



IT Systems Doctor

Problem Presented

I was asked to help implement a "paperless office" within one department of a large retailer.

Action

At an early stage it became apparent that the organisation was affected by several problems.

Initially it was agreed I should meet a small number of managers and staff in order to understand how the department operated. However each person I met raised issues which they felt needed to be addressed further, and this led to me meeting a wider range of people, and exploring other areas.

From these meetings it became evident that everyone I spoke to felt there were issues within the department leading to poor performance that were much more pressing than a paperless office. The conversations I initiated gave the staff room both to think outside their normal "box" and to speak out so that I could clearly understand the issues which affected them.

In particular, the company had implemented a major financial system some years before, but the processes within the department had not been changed to recognise this.

Actual Problem

There were many areas where inefficiencies existed, with significant duplication of effort. This was costing money, wasting staff time and causing considerable frustration.

A lot of time was being wasted on manual operations which their system had been designed to simplify.

Outcome

I was able to make recommendations in several areas. Considerable improvements in performance could be made by simply agreeing minor changes in the way of operating - for example, making better use of e-mail, which allows information to be attached and transmitted rather than printed and copied.

Out of this, many repetitive tasks were eliminated and the system used more effectively.

Two consequences were (a) major cost savings and (b) big improvements in staff morale at all levels, with systems now being accepted as helpful rather than a hindrance.