Ministry Of Defence –
Making A Difference

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The MOD and BSOL: A Standards Solution
That Delivered a 400% Return on Investment

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is a British government department responsible for implementing the defence policy set out by Her Majesty's Government. Their headquarters are in Whitehall, London, and they are active worldwide in their operations. This ministerial department oversees the running of the armed forces, contingency planning and acquisition of military equipment and supplies. Its key mission is to protect and be a force for peace. The MOD defends the interests of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as maintaining international peace and stability.

Standards and Interoperability Inside The MOD

Set up over fifty years ago, the modern MOD has many organizations within it. One of these is Defence Standardization, a standards management service. Gerry Watt leads the Business Development team for this organization and a key aspect for them is the ability to work with equipment and people all over the world. Watt describes how this interoperability is crucial for them and their allies: "All equipment needs to join up and then work together when we are on operations or joint operations, with America, NATO or other countries. Standards are the way we make that happen."

The parent company of Defence Standardization is an organization called Defence Equipment and Support. They are in charge of equipping the armed forces and tasked with having the capability to provide all military resource. The organization has Requirements Managers who develop user requirements and Project Engineers who develop system requirements - both looking at interoperability within that. The Engineers will develop an Engineering Management Plan and standardization management falls within that plan. This entire procedure of interoperability is underpinned by standards.

The Commercial Strategy Behind Military and Civilian Standards

The Defence Standardization organization, like BSI, produce their own standards. In their case, they create niche military standards for when there isn't an equivalent civilian standard that meets the same requirements. Watt makes it clear their aim is to work with civilian standards as much as possible: "It's our mission within my organization to make the rest of the MOD use civilian standards." He goes on to say how they have developed a policy, as well as several processes and management tools, to enable them to do just that. This gives small companies the opportunity to tender for MOD contracts. Watt explains:

"We want to be as clear and open as we can in terms of [our] commercial strategies. We want to be accessible to as many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as possible."

BSI Joins The Operation

Before BSI became involved, the MOD got standards through its own library. When this service was closed down, the organization had one employee running the standards contract. He did this using a standards aggregator service arranged through a third party. When Watt took over the business, he decided to test the market to look for a solution which could be more cost-effective and also open up opportunities for better information sharing. The Defence Standardization team put together a process to find the right standards supplier. Watt describes these measures:

"I was looking at more than just what kind of standards we could get. I wanted to know how good the tools were, what the appetite was for things like sharing data, and trying to join up some of the external tools with the internal MOD ones and so on."

The MOD criteria included testing the software and standards access to make sure the systems were satisfactory. Finally, it went out as a competitive contract and BSI was successful.

Watts admits his organization hadn't promoted standards as much as it could have in the past, so making the change to BSI gave him the perfect opportunity to boost civilian standards. The BSOL tool was communicated to organizations across the MOD and this resulted in a significant rise in usage.

The Importance of Standards Across a Project's Lifetime

Another area Watt oversees is an internal management system for managing standards. This system tracks standards on each project throughout its lifetime. By having BSOL and its historical archives, Watt's team are able to record standards at each stage and refer back to them if required. Watt explains how important this is: "If you think of some of the major projects, these take 10-20 years before they go live and then they're in service for 20 years. It is essential we have [captured] what standards are in those historical datasets, and that we can access them if we need to." He further explains the benefits of this support from BSOL: "If someone comes back with a question on a contract, configuration management, or even more importantly a safety issue, we need to be able to see quickly what standard it was contracted against and what did it say in it?"

This management system also allows the team to see what standards are being used most for which applications. From this information, they are now building a database of vital knowledge. Watt hopes in the future this will allow them to categorize equipment, as they will have a baseline from similar projects: "We are building these set of recommended standards, which will then [benefit future] projects."

BSOL - A Success Story Across the MOD

Within the MOD there are already over 2,300 users on BSOL, which is far higher than before Watt went into partnership with BSI. He puts it down to BSOL being a simple tool to work with:

"Our customers are finding the BSOL tool very quick and effective in finding what standards they need, when they need them."

The MOD mainly use engineering standards, however as BSOL provides instant access to standards for a range of areas this allows the MOD to include other relevant standards too. Watt points out: "Our main drive is technical standards for contracting, but now we also have ISO 9000 certification for quality management systems and we are using ISO 27000 family for information management security."

In addition, other standards are now being used because they have been offered to everyone. Watt continues: "We are looking at the organizational resilience standards and business continuity and all of these really good business-type standards that BSOL provides. They're all being used right now across the MOD." With departments including Information Technology and Information Management function now using BSOL, Watt is confident his decision to buy the full BSOL platform will continue to benefit the MOD and its standards needs.

BSOL provides a framework that has influenced how the MOD uses standards and gives opportunities for growth in other areas - standards can be found quickly and historical standards can be easily referred to. Watt and his team are also encouraging people to bring BSOL references and embed them into their own internal standard tools. With a standard at every stage, it is essential the MOD provides assurance that all their processes and procedures are held up consistently.

Furthermore, Watt reports BSOL has proved to be a cost-effective solution, already bringing in a large return less than 6 months into their contract:

"We are seeing a return on investment, which is fantastic, really big. It's something like 400% value for money."

We [have] broken even on the price of the contract with two years still to run." With increasing numbers of people using BSOL across the MOD, the benefits of this investment, now and moving forward, are substantial.

BSOL is the easy way to work with standards. It is a simple online tool that provides instant access to the standards you need. Join today and see how BSOL can support your business.

To find out more...

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