



CASE STUDY THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Summary

The FA is the governing body for football in England, responsible for developing the game at every level – from the grassroots to the international level. The FA is responsible for 19 different England teams, including the senior team, six youth teams, four women's teams, six disability teams and the National Game XI. There are also 11 FA competitions, including the world's greatest knockout competition, The FA Cup. By administering the laws of the game, the FA is the guardian of English football, whilst developing the game's future by investing in schools, clubs, counties, leagues and the women's game. The FA is also developing the new Wembley stadium.

Needs

The FA in England is making strides to position itself as relevant to today's game and to its key tenets of; governance with integrity, the fostering of development at all levels, financial well-being, and effective representation of the game both domestically and abroad.

Background

The original impetus for achieving registration to a Quality Management System came from the Chief Executive and some of his management team who had previous experience of the standard. They saw it as a way of ensuring that best business practices were being delivered and identified a pilot project related to procedures and customer service. The FA Disciplinary Department seemed the ideal candidate because of its high profile and the broad spectrum of experience amongst its staff, ranging from a few months to more than 30 years with The FA.

The department is responsible for the administration of all disciplinary matters related to all the leagues from the Premiership to the Northern, Southern and Isthmian Leagues covering around 300 clubs and 6,000 players.

In addition, the Press Association (PA) is integral to the overall process. The PA is used as the key contact point for referees. Post-match referees in professional leagues call in disciplinary information by telephone to a central call centre run by the PA.

Information is stored for The FA as well as audio records of the calls in case of any future uncertainty over what was said.

Following Saturday afternoon matches Premiership and Football League referees phone in details of red and yellow cards as well as other disciplinary matters between 7pm and midnight that night, or the following morning. Other Leagues send the same information by email with some still making written submissions.

The Professional game is the key focus as speed of reporting and dissemination is particularly important because of the appeals process, which has a very limited window. In practice, clubs can appeal a decision by midday on the Tuesday following a Saturday game with the resultant hearing taking place that week. Expediting the process allows the club or player to serve any penalty or ban on the following weekend.

The main challenge of implementing a management system that could effectively deliver the standards required was to introduce a new way of working. The FA used practical examples to illustrate the visible benefits that this brought about. The department identified the importance of measuring customer satisfaction. To this end, a customer log book was initiated. All feedback, positive and negative, was logged and then collated for regular review by the departmental manager.



Certain measurable commitments were made. For example, the clubs should receive information about disciplinary sanctions against their players by Monday lunch time at the latest after a Saturday match. However, as football is just about a seven-days-a-week sport these days, so too is the disciplinary process. It needed to be virtually error-proof.

Benefits

A number of general benefits resulting from the new management system were key to winning internal support:

1. A great deal of knowledge was extracted from the more experienced departmental members and was documented. This has been invaluable in succession planning
2. People's roles and responsibilities were reviewed and evaluated and greater clarity was provided
3. Both internal and external communication was much improved
4. The relationship with the Press Association became much more proactive
5. The log book particularly allows swifter and more constructive dialogue
6. The documentation of every aspect of the process provided greater appreciation and understanding of people's roles and their interaction with one another

There were also some more specific benefits:

7. The management of complaints posted to the logbook has led to better customer satisfaction
8. Documenting the process identified areas where procedures needed tightening. The area on the FA's website, thefa.com, which updates suspensions and pending suspensions was much improved since it had a live link from the FA's disciplinary department database
9. The FA's website has a designated area that lists the disciplinary procedures
10. Problems were identified with the use of a single fax machine to receive communications from the clubs where information would sometimes be misdirected. This was replaced with an electronic application which directs faxes to individual desktops
11. The FA is currently renegotiating its contract with the PA. The system allows them to do this more constructively, based on the improved information it now holds. Identifying potential cost savings may be one of the benefits

BSI's Role

The FA contacted BSI and other certification bodies at the outset of the project. BSI was chosen based on the level of service proposed, the training services available and the quality of the personnel provided. Several FA employees attended BSI courses ranging from an introduction to the Quality Management System standard, to detailed programmes for creating internal auditing expertise. BSI Training also conducted an on-site session tailored for core staff and management.

With the management systems in place, the additional costs of complying with the ISO 9001 standard have been relatively modest. The certificate of registration informs the FA's stakeholders that the management system has been independently and rigorously assessed on exactly the same basis as many thousands of other organizations worldwide.

BSI Management Systems is a global provider of assessment, training and certification services with 60,000 certified locations worldwide.

