

Case study:

Rebuilding HR Capability and Driving Performance After Organisational Disruption

Overview

Hunter Adams supported a client following significant internal disruption, providing leadership to stabilise, refocus, and transform the HR function. Through a comprehensive review and targeted interventions across people, processes, and systems, the organisation strengthened capability, improved performance, and established a clear, data-driven HR operating model.

The Challenge

The organisation had recently experienced the sudden departure of its HR Director alongside a major restructuring of the HR team. This left the function in a state of disarray, with low engagement and limited alignment.

The newly formed HR team of 25 required re-engagement, direction, and clarity on priorities. At the same time, the function was expected to deliver across a broad range of areas including employee relations, recruitment, talent management, wellbeing, and learning and development.

Without intervention, there was a significant risk that HR would be unable to provide effective support to the wider organisation - impacting operational performance, employee experience, and compliance.

The Underlying Complexity

The core issue extended beyond structure - it was a lack of accountability, oversight, and performance measurement.

Key challenges included:

- Significant delays in case management (absence, performance, disciplinary and grievances)
- Inefficient onboarding and offboarding processes
- Lack of meaningful data, metrics, and reporting
- Absence of clear ownership for outputs and outcomes

Additionally, previous ways of working within HR were misaligned with the organisation's strategic objectives, requiring a fundamental reset in culture and expectations.

The Approach

Hunter Adams led a full-scale review and transformation of the HR function, with a focus on aligning strategy to delivery and rebuilding capability.

The approach centred on establishing clarity, structure, and momentum:

- **Defining a clear People Plan:** Setting priorities, timelines, and associated investment
- **Policy and process overhaul:** Reviewing and modernising all HR policies in line with current legislation and best practice
- **Digital transformation:** Introducing automation and system improvements to increase efficiency and reduce manual effort
- **Restructuring capability:** Refreshing key roles within the Employee Relations team to improve case handling and outcomes
- **Strengthening external relationships:** Rebuilding engagement with trade unions and key partners
- **Building future capability:** Introducing leadership development, succession planning, and workforce planning frameworks
- **Improving accessibility:** Enhancing the HR intranet with simplified, inclusive, and neurodiverse-friendly policy design

This created a clear roadmap for change while delivering immediate operational improvements.

Overcoming Challenges

The engagement required careful handling of both organisational and cultural challenges:

- Initial resistance and tension with trade unions
- Rebuilding trust following previous leadership approaches
- Shifting behaviours from transactional to transformational HR delivery

These challenges were addressed through:

- **Early and constructive union engagement**, building alignment on the need for change
- **Clear communication with the Board**, securing strong sponsorship and support
- **Practical, transparent delivery**, focusing on solutions rather than past issues

This ensured buy-in at all levels and created a stable environment for transformation.

The Outcome

The HR function has undergone a significant evolution, delivering:

- Clearer expectations and accountability across the HR team
- More efficient and consistent HR processes
- A structured approach to workforce planning and talent management
- Improved recruitment, onboarding, and employee experience
- Enhanced relationships with trade unions and stakeholders

The function is now better equipped to support the organisation strategically and operationally.

The Impact

The transformation delivered measurable improvements:

- **Reduced recruitment time and cost**, with a move away from agency reliance
- **Improved workforce planning**, enabling more informed decision-making
- **Reduced absence levels and associated costs**
- **More effective case management**, lowering risk of employment tribunals
- **Time savings through automation**, including a four-day reduction in onboarding processes
- **Stronger leadership capability**, through targeted training and development
- **Enhanced wellbeing and mental health support**

The introduction of regular HR metrics, dashboards, and review forums has also embedded a culture of data-driven decision-making.

Key Lessons

This engagement highlights several important lessons:

- **Align people strategy to business strategy:** HR must directly support organisational goals
- **Be realistic and structured:** Clear plans, timelines, and budgets are essential
- **Use data to drive decisions:** Metrics provide clarity, accountability, and focus
- **Invest in capability:** Developing leaders and teams is critical to sustained success
- **Adapt and evolve:** Policies, practices, and culture must continuously align to changing organisational needs
- **Listen and engage:** Regular feedback and stakeholder involvement strengthen outcomes

Why Hunter Adams

This project demonstrates Hunter Adams' ability to stabilise and transform HR functions during periods of disruption.

Through a combination of clear strategic direction, hands-on delivery, and strong stakeholder management, Hunter Adams enabled the organisation to move from uncertainty to a more structured, accountable, and high-performing HR operation.

Need to reset and strengthen your HR function?

Partner with Hunter Adams to bring clarity, capability, and performance back to the heart of your organisation.

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