

Where do your employees spend their time?

A practical guide for leaders in the public sector: six steps from enquiry to answer, a checklist and a worksheet.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Contents

1. Why time disappears in the handovers
2. The six steps
3. Checklist
4. Do the maths
5. How to get started
6. Next step

1. INTRODUCTION

Why time disappears in the handovers

Public organisations have to deliver more with the same resources. At the same time, everything must be explainable to citizens, politicians, management and auditors. Many leaders see AI as an opportunity, but the data is too sensitive for the well-known AI services, and good ideas get stuck in pilot projects.

Time rarely disappears in the casework itself. It disappears when information has to be found in large volumes of documents, keyed in several places and documented afterwards. Each time it is a few minutes, but it is repeated thousands of times a year.

This guide walks through the six steps a task typically follows from enquiry to answer. For each step we describe what happens, the signs to look for, what you can do yourselves, and where technology can help.

How to use this guide

- 1 Read the six steps and mark the ones that sound familiar.
- 2 Fill in the checklist with a colleague from another part of the process.
- 3 Use the worksheet to cost your three biggest time drains.
- 4 Choose one step to start with. Not six.

This guide is written for leaders. It requires no technical knowledge, and you can use it whether or not you work with BCT.

2. WHERE THE TIME GOES

The six steps

Here are the six steps the work typically follows. For each step: what happens, signs that time is disappearing, what you can do yourselves, and where technology can help.

01 Enquiry

Questions and applications arrive by email, phone, forms and systems. They have to be sorted and passed on to the right person.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- Many enquiries are sorted by hand every day.
- It takes time before an enquiry reaches the right person.
- The same questions are answered again and again.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- Count how many enquiries are sorted by hand.
- Find the ten most frequently asked questions.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Enquiries are sorted and routed to the right person straight away, and the most common questions can be answered faster.

02 Finding information

The answer is somewhere in legislation, guidelines, previous cases and internal documents. It takes time to find, especially for new employees.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- Employees spend a lot of time searching for information.
- Key knowledge sits with a few experienced colleagues.
- You are not allowed to use the well-known AI services on your documents.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- Gather the most important guidelines in one place.
- Ask new employees what is hardest to find.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Secure AI search on your own documents, where raw data stays on your own systems.

03

Casework

A case often passes through several systems, and the same information is keyed in again and again.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- The same information is keyed in several places.
- A case has to pass through many systems.
- Cases sit waiting between two departments.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- Follow one case from start to finish and count the handovers.
- Find the piece of information that is keyed in most often.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Data flows between systems so it is only entered once, and the case can be followed all the way.

04

Quality and rules

Similar cases must be handled the same way. That requires fixed rules and templates that everyone knows.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- How a case is handled depends on the caseworker.
- Templates exist but are not used.
- Errors are only found through complaints or audits.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- Review five similar cases and compare how they were handled.
- Gather the templates in one place.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Fixed templates and automatic checks that help employees get it right the first time.

05

Documentation

Everything must be explainable: how a decision was made, which data was used, and who has seen it.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- Compiling documentation for audits takes a long time.
- It is hard to explain how a decision was made.
- Documentation is produced afterwards rather than along the way.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- List the documentation requirements you have.
- Find out where documentation is produced today.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Traceability and documentation are built in from the start, so the solution stands up to audit.

06

Data sharing

Other authorities, partners and systems need access to data without compromising security.

SIGNS THAT TIME DISAPPEARS HERE

- Data is shared via email and spreadsheets.
- It is unclear who has access to shared data.
- Raw data leaves your systems when it is shared.

WHAT YOU CAN DO YOURSELVES TOMORROW

- List who you share data with.
- Review how data is shared today.

WHERE TECHNOLOGY CAN HELP

Controlled access, where others can use data while raw data stays on your own systems.

3. FIND YOUR TIME DRAINS

Checklist

Tick the questions where the answer is “too long”, “too many times” or “we don’t know”. Each tick is a place where time and money are probably disappearing. Ideally, do it with a colleague from another part of the process.

01 Enquiry

- ☐ How many enquiries are sorted by hand every day?
- ☐ How long does it take before an enquiry reaches the right person?

02 Finding information

- ☐ How long does an employee spend finding the answer in documents and systems?
- ☐ Are you allowed to use AI on your own documents today?

03 Casework

- ☐ How many times is the same information keyed in?
- ☐ How many systems does a case pass through?

04 Quality and rules

- ☐ Are similar cases handled the same way regardless of who has them?
- ☐ Are there fixed templates and checks?

05 Documentation

- ☐ Can you explain to auditors how a decision was made?
- ☐ How long does it take to compile the documentation?

06 Data sharing

- ☐ How do other authorities access your data today?
- ☐ Does raw data leave your own systems when it is shared?

Three ticks or more? Then there is usually something to gain, and it is worth taking a closer look.

4. WHAT DOES IT COST YOU TODAY?

Do the maths

It is easier to prioritise when there is a number on it. Use the table to cost your three biggest time drains. The figures do not need to be precise. A good estimate is enough to see where there is most to gain.

$$\text{Hours per week} \times \text{number of people} \times \text{hourly rate} \times 46 \text{ weeks} = \text{EUR per year}$$

Task	Hours/week	People	Rate (EUR)	EUR/year
Example: Searching documents	3	10	55	75,900 EUR
1.				
2.				
3.				
Total				

The example is for illustration only. Use your own figures. Remember that time is not the only cost: lost orders, errors and delays often cost more than the hours.

GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN YOU DO THE MATHS

- Who does the task, and how often?
- What would they spend the time on if the task disappeared?
- What does an error or a delay cost when it happens?
- What happens when the person who knows the task is ill or leaves?

5. NEXT STEPS

How to get started

Once you have found your time drains, it is tempting to fix them all at once. That is rarely the best approach. Here are five tips from the projects we have been part of.

1. Start with one step

Choose the step that costs the most and solve it first. It delivers results quickly and experience for the next ones.

2. Measure before you build

Write down how many hours, errors and days are involved today. Then you can see whether it works.

3. Talk to the people who do the work

They know where it hurts. Solutions built together with them get used.

4. Build on what you have

You rarely need a new system. Often it is about getting the systems you have to work together.

5. Agree price and extent up front

A fixed price and a clear plan make it easy to decide and easy to follow up.

A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE**A Danish public authority – AI on sensitive data**

The authority works with some of the country's most sensitive data, so the well-known AI services were not an option. BCT built a solution where raw data stays on the authority's own systems, with secure search, internal chat and access for external AI agents. Employees were trained so they can use and develop the solution themselves.

Result: Secure AI on sensitive data, without raw data leaving the building.

6. NEXT STEP

Let's have a no-obligation chat

This guide gives you a good starting point. If you would like help taking the next step, the easiest way is to call or email us. It is free and without obligation, and you will get an honest answer about whether there is something to gain.

1 Call us for a chat

A conversation of about 20 minutes where we listen to where your time goes and share how others have approached it. No sales pitch.

2 Book a Shadow Walk

We follow the work at your company for ½–2 days and put numbers on where the time and money go.

3 Get a concrete plan

About a week later you receive a report of typically 50–75 pages with an action plan and a financial overview. Fixed price, and you own what we build.



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Book a Shadow Walk: blackcapitaltechnology.com/en/the-shadow-walk/booking/

You set the pace. Many start with a short chat and come back when the timing is right.