



IMI TALENT FORUM 1

PEOPLE LESSONS FROM A POP-UP ORGANISATION
WITH ROB JONES



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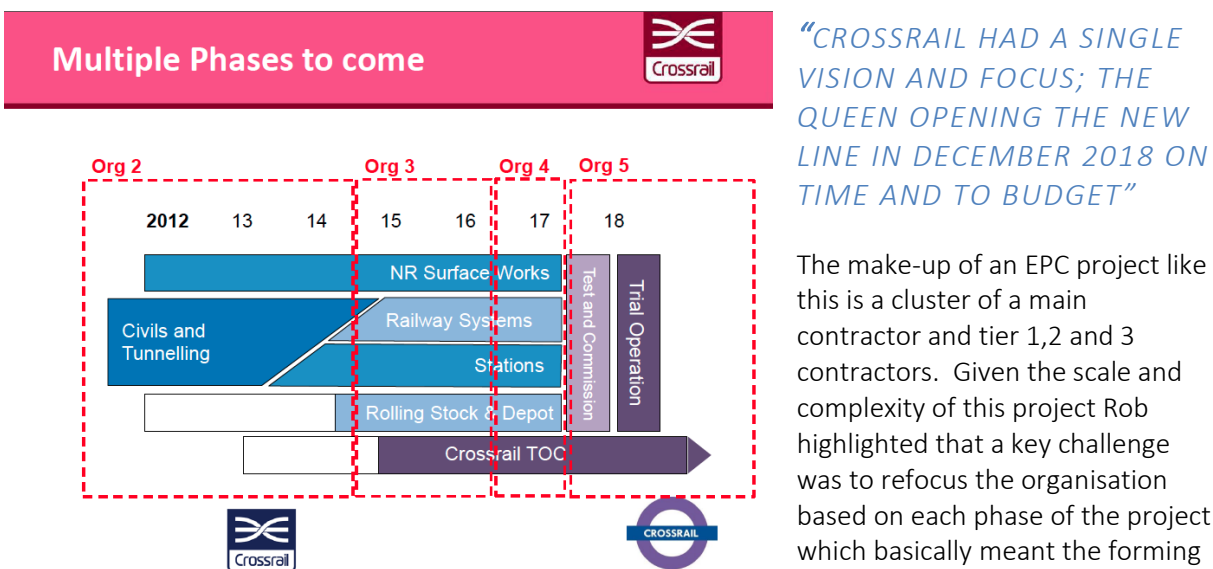
INTRODUCTION

The first IMI Talent Forum sought to bring together Ireland's leading talent practitioners and share with them the insights gathered from the very successful Crossrail Project in the UK; a unique organisation designed to form, develop and disband in six years to deliver a large capital infrastructure project – a new underground line in London. Rob Jones was the lead Crossrail 'Head of Organisational Effectiveness' practitioner who shared his planned and emergent realities in delivering this project. Since his presentation, Crossrail have been given another major infrastructural rail project in recognition of their success. The question we should ask ourselves is 'Are there learnings or ideas from the Crossrail experience that could make our organisations more successful in the future?'

There is a 'CROSSRAIL' in every organisation

While the following elements make Crossrail a unique and interesting example for understanding talent management, they are also challenges that in some form and intensity are present in every modern organisation

- **Different structures are needed for different jobs/ tasks** : Crossrail essentially needs five organisational structures to suit the five different construction phases to deliver on its new railway line.
- **It is a "Pop Up" organisation**: Each of these major organisational structural changes would be established and disbanded at pace in sequence within a 6 year period.
- **The outsourced nature of the workforce** – how to manage and motivate the workforce because only a fraction c.25% of the workforce are direct employees of Crossrail. The majority of employees are employees of Tier 3, 2 and 1 contractor companies.



every few months. This, in turn, translated into the challenge of blending disparate teams with different motivations to work together to achieve a common goal. He used the analogy of the British and Irish Lions (Rugby) to highlight to each manager and employee of the very different companies working on this project that whilst they belong to a different company and receive their pay from different sources that they were coming together on Crossrail to play for, wear the jersey, and live to the purpose and values of the Lions for this period. They were to be part of something bigger without

losing their own company loyalty for a “defined “ period. He referenced Brian O’Driscoll captaining the Lions and having to mutually adjust to deal with and lead the other Lions without ever losing his loyalty and commitment to the Irish and Leinster Jerseys.

The ‘alignment vs integration’ question and the role of ‘Values-based leadership’

We may not have to coordinate employees belonging to 9 different contractors, but in every organisation different teams have different goals, targets and thus motivations. In such a situation, , we need to identify how to:

- **Align our different units** and other external human resources to deliver projects and live to the values of “the jersey” – the organisation
- **Educate our people** that organisation structure must continuously change to suit different phases of strategy and project delivery; that a career will involve the forming, storming, norming, performing and disbanding of teams for purpose in periods of months/years. Companies require flexible and adaptable talent for a faster more “pop up” world.
- **While ‘integration’ is desirable from an efficiency perspective, ‘alignment’ is key to successfully deliver strategies and complex projects in the future.** Companies must now work with more ‘fluid’ teams. However, it is difficult to generate a sense of common purpose within such teams and it is also difficult for some employees to deal with the natural change and uncertainty required in such a structure. Rob suggested the following key learning from Crossrail:
 - Aligning incentives to a common final purpose (as outlined above). Rob talked about the concept of the **‘pop-up’ organization**, where incentives are based on the final outcome in 2018 (ie. the delivery of a successful functioning railway) rather than on year by year goals/targets. This helps focus different motivations to a common final outcome enabling a more long-term view and allowing people the time to align themselves to a common goal.
 - Not to get too caught up in trying to ‘make –sense’ of every structure and process. Sometimes it’s best to experiment and either succeed or fail fast.
- Choose local ownership over central bureaucracy.
- **Values based leadership** – try and separate “The stuff that’s just to please the machine – with the stuff that adds value to the business”



At Crossrail, Rob believes that people are looking for a sense of belonging and thus he felt he needed to address this need, by taking the values of the organisation and making them tangible.

He created the little pink booklet to fit into the back/shirt pocket of every worker’s overalls, to act as a ‘symbol’ for the common goal.

- Create a “December 2018” plan as if your organisation will disappear in 5 years and give managers the frameworks, the language and the authority to enable them to execute.

- Create leaders who can set purpose for their part of the process, align with other teams and organisations, form and disband work groups that deliver high intensity performance and have in built learning.

The 'Performance and potential' question

The Mc Kinsey 9 box matrix doesn't work for Crossrail because the dynamics of the organisation are very different. This learning was echoed by a large number of organisations in the Forum who also shared their views on what alternatives work for them.

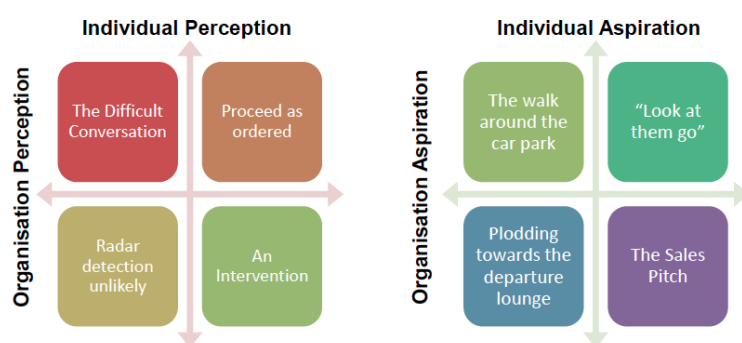
All such tools are simple lenses to deliver insights. The problem for Crossrail is that the timeline could never suit such a long-term tool. In addition, due to multiple contractors there are 5 different PMDS processes in motion simultaneously. At Crossrail, it is the end game that gets the focus and PMDS in the background isn't allowed to detract from this.

"ROB JONES IS OF THE VIEW THAT 'TALENT MANAGEMENT' IS NOT AN 'ART OF EXCLUSIVITY' AND BELIEVES THAT THE TALENT CHALLENGE IS ABOUT THE DEFINITION OF PERFORMANCE AND POTENTIAL."

Most of us are measuring results rather than measuring performance. We need to inspire people to perform rather than just deliver. He suggests:

- Define what **performance and potential** are for your organisation
- Consider the **vital many**. (The "people in orange actually doing the work")
- Find where the **truly irreplaceable talent** is (it might not be where you think it is and might not be the most senior). For eg, in the case of Crossrail, the truly irreplaceable talent were the tunnel diggers and miners! ..Not the managers. He also made an interesting comment about miners being great at succession planning!
- There are **3 types of people in most organisations**. The Life Enhancers (who are overly positive and make everyone feel good all the time), Well Poisoners (disengaged and/or frustrated people who are actually working against the organisations goals) and the Lawn Mowers (who do all the work). Rob advises that we should identify these, and find out how to motivate the Lawn Mowers. Find out what their aspirations are.

Perspective



- A lot of times, people don't actually know what the organisation thinks of them. Give more feedback, more often.

While individuals are important, Rob feels that overall we focus too much on individuals. At Crossrail, he changed the focus from individuals to teams. Assessing, measuring and thus compensating based on skills of the team vs skills of

the individual. He also suggested:

- Separating a succession plan from a talent plan. Succession is the job, while talent is the necessity
- Not to be threatened by high-performers. Either do something with them or spin them off.

A common belief emerging today is that money does not motivate the younger generation and that one needs to be 'cool' and appeal to their egos. Recent research has debunked the significance of generational differences in reward needs. There is some but it is obvious and it quickly balances out.

How to identify 'potential'? and creating an environment for it to thrive

While Rob believes that potential can't be codified, only noticed, we can suggest the following as a guide/tool to get you started:

Potential does become apparent by:

- Delivery of high performance (a start line)
- Demonstration of values and modelling of correct behaviours
- Energy
- Ability to energise others
- Use of initiative and innovation in processes
- Building of relationships
- Credible activism
- Natural commercial and business nuances

As organisations we must aim to create an environment where people will leave and come back. This is down to creating an environment where:

- The reality and importance of the role and team in an organisational phase are clearly identified and communicated
- The individual is rewarded extrinsically and intrinsically in their time with the company, based on achieving organisation/team goals
- The individual receives career and personal development by working with the company for that period
- The individual's career value is increased by having been part of this (think of the tunnel diggers. Their career value is enhanced by being a part of the cutting edge tunnelling they have been involved in with Crossrail).
- Live to your values and respect people always but also demand performance

SUMMARY

Rob's learning from a specific instance in a particular industry (construction and rail) raises some interesting insights and challenges for other organisations. It strongly suggests that we should be regularly changing structure and coordinating mechanisms to fit the task challenges of our organisation. He also suggests that modern challenges need to be addressed by aligned teams of internal and external talent, all wearing the same jersey. He highlighted the talent challenge in preparing 'talent leaders and performers' to confidently cope with the 'pop up' organisation and to align to purpose and grow their own career talent value either internally or externally. This creates a talent alumni ; some inside and some outside the organisation.

"Talent is what it does" and in Rob's definition relates all the way back to the master craftsmen building the Cathedrals of Europe during the Middle Ages. In a faster changing and more complex and competitive organizational context there are lessons for all organisations in these approaches to finding, attracting, managing, leading, stretching and developing talent. We should look for opportunities to grow and develop 'pop up' organisations and talent that can lead this.

