



# How a culture programme at The Nottingham Building Society is supporting strategic change

The Nottingham Building Society

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In today's challenging financial services industry, Nottingham Building Society are undertaking a significant change and modernisation strategy to realise their vision of what it means to be a building society today. They have developed a unique advice and service proposition, completely centred around defined customer lifetime journeys.

Of course, change at scale means new structures, roles and services, which can be challenging for long serving, loyal employees. To bring people with them through this change, the People and Culture agenda has been driven by Anne Mellors, Head of People and Development.

The Nottingham developed and launched their '**Doing the Right Thing**' culture framework and brought People Insight in to help assess how the employee experience matched their culture aspiration.

We were able to establish a baseline measure and make tangible recommendations, so that The Nottingham could continue to improve the employee experience and achieve the culture that supports their vision.



*The Nottingham's proposition of products, services centred around the customer experience.*

“ ...the most  
actionable survey  
we've ever done! ”

David Marlow CEO  
The Nottingham Building Society



## About The Nottingham

The Nottingham Building Society is the eighth largest building society in the UK, with assets of £4bn, 67 branches and over 700 employees. They are one of the only building societies to combine building society and estate agency services 'all under one roof'.

The Nottingham is a mutual, owned by its members, with a heritage built since 1849 of helping members own their own homes, providing a secure place for savings and support to manage finances. Today, this ethos translates into a new advice and service proposition built around the customer (or member) lifecycle. The Nottingham offer not just their own products, but access to whole of market mortgage advice and financial planning from across a competitive range of suppliers.

In 2017, The Nottingham announced its commitment to a multi-million pound investment to develop its digital capability to complement its growing branch network. The ultimate goal is to create the perfect hybrid between digital and face-to-face where The Nottingham's members will have the control and convenience of choosing how they interact with the society – digitally, by phone or face-to-face.

### The Nottingham Building Society project team:

- ▶ **Anne Mellors** - Head of People and Development
- ▶ **Tracy Gill** - Senior People Business Partner
- ▶ **Penny Burrows** - People Business Partner
- ▶ **Jo Navin** - Internal Communications Manager

# DOING THE RIGHT THING

## Change brings challenges

The strategy has required significant change for The Nottingham's team members including:

- 1. Job roles:** Branch team members have gone from being specialists in one area of the service offering to being customers' first point of contact for any of their services – requiring significant training and re-writing job roles to fulfil the 'all under one roof' service.
- 2. Upgrading IT & tech capability:** As part of their investment in digital technology the team members are being trained in new software and processes. As a recent example, team members are now equipped to provide customers with in-branch video calls giving members on demand access to specialist mortgage advisors at a time to suit them. They've launched a new e-savings portal 'Beehive' requiring customer services teams to learn new systems and skills to support customers.
- 3. Collaboration:** To successfully deliver The Nottingham's 'all under one roof' offering, collaborative working across all elements of the proposition including estate agency, building society and mortgages services, and between branch, head office and field-based team members is vital.
- 4. Culture:** The change in business model not only requires role change, but significant culture change. Previously used to a stable role, confident in their capabilities and 'expert' relationship with the local community, team members needed to see the vision for change, feel the benefits of change personally and develop the appetite and energy for the task ahead.

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# How are The Nottingham making culture change happen?

## 1. Raising the profile of the people agenda

Over the last 5 years, the people agenda at The Nottingham has become more important. Under Anne's leadership, the organisation has seen the value of improved management information, recruitment and better-quality business partnering. Anne's role on the Executive Committee gives the People and Culture agenda great visibility – so the culture framework had great foundations.

## 2. Developing a culture framework resonant with The Nottingham's heritage

The Nottingham's mutual ethos is as relevant today as it was in 1849. CEO David Marlow said,

*"We are all living longer and are likely to need to take more responsibility for financial planning. We think providing independent, face-to-face advice to our members to help them to navigate their way through the challenges is an important part of our role as a modern, mutual building society."*

The 'Doing the Right Thing' cultural framework, with 'ARROWS' values supports the business vision. Importantly it is grounded in the mutual heritage of helping customers 'Do the Right Thing' to save for homes and the future. This wording resonates with team members and the pride they have in the organisation. As an anonymous survey respondent told us;

*"The best thing about working for The Nottingham is that the service & products we offer genuinely do help our members. We want to offer good service and adhere to the company values and ethos to support our members have a good experience."*

## 3. Developing a consistent internal & external voice

Internal communications about the '**Doing the Right Thing**' culture framework are consistent with the external branding. The leaders' event, where the framework was launched was centred around 'Doing the Right Thing'.

## 4. Doing a full cultural assessment

To assess and help further develop the culture, People Insight designed a consultant-led programme to gauge views of key stakeholders, survey the whole organisation and provide recommendations that the Board, people business partners and line managers would know exactly how to action. Anne said,

*"From the start of the project, our objective was to listen to the views of our teams to gather clear insight and evidence to support us in planning what to focus on in our next phase of culture development."*

## OUR VISION

We reward our *members* for doing the right thing to plan, protect and save for their future through delivering our all under one roof advice and service offering and by being easy to deal with, being known as a force for good in our *communities*, delivered by enthusiastic expert *team members*.

## OUR LEADERSHIP

All leaders are open, accessible and focused on achieving our vision.

## OUR VALUES

DOING THE RIGHT THING  
for members

### WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE



- We keep members' needs central
- We take ownership
- We step in to fill gaps
- We are fair and balanced

### WE ARE RELEVANT



- We challenge ourselves
- We find better ways to do things
- We continually learn & improve

DOING THE RIGHT THING  
for our teams members

### WE ARE RESPECTFUL



- We are honest
- We are fair
- We play our part
- We value diversity

### WE ARE OPEN



- We are curious
- We seek out learning and improvement
- We speak up to do the right thing

### WE WORK TOGETHER



- We are one team
- We support each other
- We collaborate
- We share knowledge

DOING THE RIGHT THING  
for communities

### WE SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES



- We are a force for good
- We get involved
- We make a difference
- Doing good together

## OUR GOVERNANCE

Our governance underpins all we do and enables our people to do the right thing.

POS2452/0718

The 'Doing the Right thing' visual which brings together all the elements which make up the culture, including the ARROWS values (Accountable, Respectful, Relevant, Open, Working Together, Support our Communities.)

# The culture assessment programme developed with People Insight

## Stakeholder interviews

At the beginning, we carried out consultant-led stakeholder interviews with 2 aims; to understand the views of leaders and frontline staff about the culture, and to engage them in supporting and improving the culture programme. Anne said,

*“The consultants were friendly, supportive as well as credible and analytical, which gave our leaders confidence in the process and in People Insight. The interviews got senior leaders to think about ownership from the start, and helped reassure team members around confidentiality.”*

## Survey design

Based on this input, we designed the survey to evaluate:

- ▶ How the organisation’s culture reflects its ‘ARROWS’ values as a baseline measure, against which future performance can be tracked
- ▶ Team members’ response to change and what could be done to support them
- ▶ Employee engagement as measured by the PEARL™ model & benchmarked to financial services
- ▶ How employee experience varies across the organisation

## Internal communications

The ‘Your Voice Matters’ campaign, to communicate with staff about the programme, was designed to be a consistent part of their external and internal voice. Taking part in the survey was incentivised with a prize draw for participants and a ‘Have a break’ KitKat desk drop. Jo Navin, Internal Communications Manager said,

*“The effort we put into pre-survey communications paid off. With the reassuring stakeholder interviews, followed up by a broad, bold campaign and incentives, we were delighted to achieve an 86% participation rate.”*



\*Actual data has been changed for anonymity.

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## Understanding results quickly

Once the survey results were in, we released online dashboards to leaders and managers, so they could see their own results quickly.

People Insight's consultants then lead an **interpretation session for the Executive Committee and the Board**, sharing critical insights, engaging leaders in the results & focusing on priorities to have the greatest impact on culture & engagement. Anne explained,

*"After the interpretation session we all came out really clear about what we needed to do. Our CEO, David Marlow, called it **the most actionable survey we've ever done**, which is really satisfying as 'actionability' was our key project goal."*

## Creative action planning

People Insight led **workshops to prepare the People and Development team** for action planning. When people are busy in times of change, this session helps familiarise them with the survey results dashboard quickly, navigate the information with ease and prepare practical activities to support effective action planning.

Following the workshops the People and Development team were enthused and confident. One action planning activity led by marketing, involved senior team members 'pitching' ideas for support to solve issues around communication or innovation in a Dragon's Den style. Jo describes;

*"This was really fun, we came out with some really simple ideas – such as the Brown Bag Lunch to help improve inter-team communication. This informal event is now held frequently to help colleagues find out more about what different functions within the team are working on."*





## Making action actually happen

To keep teams accountable to the 'Your Voice Matters' actions they made, they are included in functional people plans and progress is given Board airtime at quarterly intervals. Said Tracy,

*"We've also renamed our staff council the 'Your Voice Matters Forum' which keeps the profile high. Your Voice Matters is certainly here to stay!"*

The results from the project provide a cultural assessment framework that the Board review regularly to support them in their responsibilities for overseeing the culture of the organisation and as part of their commitment to demonstrating culture change.

## Results from the project to date

"We're early on in establishing the 'Doing the Right Thing' culture, and the assessment has been really valuable," said Tracy.

"Most people feel that The Nottingham strives to 'do the right thing' – the central value to our culture, which is fabulous. However, some of the work we need to do includes ensuring team members feel listened to, that leaders are more communicative and demonstrably 'live the values' more. At this early stage in establishing our culture, it's great to have the stake in the ground and the direction we need to head in.

"Another key area is helping team members feel confident that we'll act on the results. In all the change we've had recently, this is so important. We've set up support and accountability for action, coupled with a solid internal communications plan. So we're looking forward to improving that view!" said Jo.



*\*Actual data has been changed for anonymity.*



## How was it working with People Insight?

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**“People Insight have been extremely easy to work with. They have challenged our thinking in a really constructive way; bringing fresh ideas which have helped us deliver a positive survey process with highly actionable results. Thank you!”**

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### We'd love to talk

If you are interested in how our employee engagement programmes could help your organisation, contact us at:

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Surveys



360  
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Consultancy