The Effects of Relocation on Blaise Support in ONS

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Blaise support team (BDSS)
ONS and BDSS

- Office for National Statistics
  - Employs around 4000 people
  - Collects and publishes a wide range of statistics
- Blaise support team - BDSS
  - Provides support to survey teams in the Social Survey Division in ONS
Overview

• Background to ONS relocation
• Blaise support before relocation
• Support during and shortly after relocation
• Following relocation – where we are now
• Lessons learned
In 2006, ONS relocated many functions to Newport in Wales, including SSD and BDSS. The Field staff moved to Titchfield.
Background to ONS relocation: 2

- Few people relocated
- Big recruitment exercise
- Loss of knowledge and expertise
Blaise support before relocation: 1

- ONS adopted the ‘survey specialist’ model
- BDSS helped set up surveys and provide advice where necessary
- Team had time to focus on Blaise uses and development (the ‘D’ in BDSS)
- BDSS had a good working relationship with IT and Field
Blaise support before relocation: 2

- BDSS provided:
  - standard block templates
  - Mode libraries, depmenus
- BDSS quality assured all surveys before going out into the field
- Training schemes:
  - Half day introduction and standards workshop
  - 3 day course run by Statistics Netherlands
  - Researchers coached each other
During relocation: 1

- ONS announced it was going to relocate in 2006
- Huge loss of expertise and knowledge across the office
- The role of BDSS changed
During relocation: 2

• BDSS lost historical knowledge and technical expertise
• Quality assurance of surveys didn’t happen
• Testing was minimal
• Standard blocks weren’t being maintained
• Communication diminished between BDSS, IT and Field
• Other complex issues around time of relocation:
  • IHS (see Setchfield paper, 2007)
  • GHS (see Fiacco paper, 2007)
Following relocation: 1

- New strategic direction:
  - Looked at different ways of providing support
  - BDSS to take more responsibility for questionnaire
  - Reduce the amount of expert programming by researchers
Following relocation: 2

- BDSS expanded from 1 person in Newport to 5 full time members
- Training improvements:
  - Regular meetings and training sessions with IT and Field
  - Questionnaire set up to train researchers in Blaise basics and screen standards
  - Series of seminars
  - Mentoring researchers
Following relocation: 3

• New support strategy:
  • Keep on top of documentation
  • Support log for all ad hoc support queries
  • Reintroduction of standards
  • Quality assure all questionnaires before each survey scatter and larger annual audit
  • Thorough testing of routeing
Lessons learned

• The traditional approach to Blaise support was not working well
• New ways of working were implemented or are being set up
• Looking back we should have…
  • kept up communication with IT and Field
  • tried to keep QA process going
  • realised that survey teams were struggling
  • produced more training materials
  • kept up to date with standard blocks and documentation
• Many more challenges ahead!
Thank You

• Any questions?

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