

Ensuring a smooth merger



Background

The newly merged Affinity Sutton Group will own or manage an impressive 50,000 homes generating a combined turnover of £185 million with assets of £1.8 billion. It has plans to deliver a £980 million development programme and 7,000 new homes by 2010.

The background to the merger was the desire to achieve improvements in efficiency and reduce costs, enhance power in the housing sector and to secure larger grants from the increased size of the group. There were significant cultural differences between Affinity Homes and William Sutton HA, which include seven subsidiary organisations.

The project

The Blue Edge team was selected to identify the existing culture within both organisations and carry out a comprehensive culture audit with senior management interviews, focus groups and presentation of the findings to all key stakeholders.

This included specific recommendations on the challenges and opportunities presented by the merger between such contrasting organisations: one at the forefront of growth and influence within the Housing Sector and the other with a peerless legacy and heritage.

The Blue Edge team worked with the new Affinity Sutton management team to map out a new 'fit for purpose' culture that could adequately capture the team's vision for the newly merged organisation.

This vision was used as the benchmark against which research data was collected, across all parts of both businesses.

A final report was produced and was presented to the entire merged organisation at a launch event post-merger in late 2006. At this launch event, the entire organisation was engaged in identifying changes and improvements which could be made across the organisation to move the organisation closer to its target culture.

Blue Edge facilitated the Affinity Sutton management team to agree an action plan for improvement which was then communicated across the organisation.

Key benefits were to:

- Define Affinity Sutton's desired future cultural vision and values and identify any gaps or problem areas
- Ensure the cultural values line up with Affinity Sutton's overall business objectives
- Communicate a positive message to employees that they are being consulted and that their views are being actively sought by management
- Ensure that the organisation retains its position as an employer/supplier of choice
- Embed the new Affinity Sutton culture across the group.