

Major change – The new ‘business as usual’

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My presentation will be based on a major change programme, which took 4 years to complete at the UK high street retailer, Boots The Chemists, now Boots UK and part of the Alliance Boots Group.

I will offer you some of the learning gained from our experiences leading this programme, and hope that you will find something to apply to your own change situations.

The challenge: In 2006 Boots launched its biggest ever change project, restructuring its supply chain to deliver a £50m annual cost saving. It involved closing 18 distribution centres and merging 3 warehouses. 1,200 colleagues needed new terms and working hours, and over 2,000 redundancies were announced 3 years in advance.

What we did:

- Developed a clear people vision, culture change and leadership development plan
- Developed a support and severance package for affected staff, including a £300 vocational training allowance for every colleague
- Opened a learning suite in every distribution centre
- Change management training for all managers and induction/culture training for all colleagues

Benefits and achievements:

- Programme delivered on time and to budget
- Colleague engagement survey scores increased by 13%
- Retention of more engaged, productive workforce
- Absence reduced from 7 to 4.5%
- 54% of leavers went straight into new work

Our work in this area has been externally recognised; last year, winning a National Training Award, the TUC Learning for Change Award with our recognised Trade Union Usdaw, and, becoming a finalist in the Personnel Today Awards for Managing Change, where one of the judges said:

“This was a complex high-risk change programme with significant business risk. It has lots of components but has been driven through based on clear values. The same care and thought has been given to all groups of staff impacted by this change.”