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Is DHS Ready For What's Next?

Looking ahead, Booz Allen offers its perspectives on change in a new administration.

Since its inception five years ago, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has made significant progress toward becoming more integrated and cohesive. As with any new administration, the tendency is often to make immediate change, says John D. Mayer, who leads the DHS business for Booz Allen Hamilton, a strategic management and technology consulting firm that works with senior management in government and industry. "A restructuring of DHS, however, may not yield greater integration of the components resulting in their functioning optimally as a whole. Perhaps most important in the discussion around change is how DHS fits within a new agenda, policies, and shifting perspectives on defense of the homeland," says Mayer.

Like other organizations created by mergers and acquisitions, many DHS units continue to operate independently, much as they did before becoming part of a huge new operation. "DHS needs to develop processes that cut across all mission areas—something Booz Allen has helped other government agencies and departments accomplish," says Mayer.

The appraisal is understandable when you consider that DHS was pieced together in 2003 from agencies as disparate as the U.S. Secret Service, Border Patrol, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Customs, and the Coast Guard as a response to the September 11, 2001 attacks. "DHS has done an excellent job toward maturing its organization, but a lot can still be achieved from an integration perspective," says Mayer.

In 2006, the Department of Homeland Security Office of Operations Coordination (OPS) turned to Booz Allen to help shape a new path forward for OPS, which plays a vital role in homeland security by providing strategic decision-making support, contingency planning, incident coordination, information sharing, situational awareness, and operational assessments.

Booz Allen pulled together a multi-disciplinary team that



worked in close cooperation with OPS leadership and staff. "We conducted extensive research and interviews with stakeholders across DHS to develop a top-down strategic assessment and a bottom-up assessment of existing capabilities and supporting activities," says Mayer. The end result was a mission blueprint and transformation roadmap for operational effectiveness.

Mayer cites the example of border security, which involves Customs and Border Protection, the Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration, Immigration

and Customs Enforcement, and other agencies. In the past, each developed its own programs to support this mission. "We advocate a mission integration approach," says Mayer, "where clients work together to align and integrate separate programs and plans within a larger shared mission."

As another example, says Mayer, the U.S. has many options for defending its southwest border, including surveillance cameras, unmanned aerial vehicles, fences, and increasing the number of border agents. To help DHS make these critical decisions, Booz Allen developed a risk model that looks at the various options and allows department officials to understand the tradeoffs associated with each option.

Mayer concludes that DHS has demonstrated improved effectiveness and results on many fronts in its short tenure. "The DHS mission of securing the country and preserving our freedoms is one we all want and needs to be performed at the highest standard. Approaching this from a mind-set of collaboration and shared responsibility will bring a broader perspective and collective commitment toward working through challenges."

Booz Allen Hamilton has been at the forefront of strategy and technology consulting for more than 90 years. For more information, visit www.boozallen.com/homelandsecurity.