

The Warehouse: XSOL Spurs Productivity

Increased productivity and a positive attitude towards business processes were the big payoffs for The Warehouse, one of New Zealand's largest retail chains, after they adopted XSOL's business mapping product.

Before XSOL, The Warehouse - like many companies - did not lack business processes, but was missing visibility and consistency of these processes within its Merchandising division.

Having a fragmented set of processes meant that staff were not always able to function effectively within their role, and were often frustrated by rework and duplication.

Pauline Short, the Business Analyst & Trainer involved in reviewing the Merchandising processes, says, "What XSOL did was make our processes more visible and helped to unify them."

"If you don't have visibility, variation of practices occurs which makes it more difficult for managers to manage the business. For example, XSOL can highlight the situation where you have a number of people doing a certain part of the same process, but they are doubling up and this is time-hungry."

"By removing this type of activity, we are freeing up time for staff to concentrate more on analysis and have input into important day-to-day issues."

The organisation was originally drawn towards XSOL because it was looking for an easy-to-use product that created process flows and published documentation around those flows. In 2005, the XSOL roll-out started within the Merchandising department.

The first stage was the documentation of existing processes - which involved consulting with staff and going through the jobs they currently did, including how those jobs related to the activities of other staff. Pauline and the team are working with staff to implement improvements.

Organisation

The Warehouse New Zealand is a nationwide general merchandise retailer with 85 stores, 6000 employees and sales of NZ\$1.5 billion.

The company sells a range of products including apparel, entertainment and technology products, music, sporting and gardening goods and groceries.

Application

Role clarification, process mapping and process improvement throughout the buying support functions of The Warehouse.

Business benefits

- Increased productivity
- Greater staff 'buy-in' and enhanced understanding of business processes
- More effective staff induction and training
- Increased staff collaboration

“What XSOL allows us to do is project the processes up on to a screen so all relevant staff working on a particular process can discuss issues with their colleagues. It gets everyone around the table looking at the same picture.”

As they are completed, The Warehouse’s buying-support processes are published on the company’s intranet where they can be seen by all staff with access to a PC.

Role clarification came about during the implementation of XSOL as Pauline and the team worked with individual staff members and documented the tasks they performed. Pauline says this allowed staff to get more clarity about how processes connected to each other, and expand their scope into previously undocumented areas.

The Warehouse has now developed this role documentation to the stage where it can use a role matrix to reflect position descriptions.

Visibility and consistency, along with the simplicity of the implementation of XSOL, is bringing about a culture change among the XSOL users. It will be an ongoing, constantly evolving body of work as processes are rolled out and improved and XSOL becomes a part of day to day life at The Warehouse.

“XSOL has helped to take us so much further from where we started,” Pauline says. “It’s changing mindsets about how we approach business processes by bringing staff together - encouraging uniformity, increasing collaboration and allowing great ideas and best practice to be spread throughout the organisation.”