

Executive Summary

The previous case study in this series **West Dunbartonshire Council Office Rationalisation** (insert link) gave the story of the move to and a description of the new offices. It alluded to the importance placed on employee engagement as part of not just that project but as part of the new culture embraced within West Dunbartonshire and the desire to create and maintain a modern, mobile and motivated workforce. To engage with their employees, new mechanisms were created to give staff meaningful and simple communication channels which were also used to provide cogent data on changes to staff morale – allowing timely and positive interventions to be implemented.

Background

From the onset of the office rationalisation project, the organisational development team knew they had to work hand-in-hand with all council staff in order to minimise the disruption from the move, to mitigate risks to service users and alleviate staff fears around this significant change.

This case study introduces some of the employee engagement techniques used within the council as part of the office rationalisation project and how the lessons learned from early use of those techniques have been used to create a permanent and ongoing forum for employee engagement.

Drivers

The key driver for employee engagement was **communication**. Due to the magnitude of the office rationalisation project, the council wanted to ensure that they had a communication cascade both up and down the organisation.

Results

Improving communication before, during and after the move has resulted in:

- **Accurate monitoring** and timely responses to changes in staff feelings to keep staff morale high;
- The collection and creation of a meaningful and consistent **set of data** in relation to staff feelings;
- **Improved communication** through all levels of the organisation.

Implementation

1. **Organisational Development and Change (ODC) facilitated communication across all levels of the organisation.**

They became members of the office rationalisation project board providing the opportunity to hear and provide information directly at board level.

2. **Service Champion and Manager Groups**

They facilitated information transfer by cascading communication at **managers' groups** and **service champion groups** which were run regularly as part of move preparations. Each service had to appoint a manager and a **change champion** who would attend these forums and they would share the information internally after the groups had met. This also provided a two-way vehicle for managers and

champions to provide staff feedback to their relevant group meetings; organisational development would then share this feedback to the project board.

Post move, the change champion groups were transitioned into staff forum groups to enable the continuation of improvements which includes auditing buildings, coming up with suggestions on how to better use space and push those parameters wider.

3. Standard Discussion Topics

Key topics were covered with each of the groups within each meeting such as document strategy (helping prepare documentation for the move), health and safety considerations, information security aspects, citizen or service user impact analysis. This provided a holistic picture of move readiness, move risk and move requirements which was monitored on a regular basis.

4. Barometer of Staff Feelings

Organisational development designed an innovative technique for continual measurement of staff feelings: a **staff barometer**. This contains ten questions which include topics such as leadership visibility, communication, support and understanding.

A deceptively simple yet powerfully efficient tool, the barometer was reviewed on a quarterly basis with the change champions who were asked to score themselves on a 1-10 in these ten key areas. If any area had dropped from the previous quarter, then that would be taken back to the change champions in the manager's groups. The change champions were felt to be representative of the feelings for their colleagues and were seen as an accurate indication of overall staff morale.

This gave the opportunity to explore reasons why people were feeling that way and to consider options as to how to improve the situation. For example, before the move people were starting to feel they were not ready for the move and the council needed to improve their reassurances. As a result, staff roadshows were conducted where staff already working in the new manner could go around and help allay the fears of people not yet to move - this meant that staff were driving the response to their own feedback and worked incredibly well.

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**ALISON MCBRIDE
OD & CHANGE MANAGER**

Previous experience had taught, that as the move becomes imminent staff anxiety increases. In order to help alleviate this, staff orientation sessions were organised for the week leading up to relocation. These allowed staff to have a full tour of the new workspace, familiarise themselves with the facilities and breakout spaces etc. They were also given their personal locker key and the opportunity to have their fingerprint scanned for biometric entry this generated some excitement and reduced anxiety allowing OD&C to assist with readiness and to answer any additional question; a frequently asked questions document was updated and published online for the benefit of all staff. This created positive anticipation with staff more enthusiastic about preparing for moving day. OD&C were on hand to provide support in the lead up to moving day and the week after, being visible and floor walking ensured a smooth transition during this period when employee's concerns and anxieties could be at their most elevated.

5. Service Assessment Review

As well as needing to acknowledge the holistic feelings of all staff involved within the move, organisational development recognised the importance of gauging the feelings at a service level. As part of the move preparation they undertook a **service assessment** which was all about listening – finding out the nuances specific to that service, their anxieties, their worries and providing an opportunity to describe any of their unique requirements as a team. Most do have the same things in reality, yet it is good to be able to give each service the opportunity to discuss what is most important to them.

Investing that time with the delivering personnel at the start was really important as they felt they were being listened to, their service and needs was understood and these points were taken on board to make sure they got what they needed to be effective when they got to their new location.

The assessment review was taken away, reformatted and returned to the service as an **action plan** for the team to start preparing for the move. The progress against this action plan was regularly checked at the change champion meetings.

6. Regular Surveys

A pre-move survey was completed followed up by a post-move survey and these were repeated six months and one year after the move.

Recommendations/Lessons Learned

1. **Continual feedback is essential** – not just for the duration of a project but as a standard and regular activity with the council. Constant monitoring allows you to see what's changed, how people are feeling, what improvements have been made (if any) and continue to check these along the way;
2. **Data collection is crucial** – collecting data using the same techniques on a regular basis allows for quick comparisons and gives the ability to see and respond to any changes in a timely and appropriate manner.

Participant Details

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Supporting Documentation

This case study is the second in a series of four linked case studies from West Dunbartonshire Council; the case studies should, ideally, be read in this order:

1. [WDC Office Rationalisation](#)
2. WDC Employee Engagement
3. [WDC Workplace of the Future](#)
4. [WDC Change, Appraisals, Learning and Development Interventions](#)

Watch a more detailed [video](#) describing employee engagement.