

International Banking Group (outside UK) – Strategy and culture change

The Challenge

This bank with a proud history but also a set of acute environmental and competitive challenges needed to accelerate its transformation. Under a new CEO, they had adopted an ambitious purpose and identified the strategy, organisation and culture required to achieve it. 12 months on, the rationale was widely understood and substantial infrastructure change had been achieved but progress was hampered by silo'd working and a lack of empowerment, and many lacked belief that the transformation was achievable.

We were asked to develop a series of leadership events aimed at ensuring that every leader in the organisation understood what had already been achieved, what was next, and the implications for them and their people; and ensuring that each one recognised and chose to take up their responsibility for delivering the transformation

As we got to know the organisation it became clear that a different kind of senior leaders' event was required and that all people leaders needed to understand the state of play and be supported to build greater psychological safety and agility in practice. We proposed, designed and facilitated a solution to meet that wider and deeper need.

The Solution

Senior Leaders Workshop (top 270)

After careful preparation of the ExCo as convenors and a group of internal facilitators, the Bank's senior leaders participated in a 2-day workshop (quite different from their previous more conference-like events), stepping back from their busyness to see what was being achieved and what was challenging; to learn from that and consider next steps, above all on how to mitigate the cultural risk to delivering on the strategy and purpose. By design (and in the way the ExCo led and participated) it was an exemplary experience of the adult:adult, speak-up, 'one team' and accountable culture the Bank was moving towards. It got beneath the surface of their performance and progress as leaders. And it both included and resulted in specific stuff to go and do.



“

*Each individual is now accountable for the transformation, understanding how **my** contribution/behaviour/attitudes are impacting my team's journey, and my control over that. This is not ExCo's transformation, this is everyone's journey and everyone's responsibility.*

Senior Leader

Leader-led Manager Roadshows (all people leaders)

In the following two weeks all other people leaders attended a similar (but shorter) version of the same workshop in their own region, experiencing a new candour, authenticity and confidence in the senior leaders who led each event.

Manager-led Team Sessions (all employees)

The organisational updates and conversation about psychological safety were opened up to the rest of the organisation as each people leader ran a 2-hour session with their own team, equipped with a digital toolkit of session outlines, notes and materials.

Introduction of the CORAL method (all people leaders)

To provide additional support in developing psychological safety, we introduced CORAL (our adaptation of Mission Command for the corporate environment). This incorporates psychologically safe methods for delegating more decision-making and encouraging greater initiative. After an initial workshop for the 270 senior leaders, each of them introduced the approach to their own team and shared how specifically they intended to experiment with it, starting a cascade of new practice flowing through the organisation. Accountability was supported with follow-up from line-managers on progress and learning.



The Result

Internal evaluation found the programme produced substantial improvements in:

- Culture embedding
- Psychological safety
- Employee engagement
- Inclusion and diversity

Feedback on leaders' events:

- 98% satisfaction with leaders' events
- 98% felt enabled to share with their teams
- "More of the same please – this event was exemplary – I loved it."
- "Made us stand up and be counted as leaders rather than passively receiving updates and always looking to the ExCo for the answers."
- "I feel I had total involvement in the day. The empowerment to go to other divisions in the Bank and discuss urgent matters was a fantastic idea."
- "Shout out to Ideas Unlimited: you showed us the way and marshalled us expertly."



The format, structure and content have been instrumental in helping us to make such progress over a short period of time. The group leadership team will only get better from here for the benefit of all stakeholders.

CFO



Thank you. This has been amazing. Really exceeded what I thought was even possible.

CEO