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Supporting our people through the change processes
*Supported by PowerPoint slides (shown in text as **12pt bold**)*

Christchurch City Libraries has been through heaps of change. We had a restructuring in 1996, that now looks like a bit of tinkering compared to what we've managed to achieve since.

Many will know about the transformation of our technical services/collection services division during 1999. And then the restructuring of our service delivery teams in the Central City Library. We have also just made some adjustments with the management of our suburban service points, and at this very moment we are planning the opening of our newest service point – the FingerTip Library. After this we will start on the development of a Strategy Group to ensure there is strategic input in to the organisation, not just the members of the Strategic Leadership Team.

So there's always something to work on, and as we hear all the time these days "change is pretty constant".

Today's session …
- **What are we trying to achieve with our support programmes?**
- **What have we actually done?**
- **What have we learnt?**

Today I want to spend a little bit of time looking at the philosophy behind how we have managed our people during times of change, and then spend the second part of the session looking at what we've done and how, and what we have learnt.

People have said to me "It's OK for you, you are working at a level where you have some input and control over the changes, which got me to thinking that that's what we are trying to do during these processes – give and enable colleagues as much control over their own situation as possible.

What are we trying to achieve?
- **Increased personal responsibility**

And this is part of the cultural shift we are trying to achieve, which is for people to take more personal responsibility for decisions about their working lives.

Libraries are traditionally full of people who have a need for certainty and details. It's part of our history as preserving and historical type institutions. Reliable and unchanging. We know that our culture at CCL has had to change from a paternalistic type style where people have been protected, to helping our people be more independent and make decisions for themselves.

- **Colleagues making decisions about their working lives**

This is achieved by giving people as much information as possible, and then supporting them in the decision-making process. An example of this is when there is restructuring, we have expected our people to formally apply for positions and go through a process, instead of slotting people in. We have had to be careful about being clear and direct with our people, not making promises, or reassuring them to the extent that they don no hear the message to take things seriously.

Does everyone want to take control of their situation and make their own decisions? Alas no! As I said, many of our people have a high need for certainty. Some want to be told "Just tell me and I'll do it!". But that's not what the organisation wants. Everything's happening so quickly these days, that we need them all doing the thinking. This is the basis of the current buzz phrase 'continuous improvement'. Everyone's needs to be on the lookout for doing things better.

- **Colleagues contributing to the new processes**

The other thing about involving colleagues in developing the detail around the new structures is to get their commitment. At CCL we have worked with consultants on the broad parameters of a project, an have put lots of time and energy into getting our people involved in developing the detail.

So what can we do as an organisation to help them become involved and take responsibility for making decisions about their working life.

What have we learnt?

I want to talk at first about communication in general, and then specifically about some of the practical things we have tried.

Communication
"one size does not fit all"
repeat, repeat, and repeat the message

The key think we have learnt about communication is that 'one size does not fit all', and repeat, repeat, repeat the message. The penny drops for different people at different times. Some will want it written down in great detail, with every possible scenario and fact.
Some will want to hear it said in a casual way.
Some will want to talk about it in a big group where they have an audience.
Some will just want to sit and listen to what everyone else is saying.
Some want constant reassurance.

So where possible, repeat the message, and in many different formats.

It's really important that all of management, and not just the manager of the affected area, are visibly interested in a large change project. We had repeated requests to see more of 'management'. Many affected colleagues reported feeling ignored. They felt like social pariahs.

It's also really important that management understands the change cycle, and that it is not linear. That is why the message needs repeated and repeated.

- **Be 'up front' if you do not know**
- **Resist the urge to reassure – it can blur the true message**

We found that we needed to say if we didn't know. Being up front, and resisting the urge to reassure, which can sometimes be interpreted as not having to make any changes.

What have we actually done?

Now for some of the practical things we did.

Job Application workshops
As I said earlier, our restructures have required our colleagues to apply for new jobs. This is a good way of ensuring that colleagues know that the new job is different from the old one, and which is the danger of slotting people into jobs.

- **These are new skills for many people**

Many of our people have not had to apply for a job in 20 years, and probably some of them didn't do it the first time round either!

- **Provide the workshops before the job applications close**
- **Workshops cover skills identification, developing a CV, writing covering letters, and role playing some interview questions**

We have held Job Application workshops before the job applications have closed and they have covered
- Skills identification
- CV structure
- Covering letter
- Role playing an interview question such as "How do you contribute to the success of a team?"

Managing Change workshops
- **Can be delivered by external providers**
- **Usually outline the change cycle**

These are general workshops, and can easily be purchased from external providers. They normally just go through the stages of the change cycle, so participants can recognize the stages, and see that they will get through it.

- **Provide good background for a change project, but of limited use on their own**
- **May have to be repeated several times during the change process**

These workshops provide good background to the overall process, but are not enough on their own. The timing is crucial as the penny drops at different times for different people, so there may have to be workshops at the beginning of and during the process.

Staff meetings with the Union
- **Colleagues need legitimate ways to "let off steam"**

Colleagues need legitimate ways to let off steam and air their views, in work time, instead of taking all their anger and anxiety home to their families.

- **Meetings on work site, in work time, and without 'management'**

We found that involving the Union on site, for meetings in work time, and without management is a good opportunity for affected staff to safely let rip.

- **Management work with Union staff and staff delegates to collate and respond to feedback**

We worked with Union officials and delegates to respond to issues raised. One Union person was especially good at writing these down and reporting back.

- **Other one-to-one support for individuals includes Project Team members, EAP, chaplains and HR people**
- **Support is supplied by the workplace**

Aligned to this, is having staff members, maybe project team members, or HR people, the chaplain, or Employee Assistance Programmes available for individuals – all supplied by the workplace.

Career Counseling
- **Can be provided by external providers**

Again, like the change workshops, these can be provided by external providers.

- **Supporting colleagues to make good career decisions for themselves**
- **Focus is on the individual and not the organisation**

The purpose is to support the individual to make good career decisions for themselves. The benefit is that these are confidential to the person, and focused on the individual not the organisation. Our experience is that these sessions have been greatly appreciated by staff.

- **Can help people to leave the organisation**

Typically these include skills identification and values clarification. It puts the individuals in a good position to sell their strengths in the application process. In some cases it can help individuals actually move on and leave the organisation if their needs cannot be met.

Again, this should be timed before colleagues need to apply for jobs. This supports the concept of encouraging our people to take personal responsibility for their working lives.

- **May be repeated at the end of the process for redundant colleagues**

Career counseling may also be supplied at the end of the process for those who are redundant. It can help them detach from the organisation and get on with their life.

Team Leader workshops
- **Designed to help colleagues decide if they are suited to a Team Leader role**

We held these before we advertised the 8 new positions of Team Leader in the Central City Library. The purpose of these was to give colleagues (both existing Team Leaders and those wanting to become Team Leaders) the opportunity to really see if they are team leader material. The organisation also needed to emphasise that what we want in a team leader has changed.

- **Workshops include looking at the role of team leader, individual profiling, and skills identification and values clarification**

The workshop had three parts
   a) a look at the new role of Team Leader
   b) results of individual profiling
   c) first part of the career counseling process

- **Available before the Team Leader applications close**

Participants then decided if they wanted to put themselves forward for the Team Leader positions.

Task Forces

- **Involves the affected colleagues in the design of the new processes**
- **Participation of affected people strongly encouraged by 'management'**
- **Involvement builds commitment to the end result**

The aim of these was to involve people. Remember I talked about management and the consultants setting the broad parameters. Well this was the hard work identifying existing processes and possible new ways of doing things. Management strongly encouraged all affected people to be involved in these task forces, as they had the valuable information, and the most at stake.

- **Involve others from the rest of the network to support those affected and raise awareness of the project**

We also involved people from the rest of the network in these task forces to raise awareness of the project throughout the network in readiness for implementation day.

Review workshops

- **Allow affected colleagues to give feedback on the whole process**

This allows all the affected people to give feedback on the process, after go-live date and when some of the dust has settled.

- **Opportunity for 'closure'**

For many it is an opportunity for 'closure'. For instance, some who are pleased to have got one of the new jobs, feel a lot of guilt about those who missed out, who have left or been made redundant.

- **Opportunity to celebrate what has been achieved**
- **Opportunity to capture learning points for next time!**

These sessions should be facilitated, and create an opportunity to celebrate what went well, and also capture learning points for the future.

There are a couple of final points that I would like to make about change processes in general.

Speed of the changes
- **Need to keep up the pace to reduce the anxiety for those affected by the changes**

This is tricky to get right, but when the project is planned it is important to keep up a reasonable pace. Mostly this is about reducing the anxiety for everyone involved, but also to keep the momentum up, otherwise nostalgia for the "good old days" sets in.

- **Those managing the change need to expect some low and flat spots in the process**

Those managing the change process need to expect the inevitable flat and low spots and be prepared for those. For instance the time just before all the appointments are made is always going to be tense.

Management stamina / Keeping our nerve
- **Important for management to 'walk the talk'**
- **Important for management to be visible and accessible during the process**
- **Keep any misgivings behind closed doors – colleagues want steady leadership during change**

There will be times when those managing the changes will come close to losing their nerve. It is really important for management to "walk the talk", show a united front, and keep any private misgivings behind closed doors.

- **Keep the end goal in sight**
- **Make sure those leading the change have personal support**

In the end, when the going gets tough, our people need to have confidence in strong leadership. This doesn't mean being autocratic but keeping the end goal in sight.

Conclusion