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Politie
HAZODI

Politie HAZODI

An experienced guide on the long road to integrity

Changing an organisational culture is never an easy task. But Police Zone HAZODI had no choice when faced with serious integrity and other ethical issues. They had to embark on gradual process of transformation by engraining new values and making integrity and respect part of their DNA. Fortunately they could rely on ISW Limits to assist and advise them on this long and winding road.



When the police zone HAZODI, covering the cities of Hasselt, Zonhoven and Diepenbeek, was faced with a serious integrity issue that led to national press coverage and the dismissal of several

top-ranking officers everybody understood that a drastic change was required. This scandal was the ultimate consequence of a failing organisational policy that led to undesired situations such as internal struggles for power, inconsistent reward policies etc.

The organisation's lack of clear vision and a transparent policy also led to a company culture lacking a sense of norms and values, even within the group of higher-ranked police officers, and consequently to a lack of trust from the police officers in their superiors. In addition many police officers and administrative employees had no idea of how to spend their working day with useful and effective tasks. "Often it felt like a holiday resort to them, where everyone could do whatever they felt like" comments Philip Pirard.



(No?) Need for drastic change

Philip Pirard is the corps commander who was asked to transform the police zone HAZODI into an organisation with a clear and respected integrity policy with a high degree of efficiency and transparent communication, with a correct and fair reward policy, and where every employee feels useful, respected and satisfied so that they can contribute to a better organisation and a better society.



This was by no means an easy challenge. The existing organisational culture had prevailed for so many years and even though most employees didn't appreciate it, it came with a lot of fringe benefits that would be hard to say goodbye to. Transforming this

police zone into an open, transparent and ethically outstanding organisation would change all that and was therefore bound to meet some resistance along the way. “They had lived for so long in a working environment with lots of freedom and little need for justification. The new environment would surely feel as if something had been taken away from them” explains Philip Pirard.

Some of the measures that Philip Pirard took were focused on correcting the habits and the organisational structure that led to abuses and the lacking sense of integrity in the past. Establishing a police council, creating a transparent strategy for awarding premiums, and installing an external and independent reporting station where one could file complaints about the corps were just some of the initial measures taken to prevent ethical and moral abuses in the future. He also charged a group, called I-Force, with investigating unjustified premiums and other expenses, and with establishing a control system that would prevent these abuses of the reward policy.

Towards a new integrity policy

But Philip Pirard realised that the change needed to go beyond investigating wrongdoings from the past and preventing them in the future. They also needed a firm and positive policy that would create an organisational culture where such excesses would not be allowed or even thought of by most of the employees and leaders.

Because drawing up such an extensive and far-reaching integrity policy would require a lot of experience and specialised knowledge Philip Pirard thought it would be best to look for expert external help for this complicated and elaborate task. An external party would probably be more convincing in delivering the - for some people - ‘inconvenient truth’ that the entire organisation was in desperate need of a complete transformation; coming from an internal

source this message would always be perceived as a strategic or biased decision.

After the call for tender ISW Limits was selected as the most eligible partner for this project. Philip Pirard explains this choice: “ISW Limits brought a lot of experience to this project and their academic background and collaboration with the University of Leuven also helped in providing a high-quality label to the entire initiative.”

Five priorities

In the first stage a project group was established consisting of members of all departments - policemen as well as supporting functions, from the work floor to the top management, and some representatives of the trade unions as well. Together this group analysed and evaluated the biggest challenges and drew up an action plan of the most urgent actions to be taken to ensure a higher level of integrity and well-being. From this list of about 25 action points they distilled a set of five priorities.

These five priorities are:

- *more transparent personnel management*; by creating clearer job and task descriptions, registering them in a document that is continuously kept up to date, and by communicating more clearly on where one person's or service's duties end and where the other one's begin;

- focus on *better communication*. This includes establishing a global communication plan for more structured communication between and towards all departments, top-down and bottom-up, but also optimising all communication about the required changes;

- *people management* becomes a key part of the organisation. To

obtain this a lot more effort will be put into coaching and job evaluation sessions, and also in optimising the leadership style by focusing on integrity and psycho-social well-being and by adding human aspects to the leadership priorities;

- a strong focus on *integrity*. To avoid and eliminate all forms of undesirable behaviour and integrity breaches a code of conduct was drawn up based on the deontological code for the entire police force. This code was the starting point for a brochure and information sessions towards all personnel on the 'values of HAZODI' (see below). On top of that all management staff receive training and an individual support program on sound leadership (see below).

- promoting and improving *mutual understanding and support*. Many formal and informal activities are organised to improve the contact between colleagues and departments. These activities include team building activities but also team meetings on specific job-related topics.

Concrete actions

On top of the abovementioned meetings Philip Pirard has also been organising breakfast seminars on a regular basis. These seminars are held with groups of 10 to 15 employees around the question: 'how do I interact with my colleagues and with other departments?' "These sessions are already an indicator that things are changing within our zone" Philip Pirard remarks enthusiastically: "the first sessions were mainly about finding causes and culprits for the problems, lately the sessions are more leaning towards: what can we do to improve a situation?"

Other realisations in the last year include an awareness campaign around the values that HAZODI wishes to promote. They are derived from the general deontological police code and adapted to

the specific needs of their corps. The values are summarised in the acronym HAZODI that also refers to their police zone:

- Harmonious collaboration
- Active approach
- Selfdiscipline & accountability
- Openness & Transparency
- Service attitude
- Integrity & Respect



Each value is highlighted for two months with brochures, posters and some playful activities that help to increase the awareness.

And, last but not least, numerous initiatives have been taken to improve leadership within police zone HAZODI. “Each person in a leading role, from top management to the lowest leading ranks, needs to understand the importance of their role”, argues Philip Pirard, “as a leader by example, who needs to be the guiding light when it comes to integrity and respect. But also as a person of trust who can be called upon by his team to discuss serious matters and who respects and listens to every team member. Every team leader needs to understand and appreciate the importance of their role, and learn to act accordingly. If we don’t get them on board with our mission how can we ever hope to fully reach their team?”

Gradual improvement

Police zone HAZODI has come a long way since the incident in 2010. “People understand, of course, that flexible work ethics and lack of integrity are forbidden” Philip Pirard confirms, “but they can also feel that the organisational culture has changed. Personal priorities have made way for mutual respect. People can see

that the occasional integrity breach is dealt with immediately. And next to reprimands when the wrong habits weren't given up they also received encouragement and compliments when they showed the right attitude. All these measures have led to a more positive atmosphere in the office. In the beginning I was afraid of what sort of problems I would face when entering a department. Nowadays I look forward to getting in touch with everybody because most of what I hear is positive feedback or constructive criticism."

This long and winding road towards a culture of uncompromised integrity, a service-minded attitude and an open and transparent communication was not always easy and simple, and they still have a distance to cover. But Police Zone HAZODI has already demonstrated some very positive results, together with ISW Limits. "ISW Limits has been very important in this entire trajectory" recounts Philip Pirard: "Their expertise and know-how with such projects has been invaluable in getting this project to move forward. Their presence during the project group meetings has helped in prioritising the right actions and creating a positive attitude towards the required change. They also coach our leaders in acquiring the necessary leadership skills by organising training sessions and individual coaching sessions for all. And ISW Limits' findings and data can be used to tune and reposition our strategy when required."

All in all, even though the road to a culture of total integrity and respect can be long and winding, it seems shorter and more attainable with an experienced and knowledgeable guide by your side.

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Philip Pirard – HAZODI

THE CHALLENGE: Police Zone HAZODI needed to improve their image and their entire organisational culture, focusing on integrity and respect.

THE SOLUTION: They called upon ISW Limits to help them in taking the right actions to enable this new culture. These actions include coaching the leaders towards more integrity, promoting internal communication on all levels and providing the necessary tools to engrain the new values in the organisation.

THE RESULT: Police Zone HAZODI still has some ground to cover, but a significant change in the mindset has already taken place. The lack of trust in the leaders is gradually disappearing and the culture of finding fault with the others has made way for constructive thinking and collaboration between colleagues and departments.