what is essential right now and what can be implemented over time.

STEP 6

IMPLEMENTATION

Once you have clearly identified your objectives, your customers, your approach or methodology, allocated your resources and set your priorities, it is time to implement the consultation process.

The first thing to do is to communicate your objectives to your customers. While consultation is one of the *Batho Pele* principles, the whole process should be conducted within the spirit of *Batho Pele*. Thus it is important to be open and frank with your customers and tell them precisely what you wish to discuss with them, why you wish to consult them and what you hope to achieve through this process.

This will help you establish whether your planning was thorough and relevant and whether it was implementable or "doable". Be prepared to amend your approach as a result of the input you receive from stakeholders/customers at this point. Clearly, you must ensure that, if you amend your approach, you will still achieve your objectives.

If you have to adjust your strategies at this point, do so and then get on with the actual consultation. Implement the approaches you have chosen and record the results.

Next you have to analyse the results, either statistically or interpretatively and come up with your findings. Once your findings are clear you need to confirm that they are valid. As mentioned, the analysis process can lead to invalid deductions, if for example, the sample was too small to support a statistical finding or if the interpretative reasoning was faulty and led to the wrong conclusions. Check your findings for consistency and accuracy. Do they make sense? Are they supported by the facts? Will your approach stand up to critical scrutiny?

It may be necessary to test your findings against a sample group of stakeholders/customers. For example, if one of your findings is that only customers in urban areas want to be consulted, you will certainly have to go back to a sample of rural customers and test this finding on them.

STEP 7

MONITOR

Evaluating the effectiveness of your consultation is vital. There are many models for evaluation, but try to keep it simple. If you have planned properly, with clear, measurable objectives, then the evaluation process should be straightforward.

Effective evaluation tells you what worked and what did not and why. It helps to make sure that you get the best value for money from investments in time, effort and resources. If one particular method has not worked well, try to establish the reasons. Problems are always much clearer with the benefit of hindsight and, once identified, will help you avoid the same pitfalls the next time. Equally, if something worked well, try to assess why it was successful, so that you can build on it.

At the end of the process you want to be able to evaluate the:

- ***Outcomes***
- Did you achieve your stated objectives? For example, to build as clinic and has this led to improved service delivery?
- Were the views of the target group(s) obtained?
- Was feedback given to those consulted?
- Did stakeholders feel that the consultation was worthwhile?
- Has anything changed as a result of the consultation?
- Did you get views and information that you could use?
- Have you actually used those views?
- Has the consultation lead to some identifiable change in your services and/or policy?
- Has the consultation changed the relationship between the department and its customers?
- Are there areas that need further improvement?

- ***Methods***
- Were the methods used right for your objectives?
- If you used more than one method, which worked better and why?

- ***Time***
- Were the time-lines clear and kept to? If not, why not?
- Was sufficient time allowed for responses?

- **Costs**
- Did you manage your resources cost effectively?
- Was the process adequately budgeted for?
- Were savings made in particular areas or was there over-expenditure in others and what were the reasons?
- Were there unforeseen costs, and what were they?

STEP 8

FEEDBACK/REPORT

There should be clear timeframes outlining when the outcomes of consultation will be known. This should be done as part of the initial planning process. The planning process should identify the people that need feedback and how it will be given to them.

It is very important in order to cement relationships with respondents and win their confidence in the consultation process that they should be singled out for special feedback, perhaps at a special function organised to thank them for their participation.

Reports detailing the outcomes of consultation should be written in plain language and should include:

- acknowledgement of the contributions by the various participating parties;
- an outline of the consultation process;
- evidence that customers' inputs have been taken into account; and
- a summary of the results.

Where major changes are being implemented after wide consultation, consideration should be given to obtaining exposure in the mass media such as newspapers, radio and television. Media consultants are normally the most effective way of obtaining such exposure, but whatever approach is used, the spokesperson for the department or institution must be clearly identified and trained to handle the media.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Consultation must be seen to benefit stakeholders. If there is a suspicion that consultation is mere "window dressing" the process and the department/institution will lose all credibility. Thus the findings of the consultative process must be made public and it must be demonstrated how these findings have been taken into account in subsequent decisions and actions.
- Staff must commit to the process.
- Staff must be trained to consult effectively and to handle complaints.
- Consultation takes time and money and thus it must be carefully planned.
- The actual consultation is often best left to experienced professionals who are familiar with the different methodologies or approaches and who are unlikely to arrive at invalid conclusions.
- Avoid being patronising. Take customers and their views seriously.
- Finally, when in doubt, consult your customers and other stakeholders. This will entrench the spirit of *Batho Pele*.

USEFUL REFERENCES

1. The *Batho Pele* White Paper; Notice 1459; 1997
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3. Consultation Manual; Australian Capital Territory Government; 2002
4. An Introductory Guide -How to Consult Your Users; United Kingdom Government – Cabinet Office; 2002
5. Committed to Quality-Buckinghamshire Country Council- How to Consult; 2000

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INTRODUCTION TO WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

The South African Constitution stipulates that public services must be made available equitably to all South Africans. This is a daunting mandate, which is made even more challenging by the fact that a large proportion of the historically disadvantaged members of our community are illiterate or only semi-literate. In addition, the country has some eleven official languages.

Thus, the question we have to answer is, how do we ensure that all these people, many of whom live in remote rural areas, are able to access public services and get what they need? Clearly, the first thing we need to do, before we can start explaining the nature of our services, is to help the people find us.

There are basically two stages to this process; first people have to know how to get to the building in which our offices and services are located and then they need to find their way within the building to locate the particular service they require. The first stage is normally relatively simple as most buildings can be located relatively easily by using a street map of the town or city. The more frustrating part for customers is normally having to find their way around the particular building to the relevant floor and office or room and then they frequently have to find the right queue, before anyone attends to them.

The challenge to frontline managers and staff is to make it as easy as possible for customers to access their particular services.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is intended to help departments or components and in particular front-line offices to introduce a user-friendly wayfinding system that is effective and easy to understand. The guide is descriptive, not prescriptive. In other words, it describes the options available for the implementation of a successful wayfinding system and provides some practical suggestions, but it does not prescribe a particular approach. Each department should devise a system best suited to its own needs and circumstances.

If implemented properly, bearing the customers' needs and circumstances in mind, a wayfinding system should lead to noticeable improvement in service delivery and customer satisfaction.

The guide:

- explains what is meant by a wayfinding system;
- explains why such a system is necessary and what outcomes the system should achieve;
- provides a set of guidelines for an effective wayfinding system;
- identifies various categories of signs, with suggestions on how they might be used;
- suggests how functionally illiterate and disabled persons could be accommodated;
- explains how to develop a wayfinding system;
- identifies the various role players involved in the development of such a system;
- provides key indicators of a successful wayfinding system; and
- invites departments to share their best practice experiences on wayfinding and signage.

The approach of the guide is user-friendly and it tries to avoid technical jargon and detail. It provides a broader overview of wayfinding as well as practical suggestions and attempts to give short answers to questions you may have in connection with wayfinding.

WHAT IS WAYFINDING?

A simple definition of wayfinding is: “To find one’s way to a specific destination.”

A wayfinding system comprises all the elements required to help one find one’s way to a specific destination. These elements could include a number of things, the most important of which include:

- signs or signage, including maps, arrows and graphic illustrations as well as words and numbers;
- a help or information desk;
- guides, including customer relations officers;
- physical devices such as hand rails, ramps, etc; and
- electronic devices such as touch pads and public address systems.

An effective wayfinding system should help a customer locate the required service point from the time he or she leaves home. In other words, it should reach out to customers, beyond the confines of the particular building or venue where the service is accommodated.

Wayfinding should not be considered a separate or different activity from traditional "signage design", but rather as a broader, more inclusive way of assessing all the environmental issues that affect our ability to find our way.

Signage means an object, mark, lettering, signboard or other visual or audible device, conveying information or a special message. Although, signage plays an important role in wayfinding, the process does not rely exclusively on signs.

However, well-designed signs, strategically placed, will greatly enhance the effectiveness of a wayfinding system. Faulty or poor sign design is frequently the reason why many visitors do not read signs, as it is often easier and more effective to ask for directions.

Wayfinding problems are not confined to signs alone, for example, adding more signs may not necessarily solve the problem. Instead, designing an environment that identifies logical traffic patterns that enable people to move easily from one spot to another without confusion, can unravel such problems. Signage cannot be a remedy for poor architecture and illogical space planning, but a well-designed wayfinding system can help enormously to overcome the limitations imposed by “difficult” buildings.

People who find themselves in unfamiliar environments feel insecure

People who find themselves in unfamiliar environments feel insecure. They need to know:

- where they actually are in the building or facility;
- what the layout of the facility is; and
- the location of their destination,

so that they can orientate themselves and decide where to go next.

As mentioned, en route to their chosen destinations, people are helped or hindered by the facility's architecture and signage. The success of any wayfinding system depends on how customers perceive the physical environment and whether the system is easy to use or not.

OBJECTIVES OF A WAYFINDING SYSTEM

To put it simply, the objective of a wayfinding system is to provide visitors/customers with a way of:

- knowing where they are and where their destination is in relation to them;
- choosing the best route to their destination;
- recognising the destination;
- accessing the appropriate service; and
- finding their way back out.

When people cannot do any or all of these things, outside or inside service facilities (buildings/offices) they become disorientated. Research and experience have shown that visitors are typically under extraordinary stress during a visit to public facilities. In addition, facility environments (in particular health care facilities and institutions) are often complex and intimidating to visitors and patients.

Signage plays an important role in the first impressions customer form of the facility

The appearance of signage in and around facilities plays an important role in the first impressions customers form of the facility. All too often, wayfinding and signage programmes prove to be inadequate and ineffective as a means of communicating building identification and directional information to the public.

It is hard to ignore the symptoms of a poor wayfinding system; people are lost, they constantly end up in the wrong place, they compensate by asking for directions, often distracting staff, security officers or other customers.

The sooner visitors feel they know their way around an environment, the sooner they feel comfortable and safe. A well-designed and implemented wayfinding system conveys a warm sense of welcome and helps visitors feel at home. It reassures them that they are in good hands, that service staff respect them and their time. By sparing visitors the anxiety of feeling lost or confused, a good wayfinding system frees them to focus on what brought them there in the first place. The result is a more pleasant experience, a more positive impression of the facility, more effective service delivery and a greater likelihood they will value your service.

If you want to pride yourself on realising a customer-driven vision and being user-friendly, wayfinding is something you should take seriously. Often, the little things make a big difference to customers.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

We have already, in the introduction to this guide, mentioned the relevance of the Constitution to wayfinding; the public service is mandated to make sure that all citizens are able to access the services they require. Without well-designed and adequate wayfinding systems, it will be impossible to meet these requirements.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The main *Batho Pele* principle that wayfinding addresses is, of course, “access”. Without a functional wayfinding system, it would be impossible to provide proper access to public services. But wayfinding strikes a much deeper cord, in harmony with the spirit of *Batho Pele;* it reaches out to the customer, it recognises that the customer comes first and that no matter what the situation or condition of the customer, his or her dignity must always be respected in the process of providing appropriate public services.

Wayfinding and signage cannot ignore the fact that the customer might:

- be illiterate, blind, deaf or physically challenged in other ways;
- be old and frail;
- have cultural sensitivities;
- be unaccustomed to large buildings and urban environments; and
- only speak one of the official languages, for example, Venda.

Whatever the circumstances of the customer, we should never lose sight of the fact that, while his or her right to services may be enshrined in the Constitution and reinforced in the *Batho Pele* White Paper, in the final analysis, access to those services depends largely on an effective wayfinding system that respects the dignity of all.

OUTCOMES

A well-developed wayfinding system will have the following outcomes or results:

- Improved service delivery – because customers find the right place, building, office, queue, etc, quickly and easily, services are provided more effectively and efficiently.
- More satisfied customers and fewer complaints – customers have a more pleasant experience, a more positive impression of the facility and there is a greater likelihood that they will appreciate the service.
- Staff morale improves.
- Government service facilities are clearly identified.
- The organisation’s corporate image is enhanced.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Signage and help/information desks installed in departments.
- Lack of bottlenecks, queues at information desks and people wandering about.
- Handrails for visually impaired people.
- The presence of guides or customer relations officers.
- A decrease in the number of complaints.
- An increase in the number of satisfied customers and compliments received by the department.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge:

A dilution of the department's corporate identity

Public service institutions may use different wayfinding systems and especially different signage formats, which could dilute their corporate images and confuse customers.

Response:

It is advisable to use standard formats, especially within a single institution or in any one department so that customers become used to the system and feel comfortable and confident using it.

Challenge:

Signs become an end in themselves

Scarce financial resources are "wasted" on costly signs

Frontline staff and/or operational managers can become totally engrossed in the technicalities of signage and spend large amounts of time and money on making beautiful signs that are not necessarily effective.

Response:

Always try to adopt the customer's perspective to ensure that the signs are functional and serve their main purpose of helping customers find their way. Ask the opinion of colleagues. A simple, well-positioned sign, made of cardboard, can be more effective than an expensive sign that is too small or difficult to read and that is placed where people cannot see it.

Challenge:

Regimented service delivery

A preoccupation with signage can lead to an autocratic approach to service delivery, which can undermine the quality of the services being provided. For example, in a hospital environment signs are very necessary to help patients and visitors find their way, but over-regimentation could undermine a caring culture and lead to a situation where patients are treated without empathy and warmth.

Response:

Constantly confirm that signage meets the customers' needs. Ensure that the spirit of *Batho Pele* remains alive and well and is not smothered by over-regimentation. Do not lose the human element in your service delivery.

GUIDELINES FOR OF AN EFFECTIVE WAYFINDING SYSTEM

The following guidelines will help create an effective wayfinding system:

- Create a unique identity.
- Create separate identities for different locations.
- Involve customers and staff.
- Use landmarks.
- Create well-structured paths.
- Place signs at decision points.
- Provide visitors with a plan or map of the environment/location.
- Draw visitors'/customers' attention.
- Limit choices.
- Furnish architectural clues.
- Keep messages brief, clear and direct.
- Consider typography.

Each of these will be discussed in detail.

Create a unique "corporate identity" for the department or component

The wayfinding system, especially the signage, should reflect and reinforce the corporate identity of the facility. Ways of doing this are to:

- include a departmental logo on all print communications, including stationery, signage, etc;
- always use the standard typeface as specified in the facility's corporate identity manual or, in the absence of such a manual, the facility should be encouraged to settle on one typeface and to use this consistently in all written communications, including correspondence, reports, publicity material and signage; and
- incorporate significant cultural, heritage or architectural elements from the community, town or building in the signage (this is particularly useful when creating sub-identities or separate identities for different locations of the same facility or service as discussed in the next paragraph).

The more customers are able to identify with the facility or department, the more comfortable they will be using the services being offered. If all the visual manifestations of the “corporate image” are consistently the same and all the signs are similar in appearance, it will reassure the customers and make it easier for them to find their way to the service point.

Create a specific identity for different locations

Customers must be able to distinguish between different functional areas such as reception, security, display, work and service areas, within a particular location of a specific facility and between different locations of the same facility.

Clear signage is very useful in this regard, for example, a sign above a desk that reads “Information” or one on a door proclaiming “No admission except for office staff” immediately identify the usage assigned to a particular area. Other means of creating a distinction between different spaces is to use furniture layout, for example, chairs arranged in cinema style to denote a waiting room or reception area or desks placed where people are expected to fill in forms before proceeding to the next phase of service delivery are helpful in communicating the purpose of the space or location to customers.

It is very important that customers are able to identify service spaces, especially where departments share facilities.

As mentioned above, different components of the same department may wish to have their own identity without detracting from the overall corporate identity of the department. For example, within a department of health, it would be useful if different hospitals had their own identity without undermining the department’s identity. This could be achieved by incorporating unique architectural or geographical elements or themes in their specific corporate identities, including their signage. In this way patients would feel secure within the corporate identity, but comfortable in the knowledge that different services may be provided at different locations and service delivery would have been enhanced. That is after all the main purpose of wayfinding and signage.

Involve customers and staff:

As wayfinding is intended to benefit customers, it is important that they be consulted on what they require and what they believe will make life easier for them. Similarly, frontline and other staff who interface with customers on an ongoing basis and who frequently have to direct customers to service points and offices in the department or building, should also be consulted to get their input.

Some suggestions are:

- Involve customers with the development of a wayfinding and signage system that appeals to them.
- Monitor queries from customers for directions. This will help with the creation of the system and ensure the continuous improvement of the system.
- Consider the predominant needs of customers in the service area, to help determine the amount and type of signage that is required.
- Solicit wayfinding information from staff familiar with the functions of the department or component at all levels. For example, customers frequently ask maintenance and security staff for directions to get to certain service points, offices, rest rooms or specific individuals. These people are an important source of information about the “real life" of the facility and can be very helpful in identifying user patterns and destinations and understanding how a facility operates and how occupants and visitors can be moved through spaces and directed to their destinations most effectively.

Use landmarks

Landmarks can be very useful in providing orientation cues to help customers remember specific locations or routes to specific locations.

- A landmark is a recognisable point of reference in a larger space, which helps customers to orientate themselves and to “know where they are”. A landmark can also be a memorable place that helps one recognise one’s location instantly, for example, a dam alongside the road or a well-decorated and appointed waiting room in a hospital. Landmarks provide the basis for verbal or written descriptions of locations or routes. A simple example of a landmark is Table Mountain in Cape Town. It instantly identifies one’s location as being Cape Town and it is a useful reference point in directing people around the peninsula.

The following are useful tips when incorporating landmarks in a wayfinding system:

- Use landmarks sparingly. Placing too many landmarks in a space belies their usefulness as memorable and unique locations.
- Situate memorable landmarks along corridors and at key decision points, for example, statues or water features in a reception area, a particular painting or poster in a corridor, etc.

Create well-structured paths or routes.

Well-structured paths are continuous, have a clear beginning, middle, and end when viewed in each direction in order to direct visitors from one point to another.

Some simple pointers relating to paths are that they should:

- take the simplest and safest, not necessarily the shortest, route to a destination;
- provide the visitor with critical information in a readily understood format; and
- confirm progress and distance to a destination en route.

Landmarks are the anchors along which paths are defined. The relationship between landmarks and paths is graphically illustrated in the diagram on the following page.

LANDMARKS

When deciding where to place signs, ask the following two questions:

- ***Should a sign be placed here?***
  If the likelihood of a visitor making a wrong choice is high, a sign is necessary.
- ***What destinations should be included on the sign?***
  Consider how frequently a destination is in demand, its importance or potential to be memorised (a landmark or a place that could be used as a point of reference) and how close it is. For example, a stranger to our country travelling by car from Durban to Johannesburg via Pietermaritzburg, Harrismith and Villiers, will want to be reassured from time to time that he or she is on the right route to Johannesburg, but also that the next town is Pietermaritzburg, Harrismith or Villiers, as the case may be. The road signs should confirm this. Reaching each of these towns will further reassure the traveller that he or she is on the right route to Johannesburg, while confirming progress.

Draw visitors' attention

Give the visitor a more extensive view in a particular direction or place an interesting or eye-catching object at the end of a corridor to draw the visitor in that direction. To draw a person forward through a main corridor, place an item of interest, for example, an exhibit, at the end of the main corridor, which is visible from the entrance.

ROUTE

Furnish architectural clues

Effective architectural wayfinding clues, such as building layouts, corridors, floor coverings and lighting, provide cognitive maps or mental pictures that allow people to grasp the environment quickly.

To furnish such architectural clues:

- Improve office layout to allow for maximum accessibility by customers.
- Clearly identify arrival points, for example by way of a reception desk, signage pointing to “entrance” or “reception”, etc.
- Simplify the geometry of hallways by, for example, avoiding obscure corners, arranging furniture practically, providing good lighting, making sure that sight lines to the reception are not blocked out by plants or furniture, etc.
- Provide convenient parking and accessible walkways located adjacent to each public entry point.
- Place elevator lobbies so that they can be seen upon entering the building.
- Make elevators conspicuous by using special lighting, finishes or orientation, for example, by ensuring that they face the entry point or foyer.
- Use consistent lighting, floor coverings and architectural finishes in primary public corridors.
- Design public waiting areas that are visually open to corridors.
- Use varied finishes, floor coverings, colours and lighting to distinguish areas/pathways.
- Ensure that floor numbers between connecting buildings are the same or integrated.
- Number levels logically. Many buildings avoid floor 13 for superstitious reasons and go straight from 12 to 14. Be sensitive to cultural preferences or taboos.
- Number rooms logically, beginning at entrances or elevator lobbies.
- Standardise names for all buildings, services and destinations.

MAKING YOUR OWN SIGNS – "keep it simple"

In all signage the golden rule is K.I.S. – Keep It Simple. The following tips will help you apply the KIS principle to the signage in your wayfinding system:

- The sign message must be simple and should convey only one idea. Too many ideas compete with each other and cause confusion.
- The primary message should be brief, just a few words to get the idea across. An additional line or two may be added, but this should be secondary, not detracting from the main thrust of the message.
- Take care with the use of personal names and even component names on signs. Make sure they do not confuse the message you intend to convey.
- Use the fewest possible messages per sign. Many people simply do not have time to absorb sign messages that are long and complicated. Keep destination names short so visitors can read them at a glance.
- Messages should be easily readable and simple to understand.
- Use established pictures or graphics and colour coding together with words to facilitate comprehension of written messages. A good example of the power of graphics is the standard "No smoking" sign which simply uses the graphic device of burning cigarette in a circle with a line through it; words are in fact unnecessary.

The computer revolution has brought sign design within the reach of virtually every person who has access to a computer. You do not have to make use of a professional sign writer or signage company. With a little practice and employing some basic guidelines, you can produce your own, very acceptable signs, using the standard software on your computer.

Below we provide some useful information on making your own signs. Topics such as sign location and visibility, the message, letter size, colour, type style, logos and graphics, layout and special effects are covered. However, we must stress that, if you want durable signage in special materials such as plastic, brushed aluminium, steel, bronze, etc, especially for outdoor use, it is advisable to contact a signage specialist. But if you do not have the budget or time to use the services of a professional, the following pointers or guidelines should help you produce very satisfactory signage, using your computer.

- Keep the number of signs to a minimum. Too many signs become “invisible” and are thus useless. If customers are presented with a whole host of signs, they simply will not bother to read them.
- Employ uniform signs in terms of colour, typeface or font, wording and placement throughout the department or component. A variety of different “styles” will not only look garish, but will tend to distract rather than instruct customers.
- Limit the number of typefaces you use in one sign to no more than two different styles. Also consider how the two type styles complement each other. Do not mix a light with a dark style.
- Popular type faces or fonts to use are Ariel, Helvetica and Universe.
- A simple rule to help you decide whether a sign is needed or not is: “If it will help customers find what they are looking for, create a sign”.
- Avoid hand-written signs if at all possible. However, in emergencies or in remote areas where there are no professional sign writers, any sign is often better than no sign at all. For example, if there is a crisis such as a flood situation or an outbreak of disease in a rural area, where large numbers of people have to be assisted at short notice, hand-written signs on a piece of cardboard can be very effective. However, guard against such temporary measures becoming permanent fixtures.
- Budget for the regular maintenance, repair or replacement of signs.
- Choose appropriate signs for your main group of clients (children, elderly, visually impaired, etc).
- In instances where the information on the sign may have to change from time-to-time, use signs with inserts that can be updated easily and cost effectively. For example, a sign on a door giving the name of room occupant. Signs with inserts reinforce the idea that certain information on a sign is changeable and temporary. Inserts have the following advantages:
- quality typesetting;
- a choice of materials; and
- easily updated at relatively low cost.

- If vandalism is a problem, place signs only in high traffic areas. Regular maintenance as a result of graffiti or damage is required to maintain the quality of signage and this can be costly.
- Use simple, plain signage. Fancy or ornate signs are often difficult to understand, while customers can easily identify straightforward and uncomplicated signs.
- Provide generous spacing between letters, words and message lines. Signs with cramped writing are not easily read or understood and remember, many of your customers may be functionally illiterate.
- The writing on signs should be in normal sentence case, in other words, in upper and lower case, rather than in capital letters, as research has shown that it is easier to read messages in sentence case.
- Graphic devices such as wall and floor graphics, the strategic placement of works of art such as pieces of sculpture and paintings, are potential elements in a successful wayfinding plan.

BLACK AND YELLOW

LANGUAGE USAGE ON SIGNS

In our multilingual society, the use of dual-language signage systems is often mandatory. As space for messages on signs is fairly limited, determining when and where to use the two languages and how to communicate the messages effectively, ensuring speedy comprehension, using the least possible number of words, demands careful consideration. The following tips will help you cope with these particular issues:

- Use clear and concise language. Short words and easy-to-understand phrases help to eliminate confusion in the minds of customers.
- Consider the language preferences of the majority of your customers. For example, in Gauteng you may wish to use two languages on signs, namely English and the predominant local language, which may be either South Sotho or Setswana.
- Use pictograms (symbols) to promote word economy and comprehension. For example, the “No smoking” sign, or if cameras or cell phones are not permitted in a certain area, the same circle with a diagonal line through it can be used, with the cigarette replaced by a simple drawing of a camera or cell phone, as the case may be.

  The old saying that “a picture is worth a thousand words" is certainly true in wayfinding. International style symbols or a "picture language" are often more effective than words in communicating a message.

SIGN CATEGORIES

Signs can conveniently be broken down into the following categories:

- identification/orientation;
- directional;
- information;
- regulatory;
- maps; and
- placards or posters.

Identification/Orientation Signs

- *Identifying the department or component or institution*
  - Identify the department or component so that it is immediately recognisable and inform customers of the available services.

  - Identification signs introduce and welcome visitors to your facility. These signs should be large and easily visible at a distance. They should incorporate your corporate livery, that is, your logo and colour scheme, and they may be illuminated, if this will assist customers in finding your facility, especially at night.

    A typical example of the need for illuminated signs is at a hospital, especially to indicate where “Casualties” is, as many accidents occur after dark and good, well-designed and well-lit signage can often help to save a patient’s life.

    Identification signs should be placed at the primary points of entry to the department or component.
  - Secondary identification signs identify particular buildings or locations on your site.
  - Banners and/or bunting could be used, together with intelligent garden layout and pathways, to lead customers to the main entrance.

Directional Signs

This type of sign is located at decision points and major routes to guide users to locations within a facility. Typically this signage involves a list of names and/or facilities, with arrows indicating path directions to key destinations.

Information Signs

Information signs are intended to simplify the customer’s task of finding a particular facility.

- Locate a facility directory in the main lobby while overhead signs point out information desks. A printed directory should be available at each desk. Group departments alphabetically per floor heading such as "first floor" or group the names alphabetically and allocate floor numbers against each name. The latter option is often the most effective in that customers do not have to read through the names on every floor.

- Locate floor directories at major entrances on floor levels, such as lift lobbies. These directories list information pertaining to that level only.
- Directories typically contain information pertaining to the names of facilities/departments, floor levels, components/service locations and special areas.
- Staff names should preferably not appear on facility directories, but rather on individual floor directories.
- It is often helpful to use “street” and “avenue” names for sections, main hallways, major intersections and corridors of buildings. For example, a corridor in a hospital leading to the consulting rooms of medical specialists, could be named something like “Surgeon Avenue”.
- Wall-mounted directional signs/maps should illustrate the “streets” visitors are walking along, the location of all destinations on that “street” and the intersections on that “street”.
- Where elevators serve different floors, it is helpful to locate elevator directories within each band of elevators.
- Establish a floor numbering system that relates to a building's main entry.
- Installation heights are, 2500 millimetre from the floor to the bottom of a sign for suspended signs and 1500 millimetre from the floor to the middle of the sign for surface mounted signs.

Regulatory Signs

Regulatory signs aim to regulate behaviour, normally in the interest of customers’ health and safety.

- These signs can conveniently be grouped in the following three categories:
  - Prohibition signs in the form of a circle with a diagonal line through it. They aim to restrict access or activities and are mandatory, for example, no access (one-way), no smoking, etc.
  - Warning signs in the form of a triangle. They aim to caution and warn against definite hazards, for example, biohazards, hard-hat areas, low overhead beam, etc.
  - Information signs in the form of a square. They are used to indicate emergency equipment and facilities and to provide guidance on services, transportation and general information

such as, emergency exit routes, access routes for disabled persons, etc.

- Installation height is, 1500 millimetre from the floor to the middle of the sign.

Maps

Maps have similar characteristics to most of the above-mentioned sign types. Some useful tips on using maps are:

- Place maps at all parking exits, entrances to facilities and at major decision points.
- Give a detailed printed map of the facility and services to every customer who requests one.
- Provide standardised "you are here" maps of the facility that include an overall map of the complex and more detailed maps of specific areas. These maps are particularly useful in large facilities, such as hospitals, where other types of signage can be overwhelmed by the sheer size of the facility or complex.
- Use maps depicting the entire building on one face and each specific service area on the other.
- Make a floor plan on each level for people to see as they step out of the elevator or emerge from the stairs.
- Integrate maps with building layouts, such as denoting on maps that "up arrows" mean "ahead".
- Consistency is key to the effective use of maps. The use of one consistent format from application to application reinforces recognition and orientates the visitor.
- Three-dimensional mapping (perspective or isometric) corresponds most closely to the user's experience of space and is the most effective.
- For maps displayed on walls, the installation height is 1500 millimetre from the floor to the middle of the map.

Placards

By placards we mean a poster or other notice intended for display. Because they are easy to mount, departments tend to locate placards indiscriminately in elevator lobbies and against walls. This practice creates visual clutter and has the potential to ruin a wayfinding and signage system. Preferably:

- include placards in your formal wayfinding and signage system; and

- provide special or designated display areas for posters , and preferably suitable frames or notice boards, at strategic points.

CATERING FOR THE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE AND DISABLED PERSONS

Recognising that about 45% of South African adults are illiterate and that approximately 500 000 people in this country are visually impaired, of which one third are blind, it becomes clear that wayfinding systems play an important role in making public services more accessible to this section of the population.

The following section of this guide focuses on:

- audible communication;
- tactile communication; and
- tactile sign design guidelines.

Audible communication

This involves communication through verbal instruction and public broadcasting systems. Some general guidelines are:

- Use audible public address systems at facility entrances and major decision points. We only have to think how lost we would all be at airports and railway stations without the help of public address announcements informing us of the departure and arrival of planes, trains and other commuter services.
- Provide attendants, trained as professional receptionists and who are thoroughly familiar with the facility, at all public entrances and information desks.
- Provide self-help telephones at all information desks.
- Provide attendant personnel to accompany visitors to their destinations.
- Equip elevators with audible chimes to identify floor levels and services. It is interesting to recall that in the early days of elevators or lifts each elevator had a “driver” who used to open and close the elevator doors, as the were not automatic, and at each level the “driver” would announce the floor level and the services, offices or functions located on that floor. It is perhaps to be regretted that this very helpful and user friendly wayfinding service has been sacrificed in the name of progress.

- Position audible landmarks at major decision points to help locate information desks, elevators, rest rooms and other key destinations. For example a water feature with running water in a reception area is an audible landmark

Tactile communication

Tactile communication means communicating through feel and touch. It includes the use of Braille, hand rails, knurled door knobs and textured floor coverings to assists customers who are visually impaired. However, many of these devices, such as textured floor coverings, for example, will assist all visitors, not only the disabled.

Some useful guidelines are:

- Install interactive audio-tactile maps at entrances and lobbies.
- Establish "shorelines" and "trails" between major destinations and information areas using materials that have differing “feels” underfoot and to the touch, such as concrete, tiles and carpets.
- Install "rumble strips" at entrances and on stair landings and escalators.
- Locate signs consistently in places where one would expect to find them – consult with visually impaired customers to ensure that the system is user friendly and effective.
- Create signs that serve a dual purpose, namely, visual and tactile communication. For example different floor coverings with different textures and colours are helpful to visually impaired and normally sighted persons.
- Tactile designs need to meet as many of the needs of as many people as possible.
- Provide knurled doorknobs where appropriate, to denote entry to service areas, stair wells, rest rooms, etc.
- Provide a raised star symbol on elevator control knobs to indicate the ground floor.
- Provide tactile signage on the inside of elevator frames to assist with identifying the appropriate level when elevator doors open.
- Provide guide rails along corridors and next to stairs and ramps.
- The minimum tactile signage required is signs that identify permanent facilities, such as rest rooms, stairs, floor markers inside stairwells and elevators and room numbers and names deemed important by the department.

The South African National Council for the Blind and the South African Blind Workers Organisation can be contacted for information and assistance with the design and manufacturing of tactile and Braille signs. Departments should also obtain the publication entitled; Code of Practice: Access of Buildings to Disabled People (Code 0246) from the South African Bureau of Standards.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A WAYFINDING SYSTEM

STEP 1

ESTABLISH OWNERSHIP

It is critically important that everyone in the component, especially management, takes ownership of the wayfinding system and buys into the process of devising, implementing and maintaining it. In order to achieve this, you need to:

- Get top management buy-in and commitment, including an in principle decision to make the necessary resources available. To do this you will need to explain the mandates and linkages to legislation and *Batho Pele* and convince them of the positive impact the system will have on service delivery.
- allocate the responsibility for the development, implementation and maintenance of the wayfinding system to a designated person. This person must be enthusiastic about the process and understand the impact it will have on service delivery.

STEP 2

ESTABLISH WAYFINDING PROJECT TEAM

Once management has bought into the system you will need to meet with fellow staff members and management to:

- select a project or wayfinding team;
- elect a project leader, who preferably should not be the same person to whom you have delegated responsibility for the system, under step one above as, at the end of the process, the team hands over to the responsible person; and
- allocate responsibilities to team members.

STEP 3

CONDUCT WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE AUDIT

This is one of the most important exercises as it will establish the current state of wayfinding and signage in the department so that when the desired state is defined, the “gap” between the current and desires states will become clear.

Thus, the team’s task is to:

- assess the current state and effectiveness of wayfinding and signage through interviews, public meetings, focus groups, needs assessments, facility review and analyses; and

- establish the best office layout to allow for maximum accessibility by customers.

STEP 4

DEVELOP A PRELIMINARY DESIGN HIERARCHY

This is where the project really becomes exciting and starts to unfold. A design hierarchy refers to all the elements and stages in planning the wayfinding and signage system. It includes:

- a wayfinding plan – if the plan includes the use of information desks or counters and attendants to provide information and conduct visually impaired customers to their destinations, appropriately qualified individuals need to be identified or employed to fulfil these functions;
- a sign plan, including the use of corporate image and architectural clues and specifying quantities, locations and functional requirements;
- sign message and wording; and
- the compilation of design documentation.

Once this has been accumulated, you need to submit it to your principal or supervisor for review and approval. It is important to involve management at every step to retain their interest and buy-in, but be careful to ensure that their involvement is perceived to be adding value and not as a waste of time or a "rubber-stamping" process.

STEP 5

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

After the design hierarchy has been developed and approved:

- Expand and refine wayfinding and signage plans, paying particular attention to details such as design, lettering and typography, the use of colours, logos and graphics, types of signs, exact locations of signs and information desks, etc.
- Confirm materials and manufacturing, in other words, what materials are going to be used and who is going to make the signs.

When all the detail and costs implications have been determined, make sure that management is again brought into the loop to review and approve the final design of the wayfinding system.

STEP 6

COMPILE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENTATION

This is the last step in the planning phase, before one goes into production.

The following need to be finalised:

- Construction drawings.
- Written specifications.
- Tender documentation, if the actual manufacturing and installation of the signs is going to be contracted out, which is highly recommended in most instances, to ensure a professional appearance.
- Criteria for assessing tenders.
- Evaluation and approval of tenders.

STEP 7

MANUFACTURING AND INSTALLATION

When all the planning has been completed and finally approved and the tender awarded (if applicable), it is time for action.

The task of the project leader and his or her team now is to:

- oversee the manufacturing of the signs (in-house or contracted out);
- oversee the installation (in-house or contracted out); and
- test the effectiveness of the wayfinding system and signage.

STEP 8

MAINTAINING WAYFINDING SYSTEM

Once the project team is satisfied that the system works as planned, the team hands over to the designated responsible person. This person must then ensure that:

- staff throughout the facility are trained in the basics of the wayfinding system, using simple tools such as a system outline, support materials and/or an orientation video; and
- ownership is cultivated in all staff.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

For a wayfinding system to be successful, specific roles and responsibilities must be assigned to various staff members while the system is unfolding and being bedded down. Departments should consider the following:

- ***Establish ownership (accountability and responsibility) for the system in a designated person***
  Wayfinding and signage is part of each department's own management function. Accountability for the system can be vested in the head of corporate services, with a further delegation of responsibility to either workstudy or the facilities manager, usually situated in the provisioning administration section of the department. Alternatively, as wayfinding and signage is basically a special form of communication, accountability for the system may be vested in the head of corporate communications.

  However, as mentioned at the beginning of this guide, one should never lose sight of the fact that wayfinding is not something separate from the services provided by a department or facility, it is an integral part of the service delivery of each and every department or component in the Public Service. For example, in a hospital offering inoculations against cholera, the signage telling patients how to get to the immunisation centre is absolutely a part of the immunisation process. It is not something separate that the medical staff can simply overlook, thinking that it is not part of their job, because, if patients cannot find the immunisation centre, they cannot be inoculated. The same applies to producing ID documents; if the customers cannot find the right office and the relevant queues, they cannot get an ID book.
  As illustrated by the Service Delivery Chain on page 9 of this guide, wayfinding is an essential link in the service delivery process and not something separate and less important than the actual service itself. As we all know, any chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

- ***Wayfinding team members***
  The following role players should be represented on the team:
- The accountable person (head of corporate services or communication) or the designated responsible person (workstudy, facilities manager or provisioning administration). As mentioned, this person should preferably not be the team leader, as at the end of the exercise, the wayfinding system has to be handed over to him or her.

- Representatives of the department's or facility's customers.
- A representative from workstudy.
- The facilities manager, if this person is not the project leader.
- Consultants/advisors in cases where the design and/or manufacture of signs are contracted out.

The National Department of Public Works (NDPW), which has the core function of providing and maintaining the functional accommodation needs of national government departments, is involved as follows:

- When providing new accommodation the NDPW will provide basic signage, e.g. room/door numbers, escape routes and security signs, as part of security equipment.
- As custodian of all state-owned accommodation, the NDPW's attention is required when interfering with the conformity and structure of such accommodation.
- Being responsible for all leased accommodation, the NDPW must be informed when changes to such accommodation require the landlord's approval.
- The NDPW will endeavour to incorporate wayfinding and signage as required by the client department when building new or renovating existing facilities.

Provincial Departments of Public Works have a similar role at provincial level.

USEFUL REFERENCE

This guide on wayfinding and signage does not claim to be the final word or the definitive work on wayfinding and signage. It is intended to be a practical guide to help frontline managers devise and implement a basic wayfinding system that suits their needs and helps to improve service delivery. As such it should be seen as being a living document, which should be updated regularly in the light of best practice experiences of all departments.
Departments are invited to share their best practice experiences with us and are welcome to contact us for further information.

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INTRODUCTION TO HANDLING COMPLAINTS

One of the salient characteristics of the pre-1994 South Africa is that people were not encouraged to complain about the services they received. This applied generally throughout the pre-1994 South African society, but if the non-designated groups were discouraged from voicing their dissatisfaction, people from the designated groups were positively restrained from voicing their opinions. For them, the consequences of complaint were dire indeed.

All of this changed radically with the advent of the country's firs democratically elected government. And the promulgation of the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights in 1996. Freedom of thought and speech are enshrined in our Constitution, but not only does every South African have the right to say what they think, they are positively encouraged to complain when they do not receive the treatment and services they are entitled to.

Since 1996 further legislation has been enacted to protect our right to free speech and our right to complain and have redress if our rights are compromised in any way. This is especially applicable to the Public Service and we shall expand on this issue later in this guide. For now, as an introduction to this guide, it is sufficient to note that South African citizens do not only have the right, but are expected to complain, if they are unhappy with the services they receive at the hands of government officials.

Furthermore, if a complaint about public service delivery is lodged, the person lodging the complaint has the right to a prompt, informative and helpful response. If it is found that the person has indeed been wronged or if, upon investigation, the complaint is upheld, the person has the right to redress and possibly compensation if he or she has suffered any material damage.

All of this is directly relevant to the very important task of handling complaints in the public service.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to explain the importance of handling customer complaints efficiently and effectively in order to improve service delivery and to provide you with a frame of reference for setting up a complaints handling system

The guide will give you an understanding of:

- what a complaint is;
- why customers should not only be allowed to complain, but positively encouraged to voice their dissatisfaction if they are not happy with the services they receive;

- why complaints handling is important in the process of transformation and improved service delivery;
- the key principles of complaint handling; and
- the key performance indicators of a successful complaints system.

The approach of the guide is user-friendly and it tries to avoid technical jargon and detail. It provides short answers to questions you may have while giving a broader overview as well as practical suggestions.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

For our purposes, within the context of this guide, a complaint can be described as an expression of dissatisfaction with public services, whether justified or not, and complaints should elicit a sympathetic response from the service provider.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

The fundamental point of departure in handling complaints is, if a customer thinks it is a complaint, then it is, irrespective of what the service provider might think. Part of good service delivery is the mindset that the customer is always right, until proved otherwise and even then the customer still has the right to be treated courteously.

The best and most constructive attitude to adopt in the face of a complaint is that it is an opportunity to learn and improve service delivery. One needs to heed all complaints. It is "free feedback" about services and probably one of the most important and useful means to research or monitor levels of customer satisfaction.
Handling complaints in an effective manner makes a statement about the organisational culture. It shows how important customer care and satisfaction are in the organisation. A learning organisation is one that:

- listens to its customers;
- learns from mistakes; and
- continuously strives to improve service delivery and achieve service excellence.

The Public Service has come a long way since 1994 and one should never lose sight of the major strides that have been made in providing services to all the people of the country. However, there is no room for complacency and we still have a long way to go. For example, in some instances there are still no clearly defined standards, which could serve as a baseline for lodging complaints.

Customers often find that complaining about services has little or no effect and they frequently experience the process of complaining as daunting and time-consuming. This culture can be changed by setting up a system to handle complaints constructively.

Service providers must inform customers how to complain, that is, what the complaints procedures are. If customers do not know how to complain, their dissatisfaction with a particular service or standard could easily turn to frustration and lead to destructive confrontation. A well-structured complaints handling system will prevent this from happening.

GUIDELINES FOR COMPLAINT HANDLING

All national and provincial departments should establish complaints handling systems and, in terms of the *Batho Pele* White Paper, they are required to review them n line with the following guidelines:

- accessible;
- speed;
- fairness;
- confidentiality;
- responsiveness;
- informative;
- reviewed; and training.

Each of these will be discussed in detail.

Accessible

Complaints systems should be:

- Well-publicised and easy to use.
- Free of jargon and excessive formality.
- User-friendly and convenient to the customer, with options such as face-to-face, telephonic or written communications.
- Located in venues that can be reached easily by all and sundry, including people who are physically challenged, for example, blind people or people in wheelchairs, etc.

Speed

The longer it takes to respond to a complaint, the more dissatisfied customers are likely to become. Hence:

- Time limits for responding to complaints should be set to ensure that they are dealt with promptly.
- All complaints should be acknowledged immediately and courteously and where delays are unavoidable, customers must be kept informed of progress.
- Once the complaint has been verified, a sincere apology together with a full explanation must be given to the customer.

Fairness

Complaints should be fully and impartially investigated. Public servants should guard against becoming defensive and trying to justify their actions, when a complaint is received. It should be borne in mind that many people might be nervous and hesitant to complain, thus the process should not be daunting or place them at a disadvantage

Wherever possible, the customer who is complaining should be offered alternative avenues to take his or her complaint forward, if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily the first time round.

Confidentiality

In line with the constitutional principles, the confidentiality of complainants should be respected and protected at all times to prevent possible intimidation and victimisation. Confidentiality must also be maintained so that staff who are being complained about are managed in line with the Code of Good Practice as detailed in the Labour Relations Act.

Responsive

No matter how trivial a complaint may seem, for the customer it is a real concern and he or she must be taken seriously. Full account should be taken of the complainant's concerns, perceptions and feelings. When a mistake is made or the service falls below the set standards, the department:

- must respond promptly;
- give an assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated and that remedial action will be taken; and
- take remedial action.

Informative

The system must provide good and useful information to management so that service delivery can be improved.

Reviewed

A good complaints system should incorporate mechanisms for review and evaluation. Furthermore, it should allow for feedback so that mistakes and failures do not recur.

Training

Complaints handling procedures should be publicised throughout the organisation and training given to all staff so that they know what action to take when a complaint is received.

OBJECTIVES OF SETTING UP A COMPLAINTS HANDLING SYSTEM

The objectives of setting up a complaints handling system are to:

- provide customers who are dissatisfied with services the opportunity for redress;

- gauge customer satisfaction and the extent to which customer satisfaction is being met;
- establish the “gap” between” actual service delivery and customer expectations, based on set standards and put in place development plans to address this gap; and, ultimately
- improve service delivery.

LINKS TO LEGISLATION

The most compelling mandates for the development and implementation of a Complaints Handling System come from:

- The Constitution.
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act.
- The Public Service Regulations of 2001.

The Constitution

The constitutional principles governing the Public Service state that:

- services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
- people’s needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
- public administration must be accountable; and
- transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.

All of these principles have some bearing on the importance of having a complaints system. But, fundamentally, it is the Bill of Rights that states that all citizens have the right to public services and the right to be heard if they are unhappy with those services.

The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act

This act confirms the customer’s right to consultation and redress if his or her rights are adversely affected by an administrative action. The Act upholds a citizen’s right to express his or her dissatisfaction with public services. A complaints facility is an important element in the process of providing redress.

The Public Service Regulations of 2001

Part C of the Regulations states that an executing authority shall establish and sustain a service delivery improvement programme for his/her department that must include, among other things:

- the current and future complaints system or mechanisms.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

The ultimate aim of public service transformation is to improve service delivery. The *Batho Pele* White Paper provides a framework and a practical implementation strategy for the transformation of service delivery. Its focus is on "how" services are provided. Allowing customers to complain is a strategy to promote continuous improvement in the quantity and quality of services and to be more responsive to customer needs.

The *Batho Pele* principles are listed in Chapter One of the *Batho Pele* Handbook. Several of them reinforce a customer's right to complain, for example, a customer's right to:

- ***courteous*** behaviour;
- ***transparency and openness*** **at all times; and especially**
- ***redress*** when he or she is not satisfied with the service provided.

The second *Batho Pele* "service standards" states that citizens should be made aware of the level and quality of services they should expect. This sets a baseline for customers to complain when service standards are not met.

The seventh principle is very specific about the nature of redress customers are entiltled to. It states: "If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation, and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response".

This principle demands a new approach to handling complaints. Complaints are seen by many public servants as an irritation and intrusion in their working lives. Where complaints procedures do exist, they are generally ineffective and bureaucratic and they often tend to defend or justify a department's actions, rather than solving the customer's problems.
By offering redress we do not only appease irate or unhappy customers, we change the mindset of service providers from a preoccupation with the processes of service delivery to focus on deliverables and thus put in motion a process of improving service delivery.

White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery

The White Paper attempts to introduce a fresh approach to service delivery. It puts pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behaviour within the Public Service and re-orientates them in the customer's favour. It involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services which treats the customer as "king" and enables customers to hold public servants accountable for the service they receive. Setting up a complaints system is a means of listening to customers and, if one is prepared to learn from them, to improve services.

KEY PERFORMANCE INIDCATORS

- An initial increase in the number of customers who complain as they will realise that you take them and your job of service delivery seriously.
- In time, a decrease in the number of complaints as the effects of heeding your customers kick in and services start to improve.

- More satisfied customers.
- The results of complaints are used to improve services;
- The same mistakes are not repeated.

OUTCOMES

A non-defensive Public Service that takes its customers' seriously and is determined to improve its service delivery. Listening to your customers and acting meaningfully is a dynamic process out of which a new relationship of "give-and-take" will be formed between the Public Service and its customers.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge

A massive increase in complaints.

Encouraging customers to complain could result in an influx of "moaning minnies" in other words you could be inundated with petty and insignificant complaints that are not relevant to your service delivery.

Response

As mentioned, customers have to get used to complaining responsibly. If customers are dealt with courteously and their complaints are treated with respect, they will soon learn what is acceptable and what is not. Treating customers courteously and with dignity does not mean that you must allow them to walk all over you.

Challenge

An infringement of privacy.

Providing customers with the names and telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses of people to whom they should address their complaints and queries could result in customers taking advantage of this information and abusing the persons' rights to privacy.

Response

Again, it will be a learning curve for customers and they have to learn the discipline of responsible behaviour. If treated firmly, but politely, they will soon learn appropriate behaviour.

Challenge

Staff could become demotivated.

An increase in complaints could demotivate staff and lead them to believe that they failures.

Response

Staff need to buy-in to the whole complaints procedure and realise that it is an important aspect of service delivery. A culture of customer care and a learning organisation needs to be inculcated in staff.

YELLOW

STEP 1

DEVELOP A COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Consult

A formal written complaints procedure should be drawn up by consulting:

- all the staff in the component, especially those who will run the complaints system;
- the members of the public who will use it; and
- other stakeholders such as other components of the department or entities, either public or private, whose services impact the department's or the component's service delivery and/or its customers.

Keep it simple

The complaints procedure should adhere to the KIS principle, namely "Keep it Simple" and should:

- be written in clear, simple language;
- be easy to access and operate – if it is difficult and complicated customers may feel intimidated and not use it;
- cover a range of matters including operational and policy matters;
- be reviewed regularly; and
- help staff to respond promptly and effectively to complaints.

Targets

The procedure should set and monitor clear targets for:

- acknowledging complaints;
- dealing with complaints;
- keeping people informed about the progress;
- getting contributions or comments from people outside of the organisation (peer review);

Develop guidelines

The procedure should set out guidelines for handling complaint, which should include:

- details on how to handle difficult customers, in person, telephonically and in writing; and
- instructions on what level of complaints may be dealt with at a particular level and when they need to be referred to a higher level.

STEP 2

TRAIN STAFF

Handling complaints requires competent staff, with special skills. They must receive specific training in handling complaints. This will enable them to channel complaints in the right direction so that they receive the appropriate attention as quickly as possible.

Identify staff with potential

It is advisable, where possible, to select staff who are in regular contact with customers and empower them by providing further training.

If new staff are being recruited for the complaints facility, please ensure that they have the required competencies.

Training

Training should cover:

- the complaints handling procedure;
- communication skills such as listening, questioning and language ability – the complaints facility should be multi-lingual to ensure that customers are "heard" and that they understand what is being communicated to them. It should be noted that components that do not have a direct interface with the public, do not necessarily have to have a physical, complaints desk. The complaints facility could simply be a team of people who are trained to talk to unhappy customers on the telephone or to communicate with them in writing;
- the benefits to all concerned of handling complaints well; and
- the consequences of handling them badly.

STEP 3

ENSURE THAT THE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CUSTOMERS

Your complaints procedure should be easy to use and understand and it should be widely publicised. There is no point in having a state of the art system, if nobody knows how to use it or having a very functional system, if nobody knows about it. As the old saying goes, "You can build a better mousetrap, but if nobody knows about, it will never sell."

Customers need to know how to complain. They need to feel confident in handling the complaints system and that that it is worthwhile. So tell your customers how to complain.

Complaints systems should be:

- free of jargon and excessive formality; and
- user-friendly and convenient to the customer; and
- accommodate face-to-face, telephonic, written, e-mail, etc, complaints.

Publicise the complaints system

The following means may be used to communicate the complaints system:

- posters and leaflets – clearly presented and user-friendly, displayed and distributed at appropriate places;
- newsletters – circulated to all stakeholders;

- mass media – paid-for advertising and/or free editorial where the spokesperson for the component speaks to the media about the system, why it has been introduced and how it works;
- helpdesks – can help to create positive impressions of the organisational culture. A helpdesk is a high impact facility as it provides a visible point of contact.

Remove barriers

People will only complain if they feel that you are listening to them. You should state clearly that the department:

- welcomes complaints;
- will investigate complaints thoroughly and fairly;
- is committed to offering redress and wherever possible, will find a solution; and
- will use the information to improve service delivery.

Meet special needs and deal with disabled people

Complaints systems should accommodate people with special difficulties.

Consideration should be given to people who:

- cannot read at all;
- are physically challenged;
- are deaf or hard of hearing;
- are blind or have impaired vision;
- are functionally illiterate and
- cannot read or understand English.

What the customer needs to know

Customers need to know what they can expect and what is expected of them when they utilise the complaints system.

Rights

It is helpful if customers know:

- what their rights are;
- what their obligations are
- how they can help you; and
- the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the person or persons who deal with complaints.

Support and advice

Not all customers will feel confident enough or be sufficiently articulate to lodge a complaint. These customers need support. Support can be provided from:

- within the organisation – by a named member or members of staff who will be responsible for helping people with their complaints;
- outside the organisation – customers should be informed that they can ask a friend or relative to help them with a complaint, or even make the complaint on their behalf. They should be reassured that this will not alter the manner in which the complaint is handled.

Service standards

Customers need to know what the service standards are so that they are aware of what to expect and able to complain when service standards are not met.

The longer it takes to respond to a complaint, the more dissatisfied customers will become. Hence:

- standards must define prompt time limits for responding to complaints; and
- where a delay is unavoidable customers must be kept informed of the progress and, if possible, be given some idea of when they can expect the matter to be resolved.

STEP 4

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

The following are the basic steps and considerations in dealing with a complaint:

Consider the organisational structure

The manner in which you deal with complaints will depend to some extent on your organisational structure. Basically, there are two options for dealing with complaints namely:

Locally

This could be done through individual members of staff at the point of service. This facilitates a speedy reply and encourages staff to "own" the complaint. A drawback is that a lot of useful information may never be brought to the attention of those who make strategic decisions to improve service delivery.

Centrally

This is done by channelling complaints through a customer care or complaints section. This ensures that complaints are dealt with consistently and that central records are kept to provide a useful database for management decisions regarding improvement plans.

The ideal may be a blend of the two, where front-line staff are encouraged to take ownership of the complaint and provide information to the "professionals" who are perhaps better at dealing with the unhappy customer.

You need to decide which arrangement is best suited to your needs, but whichever you choose, make sure that the following happens:

Apologise

An immediate and genuine apology, together with as full an explanation that is possible at the time, must be given. Remember, do not become defensive or try to justify the situation. Be prepared to be wrong, even if you do not believe that the complaint is valid. Remember, there can be no learning unless one is prepared to be vulnerable. A famous person once said that all learning begins with the statement “I don’t know””.

Redirecting complaints

If a complaint has to be referred to higher authority ensure that the customer is made aware of this. You could inform the customer of the possible outcome of his or her complaint, provided this can be done objectively, based on past experience and is not based on speculation. If there is any doubt, rather simply reassure the customer that the complaint will be dealt with as speedily as possible.

Fairness

Complaints must be dealt with fairly. If a complaint needs investigating, it should ideally be looked at by the manager of the component in which the complaint arose. The procedure for investigation should be:

- open, communicated to and understood by all those involved in the complaint;
- unbiased – not favouring any party;
- thorough – establishing the facts and checking details; and
- consistent – treating people in similar circumstances in the same manner.

Monitoring fairness

It is important to monitor the fairness of your complaints system by carrying out surveys of customers who have complained.

Fairness to staff

Staff should be treated fairly if a complain is made against them. This involves:

- informing them of the complaint promptly;
- giving them a chance to share their perspective; and
- keeping them informed of progress and the outcome of investigations.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained so that:

- people are not discouraged from complaining;
- accusations against staff are known only by the persons investigating the complaint.

Responding to a complaint

Complaints may be responded to in writing (including e-mail and fax), by telephone or face-to-face. In each case the response should:

- aim to answer the points raised in the complaint truthfully and meaningfully;
- be non-defensive;
- be to the point and avoid jargon;
- be signed by the responsible person, in the case of written replies;
- provide contact numbers, and
- tell the person what to do if they are not fully satisfied.

Written reply

This is the most formal way of responding to a complaint and is usually necessary where a formal complaint has been lodged in writing or where the investigation has been fairly lengthy and involved correspondence with the complainant. Written responses are particularly useful if a record of the complaint has to be kept.

Telephonic reply

In some instances it may be quicker, easier and more effective to pick up a telephone when dealing with a complaint, especially if one does not need to keep a written record. The telephone provides a less formal means of responding to a complaint.

Face-to-face

Face-to-face meetings can be formal or informal, but have the advantage of eye contact. They are particularly recommended where the dealings with the customer have been protracted and complex and where one wishes to re-establish a constructive relationship with the customer.

In some cases it may be advisable to follow up telephonic or face-to-face communications with written confirmation. This is fairly formal, but does convey a sense of professionalism. Whatever the method one chooses, remember to record details.

Providing a solution

The reason for having a complaints system in place is to find a solution to the problem and ultimately to improve service delivery.

Departments should:

- give customers the information they need in order to identify when services fall below standard;
- offer a suitable and acceptable remedy and make sure that staff are aware of options;

- where possible try to ensure that the remedy is what the customer wants;
- recognise that most people want to prevent the same thing from happening to others; and
- carry out surveys of the service to make sure that customers are satisfied with the solution.

Offering options

Both staff and customers need to know what the possible solutions to a complaint are. A menu of options should be drawn up for staff to promote consistency in the handling of complaints.

10 tips to handling complaints

1. Keep its simple – avoid long forms.
2. Use the telephone more – don't automatically send a letter.
3. Find out straight away what the customer wants you to do about the problem.
4. For less serious complaints, a quick apology is better than a long letter.
5. Give personal and specific replies – a standard reply will only make matters worse.
6. Follow the "mother principle" – treat people like you would like to be treated.
7. Do not pass the buck. If you need to refer a complaint to someone else, make sure the customer has full details.
8. Be clear about the solutions you can offer.
9. Let your customers know about the improvements you have made as a result of their complaints.
10. Remember, an increase in complaints can be goof news. It indicates that your customers trust you and believe that you take them seriously. And your customers' complaints can help you improve your service delivery and achieve your strategic objectives.

STEP 5

RECORD AND ANALYSE INFORMATION

The system should include a method to record all complaints about services and policy matters. The manner in which information is recorded should be:

- consistent and detailed;
- simple and practical and not impose a great burden on staff time; and
- useful in allowing you to monitor and respond to complaints by highlighting particular areas where services are falling below standard.

If your complaints system does not allow you to glean information that will help you to improve service delivery, then it has failed in its core objective. It should reflect a clear picture of the customers' views of the services you offer and the improvements they want.

Compile a report

Information about complaints should be published in a report and communicated to all stakeholders. It should:

- specify the number of complaints, broken down into logical categories;
- include statistics on achievement against published standards; and
- highlight problem areas.

The information should be communicated to policy-makers so that they have direct feedback from the customer.

Service providers are under the watchful eye of the media and care should be taken that the information on complaints is published in context so as to avoid unbalanced or even destructive reports in the media. When complaints are published in the form of reports and made accessible to customers, departments should prepare themselves for an increase in complaints.

STEP 6

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

The information gathered from complaints should be analysed to identify trends and areas of dissatisfaction, which should be fed into the service delivery improvement plans.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Setting up networks

Departments can set up networks with other departments. These can be powerful tools for spreading and sharing information and improving all service delivery systems and processes, including complaints handling systems. This has the added benefit of providing support and encouragement for staff, both within the department and across the public service.

Review of the system

Transformation is a dynamic process and as policies change the dynamics of service delivery will change. The complaints handling system must be reviewed and adapted to incorporate these changes.

Self-assessment and Peer-review

Refer to guides on Self-Assessment and Peer Review.

These are useful means of assessing the value and effectiveness of a complaints handling system.

USEFUL REFERENCES

- The South African Constitution, 1996
- The Public Service Act, No 103 of 1994 as amended
- The Public Service Regulations, 2001 as amended
- The Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, No 3 of 2000
- The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service, 1995
- The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (*Batho Pele*), 1997
- How to make a complaint; Cabinet Office- United kingdom;www.cabinet-office.gov.uk
- How to complain – can you hear your customers complain; www.howtocomplain.com

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INTRODUCTION TO HOW CONDUCT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Service delivery must be monitored constantly to make sure it is on track

The only and essential way of ensuring that service delivery is on track and meeting the agreed standards is to monitor it constantly. There are many ways of monitoring service delivery and all of them or most of them have a role to play in ensuring optimum service delivery. Some of these means of monitoring service delivery focus on the performance of individuals while others focus on the performance of teams, units or projects.

Self-assessments are a means to monitor the efficacy of teams, units or projects in meeting their service delivery commitments. It will be mentioned several times throughout this guide that services cannot be monitored unless there are clear standards against which to measure performance. These standards must be set and agreed in consultation with the customers.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to introduce you to the concept of self-assessment and to provide you with a frame of reference for conducting a self-assessment
This guide will give you:

- A definition of self-assessment
- Explains how self-assessment can be used as a learning opportunity;
- Provides you with guidelines and best practices on self-assessment;
- Outlines the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of self-assessment;
- Illustrates the links to legislation and the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- Suggests possible challenges and responses to these;
- Takes you through a step-by-step guide on how to conduct self-assessment;
- Offers some key considerations to think about during the process;
- Refers you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

WHAT IS SELF-ASSESSMENT?

Self-assessments are a means to monitor the efficacy of teams, units or projects in meeting their service delivery commitments.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

The self-assessment process lends itself to the following learning opportunities:

- An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.
- Allows new ideas and suggestions to emerge as a means of improving service delivery.
- It draws managers attention on day-to-day matters and allows them to learn more about the organisation and improve service delivery

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

The following guidelines need to be borne in mind during self-assessment:

- get buy-in and commitment;
- communicate the instrument widely;
- appoint people with competencies;
- provide training and development; and
- select components who are ready.

Each of these will be dealt with in detail.

Get buy-in and commitment

Get buy-in and commitment from all stakeholders so that the assessment process receives everyone's full support.

Communicate instrument widely

Communicate the assessment instrument widely –show benefits of measurement, explain the main objective as one of improving service delivery - not to be punitive or judgmental.

Appoint people with competencies

Appoint people who demonstrate the required competencies to manage the self-assessment process

Training and development

Identify and provide appropriate training and development for the task team so that the assessment yields accurate and valid results.

Select components who are ready

Select components who are ready and willing to participate in the process. Those who have translated their strategic objectives into action plans with standards and performance indicators.

THE OBJECTIVE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

The objective of self-assessment is to measure the performance of a team or project by means of an internal assessment. This will:

- assist components to establish a baseline of where they are in terms of performance so that they are able to ascertain the gap that exists between the current state and the service standards they have set in line with customer expectations;
- afford components an opportunity of assessing their contribution towards the overall achievement of their department's strategic objectives and organisational effectiveness;
- ensure the implementation of developmental and service delivery plans; and
- enable them to track the achievements of the component.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

Measuring performance against agreed standards is an essential tool to track service delivery against the strategic objectives of the department and/or the component. It is impossible to measure anything unless there are clear standards against which to measure it. For example, if someone should ask how long it will take to process an application for a new ID document, they need to be told that it will take 10 days, two weeks or three months, whatever the case may be. The time given in the answer, namely, ten days, two weeks and three months are standards of service delivery.

The most important link that self-assessments have with *Batho Pele* are the need to set and publish clear standards in consultation with the customers in order to ensure efficient and effective service delivery that represents value for money.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- the publication of service standards; and
- a report on the findings of the assessment, with a focus on measurement of performance in terms of the set standards.

OUTCOMES OF SELF--ASSESSMENT

The outcomes of effective self-assessment are:

- Improved service delivery – substantial improvements to both the quality and quantity of public services.
- Service standards will improve progressively with each assessment – continuous improvement. Measurement of performance points the way ahead and the ability to deliver is pushed from the hub to the spokes of the service delivery wheel so that better services are delivered on the ground.
- A healthy team spirit is fostered and individuals emerge as teams, committed to attaining a common goal.
- The component's commitment to service delivery is reinforced and the component stays on the "cutting edge".

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge

Getting buy-in and commitment from senior management.

Response

Involve senior management in the process from the outset. Consult, explore possibilities, conduct feasibility studies, including cost effectiveness against budgets, etc, especially the cost of developing the assessment instrument.

Challenge

Getting buy-in and commitment from staff.

Response

- Appoint a competent task team – with appropriate skills to manage the process.
- Provide relevant training and development for the task team
- Communicate assessment instrument widely –show benefits of

measurement, explain the objective – one of improving service delivery not to be punitive or judgmental.

Challenge

A survey that discloses a low baseline of service delivery could demotivate staff.

Response

Make people aware of changes, motivate them and gain commitment to improved service delivery by reassuring them that a low baseline survey indicates where the component is at present and that the only way forward is up. Emphasise that they need to keep focus on where the component wants to go as defined in the strategic objectives.

STEP – BY – STEP GUIDE TO SELF – ASSESSMENT (PHASES)

THE PHASES OF SELF – ASSESSMENT PROCESS

PHASE ONE

DIAGRAM

PHASE 1 COMPULSORY ORIENTATION PHASE

STEP 1

Get buy-in and commitment.

- Get buy-in from all team members to the self-assessment process and decide on an appropriate assessment instrument.
- Present the concept of self-assessment, with a relevant assessment instrument, to top management – obtain authority and endorsement from management to conduct the assessment and to use the instrument.
- Get buy-in from unions and other relevant stakeholders so that the assessment process receives everyone's full support.

STEP 2

Identify and appoint a Change Manager

- Each department should appoint a Change Manager who is willing to project manage the assessment process. It is advisable for the manager to be two levels below the top level of the organisational/departmental structure (middle management). The appointed manager must be given the necessary training and development to ensure that the process yields accurate and valid results and the desired outcome of improved service delivery.

Responsibilities of the Change Manager

- To consult with senior management and select/develop an appropriate assessment instrument that measures the performance of components against agreed objectives and standards.
- To manage the assessment process by:
    - Developing a plan for the self-assessment and to ensure that there are structures, systems and procedures in place to support the implementation of the process.
    - Co-ordinating the assessment in line with the agreed plan.
    - Monitoring the process to ensure that it measures performance against the standards set in the Service Delivery Charter.
- To select and appoint 10-12 members to serve on a task team to conduct the assessment.

- To provide appropriate training and development for the task team so that the assessment yields accurate and valid results.

The effort and enthusiasm contributed by the Change Manager are an important factor in the success of the project.

Competencies required to manage the process
In addition to generic managerial competencies for the Public Service, the following are considered as critical competencies to manage self-assessments:

- **Leadership**
  - Leads and directs the department's and components' involvement in the process.
  - Gets buy-in and support from management, task team and staff to the process; as a driver for continuous improvement in service delivery.
  - Ensures that the assessment is conducted in a non-threatening manner.
  - Provides expert advice and guidance to members of the task team and to management.
  - Monitors and evaluates the progress and impact of the self-assessment process.

- **Communication**
  - Must be able to exchange information and ideas in a clear and concise manner to explain the process and influence others to achieve the desired outcomes of the assessment.
  - Ensures that there is a communication plan in place that provides for the sharing of information on organisational performance throughout the process.
  - Ensures that accurate information is generated and passes on to management, so that meaningful efforts can be made to improve service delivery in line with the strategic objectives.

- **People skills and management**
  - Encourages staff to maximise their outputs to achieve accurate results from the assessment process.
  - Creates an environment in which staff feel free to come forward with new ideas and suggestions on the assessment process and ways of improving service delivery.

- Gets staff to view the results of the assessment as an opportunity for development and to work towards improving service delivery.

- **Project management**
  - Draws up a project plan for the assessment process.
  - Obtains all the resources required for the assessment
  - Monitors and keeps the assessment on track.
  - Ensures that the results from the assessment are translated into an action plan that will lead to improved service delivery.
- **Organisational awareness**
  - Understands the department's strategic direction, strategic objectives and the standards that are being measured.
  - The ability to adopt a holistic view of the organisation and see the "bigger picture" of the transformation process.
  - An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.

STEP 3

SELECT AND TRAIN A TASK TEAM

Appointing the task team

The task team should consist of a maximum of ten members. It is important to identify employees who are willing to participate and who demonstrate the required competencies. It is advisable for the team to be represented by the following members of the component being assessed:

- the head of the component;
- 2 to 3 members of the management team; and
- 4 to 6 members, representative of the job categories and levels.

Responsibilities of the task team

- To provide support to the Change Manager in charge of the process so that the desired outcome of the assessment is achieved.
- To provide input and suggestions on measurement instruments.
- To keep the channels of communication open so that the manager is aware of day-to-day issues.
- To conduct the self-assessment, using the agreed assessment instrument.

Competencies of the task team

In addition to their respective job competencies the members of the task team should demonstrate the following competencies:

- **Leadership potential**
  - The ability to communicate the need for self-assessments to relevant stakeholders.
  - The ability to motivate staff to see self-assessment as a means of improving service delivery.

- **Organisational awareness**
  - The ability to adopt a holistic view of the organisation and see the “bigger picture” of the transformation process.
  - An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.
  - An understanding of the department’s strategic direction and the standards that are being measured to enable them to identify and implement an appropriate assessment instrument.

STEP 4

PLAN THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Develop a work plan for the assessment process. Involve the task team so that they have a firm understanding of the process. Define the roles and responsibilities of each team member. Define outcomes, communication plan, reporting and feedback mechanisms, etc.
- Select components who are ready and willing to participate in the process and who have translated their strategic objectives into action plans with standards and performance indicators.

STEP 5

CHANGE MANAGER GATHERS DATA ON RESULTS TO DATE

- The Change Manager analyses the component’s performance to date against the standards and strategic objectives. Evidence can be obtained from the following sources:
  - results of surveys;
  - annual reports;
  - files;
  - budgets; etc.

STEP 6

AWARENESS AND RESULTS SESSION

The Change Manager facilitates a one-day Awareness and Results workshop to introduce the assessment team to the instrument and the self-assessment process, and to present to them the findings from the assessment of the results/data that have been collected in Step 5 above.

OPTION A PHASE 2

SIMPLE SELF -ASSESSMENT

Option A can be used as a Simple self-assessment. It is advised that this option be used:

- to introduce departments who have little or no experience of self-assessment and the application of self-assessment instruments; and
- when departments are not certain whether the assessment instrument is appropriate to measure the department's performance.

Although very limited time is devoted to the assessment process, it is possible to generate a fairly accurate assessment of the component's performance and to identify the areas for improvement.

Carrying on from Phase 1 above, the steps in a Simple self-assessment are as follows:

STEP 7(a)

ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The Change Manager (using the services of an appropriately experienced and qualified consultant, if deemed necessary) facilitates a one-day Assessment and Improvement Planning Session for all the employees in the unit/component/project, which is to be assessed. The first part of the day is devoted to introducing the assessment instrument and explaining the assessment process. The major part of the day is spent on a rapid, perception-based assessment of the department. This assessment is informed by the data on results gathered earlier by the Change Manager in Step 5 above.

The last section of the day is devoted to a rapid review of the key strengths and areas for improvement, identified during the day. An action plan is formulated and individuals are assigned to work on the areas for improvement.

STEP 8 (a)

REPORT ON FINDINGS

It is important that notes are taken of the main issues raised during the workshop in order to report to management and to support the improvement plan.

STEP 9 (a)

IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- If necessary, consolidate inputs.
- Assign priorities.
- Agree responsibilities and milestones.
- Set up improvement teams.
- Provide appropriate resources.

OPTION B PHASE 3

BASIC SELF- ASSESSMENT

This is a perception-based assessment (i.e. evidence is not gathered to verify the team's conclusions) based on the criteria of the assessment instrument, in the form of a workshop.

STEP 7 (b)

PREPARATION

The assessment team members need to structure their thoughts around the functions of the department, using the organisational structure as a basis for considering the criteria and the types of issues that they will be debating at the Assessment Session. This will give them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with any specific aspect of the unit's operations. The assessment team members may also canvas the views of a cross-section of employees within their unit to provide a more informed view.

STEP 8 (b)

ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The Change Manager (assisted by a consultant, if deemed necessary) facilitates a two-day workshop. The objective of this workshop is to consolidate the inputs gathered in step 8(a) and for the assessment team to reach consensus on the performance of their component, based on the assessment instrument. The assessment team then agrees on the assessment scores and develops a profile of the component's strengths and areas for improvement.

The team then goes on to review the output from the assessment and to agree an action plan to address the vital issues, which will drive service improvement in their department.

The minimal time required to conduct a Basic Self- Assessment means that a department's senior management team can readily be involved in the process. However, if it is not possible for senior management to be involved for the full two days, it is important that, as decision-makers, they are involved in the action planning session. This may mean that the session has to be split into two single days. This will have the advantage of providing time for collecting any final data required for the workshop.

STEP 9 (b)

FINAL REPORT

A feedback report must be generated on the key points emerging from the workshop, including overall performance, strengths and areas for improvement, as well as suggestions as to how improvements may be achieved.

STEP 10 (b)

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- If necessary consolidate inputs from operational units.
- Review areas to be addressed.
- Assign priorities.
- Agree responsibilities and milestones.

- Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- Set up improvement teams.
- Provide appropriate resources.

OPTION C PHASE 4

INTERMEDIATE SELF -ASSESSMENT

This is a rigorous, in-depth form of self-assessment where each member of the assessment team collects evidence to support his or her suggested scores, before the scores are discussed in the assessment session.

STEP 7(c)

TEAM GATHERS EVIDENCE

The assessment team must agree on the method to be used to collect data. They could collect the data in groups or as individuals. The Change Manager collates the data and information obtained from the task team to plan the structure of the assessment session.

In preparing for the assessment session, the assessment team will be able to structure their data gathering so as to arrive at more robust scores against each of the assessment instrument's criteria.

STEP 8 (c)

ASSESSMENT SESSION

The Change Manager (assisted by the consultant) facilitates a two-day workshop, which assesses the department in detail against the assessment instrument. This workshop brings together the inputs gathered in step 8(b) and achieves a consensus within the assessment team of the performance of their component against the criteria of the assessment instrument. The assessment team develops a profile of the component's strengths and areas for improvement and agrees a set of consensus scores.

It is advisable that the scope of the Improvement Planning session be agreed at this stage.

STEP 9 (c)

EXTERNAL VALIDATION (optional)

Support from the consultant will entail elements of validation and calibration as a natural part of the process. The facilitation provided by the consultant will ensure that assessment teams do not give themselves inappropriate scores. If departments wish to add an extra element of external validation, including a feedback report and the chance to be rewarded for excellent performance, it can be introduced here.

STEP 10 (c)

IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The consultant works with the Change Manager to align the action planning activity with existing business planning processes. The jointly facilitate a one-day workshop.

The output from this event is an outlined action plan, which is aligned to the component's organisational goals and can be used to drive and monitor progress towards improvement objectives.

STEP 11 (c)

FINAL REPORT

The consultant produces a short written feedback report on any key points emerging from the process, including overall performance, strengths and areas for improvement as well as recommendations as to how improvements may be achieved.

STEP 12 (c)

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- If necessary consolidate inputs from operational units.
- Review areas to be addressed.
- Assign priorities.
- Agree responsibilities and milestones.
- Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- Set up improvement teams.
- Provide appropriate resources.

Co-ordinate action planning and delivery with a definite indication of visible and specific accountability.

PHASE 5

COMPULSORY REVIEW

As is the case with all good interventions, a review of the self-assessment must be conducted. This is not a separate activity and must form part of the normal business review process of the department. As with other approaches, the process should be repeated at appropriate intervals to:

- check whether the milestones set were achieved;
- examine any key business measures;
- assess the overall process control; and
- review any plans the department may have for “breakthrough” activities.

This ensures that there is continuous improvement in the department.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Some key lessons learned by departments/components who have already implemented a self-assessment method for performance measurement, are listed below.

- The process will be much more successful if the objective from the start is performance improvement rather than simply to attain a high score.
- The purpose is to help a department/component to improve more quickly and address the challenges facing it. Honest self-criticism is vital.
- The assessment will lead to genuine improvement action only if senior managers are committed to the approach and take real ownership of the output.
- It is important to communicate with the whole department/component throughout the assessment process. This is vital for the credibility of the improvements the department/component plans as a result.
- The Change Manager, who facilitates the assessment, must have good facilitation skills, credibility within the organisation and must

develop a reasonable level of knowledge about the assessment instrument.

- The assessment against the assessment instrument is a diagnostic, not an improvement initiative of itself. The assessment instrument helps to ask questions, it cannot provide the answers itself. Use of the assessment instrument or any other tool is part of good management, not a substitute for good management.
- Get expert help and train those taking part in the assessment.
- Do not worry unduly about low scores, these reflect where the department/component is at present and not where it is going. Everybody has to start somewhere.
- Act on improvement opportunities, failure to do so undermines the credibility of the department/component.
- Do not expect quick fixes. Although there may be some things that can be put in place quickly to achieve immediate benefit, the process is about continuous improvement.

Size of departmental entity to be assessed

Self -assessment can be initiated in:

- the department as a whole; or
- individual operational units within a department.

The culture and structure of the department and the benefits expected, will influence the particular approach adopted. Experience, however, has shown that when departments undertake self- assessment for the first time, they usually start at operational level as a pilot exercise, before implementing it across all components of the department.

After completion of a self-assessment, departments can decide whether they wish to submit to an external validation in order to be considered for an award or not.