



New tricks

For Pinellas County, Florida, culture change was the key to implementing a new enterprise asset management system.

by Shiv Iyer

Culture is as crucial to asset management success as implementing the right software.

Increasingly, companies understand that culture affects plans and processes throughout an organisation. So, it should be no surprise that changing a company's culture should be part of implementing an effective asset management plan. A company can have the Cadillac version of its software and the best-in-class processes and practices, but if you don't train and properly equip the people who use the software, asset management will fail.

Officials in Pinellas County, Florida, not only understand this, but also realise that it requires a long-term commitment. The county is three years into its enterprise

asset management (EAM) journey, as it works toward implementing a geographic information system-centric asset management system for five county departments and services: Utilities, Public Works, Parks and Conservation Resources, Administrative Services (Real Estate and Fleet Management) and Solid Waste. These departments and services represent 1,250 employees, or roughly 60 per cent of the employee base governed by the Board of County Commissioners, and about \$4 billion in assets.

Pinellas County, where the cities of Clearwater and St. Petersburg bask in the sun and enjoy the breeze from the Gulf of Mexico, is a destination for tourists and home to nearly a million people. Aiming to set the standard for public service in

America, the county embarked on an asset management journey to adopt a county-wide EAM programme that would adhere to internationally recognised ISO55000 standards.

An EAM programme includes a focus on business processes and organisational transformation in addition to technology upgrades. Officials in Pinellas County understood that this would also mean taking a hard look at their workforce to see how department leaders and workers were doing their jobs. Steven Alston, Pinellas County's EAM programme manager, says this required a proactive approach to improving efficiencies and workflow, rather than purely reacting when assets failed. The perfect example of why this shift was needed occurred the day county leaders first

How Pinellas County changed management and culture

Companies and organisations can take a variety of approaches to changing management and culture. This is the successful change management plan implemented by Pinellas County.

1. Identify leadership and stakeholder actions
2. Develop monitoring process to measure progress
3. Develop an organisational change management dashboard to report progress
4. Administer benchmarking surveys
5. Build and engage a change liaison network
6. Conduct roadshows
7. Develop and disseminate posters, flyers and testimonial videos
8. Deliver end user training
9. Facilitate EAM training and certification approved by the IAM
10. Document an execution strategy for the organisational change management plan

The best method is often determined by the unique characteristics of the organisation or company, as one approach will make sense for one and not another.

Pinellas County, Florida, is working toward setting the standard for public service in America. As part of that goal, the county has implemented an enterprise asset management (EAM) system for multiple departments to streamline workflow and improve customer service and staff efficiency

met with implementation consultants from Woolpert.

Alston recalls that some department leaders had to rush out of the project kickoff meeting as a major asset failed, requiring an emergency response and millions of dollars in repairs. Since the data from the routine maintenance records for this asset did not indicate potential for failure, the incident raised the question, “How can we predict whether this is going to happen in the future?”

“On the surface, it appeared there was work being done, but it wasn’t actually happening,” says Alston. “At that stage, a contractor was hired to evaluate the relevant assets to get reliable data that we could trust.”

Effectively managing assets

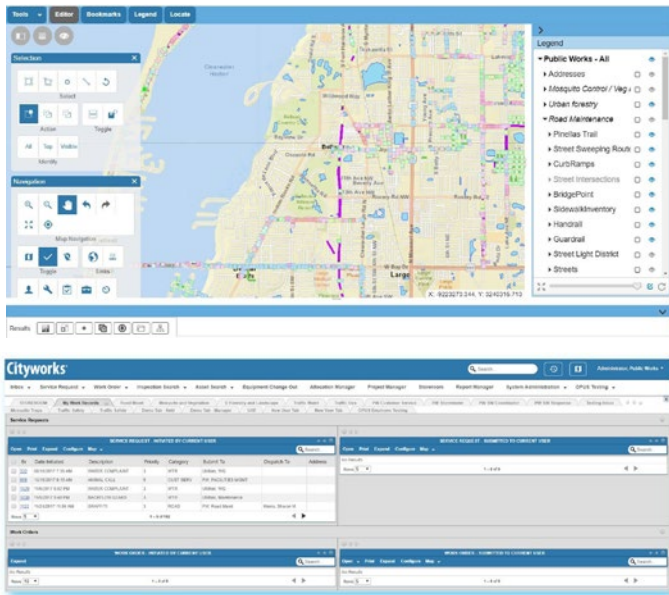
Asset management shines a new light on everything an organisation does, calling into question traditional ways of doing tasks and addressing problems. Introducing asset management can create uncomfortable experiences for people as they are asked to stop focusing on a narrow, siloed approach

in their day-to-day operations and adopt a broader perspective.

When new software and processes are implemented, employees sometimes find ways to work around these updates and will revert to old ways of doing tasks. If leaders espouse the benefits of the new processes but are not actively engaged in them, workers will see the new processes as formalities and wonder why they are being asked to do things differently. Also, when switching from a paper-based records system to an electronic one, a common perception is that employees are being monitored. Organisations can benefit from identifying internal champions to support and engage at every level.

Pinellas County had an additional issue. Since the average age of county employees is 53 and the average time employees have been with the county is 24 years, the county had recently had frequent retirements. Losing experienced workers also means losing institutional knowledge, but it can be easier to train new people on processes than to change the way experienced workers have been doing their jobs for years.





These screenshots help illustrate how the EAM system is being used by Pinellas County's Public Works and Utilities departments to effectively manage county assets

the county to streamline workflows and understand infrastructure more clearly. Alston says changing management and culture for effective asset management is an ongoing, never-ending cycle of monitoring, analysis and adjustment.

Meanwhile, consultants continue to work with employees in the other three departments (Solid Waste; Parks and Conservation Resources; and Administrative Services – Real Estate and Fleet Management) to configure the EAM system for their operations.

Alston says the culture change and accompanying EAM programme will help ensure that, regardless of turnover among county workers, those who live in and visit Pinellas County will receive the high standard in public service that officials work hard to provide.

“Active, visible leadership. That’s been a requirement for success. Strategies were laid out from the top down. At this stage, success is not dependent on just one person, but there was a time at the outset when changing out one key person probably would have changed the course of the journey,” Alston says. “Leadership being visible at every point along the way has been important. This is a great opportunity to let people know where we’re going and for employees to contribute to improving the life of the county’s assets.”

“At the outset, some managers thought that because we have a mature workforce, this change was going to be a big challenge and that field employees would not want to change, but that was not entirely the case,” Alston says. “The challenges we heard from the field were nowhere near as bad as we were led to believe. We have a lot of committed people in the county, especially our employees who work in the field. Their concerns were more along the lines of, ‘What do you expect from me to do a good job?’”

As part of the EAM programme, tablets were distributed to workers in the field so they could capture data in real time to track jobs and provide status updates. Putting mobile devices in workers’ hands “was overwhelmingly well-received,” Alston says.

Woolpert consultants James Lloyd and Miguel Rodriguez spent nearly two years conducting workshops with Pinellas County workers. The consultants were seeking information about how individuals and departments performed day-to-day operations to help them configure the EAM system specifically for Pinellas County. It was a process of learning existing workflows and gradually gaining support and acceptance of the new system.

Having informal discussions with key county leaders before the workshops helped to manage expectations and facilitate useful discussions.

“In the workshops, there is a constant risk of stepping on landmines – personality landmines,” Lloyd says. “There are things you can do and say in these workshops that can have a very negative impact on people’s perceptions of the overall programme. Once you have one dissatisfied customer, that can turn into two and two can turn into four.”

The inverse of that pattern also holds true. Getting one worker to see the benefits of the new system and work processes will lead to two workers supporting it, and so on. Lloyd says certain experienced workers were resistant to the changes being discussed, but eventually became advocates of the new system.

“If you can change someone from sowing seeds of discontent to being neutral about it, you’ve won. If you can keep one person from trying to circumvent the process, then that’s a win,” Lloyd says. “We rely heavily on key folks on the county side to let us know where those landmines are. That constant feedback loop is the only way we can get through a programme of this scope. People support what they help create.”

Is the job ever done?

The EAM system is now being used by Pinellas County’s Public Works and Utilities departments. It’s still too soon to analyse the data being recorded in those departments, but eventually it will help

About the author



Shiv Iyer, PhD, PE, MIAM, PMP, is an Enterprise Asset Management Subject Matter Expert in Woolpert’s Strategic

Consulting Sector. He is leading the Woolpert team assisting Pinellas County in its EAM journey. Shiv has more than 20 years of experience in engineering and asset management.