

Building a Global Culture



Background - Industry at a crossroads

The mobile telecommunications sector was facing tough times. Unchecked growth followed by saturation of the market, a global downturn and crippling capital expenditure on unproven technology had combined to shock the sector to a stuttering halt.

The values of creativity and innovation which had helped create the market had become less business critical for many companies than limiting a burgeoning cost base and ensuring that necessary business controls, tighter processes and procedures were rapidly put in place to deliver maximum value to the business where it mattered.

Building on past successes with a fresh perspective

For Orange, this meant embracing new cultural values without departing too radically from the features of its culture that had driven the company's early achievements and successes. Blue Edge was appointed to manage the cultural change.

The process of refocusing the culture began by involving the company's top 75 global executives in a series of structured conversations around the future direction for the culture if the company were to achieve its long term business aims. This led to us developing a framework model which incorporated some new and distinctive features, including true customer 'intimacy' and greater accountability for decisions.

Over the course of the next two years, the cultural framework became increasingly widely used: initially as a strategic HR tool; and from there to being integrated into the fabric of the organisation, as the company's 'Way of Doing Business', providing a cornerstone for values, attitudes and behaviours at all levels within the organisation.

Giving culture change 'teeth'

In the Netherlands, achievement of this aspirational future culture was tied to managers' bonuses. This sent a clear message to all senior staff within the organisation: that the top team was serious about the need to change the culture, and that they wanted to reward those who helped to achieve the change and penalise those who did not.

In this company, the culture was regularly 'measured', with problem areas pinpointed for improvement. Responsibility for these improvements was delegated to 'action teams' headed by senior managers. Bonuses were awarded to managers based on improvements made both at a corporate level and within their own teams.

Benefits

Two years following initial implementation the company has seen:

- Improved market penetration
- Reduced staff turnover
- A more engaged, involved workforce
- Senior managers have also reported an improvement in cross-department and cross-team working as all managers work towards a set of common goals.