



How Change Management from Netwatch Solutions Helps IT Organizations Meet Organizational and Strategic Goals



Plano, with a 2009 population of over 268,000, is a growing North Texas city. In 2008, the City received national attention as being the nation's Most Affluent City and Best City to Create Wealth. JCPenney, EDS - an HP Company, Frito-Lay, Perot Systems and Rent-A-Center are all headquartered in Plano. Several technology giants have major R&D operations there including Texas Instruments, Ericsson, McAfee, CA, Intuit and Alcatel-Lucent. These companies attract highly skilled workers from throughout the US and abroad.

Plano now has a large, diversified economy. Well known for its impressive roster of corporations and technology giants, Plano is also home to small companies and start ups. Many of its residents are transplants from other regions of the U.S. and the world. As a result, Plano is a diverse place. Here, you will hear many foreign languages, see different places of worship and taste foods from throughout the world. Although Plano is made up of many people with different cultures, religions and ethnicities it shares common values.



“We have commitment from the top that creating an IT culture change is vital to our success.” IT Director, City of Plano



Many organizational units in any business or at any government agency often fall way short of their strategic goals. Not so for Technical Services, the information technology service provider for the City of Plano, Texas.

When run properly, Information Technology organizations are stewards who help businesses achieve their strategic goals. Strategic planning for Plano includes “Plano Vision 2022” – a view of the future, which had implications for technology systems, right from 2007 and in 2009.

People & Process First

For David Stephens, Director Technical Services, this led to several infrastructure projects (including a new DVR system for Police, an upgrade to the city network backbone, a new video surveillance solution) but equally important, a plan to implement IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL)[®] discipline into the technology workforce.

Mr. Stephens recognized that to achieve the levels of customer service quality required into the future, a focus on his people and processes was necessary. It was vital that Technical Services be viewed as a partner, but with so many diverse business units to support, it was impossible to be all things to everybody.

City government often has little staff turnover and in cases like this, it is easy for a legacy, “status quo” attitude to develop. Changes in process can challenge the people, but to make a lasting improvement, a commitment to “being a partner with the business” must be effectively reinforced.

A three year plan was adopted to implement ITIL[®]. This plan introduces change management and change control with the goal to teach staff that change to the infrastructure impacts individual users.

The Importance of Finesse

It is well documented that success in changing the culture as undertaken by Plano is directly related to how that culture change is adopted by the people. Chester Helt, Infrastructure Manager, knew this too.

Mr. Helt recommended using Netwatch Solutions in 2009 because as he said, “they have the finesse” to make the culture change real. Use of a 3rd party when making strategic culture change is a best practice, as the existing team itself, due to long-standing personal relationships, can be less effective at making dramatic or meaningful departures from the status quo. Consultants often have the tact, tenacity and experience in teaching new skills in ways that internal teams cannot.



Roadblocks & Adversity

At the City of Plano, three major challenges existed.

First, as with most mid-sized organizations, the IT staff at the City of Plano was very busy. There seemed to be little time for the team to focus on process improvement.

Second, a concern existed on whether the culture change and the team commitment to adopt change management procedures would stick. Attempts had been made in the past that did not completely deliver the desired results. Why would this time be different?

And third, the cost became a factor. With the down-turn in the economy and with sales tax revenue dropping, financial pressure required the project to deliver a positive impact, quick.

Understanding the Starting Point

Enter Netwatch Solutions. Netwatch is a “solutions” company. It does the City of Plano no good to buy software if no one will use it to solve a problem. To be effective, change management procedures are best enabled through software. All the gains from changing a culture can be quickly lost if the resulting procedures are laborious and tedious. The trick is to find a solution to all of these impediments.

The first step began with a two week Assessment in February 2009. It was important to understand the readiness level of the organization, the likelihood for success, and the areas for caution. The Assessment began interviews with IT management, went up to the Deputy and Assistant City Manager, and canvassed down to the technical staff. Key customer leadership participated, including the Chief of Police, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation, and Director of Libraries.

The tools landscape was also considered and included Microsoft Operations Manager, SolarWinds Orion, VMWare and the Altiris Client Management Suite and Service Desk.



David Stephens, Director Technical Services, Plano Texas

The Solution

Netwatch Solutions developed a roadmap of process changes, training, and tools that helped assure a lasting change. Work began with a custom-developed ITIL® Awareness Training course. Rather than sending the team away for 3-days training, Netwatch delivered several seminar-style, on-site courses so that the entire IT department learned the foundational basics.

Next, Netwatch led an interdepartmental team to define the parameters of the City of Plano’s change management process. Flexibility was used in defining change windows, notice periods and approval requirements that fit the city culture.

Lastly, but key to success, the System Asset Management System™ was chosen as the configuration and change repository (CMDB). This product, above others, leveraged the investment of existing tools, which lowered cost. The product’s tight coupling with configuration and change management allows the system to stay current, even as things change.

After the process work, configuration data was gathered and discovered from many sources (spreadsheets, configuration files, integrations from SolarWinds) and this data was normalized and loaded into the CMDB. In all, the software was up and running by September, a 45-day implementation.



After “go-live”, the work was not done. Netwatch led and ran the new, automated change management meetings to teach and demonstrate best practices. Its one thing to go through product training, but the actual learning really comes from the day-to-day concessions the team learns to make in managing the conflicting paradigm – the need to make IT changes, but also to provide stability.

Through the process, Netwatch became a vested partner in the City of Plano’s success. Relationships were formed within the IT team, and up and down and across the organization. Netwatch was called in for follow-up, to help with one-on-one training, to assist in data loading, and to take the organization to new levels.

Four months after the implementation, the IT team then expanded to focus on Financial Management, using Samantha™ to track contracts, maintenance and license agreements.

Proving Your Worth

New conversations with the business departments now occur about IT changes, their impact, but equally important, about their success. Technical Services can now show and prove the quantity of IT changes that are 100.0% successful. Their mean time between failures is increasing (MTBF) and changes now occur only during pre-defined windows, unless approved by exception.

Plan to Win

Do not underestimate the People and Process component if you want to make lasting change. Tool selection, though is vital too. Pick a product that leverages your existing tools, meets your cost priorities and delivers an ROI quick. Avoid falling prey to the #1 failure point – Never getting started. Help from a value-oriented, experienced partner can help ensure your success.

Don’t go it alone.



õWe make IT simple.ö