

Integration; Merger; Take-over; Amalgamation – How to Bring Together Disparate Entities & Cultures

Most organisations take their foot off the peddle when they sign an agreement to merge or integrate two entities (offices, stores, companies, teams etc.) but the real work actually commences once the agreement is signed.

Not appreciating this is one reason most organisations do not get their hoped-for returns. In fact, the difference between a good and a great integration is the difference between complacency (and reverting to established ways of working / BAU) and what we call ‘Action Driven Engagement’.

Trust and engagement is not built on elapsed time but on the accumulation of positive and meaningful experiences.

Integration success largely depends on the level of excitement & engagement which is generated during a transition period and this largely depends on the number of positive experiences a group of people have – not the elapsed time or the systems put in place to make an integration efficient. Such mechanics of integration are ‘threshold’ or ‘hygiene’ factors, which organisations have to get right or they will thwart progress, but beyond this, these systems have little impact on excitement and engagement and, in turn, little impact on the level of commitment people have to the merged entity.

Integration success is far more correlated with positive experiences and these include: experiences where people see opportunities; feel empowered; are acknowledged for their strengths; discover similarities between the two entities; feel a sense of belonging and; feel supported.

As a result of any integration or merger, you want people to feel the following:

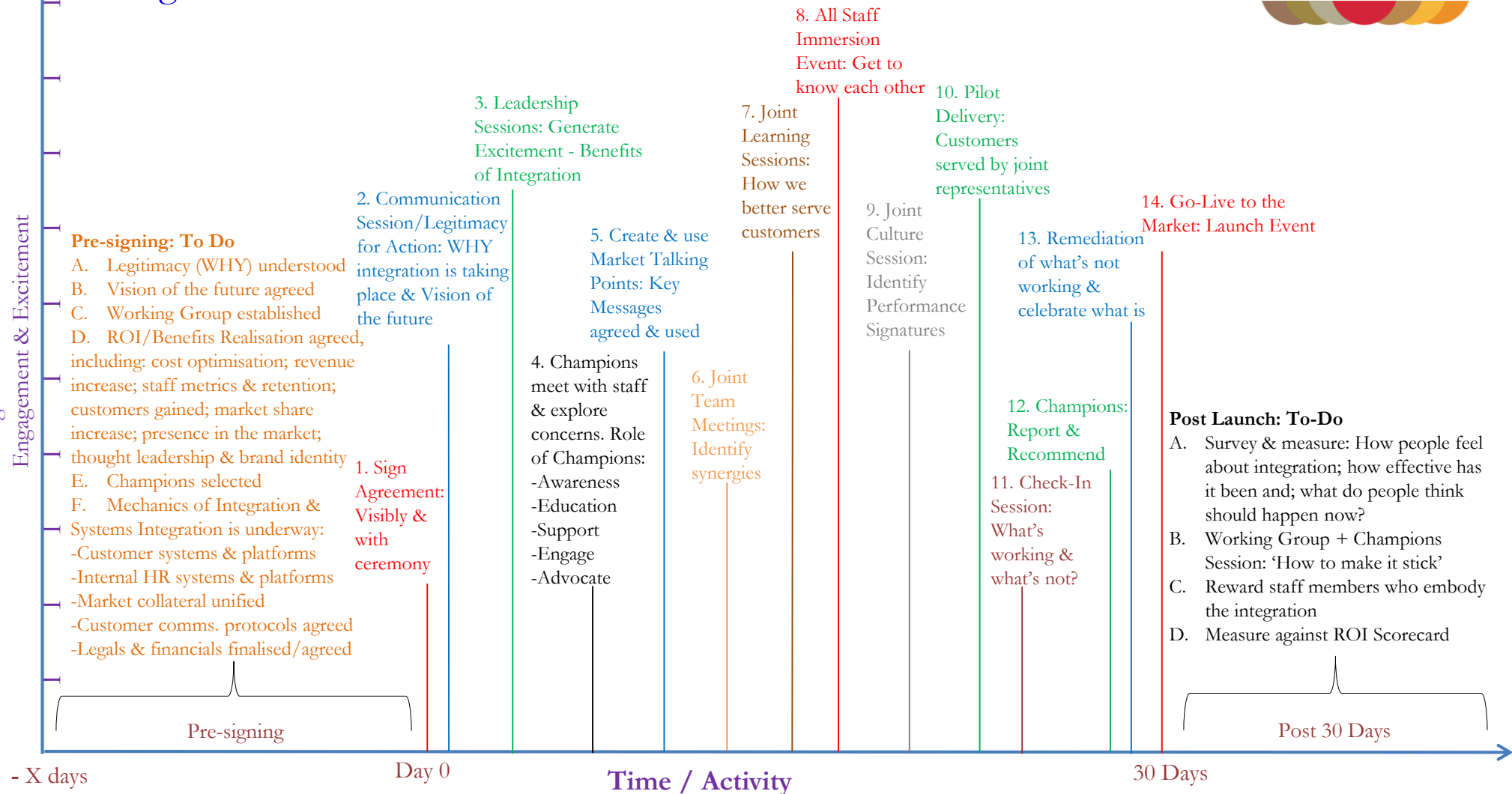
- I can learn and develop
- I can grow and better advance my career
- I can have a real role in helping us be successful
- I will work with new, interesting and challenging people and will get new expertise and experience
- I belong and have a place – I am part of something and, most importantly;
- I have a purpose and I can contribute – I matter and what I do makes a difference

These are the critical drivers of engagement, so the more occasions in which people feel these things the more likely they are to be engaged and exceed expectations. In this regard, we always schedule lots of opportunities for people to come together and share positive experiences and on the next page we show an integration plan we have used many times (successfully) in the past 12-months to help our clients integrate disparate workforces.

The form and structure of an integration is important but not as important as getting people excited and engaged as these are the biggest drivers of behaviour - get the behaviours right and people will overcome difficulties and find a way forward.

Integration Plan

Integration Effectiveness
Engagement & Excitement



- ✓ The working group must define the 'Legitimacy for Action', that is, WHY are we doing this and what is the Vision of the 2 entities, successfully integrated.
- ✓ Champions are selected based on their ability to raise awareness, educate, support, engage and advocate for change. Champions must have bought into the Vision.
- ✓ Working group & champions strive to uncover derailers / identify impacts on engagement. Most concerns can be managed if you are aware of them but silent issues are killers.
- ✓ Champions must gauge level of buy-in and commitment and determine how to ramp up commitment. Champions should generate a report, re: How to nail integration.
- ✓ Working group & champions create talking points to ensure consistency of communication when describing the merger across all professional and social settings.
- ✓ The more frequently people from each entity can cross-over and discover each other the better – schedule cross over events.
- ✓ Hold joint sessions exploring the more interesting customers and discussing approaches which have been successful.
- ✓ Go-live: phone protocols, business cards, signature blocks, sales collateral, branding, key messages, templates & pitch docs. etc. – point at which the 2 entities are one brand.