

Offender reintegration monitoring tools

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The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is traversing through an era of change with respect to information management and the fundamental role it plays in the actualization of our strategic direction. This change has emerged as a direct result of increasing demand for more comprehensive and intuitive management information in line with corporate objectives and increased public safety. The Service is technologically positioning itself to promote excellence within the correctional agenda with the development of new, integrated data management tools that focus on the quality of our correctional performance.

In recent management literature, corporate analysts have described the performing organization as the intelligent organization. The intelligent organization is a dynamic, evolving enterprise skilled at creating, organizing, and sharing knowledge. Such an organization is capable of effectively mobilizing various kinds of knowledge that exist within the corporate infrastructure to facilitate the realization of specific objectives. In other words, the most effective way to empower an organization is to create an environment conducive to knowledge sharing. However, data cannot be transformed into information and ultimately knowledge on its own.⁴ In order to achieve this result, a dynamic information analysis process must be in place within the framework of the organization to produce an effective Decision Support System (DSS).

During the Throne Speech of 1997, the federal government of Canada committed to “...building safer communities,” with an emphasis on the government’s strategy to remedy information management shortcomings. While the responsibility to deliver on this promise is dispersed among several government departments, CSC is tasked with a significant portion of this mandate. This considered, the notion of increased safety and the “protection of society” has been an integral component of the Service guiding principles since the signing of the Mission Document in 1989.

The means by which CSC administers this mandate is through a systematic correctional agenda that includes comprehensive offender assessments, required treatment at the optimum time, dynamic

supervision and informed decision-making. During each phase of the correctional process, offenders’ risk and deficit areas are continually assessed. Central to this procedure is the philosophy that effective risk management and risk reduction are the basis of good case management practices and good corrections and contribute to both violence prevention and increased public safety. This having been said, the quality of risk assessment is contingent upon the validity and appropriateness of the information used to determine risk factors. Through empirical validation and contextual analysis, risk assessments yield data elements which, when viewed collectively, form the very fabric of an effective correctional management information system.

In general terms, management information is aggregate data used to set, or assess progress toward, corporate objectives and is a useful tool in the determination of factors within the decision-making process. Through the collection of data, we obtain information; through the organization of information, we obtain knowledge; and through the assemblance of knowledge, we obtain direction. Management information is therefore key to informed decision-making, however the information must be derived from data that is consistent in definition, reliable in form and readily accessible.

Current information systems/services

CSC has an extensive repository of offender-related data in electronic format, having begun implementation of the Offender Management System (OMS) in February 1991. This database was designed to capture a broad spectrum of offender-related data, such as sentence data; bio-demographical information; offence cycles; risk assessments; program/ treatment information; community supervision and decision information. In short, OMS comprises a wide variety of offender-related data that can be used to provide a range of criminogenic profiles.

Several other systems have been designed to extract OMS data, such as the Executive Information System/Corporate Reporting System (EIS/CRS), Criminal Justice Information Library (CJIL) and

Reports of Automated Data Applied to Reintegration (RADAR) were created to deal with the vast demand for provision of a DSS.

Each of these systems is specifically designed to provide information within the scope of their respective client groups, issues and concerns. Through the measurement of key process areas within the correctional agenda, these systems have provided a starting point for the information analysis process. In assessing the vital components of a process or processes, an organization is better equipped to detect strengths and weaknesses, identify meaningful trends and forecast probabilities. Such analysis provides essential management information and lends itself to a very effective DSS.

As a result, an increasing number of managers within CSC have acquired a functional understanding of offender-related data and the perspectives from which it can be viewed. Along with this increased level of understanding comes a higher expectation with respect to:

- having accurate information for informed decision-making;
- the ability to compare results in reflection of net change;
- the ability to monitor issues in response to mandated changes;
- developing a proactive focus where problems are identified, corrective actions implemented and performance monitored; and ultimately
- managing for results.

Notwithstanding the progress achieved thus far in the dissemination of management information, the stage has clearly been set for the development of an interactive online analytical processing tool that will promote a more effective DSS. The various systems now in place within the Service have played a key role in supporting compliance and in the realization of reintegration objectives. For example, the implementation of the RADAR system, which provides indications of key reintegration process timeliness, has resulted in more emphasis, and more success in these areas. Similarly, the EIS/CRS systems have enabled managers to monitor trends and develop insight into the dynamics of our correctional processes. We are now at a point where singular or uni-dimensional blocks of information within our organization may be assembled to provide a greater perspective than is currently available within our compliance and performance indicators. The next logical stage would see a

synthesis of existing data resources with an increased focus on quality and the fundamental components of “good corrections.”

Next steps

Design work has begun on a Reintegration Lever Information Analysis System based on research. A preliminary analysis and design team was recently formed at the request of the Regional Deputy Commissioner, Atlantic region to investigate the feasibility of developing such a system. Other divisions within the Service have also expressed interest in contributing to the project (NHQ Reintegration, NHQ Performance Assurance, NHQ Operational Support, NHQ Criminal Justice Information Library, NHQ Correctional Programs and the National RADAR team).

Through collaboration, consultation and information sharing among the various divisions, the end result will be an analytical information tool applicable to an increased number of staff groups and interests.

The architectural design goals of this intranet-based quality measurement tool are as follows:

- User-friendly intranet-based technology with easy to use navigation (point and click);
- Graphical display (line/bar graphs, pie charts);
- Interactive pivot-style data sets;
- Consolidation of current and historical information, with links to supplemental tools (i.e., RADAR, CRS, policy, etc.);
- Multiple perspectives (tiered views), with drill-down functionality:

National view	(current/historical)
Regional view	(current/historical)
Site view	(current/historical)
Process-specific view	(current/historical)
Offender-specific view	(current)

Ideally, the product will incorporate a dynamic graphical interface with variable data schemes for optimal interpretation and analysis of information. The intent of this type of visual platform is to provide an easy to understand, intuitive view of correctional results within the context of the 16 key success areas identified by Dr. Motiuk.

Conclusion

A review committee is being struck to explore the system development lifecycle for the Reintegration Lever concept within the framework of a functional

prototype. This will include a cost-benefit analysis, exploration of design and development issues and an ultimate culmination in recommendations to Correctional Service of Canada's senior managers and project stakeholders.

The Service has made considerable gains in the improvement of its internal processes, compliance toward law, policy and corporate mandate. As we move forward in this direction, the issue of improved "*quality*" in our business operations becomes the predominant factor. Awareness is the key component for achieving this level of functioning within our organization and is brought about through information sharing, increased knowledge and management direction. With the

effective use of information as knowledge, the Service will enter the new millennium with the necessary tools to enable us to more efficiently and safely realize our Mission. ■

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- ⁴ A data element in isolation reflects little or no meaning. However, a data element in a specific context will yield something intelligible: information. This information can then be turned into something greater than its previous state through interpretation and analysis: or knowledge.

Let's Talk

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