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Everyone's Watching: The Remarkably Public Reorganization Of The Nevada Department Of Motor Vehicles

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1996 he Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety launched the "Genesis" project, a technology-enabled reengineering endeavor. In September of 1999, after four years of planning, organizational restructuring and system development, the new system was released. To the accompaniment of great publicity, it fell dramatically short of expectations. This case provides the background necessary to understand the origins and shortcomings of the system, then focuses on the turn-around effort that took the system to a point of successful operation within a year of its going into production. The turn around was accomplished under great pressure to retreat to the legacy system. The effort involved a synergy of manual and technical corrections to bring overall system performance to acceptable levels. The DMV now faces the formidable challenge of taking full responsibility for the long-term maintenance of a system that was designed and implemented by outside contractors.

BACKGROUND

The Nevada Department of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety (DMV) is a state-level governmental agency, but both state and federal laws establish the agency's responsibilities. The DMV performs the following core activities: evaluates and licenses drivers; regulates the vehicle industry; registers and determines legal ownership of vehicles; collects fees and taxes associated with operating vehicles on the highways; regulates vehicle emissions; and maintains vehicle records that are used within the state and nationally. Since so many people drive vehicles in the United States, the DMV has greater interaction with the general public than any other state department.

Nevada Demographics

The demographics of the state have had a significant impact on the Genesis Project and the DMV. Nevada is a geographically large (110,540 square miles), sparsely populated state (18 people/square mile) with two major population centers: Las Vegas, in the southern part of the state, and Reno/Carson

City, in the north. There are approximately 2 million residents in the state. Nevada is currently the fastest growing state in the U.S. Most of the growth is in Las Vegas. Reno and Carson City, two cities approximately 450 miles north of Las Vegas, have slower growth rates and size than Las Vegas.

The degree of population growth was unanticipated by state demographers. Projections from the early 1990s, on which government agency staffing levels and budgets were based, indicated 3.8 percent growth statewide throughout the decade. Actual growth between 1995 and 2000 averaged 11 percent per year. Currently 7,000 new families per month move into Las Vegas alone.

Pre-Genesis DMV Organizational Structure

The DMV administrative offices are housed in Carson City, the state capital. These offices provide both administrative services for the department and processing center functions such as mail-in renewals and the physical printing and mailing of vehicle titles. The primary points of public contact with the division are at the 22 field offices, where licenses and vehicle registrations are tested and issued, and emission exception conditions are handled. Primary field offices are located in Carson City, Reno, Henderson (a suburb of Las Vegas) and two locations in Las Vegas. Secondary field offices are strategically located in smaller population centers. Prior to Genesis all services provided by the DMV, with the exception of mail-in license renewal, required the physical presence of the driver or vehicle owner at one of the field offices.

The functional organizational chart for the pre-Genesis DMV is provided in Figure 1. Prior to Genesis, the DMV was structured in a traditional, functionally oriented "smokestack" architecture of sharply delineated divisions. Even service personnel in field offices, known as field technicians, belonged to a single division and provided only a single service, such as licensing or auto registration. Separation of function and management hierarchy continued from the service level through management at the field service offices up to the department director level (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: Pre-Genesis Organizational Structure