

# Developing Change Management Capability at VSO

## The organisation

VSO is an international development charity promoting volunteering to fight global poverty and disadvantage.

## The need

The VSO strategy is delivered through around 30 developing country programme offices that place volunteers with local partner organisations. There are 5 volunteer recruitment bases around the world and a range of different types of volunteer. A large part of the programme offices' role is to source appropriate volunteers across the range of volunteer types and the recruitment bases.

The recruitment bases needed to reorganise to align with the new strategy, to enable recruitment teams to better understand the needs of the overseas programmes and for the programme offices to better understand the range of volunteers available to them through a single point of contact.

The changes affected the:

- Overall structure of the recruitment teams
- Nature of the jobs in the recruitment bases
- Relationships between recruitment teams and volunteers
- Relationships between the overseas programme offices and their colleagues across recruitment bases.

VSO established a project team with additional change management expertise from J Hill Associates to support those involved.

## What we did

- Recommended appropriate change management strategies by analysing responses to a staff questionnaire
- Enhanced the effectiveness of the change management team by clarifying roles and establishing agreed terms of reference
- Designed and facilitated workshops for managers and staff in coping with reactions to change and aligning organisational culture to the new ways of working
- Provided coaching and mentoring in the practical and softer aspects of managing change to groups and individuals
- Developed a communications strategy by assisting the communications team to develop plans and activities to keep recruitment staff and others appropriately informed and involved
- Worked with managers and HR to ensure processes were in line with overall VSO policies and practices
- Led research into managing complex organisational structures (matrix management) resulting in a set of recommendations for VSO.

## Benefits

- A structured approach to managing the change with appropriate contributions from staff and managers
- Improved morale as staff better understood the reactions to the changes they were going through and that these were perfectly natural
- New change management and communication skills and models transferred to VSO staff
- Improved staff morale and participation by jointly developing a workshop for staff to understand the rationale for the change, their reactions to change, and how best to support them
- Increased confidence of managers by coaching them through the change conversations they would have with individual staff members
- Managers able to identify the required culture changes
- Increased manager's capability by exposure to well-established change management models and helping them put these models in the VSO context
- Staff equipped to develop new working relationships quickly and effectively
- Flexible approach; providing input when required over a five month period
- Access to other organisations in different sectors, and their experiences
- A positive, energetic role model for managers and staff.

## Comments from VSO managers and staff

“Jacqueline’s focus, questioning, outside viewpoint and relevant experience all cast light on what we were trying to achieve, how we might do it better and how it was perceived by less involved colleagues.”

“I felt like I was talking to someone who really understood the whole area of change management.”

“Jacqueline always brings huge energy and enthusiasm to meetings. She has a helpful style which facilitates others coming up with ideas but at the same time has been willing to input ideas if people have wanted this e.g. teasing out key messages to communicate after management meetings.”

“Jacqueline has more than knowledge and tools, she is a keen listener, is extremely patient and understanding and very empathetic. Jacqueline has been asked to do things at the last minute, some ‘doing’ rather than coaching tasks, and she has done these with great professionalism.”