

The Role of HR in innovation

This award submission from Plymouth City Council (PCC) will demonstrate where HR has transformed itself using innovation AND where HR has influenced the broader business to better use innovation.

Plymouth City Council like other Authorities, faces ongoing budget challenges and a shrinking workforce. Our Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD) service has supported the organisation to deliver £65m budget savings in the last 4 years and will be integral to the delivery of £37m savings in the next 3 years. Council wide the workforce is now reducing year on year by c.5%, saving £3m on the pay bill in 16/17, and the challenge of managing and delivering services is becoming more complex. In 2016, the HROD department faced its own challenge with a 17% reduction in headcount and a 14% reduction in budget. The service had reached a critical point and change became essential.


Our PPMA entry explains how we worked collectively and innovatively with colleagues across the Council to reshape our core purpose, develop a 3 year People Strategy (focused on the themes of Talent, Leadership & Culture (TLC) and ensure we worked with colleagues, customers and partners in line with our principles; 'think customer, think digital, think simple, think smarter'.

The Council has a pressing challenge to change the culture and enable managers to think and act fast. From an HR&OD perspective, we had been 'holding the business hands' for too long. During a transformational year for PCC and HROD we maintained the Council employee engagement index at 64%; the highest it has been since the annual staff survey commenced in 2010.

In April 2016 we transformed our HROD service; migrating to the Ulrich model; introducing Business Partnering, HR Specialist Services and HR Business (transactional) Services. Health, Safety and Wellbeing was moved into HROD in September 2016 to create a holistic service proposition. Our new operating model enables us to deliver HR services more cost effectively, saving £310k from our budget (net budget £3.1m, supporting a 2600 headcount workforce plus external clients). We launched a 15 month HROD transformation programme called 'Agile HR' in January 2016 comprising 19 work-streams to fast track our goal of adding business value whilst helping managers to manage. We have exceeded our income target this year by £25k, bringing in a total income of £441k.

We knew our 450 managers wanted access to information; so we made our information simple and easy to find. Our intranet site was improved (50% of information was deleted in the clear out) and our policies simplified.

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Current location: Staffroom > Your HR pages

STAFF ROOM	YOUR HR PAGES		EMPLOYEE SELF SERVICE
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We set up an SLA with our Customer Services colleagues to handle our HR&OD telephone calls. We branded the service HR First Contact, all FAQ's would be managed by trained agents directing customers to our new improved website to support finding information. It is a signposting service and complex calls are transferred through to our specialist teams. To manage risks, we rolled out the new service gradually, checking in with all those affected that they were confident and ready to take on the new service. At the start of our transformation the HROD service handled approx. 500 calls per week. Now with information easy to find, Customer Services are handling approx. 180 calls a week.



Further digital improvements were gained through the implementation of Midland HR iTrent modules to support manager 'self-service'. Modules included: Organisational Structure, Contract Variations, Upgrading the look and feel, Management Information and Org Charting, Managing absences, E-payslips and Expenses. The interface designed and developed for customers will be delivered

to 19 clients on our external payroll, improving our ability to operate commercially and sell payroll services. We have improved buy back from schools and Academies for payroll services.

Improving iTrent 'People Manager' enables PCC to streamline processes, improve user experience, enable better employee engagement and achieve improved management information and metrics.



Our goal was to have all our processes on a digital platform, so those which could not be achieved through iTrent are now being set up using Firmstep software. This is a new software for the Council, which was originally intended for our interface with citizens, but we are utilising the software to interface HR&OD procedures with our internal customers.

Throughout the whole process we have engaged with the business in the design and testing of the new systems. Managers can now work paperless on HR transactions supporting our SMART working initiative, to enable flexible working in the future. Automated systems are faster and data is protected. The on-going engagement in our new ways of working is via workshops and a network of trained 'Super Users', supporting staff locally to gain maximum returns. The savings for the business is realised in the saving of time and money (cost) and improved quality, efficiency and flexibility. HROD has truly transformed and now delivers an efficient, modern and cost effective service to the Council. We add value to our customers and are in a better position to offer our services on a commercial basis.

To reach out to our diverse workforce and to recognise their individual training needs we are providing a variety of training materials. Any changes to our processes or systems are communicated via our intranet site 'Staff Room' and weekly Staff News. They are also supported with our written training materials and guidance. We have recognised that everyone has their own learning style and due to work pressures communications aren't always read. So we are going that extra mile and delivering a new style of support for our managers and taking the new processes and functionality to them in the work place:

- We have delivered pre-recorded webinars that managers can view when they want to show them how to action a new process
- Delivered iTrent roadshows across the organisation to support managers and staff on how to complete new processes
- Training 'Change Champions' from each department who can be advocates for the new processes and have an in-depth knowledge of a process who can support managers.

We invested in the professional development of HROD staff with specialist Consulting skills training for managers, CIPD accreditation and upgrades for specialist staff. Coaching skills for Employee Relations staff was provided in order to support managers differently and transfer knowledge, enabling managers to have the confidence and capability to deal with basic HR issues themselves without HR intervention (an example would be that managers are increasingly chairing straightforward capability meetings without HR support).

Our core vision and purpose is now articulated on the Council Corporate Plan 'A motivated, engaged and skilled workforce focused on meeting the needs of the citizens of Plymouth'. Our new Organisational Development and Talent team is committed to driving talent management, leadership and cultural change. This is endorsed by Trade Unions and has received political support. This involved the introduction of intelligent workforce reports, workforce planning and systems leadership interventions. We now work across the system and across the County e.g. to support the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) for Wider Devon and to consider new models of service delivery including leading a strategic options review of the future of our back office services.

In a relatively short period we are now recognised as a confident, high performing, less risk adverse, business focussed, HROD team, with senior leaders recognising that transformation of PCC would not be as successful without the support of a transforming corporate centre; working to our vision to 'collaborate, enable and achieve'.

Word count 1200