

# The Problem:

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For years, Roanoke County has had a very successful department of Information Technology (IT department) that was highly regarded as a trusted business partner to our other agencies and to many of the region's surrounding localities. Up until recently, the department was managed by a director who oversaw the daily operations of the department and worked closely under the County's Chief Information Officer who provided strategic guidance and oversight. The CIO also oversaw the operations of the County's Emergency Communications Center (i.e 911 Center).

Both operations were regarded as very successful. But after multiple budget reduction processes, attrition, and retirements, Roanoke County was forced to make some serious decisions about the future of its technology and communication services. As with most problems these issues didn't arrive or impact organizations overnight. They slowly chipped away over several years until maintaining service levels, organizational continuity, and reduce staffing in the era of recessions, budget cuts, position freezes, and job banks became a tremendous task.

In the development of FY09 budget, the IT department opted to eliminate the vacant Information Security Officer position in order to reach the mandated budget reduction level. This resulted in the halting of all pro-active security awareness training and resources and forced the County to delegate portions of security tasks to various other teams in the

department. This meant the County no longer had a single source of coordination for its security efforts.

This loss was followed by a Computer Operator which, at first glance, seemed to be low impact given the fact that a large part of the Operations function was eliminated by moving off of the HP mainframe. However, there are still crucial operations that take place within the Operations group (server backup management, printing of bills/payroll, etc.). One of the major responsibilities of this position continues to be the oversight of large print jobs such as Personal Property bills, Real Estate bills and payrolls for the County, Schools and the Western Virginia Regional Jail. Roanoke County recently completed a study to determine the cost difference between having CommIT continue processing the large volume print jobs versus externally outsourcing these processes. To the County's surprise, the study showed that it was much more cost effective to retain this as an internal function. It would not only cost more to outsource these jobs, but it would also result in a reduction in customer service to the County departments. Due to the criticality and time sensitivity of these jobs it is essential that the County have two employees that are trained in these duties to back each other up. The interim solution for this loss was to stretch the Operations Supervisor into a back-up for the essential function. Roanoke County was successful in advocating only for a part-time computer operator, so the department has had to adjust expectations accordingly.

The "straw that broke the camel's back" arrived in the fall of 2009 when the CIO announced her retirement. As mentioned earlier, there were two distinct functions under the CIO in the Information Technology Department and the newly formed stand alone Emergency Communications Center. This department was approximately one year removed from the

Police Department and had an unfilled director position, so it was already in a tenuous situation.

## The Solution:

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Rather than refilling the Chief Information Officer position, the County Administrator, working with the Director of Information Technology restructured the two previously independent departments into a new department: Communications and Information Technology. This new department now houses all traditional IT functions, the radio communications shop and the Emergency Communications Center under a unified chain of command.

The improved department included two new assistant director positions, both of which were created without increasing the overall department FTE count. One assistant director handles the communication function and manages the daily operational issues for the Emergency 911 Center and the Radio and Microwave Communications work center. The other assistant director handles the traditional information technology areas of networks, phones, web, applications, and operations. This enables the director to focus on the big picture strategy for the organization. The department director reports directly to the County Administrator and serves as the County's de facto CIO.

There has long been a strong connection between IT and the ECC based on the heavy technology integration inherent in the Computer Aided Dispatch System, GIS and radio communication systems. Additionally, the County has seen tremendous value added by applying

the IT project management and capital technology processes to ECC needs. Roanoke County's recent upgrade to digital radio format also brings the radio technicians into a very similar role to that of network engineers and the communications engineer has already identified multiple improvements in the ECC's peripheral technology systems.

Through this consolidation, the organization was challenged to redefine or eliminate approximately a dozen positions. Internal position postings and vacancy fills provided opportunities to existing staff allowing new positions to be brought in only where absolutely necessary and then at much lower levels than were vacated. The computer operator positions were modernized from the main frame era to Technology Support Technicians that continue to provide operations services and will serve as help desk for trouble calls related to the network and the phone system. These positions will take on the additional workload due to the implementation of the new bulk purchasing program as well as perform other basic microcomputer technician job duties. This will help offset the increased need for additional Microcomputer Technician support, due to higher numbers and types of user devices, implementation of VoIP and future deployment of enterprise solutions such as Document Management. Additionally, this function was moved into the technical services area and the Operations function was eliminated. The Operations Supervisor position was eliminated and replaced it with a Security Specialist position. This role will consume all of the former Operations Supervisors time because she will be focused on user education, account management, policy development and security monitoring, investigations and recovery. The County was able to eliminate a senior administration position and show a bottom line savings in excess of \$100,000.

Because of the restructuring, Roanoke County has also identified major service improvements, new career opportunities, and ancillary cost savings through the elimination of redundant services. The department is now on a strategic departmental path that provides improved life-saving services to citizens and a long-range view of technology investments that prepared the staff for several additional improvements. In short, this consolidation has been a rare win-win situation resulting in cost savings AND service delivery improvement.