

A case study – Re-aligning strategy in a department fatigued by change

A UK based department of a Global organisation had emerged from a 4 month re-structuring programme part of which was a downsizing operation. The department had been through similar restructures in each of the previous 4 years. Outwardly people were still delivering a high level of service and support to their clients but internally there were signs of dis-engagement, disillusionment and some cynicism being articulated along the lines of “safe, until the next time!” One of the primary concerns was that despite the reduction in headcount, people were attempting to keep doing what they had always done and this ethos of delivering the same or more with less was impacting on the health and well-being of the team. Against this backdrop there was an urgent need to refocus and re-energise the people and at the same time prepare them for future inevitable changes being driven by the Global parent.

It was essential to have a short-term impact to raise awareness of the strategic direction of the parent company, at the same time make a clear statement that there was no going back and to set the scene for more changes in the near future. There was a need to reset and accept that things were now different and whilst service to the client was still of paramount importance, how that service was delivered and to whom needed to change. The start point of this was the design of a series of roadshows, attended by all 280 employees, delivered by the departmental leaders. The roadshows outlined the parent company’s strategy, the UK strategy and the specific department aims and objectives. Comments such as “it’s the first time I have really understood why I do what I am asked to do” were common. At the same time an investment was made in premises to give a new look and feel to the physical environment. The final and very significant change instigated was a review of the reporting-line structure of the team. The approach taken was to empower the key line managers to devise a workable structure, to cascade it to the wider team and ensure it was operational within a month. The most noteworthy outcome of this empowerment was the line managers stepped into the leadership space and drove the changes throughout the department. Whilst this was not without minor difficulties the overall impact on the engagement of the entire team was extremely positive. Taking this approach, whilst not risk free, was the most tangible evidence that things were indeed different as all previous restructures had been driven by the departmental leadership team.

Looking to the future and the need to align activity to the strategic direction of the global parent work began on defining a Target Operating Model. ‘Voice of the customer’ and ‘voice of the people’ consultancy interviews were completed to gather vital input, the results categorised, analysed and validated with the sponsor. A draft TOM was shared with the team, the global parent, and key stakeholders. Feedback was gathered and the TOM refined and a final pragmatic model was agreed by a steering committee of key stakeholders. A small transformation team was formed to scope the creation of a series of projects involving key leaders from across the wider team to plan for implementation of the TOM with a 2 year timeline for achievement.

Key achievements from the consultancy approach taken in this scenario were:

- An awareness and understanding gained by all of the strategic direction of the entire organisation.
- Buy-in and alignment from the entire team to embed new ways of working.
- Development of Leadership skills of key managers.
- Stakeholder involvement throughout the design and development of future TOM.
- An acceptance from those previously fatigued by change that it was inevitable and there was more to come. In fact, planning for the future change was embraced due to the involvement in the design of the TOM and the projects to implement it.
- Liaison with the global parent throughout the define/design phase to ensure alignment with future plans.