

Developing the WaterAid Finance function

The organisation

WaterAid is the international charity dedicated exclusively to the provision of safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people.

The need

WaterAid has experienced considerable growth and change. This growth and a new strategy placed huge pressures on existing WaterAid infrastructure. The Finance department felt that they were too busy fire-fighting to provide an appropriate level of service and a Finance Strategy Review highlighted the need to rethink the organisational structure and staffing levels. The then Finance Director, Jahangir Gandhi asked J Hill Associates to work with the Finance team in identifying how they could best organise themselves to support WaterAid's strategic objectives.

What we did

Jacqueline interviewed the members of the finance team individually to identify current processes and issues. These included the implications of the finance management strategy, WaterAid's 'Change for Growth' programme, and the structure, role design and capacity within the team.

Working with the Finance Director, Jacqueline produced a draft report of the key findings including recommendations for a new structure, the shape and size of the department, and the individual roles. Jacqueline then designed and facilitated an interactive workshop for the finance team to discuss the options for the structure and roles before the report was finalised.

At this time there were significant changes taking place at WaterAid including a new chief executive, new members in the senior management team and, crucially for the finance team, a new Finance Director. On his arrival, the new Finance Director, Andrew Lawrence, asked Jacqueline to continue working with the Finance team on assessing the implications of recent changes and to help incorporate the new ideas that he had brought to the team.

Over the following months, Jacqueline worked with Andrew and the team to develop a revised structure and role profiles, and give advice on providing a smooth transition. This included developing an internal communications plan and working with the new HR Director on employee relations and reward and recognition issues. After a long period of uncertainty and change, WaterAid were able to recruit new staff and help existing staff transition to their new roles.

Benefits

- The new structure reflected the financial support needed by WaterAid both in terms of capability and capacity
- The new structure was flexible and took into account future growth
- Roles were designed to fit the new structure whilst taking existing staff skills and aspirations into account

- The active involvement of the team helped raise awareness of the issues, recognise the significance of the change needed and made sure their views were taken into account
- As an external consultant, Jacqueline was able to gain the trust of the team and use the information she was given to develop themes and provide advice whilst preserving confidentiality
- Good relationships between the consultant and the finance team members meant that Jacqueline could provide a level of continuity through the changes in senior management.

Comments from WaterAid

“Jacqueline has always been a pleasure to work with. She has a great understanding of how people work together, and has built up a good understanding of how our organisation works. I feel very comfortable discussing difficult issues on roles and responsibilities with Jacqueline as she has a good empathy and helps to find solutions by working together.”

Joy Holverson, Head of International Finance