

Decision

An imminent election required the production of detailed briefing books because of the possibility of a new incoming Minister.

Action

Officers were now in a position to draft briefing notes at their own workstations and then send it to colleagues and superiors through an electronic transfer system for review and editing. Officers with product review responsibilities were enabled to edit on their computers without time-lag and with no need to involve secretaries in several retypings. The section involved was thus finished with their 100-page briefing book in three days. Colleagues in an analogous section (with word processors, but without linked desk-top computers) took seven days.

Results

Mixed.

Positive:

- i. Swifter response to management needs
- ii. Task completed in less time than formerly
- iii. Elimination of time-lags
- iv. Reduction of stress on secretaries, who were no longer involved in copy-typing.

Negative:

- i. Some temporary "de-skilling" as the secretaries were obliged to undertake some purely clerical photocopying until the briefing book rush was over.
- ii. Some job degradation, inasmuch as secretaries no longer involved with creation of the Section's product.

Scenario 5

Officers requiring to send telexes after normal hours had been unable to do so without secretarial help.

Decision

Create systems that would permit officer-only telex production in late night or weekend situations.

Action

A telex format was introduced into the computer memory. Officers could call this up and electronically send it to a printer set up for telexes. The officer then put in the telex form and sent it off again, all without intervention from a secretary.