

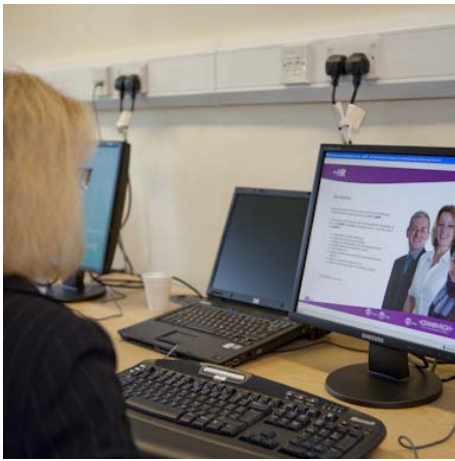


CASE STUDY

The City of Edinburgh Council:
Using communications to
support organisational change.

The City of Edinburgh Council is the second largest Council in Scotland and the eighth largest in the UK. The Council provides a wide range of services to Edinburgh citizens, including schools, social services, refuse collection, street cleansing, culture and leisure facilities, housing, planning and road services. In addition to a compound structure with many varied job types and complicated conditions of service, the Council is going through constant change.

The Council's HR and payroll functions provide services to 20,000 employees and 32,000 customers and pensioners. Having become a MidlandHR customer in 1988, the Council migrated its payroll to the Trent solution, but continued to operate with a separate HR system until 2007 when they implemented the single Trent solution for HR, payroll, talent management and workforce planning.



The Vision

In 2005 the Council reviewed its HR strategy. Its vision was to transform HR from a largely transactional and administrative service into a more strategic function. This was to be achieved by centralising the administrative and transactional activities in a HR shared service centre, streamlining business processes, and reducing the amount of administration by allowing employees and managers to carry out tasks online. This approach would enable vital focus on the Council's corporate strategic agenda and departmental objectives.

David Richardson, Trent Systems Manager at the Council, explains: "Fundamental to transforming the HR service and the way it interacted with payroll was the implementation of an eHR system, which was fully integrated with payroll and provided employee and manager self service. Following a detailed business case which was developed alongside BT, the Council's ICT partners, MidlandHR's Trent solution was selected as the best fit for achieving the Council's vision.

"The eHR project delivered a step change in the Council's approach to people management. The business transformation programme involved a fundamental cultural change which could only be achieved through communication, change management and stakeholder engagement."

The business case for HR change

"At an early stage, the Council's aim was to maximise the use of Employee and Manager Self-Service in order to remove repetitive administrative tasks and drive efficiencies. This approach was also consistent with the Council's SMART City agenda which aims to make services more efficient and customer focused," continues Richardson.

The business case set out details of the existing HR service provision which comprised of a predominantly paper-based input, multiple hands-off of tasks and a general lack of standardised processes. It detailed the future vision with the focus upon a centralised web enabled system allowing devolvement to the line and a focus upon strategy.

The main features of the business case aimed to:

- Transform HR into a strategic business unit
- Transform and centralise HR and payroll
- Provide efficiency and cost savings
- Provide enhanced customer focus
- Improve HR accessibility via Self-Service, e-mail and telephone
- Automate and standardise processes to reduce handling
- Empower line managers to become self-sufficient people managers

The new HR service would establish a single, secure source of people information which would affect every employee. Therefore it was vital to support this organisational and cultural change with a well thought out communication strategy. Objectives for the communication strategy focused on:

- Promoting awareness of HR service change
- Supporting the implementation of the online Trent Self-Service functionality – internally branded *myHR* for employees and *myPeople* for managers
- Building understanding and highlighting benefits of the Trent system to internal and external stakeholders
- Ensuring the Council's brand and message remains consistent
- Managing expectations of employees.

Change management, communication and commitment

The project was rolled out to departments in three phases over an eight month period. Change management and communication were vital to a successful implementation. Key employees worked together on site, attending weekly project management meetings where responsibilities and timelines were outlined, performance was monitored and actions agreed.

This represents a prime example of inter-departmental collaboration to combine different skills and experiences to deliver real service improvement.

Throughout the project three main stakeholder groups were established:

1. **Primary** – those directly affected by the change and act as champions to build project support
2. **Secondary** – those who needed to know the basic functionality and principles of the project
3. **Tertiary** – those indirectly affected by the project.

"An innovative e-learning package provided employees and managers with online training and reference material, adds Richardson. "This was the first major SMART City project in the Council which made use of e-learning to develop employees and managers. Given the very large numbers of people involved, face-to-face learning programmes were not an option due to time and resource constraints. Consequently, an online learning package was developed in partnership with MidlandHR and e-learning solutions provider, Brightwave, at a fraction of the cost of training each individual person. This enabled employees and managers to follow learning programmes at their own pace and convenience. A prize draw was also used to incentivise employees to complete the training in full."

The communication activities supporting the change management programme included:

- Departmental change champions – appointed to act as a communications route between departments and assist with encouraging departmental support
- Road shows – attended by over 1,000 managers to introduce the benefits of the new Trent system
- Stop/Start/Continue guides – to inform employees of individual process changes
- Pop-ups, posters and leaflets – distributed to all Council locations to ensure inclusive visibility of change
- A high quality video trailer – developed and used as part of the launch communication
- Business readiness workshops – for specific service areas to plan readiness for change
- Council intranet – introduced a dedicated section used as the main source of key information, including FAQs and user guides
- Regular email correspondence counting down to the new system launch, explaining

“myPeople is a great manager’s tool, employee information at your fingertips.”

“As a manager I find myPeople easy to use. It is quick to authorise tasks like holidays and overtime and gives a full picture of staff attendance.”

“myHR is quick and easy to use and always available – overall a great online system!”

how to access training, who to contact with any queries, and where to find out more information.

The methods of communication used were appropriate to the target audience, primarily written, electronic and face-to-face briefings. Printed materials were kept to a minimum to lessen environmental impact and distribution costs.

All communication adhered to the following principles:

- Focus upon people’s needs, i.e. “how the change will benefit me and make my job easier”
- Using two-way communication to ensure proper feedback
- Being honest and transparent
- Being relevant and delivered through appropriate mediums
- Engaging, jargon-free and written in plain English
- Being tested before being issued to each target audience

At the end of the eHR project the communications strategy was developed further to raise awareness and promote the new and improved HR service. Ongoing communications continue through:

- A single, dedicated point of contact for HR
- An internal communications plan which is reviewed regularly throughout the year
- An email distribution list specifically created to target managers who have reporting employees
- A monthly newsletter, containing a regular column for HR Online Services - providing the medium to keep managers up-to-date with developments in HR and information about the Trent system
- Annual surveys to gather feedback and measure effectiveness of communications
- Ad hoc surveys carried out regularly by the HR Service Centre
- A knowledge bank primarily created to help the HR team answer system queries
- A series of road shows to promote online HR services including myHR and myPeople.

Quantifiable benefits and impact achieved

The introduction of the single Trent solution, the eHR project has brought savings and efficiencies to the Council including a reduction of 25% in the HR headcount equating to an annual saving of £720,000.

Following the comprehensive communications project, Internal adoption of Trent Self-Service was extremely successful with over 80% of employees using the system to update their own HR records, manage their leave balance, request training and submit overtime, expense and mileage claims online. Manager Self-Service, also known as myPeople, has equipped managers with up-to-date people information, with real time reporting capabilities, supporting effective planning of front-line service delivery and talent management.

The elimination of duplicate data keying between separate HR and payroll systems has significantly streamlined processes, enabling HR professionals to focus on more strategic workforce issues. Reductions in paper-based transactions have also delivered significant cost and efficiency savings to the council thanks to Self-Service electronic forms and workflow functionality.

“Following the successful implementation of Trent and the eHR project, the communication plan was developed further. An HR customer and a case management customer forum were developed, meeting regularly to enable departments to review performance and give feedback on services. The current customer satisfaction rating is 75-80%, an improvement on the previous year’s 68% following the first full year of the HR Service being in operation. A partnership agreement was also developed in consultation with departmental representatives and is a significant step forward in the development of the HR service,” concludes Richardson.

Strategic HR Objectives

- Transform HR from a largely administrative service to a more strategic function
- Streamline and transform processes through a single, web deployed HR and payroll solution

Strategic Communication Objectives

- Promote awareness of the benefits of the HR transformation service and savings it would bring
- Support the implementation of the online system through myHR and myPeople
- Build understanding of the system implementation, highlighting the benefits to both internal and external stakeholders
- Ensure consistent branding and messages to meet the needs of different audiences

Results

- All stakeholder groups were engaged in the HR transformation project
- Branding and key messages were consistent throughout all communications
- Managers and employees received targeted communications and training
- Over 80% of employees using Trent Self-Service within 12 months
- Customer satisfaction rating improved from 68% to 80%

Organisational Benefits

- A reduction in HR headcount by 25%
- Annual savings of £720,000 through the integrated, centralised HR service centre
- Streamlined processes and reduced paper-based transactions thanks to self-service electronic forms and automated workflow
- HR professionals focus upon more complex/strategic people issues
- myPeople equips managers with visibility of information needed to support effective planning of front-line service delivery and talent management
- myHR empowers employees to update and manage personal information.

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