

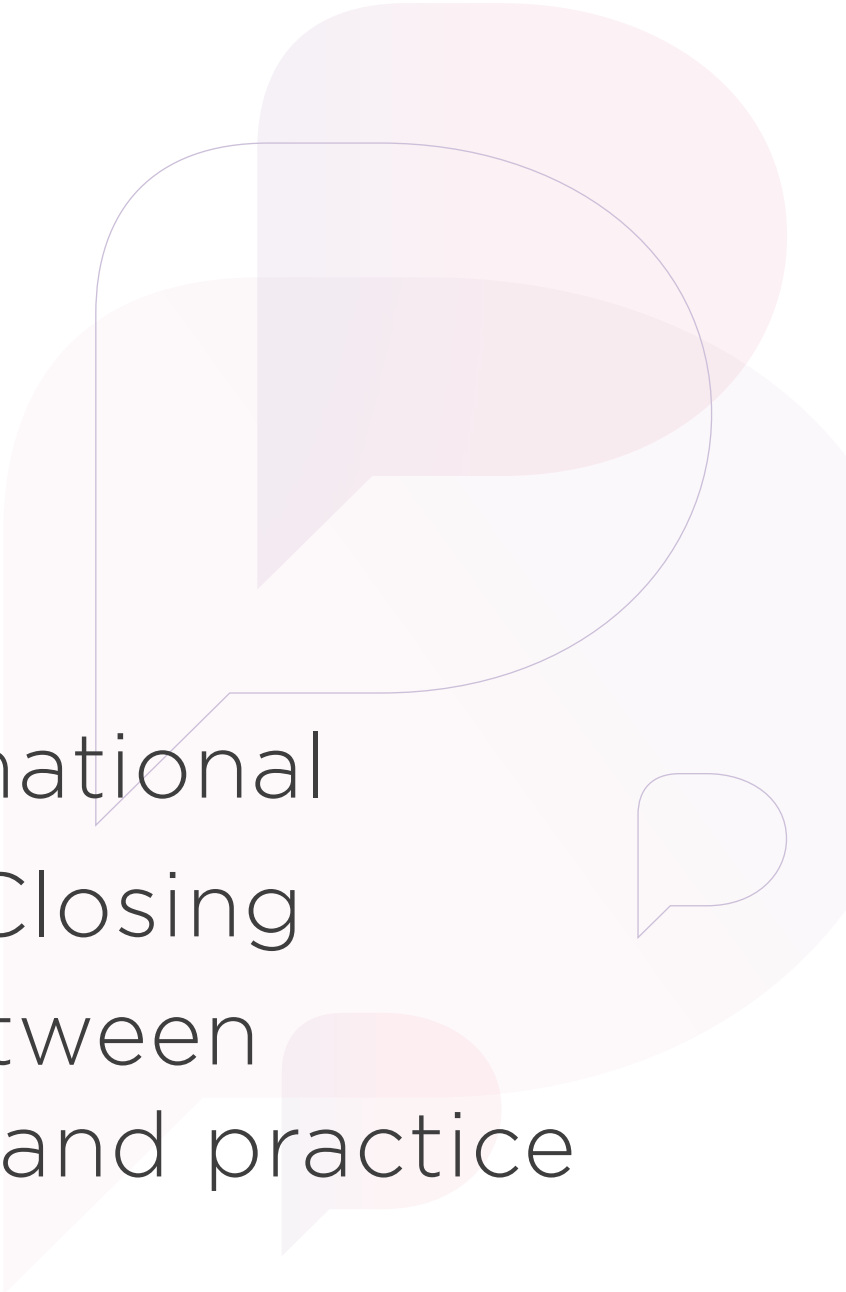
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Case study – BBC Worldwide

September 2015

Landing
transformational
change: Closing
the gap between
theory and practice



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BBC Worldwide case study

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1 Context

BBC Worldwide is the main commercial arm of the BBC and a wholly owned subsidiary of the BBC. BBC Worldwide exists to build the BBC brand around the world, support the BBC public service mission and maximise returns on its behalf while ensuring all activities are conducted in a way that is consistent with BBC standards and values. BBC Worldwide was set an ambitious task of substantially increasing revenue to BBC public service over five years.

BBC Worldwide employs around 1,800 people and has 18 offices around the globe. The executive team at BBC Worldwide are known as WEx (Worldwide Executive Committee). The executive team are also members of GLT (Global Leadership Team), a group of 100 senior managers in BBC Worldwide. The BBC Executive Board has responsibility for the overall supervision of BBC Worldwide. The two parts of the organisation are closely aligned, with a focus on being ‘one BBC’.

BBC Worldwide is a content company, but the way in which content is consumed has been changing over the last decade. The consumer decides what content to consume, when and how. New entrants have been challenging the market. BBC Worldwide needed to adapt to be in a position to capture future growth opportunities around the world.

2 Preparation for change

Balanced regionalisation: 2012

In October 2012, BBC Worldwide announced a structural reorganisation, which saw the business reconfigured from divisional to geographic lines of management. Rather than being organised around business areas (channels, consumer products, sales and distribution, content and production, and so on), BBC Worldwide is now structured across four geographical regions: the UK; North America; Australia and New Zealand; and the rest of the world, known collectively as global markets. Alongside this, there are global functions overseeing brands and content, with digital embedded throughout the company. The aim was to increase growth from international markets and be closer to customers. The whole organisation had to adapt to the new business model. The restructure was disruptive for staff and included some redundancies.

‘Morale across the company I think was pretty low.’

After the restructure there was sometimes still a tendency towards silo working and a sense that GLT needed to develop their leadership skills; however, WEx appeared to the business to be more aligned. Externally, BBC Worldwide was seeking to recruit talent in a competitive environment. WEx needed to offer employees something distinctive: an environment and a culture that would enable the employees to be the best on a global platform.

Driving clarity on strategy: 2013

Tim Davie took up the post of CEO of BBC Worldwide in April 2013. One of the first things he did was to clarify the purpose of BBC Worldwide:

- first, build the reputation and brand of the BBC
- second, deliver sustainable financial returns
- third, build a world-class media company.

He focused on communicating a clear strategy of investing in content, building global brands and delivering digital innovation.

The CEO took every opportunity to repeat that message. 'Pulse' staff surveys were used every few months to measure internal understanding of and alignment with the strategy. Having a clear strategy that focused around three key pillars ensured everyone across the business could understand the company's focus:

'Even the most junior of staff can go content, brand and digital.'

A WEx member describes the CEO's role:

'He's got us to worry about the money, the cash flow, individual businesses or individual territories. His job is to be clear about the strategy and create the best culture and make that happen.'

The CEO's view was that day-to-day difficulties and lack of clarity, rather than the market challenges for the business, could cause unhappiness. Staff wanted to have a clear story; feel their difficulties were listened to and acted on; and that they would be treated fairly and included in communications.

Dialling up the culture: 2014

Although most people in BBC Worldwide started to experience the culture drive in October 2014, for six months prior to that WEx worked on the vision of what that culture should be. The people director took time to get WEx members on board through individual and team conversations to gain input and consensus.

In August 2014 a new global director of organisation development started with BBC Worldwide. This was a strategic hire. WEx then agreed that to achieve the culture plans in practice, BBC Worldwide staff would need to feel empowered to put customers and audiences first and take smart risks.

HR designed a workshop to cascade the culture drive to the GLT, with the overall design and messaging agreed by WEx. The CEO was keen to see true alignment within WEx, not just 'Tim says this', but was aware that the sessions would need to be compulsory to make sure all staff were included.

Kirstin Furber, the people director, sought to ensure WEx members were exhibiting the values and behaviours needed to build the growth culture, so they would be authentic in promoting the culture drive:

'They have got to be living and breathing [the values] and putting [them] into their day-to-day management.'

A WEx member describes:

'At the town hall, the last thing I said to everybody was, "If I'm concentrating on something I'll look like my face is thunder, but stop me. Talk to me ... have a chat." You'd be amazed at the following

'Staff wanted to have a clear story; feel their difficulties were listened to and acted on; and that they would be treated fairly and included in communications.'

week how many people have said, "Hello, I am... such and such." So yes, you do have to change your behaviour.'

3 The change process

Conversation with the GLT: September 2014

WEx facilitated a 'virtual' worldwide GLT conference (where international staff could dial in) and took them through the workshop. The approach was to explain what the business was seeking to achieve and suggest resources leaders could use to make that happen because some people *'don't do culture ... that is for the HR department'*. Questions included: What do they love about the culture at BBC Worldwide? What needs to change? Stories were shared: a member of WEx recalls giving his personal story and explaining what matters to him. WEx talked about their passions for the BBC, their worries and what they wanted to do, drawing the GLT into the conversation.

In spite of some problems with silo working, participants described a culture in which people wanted to work together. There was an ability to attract, motivate and retain the best staff. However, there were concerns about accountability and failing to be tough when needed. To be successful globally they needed to behave like a global company and be even better at working together while holding on to what was good about the culture.

HR wanted the GLT to have the space to think through how the message would land, what it would mean for them and to allow them to translate it for their teams.

WEx now had the feedback from the GLT, wordsmithing was no longer adding value and it was

agreed that the key phrase about working at BBC Worldwide was coming in to 'be part of making history'. The statement was an ambition which also summarised the culture. It was both an invitation and a challenge to do something special.

The people director advised:

'We have to land this now.'

Worldwide workshops: October/ November 2014

The GLT were tasked with carrying out workshops with their teams. The purpose of the 'Working Together' workshops was to draw everyone into the conversation, to find out what the employees of BBC Worldwide love about their organisation, if they agree with the culture ambition and to listen to their thoughts.

'Part of it is the vision for the company, which is to be the premium provider of content to audiences globally. Part of that is about being a company ... that is admired from the outside and loved from within ... "What can we do to be admired from the outside and loved from within?"'

'It was positioned as, "we're not starting these discussions because anything is broken; we want to use culture to deliver results."'

The CEO was invaluable at this point, not only in fronting the message that a conversation around culture was important but also in pushing to get the offering *'really strong and really tight'*. Rather than dictating how the workshops should be run, HR stipulated the outcomes to be achieved. A facilitation pack was provided, including a video of the people director interviewing the CEO about BBC Worldwide culture, with some instructions and

a deadline. Managers had room to personalise the workshop for their areas:

'We focused on projects specifically.'

'We decided not to play the reel.'

'We just sat around the table and basically they framed it around a few key discussion points. ... We just put lots of Post-it notes up on the wall with all our comments and then we went through them to get people's specific examples.'

Emphasis was placed during the workshops on the value of personal stories. These were then shared across BBC Worldwide in writing, videos and pictures, with one employee singing their story. The managers also reported back on what could be better:

'Every Post-it note got transcribed as an appendix ... we summarised into key themes.'

To get through 1,800 people in 18 offices around the world, HR had to be robust in ensuring senior leaders all held their sessions. The CEO pushed the message that culture was just as important as everything else and his involvement as champion allowed HR to be the facilitator.

The workshops were on average three hours long. Some consisted of ten people; other leaders chose to do bigger groups with breakout tables. In the UK business, the WEx member attended the start of a few workshops to introduce them and say they were important but then left to allow people to speak their minds.

Within the workshops an anticipated challenge was how to respect the people who had been in the organisation a long

time. In advance of the focus groups, the people director met with individuals in the GLT who might have been through culture programmes before and might be less engaged:

'And they look round the room and say, "Oh yes, we're the oldies aren't we?" I said: "I want to learn from you ... so what's your advice?"'

HR was also concerned not to overwhelm the business. It became apparent that the rollout of the Working Together workshops was coming at an inappropriate time for the US operation, because of a joint venture. WEx demonstrated flexibility by putting the programme on hold for the US operation.

The workshops were galvanising for the workforce:

'It helped me to fall back in love with the company I work for.'

The workshops are considered a great success. For some employees it offered them a chance to be part of the wider conversation about the culture they wanted to work in for the first time. The outcome of the discussions and areas where changes could be made had been anticipated by WEx, but simply telling people about that list would not have achieved the same impact. A WEx member admits that initially the workshops *'felt like a sheep-dip part of the process to me. Actually, I was proven wrong.'* The next challenge was to consider how best to convey the list to the business.

OD took the 400 pages of output generated by the workshops and synthesised them down to 11 broad themes. While WEx were already aware of many of the areas where improvements were required, there were some surprises. For

example, while relationships with the regions may have appeared to be fine, in Australia the reality was the workforce regularly had work calls between 7pm and 1am due to time zone differences and this challenged the value of respect. The feeling that not all successes were celebrated and recognised was more of a surprise.

Involving leaders in identifying the changes required: December 2014

The 11 broad themes were:

- Take personal accountability.
- Move away from silo working.
- Work together across London and the regions.
- Explain 'One BBC'.
- Encourage simplicity in everything we do.
- Ensure tools and resources are fit for purpose.
- Improve trust and respect.
- Pioneer new ways of working.
- Recognise and celebrate individual and team successes.
- Connect with content.
- Increase the opportunities for development.

The GLT came together and these themes were shared with them. The conference provided an opportunity for group discussion around key topics including, *'What behaviours do we as a leadership team need to demonstrate?'* There was also an interactive voting system that enabled members to rank the themes. Members were then tasked to take these themes back to the business and put them into practice, for example, improving recognition by saying 'thank you' more. The conference was a success:

'[The people director] did a really, really good job of feeding back the global picture. ... It was clearly communicated. It was well organised.'

Following this the global director of organisation development condensed the discussions to six behaviours. To maintain momentum, he generated a single page linking the most important themes to the BBC Worldwide six competencies – clear direction, world-class development, strong relationships, business success, innovative and creative environment, and global excellence. It was delivered back to WEx and then shared with the GLT in a conference call before Christmas when feedback was invited. These repeated interactions with the GLT sought to ensure the GLT owned the vision of change.

Change initiatives driven from the centre: 2014–15

Meanwhile HR sought to work out on a global basis which two or three key projects needed to be 'led' from the centre. One of these global initiatives was training.

WEx had already identified the need to provide world-class development for staff but the feedback from the Working Together workshops generated urgency. To keep the momentum, the W:People intranet site was revamped to go live in December 2014. It gathered together in one place all the development opportunities and attracted a high volume of visitors.

HR also set itself another goal: every employee should have a development plan, devised with their manager, within a year. Training programmes such as the sales development programme were already happening, but WEx wanted the minimum development bar at BBC Worldwide to be higher than the standard development offering of its competitors.

New offerings – such as BBC Worldwide staff being able

to participate in the BBC 'Hot Shoes' internal work placement that allows a person to do work experience in a different part of the BBC – resulted in several placements being made for 2015 but sometimes needed support from team leaders to encourage staff to take part because:

'I don't think that it's actually going to be able to happen for someone like me.'

Team leaders tried to tackle this:

*'I did send an email to all of my team ... but none of them came back to me ... some of them are sceptical as well as to whether I would let them go, and I **said** I would.'*

BBC Worldwide also launched a global staff awards scheme in May 2015. This not only sought to answer the call from the workshops for improved recognition of good work, but was also a vehicle for helping BBC Worldwide staff gain a greater understanding of the company strategy and how it translated to their roles. During the annual results day in July 2015, the awards were announced, offering the business an opportunity to celebrate team and individual performances which had demonstrated 'The Commitment', with the hope of motivating staff further. The stories of the winners were published on the intranet.

Overall, on initiatives driven from the centre:

'We've come a long, long way. I think even from the way we on-board people to the way we train them, the way we develop them or we think about that. The way that we appraise, the way that we move people round are all much better than they were.'

The GLT: behaviour change and divisional action plans

HR synthesised the themes from the workshops into The Commitment, a quasi-contract between leaders and staff, not only setting out what you might expect from a GLT member, but also what you would be expected to give in return.

The headings were:

- a clear direction
- world-class development
- strong relationships
- business success
- an innovative and creative environment
- global excellence.

Under each heading was a sentence or two about how the GLT should behave to achieve it and about how everyone should behave to achieve it. For example, to achieve a clear direction, leaders would *communicate* the strategy and live and *breathe* the culture and values; the staff responsibility was to *know* the strategy and *live* the culture and values. It gave clarity on what everyone should do to boost the culture.

To support GLT members in meeting their side of The Commitment, HR will introduce 360 feedback on leadership behaviours. Going forward, one WEx member commented The Commitment would help address the handful of people who *'are just not playing the game'* by providing a framework that supports members of the business tackling behaviours that don't fit with the expectations of the company.

GLT members were tasked with relaying The Commitment in a way they felt would be most appropriate to their teams, which led to some interesting variations. One WEx member said the best

communicators might not say all the words in the right order but would be credible about the delivery of the message.

At first glance The Commitment might appear not to have gained traction in some teams:

'They're saying, "Well, I had a specific thing I remember airing about X and now you're talking to me about Y and Z.'"

The Commitment is, necessarily, quite long; it sets out how to tackle the important themes. One leader thought their team had not expected the next communication to be a quasi-contract.

However, leaders appeared more engaged with The Commitment:

'I think there was a lot of time and effort put into the GLT group. So we bought into it. ... We had ... half a day, probably, on it.'

GLT members were actively and successfully making changes in their areas and to their own behaviour, guided by the themes from the workshops and The Commitment. They were developing divisional action plans. These were additional to the plan for actions from the organisation centre.

'In the area that I work in there is a lot of focus on collaborative effort across different areas of finance.'

'All of our project briefs ... now have a précis. ... You've got to identify with your line manager who's responsible, who's accountable, who's consulted, who's informed.'

Getting the more open, transparent and flexible culture while at the same time thinking about the business outputs achieved through systems and processes requires 'clutch control'. To be able to

adapt initiatives to a region there needs to be clarity about what is mandatory. The HR business partner in one division described creating their plan:

'I literally sat in an equivalent room to this with my whiteboard completely covered, with Post-it notes everywhere ... to get that clarity and get those ... things that are really going to work for us.'

Consistent with the drive to focus on content and an inspiring, creative environment, programme talent were invited to speak to the UK region offsite town hall in April 2015. In content, the chief content officer is now available to everyone at breakfast meetings, to share more knowledge and find out about different parts of the business.

'It just improves interaction between people at all levels.'

'I feel like I say hello to more people in the division. ... There is now a relationship or someone I could probably go to.'

A WEx member talked about using the HR business partner in his region to give the frameworks coming from central HR some personality and individuality. For example, to help build strong relationships with staff, anyone wanting to access him with ideas 'Better Call Paul', referencing the *Better Call Saul* spinoff from *Breaking Bad*.

Now The Commitment has been disseminated, GLT members know their people will be looking for them to meet their obligations.

New office: April 2015

BBC Worldwide in London moved to a new building in spring 2015 and took advantage of the relocation to change the way

people worked. The move affected about 1,500 of the 1,800 people in BBC Worldwide.

'We've deliberately used the building shift as well, massively.'

For a year before the move the number of desks in the old building was gradually reduced to force new behaviours and ways of working before the move, as the new office would be set up for hot-desking.

A WEx member explained:

'This is the first time the UK region has been together on one floor in one building. ... [Now] we were putting everyone together in one space, we were doing desk ratios of 15 to 10. That would necessarily involve people for the first time not having their own desk with photographs of the kids. ... The way we were going to use this building was part of the culture that we believed was part of the success that was necessary for the future.'

Nobody, regardless of position, has a permanent desk now. The clear desk policy was enforced with zero tolerance; something left on a desk would not be there tomorrow. It's similar to The Commitment: we will give you a fabulous workspace and in return we have high expectations of behaviour in it.

The increased presence of TV screens made people feel more part of a media company. Meeting rooms are themed around famous content, for example *EastEnders* and *Doctor Who*. The building has also been used to tackle specific problems around the meeting culture. Rather than seeking to book meeting rooms, the people director now uses breakout areas. If you do book a room, you must arrive on time and log in on the screen outside or you lose your booking.

'The increased presence of TV screens made people feel more part of a media company. Meeting rooms are themed around famous content, for example EastEnders and Doctor Who.'

'A big improvement because it makes people stick to schedule ... and it forces them out of the room afterwards.'

The building is of value to BBC Worldwide staff:

'For me it's knowing that everyone in this building works for BBC Worldwide ... because it didn't feel like we were one company before.'

And importantly for tackling the day-to-day difficulties, which Tim argued were significant, tools and resources are better:

'The printers aren't always on the blink.'

Communications

Generally the CEO and the people director are seen as very good at communicating vision and bringing people on a journey by using storytelling. The CEO shows enthusiasm and authenticity. He is a great communicator. He has a common touch and is a straight-talker who is willing to be tough when needed.

WEx and HR have balanced the desire for uniform communication versus how best to engage creative people. The CEO's view is that as a leader in a creative organisation, you have to be comfortable with a certain amount of ambiguity. The latitude given to GLT members on this and the other initiatives, such as how to communicate The Commitment, appears to have helped engage this group and sufficient consistency has been maintained for changes to start to be seen.

Evaluation of change

The BBC staff survey took place in November 2014. The results provided a starting position of 72% engagement (top quartile of the IPSOS MORI engagement

survey). WEx and HR want to improve on this score. The Pulse survey from June 2014 provides a similar starting position on the Pulse questions. In terms of measuring progress, HR plan to compare the results year on year of the 360 feedback of the leaders and appraisal objectives (once the new Commitment behaviours are embedded in them). While there are challenges around attribution of business results to change programmes, the other initiatives running simultaneously with the culture change can be seen as embodiments of the transformational change. In that sense, if the results hit the target, success can be attributed to the overall change drive.

4 Change achieved

There were changes happening on the ground:

'We all sit somewhere different every day.'

'There has been a shift in the past six months actually. It's been much more collaborative, rather than, "You will do this."'

'I've made more of a conscious effort around dissemination of information ... involving my team and making them feel that they're really part of and have a vested interest in the company as a whole.'

There are local area-specific stories of change:

'I think probably the place that's clearest for me is in my Australian business. ... That business will be up 10% in revenue, about 8 or 9% in profit over each year over the last two years. I think in the main it's about clarity of the overall strategy, the move to balanced regionalisation, putting the right leader in place, building a good team around him and having a

really good culture through that organisation out there.'

'We were so dysfunctional, like we weren't even working with the [name of a country] team who sat beside us ... so we have what we call a [team] mixer. It's either a breakfast or an afternoon thing ... it was as a result of the cultural workshops. ... I feel like they're far more accessible.'

With regards to WEx:

'She tries to come and sit down with us at least twice a week.'

'They're far more accessible and they've got their ears to the ground.'

With regards to recognition by senior leaders:

'It was really nice that somebody at that level was actually calling out individual names.'

Overall the move to dynamic working in the new building, balanced regionalisation, the big culture conversation and action plans for change have combined to launch BBC Worldwide on a journey of change and, while we cannot link results directly to these changes, in 2014–15 BBC Worldwide returned a record £226.5 million to the BBC.



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