

CASE STUDY



COMMUNICATING THROUGH DIFFICULT CHANGE

PUBLIC RELATIONS INSTITUTE OF NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL WINNER: BEST INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

THE CLIENT

Fonterra Co-operative Group Limited is a New Zealand multinational dairy co-operative owned by around 10,500 New Zealand farmers and staffed by 22,000 employees globally.

THE CHALLENGE

Fonterra's Global Finance function was undergoing a drastic efficiency overhaul: reducing their month-end reporting time from ten working days to just two.

Producing faster valuation data meant changes to systems, processes and policies for almost 1,500 Finance employees across 12 countries.

The General Manager of Business Services got in touch to request communications support to ensure changes were successful, new behaviours were adopted and new systems embraced.

OUR APPROACH

Due to the complexity of this programme of work, a full time communications contractor was placed 'in house' to manage the strategy and implementation of communications over the programme's life cycle.

Our approach was rigorous

- Internal stakeholder mapping and engagement planning by impact levels (not by hierarchy or demographics).
- Benchmarking current employee engagement levels.
- Ownership workshops and gap analyses.

- Strategy testing in small groups.
- Senior stakeholder buy-in to the strategy, the communication objectives and key messages.

As programme changes were planned and deployed, communications and training were ‘wrapped around’ each impact for the appropriate stakeholder group.

Existing communication channels were used extensively and new ‘signature’ communication channels were introduced to add a higher, more strategic picture of the changes so those impacted could see how all the changes fit together.

The strategy followed five key principles:

1. Be transparent.
2. Managers are a conduit to change.
3. Communicate to people when they needed it (not when the programme felt like it)
4. Key messages would be relevant to the audience and jargon free.
5. Communications support across programme workstreams to ensure consistency.

THE RESULT

New work practices were adopted faster, efficiency gains realised quicker, productivity levels rebounded quicker than expected and internal customer service quality remained high.

Communications objectives received an average score of 88.6% ‘agree or strongly agree’ over the programme.

The Gallup Q1 and Q7 monthly temperature checks tracked positively at an average of 4.2 and 3.9. Higher than the annual average of 3.9 and 3.7 respectively for the year prior.