

Amnesty International – taking charge of change



Background

Amnesty International is the international non-governmental organisation whose mission is to defend human rights worldwide. Established over 40 years it has worldwide reputation for investigating and exposing human right abuses from Rwanda to the former Soviet Union.

Many countries have a national branch of Amnesty, called a Section, which is an independent part of 'the movement' – AI's phrase for the global network. At the centre of the network is the International Secretariat. The Secretariat provides practical help and policy guidance to Sections and coordinates international campaigns and action.

Challenge

The International Secretariat, led by Irene Khan and Kate Gilmore, wanted to transform the way in which the organisation was able to respond to increasing human rights violations and more complex situations in which the perpetrators were not always easy to identify.

The leadership team had already used **=mc** trainers and consultants to create a new strategic direction and to give secretariat managers new skills to take the organisation forward.

But there were internal challenges to the new strategic direction – from staff, from managers, from board members and even from volunteers.

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=mc's brief

=mc was asked to do three things:

- set up an initial training programme for international board members and the senior leadership group on how to analyse change processes and culture to help align staff and volunteers with the strategy
- develop a change toolkit jointly with the deputy secretary general – Kate Gilmore – exploring how to relate change to the new strategic direction
- run a series of workshops for international directors and board chairs in how to provide appropriate leadership in the worldwide change process

“At Amnesty International we have worked hard to create powerful and effective organisational change that will help us protect human rights more effectively. =mc has been incredibly helpful in guiding us through a complex change process – providing coaching, delivering training and helping us design a new organisational strategy.”

Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General, Amnesty International

What we did

We designed a comprehensive toolkit that would enable senior managers in Amnesty to design appropriate responses to the challenges raised:

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The toolkit was rolled out in a number of ways to chairs, directors and senior managers including an all day session in Amsterdam for 120 worldwide representatives.

The toolkit tackled:

- assessing change drivers
- developing powerful change cases
- analysing responses to change
- adapting appropriate change leadership styles
- building culture around change
- creating a communications strategy

Finally, significant time was spent developing an integration strategy to ensure that outstanding practice developed by any one Section was captured and employed internationally throughout the movement.

Result

The results will be seen in the way Amnesty is increasingly able to respond to the changing types of human rights violations that occur. Amnesty now embraces political, social, sexual, cultural, and linguistic and gender-based rights in its work.

There is now an established best practice-based change management strategy, which is helping to codify and build on successes worldwide.

Amnesty staff now feel the leadership clusters are more flexible in their approach – but at the same time understand the imperative to change.

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Want to know more?

<http://www.amnesty.org/> – for the worldwide site.

Or contact Roz Capps, =mc's Practice Manager on 020 7978 1516 or email r.capps@managementcentre.co.uk to find out how we might be able to help you.

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