



# M&A Integration

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# About the Client



Our client, a global leader in engineering and environmental consultancy, recently embarked on a significant expansion of their environmental leadership through the acquisition of a major Environment & Infrastructure division from a leading international group. This strategic move, completed on September 21, 2022, marked a milestone in our client's journey towards enhancing their service offerings and reinforcing their market position in the environmental and infrastructure sectors.

The acquired division specializes in a comprehensive range of services, including engineering, remediation consulting, environmental permitting, inspection, monitoring, and management services. Catering to a diverse clientele across government, industrial, infrastructure, and the energy sector, the division boasts a substantial presence in major markets such as the US, Canada, and the UK, with additional operations in Latin America and Europe.

This integration brings over 6,000 professionals into our client's team, significantly bolstering their expertise and capacity to deliver world-class multidisciplinary services. The collaboration is set to propel our client to the forefront of the environmental and water sectors, capitalizing on the rapid growth of these industries.

The merger not only enhances our client's global footprint, with a consolidated Earth and Environment sector now representing a third of their business and establishing a top-tier position in the USA, but it also amplifies their influence in the environmental markets of Canada and the UK. This strategic expansion is a key component of our client's ambitious growth plan, aiming to elevate their Environmental & Engineering franchise to new heights and drive forward their strategic objectives for the coming years.



# Challenges and Objectives

## Challenges

1. Increased levels of change fatigue.
2. Strong memory of past integration failures.
3. People leaders have limited capacity to support integration activities.

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## Objectives

- Development of clear, concise, and strategic messaging
- Activating our people leaders
- Build momentum and support through a change agent network.



A background image showing a group of business professionals in a meeting. A woman in the foreground is wearing glasses and looking at a tablet. Other people are visible behind her, some looking at documents or devices. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# Problem Statement

## 01 Increased levels of change fatigue.

Over the past few years, employees have experienced multiple organizational changes, leading to a significant increase in change fatigue. This constant state of change has resulted in diminished morale, decreased productivity, and resistance to new initiatives. The acquisition represents another major shift, and without proper management, it risks exacerbating this fatigue. This could ultimately affect the overall success of the integration.



## **01 Increased levels of change fatigue.**

Over the past few years, employees have experienced multiple organizational changes, leading to a significant increase in change fatigue. This constant state of change has resulted in diminished morale, decreased productivity, and resistance to new initiatives. The acquisition represents another major shift, and without proper management, it risks exacerbating this fatigue. This could ultimately affect the overall success of the integration.

## **Develop clear, concise, and strategic messaging.**

To combat change fatigue, it is essential to communicate effectively and transparently with employees. Clear, concise, and strategic messaging can help manage expectations, reduce uncertainty, and provide a sense of stability. By clearly articulating the purpose, benefits, and expected outcomes of the acquisition, employees can better understand the changes and see them in a positive light, thereby reducing fatigue and increasing engagement.



# Develop clear, concise, and strategic messaging.

Employees and leaders receive an abundance of information on a daily basis making it difficult for them to determine which messages are important and require immediate attention.

There are a number of communication vehicles being leveraged today including office hours, town halls, change advocates and more, but we need to find a better way to deliver strategic communications to avoid information overload and change saturation.

## Introduce strategic, consolidated messaging.

Create messages based on common themes, such as talent, technology, compensation, that are sent on a recurring basis to drive engagement and reduce information overload.

## Introduce stand alone communications.

For high priority messages, such as the talent integration process, send out stand alone messaging from senior executives to leaders with instruction to cascade to their employees.

## Introduce communication planning infrastructure and thresholds.

Develop the infrastructure necessary to support centralized communications to maintain consistency in messaging and gain more control over change capacity levels. This team should play the dual role of communicator and “air traffic controller”.

## Communicate approach and introduce robust feedback mechanisms.

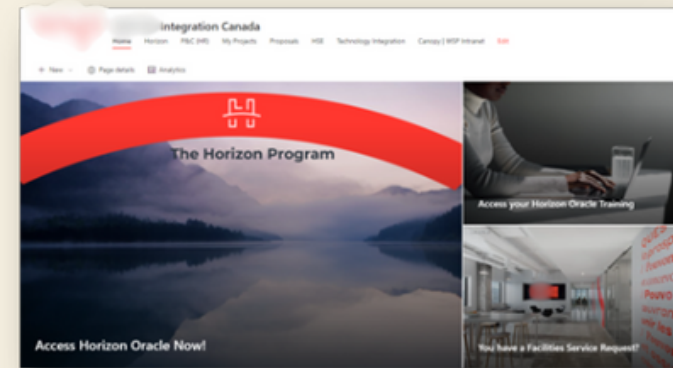
Share our final approach with leaders to provide clarity on how communications will be sent moving forward and create channels to capture feedback on the approach routinely.



# Solutions



## Relationship Between Communication Frequency & Effectiveness



## Integration Portal

The integration portal served as a centralized hub for all employees, offering immediate access to essential news, guidelines, and resources related to the integration, ensuring everyone remained informed and aligned.



## Newsletters

Biweekly emails targeted at people leaders provided them with advance notice of upcoming communications and important reminders, ensuring leaders were well-prepared to guide their teams through the integration process. The employee newsletter that followed kept all staff up to date with the latest integration news.



A faded background image of a business meeting. A woman with glasses is looking at a tablet, while a man in a suit stands behind her, pointing at the screen. There are laptops and documents on the table.

# Problem Statement

## 02 Strong memory of past integration failures.

Historical integration efforts within the company have not always been successful, leaving a lasting negative impression among employees. These past failures have fostered a sense of skepticism and distrust towards new integration processes. This challenge necessitates a strategic approach to rebuild confidence and ensure the current acquisition is perceived as a positive and successful endeavor.



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## Activating our people leaders.

People leaders play a critical role in shaping perceptions and driving successful integration. By activating and empowering these leaders, we can leverage their influence to address and alleviate concerns stemming from past integration failures. Providing them with the necessary tools, training, and support enables them to effectively communicate the vision, build trust, and demonstrate commitment to a successful integration. Their active involvement reassures employees and helps rebuild confidence in the process.

# Activating our people leaders.

Engaging leaders and communicating the important role that they will need to play in the integration will be crucial to ensuring the change is successful.

There is a known gap in core leadership competencies at WSP based, in part, on findings from the 2022 Culture Assessment.

Leaders are being provided with a lot of information associated with the integration, however these messages are not being relayed to their direct reports which is causing some confusion associated with the transition.

## Understanding their role.

Leaders must wear multiple hats as change agents for their team, including advocates, liaisons, communicators, coaches and resistance managers. Ensuring that leaders understand the role they need to play in this transition will be crucial.

## Leadership and change management training.

Many leaders believe that employees will simply change if they're told to. Helping leaders understand that individuals will accept changes differently, how to manage resistance and coach their team effectively are all considered core competencies for leaders. However, are often skill gaps.

## Provide toolkits and templates.

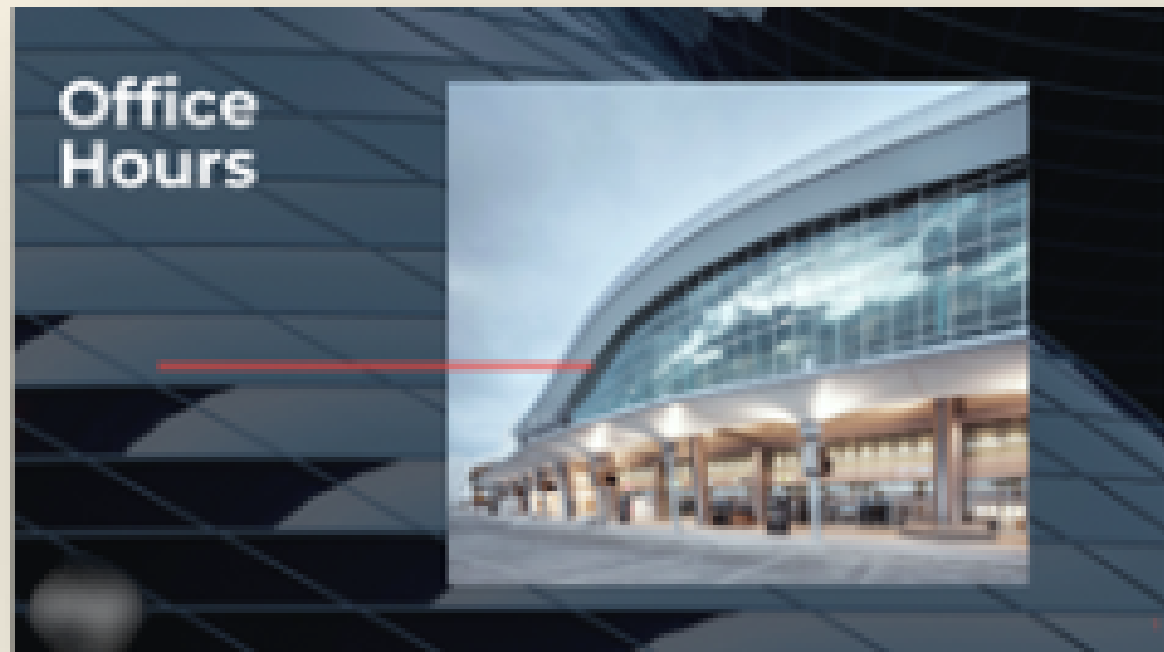
Even the most well-intentioned leader may neglect sharing information if time is too scarce, helping make this easier for leaders can have a significant impact on ensuring employees get the information they need from their leaders timely.

## Introduce robust feedback mechanisms.

Provide leaders with opportunities to voice their concerns, provide feedback and get answers to the questions they have timely.



# Solutions



## Office Hours

Regular office hours, hosted by our Sponsor helped to active the critical roles that leaders had to play in supporting the integration, facilitating open dialogues, and addressing concerns in real time.



## “Meeting in a Box”

The “Meeting in a Box” provided an easy-to-use template that they could customize and share with their teams. Helping leaders keep up with the flow of information and highlight what needed to be reinforced with employees timely.

A background image showing a business meeting. A woman with glasses is looking at a tablet, while a man in a suit stands behind her, also looking at the device. There are laptops and documents on the table.

# Problem Statement

## 03 People leaders have limited capacity to support integration activities.

The existing workload and responsibilities of people leaders have stretched their capacity thin, leaving them with limited time and resources to effectively support the integration activities. This limitation hampers their ability to provide the necessary guidance, reassurance, and support to their teams during the transition. Addressing this challenge is crucial to ensuring leaders can play an active and effective role in the integration process.



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## **Build momentum and support through a change agent network.**

To mitigate the limited capacity of people leaders, establishing a robust change agent network is vital. This network of selected employees across various levels and functions can act as additional support for the integration activities. Change agents can help disseminate information, provide peer support, and drive engagement within their teams. By sharing the workload and creating a broader base of support, we can ensure that integration activities are effectively managed and that the burden on people leaders is reduced, facilitating a smoother transition.

# Build momentum and support through a change agent network.

Change agent networks include influential individuals selected by senior leaders across key groups and departments.

While it's important to have members with the credibility and knowledge to perform their role effectively. Members must also have the willingness to get involved and be an extension of the project team to support the change; this is often the most challenging part of establishing an effective change agent group.

## Selecting change agent members.

Size matters. The size of the group may affect willingness to participate; limiting engagement, sense of ownership and reduce oversight effectiveness. Individuals should be hand selected to participate, we've found that employees on the leadership track tend to be the most successful change agents; it's an opportunities to showcase their leadership skills.

## Understanding their role.

The change advocate network was established to champion the change, increase buy-in, reinforce messaging from the center, and be an overall positive force regarding change to influence their peers. Ensuring members understand the role they must play is crucial.

## Leadership and change management training.

Providing coaching and training to employees on the change and change management elements requires a leadership mindset. Helping develop these core competencies should be a priority to set these advocates up for success in their role.





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## Provide toolkits and templates.

The change advocate network can be a highly effective way to ensure messages from the center are disseminated to impacted groups timely and provides a new communication vehicle to increase awareness of the change. Providing this group with customized resources, templates and tools to help them communicate these messages can be highly effective to ensure this is done consistently by all members.

## Making it easy to report areas of resistance.

Creating a channel for change advocates to relay resistance points and report issues on a recurring basis can be highly effective to ensure members can quickly and easily relay this information back to the project team.

# Solutions



## KEYS TO BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE CHANGE AGENT NETWORK



### Selection

- Select individuals who are considered **influential** within identified impacted groups.
- **Secondments** to perform change agent activities is preferred.
- Provide **incentive** to selected individuals; career advancement, stretch goal achievement, company swag etc.
- **Size matters.** The larger the group, the more difficult achieving two-way communications and engagement.



### Expectations

- Set expectations **early and reinforce often.**
- Actively **replace members** as needed.
- Get them **involved** to deliver training, presentations, coaching, etc.
- The best change agent networks facilitate **two-way conversations** between the project team and the team.
- Gathering **feedback** should never be the primary goal of this group.



### Building Core Competencies

- **Build a plan** to educate identified change agents about their role, managing change and coaching ahead of having the team actively participate.
- **Assign agenda items** to change agents to discuss during touchpoints to encourage engagement, accountability and ownership.
- **Incorporate change agents into project** meetings. The more involved the team can be, the better.



# Contact Us



If you have any questions or would like to learn more about our services, please don't hesitate to reach out.



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