

CUT THE RED TAPE REVIEW: SUMMARY OF REPORT

Method

1. We consulted all HQ staff by questionnaire. Regional Offices and Agencies conducted a parallel exercise. We interviewed 10% of the Department's secondees and had meetings with senior executives of BT, British Gas, National Power, BP, Marks & Spencer and ARCO (small oil company). We had substantive discussions with MoD, Health, Social Security, Treasury, National Heritage and Transport. We met Heads of central Divisions, representatives of the OSPREY team and user group, Ministers and Private Office staff. We visited the DTI file store (1.3m files, 24 miles of shelving, £1m to run). We found that internally DTI uses 75m sheets of paper a year.

Findings

a) Major inefficiencies are:

Copy lists - extensive over-copying, thoughtless re-use of incoming copy list.

Internal notices/publications - poorly targeted, too much circulated for individual retention.

Ministerial cases - inefficient process, documents seen 3 times. Over-copying of routine cases.

Briefing - over-copying of routine briefs. Little advice from Private Offices on what Ministers want.

Unnecessary rules - T&S, typing forms, ordering tea, official entertainment.

Unnecessary paper recording - Too much business done on paper rather than on the phone, excessive recording of quite small details. Notes of meetings and submissions too long.

And there were many more examples.

b) External constraints

Public Records Act requirements are a major constraint. Exactly what this means in practice is, however, very poorly understood. Files are not in good order. Too much rubbish is kept and we do not focus efficiently on our important documents. Poor filing practices are costly in storage. Common problem area for other Departments. Health have launched a major initiative.

Some Treasury requirements are still irksome. We have made headway in some areas but need to keep up the pressure.

c) Other Departments

Most are asking the same questions we are. Briefing, over-copying, lengthy submissions are common problems. Improvements are being sought through introduction of electronic mail, clearer definition of objectives and priorities, more flexible ways of organising staff and doing business. All recognise that Private Offices have a key role in promoting change.

d) Private sector

Private sector does much more business on the phone or in short meetings. They don't record every action to several layers of senior management as we tend to do. Senior management don't expect to be concerned with detail. Board papers are kept very short. Informal progress reporting or exception reporting the norm. In DTI, follow up to meetings was often slow. Significant operational change in major organisations is possible if everybody in the organisation really believes in it. It has to be driven from the top.

Recommendations

Paras 30-33 of the Report set out many detailed recommendations. Main ones are:

Ministerial correspondence: New "one-shot" system for all letters except those from other Ministers. One copy sent only to Action officer. Action Officer copies around when advice is submitted. Reply not copied around.

Copy lists: Split into copies for action (ca) and copies for information (ci). Issue new guidance on this.

Briefing: Copies only to those attending meeting and for file. Private Offices to advise what Ministers need.

Annexes: Only top, file and action copies get annexes.

Notes of meetings: Produce only when necessary. Keep short using bullet points. Where appropriate record only agreed action points.

Short submissions: Wherever humanly possible, keep to "no more than 2 pages" guidance for Ministerial papers. Private Offices to send back anything too long. Adopt similar guidance for internal committees and Resource Management Group papers. Use standard format for Ministerial minutes for (almost) all business.

Office Notices etc: Output from central Divisions to be better targeted and presented unbureaucratically. Office Notices etc grouped into weekly shots. Divisions to decide themselves how best to handle.

Rules: Simplify T&S and official entertainment rules. Do away with grade requirements for Timed Immediates, ordering tea and coffee. Kill typing forms within Divisions. Review annually continuing need for committees, standard procedures.

Filing: We need a new Edict which sets out clear guidance and shows where accountability and responsibility lie.

OSPREY: Press ahead. Make sure lean paper handling methods and disciplined filing procedures are part of the operational change to an electronic office.

2. These changes will quickly produce reductions in paper and bureaucracy. Bureaucracy will, however, grow back unless we make real cultural changes: show that the Department means business in changing the way it operates. Everyone has to sign up to this: Ministers, Private Offices, senior officials and central Divisions have to be key drivers of this process; Heads of Management Units have to reinforce the message and to search out ways of improving efficiency within their own units; and we need to tap into the many ideas of people at all levels in the Department for improving efficiency.

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DTI - THE WAY WE WORK

OUR AIM

To operate in a direct and straightforward way, constantly seeking the most cost effective methods of working.

HOW WE DO IT

1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To meet our aim we need to take action in several areas:

Priorities

We must concentrate on getting results. The Department's objectives feed into objectives for all Divisions, Branches and each one of us individually. We all have targets to meet. These are our priorities and must provide the focus for all we do.

Management Culture

We must be an organisation where everyone's contribution at all levels is valued. We shall delegate work and responsibility as far as possible.

We must be ready to challenge accepted ways of working if we can see room for improvement.

We shall have detailed central rules only where conformity across the Department in procedures is necessary. Elsewhere we shall set out framework principles and leave management to make their own decisions.

Working methods

We must have lean working practices with all unnecessary procedures stripped out.

We must keep it short and simple. Senior staff want essential analysis and relevant facts, not masses of detail.

We must plan work carefully so that our own input and that of others can be organised most effectively.

2 THE DEPARTMENT'S COMMITMENT

We **mean** what we say about tighter working methods. To show it we shall:

- Make straightforward working practice and a challenging approach qualities covered in the new staff appraisal process.
- Build these ideas into all induction and management training programmes.
- Review annually the need for and operation of formal Committees.
- Ensure output from the centre is better co-ordinated and targeted and unbureaucratically presented.

Tighter working methods are basic to Quality and contribute directly to the Department's objective of providing a professional, high quality, accessible and responsive service.

3 PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

To streamline working methods we need to question how we do things and keep what we do direct and straightforward.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Any ideas? Heads of Management Units have a direct responsibility for improving cost effectiveness and reducing bureaucracy in their area. Anyone at any level who has an idea for improving efficiency, however small, should put it to their manager or to their HMU. Their ideas **will** get a positive response.

PRODUCING DOCUMENTS

Do you really need to write it down? Could you make a phone call instead? Wherever practical we should try to work as much as possible on the phone or in short meetings. Put on paper only what you really need to tell others about or what you need to record (remember though, that important things agreed on the phone **do** need to be noted).

Be aware of the effects your working methods have on others!! Don't let things become urgent because you have delayed getting round to them.

Written style

Be brief and punchy - simple language and short sentences.

Use bullet points where it helps.

Submissions

Wherever humanly possible keep to the "no more than 2 pages" guidance for Ministerial submissions (one page for the President) and use the standard format (Issue, Recommendation, etc). Put supporting material in Annexes. Anything too long risks being sent back!

Try to stick to this for other work where possible - eg Resource Management Group and internal committee papers. It helps to concentrate the mind.

Coaching

Detailed checking and repeated redrafting is inefficient. We must coach and encourage staff at all levels. Give guidance on drafting where needed. Discuss with staff what is required and advise on how to set about it, with the aim of letting them then get on with it.

Copying

THINK! Copying unnecessarily to others wastes their time. Neglecting to copy to those who should know will waste your time and theirs when you have to put it right later.

Copy lists - Who really needs to know? Don't just recycle incoming copy list! Split copy list: put at the top those you want to take action (label them "ca" rather than current "cc"); below with "ci" label, put those getting document for information only. This will help recipients to see quickly what is expected from them.

NEW

THINK AGAIN!: Is there anyone else - eg FRM, ES, Regulatory Divisions, Solicitors - who should be included?

AND AGAIN!: Is there anybody who really does not need to know at this stage and could be cut out? Try not to copy to several people down a management chain in an individual Unit - unless they are in different buildings. People can circulate further within their Unit if necessary.

Annexes

Top, action and file copies only have Annexes. Anyone else can ask if they need them.

NEW

Nil returns

Don't expect others to respond on paper. Assume silence is assent wherever possible. Where you must have a nil return do it on the telephone.

Long documents

If you are copying around a large document indicate which part of the document action addressees should be concerned with. (They then don't have to read the whole lot!) If possible, provide a suggested format for response so it is easier to see what is wanted.

MINISTERIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NEW

All Ministerial correspondence (excluding only that from other Ministers) will be copied to the Action Officer only.

Action Officer will copy further only if necessary to enable him/her to produce advice.

Action Officer will return correspondence with advice and draft reply, copying at this stage to those people he/she considers needs to see it. Don't copy routine cases to senior officials (generally G3 up) or other Ministers. They don't need to see: their offices usually bin them.

Private Office will copy the outgoing letter to the Action Officer only. The exception will be if the final letter is materially different from the draft in which case it will be copied to those on the upward copy list.

This revised procedure will mean that everybody sees the correspondence once only instead of 3 times as at present.

BRIEFING

For Ministerial meetings, Private Offices will advise on Ministers' requirements. Don't accept open briefing requirements (eg "the Minister is meeting Mr X, please produce a brief."). Get specific instructions unless you know better than anyone else what the meeting is for.

Is a brief really necessary? Could a short oral briefing be used instead? Discuss with Private Office or whoever requires the briefing.

Keep briefs short and focused. Try to use Ministerial format (Purpose/Objective, Line to Take, Background - see "Working with Ministers" booklet) for **all** briefs.

NEW

*Copy **only** to people attending the meeting (and one copy for file). If it is a Ministerial meeting the briefing should advise Private Office which officials will need to see a note of the meeting.*

MEETINGS

Meetings are expensive in other people's time.

Is a meeting the best way to achieve your objective? Could it be done more effectively in another way - make a few phone calls, a short note to others?

Who needs to come? Ask only those you need in order to achieve what you want.

Does everyone know the time, place, agenda, have background papers and know the purpose of the meeting?

Set an end time for your meeting at the outset - to concentrate minds. Don't wait for stragglers.

Notes: Is a note necessary? Think about it! If the meeting has been to agree action can you just go away and get on with it. Do you need just to record action points? If your meeting has been to gather information or to discuss policy issues then you will need to record the outcome - but be brief!

PAPER HANDLING

The documents crossing your desk - by paper or electronically - are devouring your time. Be ruthless with them. You don't have to read everything!!

Filing

Units need to keep a record of the course of their business - the development of policy issues, handling of applications, awards of grants, for example. But we don't have to keep everything! Some material we only need to keep for a short time. At the moment too much junk is finding its way onto the files. **New guidance will be issued shortly.**

Taming the In-Tray

A full In-Tray is inefficient - either you won't know what's in it or you'll waste time ferreting around to find papers that might still be there. Work at keeping it empty. Sort out papers for Action which you need to retain (separate tray!), send the rest onto others/file/Green Bin.

Prioritise Action documents and do first the important things that need to be done today. Don't do easy, low priority things first! Read a good Time Management Book.

If, at a glance, a document is of no concern to you check if those who should have it have a copy. If so, BIN IT. Don't pass it on - others may do the same and will end up on your files. Take your name off the copy list!!

If the document is of peripheral or short-term interest only make arrangements to keep for a while and then bin eventually. You don't want these things on your files either.

Don't get drawn into reading documents on a "nice-to-know" basis (unless you have time to spare!). Stick to "need-to-know" and your own priorities.

Commenting on drafts

Be helpful! Provide amendments in ready drafted form rather than as vague observations. Comment on matters only within your own experience and responsibility. Don't redraft other people's English - not your business! Apply a Value-Added test - will what you have to say make a material difference? If not, keep quiet.

Faxes

Do you really need to send confirmatory hard copy? It often causes confusion at the other end or gets binned. New machines in the Department will use plain paper so fax copies won't fade when stored.

Booking-in

Is it really helpful to you? Lots of secretaries and managers have agreed it isn't and stopped!

Floats

Do you need one? Does it keep people informed? Or does it perpetuate a "things are done on paper" culture? Think about it!

CLUTTER

We keep too much unnecessary paper in offices. This is wasteful of space and costly. Look at the paper around you - do you need it? Send files not in regular use to the file store. Keep minimum stock levels. Don't hoard papers - if they are important file them or keep on temporary file/folder, if not BIN. If you don't know what's in your cupboard could you just throw the lot away? Remember the Department's storage limit - 3.5 linear metres per person!

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Little things are important too. Re-use envelopes. Use double-sided copying. Why does anyone use virgin paper for drafting/notes when there's so much scrap around? It all saves money.

If we all adopt tighter methods of working we should see very real time savings for everyone.

**DON'T BIN THIS!!
KEEP FOR REFERENCE**