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The Magic Button

Abstract: We explain how 3 professional staff spearheaded review and implementation actions that developed a new way to automate tasks that previously required significant manual input. The human research ethics staff manage 3 ethics review committees with 2 weekly meetings and 1 monthly meeting. There can be up to 35 applications per meeting. Staff co-ordinate 28 committee members. Each application is assigned to 3 members. Applications typically go back to a committee more than once before they are approved and, ideally, the same reviewers are assigned for the life of the project. Applications are divided into those that require scientific review prior to ethics, or those that don't. The introduction of a new ethics application form, which requires a different approach to reviewing, and the decision of the committees to accept both forms for the first half of 2017, was an added complication to the sorting and assigning of applications and the weekly process of creating Agendas and reviewer action sheets. The challenge was how to manage the increased workload without additional resources. Staff worked to redefine and reconfigure workflows and implemented cross unit collaboration to make (in-house and 'free') adjustments to the already available technology. Now systems talk to each other in new ways and generate new outputs. We have a magic button which automates the process of preparing meeting agendas and papers, ensuring correct category sorting and reviewer tracking across meetings, and generates the correct review documents for each application.

Target Audience: School or research staff

Take home message: Driving process change using existing resources.