

National Air Traffic Services (NATS) – Process mapping: gaining alignment across multiple operating centres

Background

NATS operate multiple-sites to gain geographical coverage of all UK-air space. In 2003 a strategic decision was made to amalgamate M&E services provision across three of the major sites in the portfolio using outsourcing; with a view to, ultimately, integrating the function across all sites UK-wide. To this end, the international Facilities Management service provide, EMCOR Facilities Services Limited, were introduced as the M&E services provider across these centres.

In order for the amalgamated M&E function to operate efficiently and effectively it was recognised that alignment of the strategic intent, and working processes, of the function across the sites was required. Adept Management Limited (AML) was introduced to lead this change process.

The ‘alignment’ process: Understanding ‘shared’ objectives

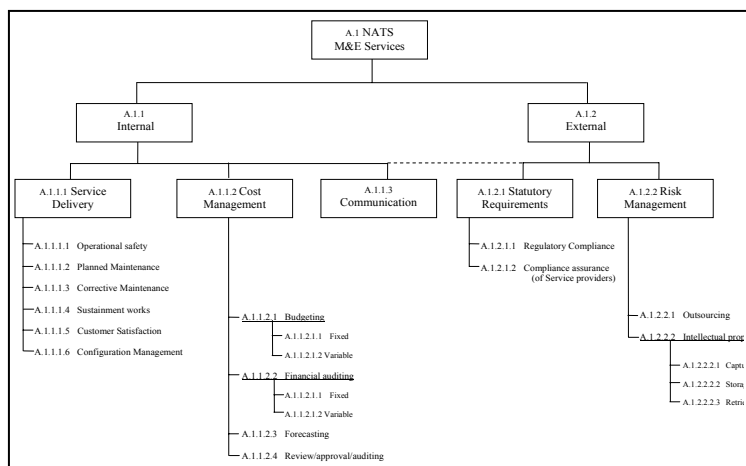
AML called and facilitated an initiatory workshop, at which key NATS and EMCOR personnel met to derive the strategic intent for the provision of M&E services. To ensure that the NATS business gained optimum benefit from the outsourcing model, NATS representatives worked closely with EMCOR personnel to develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between the working processes at each site. Only once clarification had been achieved and the ‘base-line’ position was agreed was it possible to integrate EMCOR’s delivery practices, market knowledge and expertise into this aligned perspective.

The attendees identified a number of objectives that they believed, once delivered, would enhance the ability of NATS to deliver M&E services, and would thus support the achievement of the overall NATS business goals. These were identified as:

- Alignment of NATS sites in terms of their processes, methods, and measurements.
- Alignment and integration of EMCOR into the NATS unified delivery processes.
- Capture innovation, best practice, and knowledge across the three sites to enable it to be stored, shared, and reused.
- Demonstrate the value that NATS M&E deliver to the wider NATS business.
- Work collaboratively & ensure cohesion between NATS and EMCOR personnel.
- Develop meaningful performance measurement approaches – Critical Success Factors and Key Performance Indicators.

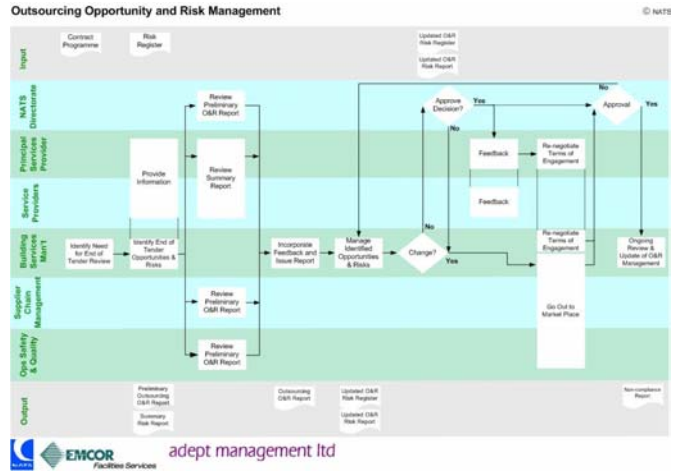
The alignment process: generating the ‘generic’ Framework

The first stage in the alignment process involved the derivation of a generic M&E services operating framework. AML’s consultant facilitated a process of negotiation that resulted in a level of decomposition being agreed that was ‘generic’ for all three sites and as such, would provide a framework in which each site’s working processes, performance measures, and operating procedures could be compiled and stored.



Once complete, the attendees agreed ownership of the sub-elements of the framework (i.e., the core processes) and were given responsibility for formulating the processes that underlay each. Members of AML's consultancy team met with NATS personnel to help them externalise the processes, before developing them into process maps. This was achieved not by proposing standard templates, but by seeking to understand the processes in such a way that those holding the knowledge could make it explicit in a structured and consistent manner.

In order to achieve this swim-lane diagramming was utilised. This format enabled interface points between business functions to be captured, which in turn identified collaborative decision making points and ensured that buy-in to the processes could be sought from the other business functions. Each process map also included input and output requirements, generally taking the form of documentation or procedure sets. These cross-process interfaces ensured that the entire process set was fully integrated.



Where the knowledge holders identified 'key' elements within the process maps a further level of detail was defined. These elements, which were termed 'Key Business Sub-Processes' (KBPs), were then utilised to provide increased clarity, and enabled critical success factors (CSFs) to be

KBPs	CSFs
<p>KBPs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify End or Tender Opportunities & Risks Appraise of M&E Strategic Intent for Outsourcing Workshop to Identify Risk and Opportunities Business Plan Comparison Assign Risk Actions to Owners Provide Preliminary End of Tender Risk & Opportunity Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Outsourcing Dependency Model of All Service Providers Generated O&R Report Completed Comparison of Industrial Best Practice Completed Appraisal of NATS Strategy
<p>Key Business Sub-process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilises Corporate approach to Outsourcing Building Services Management not fragmented Unified subcontractor/high level ownership of corporate approach Corporate Business Plan for corporate Building Services Outsourcing Corporate Business Plan for local Building Services outsourcing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of cooperation from Service Providers Poor alignment of centres and/or business functions No clear objectives Lack of guidance Poor perception of the value of the approach Poor leadership and its associated risk Incomplete / inadequate dependency model
<p>Output</p>	<p>CSFs</p>
<p>Title: Identify End of Tender Opportunities and Risks</p> <p>Project: Hera Operations</p> <p>Drawn By: J Hammond</p> <p>Date: Sep 2004</p> <p>Rev: C</p> <p>adept management ltd</p>	<p>Activity</p> <p>NATS</p> <p>EMCOR Facilities Services</p>

developed to ensure that the ultimate users would fully understand the criteria against which the process would be deemed to have been completed successfully.

To enable the movement toward achieving these CSFs to be monitored and measured Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were embedded. Existing KPIs were utilised where appropriate. However, where none existed or the current indicators were deemed to be inappropriate, more specific KPIs were derived and introduced.

The final step in the development stage involved auditing the existing NATS procedures to identify where they should sit within the Process framework. Whilst this served to provide the final layer to the M&E services provision operating framework, it also enabled the site-specific procedures to be reviewed and, where possible, unified to create a single, consistent set of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) across all sites (enabling, for example, the seamless transfer of personnel between sites without the need for onerous induction regimes and compliance checks).

The result

Although the implementation of the new operating framework and its working process is still ongoing, there has already been significant recognition of the benefits achieved through the application of this approach. NATS M&E management have presented the work at the highest level of the business as a prime example of Supply Chain excellence – with the benefits derived including:

Reduction in head count balanced with:

- Maintaining ability to deliver safety accountability
- Improved service delivery
- Delivery of cost savings (c.£100k - £150k p.a)
- Reduced risk of knowledge depletion.

Amalgamation of M&E management within 3 major sites (including 2 operational centres) with:

- One overriding management responsibility
- A common set of processes
- A common set of procedures

Additional benefits are also starting to materialise. Previously, audits invoked thoughts of additional work and worry associated with procedure compliance. With the unified processes in place the M&E function is now looking to extend an open invitation to the auditors. It is envisaged that these processes will enable the auditors to focus on assessing awareness of the process by the people doing it to determine if they are seeking to improve the process.

Likewise, internal audits by the M&E management can now look to identify where the processes are being performed differently. This allows identification of areas of non-conformity, enabling appropriate questions to be raised. Whilst this ensures that the management are fully aware of whether the day to day activities are serving to achieve the CSFs, it also provides a means of understanding how the processes can be further enhanced. For example; non-conformity may be a result of the process having changed over time. When this is the case the 'new' process can be reviewed and, if found to be enhancing, captured, allowing the maps to be updated accordingly. This is enabling improvement opportunities to be identified, considered, and adopted in short timescales; a factor which is working very well to help the NATS business to improve holistically.

Finally, the process alignment is now enabling EMCOR to innovate in their role as service provider. This means that NATS are gaining direct benefit from the ability of their suppliers to work seamlessly as part of the NATS business. In effect, the single unified process framework is ensuring that the opportunities enabled by the outsourcing model can be fully realised.

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