

## **1. Title of the case**

Total Quality Management in an authority of sovereignty and intervention administration

## **2. General description of the organisation and/or project**

The District Administration Authority of Wels-Land is an authority of sovereignty and intervention administration. This means especially that they do not render services of general interest, like for instance the supply of electricity or water nor do they operate facilities like indoor swimming pools or libraries.

In Austria, they are downright the prototype of a national authority. The district administration authority has to implement law. The contents of the official decisions are legally given and are principally not negotiable with the customers; discretionary power is only partly granted to the authority.

The district administration authority inheres power of force and command, they formulate and assert law for the citizens. Sometimes they must have their directives enforced by power of police, if they are not observed.

We are committed to the principle of obtaining effects for the greater good of the society, for instance in the range of air and water pollution prevention, security, health and traffic.

In concrete practice, for instance, the district administration authority issues passports and driving licences and award proofs of trading licences which can also be revoked under certain premises. Moreover, the regional administration authority imposes fines, for instance for exceeding the speed limit, water pollution or illegal pursuit of trade.

### **3. The main content of the case**

Substantial contents are the use of total quality management in the context of sovereignty and intervention administration. Without abandoning the traditional qualities of the sovereignty administration (like predictability, equal treatment, orientation towards public interest, proportionateness...), instruments and tools of the non-governmental performance delivery are used for the advancement of the sovereign administrative performances. To achieve this, the terminology of quality management had to be translated into the administrative language and the tools had to be adapted to the specific conditions of the sovereignty administration (e.g. involuntary customers).

The emphasis consists in the optimization of processes and results, the improvement of the competences and the change of attitudes of the employees, the fulfilment of customer expectations and the realization of an overall concept of quality.

As tools are used, for example:

Benchmarking with other district administration authorities, process optimizing workshops, in-house training of executives and employees (within an overall personnel development concept), establishing of a customer service point, complaints management, quality circles, customer forums, quality dialogue (including customer opinion polls), quality standards, stimulating proposals and agreements concerning objectives.

In the year 2000, the Total Quality Management (TQM) according to the EFQM model (European Foundation for quality management) met these requirements most of all; the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was – at least to us - not yet known at that time.

### **4. The reasons behind the case**

The district administration authority already implemented various individual measures in the past decade for administrative optimization, e.g. customer guiding system, target agreement talks and in-house conclaves for executives. Despite quite remarkable improvement effects there was an uneasy feeling that the actions taken would represent an "incoherent patchwork". This led to the search for a conclusive overall system for advancement measures. Such a

system should meet the following demands: Suitable for an administration service board of the sovereignty administration; no "documentation hypertrophy"; simply manageable; as little expenditure as possible in relation to the attainable benefit.

## **5. The actors behind the case**

The originator of our project, to which we gave the title "Quality from us and for us", was the Director of the Office of the Regional Government. The project management was incumbent on the District Head Officer as leader of the authority, who was supported by an internal project team, and by a steering team in the following implementation phase. The latter essentially consisted of the topic responsible people in the nine criteria, a member of the staff council and three further district head officers. The task to be pursued by the topic responsible people is to detect an actual call for action and to follow up the implementation measures.

We were currently supported by the Executive Department of the Office of the Upper Austrian Regional Government, in the introductory phase by an external consultancy and in individual detail projects by other district administration authorities. The employees were involved into the project insofar as a member of the staff council was and still is a formal member of the project team and the steering team respectively; both in the introductory phase and also in the implementation phase. On the other hand, during an introductory workshop, the employees were informed about the contents of the project and invited to cooperate as describers and assessors in the introductory phase as well as in temporary working groups for the implementation of detail projects. During the introductory phase, information was served steadily about the current status of the project; the intended implementation measures were presented in a final workshop. In quarterly meetings, the employees get informed currently and regularly about implementation measures.

In the introductory phase, our customers were questioned by the aid of self developed questionnaires. In the implementation phase, in the context of a region-wide quality dialogue, a further customer opinion poll was carried out, whose results gave reason to the steering team to compile and also implement target-oriented measures. Moreover, we invite members of certain customer segments to customer forums. As our most actual measure, we have developed feedback cards in order to receive from our customers constant feedbacks on selected quality standards (like e.g. accessibility of the employees).

In detail projects we have also cooperated with other authorities, for example in the development of telephone standards.

The current support and attendance of the project by the executive department as well as by other district administration authorities proves to be helpful, also the support by an external consultancy in the introductory phase.

## **6. The process leading to success**

The implementation of TQM within the district administration authority of Wels-Land envisaged first a one year's introductory phase, which finally lead to transferring TQM into continuous operation. The introductory phase was characterized by an introduction into QM-thinking and the planning of project management, the formation of a project steering group, investigation of the actual situation by teams of describers, the subsequent evaluation of strengths and improvement potentials including concrete implementation measures by teams of assessors, the evaluation of the results by the project steering group and the executive managers, information events for all employees as well as the definition of a working programme (catalogue of measures).

The project steering group and the describer teams consisted of executive managers and employees; the assessor teams additionally of external assessors. The targets of the project were compiled in an introductory workshop and finalized by the executive managers, the concrete implementation measures were fixed by the executive managers under involvement of the employees.

In the following phase of the implementation and continuous operation a steering team was set up, which meets regularly. Additionally, topic responsible people for the nine criteria were nominated, whose task is the identification of current calls for action as well as the following-up of implementation measures. Furthermore, (partially temporary) working groups are established and annual working programmes are compiled.

An overview of the main features and tools of our project was already provided under point 3 ("Main content of the case"), therefore the quality tools "complaint management" and "optimization workshop" shall be described here as examples.

- We see complaints as chances to learn and stimulate them by posters, text modules in documents to external customers, a reference in our homepage and feedback cards. For complaint reception, a complaints office was established, behaviour recommendations were given to the employees and a form for complaint collection was elaborated. Standards were developed for the follow-up treatment of the complaints. The final analysis and controlling of the complaints is done by the manageress of the complaints office, regular talks between the manageress of the complaints office with the district head officer as well as by an annual discussion of the complaints and the consequences in the steering team.
- Our optimization workshops serve to discuss and work on selected processes, in order to obtain from them recommendations for implementation and a suggestion for a consistent process presentation in the sense of best practice. The process responsible persons of all district administration authorities under leadership of one selected district administration authority are included. The following implementation follow-up and an evaluation are undertaken by the responsible district administration authority.

An evaluation of detail projects is done currently, in particular on the basis of the reports of the individual topic responsible persons in the meetings of the steering team. An overall display of all of our previous results took place 2005 for the first time on the occasion of our application for the administrative prize "Administration with ideas: Simple - faster - customer-oriented ", which was advertised by the Office of the Federal Chancellor.

At the beginning of the TQM project an investigation of the present status was performed; its results, however, were not presented in terms of quantity.

Only afterwards, that is to say after conclusion of individual subprojects and after an evaluation of the results of individual process analyses, different measurement variables were comparable.

At present and above all, the duration of actions within selected ranges (trades -, water -, forest and nature protection law) is measured on the basis of an electronic procedure information system and compared region-wide with other district administration authorities ("EVI" - Elektronisches Verfahrensinformationssystem).

A further measuring instrument is "CATS-ESS" (Cross Application Time System - Employee Self Service), which likewise creates possibilities of comparison with other regional administration authorities. This serves above all for the simplification and rationalisation of procedures and the simplification of the accounting of travel expenses; the data are entered directly by the employees. On the basis of these results quarterly ratios are evaluated and, among other things, consulted for a comparison and a potential reduction of the cost per unit with a set of processes.

Furthermore, reports of the Independent Administrative Senate of the Land of Upper Austria are evaluated and taken into consideration as a measurement variable (decrease of redresses as a reference to a quality increase of decisions).

The evaluation of the individual results points out our strengths but also possibly existing potentials of improvement, which are to be taken advantage of.

## **8. The main obstacles of the case**

A substantial obstacle during the introduction and above all also during the implementation of TQM in the district administration authority of Wels-Land was the fact that not all executive managers have participated and supported the team in all phases of the project. This could be alleviated, however, by the acceptance of at least one additional department manager into the steering team. Moreover, not all employees were convinced of the project from the beginning. Therefore we enabled further employees from all departments to participate in the project.

At the beginning of the project we decided to reach our targets by many (small) steps. We did this, above all, in order to facilitate a continuous implementation and not to confront the employees with accomplished facts. In some cases, however, this led to the fact that "resounding successes" were not immediately noticeable for the employees.

In a sense, however, difficulties arise with complaint management: Employees worry about disadvantages if complaints concerning their work area become generally known; for this reason they do not always pass customer complaints on to the complaints office.

We strive to disburden our employees from these fears.

A further obstacle was the overlay with other (region-wide) projects (customer opinion poll, questioning of the employees, introduction of a new long-term management and enterprise concept for an effect-oriented regional administration). The situation became even more aggravated by the fact that the additional time and effort caused by TQM had to be mastered without additional personnel beside the day-to-day business.

By dealing thoroughly with the subject of TQM and receiving positive feedbacks of our customers, most of the employees could be convinced of the benefits of quality management. They recognized for instance, that by the process analysis simplifications become visible (and measurable).

The problems and obstacles are tackled in different ways: For instance they are discussed at a quarter meeting or during talks with the district head officer. Some became obvious by questioning the employees. Just as different was the approach to an accomplishment of these hurdles: In order to provide information about the employees to the customers, we started to attach photos of the employees in the corridors. There was some resistance at the beginning, which could be overcome by convincing and finally also by the obtainment of a psychological appraisal.

## **9. Main sources of inspiration behind the case**

The pulse generator for our project was, above all, an informative meeting of the Office of the Federal Chancellor about "Quality Management in Public Administration" by the end of the 90's.

Further suggestions were supplied by informal and formal best-practice events with other district administration authorities as well as an excursion to the Bavarian district administration offices of Nuernberg-Land and Ebersberg. Our recent quality instrument, the feedback card, for example is strongly inspired by a similar model at the district administration office of Ebersberg.

As relevant technical literature, the "Manual of Quality Management in Public Administration" by Peter Dunkhorst, Nomos publishing company, 1999, was very helpful.

**10. The most important lesson learned**

A substantial experience in the implementation of the project was the immense importance to include both employees and executive managers in each phase as extensively as possible. It has also been proved that in many cases an even stronger integration of the employees would have been beneficial, in order to ensure the transparency, but above all the identification of everyone with the project.