

Company Name	Point of contact for narrative	Case Study Subject
Yorkshire Building Society Group	Sean Mileusnic Head of People Development	Smart Working

Business Benefits Realised	Business Metrics Demonstrating Value
Reduced absenteeism	2.76% in 2015 compared with 3.03% in 2013
Increased colleague engagement	Colleague engagement index increased to 78% in 2014 from 76% in 2013
Greater colleague advocacy	77% of colleagues in 2014 would recommend YBSG as a great place to work compared with 75% of colleagues in 2013
Improved work/life balance	74% of colleagues in 2014 agreed they were able to strike the right work/life balance compared with 73% of colleagues in 2013

## Background

In late 2013 through to early 2014, due to the growth of the organisation we moved 800 of our colleagues from our main Bradford office to new premises in central Leeds. This was a significant change for the organisation as YBS had been based at the Yorkshire Drive site for 22 years and in Bradford since 1975. It also signified a growing, modernising organisation and this presents cultural challenges.

It was very important to the YBS leadership team that the change was handled in a very people centric way, putting the needs and considerations of our people at the forefront of the move. To do this we established a Colleague Forum, representative of the departments who would be moving to the new Leeds site.

The fortnightly Forum raised any areas of concern and we worked through the solutions together. The outcome was a positive moving experience and our surveys showed that 68% of colleagues were happy/very happy with the move to Leeds compared with only 35% of colleagues 6 months earlier, when the move was announced.

## Smart Working

One of the initiatives introduced as part of the office move, based on extensive colleague feedback was 'smart working'. This helped the smooth transition and continues to be an important feature of the Head Office sites working practice. Whilst flexible working has been available to all our colleagues for many years, smart working was a concept to introduce flexibility in hours and location in a way that was more suited to the informal work practices within Head Office sites.

Smart working was quickly prioritised by the Colleague Forum as a key topic for discussion. Colleagues were concerned about various aspects but one in particular was the impact on their time, their travel to work arrangements, their childcare commitments and consequently, overall, their wellbeing. We took this seriously as despite all the delights of the new premises, it could all be lost if we didn't listen and respect the real concerns from our people. The concerns stemmed from the places they lived and the need for a longer or different commute, the impact of rush hour traffic in a bigger city such as Leeds and the reliance on public transport for some. Many colleagues had childcare and schooling arrangements that they would struggle to make fit with the new journey to work.

Flexible working was already in place across the whole organisation, which is a more formalised arrangement where people can agree to work part-time, shift patterns and flexi-time depending on the operational area requirements. Following feedback from the Colleague Forum we also introduced compressed working on the basis of a 9-day fortnight.

Formal flexible working is well utilised but was in some respects too rigid for the more flexible areas of the business where output is measured on delivery of objectives and there is more remote management on a day to day basis. It also didn't meet the need for short-term and ad-hoc flexible arrangements. Hence the idea of smart working was developed. Smart working is about more flexible work practices where colleagues can broadly work their hours at times of the day that suit them, can occasionally work from home or other sites and can agree specific working hour practices with their manager, who is the person who knows them and their role requirements best.

To support Managers with the introduction of smart working, we ran a series of workshops aimed at understanding any concerns or barriers and providing guidance.

## Business Benefits

The overarching feedback is really positive and there has been a visible shift in the number of colleagues 'smart working'. Although it isn't formally monitored, some Head Office departments estimate that as many as 75% of their colleagues do smart working of some kind.

Not only does this hold benefit for individuals in that they have more control over their working time, it also holds benefit for the business in terms of optimising the usage of office and desk space, therefore containing cost.

Managers see the benefits from enabling colleagues 'focussed' time away from distractions in the office to undertake key pieces of work. Colleagues feel more empowered to plan their working day, have greater control over their work life balance and feel a heightened sense of trust in their relationship with their Manager.

## Key Learning

For business areas to truly embrace smart working, Managers and Leaders need to role model it and lead by example, therefore making it 'ok' for colleagues to follow suit.

Good systems and technology are needed to underpin the move to smart working, particularly as YBS is now spread across multiple sites. More colleagues now use laptops, there is a greater use of telephone and video conferencing and there is an increasing number of colleagues using Microsoft Lync – enabling virtual meetings from your desktop.

We know in practice we still have mixed usage and practice across YBS but we will continue to evolve, review feedback and build capability to work in this way.