
Case study: Municipality of Amsterdam

"SAMEN STERK VOOR JOUW WERK"



Gemeente
Amsterdam

 InspiringPeople

CASE STUDY: MUNICIPALITY OF AMSTERDAM

In our series of client stories, we take a close look into what makes up a successful Culture Change.

Enjoy our case study about our collaboration between the Municipality of Amsterdam & InspiringPeople.

COVID-19 AS ACCELERATOR FOR CULTURE CHANGE?

The Facility Management (FM) Division of the Municipality of Amsterdam initiated a complete overhaul of its organisation (800 FTEs) in July 2019, complete with new roles and responsibilities. The change was triggered by changing customer demands and the need for a new strategic focus. The original planning was to implement a new organisation design in October 2020. Anticipating this milestone, it was decided in January 2020 to already start working on the desired behaviour and culture, which was needed to support a successful implementation of the new organisation design. InspiringPeople was selected to support the MT and a small project team with this transformation challenge, starting in March 2020. And then, Covid-19 became an instant and new reality...

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE

The Challenges

The assignment dictated two major challenges. The first challenge was to improve customer satisfaction with better and renewed services.

The second challenge was to bridge the gap between colleagues working in operations on the one hand (cleaners, security guards, reception desk workers, catering staff, IT personnel, etc.) and colleagues responsible for policy making (specialists and management) on the other hand.

The perceived distance between these two groups was unsustainable and often resulted in delays in implementation, miscommunication and lack of taking initiatives by employees.

Starting in March 2020, the assignment became even more challenging as the entire country went in lockdown. No more face to face or large team meetings. Everyone went digital overnight!

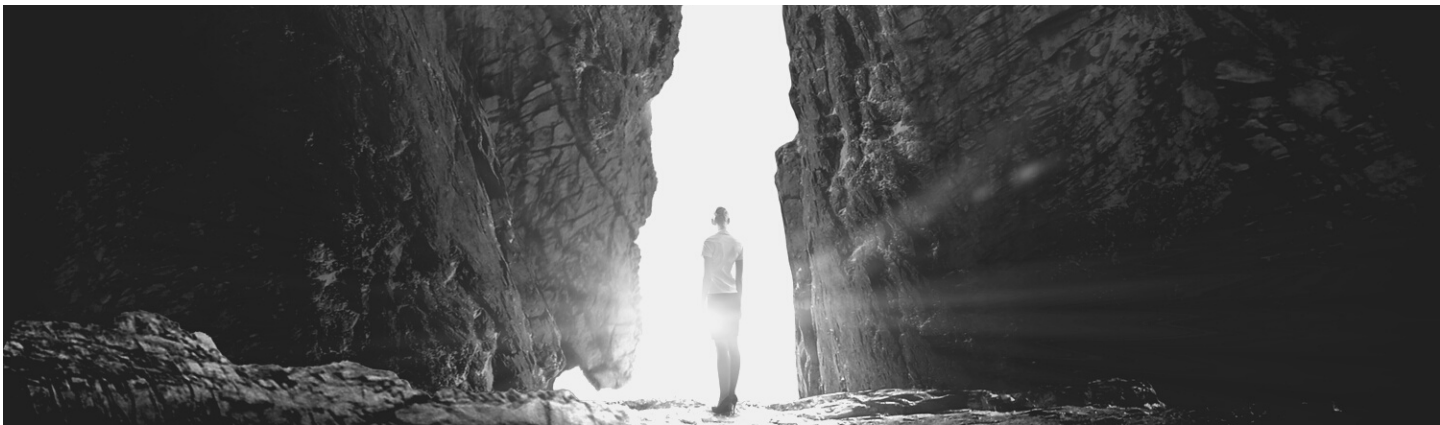
Looking back, Covid-19 presented two major opportunities. The first opportunity was very much related to the organisation's identity.

Suddenly, all its core business services to keep the public services across Amsterdam going became extremely important and valued.

Cleaners, security guards, and technical services were instantly in the spotlight of the decision makers, and the public. This recognition boosted self-confidence and pride at the Facility Management colleagues.

The second opportunity presented itself through the new digital reality, in which everyone was equal. It became perfectly normal to have online meetings, and nobody complained about it.

Everyone was challenged to reinvent behaviour individually and collectively, which is a great starting point for any culture change journey!





DESIGN THE CHANGE

There was no other option but to deal with the new reality. Through online interviews and workshops in April and May 2020, a cross section of 150 employees and management was interviewed to hear the voice of the organisation and engage many stakeholders. They were asked if they believed the organisation needed to work on its culture and if so, why or why not? The interview results allowed us to identify the most desired behaviours. These desired behaviours we labelled as development themes (also known as values in most other organisations). These themes were Collaboration, Trust, Service orientation, and Ownership.

CHANGE NARRATIVE

In any large-scale organisational change, it is important to have a clear, inspiring change narrative. A story why change is needed must be convincing and inviting to inspire people to join the journey, especially with Covid 19 hitting society and vital public services. The project team decided to craft a visual change narrative linked to a behaviour brand. This became the 'Samen Sterk voor jouw Werk' (Together strong for your work) brand, selected as the winner of multiple suggestions made by employees. The slogan is a word play of the fact that the work at Facility Management enables co-workers of the Municipality of Amsterdam to also do their work.

ADAPT, ACCEPT, AND MOVE ON

By June 2020 it became clear that the implementation date for the new organisational structure would shift. The pressure to deliver vital services was immense and people started to feel a lack of connection. The real challenge was to keep people together during very insecure times. After the summer all kinds of actions were organised to connect with each other, ranging from walking meetings in the park, online lunch key notes, community building activities, physical online energisers, ice breakers, blogs and vlogs, pop quizzes, etc. Anything was possible and most of it was fun and provided much-needed energy.

Engage & Measure

When things are unclear for all involved, this can also ignite a bonding experience. To a certain degree one could say it was business as usual, although nothing was usual at all. Engaging theme months were initiated with Love letters in February, Giving Compliments in March, World of Facility Management in April, etc.

The largest benefit for everyone involved was probably that people started to really get to know and appreciate each other. Although originally not intended, this was culture change in the making. With a baseline measurement in 2020, followed up in 2021, we already witnesses clear progress on the development themes, topped off with a 40+ points e-NPS increase!

X-departmental Collaboration

The curiosity and appreciation for each other's responsibilities were evidently increasing across all departments. Knowledge of the strategic dilemmas also improved. Based on real-life scenarios or strategic challenges faced by FM, role playing games with a twist were developed. Participants took on a role of another function. After the role-play, learnings on how they wanted to change the way they worked together were discussed. The organisation already started to develop and created a blueprint for the new organisation, before the actual reorganisation took place.





NEW STRATEGY & ORGANISATION MEANS NEW LEADERSHIP

The hiring and appointment process for all existing and new leadership positions started in May 2021.

To support the Board of Directors in their search for the most suitable candidates for the new Management Team, several case-studies were created, which could be used in the interviewing process.

These case-studies not only tested the candidates' ability to handle a rapidly changing environment within FM, but also their compatibility with the new desired FM behaviour brand and development themes.

After the Management Team members had been selected, their direct reports followed the same process.

As a result, the four development topics were now championed and carried throughout the entire leadership team and organisation, as they were widely embraced.

Something that was also codified in the fact that the six key (strategic) success factors for the reorganisation were all linked with one or several of the development topics.

Finally, the new organisation of FM kicked off in October 2021.

DEVELOPING AND BECOMING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

To ensure that the strategic goals of the new organisation would be linked with the behaviour brand in a continuous way, Quarterly Inspiration Cycles were initiated: a fun process to connect concrete actions to development theme, by using each member's strengths.

Teams learning from teams is the best way to become a learning organisation as knowledge is not hidden in silos but is freely available to the entire organisation. During the first QIC-session each team chose two QIC-masters. After receiving a tailor-made training, the QIC-masters themselves ran each session of their respective teams, meaning that the connection and responsibility with these topics truly lies within the teams.

In conclusion

The Facility Management culture transformation journey was a truly unique experience for us at IP. Not only did we receive the opportunity to work together with a very mixed group of people we also got to face the complex challenges that Covid 19 brought.

Looking back, we honestly believe that it is rare for an organisation to successfully incorporate new behaviours in such an intrinsic way into strategy and business operations.

Yet, at Gemeente Amsterdam Facility Management it resulted in a truly impactful and sustainable culture shift. Compliments to the Management Team and all people at Facility Management.

