

Leading change and transformation

The Case History – Lessons Learned



Assess

I would like to have spent 3 separate days, not 2, with the Top Team at the very beginning of the process to get them working even better together prior to them being joined by 13 other Champions.

Composition of Champions Group – ensure all members, no matter how junior, have the character and personality to be effective in this role.

At the beginning of the process I gave each Champion: (a) a sheet explaining the jargon – vision, critical success factors etc. I had to keep on top of this throughout the whole programme as sub-groups started using new terms e.g. “key strategies”, “strategic options”, “strategic objectives”, “business objectives”. (b) a diagram of the strategic planning process. (c) a specially designed SWOT analysis form to complete

The Top Team insisted that one of the outputs of the project would be a more focused business. At the outset it is helpful to have some clear expectations from the top.

One of the Champions needs to be responsible for project management; another needs to act as a secretary to the Group.

It is essential that clear agendas are circulated in advance of meetings and that action points are agreed and recorded before meetings ended. We often needed volunteers to word process flipcharts.

The Champions Group must have access to confidential information if it is to function properly. There must also be a strict code within the Group to ensure that such information does not leak out.

Recognise

The Champions were nervous about giving a progress report to their peers and needed support on how to handle hostility, cynicism etc. In fact, we encountered little of this as the Champions presented a strong case for change.

Although not in the original plan, the Top Team agreed to meet in order to prioritise the business objectives and the milestones. This was extremely valuable. It sorted out some resource issues and avoided too much front-end bunching of work.

It is essential to give the sub groups guidance notes prior to them launching into their pieces of work. The sub groups need help and it is essential to offer to review their work prior to it being presented to the full Group.

We continued to have confusion between ‘Mission’ and ‘Vision’. On some subsequent assignments I have used the term ‘Purpose’ instead of ‘Mission.’

At the 2 day Company Forum in July there was a heavy reliance on using PowerPoint to communicate a lot of new information. We did not get across the big pictures well enough.

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At the same Forum participants brainstormed snappy catch phrases for the company's mission. 3 Champions produced a shortlist of 5 and the whole company voted to select the winning catch phrase.

At the beginning of each meeting it is important to 'see where people are at' i.e. social connections before technical work. There had been a large gap between two of the Champions meetings and we spent the first 2 ½ hours reforming and refocusing the Group.

On three occasions during the 9 month programme it was important to capture the concerns of each of the Champions. During early stages the concerns were to do with wanting detailed information on the process and their role; and the impact on workload. Later it was about how the distributors might react; how to implement; what and how to communicate internally and externally.

The Champions Group under estimated the role of IT and e-business in giving the company a competitive advantage.

Implement

We originally decided to write business implementation plans for each function but then switched to writing a plan for each critical success factor/business objective. This was done to underline the need to work well across the functions. We also thought that this would help keep the staff's attention at the October Business Conference. By design, therefore, the speakers at the Conference launched plans for areas which were not their functional responsibility e.g. the Technical Director spoke about developing and motivating people and creating a learning organisation.

The working party of 6 responsible for organising the Business Conference only included 2 Champions; one of whom was not particularly strong. There was a danger that this working party would rethink the vision and strategy etc.

The Champions were encourage to present information pictorially e.g. the CSFs were presented as a wheel.

At fairly short notice we postponed a series of Leadership and Team Development programmes to free up more time for implementating the strategy.

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The results of a US survey may also be of interest.

US Survey

This survey of 93 US companies (72 of which were listed in the Fortune 500) identified the ten most frequent strategy implementation problems as being:

1. The time required for implementation was greater than had been anticipated.
 2. Major problems which had not been identified in the planning phases surfaced during implementation.
 3. The co-ordination of implementation activities was not sufficiently effective
 4. Competing activities and day-to-day crises distracted attention from the implementation
 5. The capabilities of employees involved in the implementation were inadequate
 6. Training and development at the lower levels in the organisation was inadequate
 7. Uncontrollable factors in the external environment had an adverse effect
 8. The leadership and direction provided by managers was not adequate
 9. Key implementation activities were not defined in sufficient detail
- The information systems used to monitor implementation were inadequate