

Building a Change-Ready Workforce

Ci Virtual Roundtable – Wednesday 21st July, 2010

The Roundtable objective was to explore how to support people and organisations to respond positively to change, and to identify interventions that help build a resilient ‘change-ready’ workforce.

Part 1: INSIGHT

Key drivers for change included:

- Business group reorganisation, cost reduction and implementation of a new technology platform
- Focus on provision of a global service to clients
- To create a different customer (user) experience
- Fast growth of the business or diversification
- Significant restructuring or merger
- Focus on innovation or on delivering solutions

Impact to employees included:

- New roles, new teams, high attrition, lack of role clarity, role elevation
- Changing ways of working (e.g. programme based), changing processes
- Different skills required (entrepreneurial thinking, different competencies, solution focussed)
- Developing a customer centric operational model

Challenges for participants included:

- Meeting the needs of “Gen. Y” employees
- Developing a lean and innovation focussed workforce
- Utilising a global capability to provide a single face to the client
- Career and the opportunity to make people work across silos
- Creating an organisation identity, making the values tangible and changing behaviours across the organisation

Part 2: INNOVATION

Discussion focussed around how to provide change management interventions which work. The challenge was put that traditional change workshops and skills based support had little impact on long-term change readiness in an organisation. A consensus developed that different approaches and a diverse suite of tailored responses is now required through understanding their life stage and needs in a “whole person” context. It is also important to allow for different interventions in different cultures – for example, one company has found traditional skills-based training to be effective for managers in Korea.

Innovative responses included:

- Reverse mentoring – to enable senior staff to become familiar with emerging technologies
- Immersive experiences – e.g. staff go and live in a country for a period to understand the customer and how products are used
- Use of social media within organisations to generate engagement at all levels (Yammer)
- Change agents – identifying people who are living the change behaviours and supporting them to work together, increase confidence and to influence each other and people in their teams.

Glynis Rankin of Creative Metier (as ‘provocateur’ on the call) highlighted the importance of providing off-line, remote and confidential support to individuals during change and at points of transition. Her case study highlighted how one organisation was unaware of the level of risk of losing key staff, and significantly neither the coachees nor their managers were aware of career options available across the whole organisation, as their awareness was limited by the current role, or immediate prospects for promotion in their part of the organisation. By encouraging access to wider networks, the majority of coachees successfully transitioned within the organisation with tangible business benefits.

Where a rapid organisational change occurs, individuals may become isolated within their current environment, and disorientated in relation to the company and their options for the future. The importance of having individualised on-call support for key at risk groups can significantly mitigate this.

Part 3: IMPACT

Key learning points for participants included:

- “Change is changing” and requires a wide range of innovative options and a customised approach
- Broad based change management interventions are no longer appropriate; individual focus is needed to engage people at ground level
- Need to analyse how to engage with every individual and address “Gen. Y” challenges
- There is value in the collaboration of HR & OD professionals to share ideas and create an innovative space
- In the search to gain competitive advantage, interventions must be relevant to individuals as “whole people”.