

BAILY GARNER IS GOING THROUGH A TRANSFORMATION

We've always punched above our weight, taking on projects alongside some of the largest consultants in the country and shaping important conversations around the biggest issues impacting our sector – ranging from Damp and Mould, The Future Homes Standard and Contractor Insolvency, to name just a few.

Since 2016, we've more than doubled in size as a business and met an ambitious growth target; this year, we're setting our sights even higher.

While this is exciting, if we're to reach our next milestone as a business, we need to continuously lead from the front by finding new ways to delight our clients and fulfil our purpose, which is “to positively impact people's lives”.

This is where transformations will prove vital to our future, and why I've taken on the role of Director of Transformation at Baily Garner.

WHY ARE WE TRANSFORMING?

'The Why' behind our transformation journey is multifaceted.

Like all businesses within our industry, we're not immune to the long-running skills shortage and need to make sure we operate as efficiently as possible.

But the strongest impetus for change came from the results of our client perception survey.

Our clients were overwhelmingly positive about working with us, complementary of our expert knowledge and honest, straightforward approach. But they also said we're too quiet about what we do in the realm of innovation.

One particular comment captured this feeling perfectly: “A safe pair of hands, but not going to blow the doors off”.

We see transformation as the perfect vehicle for us to make changes that will alter this perception and at the same time foster a culture of innovation that differentiates us from other consultants.

We're not starting from scratch in this endeavour either, and that's another reason we're transforming the business – it's in our DNA.

That might sound counterintuitive when we're proposing transformation as something new, but that's because we've always made bold investments to improve the way we work, we just haven't called them 'transformations'.

Our Practice intranet was built in-house from the ground up and serves as a perfect example.

BGNet made it easier to perform administrative tasks related to our projects and track their progress in a user-friendly way, and as well as saving our colleagues time, making this investment allowed us to retain visibility over our projects as they increased in number.

Although we made other meaningful business decisions, it's no coincidence that the use of BGNet has coincided with a period of strong growth, and we've since built upon this software to refine it as we set our sights to scale the business further.

HOW ARE WE TRANSFORMING?

'The How' of our transformation journey is a bit more difficult to explain than the why, as every area of the business we seek to improve will require a different approach.

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In broad terms, however, every transformation will be carried out in four phases:

- Discover – Looking at a process and identifying the individual steps, how long each of them takes and the resulting outcome for our staff and/or clients
- Design – Theorising and testing a new process driven by assumptions for how we can make things easier and more efficient for our staff and improve the output for clients
- Deliver – Implementing the transformation on a larger scale across the business, providing all the requisite training
- Rediscover – Evaluating the results of the transformation to see if the new process resulted in efficiencies or a more desirable outcome

Even if we follow these steps and discover tangible benefits from our transformation, implementing it on a larger scale is where things get a bit trickier.

Just as not every transformation is going to yield the intended results in the delivery phase, we recognise that adopting new behaviours is a process in itself and that the output of any change generally follows a ‘J curve’ of progression.

This means that performance will likely drop in the short term before evening out as new behaviours become familiar. But once they’re established at scale, performance will reach new heights, which will benefit the business in terms of efficiency and result in a better experience for our clients.

We’ve already set up the transformation process in a way that we believe will expedite our journey through the J curve by integrating our colleagues into the process.

Before we began to apply a systems thinking approach to how we make transformations, we worked hard to encourage a culture where ideas can flow freely, their value not determined by where the progenitors sit within our management structure.

We believe we’ve been successful, and our recent attainment of B Corp status provides compelling evidence. Our journey to securing the prestigious accolade began with an idea the Baily Garner Futures Group spoke passionately about at our 2022 Quality Summit event, and from there we assembled the necessary resource to make it a reality, ultimately scoring 98.9 – well above the required threshold of 80.

For our transformation initiative, we’ve adopted the same spirit of collaboration and invited colleagues from every area of our business to share their ideas on how we can do things better, both for them and our clients, and the level of buy-in has been tremendously encouraging.

WHAT ARE WE TRANSFORMING?

Now we come to ‘The What’ of the matter.

The number one objective on our business plan is to provide “the best client experience”, so it makes sense that our first transformation will be made in pursuit of that ambition.

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Specifically, we're looking at how we currently communicate and share information with our clients.

We scrutinised the way we share documentation with clients and realised there's a disconnect between that and the way we communicate digitally, even though we have a platform already used in-house that can marry both objectives together for a more seamless experience.

We now envisage moving to a process in which our clients have full visibility of all their projects through online dashboard reports so they can hold us to account against our delivery objectives and raise any queries with us, all in one place.

This way of reporting is already in use by some within the business, and we discovered a correlation between their projects and favourable KPI scores related to our communication and reporting, which is why we're now implementing training and encouraging its use across the business as our first transformation.

We expect there to be a period of adjustment that aligns with the J curve, and even potential resistance from clients who feel that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it".

But, once we demonstrate the benefits, this will be quickly overcome. In cases where this method of sharing key documentation doesn't align with our clients' security protocols, we will actively work with their IT departments to reach a resolution.

A CULTURAL SHIFT

As a partnership that operates based on our values, we place a great deal of emphasis on creating a culture that is honest and straightforward while also being friendly and supportive.

We understand that transformation means change, and that can be exciting for some and scary for others.

That's why we've invested in a new HR platform that will allow us to issue 'pulse surveys' so we can understand what colleagues are thinking and where we can offer support to make the transitions easier for everyone involved.

We're fortunate to have the trust and support of our clients, too, and we'll be using our KPI questionnaire and scheduled feedback meetings to make sure the benefits we envisage on our transformation journey become their reality.

As we take the next step on our journey, we'll retain all the fundamental qualities our clients love about working with us, and moving forward, we'll be blowing the doors off too.



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