

Learning lessons from other change programmes can deliver real benefits.

Organisational transformation: the power of a benefits-led approach



Transformation programmes are by their nature complex and demanding initiatives that challenge prescriptive or traditional management techniques. The business urgency for change, and the temptation to “get on with the job”, can easily lead to false starts and embarrassing failures. Today’s modern thinking is to blend change and programme management disciplines with a clear focus on leadership and the planned delivery of tangible benefits.

The broad scope of change

Public sector change programmes are often characterised by: broad scope (size) and profile; complexity (inter-dependencies); and staff related issues (culture). For example, a programme designed to merge two organisations to address a service improvement objective, will be required to address the following issues:

- The creation of an entirely new organisation operating from new locations, with new staff.
- The cultural challenges of merging different attitudes, beliefs and ways of working.
- The design and delivery of new services.
- The setting up of an effective corporate service function (Finance, HR and IT).

In this article we have set out some of the lessons learned by other organisations, covering the appointment of the senior management team, leadership and direction, programme management, benefits realisation and cultural change.

Appointing key managers early

It is not uncommon for merger programmes to employ large teams, incur associated costs and begin decision-making prior to the new CEO or Board taking control. In this scenario, there is a significant risk that, once appointed, the new management will require a different approach and solution. Appointing the new senior management team at the earliest possible opportunity could save huge amounts of time, money and effort, and avoid a negative impact on morale.

Providing clear leadership and direction

Leaders should not underestimate either the challenge of identifying the right path for the change programme or how much effort is required to get staff to understand and promote the change. The “vision” of the outcome often fails to inspire staff if it is too generic or too detached from everyday life.

One way of cutting through the confusion is for leaders to produce “destination statements” that clearly and concisely explain the future state. This has the benefit of providing a clear visualisation for all staff without getting caught up in the detail that is often associated with such programmes.

Finding a pragmatic approach to programme management

Successful programmes find a balance between the business urgency for change and the adoption of a pragmatic approach to programme management.

There is no one solution to fit all scenarios, but an appropriate approach will mitigate risks, demonstrate effective governance to internal and external stake-holders, prevent issues falling between the cracks, and avoid potentially embarrassing public failures or delays.

To assist in addressing transformational change in the public sector, OGC has recently updated *Managing Successful Programmes™*. The update recognises key differences in transformational programmes, not least that they involve a marked step-change or break with the present state.

Adopting a benefits-led approach

The adoption of a benefits-led approach is one of the best ways to ensure that resulting change delivers the greatest results to the end client.

The importance of the business change role in developing or transforming organisations cannot be underestimated and is crucial if the change is to be embedded properly. The business change manager works alongside the implementation managers.

Staff should be provided with a change framework before they undertake a wide range of transformation tasks. The framework provides a solid context or “framing” for the change.

Managing the cultural change

Senior managers should not underestimate the challenge of bringing disparate cultures together, nor the time-scales for reaching a business-as-usual state. The management of cultural change requires a clear strategy, extensive communications throughout the programme and emotional “visioning”. Some programmes have gained high value from deploying local change managers, champions and other stake-holders to support and re-enforce the implementation of change. Remember that permanent change is best delivered from within the organisation and not by third parties.

In summary

Transformational change should be a planned journey that takes an organisation from where it is today to an envisioned future destination. The key challenge for leadership is to communicate the benefits and “logical path” to the new organisational destination – and also to prepare and support the organisation through the “emotional journey” that its members must travel. Following the key points described above can help to ensure that the journey will deliver the benefits.

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NHS programmes get the ISIP treatment

AMTEC Consulting was asked to provide service transformation support to the NHS Integrated Service Improvement Programme (ISIP), a national initiative designed to deliver improvements in different aspects of patient care.

About ISIP

NHS Connecting for Health introduced ISIP to support the implementation of complex service transformations and improve different aspects of patient care in the NHS.

A national ISIP team worked with directors and managers in Local Health Communities (LHCs) to identify service priorities and put in place structured change programmes to deliver them. Prioritised programmes included: long-term conditions, urgent care, scheduled care, “closer to home” treatment and the national 18 week (referral to treatment) target.

The Approach

AMTEC Consulting provided support and capability to the core national ISIP programme and oversaw progress in one of 10 regional areas – Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Health Authority (SHA), which covers 14 PCTs.

Support ranged from initial ISIP promotion to the development of detailed change plans for each service priority. Priorities were assessed and aggregated nationally, with

support from AMTEC in its central ISIP role.

Developing and sustaining good relationships with senior managers in the constituent health organisations was key to success and AMTEC planned accordingly.

As the assignment evolved, AMTEC provided leadership and mentoring skills and worked with LHC managers and clinicians to produce transformational change plans for each priority.

The Outcome

The national ISIP initiative proved highly successful and progress in Yorkshire and the Humber SHA was indicative of typical outcomes elsewhere.

Almost all of the communities in Yorkshire and the Humber submitted full plans for their service priorities. Some completely revised their service planning processes to reflect an ISIP approach.

The momentum for service improvement has been considerable and AMTEC is regularly asked to share experience of the programme deliverables and lessons learned.