

Getting Better Results with PAM; the West Midlands Perspective

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Summary

Following the recent Knowledge Management conference in London I have received a number of enquiries asking for more information on our use of the PAM software. This short paper gives you a summary of the benefits we have found.

PAM is an online hosted toolkit used for business improvement and relationship management. It is helping us sustain our performance improvement and improve knowledge management as well as increase efficiencies and effectiveness in a number of disciplines. These include engagement with stakeholders, business risk management, partnership working and project activity around areas such as Area planning, Trust readiness, Best Value, Procurement and Business Risk management.

In just 3 months of limited use PAM has equipped us to deliver more value in WMPA than its annual fees so we are accelerating its rollout across the Area and looking for it to add even more value in 2009. We have found PAM to be a useful business tool whether it is used by one person, a small team or a whole Area. With the prospect of PAM offering cross Area collaboration and knowledge management we envisage Areas and Regions can work better together nationally and share experiences for mutual benefit internally as well as with external partners.

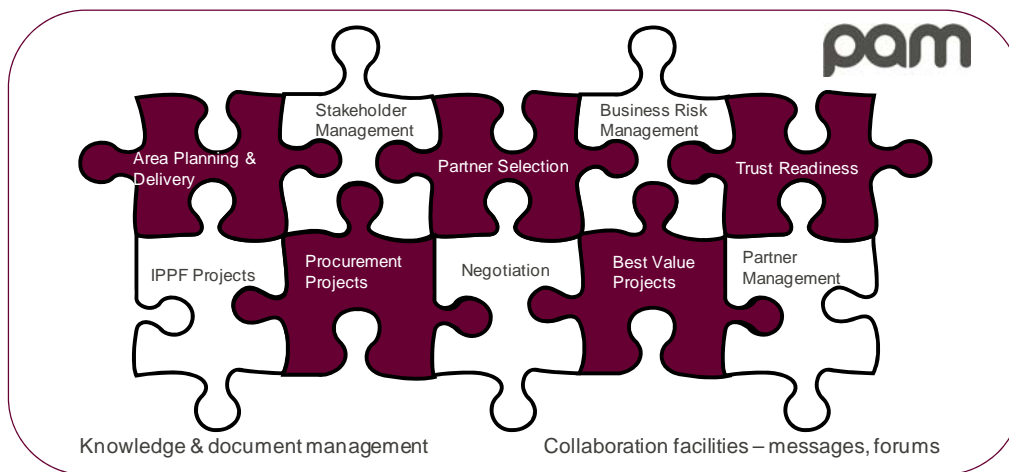
Our starting point

It's worth remembering that until recently WMPA were bottom of the performance table and in directed improvement. Following a successful 'Solutions' change programme over the past 12 months and new leadership from Mike Maiden we are out of directed improvement and our performance is rising quickly again.

We identified a number of key activities that would need to be done differently for the future, to achieve efficiency and effectiveness improvements and in particular to achieve and keep Trust status. Having first seen PAM in operation at London Probation it met our needs and we adopted it in Sept 08. Being part of the PAM Advisory Group with London and Dorset also meant we could share ideas and work together, for example helping ALLIANTIST develop new project frameworks and the Probation Risk Map tool.

Where PAM fits and adds value

PAM is becoming an integral part of how our Area enables and assures business operations and it's one of the core applications that all Areas are likely to need for the future. PAM has a wide scope of use as shown in the jigsaw graphic below, and it's worth mentioning that it complements any process mapping software.



Our early results from using PAM

Despite only using PAM in a limited fashion for the past few months we have already achieved valuable results from it. Examples include:

Cost savings from negotiation: In a difficult negotiation with another organisation I chose to use the negotiation tool in PAM to help me prepare. Having used the tool I was able to adopt a different mindset to the one I had planned, and used the learning to achieve a different outcome, which saved the Area a significant amount of money.

Efficient & effective stakeholder engagement: Prior to using PAM we had an informal approach to working with stakeholders and didn't always allocate our resources carefully enough to get the best results from these engagements. Now we are using PAM to focus our attention on the right stakeholders to achieve more effective outcomes in a smarter manner. All senior managers are also kept up to date with stakeholder information on-line in a cost efficient fashion, saving meeting time and unnecessary paperwork.

Business Risk Management:

ALLIANTIST recently released a Probation specific risk mapping tool. It follows the principles laid down by NOMS and will save us significant time versus working in spreadsheets and paper. In addition by using the risk tool with the projects module we are now able to dynamically link our business plan for 2009/10 and risk management activity giving us the opportunity to closely align risk management with plan delivery.

Better Project Delivery: PAM offers a simple project module that means all PAM users can easily and quickly participate in and manage projects without needing to be a project management expert. We are already seeing efficiency savings from having staff structure and manage their work better in teams. Because it has a documentation and messages facility PAM also acts as a good knowledge management hub saving time on chasing information and avoiding the need for rework. Ros Allcott (our Planning Manager) has been working closely with ALLIANTIST to ensure the PAM project module is fit for Probation purpose with relevant language and additional features like a Project Board approval process. The Pioneer Probation Areas (London & Dorset along with us) have all contributed to developing Probation specific project frameworks including Trust Readiness, Best Value, Procurement and IPPF as well. These will enable us and other Areas to fast track what we want to achieve instead of focusing unnecessary time on how to do it. It's difficult to place a financial value on the project management benefit but we are already seeing greater clarity, increased transparency of operation and improved collaboration.

Partner Selection: We recently made an important decision to use a partner for our Modelling District Project. As a result of using the PAM partner selection tool we got greater clarity on our ideal partner criteria, and were able to select the 'best partner' giving us greater confidence of project success. Whilst we expect better outcomes from the project as a result of having the best partner, we also saved money in efficiencies by avoiding travel expenses and senior manager downtime. The selection team could remotely log in to PAM, complete their scoring and add comments. After a review, again done remotely we printed off a standard report to aid the decision for our Chief Officer.

Partner Management: We have just started using the relationships module in PAM to help us manage our partner activity. This module, like most of PAM, facilitates a different way of thinking and encourages users to address the common aspects of partnerships that could go wrong e.g. governance, performance measurement, sharing information, reviews, team working and so on. It is early days but we anticipate being able to have a different level of discussion with our partners and because they can also use this part of PAM it's going to enhance collaboration and openness. The KPI feature forces users to focus on what we see as shared outcomes as well as what else might be important to us and the partner.

The costs & benefits from PAM:

From a cost perspective we see PAM as a good investment and already providing a positive return despite its limited use so far. We chose an annual license model for a number of internal and partner users although there are a choice of license models from ALLIANTIST. Having paid the annual fees there were no other costs. As PAM is a web based application it can be used anywhere there is an internet connection and there is no new hardware requirement, no installation or ongoing maintenance costs. PAM is also available over the GSI network so it's accessible on any Probation desktop. There is very little need to have concerns about IT in the discussion as this really is a business solution led by the Chief and SMT with minimal impact around technology. PAM is easy to use and has an attractive interface, and therefore little or no training is required so people can be productive in minutes. As PAM has so much to offer there are on-line help guides and video tutorials which I would encourage people to digest. I would also recommend an orientation session for the 'super' users as PAM comes alive even more quickly with an ALLIANTIST workshop. This also provides an opportunity to clarify how and where the Area wishes to roll it out.

Risks and Issues from using PAM:

ALLIANTIST is a small company but they have a 'blue chip' customer base. A benefit of their size has meant we have been able to positively influence the PAM roadmap and develop it for a Probation audience. ALLIANTIST outsources its hosting and systems administration to much larger specialist companies that also provide the relevant back up and disaster recovery services. As pioneer users we have found the odd software issue but everything raised has been dealt with quickly; usually the same day. The November 2008 Probation PAM Advisory Group meeting with our Area, Dorset and London reinforced that ALLIANTIST has been a pleasure to work with and their commitment towards meeting our development and support needs is second to none.

PAM holds basic user details like email address and phone number. Users can add more personal professional information if they want to and we will be encouraging that in order to get the best out of the community features when they are released shortly so we can have our own 'yellow pages' directory. From a privacy and offender data perspective ALLIANTIST has clear registration terms and legal agreements, but we also have a responsibility to ensure our own information security policies were updated to reflect PAM, in particular to reinforce that no offender data or related sensitive information is held in it. PAM like other digital solutions is also subject to Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.

Our vision for PAM

WMPA has embraced PAM and we are now confident of its ability to add value for the Area as a total business operation solution, all with knowledge management and collaboration features 'built in'. It's equipping our people to do the job well, both efficiently and effectively.

"We are using PAM to help accelerate our change programme and embed better business practices across the Area efficiently and effectively. The early feedback about PAM is extremely positive and it has the potential to make a massive difference for WMPA."

Mike Maiden, Chief Officer

Mike also reiterated his support at the KM event where he said, "PAM is the 'toolkit' to meet the practical KM needs of the Service".

We now envisage growing to about 200 internal users and 100 partners using PAM and are working with ALLIANTIST to develop a business model to facilitate that growth in a cost effective fashion.

Following the KM event and with the imminent release of the community features¹ we are really excited about the potential use of PAM across Probation to enable us to share and contribute with other Areas easily. We believe PAM will help every Area become more efficient and effective and equip staff with the tools and confident mindset to do their job well.

Whether PAM is used by one person, a small team or the Area there is a benefit to be had. It's already delivering positive benefits for us but the more Areas that sign up for PAM, the greater the 'community' benefit and the deeper the value we all realise and that's got to help reduce reoffending and improve public protection.

I would be happy to talk directly to anyone who is interested in how we are developing our use of PAM in the West Midlands.

Catherine Holland

¹ The PAM community features will offer cross Area, Region and National sharing of resources such as internal expertise, yellow pages directory, partnerships, best practices and information as well as other PAM customer insight.