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City of Boston: Improving the Quality of Life with Better City Services and an Analytics Solution from SAP

The City of Boston is famous for many things – from its vibrant neighborhoods to the storied Boston Red Sox baseball team. The city is also a recognized leader in its innovative use of technology. Now with the help of the SAP® Strategy Management application, Boston is improving public services and providing its citizens instant insight into the city's performance.

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Executive overview

Organization

City of Boston

Location

Boston, Massachusetts

Industry

Public sector

Products and Services

City government

Employees

16,000

Budget

US\$2.5 billion

Web Sites

www.cityofboston.gov

www.cityofboston.gov/bar

Partner

CIPHER Business Solutions

www.cipherbsc.com



BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

The organization's top objectives

- Improve the quality of city services for Boston residents
- Better align the city's actions and resources to established objectives
- Ensure public transparency to the city's performance

The resolution

- Chose the SAP® Strategy Management application to help align strategy and execution
- Co-innovated a mobile app to deliver performance scorecards to citizens on the go
- Helped ensure smooth rollouts with support of implementation partner CIPHER Business Solutions

The key benefits

- Analytics tools and system support for continuous improvement of public services
- Increased accountability of city officials
- 24x7 visibility into city strategies and associated key performance indicators (KPIs)

Read more ►

"I'm proud that Boston is leading the way in using innovative technology to better serve our residents."

Thomas Menino, Mayor, City of Boston

TOP BENEFITS ACHIEVED

>2,000

KPIs tracked on a monthly or quarterly basis

45

Departments all using a common performance tool

16

Departments conveying performance through an interactive public score-card, and more being added

See more metrics ►

Executive overview

Organization objectives

Resolution

Business transformation

Future plans

Delivering results in a best-run city

“In my mind, the best-run city is really focused on improving the quality of life every day.” That’s how the City of Boston’s chief information officer Bill Oates sees the role of city government. And for Boston – the largest municipality in New England – this philosophy affects the lives of over 625,000 residents in nearly two dozen city neighborhoods and some 4.5 million people in the larger metropolitan area.

The CIO’s statement is more than political rhetoric. Boston is about results. The city even has a long-standing performance management program named just that: Boston About Results, or BAR. BAR provides an interactive Web-based platform that lets city officials and Bostonians alike know what city agencies are doing, how well they are doing it, and where the city can improve.

Not long ago, city leaders decided to make the BAR program even more robust and easier for citizens to use. To do that, they needed underlying information technology that would help the various city agencies set strategic goals and measure key performance indicators (KPIs) in a consistent way. And like any large municipality, Boston has city departments from A to Z – literally from animal control to zoning. So, as Oates asks, “How do we let the city think about technology as an enterprise and not as 45 different agencies?” The answer to that important question is the SAP Strategy Management application.

“SAP Strategy Management allowed us to take the Boston About Results program from an interesting data collection effort to a true performance management system across the entire city.”

Bill Oates, Chief Information Officer, City of Boston



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Staying in touch with an engaged constituency

Boston was looking for a way to better align the city's actions and resources with established objectives. City leaders invited several software vendors, including Oracle and Microsoft, to discuss their solutions. And after a compelling demonstration from SAP, Boston chose SAP Strategy Management.

Boston, with the help of implementation partner CIPHER Business Solutions, rolled the software out in phases across various groupings of the city's departments. Because CIPHER ensured knowledge transfer to Boston's project team, the city completed the last of three rollouts largely on its own. The end result of this partnership was an improved BAR program delivered on time and within budget.

Today, the city uses SAP Strategy Management to ensure that performance is tied directly to strategic goals. The software also serves as the engine for data analysis. This analysis helps the individual agencies understand exactly how well specific programs are working. It also enables the city to determine the root cause of problems and take proactive corrective action when necessary.

Just as important, the public has 24x7 access to a performance scorecard detailing Boston's progress. This information is available to Bostonians via the city's Web site and from their mobile devices. Boston's project team collaborated with SAP to develop the CitizenInsight mobile app that can be downloaded for free.

“When we think about open government, we think about engagement. We believe that the successful cities in the future are going to be the ones with the most engaged communities.”

Bill Oates, Chief Information Officer, City of Boston



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Closing the gap between strategy and execution

BAR is working. Internally, Boston is tracking more than 2,000 KPIs on a monthly or quarterly basis. All city managers have access to advanced analytics tools, dashboards, and alerts. And a city performance manager meets with the various department heads each month to discuss the available data. This visibility helps ensure public transparency, greater accountability, and a more efficient use of city resources. Using the scorecard to track pothole repair, for example, the public works department can focus its workforce to deliver faster, better services.

Bostonians – in fact, anyone – can use the online tools to explore the strategic goals of each of the city's largest departments and drill down into specific performance measures. Oates uses those same potholes as an example of the kind of information you can find on BAR. "You'll see that more than 96% of those service requests are met within the 48-hour target we set," he says.

KEY BENEFITS

>2,000

KPIs tracked on a monthly or quarterly basis

<1 year

From software purchase to full-scale rollout

45

Departments all using a common performance tool

3 million

Visitors to city Web sites in Q2 of 2013

1,200

Unique visits to the public scorecard each month

16

Departments conveying performance through an interactive public scorecard, and more being added



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Continuing to use technology to better serve citizens

Boston is a town of diverse neighborhoods, and city government serves them all. With BAR, citizens from Charlestown to Hyde Park can see the measurable results they receive in return for their tax dollars.

City leaders continue to look at technology as a way to increase that return. Boston recently bolstered its IT infrastructure with SAP Data Services software, business intelligence solutions, and the SAP HANA® platform. SAP HANA, for example, is helping the city gather and analyze information on problematic properties. Boston is using the data to identify and respond to properties where there are persistent criminal activities or violations of the building codes. The city can also proactively predict where problem properties are likely to be even before complaints are made.

“In Boston we are making sure that everything we do inside city government is for one reason,” says Oates. “It’s to deliver for the folks out in the neighborhoods.”



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