

## INTEGRATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF PROCESSES AS A DETERMINANT OF WORKLOAD BALANCING IN THE COURT SECRETARIATS

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### Abstract

The pillars of integration and standardization of processes in organizations are areas such as logistics, engineering, computer science and management. Process integration is the highest degree of cooperation, preceded by informational and functional integration, related to the adjustment procedures, control measures, principles of operation, planning and responsibilities. The main objective of standardization is, however, to provide the basis for continuous process improvement. In the absence of established standards and lack of integration of operations performed in different ways and by different performers - the introduction of improvements will not be assessed in terms of efficiency, because it is difficult to determine a starting point for improvement.

The aim of this article is to present a solution which was introduced in the second half of 2011 in all courts of the District of Gliwice and consisted of the current assessment of the workload and the flexible moving of office workers between departments of the court. The starting point for discussions was the lack of methods worked out for the measurement of the workload of the courts' staff in the light of rules relating to the administrative supervision in the Polish common judiciary, and the possibility of applying practical solutions provided by the area of logistics which are also used successfully in other organizations.

**Keywords:** Logistics, process integration, process standardization, common judiciary

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Changes taking place in the economy set new challenges for logistics processes in the organization and indicate the nature of integration [10], which is, according to the encyclopedia, "a fusion of different components, integration, the formation of the entirety of the parts." [20] The connection of logistics with various management theories and its extensive scope mean that there are many solutions that may be applied also in atypical organizations. Contemporary logistics has a peculiar dichotomy (gr. *dichotomy* - split into two opposing groups), which arises from the tendency to take the strategic and logistics operative plane into account simultaneously. [2] Due to the complementary levels of decision-making and the implementation of these processes, underestimation of one of them can have negative consequences for the whole process of management in the organization, so therefore it is appropriate to link them together. Such integration should lead to synergies. [16] In terms of efficiency and effectiveness - integrating an engineering approach with a strategic approach which is present in management sciences, therefore seems reasonable. This approach is reflected in a number of publications in the field of logistics [1,2,3,8,5] which creates reasons for treating it as a paradigm for the management of logistics processes.

There are different forms and dimensions of integration in whose framework there are links dynamizing and activating to a large extent the process of integration. There may exist:

- ✓ horizontal integration - merging elements of flow processes with supply chain management,
- ✓ vertical integration - merging levels of government with instruments of action,
- ✓ hierarchical integration - merging simultaneous levels and elements of governance with economic and technical processes and logistics functions in full-structured organizations. [2]

In the case of a particular type of organization i.e. the common courts, a matter of interest is the integration of hierarchical processes and functions in a structural way within the organization, particularly in the court secretariats. The integration process should, however, be preceded by the identification and the standardization of specific, repetitive operations. The aim of this article is to propose a solution, which was introduced in the second half of 2011 in all courts of the judicial District of Gliwice which consists in the current assessment of the load and flexible moving of office workers between the court departments.

Integration is a natural consequence of the approach to the organization as an open system [17], whose pillars are: logistics, engineering, computer science and management, and a numerous connectiona of organizations with other entities mean that it can be followed at the level of concepts and methodology of documentation. The factual basis of this kind of integration may be the use of widely available information technology, but first of all a new approach is required and in order to to achieve a radical improvement in the functioning of the organization, we must design new operation processes and systems.[4] Process integration is the highest degree of cooperation, preceded by informational and functional integration, related to the adjustment procedures, control measures, principles of operation, planning and responsibilities. The main objective of standardization is, however, to provide the basis for continuous process improvement.[15]

The essence of the integration in common judiciary may be the combination of general office activity, conducted in several departments, in order to allow the coordination of the entire system.

## **2. STANDARDIZED WORK IN OFFICE MANAGEMENT**

Integration activities of the court secretariats should be preceded by identification of secretarial duties and establishing standards that would allow for alignment of the workload and, above all, to make comparisons.

Standardization work is one of the 14 principles of Lean Management System, developed in the concern of Toyota and forming the basis of modern production.[21] A standard (norm, model, pattern) in the organization of work is considered to be a set of agreed working methods that effectively combines people, materials and equipment to ensure the quality, performance, safety and comparability. Standardization, according to Toyota, is far beyond just describing the list of consecutive steps to be taken.[19] Standard work consists of carrying out documentation of an agreed (approved) best way of performing the work. It serves as a basis for communication, training and improvement of process in the production's cell. Standard operation is also understood to be the safest, easiest and most effective way of performing the work, which is now widely known.

Application of the lean sourcing standard operating procedures and monitoring is good base for measuring performance and challenge deviation from the standard solution to assure efficiency of the process.[18] In practice, not all of the tools and techniques used in the manufacturing industry are appropriate for achieving cost saving and quality improvement in the public sector. It is argued that tools and techniques used in the manufacturing industry should be adapted according to specific conditions in the public sector before they are adopted.[14,13] Some typical and frequently applied lean tools and techniques adapted and adopted in the public sector include rapid improvement event [11,14], value-stream mapping [7] and Six Sigma.[12]

The main objective of standardization is to create a basis for continuous process improvement. In the absence of established labour standards, all tasks are performed in different ways by different contractors, which creates the impression of uniqueness and randomness, and made improvements cannot be evaluated in terms of their relevance, because it is difficult to determine a starting point for improvement. [9]

Each change results in an increase of process variation and continuation of improvements' implementing is possible only after the stabilization of the current process. At that moment it may be helpful such standardization, which leads to a stabilization of process.[9] Standardization is a manifestation of

normalization of activities. Standards are a source of knowledge, in particular, of issues of technical and organizational nature.

### **3. MEASUREMENT OF WORK LOAD OF SECRETARIATS - CASE STUDY**

The presented study is a proposal to measure the workload of the court departments' secretariats, which should allow for an equitable distribution of civil servants between departments, depending on the amount of duties. The solution has been prepared by W. Hajduk, former president of the District Court in Gliwice, currently holding the position of Deputy Minister of Justice.[6]

The starting point for discussion was the lack of methods which should be worked out for measurement of the workload of the courts' staff in the light of the rules relating to the administrative supervision in the Polish common judiciary and possibility of application of practical solutions provided by the area of logistics and used successfully in other organizations.

Lack of method causes increased confusion among employees of departments, both between judges and officials. Widely used "intuitive" placement of civil servants is incorrect and leads to substantial disparities in the load. The basis for the efficient operation of the court should be an analysis conducted correctly and measurement of the quantity of duties. This would force the secretariats which reach poorer efficiency to make an effort, will give a sense of fair treatment and will help build teams. The proposition presented by W. Hajduk is different from the attempts made previously to rationalize allocation of civil servants between the Departments e.g. via questioning employees or valuation of various secretarial duties or performance improvement through financial incentives (such as getting rid of slow workers and the distribution of their salaries among the remaining - proposed by the Ministry as part of the pilot program).

The proposed solution can be used in all Polish courts, regardless of the level of development of the technology used. It allows for ongoing assessment of load and flexible shifting of personnel between departments, depending on the current capabilities and needs of the court. This does not preclude the pilot actions proposed to improve the efficiency and quality of work, this complements them only. The solution can be the basis for the development of "normal working hours" for the secretariats. The idea and its technical development were born out at the turn of 2004 and 2005 year as a result of the dramatic situation of human resources in the department led by W. Hajduk, which was associated with the process of the formation of the newly created District Court.

### **4. STAGES OF ANALYSIS**

The starting point for discussion was whether the work of the various secretariats: civil, criminal, employment, family, etc. can be reliably compared with each other or whether there are any specific conditions of work of different departments that make comparisons impossible. Arguments about the differences in working conditions and specifics departments are placed in all the discussions on the evaluation of the work. In order to make comparisons, it was necessary to establish common standards for operations, to indicate the different activities and to examine which of these activities affect the timely completion of tasks within the activities of the secretariat. The next step was to establish the load measurement system which is common to all secretariats to allow the standardization of activities and to monitor them. Stages of the analysis were as follows:

- ① determination of common and distinct secretarial duties for each department,
- ② determination of activities affecting the timely completion of the tasks in the following secretariat,
- ③ determination of the load measurement system, same for all secretariats of the court's departments.

As a result of the Stage ① - the activities carried out by the secretariats of the court's departments were identified. They are as follows:

- taking the minutes of hearings,
- making entries in office books,
- copying,
- files transferring / searching,
- attaching documents to the file,
- copying of documents,
- seeing the enquirers / parties,
- answering phone calls,
- putting letters into envelopes,
- other. [6]

Analysis of the secretariats' work and determination of the secretarial duties led to the following conclusions:

1. Tasks carried out by the secretariats are the same, but in some secretariats certain actions do not occur (e.g. in the Land Registry minutes of hearings are not taken);
2. An employee who is taking minutes of hearings is at that time excluded from work of the Secretariat;
3. The efficiency of office work (in terms of timely execution of orders) depends on the number of employees who are currently working in the secretariat (i.e. not taking minutes of hearings), and the amount of all secretarial duties attached to these workers;
4. Time consuming of each activity is averaged between the secretariats when there is a large number of these activities. *(An illustrative example can be given that in both the Civil and Criminal Departments short or long letters are copied; the cases are entered in registers where there are two parties as well as where there are a few or several dozens of parties. The statistical accuracy of the averaging is defined by central limit theorem).*[6]

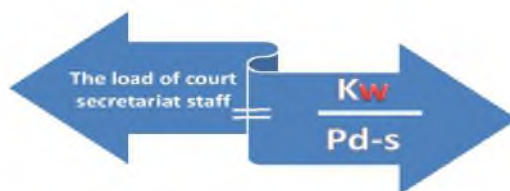
Formulated conclusions allowed to establish the activities affecting the timely completion of tasks within the secretariat function, determining the efficiency of its performance measured by timeliness of execution of orders: making entries in office books, copying, files transferring / searching, attaching documents to the file, making photocopies of documents, seeing the enquirers / parties, answering phone calls and putting letters into envelopes (excluding taking minutes, because recording clerk does not perform actions that affect the efficiency of the secretariat), which led to completion of Stage ②. Establishing the load measurement system for all secretariats of the court's department - Stage ③ - aimed at identifying a common measure, which is in proportion to all identified common activities (- except taking minutes of hearings), which is the result of these steps, and reflects the efforts of the entire Secretariat.

## 5. ALGORITHM OF WORK STANDARDIZATION IN COURT SECRETARIATS

The load of the court secretariats is usually identified with two values: the number of judges in the department and the number of cases filed. In the light of W. Hajduk's elaboration - these assumptions are wrong. It often occurs that in the department which employs only 7 judges, there is as much work as for 17 judges. This shows that the number of judges is not a measure of the load of the secretariat and determining the number of staff of the Secretariat in relation to the number of judges is not correct. It also happens that 1000 applications for enforcement clause regarding bank writs of execution are filed with the Civil Court per month. At the same time, the Criminal Department has only two cases, including the first, where there are 300 accused and 1000 witnesses in, and the other of the 40 accused and 200 witnesses. The workload of civil and criminal secretariats associated with entering cases in registers and their further handling, will be similar (or even greater in the Criminal Department). This example shows that the number

of cases filed with the Department is not significant for the calculation of load of the secretariat. If we look at all the secretary's operations, regardless of the number of judges and the size of the of cases filed, we can conclude that all of them are reflected in the number of correspondence sent. In these examples (1000 cases filed with the Civil Department and 2 cases filed with the Criminal Department) - secretariat workload related to recording the cases in the register, preparing notices and summons for parties and witnesses, etc., will be quantitatively reflected in a large number of correspondence sent.

Therefore: „great workload of the secretariat = lot of the correspondence sent”. The functioning of the entire secretariat is finally reflected in the number of correspondence sent. The said correspondence remains in the permanent proportion to all activities performed by the secretariat (a statistical analysis in this area was conducted at the Superior Court in Gliwice). It was established, as a result of completion of Stage 3, that exactly the number of the correspondence sent is a real measure of the court secretariats' workload which allowed to create an algorithm measuring the load of a “statistical” employee of each secretariat, e.g. per day, per month, per quarter, etc. (without attributing given tasks to given employees). The entire secretariat was assessed without regard to the division of duties.



- K - correspondence sent
- P - number of employees of department secretariat
- d - number of working days per month (assumed 20)
- s - number of sessions in the department
- w - the coefficient of difficulty generating correspondence

**Fig. 1** Loads algorithm of court secretariat staff [study based on [6]

**Fig. 1** shows the Loads algorithm of court secretariat staff, assuming that the number of session days per employee is equal to the number of sessions / number of employees. Number of working days per single statistical worker outside the courtroom = number of working days - the number of session days per employee. Therefore: load = correspondence / number of employees / number of days without session per employee. To illustrate the algorithm - Figure 2 shows a simulation of given data.



**Fig. 2** Example of calculation - daily load of court secretariat staff [study based on [6]



Indicated example illustrates the situation without taking into account “w” factor because it relates to an entity that has established and applies standardized secretarial duties. The described solution has been applied in the District Court in Gliwice and Regional Courts since 2007.



Fig. 3 Examples of entries made correctly and incorrectly in the SAWA [6]

The reliability of the proposed index, however, is dependent on a number of important factors contained in the standardization of secretariats' work. For authoritative comparison of the work of individual secretariats, it is important that the work was done under the same or similar conditions. In order that time-consuming data entering in registers could be comparable - registers should be kept in the same form: paper or electronic. When keeping such dual office management, which takes place in some courts, the efforts to make entries in two registers are much bigger than when recording the cases in one type of register. Similar differences exist between the secretariats where office work is done in traditional (paper) or electronic form (e-letters significantly reduce the amount of work). There is also the difficulty in identifying the number of correspondence sent, if the secretariat does not have correctly made entries in the functioning of the SAWA tab. Examples of entries made correctly and incorrectly are shown in Figure 3. Information "service", "summons" is clear, and the "official record" does not inform about the fact of generated correspondence.

Court	Department	Number of sessions	Number of employees	Number of session/number of employees	Number of working days	Number of correspondence sent	Daily average load per statistical worker
SR w CH	Wydział Cywilny	42	17	2,47	20	17,22	16,60
SR w CH	Wydział Karny	14	6	2,33	20	16,56	13,91
SR w CH	Wydział Skarbowy	10	4	2,50	20	16,33	12,87
SR w CH	Wydział Gospodarczy	4	2	2,00	20	16,33	17,26
SR w CH	Wydział Ksiądzowski	0	0	0,00	20	16,33	11,88
SR w M	Wydział Cywilny I	20	14,5	1,37	20	16,33	14,74
SR w M	Wydział Karny I	11	6	1,83	20	16,33	7,99
SR w M	Wydział Gospodarczy	6	0	1,00	20	16,33	5,32
SR w S	Wydział Cywilny I	17	6	2,83	20	16,33	26,01
SR w S	Wydział Karny I	14	12	1,16	20	16,33	15,63
SR w S	Wydział Gospodarczy	5	2	2,50	20	16,33	10,38
SR w S	Wydział Gospodarczy W	4	2	2,00	20	16,33	16,70
SR w S	Wydział Karny M	20	10	2,00	20	16,33	22,20

Fig. 4 Tables spreadsheet showing disparities in the load of individual departments in several courts [6]

The problem may be the fact that employees knowing about loads measuring, try to send or show, more correspondence than required for the purposes of specific cases. For example, when the summons regarding the trial date, with a copy of a judgment entered at closed session and the copy of the adversaries' writings should be sent, it may happen that the employee instead of sending documents in one, properly addressed envelope, generate three letters (generating unnecessary expenses to be paid by the Treasury), which automatically overestimate the load of secretariat. It is necessary to adopt uniform rules for all the evaluated entities.

Figure 4 shows a spreadsheet tables showing disparities in the load of individual departments in several courts. Thanks to the data provided by the Presidents of three non Gliwice District Courts who sent information about the work of the secretariats, we can assess disparities in the load of individual divisions. The spreadsheets permit the automatic calculation of the Loads by entering specific data and can be used in all units.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The proposed solution does not indicate what should be the optimal load of statistical worker but it allows to make comparisons between the loads of the Departments and to make personnel transfers. However, it allows to determine at what level the desired load should be, and when it is excessive in relation to the other departments. In conclusion, it is clear that the solution is suitable for use without any expenses, at any time, regardless of the office software used by the courts. The basis for the success of is the reorganization of the secretariat work and training of persons responsible for its implementation.

Standardization means that the same actions are taken in each secretariat and in the same way the actions and the documents flow are recorded (the time of performing these activities should be the same). It is advisable to achieve the same level of the use of office software in each secretariat. When workers and judges use properly configured templates of letters, orders and judgments, the workload of secretariat is reduced (from 30% to 50%).

The most important factor determining the reliability of the assessment is adopting a uniform method of counting correspondence sent, by specifying the types of items that are included in calculation. It is necessary to issue an order which shall regulate the accurate and standardized use of the "CORRESPONDENCE SENT" website tab in SAWA software, which allows to make calculations quickly with different options, also allows to catch irregularities associated with excessive generation of correspondence. Entered standardization can become the basis for integration activities. Flexible deployment of staff (temporary transfers between the secretariats) in the case of unequal (increased in one of the departments) number of activities provides a basis for integrating the repeated operations. Such activities, however, require further analysis and simultaneous merger of management levels and elements, and economic and technical processes and logistics functions in full-structured within the organization.

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