New Zealand Police

Safer communities together: the challenges of New Zealand police leaders

Overview

The need
Faced with a new direction and a changing style of policing, New Zealand Police needed a solution to help its leaders, at each level, be more effective by enhancing its ability to strike the right balance between command, manage and lead.

The solution
NZ Police used IBM® Kenexa® Best Workplaces basic survey as an employee survey tool to drive staff empowerment and build leadership capability.

The benefit
- Improved leadership performance including 360-degree feedback survey scores, competency profiles and thekey dimensions in their workplace survey

- Improved staff morale by reinforcing a culture of appreciation

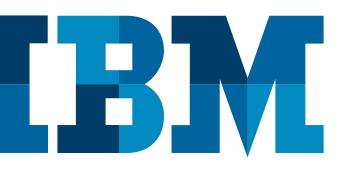- Improved staff engagement levels through open and honest two-way communication

New Zealand Police is the lead agency responsible for reducing crime and enhancing community safety. The organization provides policing services 24 hours a day and operate from more than 400 community-based police stations around the country. New Zealand Police operate by land, sea and air, and with more than 11,000 staff they respond to more than 600,000 emergency 111 calls each year.

2011 was a particularly challenging year for the New Zealand Police. There were the Canterbury Earthquakes, Pike River Disaster and the 2011 Rugby World Cup. However, according to Commissioner Peter Marshall, business as usual is virtually anything but usual for the NZ Police, in which professionalism, operational skills and dedication are demanded at all times to respond to a wide range of events.

In turbulent times, policing is about swift and effective operations, and in normal times it is far beyond catching criminals. It is about working alongside the community, getting to the root cause of the problem and preventing crime from happening in the first place. Such philosophy forms the core of the Prevention First strategy, which was introduced to the New Zealand Police in 2011.

With a vision of having "Safer Communities Together," and a new strategic focus of Prevention First, the meaning of policing is shifting. There is now a growing need for partnership, to work with the community beyond just enforcing laws to prevent crime (as opposed to fight crime), and to enhance (as opposed to maintain) public safety. From this comes a need to build a workforce that is both engaged and enabled to do what is perceived to be best for New Zealanders.

Solution components:

- IBM® Kenexa® Best Workplaces

The challenge: empowering people to lead

With a new direction and a changing style of policing, leaders at each level in NZ Police are charged and challenged with a common mission: engagement. Being an effective leader in NZ police thus, involves striking the right balance between command, manage and lead, according to Alan Cassidy, Human Resources Manager of Organizational and Employee Development at NZ Police.

"Operational knowledge and skills are important, as our leaders need to be able to deal with ambiguity and make decisions," Cassidy said. "But we also seek the right values and people skills, such as emotional and social intelligence. We look for and grow leaders who demonstrate the values of integrity and courage, the ability to engage others and the skills to build a culture aligned to the strategic direction."

Challenging, but not an impossible mission. In fact, those who have made headway share a common approach: They all strive to build a culture where staff feel aligned to the vision, empowered to act and are supported in their action.

The challenge of alignment is about helping staff find the answer to "who we are and what we are trying to achieve," said Dave Cliff, the Assistant Commissioner – South and former District Commander of Canterbury. For Cliff, this means clarifying the vision and each person's role in achieving it during the business plan presentations. To facilitate a sense of connection with the community, the Canterbury Police District introduced a "Visibility Strategy" where staff members are encouraged to spend 15 minutes each day on the beat talking to the public to help them understand how they can better meet the needs of the community.

At the team level, the alignment between individual, team and organizational goals are solidified through the setting of clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Rebecca Pepere, a Section Supervisor in Gisborne, said her team keeps a tally of day-to-day policing records. Each month, targets are set for the whole team, which are linked back to what the team as a whole is trying to accomplish for the community. Throughout the month, the tally sheet is openly shared and staff can easily track whether the targets have been met. "This increases the visibility of what we do and encourages the team to work together," Pepere said.

The solution: finding solutions for the good of communities

Creating this line of sight between the daily policing work and the organization's vision is the first step toward having a sense of ownership and empowerment. For NZ Police, the strategy of crime prevention means giving the decision-making power back to the staff by encouraging them to make appropriate judgements and do what they believe is ethically right.

To enable this, leaders are faced with the challenge of encouraging "self empowerment" in the organization. "Leadership is not about someone else. All members of police are leaders, and everyone needs to stand up and understand the importance of taking a leadership role every day and every time they interact with the community," Cliff said.

For NZ Police, the use of employee surveys becomes a powerful tool to drive staff empowerment and build leadership capability. The survey solutions offered by Kenexa, an IBM Company, focus on providing leaders with tangible and relevant insights related to the four key elements of building an engaged and empowered workforce: creating strategy, engaging talent, inspiring people and achieving excellence.

The results: engaging the workforce through leadership

NZ Police is benefiting from its investment in its employee survey. "We see performance improvements in the leaders' current roles, including 360-degree feedback survey scores, their competency profile and the key dimensions in our Workplace Survey," Cassidy said.

The key ingredients to enabling personal leadership are trust and positivity. Cliff describes his leadership style as "giving people the right skills, identifying challenges at a high level and allowing people the freedom to get on with the work." This type of trust is already paying big dividends. When an earthquake recently hit Canterbury, staff from all over the city took the lead in on-the-ground rescue operations, helping ensure that those who were affected were being fed and kept safe, and setting up a Disaster Victim Identification process.

To make staff feel valued, NZ Police is taking steps to highlight the good work done by staff. Commissioner Peter Marshall's regular blogs on the NZ Police website share and celebrate the department's success stories, and helps model behavior for leaders at each level in the organization. According to Cliff, appreciation is the key to staff morale, so reinforcing a culture of appreciation is not just a job for leaders but for everyone.

Pepere recognizes good work on a daily basis during team briefings. Acknowledging staff among their peers is important because it enables Pepere, as Section Supervisor, to reaffirm the positive and desired behaviors of staff and encourages others to learn. West Coast Area Commander John Canning holds an annual Pay Parade, where staff members are publicly recognized for innovation, achievements and success in the form of long service medals and District Commander commendations.

However, valuing staff goes beyond taking time to celebrate success. Care and respect demonstrated on a daily basis make people feel they belong to an organization. Leaders in NZ Police who have been successful in keeping or improving staff engagement levels share one common piece of advice: it is vital to have open and honest two-way communication.

Canning maintains an open door policy so staff can get information directly from him. He has also established quarterly meetings, which involve traveling to the three main stations in the area and inviting staff to talk through issues. "Building trust and rapport is crucial for these sessions to be successful," he said. "Initially, it was difficult to make headway. I then learned that it was important to feed back what I did as a result of these discussions so that staff would come to realize that the sessions are for them, to improve their lot."

The outcome has been an increased sense of care and support. Over time, staff feel more comfortable directly approaching Canning during normal business hours and are less reliant on the scheduled, quarterly sessions. What is more, positive attitudes increased and staff empowerment grew as a spin-off effect. "It became apparent after a while that attitudes were changing, the type of questions asked became more of how they could do something rather than why the department had not done something. It was subtle at first, but as people got more positive toward their work, it just took off," Canning said.

The sharing of operational knowledge and people management experience is the key strategy for supporting and developing leaders for NZ Police. "We grow our leaders by identifying the knowledge, experience and skills required for their aspired role, and "engineer" the necessary activities and projects into their profile to help them get there," Cassidy said. Each year, around 30 to 40 high potential individuals are put through a leadership development program. The program focuses on experiential learning, which includes a combination of testing a different job or role, action learning groups, leader shadowing, structured peer mentoring (such as partnering up with experienced area commanders) and coaching. This approach helps ensure long-term and sustainable learning, and enables the future leaders to accumulate experience and build their credibility over time.

For NZ Police, the vision of "Safer Communities Together" also underpins the need for collaboration with other public sector agencies, and this drives the need for cross-agency sharing and learning. A cohort of 16 leaders are placed into a Transition Program run in conjunction with the Inland Revenue Department, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, and Department of Corrections. This program, encompassing action learning, shadowing, and facilitated discussions, provides opportunities for leaders to share issues, explore solutions and build a wider support network.

"For the whole organization, the link is clear: effective leadership builds a strong culture and an engaged workforce, which means success in our strategies and ultimately ties back to our goal of building safer communities together," Cassidy said.

About Kenexa, an IBM Company

To us, business has always been personal – and it has always been about helping to make the workforce smarter, which is why we are proud to be a platform for a Smarter Workforce. We look at it from two angles – empowering people and transforming business. Our tools help enable businesses to attract and keep the best people, develop their skills, cultivate new leaders and capitalize on their collective intelligence by applying human insights, social tools and workforce analytics to transform the way they work. We provide deep insight and experience in employee engagement, talent management and leadership development mixed with industry-leading technology and social platforms, giving us the unique ability to build a Smarter Workforce.

For more information

To learn how to build a smarter workforce, visit:
ibm.com/social-business

IBM

Kenexa
an IBM Company

Please Recycle

LOC14381-USEN-00