

The potential of 'performance arts' to support change management

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This research was conducted by **Tracy Harwood** and **Sophy Smith** at **De Montford University, UK**

Summary

This paper reports on a novel approach to supporting creativity and change management at a plant breeding and seed packing company in the UK through a devised 'performance arts' initiative. The case study explores the arrangement between the firm and artists' efforts to produce a performance piece to manage a period of change within the company. Through interviewing key people in the initiative, the researchers found that it promoted a creative process that was built on a deep level of business engagement and co-creation, supporting the firm through a period of change.

'Devising' is a useful way to think about change management

Bureaucratic or autocratic processes are typically associated with firms and change management processes. Devising work in an arts context demands an iterative approach to managing change. In the arts, devising is a process that encompasses improvisation to generate social interaction within a community of practice. Improvisation is used as a devising tool to connect individuals and groups with past, present and future practices. It incorporates a collaborative approach to producing creative pieces, working with audiences as creative collaborators to reflect the needs and wants of the public. This element can take a variety of forms such as discussion groups and creative workshops.

Devising has the potential to break down barriers and strengthen employee relations

The study revealed that a devised performance arts initiative that includes the participation of employees in the creative process has the potential to build and strengthen a community during change. The creative process facilitated the breaking down of barriers between teams of employees across the firm and generated a shared experience and memory about place, work and people and has the potential to become deeply embedded in corporate memory.

This summary is by **Shelly-Ann Gajadhar, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

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