

Developing the WaterAid Human Resources 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 had experienced considerable growth and change placing huge pressures on the existing WaterAid infrastructure. WaterAid was managing its human resources primarily through local line managers with part-time UK-based support. As the organisation grew, so did the pressure on local, regional and global managers to get the best from WaterAid's staff and volunteers. There was a need for global and more comprehensive human resource management. The Finance Director was asked to lead the development of the new HR function, however a significant workload across the staff at WaterAid meant that additional help was needed if deadlines were to be met.

What we did

The initial brief from the senior managers and trustees was to develop role profiles for and recruit an HR Director and two HR managers, one international and one UK. In discussions between Jacqueline and the Finance Director it quickly became apparent that we needed to take a broader view and first establish what the role of the new HR function would be, its main accountabilities and how WaterAid could transition from the current arrangements to the new structure without significant disruption.

Jacqueline suggested collating feedback gathered from stakeholders across the organisation, identify areas of the strategic plan where HR would be a key contributor, and identify relevant external best practice. This raised a number of questions regarding how the new HR function would work with existing departments and where specific responsibilities should lie. Many of these issues needed to be answered at a management team level so Jacqueline developed an initial paper describing the role, scope and goals of the new HR function, the assumptions made and questions that needed to be answered, the proposed HR team structure and individual role profiles, and a proposed process for recruitment and transition.

Following approval from the management team, Jacqueline developed a briefing for recruitment agencies, the recruitment process was given the go-ahead, and effective interim measures were put in place.

Benefits

- Clear links between the goals of the HR function and WaterAid strategy
- A process that enabled an appropriate level of analysis within the deadlines set
- Participation from the management team and others within the organisation
- Involvement of and ownership by the Finance Director

Comments from WaterAid

"Jacqueline is very much a 'hands on' operator who has the extraordinary ability to completely take the pressure off management but at the same time ensure that they retain

ownership and control of both the process and the output. She has shared ownership of the project with WaterAid management, linked the project to the organisational strategy, ensured space and time for sufficient consultation and produced an excellent and clearly written paper which has fully met expectations of the management team. I would have no hesitation in recommending her for a similar role at another organisation.”

Jahangir Gandhi, Finance Director