



# Employee Lifecycle

## Change, change, change ... demonstrating value and getting buy-in in a Telco

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Many bemoan that constant change has become the mantra of business schools and gurus, and a way of life for executives seeking to make their mark in organisations. Yet, as far back as the fifth century BC, Heraclitus commented that no man ever steps in the same river twice by which he sought to explain that the world is ever changing and that we live in a state of perpetual flux. Of course, “stepping” into change or seeking a “step change” requires more than just an acceptance of change, and more than just good old managerial common sense given that so many change programmes fail to deliver their full value to organisations.

A recently published IRS study states that seven of every ten organisations restructured in the last year, with change programmes being common across all industries as companies have downsized to cope with difficult trading conditions or to get a better focus on customer needs. According to research by the CIPD, the average business can expect a major re-organisation every three years.

Change in a telecom  
Facing the volatility in their market, COLT Telecom Systems Operations was faced with the need to improve operational efficiencies

and to improve the consistency of the services offered to customers. COLT also recognised the need to harmonise management practices across its European operations and sought to establish a more cohesive group-wide culture aligned to its business objectives. While COLT was well equipped with the hard technical skills necessary to operate in its market, the company felt that it did not have or had yet to harness the people skills sufficient for it to realise the success that it sought.

As observed by Peter Walmsely, HR Director of Operations & Technology “We recognised that we had limited experience of effectively leading and managing change, and we had the desire to do something different to demonstrate that COLT could successfully manage change. We wanted to adopt a more engaging approach and to learn the lessons of past failings. Overall, we recognised that we needed help and education for our managers and employees.”

Change is about people ...  
While several approaches were incorporated in the change programme, among the key factors underpinning the success of the programme was the identification of change agents who were brought together through a series of workshops that provided them with training in the use of tools for identifying stakeholders and target groups most at risk from becoming detached from the change. The workshops provided the change agents

with development in the psychology of change and skills in predicting the psychological impact of change on key constituencies, as well as how to devise and implement strategies for keeping these constituencies on side. The change agents were also helped to develop greater self-awareness in their own ability to cope with the demands of delivering the change. By creating local networks of change agents, questions could be answered more effectively and key message promoted more consistently.

Experiencing business value from change  
The change programme has resulted in many business benefits. For example, the outsourcing of a number of call centre operations was achieved four months ahead of schedule, minimising disruption as well as realising significant cost savings to the business. Where there were a lot of cynical views, the programme has helped turn attitudes around to realise the reasons for and commitment to the change at COLT. Peter Walmsely believes that senior management now recognises the importance of keeping employees engaged and that they have themselves committed to a better understanding of the people dimension involved in the change process. Indeed, other parts of the business are now asking what has happened and how they can adopt the lessons learned from this programme.