

Delivering Operational Change

Mission Excellence supports a senior leadership team

Staffordshire is the UK's 15th largest county (of 90) by population and covers a varied geographical area with pockets of significant economic challenge. In 2011 and 2012, Mission Excellence was commissioned to run a series of interventions for the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) supporting her senior leadership team through the implementation of a major restructure and change programme designed to address the economic challenges of the county.

The Brief

In 2011, Staffordshire County Council initiated a significant transformation programme aimed at putting the customer at the heart of everything it did. As part of this programme, the Council was restructured into 2 main units: 'People' and 'Place'. People is accountable for all activities which support individuals and communities (e.g education, care for the elderly), whilst Place is accountable for infrastructure and driving support to business and the economy. The single common aim for all parts of the Council is to drive prosperity.

Following the formation of the Place senior leadership team, Mission Excellence was engaged by the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) to accelerate the group's effectiveness as one cohesive unit focused on, and delivering, performance outputs which would directly and indirectly drive the desired long-term economic outcomes.

The Challenges

In common with most public sector organisations, the Council's senior executives must manage and meet political and public expectations at the same time as executing operating plans to deliver outcomes, often with misaligned time horizons between the political and executive requirements. The Deputy Chief Executive (Place) was responsible for a workforce of some 5,500 people, a highly diverse group, many of whom had been with the Council for many years in a

non-competitive environment, and saw no over-riding case for the restructure and changes. The leadership team was all new and the Deputy chief Executive (Place) was determined that, in spite of the competing priorities and complexity of the operating environment, they should agree and define a single common purpose.

The Solution

Mission Excellence's work fell into 2 phases: team development and team effectiveness. A bespoke team development programme was designed and delivered with the focus on 2 key deliverables:

- An engaged and committed team
- Tangible insights into drivers of operational excellence

Feedback was excellent and Mission Excellence then followed up with a team effectiveness programme focused on specific rather than generic performance. The primary aim was to distil the various political priorities into a simple long-term clearly articulated strategic objective, and to establish working practices for how that objective would be achieved. The programme resulted in cutting through the noise to bring simplicity and clarity to common purpose, and an agreed 'main effort', which would then drive resourcing and priorities decisions. The next level of tasks implied by this 'mission' was also agreed together with the limits on freedom to act and a number of behavioural and process norms.

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Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
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Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
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Finally, several months later with the impact of the team's work becoming embedded at senior levels within the Place workforce, Mission Excellence was invited back to deliver a series of standalone large-scale high-impact presentations on operational excellence to groups from across the organisation.

The Verdict

Feedback from the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) was as follows: “By working with Mission Excellence, we achieved real clarity in our joint mission, and not only clarity, but a laser-like focus on the main outcome that is really important to the organisation as a whole. This is referred to as the ‘main effort’ and has led directly to work in which we have further developed the agreed mission into core strategic aims for each department. It has underpinned a whole culture shift across the entire organisation, whose people now understand what their focus should be every day that they come to work. The change has embedded and lasted and has had a huge impact on our stakeholders, who all comment that the organisation is unrecognisable in terms of its energy, focus and accountability, from where it was before we did the work. I am really delighted that I invested up front in the work with Mission Excellence, which really gave the very important and much needed kick-start to the whole process and provided the foundation upon which the culture shift was built.”

About Mission Excellence

Mission Excellence is a consultancy specialising in execution. We help clients to deliver operational change through embedded personnel, development programmes and consultancy. We have 2 key areas of focus: Operational Excellence and Risk and Safety Management.

You can expect from us: relevant, tangible and practical outcomes; passion, objectivity and the relentless pursuit of excellence; the highest professional standards; subject matter expertise; and an enjoyable experience with people who are easy to work with.

We have a proven track record throughout the public and private sectors, in professional sport and support of academic programmes. Our client list includes 3M, Accenture, BP, GlaxoSmithKline, HSBC, IBM, Procter & Gamble, the National Health Service, Staffordshire County Council, British Cycling, Formula 1, Cancer Research UK and the University of Oxford.