HR Rising Star 2014

"New ways of working are required to help the Public sector through its current many challenges. Define and prepare a business case for an initiative that you'd like to promote within your own organisation to improve workforce agility."

HR Rising Star 2014

The competition this year was fierce (as quoted by many of the judges) and each Rising Star candidate came up with a unique idea to promote workforce agility.

When Rising Stars came to an end a number of candidates were keen to share their ideas with other organisations and HR professionals, which led to the creation of this pack.

On the following pages you will find a selection of summaries of the initiatives and proposals that were put forward this year. They provide a quick overview of the idea, its benefits, potential problem areas and solutions. Contact details of the Rising Star that submitted the idea feature at the bottom of each summary. Please feel free to make contact with individual participants if you would like to find out more about their idea.

We hope you find the pack useful.

Rising Stars 2014

Submission 1

As Agile working grows bigger and the ways in which we work adapt and change, we can anticipate less office space which will be used by a wider number of people, but less regularly. People will be working remotely, often from home or other private locations. We all know the many benefits this will bring for both employer and employee. However for me, one of the great challenges of Agile is how do we continue to engage people and ensure they feel they are a part of something, a team. We will be at risk of losing the great rapport most of us enjoy today with our close colleagues and people we see frequently. I believe we need to stop taking this for granted now and begin to ensure there is a focus on driving collaboration and strategies be created that will ensure as Agile slowly takes over and our way of working evolves, managers and employees are accustomed to knowing there are certain tasks that will require them to be in their office, as part of their team. There are many ways we can ensure the team element continues, but the key is for senior leaders to commit to promoting this from now onwards.

It is part of a well-being strategy for Agile and the benefits to the organisation are maintaining or increasing morale, staff engagement and motivation – which in turn should reduce recruitment and training costs as staff retention should be strong. In addition lone working has been proven to sometimes lead to depression and feelings of isolation, so in ensuring this is avoided, sickness absence for this reason should not increase.

The potential problem I see is that at present most staff are still doing the standard 9-5 day in their office, at their desk and Agile is at very early stages – so what are you going to do differently? I think the solution is to be mindful that this is not about completing a certain task, then on to the next one. It is a philosophy and a culture – an idea rather than a set process. Let’s look at the big picture, how the future is likely to be and lets start now so we are pro-active instead of being reactive later when it’s too late.

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Submission 2

Seeking to address the **who** and **what** elements of the workforce agility challenge, the *Improvement Team* provides a framework that deploys employees from all levels within the organisation into diverse programmes of work on the basis of their skills and the organisational need.

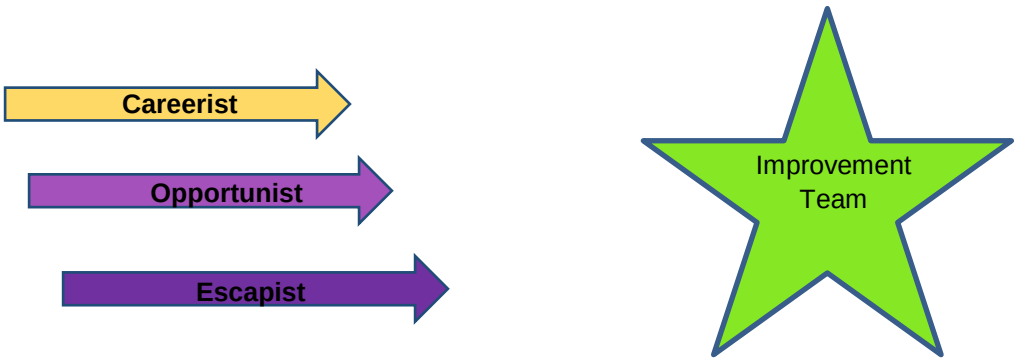
Employees will elect to be part of this resource pool and will be released from their substantive positions onto short term secondments. The Improvement Team will also have a core membership which will, in return, provide support and resource to substantive or originating teams as required.

This approach to resourcing alters the traditional team model significantly, replicating the organisational delivery model and increasing the agility of the workforce. It will help to embed the organisational values by developing cross-boundary relationships thus encouraging collaborative ways of working; optimising the organisation's use of available resources and skills through flexible deployment; providing employees with increased control over the work they take part in; and focussing on results by ensuring appropriate deployment of skills regardless of structural constraints.

Benefits/how it can add value to the organisation

CBC is on a continuous journey to deliver quality, efficient and accessible services via the most appropriate means. This proposal provides CBC with an opportunity to improve its agility, developing and deploying skills appropriately within the organisation and helping to embed the corporate values and Leadership Qualities. It goes beyond enabling the workforce control over when and where their work takes place. It empowers employees to exercise control over what and how - putting their skills to best use to deliver organisational goals and quality services. It encourages collaborative working, a culture of empowerment and the alignment of skills against organisational priorities.

Routes of entry into the Improvement Team will vary, but are likely to be broadly categorised as below:



Careerists will be those employees who value the Improvement Team for its ability to provide opportunities for personal development and career growth. This group of staff are likely to be encouraged to remain loyal to the organisation given access to a career development pathway and a varied work experience. The redeployment and retention of these skilled and ambitious employees will be valuable in many ways. This group will be crucial models of the corporate values and leadership qualities and should be used to embed an organisational way of working. The Improvement Team offers the chance to shape and grow future leaders who have a rounded knowledge of the organisation, have built up a network of relationships across organisational boundaries and are willing and experienced in acting as a flexible resource to be deployed where needed. Having used the Improvement Team as a development platform, those who graduate to management will be influential advocates of the scheme, helping maintain it for the future.

Opportunists will be those who either have a specific interest in a project, are looking for an opportunity for change, or are considering retraining completely. This group's main asset is its commitment. It is likely that Opportunists will have a desire to learn and add value as they have elected to take part in the scheme with a specific objective in mind. This group provides an opportunity for the organisation to address areas of skills shortage, offering up a wide pool of employees with transferable skills which can be focussed and developed to address areas of shortage or need, either in the short or long term.

Escapists are those employees who do not feel able or content to remain within their substantive teams. This may be as a result of organisational change; breakdown of professional or personal relationships; performance issues or other factors. The redeployment of this group offers a chance to find a suitable job fit for an employee, therefore reducing the risk of turnover or potential employee relations difficulties, and maintaining skills and knowledge within the organisation.

Potential problem areas and solutions

Operationally the principal barriers to this initiative will be management support and employee willingness to participate. Efficient processes and strong sponsorship will help to alleviate these concerns. Clear articulation of the initiative's objectives and benefits at an individual, organisational and customer level will be instrumental in achieving the support and appetite required to make the Improvement Team successful.

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Submission 3

The main idea behind my proposal is that to become more agile and reduce costs we need to Connect to our Talent. Agility=Connecting Talent (ACT). It takes the form of a 4 stage incremental project:

Stage 1 – Define, Identify and Track talent using consistent performance and potential ratings

Stage 2 – Talent is developed for appropriate connection

Stage 3 - When ready, Talent is rotated around the organisation to build capability and to enhance capacity where needed

Stage 4 - Talent is connected to internal opportunities when they arise

Benefits/how it can add value to the organisation

The outcomes/benefits of the approach are:

The Council clearly states what talent means, looks like and how it will be measured.

Talent is identified, developed and connected which will improve clarity of expectations, greater engagement in discretionary effort and higher performance.

The workforce is not constrained by perceived silos.

Expenditure on redundancy and recruitment is minimised therefore liberating budgets to be targeted art front line services.

Potential problem areas and solutions

There needs to be absolute buy in from the top of the organisation as this will need a culture change.

There needs to be an investment of time and budgets on an invest to save basis to liberate agility and budgets through the project.

Managers will be resistant to releasing their top talent unless they recognise the overall benefit to the Council and it's customers, this needs to be clear and objectives set from a corporate standpoint.

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Submission 4

To respond better to the needs of the communities we serve and retain valuable employees who may go elsewhere in search of better working conditions, this agile initiative focuses on putting in place different types of work patterns.

3 types of agile work patterns have been identified as a starting point:

Temporal Agility –allowing staff to work at times that best suits their service users and their own work style without the restrictions of core hours that are still used by many councils.

Task-based Agility – those who have a fixed number of jobs per week have their working week measured by the completion of these tasks, not the number of hours they work.

Functional Agility – with the public sector having fewer roles advertised, highly ambitious employees may leave to find new opportunities outside of the public sector. Functional Agility will allow staff to spend some of their time working in different services and teams to gain new skills and form relationships across the council. In busy times, these members of staff can be asked to fill in where there are specific service needs.

Benefits/how it can add value to the organisation

For every new person recruited due to a member of staff leaving, the recruitment cost to the council ranges from £5-10k not accounting for the cost in lost productivity as a new employee “learns the ropes”. If we could engage staff through Agile Work Patterns and prevent 100 people from leaving each year, an average of £750,000 savings per year could be made.

This initiative will also promote the public sector as an employer of choice, providing a supportive and stimulating place of work.

Potential problem areas and solutions

Problem
Trust – managers fearing their employees will not do their work if they are more independent (working different hours, spending time in different teams).
Solution
When an employee requests and implements Agile Work Patterns, regular review meetings are set up. These can help to build trust between the employer/employee as they review the work done and discuss any issues that arise

Problem
Isolation – employees working different hours through temporal agility will become isolated/unengaged.
Solution

Those people who work different hours will come to the office on set days to take part in team meetings, catch up on latest news and be part of the team. Tri-annual wellness meetings would also take place as part of the above mentioned regular review meetings to ensure the council fulfils its duty of care to employees.

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Submission 5

I began my research by looking at the definition of Workforce Agility within our organisation. At ESCC we currently have a 'Go Agile' project which states the following:

> "Agile working is about providing our employees with the opportunity to work in new ways to meet the needs of our customers and enable us to make significant efficiency savings at the same time.
>
> It is about introducing new ways of working which are made possible by advances in technology and changes in working environments, working culture and business processes."

This definition made me realise just how broad the term Workforce Agility is and how important it is in the modern day work place. The wants and needs of employees are changing rapidly and the way the Council, as employers, address this is very important.

I searched online for the definition of Workforce Agility and found the following quote:

> "It is working within the guidelines (of the task) but without the boundaries (of how you achieve it)."
>
> CoreNet Global Conference, September 2009

It was this that inspired my idea and, alongside my other research, gave me a full understanding of Workforce Agility.

As part of my research I looked at the challenges we are currently facing in the Public Sector, the most obvious being money. A big part of any new initiative will be to ensure it is cost effective, not only in implementation but long term.

Linking to Rising Stars 2013 and my current role in Recruitment Support, another ongoing challenge we currently face is the recruitment and retention of staff. Ideally, any new initiative would not only make us more attractive as a potential employer but it would also benefit the current workforce and encourage them to continue their careers within the organisation.

Through my research and working experience I have decided to focus my initiative on an area I feel passionate about, training. Every employee undertakes training throughout their career, be it a short course or attending regular lessons to learn a career changing skill. I believe that creating an agile initiative for training would benefit the organisation and staff greatly.

My idea is focused on introducing an interactive, online training centre for the Council's employees. This would reduce the pressure and costs for the current training centre and would also improve the availability for training which is required in a face to face environment.

There are pros and cons attached to this initiative, as there would be to any. I have included a summary of my main pro and con below:

- This would give current staff the ability to update their knowledge and complete new training when and where is best for them and their team.

- Initially this would be relatively costly to implement, however I believe this would be balanced out by the costs saved in other areas.

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Submission 6

Large savings could be found by encouraging a culture where employees expect to be moved across different service areas a number of times during their career. For this to happen, managers will need to be pro-active in seeking employees with the right skills to move to their area when they are needed and be receptive to other managers requesting for their staff to be moved.

Three actions that would allow and encourage an improvement in workforce agility have been identified:

1. Recruiting the right behaviours and attitude.
2. Changing the employer proposition.
3. Ensure HR policies and procedures support agile working.

1. Recruiting the right behaviours and attitude.

- For the first action, it is recommended that an SSQ is introduced.
- This is a cost-effective option that will help to ensure that all recruits understand and possess the right behaviours and attitude to become part of an agile workforce.
- An option such as an SSQ that encourages candidates to reflect on whether they have the right behaviours and would discourage some potential applicants from applying where they do not meet the desired behaviours.
- Problems with this would be that a self selection questionnaire would not actually prevent anyone from applying; it just attempts to encourage higher quality applications and deter weaker applications from progressing their application. To overcome this, a questionnaire could be introduced that stops applicants from progressing their applications if they answer questions wrongly, however, this would be a lot more expensive and could cut down on the number of applications, which would not be beneficial for posts that are difficult to recruit to.

2.Changing the employer proposition.

- The second action requires a change in the way that vacancies are advertised.
- They should be advertised with the proposition that candidates are applying to work for the council, and not a specific service area in a specific role.
- The proposition should be clear that there will be opportunities to move to different service areas where their skills allow; all managers and employees should be encouraged to support this and make it happen.
- Difficulties associated with this are that it would be a challenge to induce a change in organisational culture, which would be needed to ensure that all managers adopt the idea of working in an agile way. It is important that what new recruits are offered during the application stage is actually delivered by managers.

3. Ensure HR policies and procedures support agile working.

- The third action should only require minor changes in the HR policies and procedures, but is nevertheless one of the most important actions to allow an improvement in workforce agility.
- Policies and procedures should encourage the ease of movement of staff within the organisation and whilst still acting in the best interest of leaders and employees to promote fairness for all in the workplace, they should never provide a barrier to agile working.
- Problems with this point are that there are a number of recruitment policies and procedures that have been put in place to ensure they are fair for all. When an employee wishes to move services the policies ensure that the system is fair for both the recruiting manager and the manager that releases their member of staff – if the policies were to change to become more agile then it must the policies must remain as fair as possible to both parties.

Conclusion

- 1,108 redundancies have been made since April 2009 with a one off cost to the council of £20.03m (average of £18,082 each).
- With improved workforce agility, it would be hoped that turnover would reduce enabling further savings to be found, as the CIPD estimate that the cost of recruitment is £2,930 for each post.
- The cost of introducing the three identified actions should cost little more than £10,000 plus labour costs to implement.
- Therefore, it would be worthwhile to introduce these measures as the cost would be met if only one redundancy could be prevented by moving an employee to a different service area.

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Submission 7

There is a need in Kent County Council (KCC) to enhance current practices on agile working to ensure the organisation is sustainable now and in the future. This business case has been commissioned to make a case for introducing a pilot that proactively promotes a flexible recruitment option for recruiting managers and makes accessible flexible job opportunities for younger people. By doing so, KCC will enhance its ability to work in an agile way.

The proposal is to introduce a candidate pool of younger people between the age range of 18 to 25 years to be deployed to work activities and projects as and when required to help business units meet resourcing gaps. Individuals will be employed on casual or fixed term contracts and paid at an hourly rate to provide managers the flexibility to employ resource in the amount it is needed when it is needed. The pilot initiative will be called Flexi-Pool.

How can Flexi-Pool add value?

- Enhances workforce agility by creating a ready-access pool of candidates to deploy to fill resourcing gaps on projects and other work activities
- Provides a quick and easy resourcing solution for managers that by-passes the standard recruitment process
- Resourcing is tailored to requirements of the project or work activity
- Increases the proportion of younger people in the workforce profile
- Provides younger people with the opportunity to gain work experience
- Develops candidates understanding of the Council across a variety of business units
- Demonstrates that KCC is committed to tackling youth unemployment in the County, which creates a positive employer branding image of KCC with younger people
- Creates a future pipeline of younger talent that can be tapped into for longer-term workforce planning
- Tackles existing workforce cultures that resist a change mind-set by introducing a younger workforce who will view agile working as a standard working approach

What issues could Flexi-Pool face and how can these be overcome?

- Issue - The pilot initiative may fail to secure funding from the Council. Solution - Secure funding through partnership-working with other Public Sector organisations (NHS and the Police). Become income-generating and charge for services.

- Issue – Lack of candidates registered with Flexi-Pool with the right skills to deploy to fill resourcing gaps.

Solution: Run a Communications Campaign (visits to schools/colleges/universities, radio, Twitter, Facebook) to reach as many 18 – 25 year olds. Target this age group in the current workforce.

- Issue – Lack of uptake from managers
  Solution – Bring on board a Political figure-head. Gain buy-in from the Corporate Management Team and senior managers. Run a communications campaign via the Intranet

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Submission 8

The public sector has an external environment that is in a state of flux. It is arguable whether the pace of change has increased, but the drivers for change – Sociological, Technological, Environmental, Economic and Political - are changing and becoming more complex. In other words, it is a STEEP challenge the public sector faces.

This proposal argues the case for moving away from transactional solutions, such as efficiency reviews and organisationally engineered labour models towards more genuine, whole system, transformational solutions focusing on the ideas of community leadership, innovation, technology and a focus on the customer to drive new ways of working. It seeks to deliver small wins that incrementally add up to deliver a shift in our approach to work that delivers sustainable change.

A vision for the public sector is proposed as a future society where public service providers are community leaders that ensure public services are shaped appropriately for the public good. That means having a workforce that is skilled and does things for itself when it comes to innovation as the goal to improve workforce agility. The proposal is in 2 parts:

1. To gain support for and implement, not only for my organisation's workforce, but also for the workforce in partner organisations that provide public services with my organisation, a whole system methodology based on a particular creative problem solving technique that challenges and redefines people by 'the work'; (i.e. what they do, rather than by where they work). The focus will be on the customer for the reasons above, but also on reframing how we can use technology to better serve the customer, transcending organisational boundaries. To do that aspect, we will also:

2. Seek to gain support for and implement a dedicated 'networked' forum, based on social media and planned events to create a shared safe space whereby attendees from the above course can continue to challenge and drive forward innovation ideas locally. This will give a safe space for the innovators and early adoptors to try out innovative ideas in principle with like minded people outside their own organisational constraints and develop them.

The proposal concludes by aspiring to have a context where innovators and early adopters self-organise into groups that transcend organisational boundaries to achieve small wins that innovate and nudge others to make changes to their behaviours in their own ways. The ultimate outcome sought will be a changed way we work across boundaries to achieve small wins that incrementally add up to a sustained change that makes things better for our customers.

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