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creating sustainable business advantage

Case study

Name: Property Investment and Management Company

Sector: Property Maintenance

Location: London, UK

Working Together to Maintain Better, More Sustainable Communities

When this leading property maintenance company took over the contract to provide repair services to 8,000 homes on behalf of a London Borough council, it needed to work effectively to maximise efficiency on behalf of its client, the Borough's not-for profit housing partnership which is dedicated to improving homes across the borough and delivering better services for residents.

Background

A major player in the property maintenance sector, this leading provider of expert maintenance services to the social housing, health and social care sectors secured a five year contract to deliver a range of repair and maintenance services – including day-to-day responsive repairs and void maintenance services – to 8,000 properties across a London Borough.

To support effective partnering with its client, the organisation took the decision to co-locate its operational team within the Housing Partnership's offices so that staff could work alongside the client's call centre and repair teams.

As a not-for-profit organisation that manages council housing on behalf of the local Borough Council, the Housing partnership is strongly focused on delivering quality and value in its provision of day-to-day management services to over 6,500 tenants and 1,500 leaseholders. Enabling the Housing Partnership to achieve its strategic goals would be a primary objective for the operational teams.

Key challenges

- Create a 'one team mentality' with personnel working in unison, utilising streamlined processes that extend from the initial client call centre interface to operatives in the field
- Efficiently undertake day-to-day responsive repairs and void maintenance, delivering against a public sector housing partnership's exacting KPIs
- Improve 'first time resolution rates' to boost client satisfaction and maximise potential contract margin

Key gains

- Field operative productivity is up 71%, thanks to scheduling improvements and the proactive management of potential impediments to operative performance
- Achievement of 95.6% performance against voids management targets, significantly reducing void durations for the Housing Partnership
- Improved operational performance has reduced the number of weekly 'missed appointment' slots by 75%

The challenge

Enabling the Housing Partnership to deliver customer-focused and cost-effective landlord services to its residents meant its property maintenance partner had to be able to manage unpredictable workloads without compromising on service delivery. But performing against stringent KPIs set by the Partnership was just part of the challenge.

Operational performance had to be maximised to ensure that contract margins could be maintained for the duration of the contract. What's more, operational performance would be a key deciding factor if the Housing Partnership was to exercise an optional contract extension at the close of the initial agreement.

"We need to manage a complex series of relationships that include residents, the Housing Partnership and the Council. Enabling a sustainable commercial relationship that delivers against the expectations of all parties is a delicate balancing act – one that has a minimal margin for error," explained the Director of Non-PFI Social Housing at the maintenance company.

Having inherited a substantial staff team who were transferred across, in accordance with TUPE regulations, from the previous contractor, these personnel needed to be brought up to speed fast and weaned away paper-based job systems to a fully automated field-based hand-held PDA systems.

"We inherited personnel with an embedded way of working. What's more, our supervisors were all new to their role, taking up the reins under what felt like an overwhelming pressure to perform – for example, getting the repair backlog under control," continues the Director of Non-PFI Social Housing.

To maximise customer satisfaction rates and transform working practices, the company turned to Managementors to bring its disparate teams together, upskill its supervisory personnel and enable the new unit to operate cohesively in a manner that would maximise organisational – and operational - efficiency.

Back to basics

Managementors redesigned the management operating system, giving supervisors the tools to identify issues that were inhibiting the performance of field based operatives.

Accurate reporting on operative availability, utilisation and visits per call was developed to enable supervisors to evaluate actual operational performance against planned activity. Daily, weekly and monthly review meetings were initiated, during which operatives and supervisors came together to identify issues that were impeding productivity in the field.

Improvements to job planning – combined with a new process that ensured residents received a reminder call ahead of a scheduled maintenance visit to ensure they would be at home – have helped to significantly reduce the number of visits required to complete a job. Within three months the number of weekly 'missed appointments' was cut by 75%.

A key priority was the management of 'voids'. By minimising turnaround time on empty properties, the maintenance provider would make it possible for the Housing Partnership to maximise rental income and ensure waiting tenants could be housed more quickly. Managementors developed a powerful voids management tool, providing up-to-the-moment visibility of status and eliminate lag time between survey, specification, work commencement and final snagging. This gave the maintenance company the ability to accurately report void processing delays resulting from 'on hold' awaiting contractors working for the Housing Partnership who were tasked with installing a new kitchen or boiler, for example.

In just three weeks, new performance measures were agreed with the Housing Partnership, and the maintenance company's void performance is now higher than other void management contractors utilised by the Partnership.

"With Managementors help, we've completely re-engineered the delivery of maintenance services – putting residents at the heart of our operations."

Social Housing Director

Next steps

The next objective was to get the repair backlog under control. This would enable the maintenance operation to move from working on the 'back foot' and evolve more proactive working practices.

Managementors worked alongside supervisors, helping to develop their skills and supporting them to become managers who could confidently – and proactively – manage the performance of field operatives. Supervisors were moved out of the field and their roles clarified. As office based coordinators, they were given clear guidelines on the scope of their responsibilities and daily tasks.

Volume profiles for reactive work were produced and utilised to generate resource models, identifying areas of excess capacity that could be refocused to bring work back into the operation that was currently being subcontracted out. Today, the maintenance company's team of schedulers are able to fine tune and match existing workforce and field resources to the daily work roster.

Finally, activities were undertaken to strengthen the interface between the contractor and the Housing Partnership, in a bid to ensure the most accurate resident and fault information is captured by the call team in the Customer Contact Centre. This would strengthen the ability of the maintenance provider's team to respond first time to resident issues.

"Managementors provided the skills, insights and resources we needed to bring our teams together and generate performance improvements that have helped transform how we work on behalf of the Housing Partnership."

Director of Non-PFI Social Housing.

Outcomes

In just three months, the productivity of the maintenance company's field operatives underwent a major transformation. A startling 71% increase in productivity was generated through improved scheduling and the identification and addressing of issues that were impeding the ability of operatives to perform in the field.

"We are now performing well against industry benchmarks and there's a palpable 'one team' mentality that's resulted in our field and office based personnel working cohesively together to the benefit of the client and the residents we serve," says the Director of Non-PFI Social Housing.

The improvement in productivity has enabled the maintenance provider to reduce the overdue repair backlog from 2800 jobs to just 150. What's more, improved scheduling combined with better resource balancing means its reliance on sub contractors has been significantly reduced – all of which adds to the bottom line.

"Reactive maintenance isn't the most glamorous end of the business, but Managementors' highly professional approach helped elevate the performance and self-worth of the entire team," concludes the Director of Non-PFI Social Housing. "We now have a motivated and highly effective operation that puts residents at the heart of everything we do."

Contact us to find out what Managementors can do for you

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