

Preparing for merger

and developing leaders and individual contributors to manage and lead change



Context

Bringing together two strong regional banks to create a financial services powerhouse in the Hunter meant taking their people on that journey of change.

With disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including embracing of hybrid work, many people are opting to live and work in regional centres, creating an opportunity for financial services entities focussed on customer service excellence and a deep understanding of local needs.

Newcastle Greater Mutual Group (NGM Group) was established on 1 March 2023 following a merger between two customer-owned banks and offers retail banking services under the retail brands, Newcastle Permanent and Greater Bank.

Understanding the changes that such a merger would bring, the organisation's Executive committed to two bespoke programmes, Leading Change for leaders at all levels, and Thriving Through Change, for individual contributors. These programmes, designed and delivered by Paul Mills Consulting Pty Ltd, launched in September 2022, with around 207 leaders and 803 individual contributors having participated in content designed to support them to navigate and lead change. The programme featured the Opportunities-Obstacles Quotient (QO₂) Profile from Team Management Systems, which provided a unique focus on self-awareness and understanding of impact, together with strategies to achieve balance and be effective in a changing environment.

Challenge

The merger represented an opportunity to bring all staff on the journey of change, to empower people through a better understanding of how they might respond when significant change occurs. The programmes also provided an opportunity to build a change handling/change leadership toolkit, built on common principles, knowledge and evidence-based principles. The programmes offered a blended learning experience with customised modules housed in an online learning platform, supplemented by a 2-day workshop for leaders where the QO₂ was distributed to participants. Group data was also produced for the People and Culture function to better understand the dynamic for change, and what future development areas would also support people going forward. Executive Team members participated in workshops, to demonstrate leadership by example.



Approach

The QO₂ featured in the Leading Change programme for leaders. The programme launched with relevant pre-work including the QO₂ in September 2022, with the first workshop conducted towards the end of September. Participants, depending upon their stream, engaged in five core online learning modules themed around change, followed by the workshop, and then a series of APPLY and ASSESS activities. Optional modules were also provided for those interested.

The Thriving Through Change programme launched in October 2022, and was timed to allow Leaders and their people to engage in fortnightly huddles aimed at sharing and embedding learning. The 11th workshop was delivered towards the end of March 2023, with a further series scheduled to incorporate leaders from Greater Bank.

Outcome

Both programmes have been successful in upskilling staff at all levels to embrace the opportunities associated with the merger. Both organisations are well established in their operating footprint and are highly trusted by customers, achieving high NPS scores and regularly winning financial services awards. The challenge was to help people orientate to new skills, mindsets and behaviours such that the value from the merger is fully realised. The QO₂ is valuable in helping leaders to understand how they view their landscape, what perceptions emerge from this, and how to better take their teams on the journey of change such that people feel valued, empowered and supported to be their best selves.

The programmes delivered a strong platform to achieve this, with data at the organisational level to better understand and manage the change process.

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The feedback for Leading Change and Thriving Through Change has been overwhelmingly positive and the content is absolutely hitting the mark with all levels of leadership. Leaders have also been impressed with the facilitation style and use of storytelling for impact.”

Gayle Piek,

Chief People Officer, NGM Group



Paul Mills

Director at Paul Mills Consulting Pty Ltd

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