

Coping with relocation by managing change with the MBTI tool

When a major change creates stress, what kind of support works best for the people involved? And is it the same for everyone? A store relocation presents some answers

Waitrose was relocating one of its branches from a town centre (where it had been for the past 30 years) to an out-of-town site. Relocation does not happen very often in the company – refits and extensions have, historically, been the more usual forms of change. Also, the new site was two to three times the size of the existing branch, so the changes facing the workforce were considerable.

The Branch Manager had experienced relocations in the past, and was keen to support the process by building the kind of resilience, self-awareness and flexibility necessary to deal with the changes in store during the months ahead.

The Branch Manager was familiar with the MBTI® process, having attended Waitrose's Business Applications of MBTI course. He was keen to explore how the management team could employ the instrument to enable them to work effectively together for a smooth transition to the new branch.

Solution

Alex Woodward from Waitrose's L&D team was brought in to assist in preparing for the relocation. Together with the Branch Manager he reviewed the MBTI application tools available and decided to administer the MBTI Stress Management Report.

Business Challenges

- Managing change
- Creating resilience
- Leadership development
- Enhancing communication
- Team building

Company Profile

Waitrose was founded in 1904 and is part of The John Lewis Partnership. With 350 branches nationwide, the supermarket is a household name in the UK and is known for its 'upmarket' reputation. It has more than 91,000 employees and has been a regular winner of food and grocery retail awards in recent years.

Waitrose

This tool was perfect for the job – specifically designed to help people build resilience, and pertinent in times of change. Woodward designed a 1-day MBTI event for the management team built around the report. The day started with a group feedback session using the Introduction to MBTI Type booklet, helping team members identify their best-fit type. They were then split into groups that reflected their dominant MBTI functions, and discussed ways in which they could face their own reactions to the situation and restore the balance by adopting approaches that create resilience.

The management team found it helpful to discover that their reactions to the relocation were shared with others of the same MBTI type. Individuals realised that it wasn't just them reacting in a particular way – a very helpful insight.

The team were given time to reflect on their own MBTI reports. They then shared their reactions and needs, shifting self-awareness to wider group-awareness. The session showed how something that might offer the best practical support for one person could actually be stressful for another. This underlined the fact that the uninformed tendency is to give support from one's own perspective, which is not always the type of support the other person needs.

Having the MBTI reports for reference succeeded in depersonalizing the feedback, enabling the team to participate in open and honest discussion about what did and didn't work for them. It created a forum in which there were no barriers to participation.

The reports also provided a very useful snapshot of what was going on within the team at that time, and how current approaches and reactions were helping or hindering their work.

Solution

- MBTI development with a focus on stress management

“ All of my leaders commented on how accurate the reports were and how well they were brought to life by the facilitator. Without doubt, the day spent on MBTI really helped with our very successful relocation. ”

Interviewee,
Branch Manager,
Waitrose

Waitrose

Results

By giving them a common language in which to discuss the issues, the MBTI reports helped the management team articulate their concerns and support colleagues and staff during the period of change.

Different types have differing needs, and the report provided the knowledge on how to turn this insight into positive action.

“I now understand why people behave in certain ways, that maybe frustrated me previously,” one of the participants commented. “I can now appreciate why they behave in that way and what their needs are. This will enable me to adapt my approach when working with the rest of the management team.”

Overall, the MBTI reports enabled the management team to turn the relocation into a valuable development exercise. The insights they gained will be beneficial not just for managers, but for their own teams, as leaders bring their insights to bear on the wider organization.

“The MBTI exercise we took part in prior to our relocation was invaluable in helping my team understand themselves and, just as importantly, each other,” commented the Branch Manager after the move to the new branch. “It also provided them with indicators of what to look out for in stressful times. All of my leaders commented on how accurate the reports were and how well they were brought to life by the facilitator. There is no doubt in my mind that the day spent with the MBTI really helped with our very successful relocation”.

Results

- Awareness and understanding of others' needs
- Increased flexibility
- Smooth relocation



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