

CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Contributing to the Management of Change

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The purpose of this change was to monitor COVID-19 amongst staff at Tai Tarian, by giving managers a tool to support consistent decision making across the organisation, to ensure that the organisation can record both covid-19 absences and monitor those dealing with any covid-19 issues whilst working from home. This will enable the organisation to offer support to employees where needed. This data would then go on to provide a report to the Senior management Team and importantly to be used by the HR team to analyse and identify any trends /concerns or issues.

To provide the outcomes necessary of this change , four key points were to be focused, these were:

- creating a COVID-19 checklist for line managers to provide consistency of advice given across the organisation and to report anything covid-19 related to the HR department.
- recording COVID-19 absence/incidents on HR/Payroll System by creating new absence codes (current set-up not fit for purpose)
- devising a report to be run from the HR/Payroll system
- monitoring any changes in government guidelines in relation to COVID-19 and absence from work and change process as and when needed **(EV22, EV29: LO1.1,1.4).**

The drivers of this change were both external and internal (Lambertson,2018), this is due to the ongoing pandemic of covid-19 and the development of internal process needed because of an external factor. Covid-19 is said to have meant new ways of working for 80% of all employees (McKinsey,2015) so this change is not a surprise.

Within this change a Business case was not used, because of two main points - being a relatively small change and the time constraints of getting this plan in motion to keep up with the increasing number of employees with Covid-19 reported issues/absences. In a larger scale change plan, I would devise a business case to support and use as rationale for change and present to the Senior management team.

When planning for change, devising a change plan to ensure all key points are identified will support the change process and help towards its success (Changeboard,2016).

Included in a change plan should be points which include, why there is a need for the change and its objectives and how you will achieve said objectives and tasks. The plan should identify who will be involved in making the change and what roles they play **(EV1 & EV19: LO1.1,1.3, 1.4).** What stakeholders will be affected and how and what they need to be communicated **(EV2: LO1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 2.2)** . What resources are needed such as time or training . Lastly, the plan should include how the progress of the change will be monitored and what will be measured to gauge its success (managers.org.uk,2020) **(EV1: LO1.1,1.3, 1.4).**

In any change plan resources that are needed should be identified at the start , without clear thought of this the change may fail (CIPD,2014). For example, if a change plan involves using a new system and extensive new training is needed for staff then cost and time for training will need to be considered. As part of this change implementation, the main resource needed was time to complete the tasks. To do this I had the support of another HR Advisor who was able to pick up some of my workload **(EV19, LO1.3)**. This was time sensitive giving the changing situation of Covid-19 and made a priority *“The top barrier to implementing new practices is the operational pressure that absorbs time necessary to develop and trial different ways of working”* (CIPD, 2014).

To ensure continued implementation of the change the HR team were used as ambassadors for the change (Gordon,2020). I decided not to chose employees from across the departments to do this due to the changing circumstances and information given by the government (gov.uk,2020).

Effective communication is a key enabler of successful change management, highlighted through various theorists' studies, such as Kottor (2016). Wilkinson and Taylor (2016) highlight the importance of Top-down communication – During this change key specific Senior Operational Managers were asked to communicate the change in team meetings with their line managers, promoting from the top down to ensure the changes were taken on board **(EV5,EV15: LO1.5)**.

ACAS,(2014) claims that Face to face meetings with employees to discuss the change have the most benefit, but communication can also be through other channels such as employee newsletters, all staff emails, key messages on staff intranet services. Unfortunately, no staff face to face meetings were being held during this change so the use of video calling via Zoom or Skype to discuss, along with staff emails **(EV4,EV21: LO1.5)** and the Checklist available on the employee intranet site was used to communicate at this time **(EV20: LO2.5)**.

It is important to remember that different stakeholders within a change plan may have different communication needs. I identified this within the communication plan devised and provided specific information to those affected by the change **(EV21, EV5, EV6, EV15,EV26,EV28: LO2.2)**.

The overall HR team, senior management team and board, senior operational managers, Line Managers, Payroll and Employees, will at some point be affected by the implementation of this change. Mostly effected will be the line managers as they have the responsibility of completing the form once they have been informed by their staff .The form had been designed to be straight forward and give answers in case managers are questioning what to do in a situation a staff member may find themselves in. Although through the implementation of this change there were always anomalies , and situations not accounted for, where line managers needed support from HR. The team made themselves as available as possible, and if missed calls ensured to call back as soon as possible to support line managers**(EV18,EV21 - EV25: LO1.2,2.3-2.4)**. With line managers key in driving this change it was important that our role was to provide as much support and guidance to enable them to complete the change as best as possible (McCarthy,2004).

During the change I noted any key changes and milestones by keeping a timeline as a calendar of events, this helped ensure all changes are noted and if tasks were due by a specific date, I had records of them, this helped to keep on course and focus on what needed to be complete **(EV3:LO1.4, 2.1)** storing all correspondence and documents in relation to the change in a specific file for future reference **(LO2.5)**.

The CIPD (2020) notes that resistance to change can be by both individual and groups of employees. Resistance can be as simple as not following the new process and public sector organisations such as Tai Tarian can have a “we have always done it this way” view when change is introduced (Kotter,2016). The “new normal” of the pandemic has seen the organisation become more “agile” and adaptable to change, and the more agile an organisation, the more responsive it will be to change (Cannon,2017). I feel this, alongside selecting certain managers to ‘trail’ the form and provide feedback has helped developed relationships, the managers selected consisted of new, keen managers, influential managers (to gain buy-in), (Kotter,2016), and some which have the “we have always done it this way” attitude , I selected these to encourage engagement and help develop key relationships, involving the end user, ensuring to let them now that their opinion matters (Mckinsey,2015)**(LO2.3)**.

When considering the change, I looked at the guidance of the change model which was developed by Kurt Lewin, consisting for three stages, known as the Unfreeze-Melting-Refreeze, developed to support change in organisations(www.mindtools.com,2020).

Unfreeze is the planning: deciding what needs to change, how and why **(EV2: LO1.1, 1.4)**

Melting is the change or action: communication to employees and the tools to execute the change explaining why change is needed

Refreeze is the result: feedback from employees, to develop the change support and training to sustain the change (www.mindtools.com,2020) **(EV7 – EV13: LO1.5,2.1)**.

Mckinsey (2016), developed the “Influence model”, which looks at four specific “building blocks” which are used to change mindset and help the change process, I considered this whilst implementing my change.

Its four points include “Role modelling” – Managers from top down have taken on board the guidance, suggesting a copy behaviour and the effect of role modelling.

“Fostering understanding and conviction” – providing this tool meant that managers were able to make informed decisions about Covid-19.

“Developing talent and skills” – Managers gained confidence and capability to deal with different scenarios.

And lastly, “Reinforcing with formal mechanisms” – the processes were put in place to enable and reinforce the change. **(EV7 – EV13: LO1.5,2.1)**

Guest and Conway (2001), cited in Taylor and Wilkinson (2016) concluded that generally employees will react positively to changes that will support and enable them to achieve their role better, so generally this change was well received and its uptake positive **(EV30 – see Graphs 1.4,1.5,1.6 : LO3.1,3.3)**

I monitored the effectiveness of the change by recording any form which had not been completed and asking line managers to provide feedback as to why **(EV30 – see Graphs 1.4 - 1.6 : LO3.1,3.3)**. A total of 15 out of 128 forms were not completed over the period from Sep 2020 – Dec 2020. With “Forgot to use”, “Unable to access on iPad” , “Not aware of form - did not receive email”, and “Missed email / did not read”, as reasons **(as highlighted in EV30 , Graph 1.6)**. It may be possible that the reasons that the managers had not completed the form as they missed the email / did not read it or they forgot to use it, may suggest a lack of engagement or may be more down to a resistance to the change (Connelly,2020).

Taken on board some of the managers frustrations about the not being able to complete the form on the iPad, looking for a resolve and being able to not only compromise but explaining why the detail of the form was so important, helped to develop positive working relationships with my line managers**(EV12, LO2.3)**.

This is been a very difficult time for all, and I often found that certain managers who might have been new to the role and lacking confidence would still phone or email me to confirm what the checklist would tell them.

I feel this is not due to an issue with the form’s readability (which managers confirmed) **(EV9,EV10)** but more due to the severity of making decisions about their teams which could greatly affect their health.

The Kubler-Ross change model highlights the motions of change, resembling that of a roller coaster. This is linked to a person reaction to change and changing emotions as they process the change (Mindtools.com,2020). When supporting managers and their queries throughout this I feel there has been a roller coaster reaction to the change, but once again not due to the process implemented but due to the bigger picture of the pandemic **(LO1.2,2.2,2.3)**.

Upon reflection I do feel that the support of the organisations Health and Safety team was lacking in supporting the HR team through this. Some scenarios we were advising on could fall under Health and Safety. This is frustrating, but it highlights the need for HR and Health and Safety to develop relationships and collaborate more going forward for the benefit of the organisation **(LO3.2)**.

As highlighted by ACAS (2014), it is important to set up mechanisms which will continue to evaluate the progress of the change and highlight if anything need to be adapted to suit the desired outcomes.

I continued to work with managers to gain feedback throughout the change to see if any improvements could be made. These were considered and implemented where possible. For example, one criticism was not being able to complete the form on the iPad (As previously discussed), **(EV12,13,14,EV16-18, LO2.4,3.2,3.3).**

The presence of coronavirus looks to be a part of our everyday lives for a while yet, this change will be adapted to comply with government guidance and used for as long as deemed necessary within the organisation, hopefully soon demands of the IT department may decrease and we can work to get the form available on the iPad providing greater accessibility to managers working in the community **(EV16,17: LO3.2).**

The outcome of the change has seen the use of the data to establish key trends and issues which have helped to make organisational wide decisions to help keep our staff safe, without this we would have not had the analytic backing to stop employees travelling in the work vehicles together and suggested that the trades that were working in tenants' houses were those mostly affected by testing positive for coronavirus. The HR team was able to go to the Senior management team and Board with the concerns of feeling unsafe that employees had voices and provide actual evidence to make change for staff safety in the current climate **(LO 3.1,3.3).**

For example:

EV30: Graph 1.1 - This is a snapshot of the report devised for SMT and board – here is the week in October 2020 where we highlighted the 5 members from the same team who had tested positive for Covid-19, suggested that the PPE used was not adequate against traveling in a works van together, this enabled the decision to be made for single use of vehicles for work and the development of the Covid-19 checklist to include further detail questions **(EV24, Page3).**

EV30: Graph 1.2 and 1.3 - show the total positive cases of Tai Tarian employees between Sep – Dec 2020, split between those home working and that tenant facing (this means that they would be carrying out work within tenants' homes). This data allowed us to put a case forward to the SMT and board to stop employees having to go into tenants' homes unless in an emergency as the data showed a higher number of cases amongst those staff **(EV27).**

Effective communication is vital to the success of any change plan (Kotter,2016), when considering this point, I feel the communication throughout the change project has made use of some but certainly not all avenues available. During the first few weeks, when looking at the reasons why a manager may not use the form the data highlighted that those in 'acting up' positions were missed in initial communications, the "all managers" staff email was set up by IT and running a report from the HR/Payroll system, unfortunately the system does not allow to input detail such as those in "acting up" positions which also need to be included in correspondence. These persons were highlighted by the HR team, simply through knowledge of their teams and then the correspondence sent on. We are lucky that the HR team have the extensive knowledge to provide this and a future task will be to find a suitable place to store this information on the HR/Payroll system to keep these potential future managers engaged.

I could have used other avenues such as the weekly employee newsletter called "the advisor" to communicate the change, which could have advised those missing "acting up" employees earlier but given that this change mainly effected managers I did not see it appropriate at the time.

I could have made use of this to mention that all employees, no matter what circumstance (working from home or not) should report anything covid-19 related to their managers as soon as possible for us to provide support if needed. The managers were asked to provide this information in their daily catch ups as they were encouraged to reach out to home working employees daily to help support through each day.

It was also evident that some managers simply do not read their email given the questions that a small majority asked in the first few weeks of the roll out of the new form, this was to be expected, so in these instances, I do not feel that including in the weekly newsletter would have made a difference as this is also sent via email **(LO2.4,3.4)**.

When looking at my own contribution during the change plan I now feel I have the necessary skills and knowledge to take on the challenge of a bigger change plan **(EV12,13)**. In comparison to others that are taking place in Tai Tarian this was relatively small, but a good way of learning what worked well and what did not. In future I would use the aid of a gantt chart, to set targets to stay on track. I devised a timeline which I used within this change, but I feel that this would not be sufficient for a change project on a larger scale. (Mindtools.com,2020) **(LO3.4)**.

I would also ensure to ask for help and support from other members of the team if needed and not try to do everything myself – at some points during the absences / issues being reported were hard to keep track of with other demanding workload **(LO3.4)**.

I would give more detail as to 'why' a change is taking place, I feel this is key to a change success and buy-in from employees, it is also something that I personally feel enables me to respond well to change. At the advice of the HR manager, I was asked to take out a lot of the 'why' correspondence I had written within my communication about the change to line managers (Tahir,2019). This did not stop the questions, and instead found myself having the same conversation each time I had contact with different managers, who in some cases had speculated and come up with negative reasons which could encourage "storytelling and speculation" which in turn may breed cynicism to the change (ipa-involve.com,2018).

This, unfortunately, is something that is embedded in the culture of the organisation and its way of working. Next time I shall explain my reasons for wanting to provide this information and the research by theorists such as Kotter(2016) and McKinsey(2015) which gives this credibility for change success **(LO3.4)**.

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