



Case study:

Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General Justice on Target program

Deloitte entity: Deloitte Inc. (Deloitte Canada)
Client name: Ministry of the Attorney General, Government of Ontario
Topics: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in Ontario
Country: Canada
Timeframe: October 2008-present
Services supplied: Strategy & operations, human capital, change management, cost management
Contact: Alex Case (acase@deloitte.ca); Andy Potter (andpotter@deloitte.ca)



Global Public Sector

The situation

Court delay in the Ontario criminal justice system had been steadily increasing for nearly two decades. By 2008, the number of appearances and the duration in days it took to resolve a criminal case had increased 119 percent and 78 percent respectively from 1992. In June 2008, the Government of Ontario publicly announced the Justice on Target strategy to achieve a faster and more effective criminal justice system by targeting 30 percent reductions by June 2012 in the average number of days and court appearances required to complete a criminal case.

By reducing delays, the Government of Ontario sought to become more efficient, better focus existing resources, and enhance public confidence in the criminal justice system. Following competitive public tendering, the Ministry of the Attorney General retained the services of Deloitte Canada to develop and implement a strategy for improving the movement of cases through the criminal justice system.

The solution

To develop a faster and more effective system, the team needed to obtain a strong understanding of the root cause of the delays. How were resources being used? Did the various professionals serving in different capacities not have what they needed to do their job effectively? Where were the bottlenecks, if any? Working with the Ministry's Implementation Team, Deloitte engaged with Ontario courthouses and local justice participants to determine the cause of delays and come up with a lasting solution that would ad-

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dress these issues to the satisfaction of all stakeholders while respecting their independent roles. Deloitte used government statistics to gain a firm handle on the situation and of the factors which impacted the slowdown. Deloitte also sought an intimate understanding of local challenges to ensure that realistic and sustainable solutions could be developed and implemented. The modifications to the system needed to benefit all participants as their buy-in and support was crucial. Additionally, any new process had to be meaningful and adaptable across all courthouses while recognizing that each one had its own set of unique circumstances.

The Justice on Target strategy engaged local stakeholders, including police, Crown attorneys, prosecution, defense, legal aid, court administrators, and members of the judiciary. The approach also encouraged collaboration and respected the independent roles of criminal justice participants.

In 2009, the average number of appearances needed to complete a criminal case fell for the first time in nearly two decades.

Deloitte worked with the Implementation Team in the areas of process-mapping, statistical analysis, monitoring, evaluation and change management. Multi-disciplinary teams analyzed the court process—such as bail, first appearance, set-date, judicial pretrial, and video appearances as well as court roles, responsibilities, and timelines—and identified opportunities for improvement. Deloitte held one-on-one interviews, focus groups, and solution development workshops with over 100 justice participants in each courthouse. In many instances, this brought together stakeholder groups and individuals that previously had never met with one another, let alone discussed common issues and potential solutions. From there, local leadership teams (LLT), comprising decision-making representatives from various justice participant

groups, were organized to facilitate engagement and local accountability.

Deloitte recommended a phased approach whereby local JOT efforts were rolled-out in a series of five waves that clustered groups of courthouses based on size, geography, and potential to impact the targets for reduced delay. Using the information, observations and data collected by Deloitte, local leaders at the first wave of court sites developed a set of an initial seven initiatives. These solutions shared the overall objective of helping justice participants arrive at the decision points faster, allowing more resources for those cases that need them and ensuring each case receives the time it needs.

The initiatives included on-site legal aid and streamlined disclosure that provides everyone with the information they need to make timely decisions; meaningful, informed, and productive first appearances; a three-appearance standard; Crown access commitment; increased availability of plea courts; and direct accountability.

In subsequent waves, local and regional teams with the support of Deloitte and the Ministry Implementation Team adapted these initiatives and developed new solutions at their respective criminal courts across the province.

The outcomes

Deloitte's approach for coordinating and delivering the JOT initiative was rolled out to over 57 courthouses across the entire province of Ontario, with more than a dozen distinct or independent justice participant groups at each site. As a result of new local initiatives and customizations, the upward trend in delays that continually challenged the criminal justice system has been reversed. In 2009, the provincial average number of appearances needed to complete a criminal case fell for the first time in nearly two decades. Two thirds of Ontario's criminal courts have reduced the average number of appearances since the strategy began with approximately one third of the sites achieving double-digit reductions.

Beyond the targets and statistics, JOT has begun to transform how justice participants across the province manage their courthouses. There is now more collaboration to ensure meaningful appearances and increased public confidence in the justice system.

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