



CASE STUDY ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

USING COMMITMENT MANAGEMENT TO DRIVE OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Helping Organisations build skills and capability to be more effective at implementing strategy

BACKGROUND

Coillte is Ireland's largest forestry, land and natural resources company employing approximately 1,000 people and owning over 445,000 hectares of land, about 7% of the land cover in Ireland.

Back in 2011 Coillte embarked on a Transformation Programme to deliver a lower, more flexible cost base and improve operational performance. The result was a focused strategy creating value along three divisions, Coillte Forest, Coillte Panel Products, and Coillte Enterprise. As part of that transformation the Coillte Group Executive Team introduced a number of initiatives to support their leadership team build new practices to enhance their capability.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Ennovate worked with two divisions that were at different stages within their commitment journey.

The Forest Division had already introduced Commitment Management. They now wanted a deeper understanding of the approach and a way to increase their effective use of Commitment Management in their work.

The Forest Division had an ambitious programme to transform their operation. This division was implementing new systems that would provide them with visibility on when best to harvest, and a much clearer understanding of likely future yields.

The forest division had already restructured their teams, bringing about a stronger performance focus and had also introduced specialist technical roles to build deeper understanding of Forest technology to support their field operations. They recognised a need to build and invest in their management capability within the Forest Division.

Commitment Management offered a set of management skills to help drive actions within their division to continue to innovate and improve performance.

The HR Division had yet to begin their journey in the use of Commitment Management, and whilst they had an intellectual understanding of the new discipline they were not convinced that it would benefit them. Within the HR Division, the management team had built a portfolio of services that was comprehensive, but the team had a goal of increasing their ability to deliver more flexibly to different divisions without compromising the integrity of a unified HR service. Their challenge was to create new standards of accountability to divisional heads.

In Spring 2015 Ennovate was invited to coach the Forest and HR Division's senior management teams to change their respective ways of working and develop their competency in using commitments to drive performance.

“THIS WASN’T LIKE ANY OTHER LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME WE RAN IN THE PAST, ENNOVATE CHALLENGED OUR VIEW OF OURSELVES AND THE VALUE WE BRING TO OUR INTERNAL CUSTOMERS. ENNOVATE HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEY TAKE PERSONALLY THEIR COMMITMENTS TO HELP US BECOME BETTER LEADERS. THIS PROCESS HAS FORCED ME TO LOOK AGAIN AT CHANGING HOW WE DELIVER INTO THE BUSINESS”. **EAMONN MCGEE, GROUP HR DIRECTOR**

OUR CHANGE APPROACH

While both teams were at different stages in learning about commitment management and its effective application, it was important that we did not create a divergent understanding of commitment management. Consequently we decided that we needed a similar approach with different emphasis on various phases for both divisions.

1. *Build Reasons for Change*

During the first stage we got the team to consider why it was necessary to work differently at all. They asked; “What could be better by making a change?” These reasons need to make sense both at a personal level and at a team level.

- a. We worked with members of the management team to build mutual understanding about how they worked together and how using commitments would deliver a better outcome for them personally and collectively.
- b. We tailored our involvement based on the needs of each team member.
- c. Before moving forward, we determined that the majority of the team saw personal benefit for them in using commitments.

2. *Build Shared Goals*

The first step in moving a team to act differently is to create a set of shared team goals greater than the current ambition of the team. The team then build a set of commitments that they individually make to the managing director and each other, the delivery of which will achieve the goals.

- a. Once the majority of the team were on-board with commitments in principle, we proceeded to build shared goals through a workshop.
- b. We worked then with the team to create commitments that were individually deliverable, each with a clear customer.
- c. We took care to make sure the team crafted some goals on softer measures, for instance employee engagement which led to the design of initiatives to improve staff mobility and motivation.

3. *Make Outcome-based Requests*

We helped the team members recast their commitments to produce outcomes rather than simply execute tasks. This change in focus removed from the discussion any actions not directly connected to delivering on a promise. The introduction of this discipline required the request maker to more fully consider the outcome they wanted, and by doing so bring more clarity to the request and more accountability to the delivery.

- a. Working with the team we examined some recently delivered actions to see if they could be improved. In doing this we created a desire for Commitment Management within the team.
- b. We introduced the concept of outcome-based requests and then asked the customer to consider what concern of theirs did the request address, and what outcome did they want to achieve.
- c. We facilitated the team to coach each other as they prepared their offers, made their commitments and reported on progress to their customer. This experiential learning process was a key part of building the teams skills.
- d. We instituted a small but critical practice where a person who had accepted a request was required to restate the commitment they believed they were giving back to their customer to validate their mutual alignment.

“WE WANTED TO WORK WITH AN ORGANISATION THAT WOULD FIT IN WITH OUR TEAM TO OBSERVE US WORKING TOGETHER AND UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES IN REAL TIME. ENNOVATE BROUGHT US THROUGH A STRUCTURED PROCESS USING COMMITMENT MANAGEMENT AND ACTION LEARNING TO HELP US CRAFT AND DELIVER COMMITMENTS. I AM PLEASED WITH THE PROCESS AND RECOMMEND THIS APPROACH FOR BUILDING TEAM CAPABILITY”. **GERARD MURPHY, MANAGING DIRECTOR, FOREST DIVISION**

OUR CHANGE APPROACH

4. Give the team time to negotiate

Before letting any potential customer ask for a commitment, we made sure the potential performer, the person who had been asked to deliver the work was satisfied that they could deliver the requested outcome.

- a. We used the Quarterly Performance Review process to consider new actions and requests that advanced strategic initiatives at Group Executive Team level. These more complex requests required the senior managers to carefully consider their resource requirements and how they would get others to commit to them before making a commitment.
- b. We looked to reschedule the commitment conversation when the potential performer had time to complete the tasks to establish whether he could deliver the commitment.
- c. At the rescheduled meeting the commitment and reporting progress was agreed.

5. Put in place a Measurement Practice

A measurement practice where on-going commitments are tracked and reviewed is an essential part of ensuring commitments don't fade away and of managing a team's performance.

- a. The Forest Division team had already in place a monthly meeting practice and a monthly one-to-one catch up with the Managing Director. We used these existing meeting practices to put in place commitment measurement.
- b. During regular meetings we asked that the commitment holder report if their commitment was failing. We also asked the person to whom the commitment was being delivered whether they had any concerns about the delivery. We facilitated discussions in either potential failure scenarios.

HOW ENNOVATE HELPED

Develop Change Interventions

We designed and co-facilitated a series of working sessions to design new requests and commitments. Working with the senior teams within the Forest and HR Division we helped identify areas within their operations where commitments would make a significant impact. We helped the senior team craft requests to drive new actions to create more effective team based performance.

Individual Coaching

We coached and mentored the Directors in both the Forest and HR Divisions and introduced and embedded Commitment Management concepts and practices within their daily work activity. We applied a mixture of challenge and support to help participants craft better outcome driven requests to better challenge their teams to deliver more effectively.

Workshops

During our work with Coillte we conducted a series of working sessions in small teams to consider the building blocks of a renewed vision and action plans. We co-facilitated a series of design workshops to bring the team together and design the commitments and plans using a commitment management.

“I INVITED ENNOVATE IN AT AN IMPORTANT JUNCTURE IN THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME; MANY OF THE STRUCTURAL CHANGES WERE ALREADY IMPLEMENTED. I REALISED THE IMPORTANCE OF PUTTING IN PLACE CHANGES TO THE BEHAVIOURS AND WORKING PRACTICES OF THE RETAINED ORGANISATION. I HIRED ENNOVATE TO COACH THE LEADERS TO DELIVER CHANGES IN THEIR WORKING PRACTICES USING COMMITMENT MANAGEMENT AS A NEW MANAGEMENT PRACTICE. BOTH DIVISIONAL LEADERS INVOLVED ARE POSITIVE ABOUT THE OUTCOMES ACHIEVED BY THE ENNOVATE TEAM.”

SEAN KENNEDY, TRANSFORMATION DIRECTOR

IMPACT

Ennovate worked with 12 participants at the Director level within the Forest and HR Division in Coillte over a 4-month period, April through August 2015. We made a series of commitments to the HR Director and the Forest Director.

10 of 12 participants reported changing their work practices and this was validated by the Directors of the 2 divisions. Our involvement came at a time of great change within Coillte and we are proud to have delivered the following;

- Both Forest and HR Managing Directors are holding their teams accountable.
- Results from their quarter performance are consistent with expectations.
- Both Forest and HR Managing Directors are setting more ambitious goals.




In addition we are seeing progress towards the following outcomes:




- Participants are competent in managing commitments and hold each other accountable.
- Most participants are cascading down to their team high standards of accountability based on commitment management.

How can Ennovate help your Organisation?

We can bring a very practical and human approach to helping your organisation deal with change. We go beyond providing advice and make a commitment to coach the leaders and their teams through the change process and build their internal leadership capability.

Get in touch. We would be delighted to hear from you.

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