

CASE STUDY

With

BT



BT Case Study: Using ‘Operational Coaching’ to Transform Business Partners into Trusted Advisors

This case study was presented live on stage at the 2018 HR Directors Summit at the NIA in Birmingham.

The Background

Notion started working with BT in the wake of a period of significant change and controversy for the telecommunications company. During this difficult period, the company faced challenges that had left them a little battle worn but ready for change. Our challenge was to help BT restore their brand advocacy and improve employee confidence by helping them to modify the behaviours of their internal communications team.

Notion designed a bespoke development programme for the internal communications team called, ‘Developing Influence as a Trusted Advisor’ which introduced BT to Notion’s unique ‘Operational Coaching’ model. As a result of the programme, BT witnessed their Internal Communications Business Partners transform into ‘trusted advisors’, with new skills that enabled them to help leaders to engage more effectively with employees, and prepare them to lead through change.



In the words of BT

Karen Terry-Weymouth, Operations Director of Internal Communications at BT, describes BT’s journey, here in her words:

“We needed to build the capability in our business partners to become ‘trusted advisors’ so that they could coach and enable leaders to lead the rest of the organisation and take them on a transformational journey.”

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“A Bit about BT

BT is a global telecommunications company. We underpin the telecommunications infrastructure in the UK and also support a number of large global organisations including banking, hospitals, defence, and emergency services.

Navigating Significant Change at BT

We’ve been going through a massive amount of change. We experienced exponential growth in broadband, we went into the TV and Sport market, and to keep up with the shift on mobile - we acquired EE. This acquisition put us into the FTSE Top 10. Everything was looking pretty rosy! Perceptions were improving and we were moving with the times. Then we hit 2017.

“There were a lot of things conspiring against us”

Firstly, we had the scandal in Italy; then we had regulatory issues with ‘deemed consent’. Both of those put together wiped millions off our bottom line. Our relationship with Openreach was also under scrutiny by Ofcom. There were a lot of things conspiring against us - our share price halved and ultimately both the City and our people lost confidence in the organisation. We really needed to restore the confidence of our employees and restore the advocacy of the brand, so the role of Internal Communications was absolutely critical but the function was going through a transformation of its own.

BT’s People Challenges

We were in a situation where the Internal Communications function was distributed across the whole organisation. The teams were working in silos, we didn’t have any consistent or co-ordinated messaging and we didn’t have a compelling strategic narrative. To address that problem we totally restructured and changed the purpose of Internal Communications.

We put in place a new operating model and we changed the role of our business partners to ‘trusted advisors’ to leaders across the business. Previously they had been regarded as good writers who provided a tactical service to the organisation whereas now we really needed them to get into that value added space.

Taking People on a Transformational journey

By this point the whole organisation was going through a massive transformation and we needed to equip our people to become brand ambassadors and to encourage leaders to create that advocacy across an employee base of about 100,000 people. To achieve this we needed to build the capability in our Business Partners to become ‘trusted advisors’ so that they could coach and enable leaders to lead the rest of the organisation, and take them on a transformational journey.

Faced with that challenge we started conversations with Notion. We explained that we were expecting our Business Partners to partner CEO’s and MD’s of huge units but that they were relatively junior and lacked the communication and influencing skills, confidence and credibility to perform this new role.

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BT's Partnership with Notion

The Notion team designed a programme for us called, 'Developing Influence as a Trusted Advisor'. It consisted of a two day workshop followed by coaching circles and on-going emails. We put about 50 of our business partners and the internal communications leadership team on the programme and the feedback has been phenomenal. Our leaders have seen a massive difference in the approach that our business partners take. As a result, we now recommend this programme for any one who are in business partnering roles across HR, Finance and Legal, etc.

This has really helped to build the confidence of people to ask our leadership insightful questions, to really challenge leaders around what they are doing so that they can then take that forward in the best way possible. It hasn't been an easy ride – in our organisation, coaching tended to be regarded as something you use when you are having a performance conversation, so we really needed to turn that on its head.

The Results!

By introducing Operational Coaching our business partners now use coaching on a day-by-day basis rather than it being seen as something that you use on special occasions. We also had to re-educate our leaders to understand what our business partners were trying to do rather than allowing those leaders to abdicate responsibility for communication. Now we're in a situation where we can work together on how we engage with our employees and take them on that change journey. ”

[Click here](#) to watch Karen tell the full story.



Notion is a global expert in behaviour change. For more information about how we can help your organisation navigate change and help improve the influence, confidence, and capability of people within your organisation using an 'Operational Coaching' approach, visit our website by [clicking here](#) or call us for an informal consultation on +44 (0)1926 889 885.

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