

Relocation as a catalyst for change: How leadership empowered employees and achieved organizational change at Sanofi Canada

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ABSTRACT

This paper tells Sanofi's relocation story and offers insight for organizations embarking on a similar journey. The work environment can be a powerful tool through which to communicate information about the organization and its values to both employees and the outside world. In 2013, the sale of part of its business prompted leading healthcare partner Sanofi Canada to relocate its headquarters. Moving from closed "silo" offices, to a state of the art open-plan work environment, Sanofi Canada achieved meaningful change in its work culture in a very short period of time: a companywide survey undertaken four months into life at their new headquarters revealed satisfied and engaged employees who were taking advantage of new technology and embracing new opportunities to collaborate.

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The work environment can be a powerful tool through which to communicate information about the organization and its values to both employees and the outside world (Davis, 1984). Studies over the past ten years (Bordass & Leaman, 2005; McElroy & Morrow, 2010) have revealed how evolving office space design—when combined with employee-focused initiatives—can bring about positive change to a company culture (Brennan et al, 2002). This paper tells the story of a concerted effort to implement good change management initiatives at global healthcare partner Sanofi Canada, and how such change management affected a corresponding transformation in the organization's culture of work.

In 2013, the sale of part of its business prompted leading healthcare partner Sanofi Canada to relocate its headquarters. Moving from an antiquated building

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of closed “silo”¹ offices, to a state of the art open-plan work environment, Sanofi Canada achieved meaningful change in its work culture in a very short period of time: a companywide survey undertaken four months into life at their new headquarters revealed satisfied and engaged employees who were taking advantage of new technology and embracing new opportunities to collaborate. Patterns of interaction had begun to change and an increase in informal communication contributed to greater transparency and efficiencies in the business. How had this been achieved?

Firstly, change was initiated by establishing a powerful and open dialogue between Sanofi Canada’s executive committee, human resources and a team of change ambassador “agents” (Pascale & Sternin, 2005). Secondly, it was initiated through the creation of small, inclusive initiatives aimed at building new capacities through new technology (Guha, Grover, Kettinger & Teng, 1997) increasing employee interaction and prompting the role modeling of new behaviours from the bottom-up. Finally, the paying of particular attention to the “emotional aspect” (Bridges, 2004) of employees’ change experience contributed to the creation of a workforce receptive to the prospective change (Cable, 2012), while motivated to own, embody and see the transition through.

In presenting how Sanofi Canada enabled transformational change within this timeframe and in examining the key lessons learned by company executives and human resources, this paper aims to both tell Sanofi Canada’s relocation story and offer insight for organizations embarking on a similar journey.

Introduction

In July 2011, Sanofi Canada announced the sale of its dermatology business, Dermik. The result of a strategic shift in business to focus onto “growth platforms,” this US \$425 million sale included the transfer of Sanofi Canada’s head office building in Laval, Quebec and its adjoining manufacturing facility. From the date of the sale, Sanofi Canada would be required to vacate the premises within 12 months and find a new home or appropriate site on which to build new headquarters. This is the story of how a company seized

1. Representative of a mind-set defined by BusinessDictionary.com as “present in some companies when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same company. This type of mentality will reduce the efficiency of the overall operation, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture.”

upon a required facility change to precipitate a fundamental shift in organizational culture and reposition itself for the future.

History and background: Sanofi Canada

Sanofi Canada is a leading healthcare partner in Canada, providing medicines in several therapeutic areas, with a long history of pioneering innovative treatments for diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Together, Sanofi companies in Canada² employ more than 1,700 people across the country, working closely with patient groups, healthcare practitioners, pharmacists and others to deliver innovative and patient-centred care to Canadians. In 2012, Sanofi companies invested \$122 million in research and development in Canada, creating jobs, business and opportunity throughout the country.

Throughout its forty-five year history, Sanofi Canada's evolution had been comfortably accommodated within the same headquarters situated at 2015 Saint-Elzéar Boulevard West in Laval, Quebec. However, during the years leading up to its 2013 relocation, changes in the pharmaceutical business climate and market conditions necessitated significant changes.

In 2005, in common with many pharmaceutical companies of similar stature, Sanofi Canada began experiencing a series of patent-cliffs³ as its exclusive rights to medicines serving a broad base of the Canadian population⁴ began to expire. Challenged by generics, the resulting loss in revenues from these major brands forced large pharmaceuticals such as Sanofi Canada to begin rethinking the prevailing business model.

Beginning in 2006, Sanofi Canada undertook a series of downsizing initiatives which, despite the company's best efforts to the contrary, had an adverse effect on employee morale. By the time of the Dermik divestment in 2011, and the further reduction to Sanofi Canada's overall staff brought about by fresh restructuring in 2012, it was clear that the Saint-Elzéar Boulevard office was no longer fit for purpose, both in terms of size and layout. The design—both interior and exterior—of these headquarters had grown out of date: closed offices, a shortage of open meeting spaces and little natural light

2. These are Sanofi Canada (pharmaceuticals); Sanofi Pasteur (vaccines); Sanofi Consumer Health (health and beauty); Genzyme (rare diseases) and Merial (animal health).

3. The phenomena of patent expiration dates and the abrupt drop in sales that follows for a group of products capturing a high percentage of a market.

4. For example Plavix, a thienopyridine class antiplatelet agent used to inhibit blood clots in coronary artery disease, peripheral vascular disease, and cerebrovascular disease.

made for an environment neither suited to the hyper-connected pace of the pharmaceutical industry in 2012, nor conducive to the collaborative and communicative style of work required to revive ailing morale or drive innovation and competitiveness.

Physical space as agent for culture change

In line with company policy on the reconfiguration of new offices worldwide, Sanofi Canada's global management in Paris directed that its Canadian affiliate's new offices conform to an open plan concept. Although the company would retain the flexibility to design its workspace one that would contain a range of collaborative meeting rooms – there would be few or no closed offices.

Wrestling with how to organize the new space, Sanofi Canada's executive leadership team established the clear objective of creating an environment that would address problems associated with the "silo" mentality within the company, information guarding as the exercise of power, and inflexibility in adapting to change.

Appointed in April of 2012, Sanofi Canada's incoming president and chief executive officer, Jon Fairest, shared the executive leadership team's view that relocation presented the potential for positive change. Seeking to become a catalyst for this change, he aimed to facilitate their objectives of reinvigorating company work culture to meet the challenges of an evolving healthcare market. Collectively, they established goals of becoming more collaborative, innovative and transparent.

Increasing employees' well-being in the new offices would encourage the free flow of ideas and provide the inspiration needed to inject new creativity and passion into their work. The design of the new open-plan work spaces – which employees would all have a part in helping to finalize – would focus on implanting a new business model based on greater transparency, collaboration and the sharing of ideas. In this way, the design of the new physical space could kick-start and sustain new behaviours affecting positive change, allowing the company to embrace a new work culture that would drive growth and innovation.

From vision to reality: Change leadership and the 'change-friendly' workforce

In a 2008 article entitled "What Makes Change Happen?" the *Harvard Business Review* cites Bossidy and Charan (2004) in suggesting that assembling the right team to carry out an initiative is "the most difficult yet most important imperative for change leaders." For Sanofi Canada, it would require the "engine" of change leadership provided by the combination of a strong leader and executive leadership team in order to take advantage of the window of opportunity for radical modernization presented by the move.

Within the framework of the executive leadership team's vision, relocation to new corporate headquarters in Laval's Biotech City—Greater Montreal's biotechnology and life science cluster, home to 80 companies operating in these industries—would represent a transformational change for the company and its employees. Realizing such change within a 'business as usual' framework would also represent a considerable challenge; much more than a box ticking exercise. Sanofi Canada decided early on to pay particular attention to the human aspect of the transformation, involving employees in as many stages of the change process as possible. It would do this by providing purpose and encouragement, while empowering them through technology and collaborative capacity training. Why? Because it recognized that wholesale change could not happen without the buy-in of its employees. It would be this form of change leadership that would enable Sanofi Canada to realize its vision on a large scale.

In his 2012 article, "The New Path to Organisational Change," Daniel M. Cable, professor of Organisational Behaviour at the London Business School (LBS) maintains that the key to successful organizational change lies in recognizing change as cumulative. Choosing IKEA, the Swedish furniture manufacturer, and the American software company SAS, Professor Cable draws on examples of these organizations' ability to adapt to crises and change while creating 'change-friendly' workforces. Constantly adapting its ability to absorb and take advantage of change, Cable (2012) describes how IKEA responded to a formaldehyde scandal in the early 1980s by taking a proactive stance on environmental issues and in 1990, adopted the 'Natural Step' framework as the basis for its environmental plan. In this way, its focus on sustainability became the basis of employees' pride in their work, and continues to inspire in them a flexibility to change and grow with the company.

Cable goes on to cite the American software company SAS as a model

of exemplary change leadership. Offering benefits appealing to work-life balance helped to create a workforce that continually and independently looks for ways to improve the company so that it remains competitive, an approach that saves SAS between \$60 M and \$80 M a year in costs related to staff turnover.

Common to these two organizations is leadership that is both in tune with its workforce and able to project to it an inspirational vision of the company's values and work culture. The result is employees that are ready to endorse change as it arrives, understand why the company must keep changing and are prepared to change proactively, helping to keep the company both innovative and competitive. Through inspirational leadership, the regular championing of its change vision, and by building small changes in employee behaviour into a critical mass, Sanofi Canada would successfully relocate and achieve the overhaul of its work culture.

Change management and Change Ambassadors

As organizational consultant William Bridges posits in his bestselling text *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Change* (2004), as the change organization, Sanofi Canada could not simply allow such large-scale change to "happen to" its employees, nor could it be presented as a simple *fait accompli*. In assembling six groups of employees, drawn from across the company, to collectively lead the change, Sanofi Canada ensured that it selected employees not only enthusiastic about leading change, but also functionally suited to the job and motivated to make things happen.

In his capacity as catalyst to the change to be overseen by the executive leadership team, headed by Franca Mancino, vice-president, medical and regulatory affairs, with Alain Fortier, vice-president, human resources, Jon Fairest, president and CEO, was instrumental in assembling the overall structure of the groups working to successfully implement change. He recognized that to steward the change effectively meant successfully combining elements of leadership, human resources/organizational behaviour and communications from within Sanofi Canada. To this end, at the top were positioned the executive leadership team and the steering committee, while directly below sat the design and project teams—reporting directly to the steering committee—as well as the change management team, consisting of Isabelle Aubin from human resources/organizational development, as team lead with Joanne Kennedy, director, communications, added to ensure strong communications.

Following Bridge's assertion to its logical conclusion, it was also essential that leadership at Sanofi Canada recognize the difference between "change" and "transition." This would allow the company to inspire employees to move successfully from an "awareness" of the need for change, the first stop on Prosci's (2006) ADKAR change roadmap, to a full-fledged "desire" to support and participate in that change. The company would successfully traverse the present upheaval "only if the people affected by it (also got) through the transition...successfully" (Bridges, 2004). Particular attention, therefore, had to be paid to Sanofi Canada's employees over the necessary and linear "process" of the change itself.

Therefore, with these committees and groups firmly established, and addressing what Bridges (2004) referred to as the "emotional aspect" of the "employee experience," Sanofi Canada was then able to create teams of "change ambassadors" to represent the "powerful coalition" from Kotter's (1996) classic eight step formulation and make the case for change to their peers. This broad group, drawn from across the organization and retaining executive support, would ensure that—based on the overriding objectives of collaboration, transparency and innovation—employees themselves be pivotal in influencing and acting out Sanofi Canada's change program. These "change ambassadors," serving as barometers of employee engagement and endorsement, would help to counteract what Mirvis and Kanter (1989) identify as the cynicism and distrust of middle management common to many organizations, and ensure this program of change won the "hearts and minds" of every employee, across each group.

Reinforcing key messages within a dialogue

The rapid and large-scale changes faced by Sanofi Canada necessitated frequent and regular communication between all stakeholders throughout the change process. In order to remain distinct from day-to-day communications, as well as to inspire and impart urgency, messages transmitting the company's specific change vision, aimed at achieving employees' affective commitment to it, were reinforced as frequently and powerfully as possible using the following principal methods.

Town-hall meetings

Initiated as “town-hall” style Q&As in the cafeteria in order to quell the rumours surrounding the prospective location of the move, such meetings formed the foundation of direct “bottom-up” communication between employees and management. The number of such sessions attended by employees has been shown by Refferty and Restubog (2009) to be directly proportional to a decrease in overall anxiety regarding large-scale change, as well as an increase in desire to support and take part in change. With that in mind, this practice was continued as an effective forum for communicating with all employees and providing a limited forum for dialogue throughout the change process.

Change Ambassadors

In *McKinsey Change Quarterly* (2009), Aiken and Keller suggested that the effect of influencers on change can depend on how receptive the work “society” is to the influencers, rather than how persuasive they are. To counter this, Sanofi Canada’s change management ensured that change ambassadors would not be required to lead attempts at selling the change on behalf of management, and thus limited the risk of its vision being rejected by employees as disingenuous and inauthentic. Instead, they ensured an “exchange of ideas” that led to the type of genuine “conversation between upper management, HR and employees” during the lead-up to and change implementation referred to by Kanter (2004) in the *Harvard Business Review*.

Such conversations would occur during meetings, one hour every two weeks, and be used by human resources as an opportunity to communicate the company’s change vision and stay informed of any issues or potential areas of resistance requiring early attention. Establishing this dialogue not only helped to “address the widest possible spectrum of employees’ preoccupations” (Huy, 2001), but also to ensure that change vision messages be communicated by change ambassadors in a style tailored to enthruse each diverse segment of Sanofi Canada’s internal audience.

The company’s implementation of change ambassadors not only served to create a “bottom-up” dialogue between the executive leadership team and employees, one that allowed for change messages to be tailored to a spectrum of employees’ preoccupations, it also guarded against the potential for such anxieties to manifest themselves as rebellion or resistance that would be detri-

mental to the progress of the change strategy itself. Resonating with Professor Cable's (2012) assertion that in organizational change, ideas "frequently come from the individuals working at all organizational levels... people doing the work... know the way the firm operates." Sanofi Canada's change ambassadors ensured that its change became an inclusive "group activity, coming from the bottom up" (Cable, 2012).

In the *Harvard Business Review* (2005) Pascale and Sternin recommend that companies seek out "secret change agents" among employees during change management, in order to "bridge the gap between what is happening and what is possible." Sanofi Canada chose nine such "indigenous sources of change" (Pascale and Sternin, 2005) from across the company on the basis of their networks, credibility and capacity to influence and communicate. Acting as conduits of information, they helped to illuminate the executive leadership team's decision-making processes for their peers and to counter the helplessness identified by Rouleau (1999) that is often felt by employees in the face of corporate change. In order to transmit excitement to their colleagues, they were brought to visit the new offices some time before the move, and shown key features such as the cafeteria and its plasma screens, future workstations and innovation rooms, a move Alain Fortier recalls as crucial in helping to "turn employees' fear into excitement" (Fortier, personal communication, May 30, 2013).

Tactical information sharing

As excitement and curiosity began to grow among staff members regarding the new building—employees became extremely keen to see a floor plan of the new space and exactly where they would be sitting. In order to minimize disruption to preparations that would inevitably flow from questions surrounding exact seating arrangements, a plan was revealed showing only which functions would be on which floor. In this way, the company "kept enough information flowing so that people were informed of what was going on in the planning process" (Fortier, personal communication, May 30, 2013) but kept disruption to a minimum while retaining the dialogue that had been established between the executive leadership team and employees.

In addition, the executive leadership team, in cooperation with communications, insisted on weekly photographs being put up across the building so that people could see progress. Providing the chance to vote for their preferred option, the company presented employees with a selection of scale models of

the workstations and chairs that would furnish the new office. On announcing the furniture that had been chosen, they then displayed these items, along with the colours of the carpet that employees had contributed towards choosing. Small initiatives such as these helped to play a key, supporting role in successful change, serving to remind employees of their involvement in deciding key features of their future work environment.

Capacity building: Training for technology change

Crucial in fostering the collaborative work style that would drive future innovation, empowering employees to support and participate in the change formed a key pillar of the change leadership strategy. In addition to 'behaviours-focused' initiatives (discussed below), employees' capacities would be developed through further competency-based training centring on the use of new technology. Introduced to the new ergonomic desk design were a new phone system, head set and computer. With additional training on how to use the new wi-fi set-up, employees were given training sessions to ensure they would be able to use and benefit from the technology immediately and to maximum effect upon moving to the new space.

The potential for collaboration within this knowledge-based environment would be heightened by the simplification of information distribution, analysis, coordination and decision-making. In addition, the overriding effect of new technology on the flow of information and work processes within the organization, as well as in facilitating learning and knowledge development through coordinated interaction and sharing among employees, would help to create an environment facilitative of successful culture change (Guha et al., 1997).

Change leadership initiatives: short-term wins to break the silo

Small victories motivate bigger ones while helping to maintain the pace of change. As Lawson and Price propose in their 2003 article "The Psychology of Change Management," in preparing for transition, an organization must ensure that employees have the capacity to absorb, experiment with and integrate new skills and knowledge as they make the step from ADKAR's

“awareness” of the need for change to a “desire” to support and participate in it (Lawson & Price, 2003). Sanofi Canada’s executive leadership team developed a series of activities in order to prepare employees for the new work environment and to rehearse key behaviours before “going live.” Beginning in August 2012, these activities—designed to produce small and attainable successes—were used to build awareness and educate employees about their new environment, while addressing the necessary behaviours to be adopted in embracing a new culture of work at the company.

Open door challenge

As part of the change management initiatives designed to simulate an office environment without closed offices, in October, Sanofi Canada employees were invited to participate in an “open door” challenge. Employees with closed offices hung a calendar with coloured stickers on their door to allow them to both observe their own habits and become more aware of current practices in general. A red sticker meant the employee had to “stop and ask themselves why they were opting to close the door, and created a learning opportunity in anticipation of the move” remembers Isabelle Aubin, manager, organizational development, human resources. Weekly communications updates then provided progress reports via email and allowed the reactions of employees to be addressed and discussed openly. At the same time, Sanofi Canada’s information services team converted empty offices into “alcoves” to simulate the small spaces that, in the new office, would be available for *ad hoc* conference calls or private conversations.

Less paper challenge

The “less paper” challenge initiative was aimed at preparing employees for printing only when absolutely necessary in their new LEED-certified⁵ environment and during November, the company asked employees to clean their offices and keep track of their progress with stickers, while reducing their printing whenever they could. “Results were significant” remembers Alain Fortier. “I think we used 50 percent less paper that month, and made

5. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification is awarded by the Canada Green Building Council.

sure that employees were made aware of their achievement” (Fortier, personal communication, May 30, 2013).

Getting to know you

Prior to moving, teams were informed only of which floor they would be on, with access to the exact details of the floor plan for the new building kept secret in order to minimize disruption to preparations. In December, the company devised a “getting to know you” session, in which employees who would be seated together in the new office—but might not yet know each other—would interact in a thirty-second “speed-dating” style scenario. Sharing information about who they were and what they did at the company, they would break the ice, encouraging the beginnings of collaborative relationships that would be necessary when working side by side in the new office.

Furniture mock-up

During this time, employees were also invited to view and give their feedback on prototypes of the desk areas to be installed in the new building open-plan offices, the types of chairs that would be supplied, as well as the colours of the new carpets. Employees were encouraged to contribute their views regarding the design of the workstations and innovation rooms—small, imaginatively decorated spaces designed especially for small meetings and brainstorming sessions—as part of a formal and planned initiative. This activity formed a part of the company’s wider policy of involving employees in the building of their new environment, garnering increased enthusiasm for and participation in the change process.

Keys to the building: The “dos and don’ts” of collaborative space

To mitigate the culture shock of moving into an open space for employees, some of whom had worked in closed offices for forty years, Sanofi Canada produced a set of guidelines packaged in an attractive key-shaped USB stick, including the guide *The Etiquette of Open Space* in conjunction with a paper booklet distributed to employees entitled *Etiquette for the Open Plan*

Work Environment. Directly addressed were the subjects of noise, distracting behaviour, clutter, food and odours, along with the proper use of community areas, and these initiatives communicated the suggested behaviours for working in close proximity, paving the way for greater comfort in collaboration and a “productive and harmonious environment.” (Sanofi Canada, 2012)

With regards to noise in the open-plan work environment, employees were reminded to “stay conscious of your surroundings and lower your voice if necessary” (Sanofi Canada, 2012). Cell phones were to be set to vibrate when in the office, while desk phone speakers along with music and radio were to be redirected through the new and specially provided headsets. Equally, the newfound ease with which colleagues’ attention could be accessed in the open space was to be exercised with sensitivity; their need for uninterrupted concentration should be respected, with shouting across the open space strongly discouraged.

Clutter should be kept to a minimum, both in terms of the unnecessary printing of paper materials as well as personal possessions that, especially with the extra clothing required in winter, should be stowed in the provided closets. Emphasis would be placed on keeping the community areas tidy after use, with employees asked to consider the use of the special alcoves for lengthier discussions or conversations of a delicate nature.

Finally, the subject of food and odours was tackled. No longer would staff be able to take their lunch alone in their offices, and although consuming “snacks and drinks” (Sanofi Canada, 2012) would be permitted at one’s desk, lunch would now be taken in the cafeteria. This would both encourage employees to mix, socialize and minimize antisocial food smells in the work environment, while also presenting management with a handy and relaxed forum for *ad hoc* housekeeping announcements. Scents and colognes were also requested to be kept at discreet levels in consideration of potential allergies.

Strong executive sponsorship

Jon Fairest took up the position of president and chief executive officer at Sanofi Canada in April of 2012, soon after the company had announced to employees its intention to stay in Laval. In the intervening eight months since the divestment of Dermik, the company had neither been able to make

6. Both would require a commute of between forty-five minutes to an hour during peak traffic times, meaning a considerable change to many employees’ routine.

an internal announcement to employees regarding the location of the new offices, nor reveal a great deal more behind its decision making process due to the lack of a suitable site, and the question of approval from Sanofi Canada's global head quarters in Paris also lay unresolved.

With half of Sanofi Canada's employees already residing in Laval, but the other half commuting in from the North Shore or Montreal's West Island⁶, the uncertainty and lack of information as to whether the company might move to downtown Montreal or the West Island had contributed to a climate of considerable insecurity among employees. A considerable number had even expressed that they would reconsider their employment at Sanofi Canada should either of these situations become reality. As Fairest recalls, "employees not only had doubts regarding their new home, but (also) where the business was going." The confirmation that the company would make its new home in Laval's Biotech City therefore proved to be a major milestone in the change timeline, and the first major victory in securing the backing of employees in its planned relocation.

During periods of change in organizations, leaders must "provide employees with hope, purpose, and encouragement to try new things" (Cable, 2012). In assuming the role of Sponsor and that of Kotter's (1996) change leadership "driver," the executive leadership team set about stewarding the transition from "fear, uncertainty, and a lack of trust and vision" to a common sense of purpose that led to collective action. In personally rallying the company's employees to embrace transformational change, he employed a combination of positive imagery through written and spoken messages reinforced through behaviour role modelling.

President's message

If a leader "cannot convince employees to unite in the pursuit of a common goal" Cable (2012) asserts, it is "unlikely that lots and lots of people are going to make sustained common change." Establishing a direct line of communication between upper management and all Sanofi Canada employees, regular messages were drafted and signed by Fairest, explaining and clarifying the steps and initiatives leading up to the move itself, as and when they happened. These messages, disseminated via company intranet,

7. The possibility of moving to Ontario had been discussed as a viable alternative to staying in Quebec, however it was eventually rejected.

sought to focus employees' perceptions on change as positive, good news, and the opportunity to build a new Sanofi together, while staying in Laval, Québec⁷. They also contained key information regarding new technology training programs, regular updates on the progress of the new site, structure of the executive leadership team and a call to action accompanied by specific instructions for the countdown to moving day.

This medium of communication served both to reinforce and build upon the dialogue established by change management through its change ambassadors, and the message content revealed a president and chief executive officer who effectively invoked positive imagery to rally and inspire employees. Choosing to frame the change narrative within the context of a new chapter for the company that would follow a period of considerable upheaval, uncertainty and stress, Fairest spoke of a "new home for all of you" and the chance "to work differently, break down the silos, collaborate more" (Fairest, personal communication, June 4, 2012) The culture of needless secrecy and confidentiality would give way to a new way of working where employees at Sanofi Canada would, "collaborate and talk to people, get to know each other more and make [the new offices] a fun and friendly place to go." In addition, messages took on a congratulatory tone to acknowledge the difficult period employees had been through, in what, affirms Fairest, constituted "a huge opportunity to change people's mind-set and re-engage them" while securing their endorsement and participation in the desired change (Fairest, personal communication, July 11, 2013).

Role modeling change

In a period of change in the organization, employees must see those senior to them actively modeling change. This behaviour, as Lawson and Price (2003) have suggested, must also be confirmed by surrounding groups in order to have lasting influence. If statements of intent by influencers are discredited, individuals around them will feel less pressure to change their behaviour, and it is for this reason that the part played by role modeling in successful change at Sanofi Canada was closely linked to the role and effect of change ambassadors. This also made the choice of change ambassadors particularly important: employees would not act upon the endorsement of peers whose judgment they did not trust and whom they could not easily establish a rapport with.

Measurement

Sanofi Canada completed its move to Laval's Biotech City on February 11, 2013, and once employees had made the transition into the new open space work environment, the company commenced the process of gauging their reaction to their new environment. Conducting its first survey since the move, the company aimed to measure how employees were adapting the "etiquette" of open space, whether they were maximizing the use of the new collaborative spaces and new technology, and whether behaviour was changing in the desired ways: had collaboration, communication and transparency increased?

Asking employees to rate nineteen statements from strong disagreement to strong agreement depending on levels of satisfaction, the survey, entitled *Our New Workplace Environment*, covered a variety of key areas of change management. These included levels of inter- and intra-team communication, collaboration and access to collaborative spaces, use of new technology, noise and disruption, levels of engagement and overall satisfaction.

Employee survey

The results of Sanofi Canada's employee survey cannot be read without reference to the period from 2006 to 2012, characterized by long periods of uncertainty for many at the company. Prompted by the loss of revenues associated with the expiry of certain of the company's key patents, the company's best efforts could do little to prevent employee morale from suffering in the light of the several downsizings and restructurings that marked this period.

Sanofi Canada's move to new and modern offices therefore represented for employees both a physical break with the locale associated with this period, as well as the psychological distance needed to make a clean break. Coupled with a promising start to business in 2013, morale could be expected to enjoy a 'feel-good' bounce as the company put this period behind it. While these factors must be sensibly factored into any potential margin of error contained in the results, they do not render specific enquiries regarding early levels of collaboration prompted by the new work environment insignificant.

Satisfaction and engagement

In two separate questions, employees were asked to share whether they felt “satisfied with [their] new work environment” and whether the “new workplace environment [had] a positive impact on engagement.” With regards to “general satisfaction” with their new environment, an overwhelming 88% (Appendix 2) of employees polled agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied. Concerning personal levels of engagement, a sizeable and clear majority at 61% (Appendix 3) agreed or strongly agreed that the new work environment was having a positive impact.

Given the high levels of scepticism with which plans to move to an open concept were met across company ranks, and the radical departure from the previous space that it entailed, such high levels of general satisfaction are undoubtedly testament to the effectiveness of positive imagery consistently used by the executive leadership team in messaging leading up to the move, as well as the training and preparation painstakingly planned and delivered companywide. In addition, the adaptability and open mindedness of Sanofi Canada’s group of employees also cannot be underestimated in the face of such radical change.

Collaboration

Fifty-five percent of those polled agreed or strongly agreed that the “level of collaboration with [their] colleagues” had increased (Appendix 4), with the collaborative alcoves polling 22.5% of total votes, proving to be the most popular venue of collaboration (Appendix 5). This result tallies with the anecdotal evidence gathered by upper management that quick and ad hoc meetings were now becoming common in the new environment. Reflecting greater levels of teamwork and communication since the transition into the new work environment, this emboldening of employees, prompting faster and independent decision making, is sure to have a positive effect on productivity, providing a base upon which to continue striving for the “agility,” “collaboration” and “productivity” that formed the cornerstones of the company’s change vision.

8. Microsoft Lync is an instant messaging client as part of Microsoft Office 365. It replaces Windows Messenger, and unlike Windows Live Messenger, has a different feature set that is targeted toward corporate environments.

Technology

Much emphasis was placed on the role of technology as the enabler of both transformational change in Sanofi Canada's work culture and quick adaptation to the new work environment. Without the proper tools and corresponding capacities, the company had reasoned that employees could not be expected to make the leap from the "silo" to a hyper-modern open space work environment. The survey therefore polled employees based upon the demands of their position and their ability to meet those demands using the new technology at their disposal.

With 78% using their new mobile docking capability, 60% Microsoft Lync⁸ and 54% the projection screens (Appendix 6), the technology with which employees claimed to be most familiar was that most instrumental to enhancing the communication, mobility and collaboration sought after by the company. Even if there was certainly more work to be done, these numbers, when read in conjunction with those concerning engagement, suggest that information technology training initiatives put in place before the move had enabled employees to embrace a new and collaborative style of work through the tools the company had provided.

Cohabiting in the open space

Sharing and working in the new work environment presented a series of challenges, and certainly formed the source of much anxiety among employees as they prepared to move, sentiments that had been highlighted by change ambassadors in their dialogue with human resources in the months leading up to the move. The survey therefore based its enquiries into this topic over a series of different questions to gauge how employees were sharing the new space. Clearly, without successful cohabitation, there could be no hope for increased collaboration and any subsequent bounds in innovation.

Eighty-two percent and 75% (Appendices 7 and 8) respectively deemed levels of "background noise in [their] immediate working area" and "the volume of their colleagues' voices" to be "acceptable", while overall the "level of distraction related to the open space" (Appendix 9) was also deemed "acceptable" to 78% of respondents. The ability to concentrate in the open space, and the importance of respecting people's need to work without constant interruption was also addressed, with 64% of Sanofi Canada employees agreeing (Appendix 10) that their colleagues had thus far been considerate of their need to concentrate.

Anecdotal evidence of change

Comments gathered as part of the formal questionnaire, as well as informal discussions with employees, have revealed further anecdotal evidence of a change in the company's work culture since moving, testimony that must again be considered in the context of the previously detailed downsizing period between 2006 and 2012.

The survey revealed that employees were having many more ad hoc meetings, and this in itself was not only evidence of the embracing of a new mode of work, it also resulted in less items travelling up to the executive committee table for approval than before. In the past, a quick question might not be able to be resolved until a meeting had been scheduled, three days down the line. This, suggest members of the executive leadership team, was proof of enhanced levels of collaboration and communication prompted by the move having "pushed decision making down into the organization." That "people are making decisions more quickly" shows firstly a greater sense of empowerment, with "employees talking to [executive and upper management] more on a day to day basis" and secondly, that the company is showing the signs of agility and a collaborative nature quashed by the "silo" culture of the previous offices.

Members of the executive leadership team have also observed increased levels of engagement evidenced in "happier faces" around the new office. As one member explained, "I just see happier people. You just have to walk around to see it... I never saw as many smiling faces in the other building." In addition, they add, a new "entrepreneurial spirit" can also be felt around Sanofi Canada and employees now retain "an extra level of courage and energy to do things a bit differently. We are becoming more efficient" (Anonymous, personal communication, June 26, 2013).

Conclusion

Certainly, the results of the survey are extremely positive for the company. When read in conjunction with the low attrition rates for the first quarter of 2013, they present the beginnings of a favourable curve for continued change. Sanofi Canada must seek to further harness the bounce in engagement, satisfaction and collaboration evidenced since the move. In order to continue building on what has been achieved, the reinforcement of positive messaging, regular dialogue with employees and "bottom-up" role modelling that have

prompted the beginnings of a lasting change at Sanofi Canada must therefore themselves be incorporated permanently into the company's culture to make for the real and lasting change to drive creativity, innovation and sustained growth.

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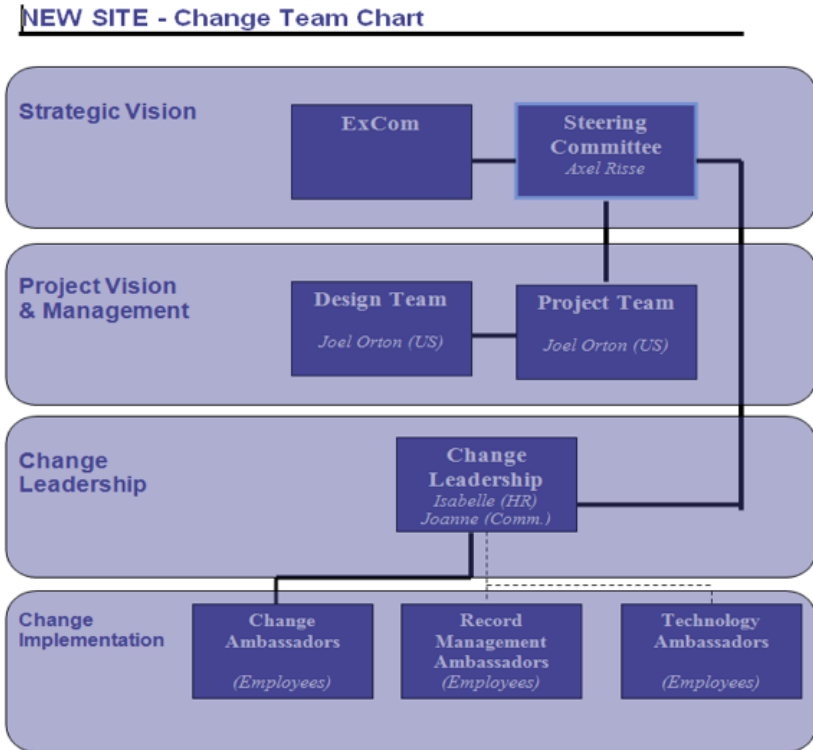
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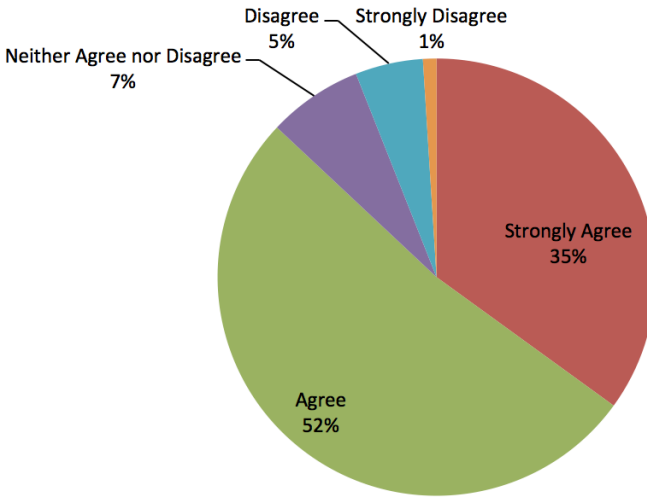
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Appendix 1



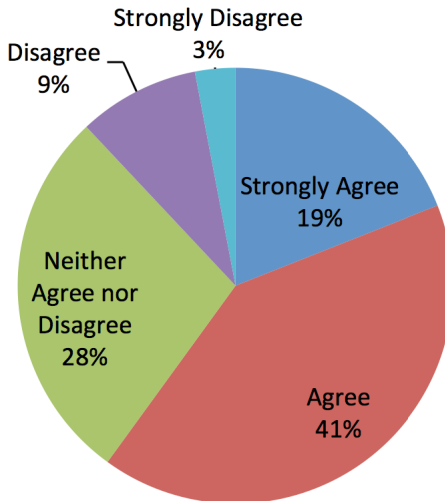
Appendix 2

In general, I am satisfied with my new work environment



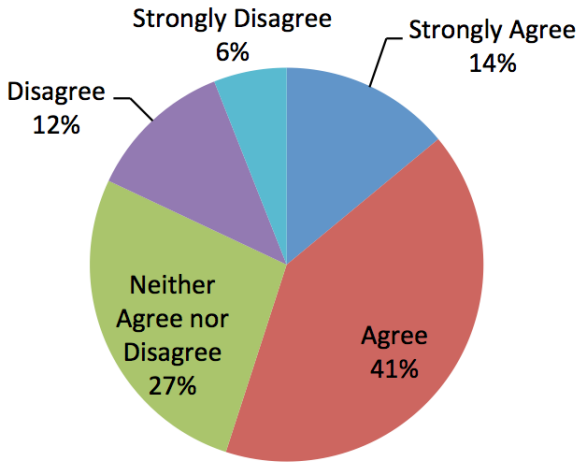
Appendix 3

My new workplace environment has a positive impact on my engagement



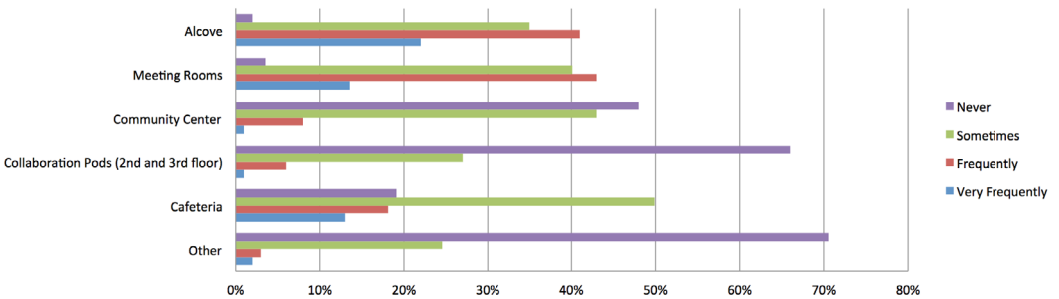
Appendix 4

The level of collaboration with my colleagues has increased



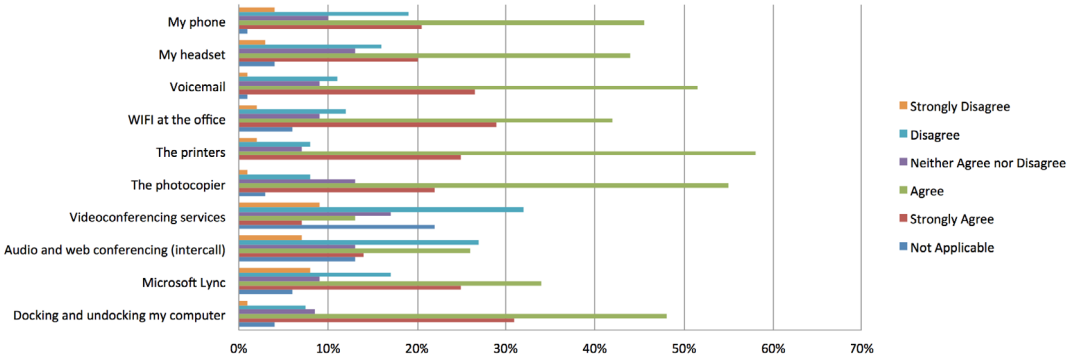
Appendix 5

I use many of the available collaborative spaces to collaborate with my colleagues



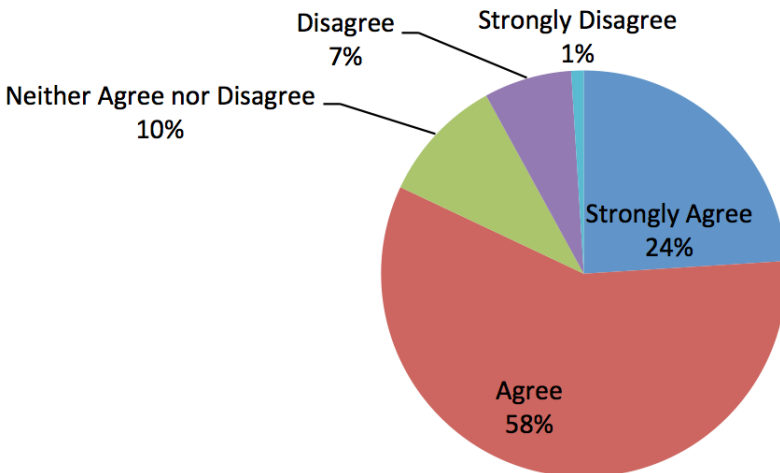
Appendix 6

Based on my needs, I know enough about these tools to use them effectively...



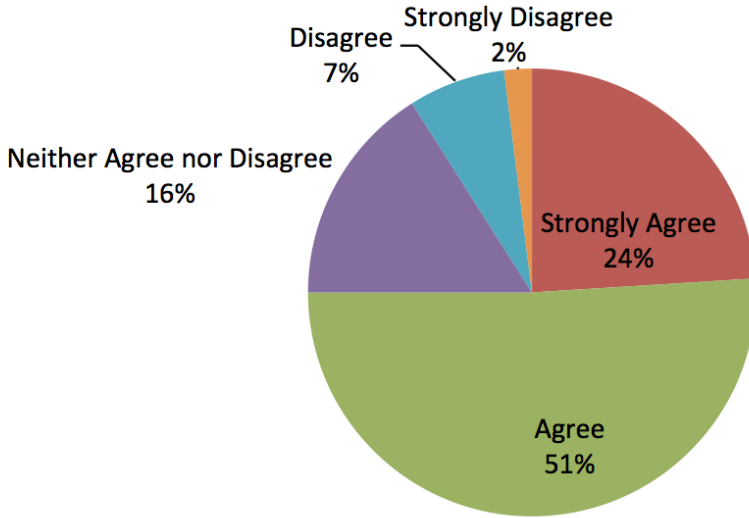
Appendix 7

The background noise in my immediate working area is acceptable



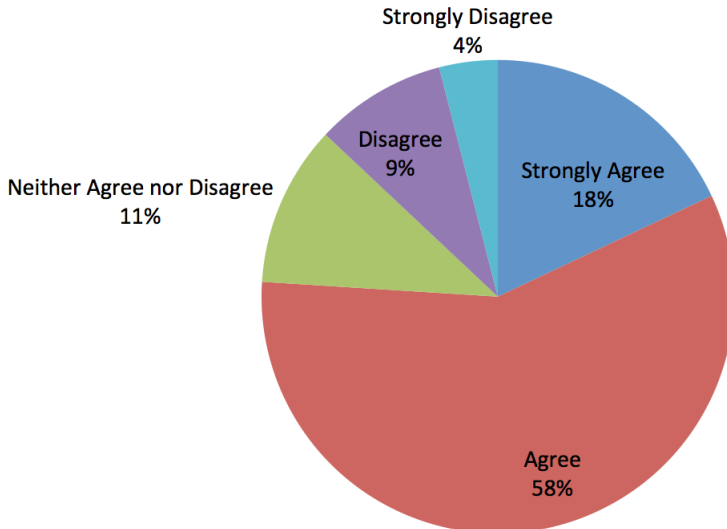
Appendix 8

People around me use a volume of voice that is acceptable



Appendix 9

The level of distraction related to open space is acceptable



Appendix 10

The level of distraction related to open space is acceptable

