



# How HR is influencing business transformation at A2Dominion Group

A2Dominion Group

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A2Dominion Group is a residential property group with a social purpose. Whilst the Group takes a commercial approach to housebuilding, it reinvests all of its profits into building more new homes and supporting the communities where they work. They provide award-winning affordable, private, social rented homes, keyworker and student accommodation and supported housing and homes for older people.

With over 37,000 homes across London and southern England, A2Dominion employs 1,000 people in 60 locations and is one of the larger property groups in the UK with more than 7,800 properties in the development pipeline.

2 years ago, A2Dominion started a three-year 'Fit for the Future' business transformation programme (FFP), radically updating services, processes and technology. Recognising market, societal and technological changes, the ultimate aim is to ensure the business is set for a customer centric, efficient and profitable future.

### This case study explores how A2Dominion are:

- ▶ Transforming leadership to enable change
- ▶ Developing a culture that encourages strategic change to happen
- ▶ Evolving HR to become enablers of excellence throughout the employee journey
- ▶ Measuring progress with People Insight's support

**OUR VISION**

Our vision is to improve people's lives through high-quality homes and services

**OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

To help us realise our vision we are committed to working toward our four strategic objectives:

-  PROVIDE NEW HIGH-QUALITY HOMES AND PLACES
-  DELIVER CUSTOMER-LED SERVICES
-  INVEST IN OUR HOMES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES
-  STRENGTHENING OUR BUSINESS

**STRATEGIC PROJECTS**

To support the delivery of these objectives we launched and invested in a £20m three year business change programme, **Fit for the Future**.

This programme will transform the way the organisation works and significantly improve the services we provide to our customers over the next few years, by making changes to our services, processes and information technology.

This will enable us to become more efficient, profitable and responsive to customer expectations, whilst making it easier for staff to do their roles.

The benefits from this programme will also form part of our long-term value for money targets.



A2Dominion residents and staff

## Culture change was needed to support business transformation at A2Dominion

*“To deliver the A2Dominion vision and to support the ongoing implementation of the Fit for the Future Programme, we require an organisational culture where we can all grow and succeed.”*

*Penny St Martin, HR Director*

As the business transformation programme got underway, the executive management team’s appetite for external, disruptive ideas grew. A new HR Director, Penny St Martin was brought in to the business and saw great potential for the HR function to contribute more strategically to the change. She quickly got involved in Fit for the Future, running organisation design workshops to help shape how aspirations for change such as ‘agile,’ ‘culture’ and ‘resilience’ should be defined.

HR had been mainly responsible for process, policy and payroll. “I wanted the business to see how much we had to offer,” said Penny. “HR should be a strategic function with expertise in building long term organisational capabilities – essential for the success of the transformation programme & realising our 2020 goals.”

Sitting on the change delivery team, Penny was clear that if technology, service and process were to change, bringing A2Dominion’s 1,000 staff on board would mean more than just training. A cultural shift was necessary.

Penny said, “As HR we invested time in looking at the people impact of the transformation aspirations. For example, we wanted managers to be able to be self-sufficient, productive and agile. But our policies were stiff, lengthy and over engineered – no longer facilitating the behaviour required. We set the tone for the HR transformation to follow by starting working towards turning long policies into succinct, clear advice. A good example is our dress code policy with 5 pages of guidance, which we intend to turn into 2 words of advice.”



One of the many A2Dominion workshops

## Developing 'Leadership for the Future' behaviours

"Probably the most fundamental activity we undertook to transform the culture was to develop the behaviours required of leaders to steer the organisation through the transformation" said São Gorgueira, Head of L&D and Engagement. "The behaviours would underpin everything – how we do things, how we develop talent, recruit and measure performance. We envisioned them being so embedded in the culture, they would be business as usual."

### The behaviours are:

1. **Engaging** - Achieves collective outcomes by building effective relationships
2. **Resilient** - Does not allow pressure to interfere with thinking, judgement or behaviour
3. **Performance focused** - Delivers a consistently high performance
4. **Influential** - The ability to work with and through others to achieve organisational goals
5. **Future focused** - Looks at what's possible and how to make it happen





## A transformative 'Leading Change' programme

Of course, introducing, training, and motivating all staff with a leadership responsibility on the new behaviours required an extensive programme. 'Leading Change' consisted of 5 workshops (1 on each behaviour), learning hubs, self-assessments, experiential activities and work-based activities delivered over a 6-month period.

Says São, "the programme removed barriers to change, opening minds to a different way of doing things and giving people confidence to take it forward. There were practical tools to handle different people situations, and we've had great participation."

## Leadership for the Future behaviours become Behaviours4Success

Having built momentum through Leading Change, the behaviours have been broadened out to all employees – whether they are 'leading the organisation', 'leading others' or 'leading self.'

Said Penny, "The frameworks were developed with behaviours bespoke to each division, in collaboration with division leaders defining what good looks like in their teams. This was great for buy in and support."

## The behaviours weave through the performance management framework

Behaviours account for 50% of individuals' rating in the performance management system designed to encourage staff support for the new processes, technology and services. "There's no clearer indication of how important behavioural change is, than making it a significant part of people's individual performance" said Penny.

As well as demonstrating when behaviours have been shown positively, A2Dominion have made it just as important to call out unacceptable behaviours that go against this new ethos.

## Continuous leadership development

Of course, leadership development is not a one-off exercise. At least 50 new leaders have joined A2Dominion since 'Leading Change.' An integrated model now includes workshops, a social community and resources in the online 'Academy', and an expanded set of capabilities. The capabilities ask leaders to take personal responsibility for their learning, supplementing led activities with online learning tailored through their PDPs and supported by L&D colleagues.



*Some of the winners of the Customer Engagement Awards*

## Customer Focus

In line with A2Dominion's strategic aim to become more customer centric, the organisation have launched a number of initiatives to encourage customer focus, recognise and shine a light on excellent service – whether 'customers' are internal or external. **Customer Engagement Awards** are nominated across the Behaviours4Success where an employee has demonstrated:

1. **Engaging:** Making a positive impact on customers
2. **Resilient:** Achieving results despite facing numerous barriers
3. **Performance-focused:** Actively seeks new ways to provide an outstanding service
4. **Influential:** Builds relationships with colleagues/customers
5. **Future focused:** A new and innovative solution to an issue

During **Customer Experience Week**, people are encouraged to improve customer focus, with news, features, customer experience case studies and manager discussion guides promoted via the intranet.

# #TransformingHR

Whilst working with the Executive Management Team (EMT) on organisation design for the business transformation, leading culture change and supporting customer focus initiatives, Penny is also restructuring the HR department with a fresh proposition.

Transforming from traditional HR to a structure of HR business partners, learning and development and centre of excellence, the vision for HR is to **'enable excellence through the employee journey'**. The vision incorporates:

- ▶ **A customer service model** - services based on what internal customers need
- ▶ **Strategic input** - business partners providing value adding support with expertise provided from the various centres of excellence
- ▶ **Reduced bureaucracy** freeing people up to get things done faster
- ▶ **Self-serve career development** guidance & tools with access to learning anytime, anywhere
- ▶ **Decision making** based on accessible MI or 'one version of the truth'
- ▶ Services supported by **new technology**

The proposition has been shaped based on input from a representative group of over 90 internal customers who were asked about their experience of HR and what they needed going forwards.

Said Penny, "The input has been fantastic and really helped us shape a responsive, ambitious offering. We communicated this back to people at the launch of our 3-year HR proposition, showing 'You said', 'Our approach' and 'Our offer'. We showed how the HR proposition addresses their pain points, aims to get the basics right and offers an ambitious service to help us realise the business strategy."

"I'm proud of what we've achieved so far," says Penny, "but we're only on step 2 of a 4 step journey. The key thing right now is the HR team feel positive, our new identity helps us feel a professional pride in what we do."



# How People Insight have supported A2Dominion

People Insight have worked with A2Dominion for three years. Our consultants have helped design and deliver twice yearly 'Your View' surveys to help them track and improve employee engagement. Says São,

*"It was time to break the impact of previous surveys. We chose People Insight because they could provide a flexible approach to engagement surveys and more meaningful, actionable data delivered quickly."*

## Pre-survey stakeholder interviews

Demonstrating a new era of listening to employees and acting on results, People Insight started with pre-survey stakeholder interviews. This meant leaders' needs were listened to and incorporated in 'Your View' questions, such as: "There's a perception the purpose and aims refresh has gone down well - but has it?" "Do people feel part of the new purpose? Do they understand their role within it?"

The benefit has been that leaders see their personal concerns answered through the survey, so feel involved, taking ownership through the programme.





A2Dominion residents

## Aligning the employee survey to track A2Dominion’s change programme

Taking input from the stakeholder interviews, the [PEARL™](#) survey provides an index reporting the difference ‘Leading Change’ has made to employees’ perceptions of leaders. A2Dominion have improved leadership scores significantly, and are well above average compared to other organisations we have surveyed (benchmark).

	% Score vs benchmark	% Score vs 18 months ago
<b>Overall Leadership index</b>	<b>+18</b>	<b>+13</b>

## Assessing burnout

Given the amount of change underway, we’ve used the [Burnout index](#) in ‘Your View’ to assess how resilient people are feeling. This enables A2Dominion to act quickly where burnout might be an issue, and therefore minimise, manage or prevent risk.

## Providing Videographics

Transparency has been critical, showing staff why the survey is being done, and what benefit it brings. We designed internal communications videos to announce results of the survey to staff, showing this was different to the previous approach and engaging them in action early on.



## Effective action planning

People Insight held train the trainer workshops with A2Dominion's HR teams to support effective action planning and change. The workshops cover best practice facilitation techniques, how to use the 'Your View' dashboard effectively to define meaningful action areas and session templates for managers to take forward internally.

São commented,

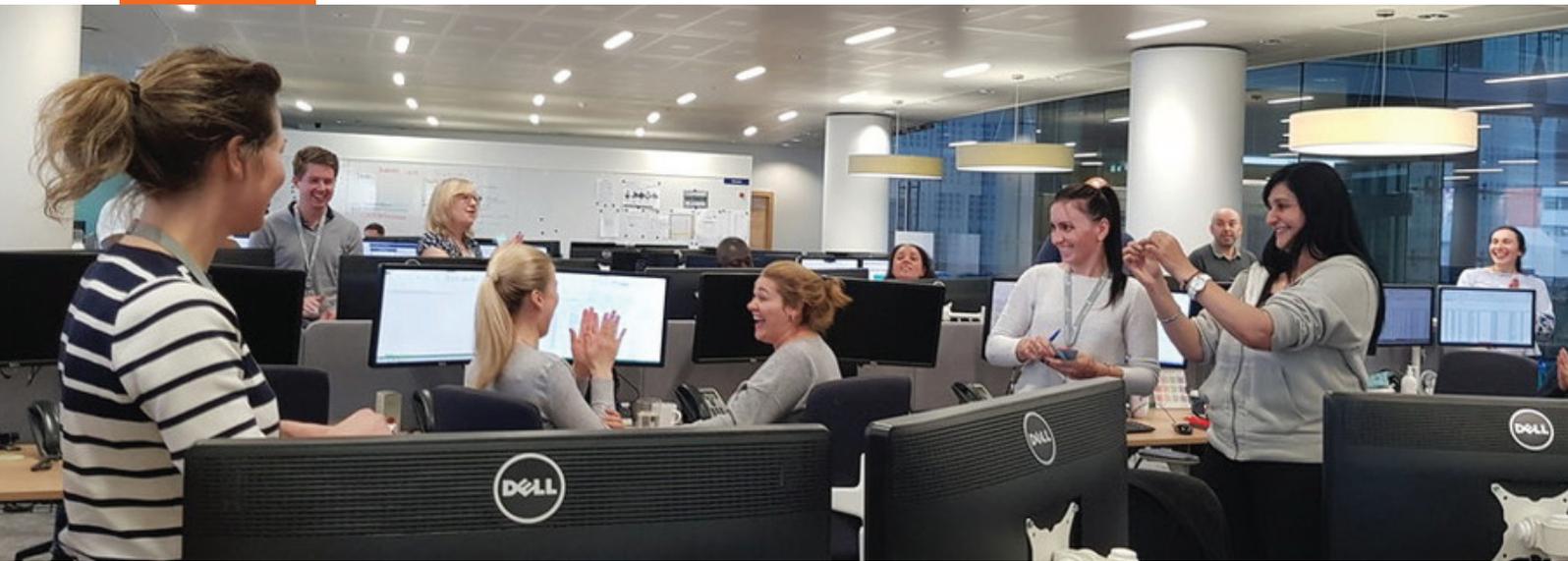
*"we've found People Insight's post survey support really useful; results presentations and train the trainer exercises have helped our managers understand our results and do effective action planning. This is well embedded in the organisation now - the survey and change are part of the daily fabric of how we work, not just a check-box exercise."*

"Throughout, we have had the opportunity to 'live' our behaviours. Leaders are 'engaging' with people in the results, we're using the data to be 'performance focused', and the burnout index provides evidence for us to support 'resilience'."

The commitment of A2Dominion's directors to listening to and acting on employee voice has been clear from subsequent employee feedback: "I have seen Directors want answers and want to engage and make a positive change when receiving the results from the survey. What's great is that they do this without trying to find out who said what, but much more collaboratively, in an effort to do the right thing. It's encouraging." Anonymous survey respondent.

Said São,

*"Over the last four surveys, we've seen response rate jump by 11 points, indicating people believe more in the process and want to contribute. What's more, belief in action has gone up 18 points – suggesting people are feeling empowered and getting involved in change. Engagement overall is now at 84%, seven points above benchmark, which is a great place to be at this stage in our transformation."*



## 'Your View' data provides real evidence of cultural change

### Reflecting on progress

Penny's team have achieved a lot over the last 18 months, and the impact is being felt around the organisation. "The 'Your View' data is providing us with real evidence of cultural change, and we've got fun things planned to maintain momentum – a video competition highlighting examples of what has changed the most. HR conversations with the business are really different now. HRBPs are being brought in early to look at strategic issues, being invited on departmental away days. They are being seen as central and important to decision making. We've maintained our Investors in People Gold accreditation and are not far off platinum status."

### HR Transformation

"A key milestone that I'm particularly proud of," said Penny, "is establishing the Diversity and Inclusion steering board, with our CEO, Darrell Mercer as chair. We're thrilled with what we've started, working through our aspirations for what diversity and inclusion should look like at A2Dominion."

### Evaluating the employee experience

Says São, "the approach so far has set a great foundation for leader and employee participation and assessment of engagement, leadership, change and burnout. We're now in discussions with People Insight to evolve our approach to look at the broader employee experience throughout their journey, as we enter the next stage of our transformation programme."



More winners from the Customer Experience Awards

“It was time to break the impact of previous surveys. We chose People Insight because they could provide a flexible approach to engagement surveys and more meaningful, actionable data delivered quickly.”

“We’ve found People Insight’s post survey support really useful; results presentations and train the trainer exercises have helped our managers understand our results and do effective action planning. This is well embedded in the organisation now - the survey and change are part of the daily fabric of how we work, not just a check-box exercise.”

*São Gorgueira, Head of L&D and Engagement.*

## 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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