

NO ACCIDENTS IN CASE MANAGEMENT IN EMERGENCY SERVICES ORGANISATION

MANY EMERGENCY SERVICES ORGANISATIONS ACROSS AUSTRALIA ARE FINDING THEIR EXISTING SYSTEMS DO NOT ALLOW FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THESE PROCESSES, WRITES **ROSS ALLARDYCE**.

■ Emergency services in Australia are generally delivered by state-based organisations that provide police, ambulance, fire, rescue and other critical-care services.

The delivery of their services falls under a strict set of ethical standards.

Occasionally, for a myriad of reasons, one (or more) of these ethical standards may be breached and a report or complaint may be made by a member of the public or colleague.

Complaints must be investigated, thoroughly and swiftly. Having the correct processes and systems in place to report, investigate and resolve employee misconduct and ethical standards breaches is critical but not always well managed.

THE PITFALLS OF MANUAL SYSTEMS

Many of the emergency services organisations across Australia are finding their existing systems do not allow for effective management of these processes.

Many of these organisations have been managing reports of ethical standards breaches manually, with the use of spreadsheets, emails, paper forms and verbal communications.

While these methods worked when these organisations were smaller, today's large organisations with thousands of employees, servicing thousands of requests daily, require a much more robust system providing insight into individual reports as well as the organisation's situation as a whole.

Records of employee misconduct and ethical standards breaches are often stored in a number of disparate areas. Frequently, spreadsheets are used within departments to record this information.

However, different departments generally have their own spreadsheets and results are not easy to share across the organisation.

Often the information recorded is unique to each department, making organisation-wide reporting difficult.

Due to the manual nature of the data, if an employee changes departments, their history remains at the old department.

This lack of visibility allows them to commit additional breaches within their new department without the organisation being able to truly assess the severity of



the breach in context with their past history.

Recording of reports of misconduct and breaches occurs across different parts of the organisation, different information may be collected depending on which department first takes the report. Over time, each department is likely to organically develop its own processes to manage the complaints.

Each investigation can be left up to the individual investigator who manages the enquiry in a unique fashion.

These enquiries are used to substantiate or repudiate the reported breach and when an outcome is finally derived, the treatment of the employee may not be consistent across the organisation.

TIME TAKEN TO REACH A CONCLUSION CAN BE DRAWN OUT

The process of investigation and review is essentially manual, the timing of each step can be left up to each responsible party, which means that at times the investigation and ultimate recording of finding can be very drawn out. This can lead to dissatisfaction on behalf of the reporting individual, as well as stress and dissatisfaction on behalf of the reported employee.

Given the sensitivity of this information, it is not in the organisation's best interest to have information like this inadvertently exposed to anyone without the need to know.

Government directives, internal development strategies and public scrutiny, have spurred a number of emergency services organisations around the country to review the way they manage their employee misconduct and ethical standards breaches.

In an effort to overcome the inadequacies of their existing systems and meet their obligations, they are moving to more efficient, accurate and effective solutions, primarily Dynamic Case Management (DCM) systems.

DCM systems are software solutions bringing together information, processes and people utilising a mixed set of controls that are human and system driven.

Security of sensitive data is extremely important and utilising a DCM system to manage the collection of data provides an environment where data can be secured, even down to the individual field level.

Since all information is stored in the DCM database, and the necessary processes are controlled by the same system, at any point in time an authorised user can review the state of affairs within the system.

Dashboards of key performance indicators can be used for a quick reference view on the current state of play; reports can be run to review real-time, trend or historical information; and rules can be set to ensure that management is automatically notified if any key threshold is crossed.

DCM systems can provide tools to recognise systemic issues that are occurring across the organisation.

The organisation can set business rules to guide the system to the issues that are of interest and of a high sensitivity, allowing it to automatically provide for the recognition of these issues and proactive remediation activity to start at the earliest possible time. **GN**

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