



## **An Evolution - Tree Cutters to Tree Huggers**

### **The Northern Health - Building Engineering & Maintenance Service Case Study**

*'The environment should be everyone's concern. I don't know we get that physical with the trees (hugging) but using MEX Mobile has made us all feel we are making a positive contribution to the environment. An added bonus is that we have already saved approximately 1.5 FTE across the region as a result of reducing the workloads on admin!'*

*Colin Woodward (Senior Maintenance Engineer)*

This case study will look at the transformation of the Northern Health Building Engineering & Maintenance Service (BE&MS) to an effective 'paperless' maintenance organisation.

As a by product, this transformation resulted in a saving of just over 100 reams of paper per year. Environmentally this means an annual saving of over 6 trees, 30 000 litres of water, 0.4 tonnes of coal and assorted chemicals and a reduction of 25 000 sheets of paper in landfill.

According to the Federal Government's Green Office Guide there is also a reduction in greenhouse gas emission of a staggering 2.5 tonnes!

### **Background**

The Northern Health (TNH) is the key provider of public healthcare in Melbourne's northern region. The BE&MS department supports a quality, innovative health care service for patients and communities.

TNH operates five major public healthcare facilities: The Northern Hospital, Bundoora Extended Care Centre, Broadmeadows, Craigieburn and Panch Health Services.

The Building and Engineering Maintenance Service comprises of eleven full time internal staff and also relies on numerous contractors to carry out specialised services for the various health care facilities.

## Challenges

The challenges faced by TNH were typical of any engineering organisation implementing a change process. These included but are not limited to;

1. Creating a system and processes that support an effective paperless maintenance organisation
2. Changing a mature 'set in their ways' workforce to a mobile workforce utilising modern technology
3. Increasing the amount of quality data entered into MEX to support legislative requirements and also meeting Health Care Accreditation Standards

The key stakeholders in the process were Colin Woodward (*Senior Maintenance Engineer*), Kellie Lee Loft (PA) and tradespeople including (Al, Alex and Mick).

Involving people from every key department from the outset enabled 'buy in' and hence commitment to the project. It is this commitment that was the key ingredient to the success of this project.

## MEX and TNH

TNH purchased MEX in July 2005 and by the end of the year were using the system to control Work Orders, PM's and Requests. This continued until early 2008 when TNH upgraded to regions to allow them to support the other four facilities within a single database. This change prompted the beginning of the evolution which began with a statement of intent:

*"TNH wants an effective paperless maintenance system in operation by 2010."*

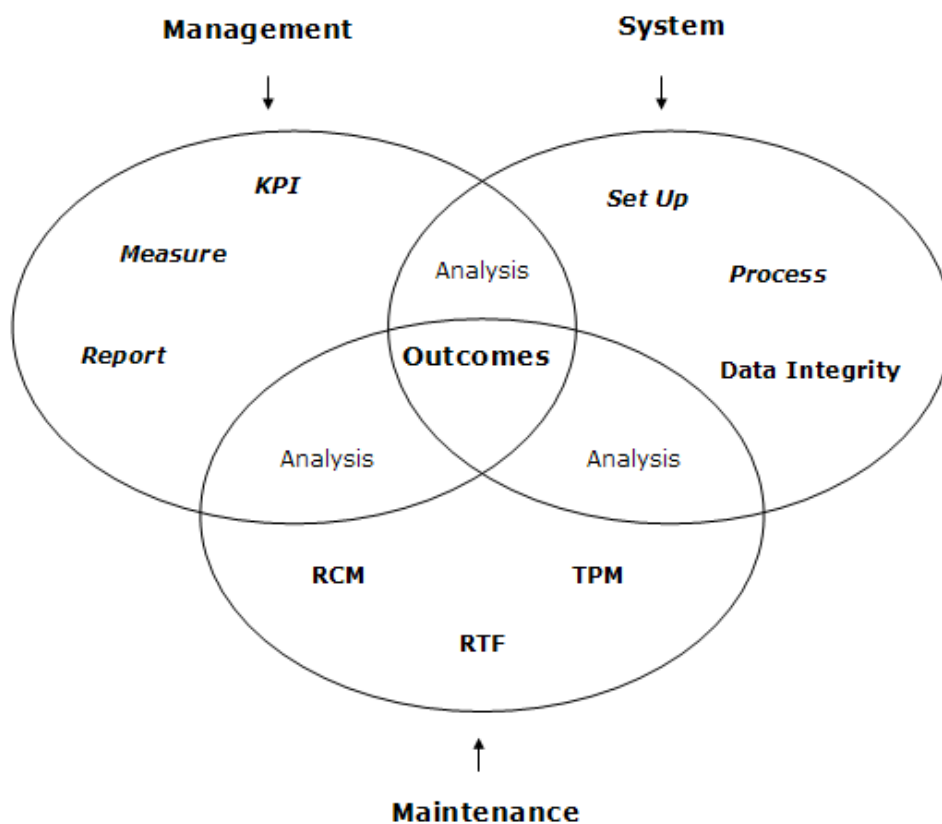
This statement was the outcome that all future decisions would be based upon. The first of these decisions was to look at the options as to who would be the best maintenance software provider to meet this outcome. As part of this process MEX (and along with other providers) had an opportunity to demonstrate how they could work with TNH to achieve the paperless system within the time frame required.

After a number of presentations it was clear that MEX was the only provider who could confidently meet the needs of TNH. Colin Woodward succinctly sums up the reason by stating

*'MEX listened to what we wanted from the start. Other software providers wanted to give us what they had not what we wanted!'*

From here MEX was also committed to achieving the outcome and began with tackling challenge number one 'Creating a system and process that support an effective paperless maintenance organisation.'

The strategy used for tackling this task was based upon the 'MEX Health Check'\* framework as per the diagram below.



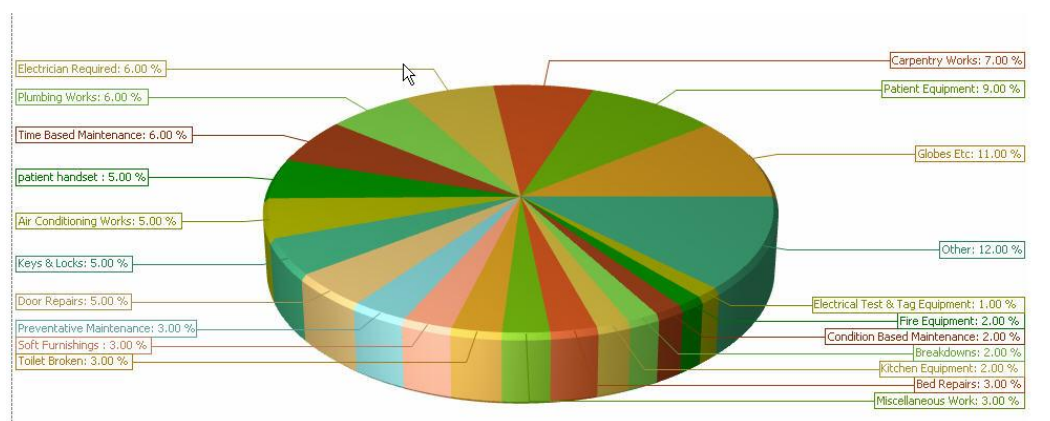
The Health Check looks at various elements to see if the maintenance management system supports the potential to succeed in achieving the desired outcome. There were a number of recommendations and on going strategies that Kellie implemented and continues to work on that greatly aided the success of this project.

*\*Health Checks analyse your system and supporting process as a free service under your annual maintenance agreement.*

An interesting point of note out of this free check was that TNH had around 20,000 Assets, of which, after three years of operation, only 1800 Assets had ever had a record against them. This is a typical issue, usually resulting from inheriting an Asset Register that has been constructed with uncertainty around *'what is an Asset'*. As a guide to what is an Asset ask yourself the questions below. If you answer **'yes'** to any of the questions then the item must be entered as an Asset in the Asset Register.

- Does the item require regular maintenance?
- Do you wish to see or report history on the item?
- Does the item have to meet any legislative requirements?
- Is the item of value (usually determined by your finance department)?

In this case MEX provided a 'script' that stripped out all the items that were not an Asset allowing a clean and effective Asset Register to begin working with. Kellie was responsible for the system set up and management including aligning the trades, setting up PM's with the view to **\*\*regionalising the database**. As part of reporting and management a report was created by MEX that helps monitor the KPIs for TNH.



Once the system was running more effectively and the staff had got familiar with the processes the time had come to tackle challenge number two, *changing a mature 'set in their ways' workforce to a mobile workforce utilising modern technology*.

The platform for this challenge had already been set some time ago when Al, Alex and Mick were willing stakeholders in the change process. It was now the responsibility of Kellie to nurture these guys to drive the change from the shop floor.

**\*\* Regions simply means having a single database for multiple locations with the ability to regionalise the database so each location only sees those Assets that belong to them.**

In early 2009 the evolution began, MEX Mobile version one was introduced to the staff a little sooner than was first planned.



This introduction was expedited due to the fact that Work Orders were getting lost and staff were not recording all the required information. Having accurate information was imperative in meeting legislative requirements and meeting Health Care Accreditation Standards. The work was being completed but we all know how auditors want data, data and more data!

TNH purchased a number of M3 PDA's from Alex Osborne, BCP Media and were trained (in house) in the use of MEX Mobile v1 by Kellie within hours. Colin also states that *'we have had pay back on the hardware already.'*

Kellie said that once the three guys started using MEX Mobile it was *'remarkable how quickly and enthusiastically they picked it up.'* It was this enthusiasm that filtered through to the other staff that slowly brought them 'on board'.

TNH subsequently upgraded to MEX Mobile v3 upon its release in August 2009. The change to version three has *'made everything simpler, the sync time has been reduced dramatically and having the ability to sign Work Orders off is just fantastic!'*

Kellie believes that an indication of how the staff feel about using a mobile solution rather than paper can be summed up with the following comment,

*The tradespeople now chase us (admin) to let us know finished jobs have not been removed from the listing, what a turn around!*

The use of MEX Mobile allowed an increase in data quality due to the fact the screen only shows fields that require populating. This made it easier to use and hence staff recognised the importance of filling these fields in correctly. This in turn made challenge number three easier to achieve. Increasing the amount of quality data entered into MEX to support legislative requirements and also meeting Health Care Accreditation Standards.

All legislative requirements are currently being met and Kellie has recently presented to the committee on Health Care Accreditation Standards. This presentation on how TNH has achieved an effective 'paperless' maintenance organisation' was very well received and are now waiting on the written report.

It was also commented that this is the first health care maintenance facility to achieve such a result in the state of Victoria!

## **Conclusion**

There are two comments that sum up the whole evolution experience.

When asked what advice would you give to others thinking about going to a paperless system the response from Colin Woodward was

*‘Just do it! It is that simple. It is quite remarkable that it has taken less than twelve months to move the whole department to a paperless system. This is also great for the environment and I only wish we had done this earlier.’*

The last word is from the maintenance staff when asked how MEX Mobile has impacted on their role, they were unanimous in saying

*‘We could not live without it, we love it!’*

For more information on MEX Mobile please visit [www.mex.com.au](http://www.mex.com.au) or phone +61 7 3392 4777

Data for the environmental savings taken from the website [http://www.naturalstrategies.com.au/sustainable\\_living\\_guide/sustainable-work/save-paper-and-forests](http://www.naturalstrategies.com.au/sustainable_living_guide/sustainable-work/save-paper-and-forests)