

## Case Study

### LGC Forensics

With six UK laboratories and 600 staff, LGC provides the UK's largest privately-owned forensic science service and works for every major police force in England and Wales. As well as assisting in thousands of day-to-day criminal investigations, LGC also played a critical role in solving many, high-profile cases, including those surrounding the deaths of Rachel Nickell, Princess Diana, Damilola Taylor and Dr David Kelly.

In June 2008 the business won a substantial new contract from a consortium of police forces, effectively doubling its case work volume. Managing this huge workload increase was contingent on the incumbent supplier providing LGC with an orderly and phased handover. But when this failed to happen, the company needed to deploy extra operations management expertise – and fast, explains managing director Dr Steve Allen who turned to BIE for help.

“The result was the arrival of Ben Jeffs in just five days. He had a five year, wide-ranging track record of successful general management, operational and turnaround assignments under his belt, including a stint running business change projects at the government's Forensic Science Service. It was this mix of general and specific experience that I thought made Ben ideal for us,” explains Allen.

“His overall brief was to put LGC's casework operations on the best possible footing for handover to a new permanent director, who we had begun to recruit, but he ended up delivering a great deal more.”

What Jeffs saw in LGC was the kind of challenge he relishes most as an interim; the chance to do a short, all-encompassing strategic review and then personally lead the changes recommended to achieve the set objectives.

“For me, execution is everything. Planning and strategy are obviously important but at the end of the day, they are just ideas on a piece of paper if they aren't followed through with vigour and persistence to achieve the set goals,” he says.

Central to Jeffs' success is the practice of what he describes as 'active management principles, a personally-led, almost incessant focus on daily business performance which encourages individual accountability and creates a fast momentum for improvement. This, he says, was the single most important key to achieving a 30% cut in one team's 10 week case load backlog within the first month and with no additional resources.

“We held daily 15 minute operational reviews where I encouraged LGC managers to focus on the outcome and not the process itself, other than providing a few broad steps. It's a small but important detail in terms of how people go about their daily work, liberating them to think for themselves and thereby subtly committing them to solving problems,” he explains.

Jeffs also created a 'hit team' comprising a forensic science specialist and experts in process improvement, IT and issues resolution. Having already identified where it should begin, this team carried out roving, five day interventions on each of the ten laboratory teams based at LGC's six UK sites. Each intervention identified potential risks that could be avoided, and quality and performance improvement opportunities.

These and other measures led by Jeffs with support from managing director Steve Allen allowed management to quickly regain control over the workload and to move out of what Jeffs describes as 'reactive mode'. At the end of month six all case work backlogs were cleared and an additional £1.6m of previously unaccounted-for income identified. LGC could move out of reactive mode and begin talking to customers about clearer definitions for key service metrics and identify new service delivery opportunities. But for LGC's Steve Allen, it is Jeffs' lasting legacy that stands out most.

"LGC reached a critical stage in its growth last year. That tested our existing processes and could have capped further growth. Ben helped instill a sense of urgency and provided a strong impetus for change. He also helped me personally to develop a vision and business plan, with a transformation map and monitoring process to ensure we stay on track, manage the change and achieve our growth plans with a renewed sense of confidence. Creating that agenda for change, for me, is his single most important contribution," he concludes.