

FINANCE FOR THE FUTURE AWARDS

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2017 WINNER LARGE BUSINESS

LESSONS IN DRIVING BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY

TELUS COMMUNICATIONS

TELUS is a Canadian national telecommunications company that provides a wide range of communications products and services and is comprised of over 50,000 team members globally. Just over a decade ago, it realised that it faced escalating lease costs, an ageing infrastructure and inefficient use of office space.

This was the catalyst for change. The organisation reviewed its real estate holdings and realised there was an opportunity to reduce the overall portfolio. At the same time they looked at what other technologies could be leveraged to reduce commute and travel time and enable seamless virtual communications amongst team members across the country, in order to reduce costs and the environmental impact of travel. Their focus became moving information and ideas rather than vehicles and paper. 'The overall objective of the project,' said Vince Mercurio, Corporate Controller, 'Was to consider ways we could reduce our overall real estate footprint. Our objective was to look at our workforce and the type of work they do and identify 70% of the workforce to work on a mobile basis. By doing that we would be able to cut out around 1.5m square feet of real estate space over time.'

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The finance team was crucial. They were key partners at the project's inception and they drove the change, collaborating with the business and ensuring that the project had a voice at the top table and so that they could help quantify the costs and benefits and the overall savings of the project. 'That brought a lot of legitimacy to the overall project,' said Mercurio, 'And it allowed the programme to realise the benefits that were envisioned at the time.'

The programme became known as Work Styles. This was designed to be flexible and empower team members with the tools, resources and support needed to work when and where they were most productive, so that they could focus on providing a superior customer experience.

The intention was to positively impact work-life balance, contribute to team member engagement, and achieve significant cost savings. Importantly, underpinning this programme was TELUS' deep commitment to sustainability and reducing its carbon footprint. 'The programme has helped us reduce travel, our carbon footprint and our real estate consumption and costs,' said Mercurio. The key to its success was basing the project around the working style of employees. A change management programme played a big role in bringing this about. 'You need to enable the mobile workers with the infrastructure and the technology in order for them to work remotely,' said Mercurio. 'If you don't have that, the project fails.'

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A cross-functional team was brought together across the organisation. The finance team played a key role but also depended on the IT team as part of a collaborative process to understand what the technology could do. The HR department worked with them to ensure that the right policies and governance processes were in place. And from a security perspective it was important to ensure that working remotely didn't infringe on privacy or security issues.



TELUS team members using virtual meeting technology to minimise travel and promote sustainability

The initial challenge to the change management programme was getting buy-in. When first brought forward as a potential idea, there was some resistance, which was expected. Frontline managers and senior managers, used to dealing face to face with colleagues, regarded it as a challenge. A mindshift was required. 'It was about being productive,' said Mercurio. 'It was about working anywhere and working in a collaborative way and leveraging our technology in order to work in a Work Style environment,' he said.

The tone from the top, as always, was key. The CEO was very supportive. He understood the value and realised that a cultural shift was necessary in order for the programme to succeed. Programme champions were identified across the organisation at all levels who advocated for it and set the example with their own teams. Having a team with a direct line to the CEO gave the whole project credibility.

The long-term impact and benefits were ultimately realised. The fundamental shift in culture, basing the programme around how employees wanted to work, and basing work on the concept of shifting the resources of information and ideas away from buildings, vehicles and paper, has come about. Since 2010 CAN\$163m of cash flow savings, net of investment, have been created. In 2016, savings of over 100m kilometres of commuting were made, the equivalent of over 2m hours, and 14,713 tonnes of CO₂ were avoided. Additionally, TELUS team members have benefited greatly. In their 2016 third-party engagement survey, 97% of employees identified Work Styles as positive for the company, 95% are satisfied with their productivity when working outside the office and, 92% identified the programme as both a success and a significant factor in their decision to remain with TELUS.

The key lesson learned from the process was that collaboration was essential, particularly with a project of this size and complexity. It was important to have the right people at the table to deal with all the touch-points that would inevitably surface. Having champions to ensure a thoughtful change management process was also essential, as was the use of the right technology.

It is really the overall change management process that ensured that the project was a success.



The TELUS Innovation Centre, where new technologies facilitating flexible work and virtual collaboration are tested and trialed

And true to its sustainability aims, TELUS has taken the Work Styles project and is now sharing it with other organisations, mentoring and supporting them in their adoption of flexible work. The company has also been hired to consult with a variety of businesses related to flexible work initiatives. That is part of the future. But there is more. 'The Work Styles programme at TELUS doesn't stop evolving,' said Mercurio. 'We have put a number of really good tools in place to monitor the behaviour of the programme. We are done removing swathes of real estate space out of our portfolio and are now exploring Internet of Things smart building technology to support the behaviours of our team members as they choose how they want to work in the Work Styles environment.'

What the judges said

With the finance team involved from the start, TELUS has developed an integrated approach to their business challenges over 10 years which has resulted in improved business performance with significant social and environmental benefits. This approach is also being used in advising other Canadian businesses. It is an excellent example of a sustainable and transformational initiative.