

Interview transcript with Glenda Parata, Director, NZ Defence Shared Services

Leveraging shared services to free up resources and drive innovation

Ahead of [Business Transformation NZ 2016](#), we caught up with Glenda Parata, Director, NZ Defence Shared Services, to find out how the organisation is focusing on leadership, continuous improvement and lean concepts to drive transformation and lessons learned through business excellence to date.

What stage of the shared services journey is NZ Defence Force currently at?

Glenda: we've made quite a big transformation within the New Zealand Defence Force, but we have had a couple of hiccups along the way where we have gone backwards. We've split apart and come back together. Right now, we're in the middle of going back to where we used to be and we're moving forward. Compared to other shared service organisations, we would be round about the mid-half way through the journey – and it is a big journey.

What tools are you using to expand the scope of your shared service?

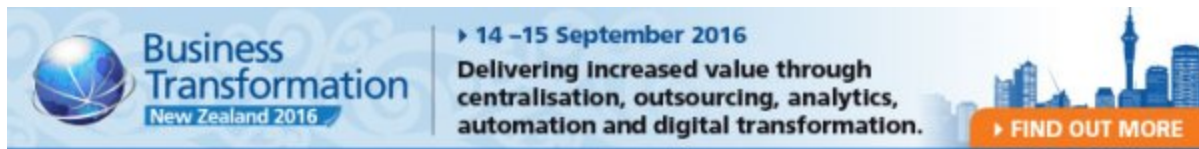
Glenda: We have implemented what we call an 'equip team' which involves compliance, audit, new IT systems and process improvement. We're also bringing in lean six sigma and also doing process improvement. All these tools in conjunction with what we're doing with the management side should be able to move us forward.

How are you establishing a culture of high performance in your shared service?

Glenda: One of the things we need to do is succession planning of staff. We've got the older generation coming in with the newer generation and while we are planning, it's constant change management. We are relying on or putting more into our managers and team leaders who are the ones who are going to be managing these people. That's where we're looking at the moment. We've gotten to the stage where our processes have been organised, but we're finding some of our management structures don't support the changes that are going ahead. I think this is something really important that we need to look at - the lack of skills or the skills we have presently, to what we will need in the future.

What steps are you taking to provide more value through your shared service that goes beyond basic cost savings?

Glenda: The biggest value is the efficiencies gained because of our widespread location right across New Zealand. The efficiencies gained and less FTEs, but doing more work. Unfortunately it has come at an expectation of the customers that we don't need to grow any more; so it's a matter of doing business cases to get that right. The sad thing about is that the expectations when we first started shared services



were to save money. Now we've gotten to the position where we are growing and we actually need to employ more people, which is a very hard sell.

What challenges have you faced on your transformation journey so far? How have you addressed or overcome these challenges?

Glenda: With us especially, the culture. To change a culture in any organisation is really difficult but we're also trying to change three cultures with the three different military streams. On top of that we also have operations and training camps. The whole mix has been extremely difficult. But you've got to do what you're going to do and say that you're going to do it – and actually do it. This builds trust in the organisation and it is difficult, it is not an easy journey. But that's how we've managed so far.

What factors do you think will change the Australasian shared services landscape in the coming years?

Glenda: In the coming years I foresee it will be the technology that changes absolutely immensely. Also the ageing workforce, robotics and the generation gap. Because now we've got people from the 60s and we've got the generation managing those huge gaps of people, which is extremely difficult for managers and it is going to be something that needs to be worked on.

What steps are you taking in your organisation to prepare for these changes?

Glenda: We're actually training our managers on behavioural which is something that we don't normally do in the Defence Force. It's something that is basic but is not taught to managers. The expectations of managing those staff, we've got succession planning for our team leaders, we need outside people to come in with new skills, new technology. We're also doing relationship management as well.

If you found this interesting, join Glenda at Business Transformation New Zealand 2016, where she will further explore:

- 3 key strategies for shared services: engaging with business excellence; strategic planning and change management
- Discarding conventional fixed ideas and really getting back to the basics of shared services
- Focusing on leadership, continuous improvement and lean concepts as tools for change
- Lessons learned through business excellence—engaging all staff in all levels of strategic planning to gain buy-in
- The criticality of allowing employees the time, resources and opportunity for innovation
- Future goals and 2020 strategy

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