

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY -

Better Communication across the Civil and Structural Engineering discipline.

Ridge is a company based on 12 office locations, the civil and structural discipline is circa 150+ engineers and technicians with teams located in 10 out of the 12 offices. The largest centres in Manchester, Oxford and Winchester. The main element to the challenge is to increase communication between the offices with the net effect being increased opportunity, more effective delivery, increased sharing of skills and above all happier staff.

The approach taken was to split the challenge into four segments, Basic quick and readily delivered, Office based, Discipline based, and then Company based elements. For this year I have focused on the Office and Discipline of the identified elements, a wider Company focused element is under discussion but not yet ready.

Office

The initial premise was to use the office as a test bed for a wider exercise, small simple steps were encouraged in the team, these were in some way disguised as elements to help them with their day to day delivery of tasks. For example, simple breaks taken as a team or in small groups, walks to take them away from the screens, organising their day around when they might feel most productive.

The thought here was that there would be some cross fertilisation with other teams, that would either assist solving problems, create debate or provide avenues or leads for business growth as people naturally bump into one another and conversation naturally evolves.

Opportunities arose through discussion and working groups have ended up being formed. Plans were created through expansive and then reductive thinking with one further option being sought. This provided a base outline route map for the groups to take each initiative on with the goal for each to develop or restart relationships in different areas and sectors there by taking them out of their own channel in a move that you seek to positively challenge them and create new opportunity.

Civil and Structural Discipline

The emphasis of the challenge has been to increase communication across the offices with the hypothesis that this will bring a more effective work force with greater opportunities. After discussion with a close colleague and rather fortuitously after the senior partner revealed growth aspirations, a working group was set up between the office leads to meet every quarter.

We needed a target to aim for and with a little maths employed the group worked out that we needed 291 people to reach the four-year growth target and the name plan 291 was settled on to give identity.

Substance was needed to the plan, and an expansive thinking session was embarked on producing topical ideas based on both STEEPLE / PESTLEEs analysis tools being used to assist with topics and choices. A reductive session followed, and the plan was flushed out.

Seven areas are targeted and champions for assigned to each and working groups formed with a view to running similar exercises to identify future opportunities within each area. The 'areas' are reviewed every 6-9 months so that they remain current and do not stagnate.