



CHANGING THE WORLD OF WORK

Vodafone Ireland's journey to becoming a Great Place to Work was boosted by the launch of the company's "New Ways of Working" initiative in July 2011. "This is transforming our culture by creating an open, flexible working environment and a collaborative employee ethos that encourages and supports speed, simplicity and trust, ultimately resulting in a better overall experience for our customers," says HR director Rachel Mooney.

"We needed to create a new way of working, to inspire our people and put our customers at the heart of everything we do," she continues. "We wanted a better workplace that could deliver our business strategy to improve performance and results. Through a community of people working together we took stock, lifted the lid on the organisation and decided that in order to succeed in the future, we needed to be smarter and more efficient in both how we worked internally and how we delivered services to customers. Fundamentally, we needed to change the way we worked so we decided to design a new working environment that would encourage communication and allow our people to be more creative."

This saw the adoption of an open-plan approach throughout the Vodafone headquarters building in Leopardstown in South Dublin with everyone working there flexi-desking in designated neighbourhoods but being free to work anywhere in the building. People working in different teams and different business units now mingle with each other and interact in a far more collaborative and flexible way which encourages cross-functional working.

But the journey is about far more than simply changing the layout of desks and taking down the walls between offices. Dozens of separate but interlinked initiatives are involved taking in key areas such as communications, rewards, personal and career development, and well-being.

Among the most successful yet simple of these has been the introduction of a "Reward & Recognition Menu". This allows us to informally reward and recognise others achievements and

contributions. It includes options like star awards, a thank you email from the CEO, an extra half-day paid leave, and a digital thank you card. "The real benefit of the menu is that it empowers all of us, not just managers, to reward, recognise and thank each other," Mooney points out.

Another quite thoughtful initiative is known as "Text First". This aims to reduce the pressure of feeling obliged to constantly check and respond immediately to emails during personal time. With text first, people are alerted if there is an absolute crisis or emergency which requires them to check their mail - otherwise they can relax and not worry about it.

Leadership development is also an area of focus and we worked closely with Organisational Development consultants, Sheppard Moscow to introduce the Stretch Leadership workshop that was aimed at building leadership capability within the organisation. "Its purpose was to provide participants with a stretching learning experience during which they could each explore their individual leadership capabilities and support and challenge one another," says Mooney. "In addition, our development programmes have equipped managers with the tools to coach and help create career plans for their own teams."

One particularly successful programme was Wellbeing Week. "The focus here was on staff



supporting each other to manage what we call our 'work life blur' in a way that suited all of us individually", says Mooney. "It gave everyone in the company the opportunity to give some attention to our fitness, nutrition, and general work-life balance as the focus was on health, wellbeing, and straightening out some kinks in our lives."

Wellbeing Week including a number of educational and wellness seminars on topics such as financial management; work-life balance; relaxation techniques; resilience techniques; cultivating good sleep behaviour and daily routine for children; and boosting your immune system and eating for energy.

Diversity is also an important area of focus and last year the company established its Women's Network to help create networking opportunities for both women and men and in particular, to give people a forum to interact with our senior leaders and managers. Launched last April officially by psychologist Dr Maureen Gaffney, the Women's Network holds regular seminars and networking events for staff.

"There's been a dramatic cultural shift with the implementation of our 'New Ways of Working' ethos which has been a huge success. This has transformed the way we work, and has helped our business to attract and retain high calibre, creative people and provides the right environment for us to experience our own products and services," Mooney concludes.