



SOLGM
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Nomination: **e-LIMS@aucklandcity**

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Index

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	Auckland City Council	1
1.2	What is this submission about	1
2	E-SERVICE STRATEGY	1
2.1	What was the customer service challenge?.....	1
2.2	People, Process and Technology	1
2.3	What were the business objectives?.....	1
2.4	Development and Implementation Process	2
3	E-LIM SERVICES	2
3.1	The LIM Challenge (The need for and expected benefits)	2
3.2	e-LIM Staged Delivery.....	2
3.3	Observations on e-LIM Implementation	3
4	BENEFITS.....	3
4.1	The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the council's vision and strategic direction.	3
4.2	Effective project management techniques.....	3
4.3	A Participatory Approach to getting “buy-in” from stakeholders associated with the Project	4
4.4	Innovation and originality	4
4.5	Successful results in both financial and non-financial terms	4
4.6	That the project was a “good, sensible and right thing to do”	5
5	SUPPORTING INFORMATION	6

1 Introduction

1.1 Auckland City Council

Auckland City Council is a large multi-functional local authority. The efficient handling of transactions is key to achieving customer satisfaction with the Council's services.

1.2 What is this submission about

Auckland City is well advanced with a programme of work to get the business of Auckland City online to meet growing customer expectations of online service capability and to deliver to the e-government mission of:

"By June 2007, networks and Internet technologies will be integral to the **delivery** of government information, services and processes"

This submission for the SOLGM New Zealand Post Technology Innovation Awards describes the e-LIM service in the context of the overall strategy, as an example of a **high value e-service** that provides significant value to all stakeholders. The submission comprises:

- a brief summary of the multi-year programme of work we undertook to build the technology, people, information and business process infrastructure to deliver e-transactions
- a description of the e-LIM service as an example of transforming a business service to deliver both high value to customers and efficiencies to Auckland City.
- a summary of the benefits achieved in the short time the full e-LIM service has been operational.

2 e-Service Strategy

2.1 What was the customer service challenge?

In late 2000, Auckland City committed to getting our business online. From the customer benefit perspective, we wanted to provide choice for customers by enabling online customer transactions through Auckland City's web site. Our web site is an always on, available from anywhere channel that allows customers to undertake their business with Council from their own home or place of their choosing and at a time that suits them. From an internal business perspective, we wanted to realise the fiscal gains, improved business processes and increased customer satisfaction by moving our business online.

Customer expectations were already increasing for online interaction given their online experiences with other organisations. Politicians wanted Auckland City to be an e-enabled organisation and considered it good business to do so.

2.2 People, Process and Technology

The programme of work created comprehensive organisational capability to deliver Auckland City's business online. We put in place new technology platforms and business applications automating more of our core business processes.

However, it was more than just technology. New business models enabling and delivering the online transactions were created. Support models for the customer transacting online were implemented. Paper based property information was digitised to enable this information to be provided online. Information management frameworks were implemented across these information sets to keep them current and up to date. The initial building blocks were developed from the bottom up.

2.3 What were the business objectives?

The e-business objectives we set in 2001 were:

- Increased customer value by providing a convenient and efficient experience at a reasonable cost
- Auckland City makes it easier for businesses to do business in Auckland City due to easier interaction with Auckland City
- Auckland City provides an evolving range of information, products and services via online services while ensuring customers a consistent experience
- Auckland City promotes and maximises the use of online services and technology.

2.4 Development and Implementation Process

The e-business strategic roadmap developed in 2001 determined where the major roadblocks were to delivering online customer self-service capability and this identification led to the major multi-year work streams for the programme. They were:

1. Replacing the core local government business system
2. Digitising the land based information set
3. Developing and implementing an information management framework
4. Building an online credit card payment gateway capable of handling the complexities associated with local government business transactions.

At the conclusion of these projects, we had established the building blocks to deliver online customer transactions. The e-LIM service is an exemplary example of transforming the business of LIM delivery through the “e” channel.

3 e-LIM Services

3.1 The LIM Challenge (The need for and expected benefits)

LIMS (Land Information Memorandums) provide key information for customers in many property planning, development or sales activities. They serve both an information and a statutory function by making available Council files covering history, zoning, designations, hazards, services and other information related to specific properties. Auckland City has requests for in excess of 10,000 LIMS per year.

From a technical perspective LIMS are complex to produce in that they;

- Require collation of current and historical information from many sources involving both spatial and textual components
- Are subject to both macro (e.g. District Plan changes) and individual (e.g. planning consents or services) changes.

Historically LIMS have been time intensive to prepare with issues relating to indexing, currency and accuracy of information provided. Many customers rely on the information contained in a LIM when making major decisions. The time for a customer to obtain a LIM is regulated by statute as a maximum of 10 days. Time delays, often impacting on customer property transactions, have historically been a source of frustration for all stakeholders and a source of criticism directed to the Council. Also, when the property market is buoyant the number of requests for LIMS can increase rapidly.

3.2 e-LIM Staged Delivery

The e-LIM service to provide online requesting and delivery of LIMS has been developed and deployed in two stages.

Online ordering and payment

1. The facility to request a LIM and pay for it online was introduced in April 2004 as a major service solution building on the infrastructure that had been established. Using re-engineered processes and new applications LIMS were scheduled, prepared and quality assured using workflow and automated tracking and audit checks.
2. This feature allows Auckland City to offer a service standard where an urgent LIM requested online is prepared within four hours.
3. LIMS continued to be dispatched by courier or picked up in person.

Online Delivery

The second stage, the ability to deliver an electronic LIMS online was introduced in April 2005. This enabled customers to access and download their LIM online at the location of their choice within the four-hour delivery period. It also removed the risks associated with couriering paper based LIMS or managing paper reports at Council customer service centres.

3.3 Observations on e-LIM Implementation

A key service differentiator for our e-LIM product is that we can deliver the LIM electronically within four hours from online ordering, leveraging from our investment in the business processes, information digitisation and technology. **No other Council can deliver within this timeframe.**

Therefore, customers can order and pay online for a LIM over coffee in the morning and access it electronically at lunchtime.

Other Councils take up to ten working days to provide a paper-based LIM. Auckland City is lifting the standard in the local government sector for this high profile, significant customer service.

The e-LIM project involved a number of technical challenges that included:

- Building access interfaces into the GIS, EDMS and Property Systems specifically to meet the requirements of e-LIMS.
- Developing a specialised online Credit Card payment processing module to handle the complexities of payment for services such as e-LIMS. This is now in use in other Councils such as North Shore City Council.

4 Benefits

4.1 The need for and expected benefits of the project and how it furthers the council's vision and strategic direction.

e-LIMS is the tangible delivery of a high value service for customers that demonstrates the delivery of the overall strategy to "e" enable the Council's service delivery. It sets new standards for online delivery, speed of delivery and improved quality assurance for LIMS

The delivery of services such as e-LIM online demonstrates the Council's strategy of offering service channels that are aligned with the Government's e-Government strategy and aligned with delivery channels that the Council's customers use in dealing with other organisations.

Certainly enabling customers to directly access information that previously was only accessible within the Council is a major transformation in the business relationship between the Council and its customers.

4.2 Effective project management techniques

Project management practices and methodologies within Auckland City have evolved to deliver projects in a consistent manner understood throughout the organisation.

Key practices that the Council emphasises in all projects were instrumental in the success of the e-LIMS project. These included.

- Strong and visible sponsorship by senior management
- A working partnership between business groups and the technical groups
- Key managers committing to Project Champion roles
- Design, development and integration being managed within the organisation, drawing on the organisational knowledge within the Council (as against an externally sourced solution). We believe this provides a better fit to meet the Council's requirements and business processes.
- Communications Planning encouraging participation and buy-in from stakeholders.
- Risk management processes to identify and mitigate project and business risk.
- Quality assurance processes across the technical solution, the business processes and implementation of the solution.

4.3 A Participatory Approach to getting “buy-in” from stakeholders associated with the Project

A major driver for success was involving the key internal stakeholders (Auckland City Environments, Data Services, Information Technology and Communications). Requirements from customers were clearly visible from feedback relating to the existing LIM requesting and delivery channels.

Within Auckland City a culture of shared ownership and stewardship has been cultivated through initiatives such as process owners covering end to end processes across organisational boundaries and information owners having responsibility for datasets through the data's entire lifecycle.

The project methodology sought input from all internal stakeholders early in the project to establish “buy-in” and a sense of ownership by the stakeholders. As earlier mentioned, Auckland City projects such as this one include communications plans to both disseminate information and to gather input and feedback. Also, Change Management is a responsibility within the project ensuring consultation and visibility of any changes affecting staff.

For a project such as e-LIMS the opportunity for staff to exploit the significant investment in the building blocks for “e” enablement and to deliver a high value solution in the “e” space provided a high level of motivation.

Internal visibility of the success of the project and affirming feedback from senior management was beneficial, with staff members having the opportunity to participate in a “success story”.

For customers, the web channel solicits feedback, which is taken seriously within the Council. To date no negative comments on the e-LIMS service have been received from customers.

4.4 Innovation and originality

LIMS are specifically produced to meet individual customers' requests and to comply with statutory requirements. Production of LIMS that are current, complete and accurate within timeframes that are acceptable to customers has always presented a service delivery challenge for Councils.

Through taking a strategic approach, Auckland City has developed and integrated:

- Large volumes of spatial and textual information, including digitised legacy paper records.
- Re-engineered processes to assure quality and delivery timings
- e-LIM access, enabling customers to order, pay for and receive LIMS from the location of their choice at the time of their choice completely online.

We believe that this service solution sets new standards within the Local Body sector, not only for processing of LIMS, but also for many other of the diverse transactions that customers need to interact with a Council.

4.5 Successful results in both financial and non-financial terms

Uptake has been swift and high. No formal marketing or promotion has been undertaken.

Of the approximately 10,000 LIMS requested each year;

1. 37% are currently requested and paid for through the e-LIM service
2. 50% of the LIMS requested in May 05 through the e-LIM service are delivered online
3. It is expected that for June 05, approximately 75% of the e-LIM requests will be for delivery online (third month of operation)

Some 80% of e-LIM requests are from Real Estate Agents. These businesses deal in high volumes of LIMS and the level of uptake by Agents obviously indicates their preference for the service.

In May \$215,000 revenue was generated through the web channel. This is estimated to rise to \$250,000 in June.

We expect that with a modicum of promotion and with the influence of the e-Government initiative on the community's expectations of service channels and performance, that uptake from low volume customers will build over time.

As well as being a major pilot for future service delivery channels and processes e-LIMS;

1. Significantly improve the timeframe where a customer can access LIM information. This is often critical for customers making major property investment decisions in a market driven environment (i.e. removes access to LIM information from the critical path of a property transaction).
2. Improves the quality of information provided by LIMS through:
 - Use of technology (e.g. EDMS and GIS) and formal IM practices to manage Auckland City's core property information.
 - Re-engineered processes providing end to end control and management of the entire service solution.
 - Exploiting the strategic infrastructure for e-enablement that can also be leveraged for many other Council Services.
3. Decreases the labour costs and the cost of reworking LIMS which will be reflected in the fee structure for LIMS.

4.6 That the project was a “good, sensible and right thing to do”

Auckland City now has in place the organisational capability to deliver our business online. The success of the e-LIM service demonstrates this capability. Prior to this programme, we simply did not.

The first online transactions have been delivered and customer uptake has been high. We have provided choice to our customers by enabling online customer transactions through Auckland City's web site. They are not restricted to the opening hours of our service centres and needing to travel into the CBD to conduct their business. Customer expectations that the business of Auckland City is online are being met.

We now have in place the underlying, enabling infrastructure to continue to add further transactional services for our customers and our business partners with confidence that they will be as successful as e-LIMS.

5 Supporting Information

User references

Ian Rae, CIO Auckland City and e-business champion

Sandra Matthews, customer service champion

Technology Suppliers

GEAC – Pathway

Smallworld – GIS

Ubiquity – Utransact

List of documents

Auckland City's IT Strategic Plan - 2004

Auckland City's e-business strategic roadmap – 2001

Project FOCUS (Pathway implementation) – scope and e-business documents

Information Management strategy – 2002

Web Vision – 2004