

Four Useful Lessons from the Tour de France in Yorkshire

The recent Grand Départ of the Tour de France in Yorkshire has been heralded widely as a huge success. Following on the heels of the 2012 Olympics the UK in general can feel very proud of the delivery of yet another huge sporting achievement.

The crowds were huge, the atmosphere electric and the scenery stunning. Perhaps most impressive was the total involvement of whole communities. Small villages along the length of the route were decked out with colourful decorations and many local celebrations were organised to mark the historic visit by the World's largest sporting event.

What are the lessons that we can learn from this triumph in order to help us achieve our own, much sought after success in Culture Change? I would highlight four key aspects:

1. A key individual with a powerful vision and the dogged determination to succeed. Local sheep farmer and Chief Executive of Welcome To Yorkshire, Gary Verity had the vision of bringing Le Tour to the county. He set about selling the idea to the Race Director and Organising Committee as well as to the people of Yorkshire. He demonstrated the benefits and used every ounce of his drive and enthusiasm to ensure success.
2. Attention to detail and precise organisation. We cannot rely on pure enthusiasm. All the details and possible eventualities need to be thought through carefully and addressed. The route, signage, information for locals and visitors, facilities, as well as listening to and dealing with the concerns of all parties.
3. Getting point 2 correct will help us with the next element: get everyone involved and create a community spirit. For the visit of Le Tour to the Yorkshire Dales this was very apparent. Every town, village and tiny hamlet along the route (and beyond) was doing their bit to add to the spectacle. Also involved were the estimated 5 million spectators that lined the route of the three UK Stages. Defending Champion Chris Froome described feeling *goose-bumps* as he battled his way up the climb of Holme Moss.
4. Recognise the benefits of all the hard work and expense. Putting on an event such as a stage of Le Tour (let alone an opening ceremony, two stages in Yorkshire and one in the south) takes a great deal of effort and costs a significant amount of money. We should look at this as an investment from which there will be significant dividends. Much of the input at a local level didn't have to cost a lot of money: making and putting up the miles of coloured bunting, painting old bikes yellow and decorating schools, guest houses, farms and pubs could be seen as a great opportunity to bring communities together in a common cause. Many farmers gained useful, extra income from temporary car parks, campsites and viewing areas. Guest houses, restaurants and local shops benefitted from the massive influx of visitors. Longer term, the reputation of Yorkshire as a beautiful and fascinating place to visit can only be beneficial for the local economy as fabulous pictures were

broadcast around the world to a global market. A final benefit will also be to inspire even more people to get out on their bikes with all the improvements in health and well-being that this will bring.

You can draw your own parallels between what is described above and what we are trying to achieve in a successful programme of culture change within our own organisations.