

Improving the performance of an HR Service

Our client provided an outsourced HR service to a Local Authority. The service was receiving poor reviews in customer satisfaction surveys and urgent action was required to improve the service.

Four Stage Plan

In consultation with the Executive Management Team we agreed a four stage plan:

Stage One – Discovery

The first stage was to interview HR Staff and Local Authority Managers and review surveys and reports to establish underlying issues.

Stage Two - Stabilisation

In the short term we needed to tackle HR service delivery issues and quickly demonstrate to the client-side that corrective action was in hand.

Stage Three – Sustainable Improvement

In the medium term we would put in place a sustainable HR service delivery solution.

Stage Four – Evaluation and Strategic Planning

Finally, we would ensure that there was a system in place to monitor future performance and a People Strategy aligned to the Local Authority Business Plans

What did we do?

Attempts had been made in the past to improve the HR service but had failed. The main reason for this was that solutions had been imposed on the HR team without gaining their commitment as a result as soon as support was withdrawn they went back to their old ways. The key to success was therefore to engage with the HR staff and the Local Authority managers and work with them to help them to improve the service. Some of the things that we did were as follows:

- A Blue Star Consultant was embedded in the HR Team to manage the project on a day to day basis
- A detailed improvement plan was developed which was subject to Project Management Disciplines and regular reports on progress against milestones were made to the client's Executive Management Team



BLUE STAR

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Regular meetings were established with the Local Authority Business Relationship Managers to ensure that they were aware of what was being done
- Performance management issues were tackled and a recruitment campaign was created to fill existing professional vacancies
- Personal and business objectives were agreed for the HR team
- HR processes that were problematical were Process Mapped, analysed to establish where waste and delays were occurring and fixes put in place by the owners of the processes
- An HR business partner model was established and dedicated HR Advisors were attached to each Directorate
- HR advisors regularly attended Heads of Service management meetings and were able to understand better what was happening in the business and how it might impact on HR. They were also able to establish what management information was needed and how it should be presented.
- A voluntary HR project team sponsored by the HR management team was established to tackle internal HR ways of working. Eventually this volunteer body encompassed all HR staff and was self managing more than 20 projects ranging from office tidiness to improving the HR intranet.
- Regular away days were provided for the HR Team to share progress and plan future actions.

Conclusions

In a relatively short time feedback from the customer satisfaction surveys began to improve. Initially this was as much from the fact that relationships were improved and there was a better understanding of each others issues. Within a few weeks the changes in processes and ways of working began to take effect and although it takes time to change perceptions HR was finally declared to be fit for purpose.

Our last task was to start the process of developing a People Strategy in conjunction with the LA Organisation Development team to ensure that there was clarity for the future direction of HR.