

Development Management insights 1 - If you want to deliver a better service... get better customers.

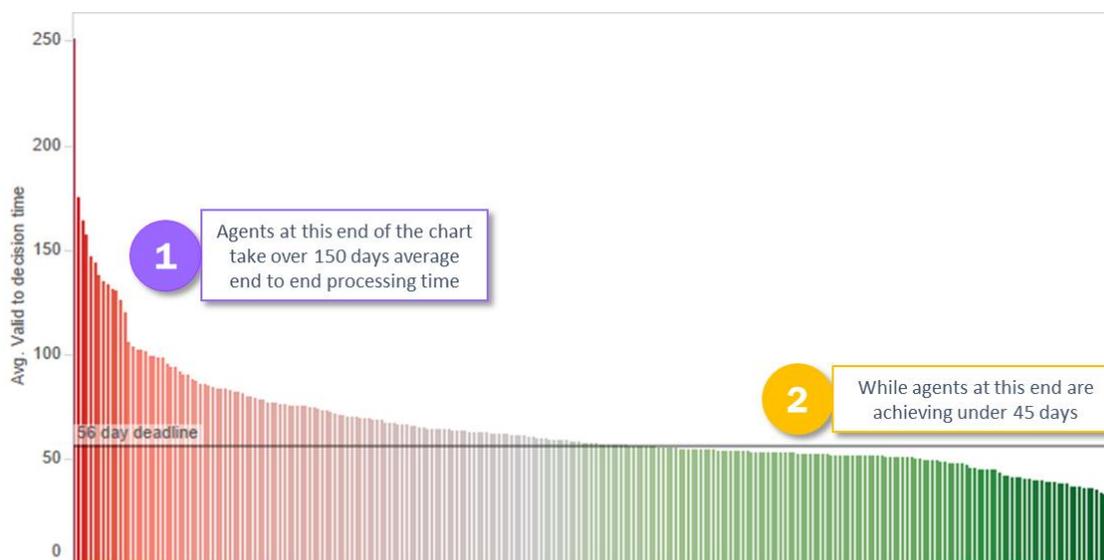
We've been working hard with a number of LPAs recently looking to improve the Development Management (DM) process in local authorities and a few things have struck us. This short series of mini insights highlights just a few points that we hope might help others looking at improving efficiency, effectiveness and outcomes from DM.

Insight

Applications from the best planning agents cost far less to process, provide a far better experience to the applicant and avoids the reputation of LPAs being unfairly tarnished by agents who provide below par services. LPAs can drive up performance measures by understanding the impact of different agents on their metrics and working to improve application quality.

Analytics

A group of authorities wanted to improve end to end process time to help drive up performance and customer satisfaction. To help with this we decided to look at how well the applicants themselves performed. After cleaning up the data and merging across the group we could then start to compare agents' performance.



Average end to end process time for each agent in local authority planning services
Produced by i-three analytics Oct 2017

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The worst agents submitted up to 35 applications without ever submitting one that was valid while the best submitted over 200 without any being invalid! This contributed to the better agents achieving an end to end process time was of under 40 days while the worst took over 150 days for very similar applications. Even at the outcome stage differences were maintained with the best submitting applications that LPAs were happy to approve all their applications while other agents saw more than 40% of their applications rejected. These factors are also highly consistent. In many cases the agents

who submit more invalids, take longer to process and have higher rejection rates. Clearly some agents are delivering much more for their customers than others. For LPAs the costs of dealing with the poorer quality agents is disproportionately high. All in, the cost of processing an application from some agents could be double that of the best, not to mention the impact on the applicant who receives a slower, more expensive decision (and may be wrongly blaming the LPA leading to reputational risks for the LPA).

Application

Improving costs, speed of processing and the applicant experience is crucial and agents play a key part in this. Authorities should undertake analysis of agent performance and work with those providing the worst results to drive up their performance. Further analysis of the most commonly occurring faults will help to target available support. Publishing the results in the form of agent league tables could also be considered so that residents can make informed decisions.

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