



Mobility Champions

Moving new people into an office is a challenge for any business, and can pose cultural and operational issues during the integration process. In early 2019, **Abbott** moved over 70 people to their office following a business acquisition. For optimal operational, integration and cultural synergy, a plan was required that would meet the needs of their diverse group of employees; from physical space to information on how to get to work.

Abbott formed a working group to help plan, sought feedback and deliver the change, and employee Move Champions had a critical role for the successful integration. The group was made up of people with mixed abilities and acted as the voice of employees and a constant touchpoint with Facilities Management as well as implementation leads in HR and workplace culture.

Having regular face-to-face meetings, the working group started by mapping the individual and group needs. It was clear from the outset that more training and meeting rooms were a must. Employees were engaged and kept updated by Move Champions as there would be adjustments needed by all parties as we relocated individuals into separate work areas around our building to accommodate the diverse collaborative work styles, the newcomers and renovation projects.

A timeline to "moving in" day was created, mapping important milestones like the delivery of new furniture and Move Champions' preview tours. Business leaders were consulted from the outset and told what would happen, to help bring them onboard and support the process.

On move day, the Move Champions performed their roles to welcome and help bring people together. They were provided with t-shirts so they were easily identifiable.

Director of HR Judy Gambin stated:

"Caring is one of Abbott's core values, and we wanted to demonstrate this in an action-oriented way to the new people joining us. We delivered the personal touch with one-on-one attention to our new starters, to make them feel truly cared about and welcome in their new workplace. At the same time that we set them off to a great start, we made sure they had the resources available to find out new information for themselves."

The Move Champions were prepared to help answer questions, ranging from "Where are the toilets?" to "How do we join the gym?" and most importantly "How do I get a coffee?"

LAUNCH DAY:

Every effort was made to make people feel welcome from day one.

Move Champions were stationed in the car park in their easily identifiable t-shirt, to explain how access to the car park worked. They helped direct people to park in the correct place and establish good parking behaviours.

IT and Security had made sure that existing security access passes would work seamlessly at the new building. They'd worked over the weekend to ensure each workspace was set up correctly with the appropriate IT equipment and had tested the systems to ensure no hiccups on day1. Things went exactly to plan, employees found within a very short space of time after unpacking their moving crates, that they could start work immediately.

A morning tea was held as part of a week of planned activities to help engage employees on site with the task of welcoming their new workmates. A lunch and learn session introduced the cool Abbott office space and features, how the Abbott building worked, important OH&S information, and welcome kits gave people the information they could discover for themselves. Each workspace had a welcome pack that provided a personalised greeting from their GM; an A-Z of everything important, FAQ's, a coffee card and the all-important freebies.

At other employee engagement events, alternative transport options were discussed, such as how to get to the railway station from the office. People were asked to group in the room according to whether they came from north, south, east or west. Employees were able to identify potential neighbours and carpooling partners in this way and share travel tips for getting to the office from their area. Several of our employees now car pool on a daily basis as a consequence of this meet and greet, and this is great start to being a little more environmentally sustainable.

INSIGHTS

- In the face of change, businesses must gather a guiding coalition to enact change.
- Create a plan early to avoid internal and external resistance.
- Identify "champions" who are effective in engaging employees and make them easily identifiable.
- Consider the social as well as physical needs of employees for positive and collaborative workplace culture.
- Communicate in person (for example, via activities) as well as in writing – there's a lot of info for new people to take on.
- Be clear about expectations.
- Check in regularly in the early days.
- Remember it is an adjustment for everyone in the building.