

Programme Improvement Project

Identification of Stakeholders

As Powys Teaching Health Board's (PTHB) ICT support department is hosted by Powys County Council (PCC) under the health board's Section33 agreement with the Council, there are a number of stakeholder that I have identified, breaking down their roles and analysing their link within the digital transformation strategy.

PCC's Head of Digital and ICT department and Senior ICT Manager involved a vast number of stakeholders in the implementation of the digital transformation strategy, the entire Digital and ICT department to be exact. The digital transformation strategy was formulated from a staff 'away day' where the entire department was divided up into teams and were given tasks in mini workshops to produce an end-product from brainstorming, planning and execution of a work package, quite like the format of the BBC's television show "The Apprentice". Some of these tasks included service area re-branding, ideas on how to introduce Digital Transformation to the demographic of Powys, how to resolve an issue in Powys where a lack of superfast broadband connectivity is concerned, and how to effectively use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Powys for public services, amongst others.

Therefore, the idea was to involve the stakeholders who possess expertise in their field of work, which included every person in the Digital Transformation and ICT teams. The stakeholders involved in the process of devising and implementing the digital transformation strategy included –

- Service Desk Operators
- Desktop Field Service Engineers
- ICT Infrastructure Engineers (junior and Senior)
- DevOps Technical Architects
- ICT Support Specialists
- ICT Applications Specialists
- ICT Team Leaders
- ICT Operations Managers
- Senior ICT Managers
- Head of ICT and Digital Transformation
- PCC Board of Directors
- HR Department
- Finance Department

Reflection of Effective Engagement

I believe effective engagement with stakeholders begins with devising and using an effective communications plan. Every stakeholder area and the people within them differ from each other, therefore, I believe a plan needs to be devised and reviewed closely if engagement with diverse groups of stakeholders is going to be executed effectively.

Various Professions

I have learned that digital transformation strategies affect stakeholders in all types of professions. With this being the case, I believe one cannot use the same engagement methods for stakeholders in all professions. For example, a Dental Nurse being a clinician may not have the time to engage in formal meetings without a vast amount of prior notice as they are usually running clinics back-to-back. Even an elongated email may not be the most effective way to engage with them given the status of their work and any time that they may retain in between clinics will more than likely be used preparing for subsequent clinics and other clinical commitments. Therefore, I feel the best form of communication for engagement with someone of this profession would be an instant message, a succinct email or electronic documentation, for example Microsoft Forms, when the end goal is to harvest information from them. I believe this will differ from another profession, for example, an ICT Team Leader whose nature of work may not involve back-to-back meetings or similar commitments. They would more than likely have more time than a clinician to engage with me via a virtual meeting or email communication/threads that would require ten minutes or more to review in its entirety.

Agencies

I would engage with agencies including as much detail as possible. As agencies tend to partner with organisations, for this example, I use an employment agency. I would use email and telephone communication, including as much detail as possible is used regarding the credentials of the agency staff I require for the role. The chances are I would more likely receive what I ask for, resulting in the agency staff working more effectively within my department. If I do not convey the exact detail of what is required, I run the risk of not receiving the agency staff member equipped with the skills to conduct the role.

Regulators

I would use most electronic methods of communicating with regulators, however, I would place a strong emphasis on statistics using Business Intelligence tools. In my opinion, a regulator will not wish to review lengthy electronic communication with multiple paragraphs and lengthy reading, they would much rather see statistics in the form of numbers, charts, graphs and other analytical illustrations that can be quickly used for their purpose.

Patients

I believe this all depends on the type of patient I am engaging with. For example, an elderly patient who is not 'tech savvy' would more than likely appreciate a traditional paper letter or telephone call of communication, as opposed to another elderly patient who actually enjoys using technology in their spare time, in this case, I believe email, text messaging or even virtual clinic appointment communication would be an apt method of engagement.

Users

In general, I believe that in this day and age, there is an expectation by employers that users should possess a certain level of digital literacy in order to conduct their role in the workplace. Therefore, I believe emails, instant messaging and secure email systems are the most effective means of engagement for this group.

Citizens

Citizens vary from person to person. However, as we are in the age of the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions, and as the generations proceed, we are generally a nation of people who use smartphones for a lot of things that we do. Therefore, I believe text messaging and social media would be an effective means of communication for engagement with this group.

Critical Personal Reflection

In the workplace within my role, I use several methods of communication to engage with various stakeholders.

Email

Email is the most generic form of communication I use to engage with various groups. Personally, email is the quickest, most effective tool for engagement; as I can include most of the detail I wish to convey, it will arrive at the recipient instantaneously and it is the means to receive a timely response from the recipient. The disadvantage is that a timely response from the original recipient is not always the case with email. I find myself chasing various stakeholders with follow-up emails for answers to my queries or the detail I am trying to obtain. I also find that email communication remains formal which is effective for an audit trail, however, it has not been so effective gauging how staff that I have managed are feeling in their own roles, usually a face-to-face meeting or telephone call is a much more effective means of communications in this case.

Instant Messaging (IM)

Within all my capacities within PTHB, instant messaging has been an effective means of communication, the obvious being it is a very quick form of conveying detail or seeking queries from various stakeholders. I have also found it to be a light-hearted communication tool to engage with colleagues I work with or have worked very closely with. What IM is not

exceptionally good at being a repository for information, unlike an email which can be forwarded onto any colleague who may require certain information about a new digital system for example.

Telephone

I find the telephone to be the worst form of communication in the workplace in my personal experience. If detail or instructions relating to work are not written, I have found it easy to forget or not recall what was said or any instructions provided. The only advantage I can think of regarding telephone communication is the fact that it is effective in terms of light-hearted engagement with close colleagues which is not essential to conduct my role.

Consensus Versus Groupthink

I believe consensus is reached by groupthink taking place beforehand. If decisions are made in the workplace where every team member has been involved and has had input, the decision is one that every team member favours, respects and will support the outcomes going forward. I believe that everybody involved in that decision has accountability for the outcomes also.

However, I also believe that using groupthink to reach a consensus has its pitfalls also. *“Janis originally defined groupthink as a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.”* [1] My personal belief is that this can cause issues where groupthink brings out the best and the worst in people.

I have personally witnessed situations in the workplace where quieter individuals express themselves more within a group as there is the notion of ‘safety in numbers’ that exists in their mind. On the other end of the scale, whilst the more dominant individuals always get to express their opinions, they enter a mode of conflict when faced with another dominant member of the group in an unofficial battle to become the top contributor.

Whilst the less assertive individuals have struggled to have their voice heard in such groups, I have personally found that either a brief time to personally brainstorm an issue, the group is reformed, and everyone is instructed to convey their contribution with an equal time limit enforced for every individual. With this method, I have found that there is assurance that every voice within the group is heard, and their points are taken on board before a decision is made.

With that approach, I have found that the greater number of individuals in the groups who have expressed the similar views becomes the consensus, but not before the approach is voted on by everybody in the group. I have seen witnessed any dominant individuals in the group who had a difference of opinion to the general view tend to concede and finally agree with the majority as they wish to be fundamental key collaborators within the group. Once this process has transpired, then the consensus is reached.

References

- [1] Griffin, E.A. (1994) *A First Look at Communication Theory*. Available at:
http://people.uncw.edu/mcdaniela/afirstlook_PPT_09_16.pdf.