The value of grassroots communication and engagement to drive cultural transformation

AFAC BNHCRC 2018 Research Forum
September 2018
Objectives:
➢ Develop a deep level of insight into the barriers to positive workplace change.
➢ Work together to identify and implement progressive, high impact actions to improve our workplaces and make sustainable cultural transformation.
➢ Agree on state and local actions for inclusion in relevant business plans.
➢ Create buy-in from staff at all levels of the organisation for change initiatives.

Workforce engagement and consultation process

July/August 2017 – 5th annual Working for Queensland Employee Opinion (WfQ) survey.
October 2017 to April 2018 – staff forums and station meetings were conducted across the state.
Consultation with over 860 staff
Across 73 workplaces
Travelling over 17,000km
What did they say?

Organisational successes:

• Agency engagement
• Relationships within workgroups
• Satisfaction with direct manager/supervisor
• Job satisfaction
‘Have lots of work and variety and love it...’

‘My work is a great place to work under the current management. The culture is great, flexible hours...’

‘QFES now appears to have appropriate processes in place to enable progress to be made after 1-2 years of restructuring.’

‘I have a great work group and an excellent manager where I am able to express not only all the positive milestones, but also discuss issues that require more work.’

‘Staff observe that effort is being made. Will take time to turn around with consistency, ethical manner and authentic behaviour.’
What else did they say?

Areas of greatest concerns:

• Performance of managers and senior leaders;
• Visibility of, and communications with, QFES management;
• Equity, transparency and accessibility in performance management, recruitment, promotions and training opportunities;
• Integration of, and communication between, QFES services;
• Number of staff experiencing harassment or bullying;
• Concerns regarding workload and its effect on staff health and wellbeing;
• Ineffective change and contract management practices; and
• Excessive approval processes and red tape.
‘QFES have so many great initiatives but don’t have time to focus on them.’

‘Role descriptions are important. Why are they not detailed or correct?’

‘There is no or little communication within the Region.’

‘Communication between levels of management needs some work.’

‘Staff have been faced with many reviews over the past several years and yet they aren’t seeing any change as a result. Affects motivation levels.’

‘Would like to see more diversity in the work force.’

‘...long term temps have had a year of angst regarding job security...’

‘The 'secrets' make you not trust the leadership and this is worsened when decisions are communicated then changed without additional communication around why.’
The first step to solving a problem is recognising there is one.
‘Complaining about a problem without proposing a solution is called whining.’

Teddy Roosevelt
Over 700 suggestions provided
Suggestions by theme

- Leadership: 120
- Fairness and Trust: 90
- Communication: 80
- Effectiveness and Innovation: 60
- Safety, Health and Wellness: 140
- Workplace Conduct/Behaviours: 100
- Performance and Development: 80
- My job: 40
- Change and Project Management: 20
- Recruitment: 20
- Other: 20
What have we done?
1. Leadership and governance
2. Communication and engagement
3. Vision and strategy
4. Systems and processes

Levers for Cultural Transformation
‘Our preferred future starts with the decisions we make today. Whether we are thinking about what we would like to achieve next year, or by 2030, our everyday choices make a difference.’

Commissioner Carroll
Regional/Service/Directorate level

✓ Incorporated actions into Region and Directorate business plans to address local issues.
✓ The main benefit of these actions - their focus on solutions from the workforce that will have a direct impact on their workplaces.
State level actions - completed

✓ Improved communication across the department.
✓ Use independent members in recruitment and selection and blind recruitment process for Basegrade Firefighter recruitment.
✓ Developing leaders across the department including:
  ✓ coaching program for front line managers.
  ✓ Reviewed Officer Development program to include more people management.
State level actions - commenced

✓ Business plans utilise data and findings from surveys and staff forums.
✓ Revised workplace conduct training program.
✓ Corporate induction program and Employee Handbook.
✓ Developing a values framework.
✓ Commenced organisational cultural assessment.
Lessons
Conclusion

• We have made significant progress since our 2015 staff consultation.

• **However,** some remain discontent with leadership, workplace bullying and harassment, management of complaints, equity across the services and concerned about the impacts of excessive workloads.
Conclusion

• Complex change does not happen in isolation. Levers for cultural transformation provide a holistic view when implementing change.

• Require a coordinated approach to workplace change led from the top, with potential changes being realised over a number of years.

• Cultural change often comes from the unexpected.
A person who feels appreciated will always do more than expected.
‘Organisations that have strong engagement cultures are populated with senior leaders that make everyday – and everyone – count daily...

These leaders are not afraid of tough questions, comments or challenges. They seek out those who will engage in the tough conversations to build their capability and that of the organisation.’

Romans & Tobaben
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