

Update

Transformation Programme newsletter



Welcome to your latest newsletter about our Good to Great plans. In each issue you'll be able to meet the team, find out what's going on and understand what our journey will mean for you. Let us know what you think!

A Good Day in the Office



A year ago, we made a decision to materially change our funeral prices in response to a profoundly changing environment. We cut the price of our simple

funeral and then throughout the year we also reduced the price of full-service funerals. We introduced an expanded range of services through our Simplicity business, which now provides the cheapest nationally available attended funeral service. However, this has not been at the expense of quality and in fact we saw the percentage of clients who said they would definitely recommend us improve over the year. I truly believe we continue to lead the market for client service, and now with very competitive pricing.

Reaction to this has been very positive and the good news is that we were able to grow our like-for-like market share in 2018. In my 23 years in the business this has never happened, so I'm

delighted that the work we're doing and the huge improvement in our competitive position is clearly working.

With this improvement in outlook, some of you may well be asking whether we actually need to carry on with the transformation programme. After all, we're doing OK, our customer satisfaction levels remain high and market share is strong. However, the reasons we committed to invest £50million remain.

We have an opportunity to modernise the way we do things. We have an opportunity to look at the way we present ourselves in the physical and digital worlds. We have an opportunity to make the most of our size as a major player in the funeral sector and build a business that meets consumers' needs, is innovative, transparent and truly leads the market in professionalism and service quality. This is what Good to Great is all about.

I do understand that from your point of view, you're probably wondering what's happening with the Good to Great programme – many of you won't have seen any changes yet and in all honesty, probably won't for a while yet. But I want to reassure you I am feeling incredibly encouraged by how it's all taking shape and the good progress we're making. The amount of planning that needs to be done is incredible and the change experts we've brought in have been working extremely closely with the hugely

experienced funeral experts in our business to make sure we get this right (you can read about Stephen Rymer's experiences of the programme below).

It's hard to single any one aspect of the programme out, so let me just give you a taster of what's been going on:

1. Only last week we approved the first new design branch investments, with work anticipated to begin in early summer this year.
2. Planning for our new Dignity branding is advancing well. The new look and feel is a definite move in the right direction for our national brand and I am really looking forward to sharing more with you later this year. (As an aside, I keep getting asked whether we are going to remove our long-standing local business names. The answer is no. Our investment in the Dignity brand is in addition to our commitment to our local heritage).
3. And last but not least, we've seen a spectacular upturn in visitors to our website following the mid-December refresh, with a big increase in the number of potential clients visiting branch pages to get their contact details.

Changing the way we do things is frightening, so we're not doing this lightly and I can assure you we won't launch anything new into the business without testing it robustly and thoroughly first. For example, we plan to launch three networks with new processes later this year and we will be testing these very carefully before any wider rollout to the rest of the business.

So yes, we will be asking you to do things differently and to think differently too. But there are plenty of exciting opportunities ahead for lots of us, for example:

- A new, flexible and specialist approach to arranging funerals; being there when and where our clients need us, 24/7
- New and exciting roles that will support our revised operating structure - keeping the client

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at the heart of what we do, but making the most of the skills, talent and experience we have right across our business

- Refined front of house and back of house roles that will work together to make sure we organise and deliver every detail of every funeral perfectly – meaning that colleagues will be able to concentrate on their strengths, rather than trying to do a bit of everything.

It's not just our processes, presentation and properties that need to go from Good to Great though, it's us as people too. I am actively working with my management team on what we need to do differently to be better leaders. I'll be honest and say that challenging yourself to change for the better can feel a little uncomfortable at times, but this is something we need to do, not only as individuals, but also as a business, working together.

So I'll sign off on that note and ask you to think about how you can help make Dignity work better as a team of 4,300 people. There's so much we can learn from each other and by pooling our collective passion, experience and care, we will truly make this a great place to work.

Yours, Mike.

CEO, Dignity Plc.

Regional Operations Roadshows Underway



Last week saw the first of three roadshows for Regional Managers and Area Managers from Funeral Operations, aimed to bring everyone up to speed on what's happening on our Good to Great journey.

The taskforce business leads each took turns to share plans with their teams and stress the importance of working together to make Dignity even more successful in future.

Gordon McGown, Head of Service Delivery, shared the plans for the future shape of Funeral Operations, talking about creating a more consistent network design and making sure we use our people, fleet and other resources more efficiently.

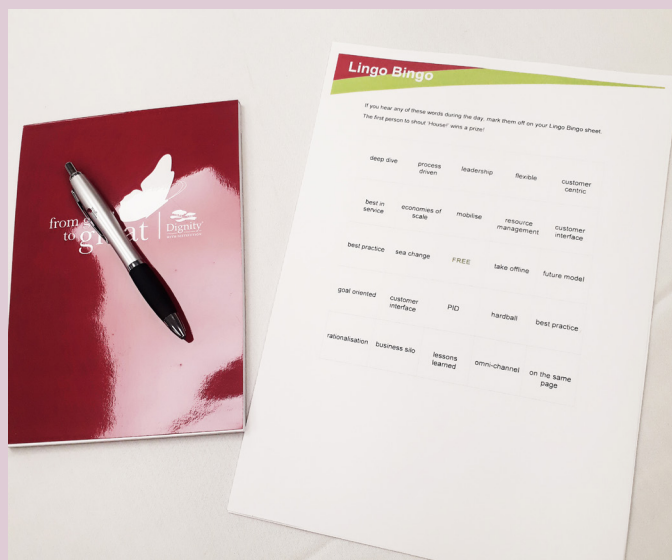
With arrangement perhaps one of the most key areas of transformation and one which has raised lots of questions, Regional Manager and business

lead **Stephen Rymer** told the team of the plans to create a seamless experience for customers and introducing a user-friendly tablet device to enrich this through a team of well-trained and well-equipped arrangers with consistent roles, nationwide.

The group also gained insight into property plans thanks to **Anthony Driver**, while **Justin Lewis** showcased the valuable input of the business development team. Attendees had an insightful session from Transformation Comms Lead, **Kate Goodman** on the importance of communicating with their teams, including a teaser of a brand new Team Brief coming your way in March. Not to be outdone, **Jamie Hawke** talked about progress being made in designing the management structure and **Mark Hull** led a fun session about brand and the plans being made to refresh Dignity's look and feel.

Andrew Judd, Operations Director, said, "It was a fantastic day and a great opportunity to get the Funeral Operations management team, their buddies and heads of department from around the business together. We learned a great deal about the need or collaborative working and formed an understanding that the transformation touches everyone as we walk shoulder to shoulder from Good to Great."

What would you like to hear about in the next newsletter? Let us know at goodtogreat@dignityuk.co.uk



Lingo Bingo

If you hear any of these words during the day, mark them off on your Lingo Bingo sheet. The first person to shout 'House!' wins a prize!

deep dive	process driven	leadership	flexible	customer centric
best in service	economies of scale	mobile	reducing management	customer interface
best practice	sea change	FREE	take offing	future model
goal oriented	customer interface	PID	handball	best practice
rationalisation	business silo	lessons learned	omni-channel	on the same page



60 Seconds with... Stephen Rymer

Name:

Stephen Rymer

Role:

Regional Manager (and Business Lead for Arrangement taskforce)

Where are you based?

North East Region

How long have you worked for Dignity?

I've worked for Dignity for 25 years, but have been in the funeral industry for 31 years.

What does a typical day look like for you?

If I'm in the office, I arrive at 7.45am, unlock the gates, put all the lights on in the funeral home and put the kettle on. I'm very lucky that I have an office in my own family business that was established in 1848 - I am 6th generation funeral director!

My office was the old workshop where I watched my grandfather and father hand make coffins. My vivid memories of the workshop are the smell of the shellac varnish which was brushed onto the coffins as the last coat, my grandfather pouring boiling water over the shoulders of the coffin sides so the wood didn't split when it was bent into shape and holding the solid brass handles that I struggled to lift because of how heavy they were.

I also deal with e-mails and take calls from colleagues. Sometimes I get a knock on my office door from funeral manager, Richard Jackson, asking for advice regarding a funeral. I like it when I get the opportunity to influence the service we offer the client. Richard



is carrying out an excellent job at Rymer's and if I can help this is the best part of my job.

How would you explain your job to a three-year-old?

When someone dies (usually an old person) my job is to help them say goodbye in a special way.

What's the most unusual/most eventful thing that's ever happened to you at work?

When we were a family business we provided a chauffeur driven service. I was a chauffeur for Charlton Heston and his wife, and Philip Schofield.

If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?

To reduce the amount of emails and paperwork, so we all can spend more time looking after the clients we serve.

What song/piece of music would you choose for your own funeral?

Bob Dylan's Forever Young – this would be for my children (listen to the lyrics).

What would your top tip be to take Dignity from Good to Great?

Don't say 'no it can't be done' straight away. Think about it, think of the benefits to us the staff, to the clients, and the company. I have been in various meetings in connection with Good to Great; initially I thought some of the suggestions discussed were not good ideas, but after a couple of days thinking about it I realised there were benefits of working in a different way and I realised I was wrong to think the new idea was not the right way.

The Rumour Mill: True or False?



I've heard our share price is recovering – do we really need to transform?

TRUE

The role of the transformation team is to stabilise the share price through transforming the business. The share price has recovered a little, as Mike explained in his message above, but it is not where it was. We need to change our ways of working to make sure our business is fit for the future and does not get left behind by competitors.

New! Listen in!

If you want to hear about transformation in more detail, why not listen in to our Good to Great dial in? Simply call free on **0800 0086371** to hear Transformation Director Paul Turner speak – don't forget leave your question or feedback at the end (10mins).



Contact us 

If you have a question about transformation, have some feedback or a suggestion for the next newsletter, then drop us an email at goodtogreat@dignityuk.co.uk