

Case study

Keeping Morale High in Difficult Times



In this study, Chris Haynes-Brown, Programme Owner for An Even Better Place to Work, tells how it has helped to maintain morale and motivation in difficult times.

The Situation

There have been a number of Finance Change Programmes in the last decade that have progressively reduced the number of staff whilst at the same time providing a better degree of business support.

The number of Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in Finance has fallen by 51% from just over 500 FTE employed in the Finance Directorate, to less than 250 FTE.

The Challenge

We identified numerous potential barriers to employee engagement in Finance. Not least of which are the effects of having a geographically dispersed nature of our National service delivery, with teams based across 11 different locations.

- Inconsistent communications and knowledge sharing across teams;
- Poor senior management visibility and consequently inconsistent downward communication;
- Management style and ability varied significantly;
- Lack of advocacy resulting in poor local support for nationally decided processes;
- Too much reactive decision making.

The Solution

We recognised that it was going to be a very big challenge to maintain our current levels of service delivery whilst going through change. Change brings with it anxieties about job security, redundancies and increase our staff stress levels.

Recognising that this wasn't about maintaining our service levels through significant change but was very much about improving them, we needed to put in place some significant support improvements across the whole Finance Directorate that specifically improved our employee engagement.

This is where An Even Better Place to Work comes in. We have a great working relationship with the Better Place to Work team. The solution helps us to create the right culture of shared values and vision for the directorate whilst at the same time helping our staff to express and be clear about what their needs are.

The Results

An Even Better Place to Work is regarded as a very valuable tool and the whole programme is strongly supported by teams. Managers are finding that the reports that we can produce from the system are very informative and particularly useful at identifying areas where they can target improvement activities ie Conflict Management, Openness, Feedback etc

A staff survey (conducted by Ipsos MORI) showed significant improvements over results from two years earlier - despite the structural changes that we implemented.

In fact the Finance results from the survey were consistently higher than the Environment Agency overall figures.

Undoubtedly the arrangements that we have in place with An Even Better Place to Work help us to listen and act upon our staff opinions, needs, concerns etc. It clearly makes a huge difference to our continuous improvement ambitions and towards improving overall service delivery for our customers.



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