



POWERFUL BEGINNINGS FOR NEW TEAMS

This organisation was attempting to shake off its history of bureaucracy and transform its finance practices so that they were fit for purpose in the current context. A new CFO had been appointed to enable this transformation to begin and we were consulted six months into his tenure. There had been a lot to do in a short space of time since the appointment was made.

The external environment had meant that a high degree of change had been forced through without sufficient time to build the case for change or engage those effected to the desired extent.

This meeting was a chance for the team to collectively pause for breath, take stock and spend time in conversation together. The conversation was designed to strengthen relationships, recover any breakdowns that had been caused and make the case for change in a different way. The time together would also continue the process of creating a vision for the future of the finance organisation.

Our intention was that individuals leave the meeting with a renewed sense of relationship and intention. They would have the opportunity to contribute to the future story of the organisation and commit to some small steps they and their teams could take towards it. There would always be a part of the population that feels disempowered, marginalised or cynical towards the change. Whilst they may choose to maintain this mindset there would be every opportunity to work through it rather than stay stuck.

The approach we used relied on the assumption that organisational change is a social and emergent process. Most of the research conducted into why transformations fail suggests that not enough time is spent on relationships, shared meaning, new identities, common values and alternative mindsets. So this meeting was structured to allow for maximum interaction, diversity of opinion and generation of collective meaning in the change ahead.

We worked with storytelling and metaphor. What would allow the audience to connect deeply with the change they are in the middle of? We helped the team develop stories that allowed them to talk of their own journey in a vulnerable and authentic manner. Something that would connect compassionately even with those who didn't want to change.

A tale that bridged the gap between now and the future, that highlighted the need to leave behind cherished routines and embrace some discomfort. Most importantly the stories captured examples of the desired future already being played out inside the organisation.

The work was conducted in three stages. The first stage gave participants a chance to develop their own vision in a way that they can simply articulate it. It also provided a chance for any scepticism about the future to be voiced. The second stage allowed them to connect the sense making of 'what is going on here?' to the pragmatism of 'what do I do next in my team?' The third stage encouraged team members to share with each other their contribution to making the overall vision come to life.

The meeting was not a linear process and the benefits are still being realised. The biggest shift was as a result of the ownership and weight of the transformation being carried by the whole leadership team.