

There is much to learn from these initiatives for the designers of business cases for new integration initiatives. All of the designers and builders we studied faced significant obstacles and complex problems. The many successes that we found were not the result of applying simple formulas or simply taking advantage of fortuitous circumstances. Instead the successful results followed from a combination of opportunities, leadership, careful planning, and coordinated, sustained effort. We also identified some more specific elements of successful strategies that can help guide business case development.

Need to Tailor Strategy to the Time and Place

The study showed clearly that even though there were consistent themes and initiatives, every jurisdiction has its own set of unique problems and opportunities. Each has a variety of stakeholders with dissimilar interests and goals. Consequently, the most effective business cases will be tailored to those particular circumstances, including the extent of integration achieved through previous efforts. This suggests that the business case materials should include tools to assess the political and organizational environment, technical capacities of existing systems, as well as the capacity of the participating organizations to undertake the proposed activities. The materials should also emphasize methods and resources rather than specific cases that may not be appropriate to many settings.

Importance of Buy-In

Effective buy-in for any integration project appears to depend on careful attention to interests and incentives. That is, mobilizing support and buy-in by the full range of necessary players requires understanding of their needs and objectives. Authoritative, top-down approaches are useful for only part of the process, particularly around issues of standards, priorities, and funding. The collaborative and integrative parts of an initiative require commitment by the full range of participants. Thus the relationship between the functions and features of the integration initiative and the interests of the participants become an important part of the design. The case materials and methods should therefore include tools and techniques for stakeholder analysis and identification of benefits and costs, as well as marketing and persuasive tools for generating enthusiasm and support.

It is also clear from many of the accounts of successful initiatives that grassroots efforts at communication and commitment building are often necessary. Integration typically involved many local agencies and jurisdictions whose participation is essential to overall success. One participant talked about “attending every sheriff’s meeting for a year” to talk about the initiative and encourage participation. Therefore, the business case materials should include strategies for the grassroots part of the initiative. These strategies could include assistance in how to develop persuasive presentations, print materials for distribution, and techniques for eliciting information about interests and needs from potential participants.

Importance of Planning

The complexity of integration efforts, in both technical and organizational terms, means that careful planning is an important element of success. The case materials should, therefore, include tools and support for effective planning. Business case resources could include examples of plans and planning techniques used effectively in other initiatives. It would also be useful to have brief descriptions of planning and strategy-making tools. Financial planning is an integral part of the case development. So some attention in the materials should be given to financial planning tools, such as budget building techniques, scenario building and what-if analysis, capital investment analysis, and returns on investments.

Federal Role in Funding

Support from the Office of Justice Programs, and other U.S. Department of Justice divisions, has been a vital part of many of the current and past integration initiatives. Therefore the business case materials should contain information and tools to support requests for Federal funds. These materials should include descriptions of the various programs that provide funding, procedures for application, and possibly examples of successful applications and proposals. State and local level decisions to concentrate Federal funding on integration activities have been a successful part of the initiatives in a number of states and localities. This strategy can be an important part of the business case. That is, the case for local and state support should also include persuasive arguments for concentrating Federal funds in the same way. However, information integration is not the only possible use for Federal funds. State and local criminal justice agencies may have other priorities in mind for

these resources, such as more personnel or other kinds of equipment. Making a strong case for integration can be a source of conflict with agencies that have other agendas. Deciding how to avoid or deal with these possible conflicts then becomes part of the overall planning and strategy-building effort.

Organizing the Pitch

Many of the participants in the interviews described the process of persuasion necessary for these initiatives as “selling the project” or “making the pitch.” Therefore tips for understanding and successfully employing basic marketing and selling techniques should be part of the case materials. These could include basic descriptions of concepts and methods for understanding the potential market and the customer, discovering needs and preferences, and effective communication and persuasion. Part of the “selling” component will be based on information and analysis described above, such as stakeholder analysis and strategic planning. Tailoring of the pitch to the particular audience can then be part of the overall plan. Since the audience will vary, a well-grounded understanding of what works with various audiences is an essential part of planning the approach. Political leaders, for example, do not all have the same preferences and agendas; legislators tend to specialize in certain areas, so finding the right legislator is part of the strategy. Governors have very limited time and highly-defined priorities. Judges are careful about judicial autonomy. Staff to elected officials are often key gatekeepers in access and defining agendas for their employer, so making a case to staff often precedes access to an elected official. These and other elements of planning a “selling” campaign can also be valuable parts of the overall case development guide.
