

CASE STUDY: WCS GROUP

Change Management, Talent Management, Learning & Development projects

What?

I was initially engaged as an interim People Integration / Change Manager to support post-acquisition integrations. This then led onto me being asked to take the lead as interim Head of Talent Management and subsequently the interim Head of Learning & Development.

Why?

WCS Group were a highly acquisitive and successful business but they had struggled with post-acquisition integrations. They required specialist knowledge and experience of acquisitions and particularly integration and harmonisation of T&Cs. Once I had successfully introduced best practice principles and tools, I was asked to take the lead on Talent Management & Engagement given these are some of my specialisms. As a result of this work, I then proposed the requirement for a Learning & Development Strategy and Function as the next required step. My rationale was that the management and leadership capability gap was constantly widening with each acquisition and a lack of training & development and career pathways was being flagged in the employee engagement surveys.

How?

- **Change Management** - a new business had been acquired on the day I joined and I was asked to meet the leadership teams onsite. This proved a tricky acquisition as the incoming senior management team thought that they would have the opportunity of a management buy-out, but the business had been sold without their knowledge. This created huge despondency and refusal to adapt to new ways of working. I worked closely with the incoming senior management team to help them feel listened to, demonstrated empathy and looked for quick wins to earn their trust. I then coached the leadership team they would be reporting to so that they could develop their empathy and coaching skills (utilising David Rock's SCARF model to develop their understanding of the psychology of change). I also designed and facilitated bespoke leadership development workshops for the merging leadership teams including 1:1 coaching / mentoring, and subsequently team building for the wider incoming team, as well as ensuring that the incoming acquisition had access to management and leadership development initiatives. On an operational level, I introduced a T&C template for the HRBPs to use as the basis for harmonisation. This tricky acquisition became a success story, and I was asked to take the lead for the Culture & Engagement Working Group.

- **Talent Management** - I was asked to reintroduce talent reviews and succession planning across the business as the previous attempt had not been successful. I prepared revised templates with guidance notes and a short interactive presentation briefing for managers and HRBPs. I also introduced peer calibration sessions which was a new concept. I provided support and guidance to the HRBP team with implementation. I also designed and deployed a skills gap analysis of circa. 225 managers and leaders to identify skills gaps, as well as developing a learning directory combining technical and compliance training with proposed people management skills training and e-learning. I was then asked to take the lead on employee engagement and successfully proposed moving from one big annual survey that involved a long process, onerous data analysis and a delay in taking actions to shorter, quarterly pulse surveys for more timely feedback and proactive actions. I also built in an employer net promoter score as an extra reporting metric. I was asked to also review the onboarding and appraisal processes.
- **Learning & Development** - I highlighted pain points - an overwhelming skills gap between current management & leadership capability and future requirements, lack of non-compliance/technical training and development, as well as the organisation's ambition to move from silver to gold 'employer of choice' status. I presented this to the C-suite, and it was immediately approved and sponsored. I then created an L&D strategy and developed a Management & Leadership Excellence framework - this included developing and facilitating learning interventions, enlisting internal SMEs, designing and facilitating workshops to develop - people management skills, coaching fundamentals, managing teams through change, developing high performing teams and personal effectiveness. I also designed and implemented a mentoring programme for high potential employees and implemented a Level 3 Team Leader apprenticeship programme. I also designed and facilitated team building events for various teams. Due to the huge success of the L&D strategy and learning interventions, I was able to gain approval to recruit and develop an L&D Co-ordinator. I was also asked to develop and lead a Learning & Development Working Group.

Outcome

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"I have been very lucky to work with Gemma over the last year. She has supported me and my People/ HR team in developing a top-class Management and Leadership Excellence programme that has engaged both our current and aspiring managers to improve and develop their skills and learn how to get the best out of their people.

Gemma's drive, enthusiasm and expertise in launching this has been invaluable and I am sure it will continue to be a highly credible and supportive programme that no doubt impacts business performance positively.

Thank you, Gemma, we couldn't have done it without you!"

Jennifer Jennings, Group HR Director - WCS Group (Marlowe Environmental Services)



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