

STARR & ASSOCIATES

Case Study: **Cox Communications**

Performance Management Strategy Saves Millions in Costs for Cox Field Service Operation

Project Highlights

Organization: Cox Communications

Industry: Multiple System Operator

Challenge: Cox needed to improve efficiency by introducing new work activities into its decentralized field services operation.

Solution: Starr and Associates assessed the operation and implemented a new performance model. It has so far produced more than \$150M in savings for the company.

Cox Communications, with more than 6.2 million subscribers, is the third largest cable entertainment and broadcast services provider in the United States. Six years ago, Cox's field service organization asked Starr and Associates to create a performance management strategy for improving workforce performance and reducing costs. So far that investment has yielded more than \$150M in savings for the company.

"Truck rolls are big cost drivers for a multiple system operators like Cox," says Jamal Starr, Starr's CEO. "Each truck roll costs the company \$75 to \$80 dollars. If we could reduce the number and duration of these site visits while improving service outcomes, we could save the company tens of millions of dollars."

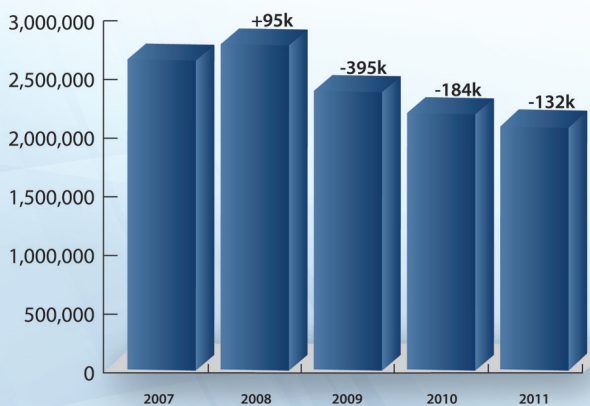
Understanding the Requirements

Cox had significantly expanded its field service organization over several decades by buying smaller cable operators. By 2006 these acquisitions had produced a decentralized field service operation serving municipalities in 18 states.

Cox's portfolio includes services for accessing digital cable television channels, surfing the Internet, and making calls via a digital telephone network. Cox asked Starr and Associates to focus its initial efforts on improving field service for cable television subscribers.

Starr's field team began its investigation by reviewing data from field service's regional operations and quickly determined that work processes varied considerably from location to location. This finding wasn't unexpected given the organization's history, but it meant that the team needed to standardize service and repair processes for thousands of Cox field technicians before it could address the ultimate goals of maximizing workplace efficiency.

Total Company Annual Trouble Call Volume



Going to the Field

The Starr team began visiting Cox field service operations and writing detailed descriptions of the work activities technicians were using to install and service customer accounts. It then trained Cox employees to ride with field technicians during truck rolls and to conduct time studies for each work activity.

“This research allowed us to determine the most statistically valid metrics for the work activities, Fowler says.”

The Starr team used this data to facilitate focus group discussions with field service personnel and supervisors. These conversations enabled management to determine where performance values should be for the field service organization and also helped define a new set of problem and solution codes for Cox’s ICOMS billing system. These codes were essential for ensuring that Cox would be able to measure progress as new service and repair processes were instituted company wide.

Implementing a New Performance Model

The Starr team, accompanied by Cox executives, returned to the field to brief the field technicians on the new work activity procedures and performance measures. The new performance model was essentially rebooting the field service operation and introducing a new model for service delivery.

“It was essential for them to understand that we were starting a process of continuous improvement,” Monte Fowler, Starr vice president of operations says. “That meant learning and using the standard work activities and also capturing start and stop times using the billing system. The new performance measures would allow us to audit progress and benchmarks for how we were doing. Where necessary, we were ready to map out plans for closing gaps in performance.”

Measuring Success

Cox is using reports generated from billing system data to provide performance feedback to managers and other field service employees. The reports



validate the effectiveness of new work activities and ensure that organizational decision makers remain engaged in the continuous improvement process. The reports also enable the field technicians to compare themselves to their service peers. Individuals who are underperforming can be assigned to supplemental training and one-on-one mentoring and then monitored to see if further interventions are needed.

“Cox is doing performance management right,” Starr says. “They have been willing to take the time and make the investment of resources to nurture a significant culture shift within the company.”

Close tracking of performance metrics indicates that the field service organization is continuing to improve its operational efficiency. These results are being achieved even as the company rolls out new and more complex service offers for its digital cable subscribers.

Starr is now in the process of applying its performance management strategy to the Cox’s Internet, digital telephone, and business services operations.

About Starr and Associates

Starr and Associates is an industry-leading provider of professional services ranging from project management to comprehensive workforce management solutions. Our consultants leverage management experience and the latest technology to design, implement and maintain your customized business solutions.