Change

The Fast-track To Sustainable Culture Change

Reduce Pain & Increase Pleasure

Structure Supports Behaviour

Realistic Timeframes

Try Before you Buy

Trust, Accountability, Innovation & Collaboration In Your Workplace

Dr Pete Stebbins PhD
with Alistair Kerr & Ocean Reeve

Change

Trust, Accountability, Innovation & Collaboration in Your Workplace

Dr Pete Stebbins PhD

with Alistair Kerr & Ocean Reeve

OCEAN REEVE PUBLISHING

Change

"Change is the only constant in life."
—Heraclitus
(535 - 475 BC)

"They must often change, who would be constant in happiness or wisdom."
—Confucius
(551 - 479 BC)

"Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them, that only creates sorrow."
—Lao Tzu
(605 - 531 BC)

Contents

Leadership & Change

One inescapable truth in the field of educational leadership is that change is a reality of life and leaders must both acknowledge this fact and develop effective change management skills. This is essential because change, in itself, can be constructive or detrimental, positive or negative, depending on the contextual situation and the change action taken. What works beautifully in one context may not necessarily work well, or at all, in a context that is quite different.

Change management requires deep and effective communication and collaboration, which helps to develop shared ownership and trusting relationships. This type of change does not rely on *'change for change's sake'* and allows all stakeholders to feel involved – to be part of a team, focused on continual improvement. Clear designation of key responsibilities and a shared understanding of school improvement priorities also assist in enhancing collaborative engagement, allowing innovation to emerge in the organisation, sometimes from unlikely places.

Successful professional learning communities ensure that ongoing reflection on what works (and what doesn't) is also built into the organisational fabric. School leaders also need

to accept the reality of change and embrace the leadership possibilities it brings.

For this reason, I hope you will enjoy *Change – Trust, Accountability, Innovation and Collaboration in the Workplace* by Dr Pete Stebbins.

Read on!

Michael Fay
QASSP President

Foreword

Change: The Missing Link for High Performance Teams

"They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

—Andy Warhol

In the fast-paced world of work, change is more of a 'must' today than at any point in history. We are facing some undeniable accelerators of change like never seen before. Advances in technology and automation are leading to a world where eventually 40% of all jobs will be redundant

Coping with change is a crucial life skill – particularly at work. After all, we spend more time at work (34% of our lives) than any other activity we engage in between birth and death. Therefore, we can become tremendously attached to our work routines, as these are the most familiar and reassuring behaviour patterns we engage in.

How we manage the collision between the opposing forces of (1) our need for a degree of stability and predictability in our work routines and (2) the largely unstoppable acceleration of change in the workplace provides the central question, which this book attempts to grapple with. However, like any good story, there is a back-story that is a twofold story of

personal and professional experience. The backstory of change from professional experience begins by understanding the unexpected challenges we discovered many teams face whilst undergoing the *High Performance Teams* transformation journey that I'll briefly introduce below. The backstory of change from personal experience is a much deeper struggle – something I will share with you in the Introduction to this book.

High Performance Teams
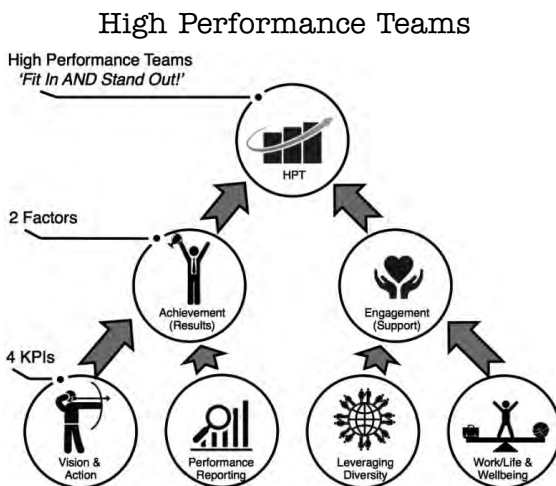
High Performance Teams (HPT) was developed as a simple framework that could be applied to any team desiring to improve their performance, by developing team specific strategies to improve both Team Achievement and Team Engagement. Typically the HPT framework is used to assist teams either (a) newly forming with a need to fast-track team development or (b) established teams managing interpersonal difficulty and/or major workplace change.

Since the initial development of *High Performance Teams* (HPT) we have supported thousands of leaders and teams through the HPT Journey from understanding why teams fail, to building a culture of high performance. We have celebrated many successes as people found their work more enjoyable and sustainable and their workplaces thrived due to higher levels of productivity and team performance.

On the surface the positive results were at times hard to believe, yet when you looked deep into the transformation journey of most teams there were plenty of struggles and setbacks along the way. By far the biggest struggle most teams faced was in the area of 'sustainable culture change' moving beyond simply learning about HPT and trying out new skills and strategies in workshops and seminars into actually embedding these new behaviours into their workplace amidst the ongoing urgent issues, crises, organisational changes and personal challenges all teams must face.

It was during the mid-program follow-up sessions held with a multitude of teams where these setbacks and struggles with change were shared. A deeper analysis of these problems with change management showed that many people had overly optimistic/unrealistic ambitions for sudden turnarounds in team behaviour and/or were using poorly thought out change management strategies for team transformation. These same people were very hard-working, well-intentioned people – some of whom suffered a lot of guilt and self-blame when changes did not work out as expected. This level of difficulty and personal struggle rang alarm bells to us – telling us something was missing in our approach to supporting team transformation.

In subsequent mid-program follow-up sessions, we found ourselves increasingly focused on not only encouraging people to be tolerant and forgiving of themselves and others as they persevered with the journey of team transformation, but also reminding them of the fundamental psychological principles that underpin effective change management – in particular the four success factors needed to fast-track sustainable culture change. As this additional change management training and support strategy progressed, we increasingly referred to 'Change' as the 'missing link' between understanding why teams fail and successfully undertaking the journey to become a high performance team.

The Missing Link: Culture Change

But why dedicate a whole book to change? Well, as time progressed and we heard more and more stories about the collision between the opposing forces of the need for stability and predictability in our work routines colliding with the largely unstoppable acceleration of change, we realised change was not simply an 'add on' to High Performance Teams but rather a very important topic in its own right.

Moreover, the knowledge needed to effectively manage workplace change whilst being an important complimentary toolkit for people interested in *High Performance Teams* was even more important to a much wider audience of employees, managers, executives, human resources professionals, consultants, and company directors.

So as you turn the pages and learn from the wisdom born of many scars and mistakes of myself and so many others, please remember that 'Change' is important. Not only for teams making the journey to High Performance but even more important for the managers and leaders navigating the basic survival challenges and people management issues that are common in the increasingly faster changing world of work.

Pete Stebbins

Introduction

Close Encounters:
When Life Imitates Art…

"Life imitates art more than art imitates life."

—Oscar Wilde

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

—Charles Darwin

"Change is the only constant in life."

—Heraclitus

I gently pressed the red button and finished the call. It was over. Letting out a deep sigh and turning to stare at the empty ocean and grey sky above, I wondered to myself what was next in the long and winding road of my career.

Making the decision to close down the multi-million dollar company I had started so many years ago, when my enthusiasm for business and life seemed almost unstoppable, was simply the final logical step in a chain of events that had dragged on for far too long.

It was inevitable. The final outcome of a larger group of well-intentioned people unable to row the boat in the same direction and keep up with rapid changes in technology and customer expectations that required radical changes in our business planning and operating systems. Charles Darwin was right when he said that *'it was not the strongest of the species*

that survive but rather those most adaptable to change.' Our inability to adapt to change and reluctance to confront the brutal facts of our situation created the gradual slide towards oblivion.

The preceding years had been a struggle – various people spear-heading heroic new strategies within different divisions in the company often working long hours with minimal resources or assistance, but this had only served to strengthen the divergent views about which was the correct path to salvation. The saying that 'life imitates art more than art imitates life' was becoming increasingly disturbing to me.

You see our 'art' was organisational transformation, change management, and leadership development strategies with public and private sector agencies struggling with change; and 'change' was very real and unstoppable for our clients. In the private sector, we were seeing companies struggle with ever decreasing margins due to price pressure from competition leading them to downsize their workforce and outsource to offshore operations to manage costs, simply to stay alive and avoid bankruptcy. In the public sector, we had witnessed radical budget cuts to services and downsizing of workforces with many community services moving entirely online using technology based applications. The dual forces of increasing global competition and falling retail prices combined with rapid advances in technology making many services automated online instead of through face-to-face contact, was a tsunami of massive proportions leaving hundreds and thousands of people displaced and unemployed in its wake.

Despite having front row seats to this disaster and advising many clients on how to best manage such changes, we had a blind spot in our field of vision when it came to our

own organisation as more nimble competitors entered our markets with lower costs, more comprehensive technology enabling service offerings, and staff with more specialised product knowledge. Gradually we all began to face the stark realisation that our own organisation was now mirroring the very problems we had so proudly claimed to be able to fix for our clients.

I had reluctantly returned to the role of CEO in the early stages of the crisis and it was impossible to steer the ship on a straight and steady course whilst juggling the multiple challenges of declining revenue, unsuccessful tenders, staff turnover, and personal struggles. Juggling so many different challenges all at once reminded me of some of my most stressful moments sailing in stormy seas - the courageous yet frightened team, the waves pitching at odd angles across the bow, the howling wind whistling through the broken rigging and torn sails, and the driving rain and thick black darkness of night making it impossible to see what lay ahead.

During this time, as part of my own path to salvation, I began researching and writing about *High Performance Teams* and experimenting with various models and frameworks to drive transformation within my own team and encouraging other divisions in the company to use some of the strategies that were showing promising results. This involved piloting a range of different strategies to improve both Team Achievement and Team Engagement. We improved Team Achievement by tightening the alignment between our vision and action plans and developing a comprehensive data wall to track all the key team performance metrics. We improved Team Engagement by using weekly pulse surveys to increase support and feedback among team members;

increasing the use of peer observation and feedback systems around customer critical behaviours; completing regular team profiling activities to ensure people understood the impact of differing personalities and how to leverage diversity, and radically improving our team meeting processes to fast-track both relationship building and continuous improvement.
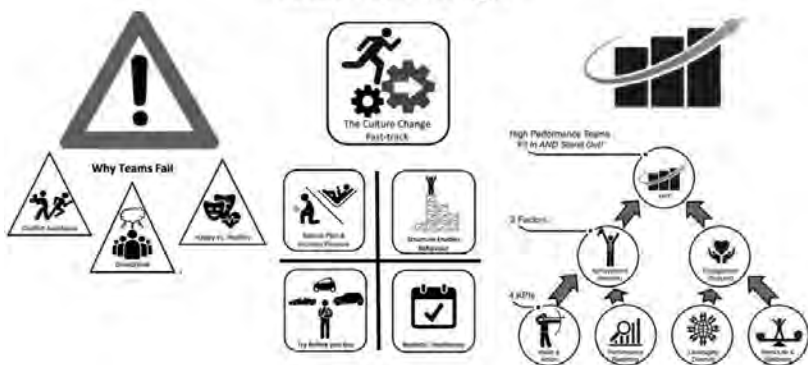
These *High Performance Teams* strategies had an undeniably positive effect on both morale and sales leading to significant growth in the team. However, as we moved various strategies from optional experiments to mandatory business, as usual, I noticed some of the team began to struggle and go 'missing in action' - avoiding many opportunities for feedback and development on the very same issues they were struggling with. These somewhat perplexing issues surfaced during the pilot phase of what was eventually to become the *High Performance Teams* Program, and gave me some first-hand encounters and deeper personal perspectives on the complexities of change management in a fast growing team.

Trust, accountability, collaboration, and customer service all became 'hot spots' of difficulty as the growth in sales led to an increasingly larger team of consultants. It became difficult to provide the same high level of customer service to all clients when new staff were on-boarded to our systems but not to our culture, leaving them to have wildly different interpretations of how to best serve our customers. Collaboration and working together effectively also became inconsistent in both its depth and frequency as the team expanded – breaking a crucial link in our 'practice what you preach' mantra that we regularly spoke about to our customers. Accountability also became a challenge as some of the more established people could 'pick and choose' the aspects of the job they preferred despite the 'all in credo' we espoused where everyone had to complete an agreed set of basic team tasks. Finally, and predictably in light of the challenges above, trust began to waiver as the gap between what people were saying and doing widened. Yet another example of art imitating life as we struggled to address issues within the company, yet earned a living addressing these same issues with our clients.

Whilst we were coming to grips with these change and growth problems and were beginning to realise how little we really understood about fast-tracking sustainable culture change, time ran out for the wider organisation – a case of too little, too late. It was somewhat ironic that The *High Performance Teams* Program was almost ready to roll out at the same time the company was closing its doors.

The lessons learned through the *High Performance Teams* experiments and the launch of the subsequent organisational

transformation program became a lifeboat for a few of us who, once on the other side of the company storm, continued to work together in organisational change. These lessons shaped a much deeper and honest appreciation of the complexities of change and greatly influenced our work in Leadership and Team Development.

In fact, the more our work progressed with clients, the more we began to appreciate that for many organisations the headline issues leaders and teams were facing were actually about coming to terms with 'Change' itself.

For leaders and teams to perform at their best there needs to be:

1. A recognition about the genuine underlying need for change and an understanding of the personal impact of change.

2. Knowledgeable on how to fast-track the transition process and avoid the communication and strategy pitfalls so common in modern management thinking.

3. The abilities to apply effective change management strategies to some of the most important issues facing organisations today such as Trust, Accountability, Innovation, & Customer Service.

If you work in any organisation across the world today, and if you are to survive and thrive in this new world of work that is changing much faster than we realise, you urgently need to become an expert on these three aspects of change.

Let us begin….

Part 1:

Workplace Change 101

- What They Don't Teach You About Change: Brace For Impact
- The Personal Impact of Change: Crossing Over & Letting Go
- Why Change Fails: The 4 Classic Leadership Mistakes
- Change: The Myths & Misuse of Modern Management

What They Don't Teach You About Change – Brace For Impact!

"There is no easy way into another world…"

—John Krakauer

I spent excessively too much time at University. In the end, I earned a PhD examining stress, burnout, and ways in which people thought (cognition) and behaved (coping) that either made them more resilient or hastened the slide into despair.

Along the way, I also studied both clinical psychology and management theory and learned a lot about the theory behind workplace change, and why people succeed and fail through organisational change and career transitions. However, this level of theoretical knowledge was not enough too successfully guide me through my own wilderness of organisational and personal failure as the tide turned unfavourably on my own company and personal circumstances.

Moreover, in climbing out of the abyss, and re-building my career as an executive coach, I saw far too many examples of leaders relying on the same conventional wisdom I was taught only to suffer the similar fate in terms of organisational decline and career failure. As the years passed and the wounds healed, I began to catalogue my own life lessons – an attempt to 'pay it forward' on the things I wished they had taught me about workplace change much earlier in my career.

In the first part of this book, I want to share with you some of the key learnings I have accumulated about workplace change through the scars and bruises of the school of hard knocks (a.k.a 'the school of life').

I want you to understand the deeper and more insidious stress that sits beneath the personal impact of change. In particular, the challenges of understanding and processing emotions associated with letting go of the past (grief and loss), whilst struggling with the performance anxiety and challenges of learning new skills as an adult (teaching an old dog new tricks), all while trying to stay calm and happy on the outside whilst grappling with the turmoil of change (emotional dissonance).

My hope is that you will also learn from the management mistakes made by a range of hapless executives, including myself, and that you will see that through our earnest desire to help our staff make the most of the opportunities of change, we made many of the classic management mistakes. This in turn, derailed and sabotaged our otherwise good intentions.

Finally, I want you to understand the 'common sense' and 'conventional wisdom' that I and many other managers were

taught in our years of university study and through reading articles and journals by the so-called 'management gurus', which in the end only proved to be myths and nonsense; so that you can tell the difference between facts and fads and avoid the pitfalls and mistakes that are all too common these days.
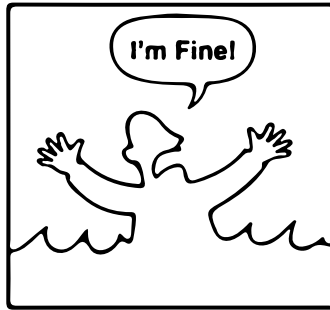
The Personal Impact of Change: Crossing Over & Letting Go

"Change is hard because people overestimate the value of what they have and underestimate the value of what they may gain by giving that up."

—James Belasco and Ralph Stayer

"Just like life itself, no job is permanent."

—(Unknown)

We spend more time at work (34% of our lives) than any other activity. Therefore, we can become tremendously attached to our work routines, as these are the most familiar and reassuring behaviour patterns we engage in between birth and death. When it comes to work, most human beings are 'creatures of habit' preferring the devil we know – the familiar routines – whether good or bad, over the prospect of having to try something new. That is why most people, understandably, believe change is bad, and as a result tend to be resistant to it.

| Birth | Sleep 33% | Domestic 22% | Work 34% | Life 11% | Death |
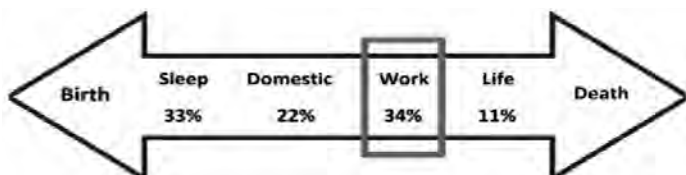
Work & The Necessary Evil Of Change

In the fast-paced world of work, change is more of a 'must' today than at any point in history. We are facing some undeniable accelerators of change like never seen before. The advent of the internet and associated advances in technology and automation are leading to a world where eventually 40% of all jobs will be redundant. Beyond the revolution in automation and loss of previous professions, there is a massive shift in the 'costs' and 'locations' of work. As the competition lowers prices the pressure on costs increases, and the search for cheaper manufacturing and labour moves jobs away from higher cost nations to lower cost nations. The rising global economy and outsourcing of manufacturing, administration and increasingly sophisticated professional services to a 24/7 global market accelerates the migration of jobs away from first world economies.

In this context, many people are 'living on borrowed time' in their current professions in terms of expertise, skills and wage levels. Expertise remains a critical part of doing many jobs well but the rise of the internet and 24/7 access to information enables anyone to rapidly learn an enormous amount of content about expert niches, leaving the so called 'experts' vulnerable if all they rely on is historical training and information. Skills are also essential for many jobs but again,

the acceleration of technology makes virtual training programs viable for an increasing range of skills across industries. Finally, wage levels are unsustainable in many professions as business owners are forced to pay lower rates for jobs to match the lower prices customers' desire (and expect!).

Thus to survive and thrive in the workplaces of the future, people need to:

1. Be constantly up to date in industry knowledge and skills, and
2. Be able to deliver products and services at benchmarked maximum speed and quality to maximise their own personal income.

It gets worse. Achieving these two critical factors for success does not involve a one-off push to study and complete an upgraded degree or qualification, but rather a cycle of continuous learning and improvement to keep up with the rate of change in society.

The Personal Impact of Change: The Double Negative

There are very good reasons why most people avoid change wherever possible and thus believe change is bad. Bad firstly because it involves the pain of having to learn something new – the uncertainty and performance anxiety of being a novice along with effort of gaining the skills and experience needed to reduce stress to pre-change levels. Bad secondly because on top of the effort needed to learn something new, we must also

manage the emotions of grief and loss (no matter how mild) associated with letting go of past habits and routines – things we had previously learned and could do easily without any additional effort.

Given the double edged sword of change - the undeniable pain from both (1) the grief and loss of old and familiar ways and (2) the performance anxiety and stress of learning something new; it's no wonder people do not like any kind of change and prefer to 'stick their heads in the sand' and hope it will go away.

Emotional Dissonance – The Straw That Breaks The Camel's Back

> *"All the effort that it took to get here in the first place, plus all the effort not to let the effort show..."*
>
> —Low Tide (Everything But The Girl)

As if managing the double negative of change was not enough, another even more challenging aspect of change for many people who also have to apply for new jobs and/or commence in new teams, is the additional burden of *emotional dissonance*. That is, the extra energy required to 'appear' happy, relaxed and professional whilst struggling with the emotional roller

coaster of grief, loss and performance anxiety associated with letting go of the past and learning new skills. For some people, the added stress caused by emotional dissonance can literally be 'the straw that breaks the Camel's back' and becomes a tipping point into serious mental health problems.

Overcoming The Double Negative: Letting Go & Crossing Over

To survive and thrive in the fast-changing world of work we need to become self-experts at two very important psychological tasks:

1. Letting go of the past effectively – managing the emotions of grief and loss rather than bottling up (avoiding/denying) the emotional impact change is having on us, and
2. Learn new skills quickly – having the self-awareness and openness to learning new skills and the insight necessary to understand the learning techniques that suit us best.

1. Letting Go Of The Past Effectively: Grief and Loss

People change jobs, on average, 11.7 times in their working lives

—(Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2015)

"Grief and loss (no matter how mild) is a normal part of the healing process after major change."

—Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Changing jobs can occur within the same organisation through promotions and re-structures or by joining a new organisation after job seeking, post resignation, termination, or redundancy. In each case there is, at the very minimum, changes to roles, key relationships with co-workers and managers.

Stressful life events research (i.e., Holmes & Rahe) shows that major changes in our work are indeed very stressful events to cope with. Losing your job, or major changes at work, rate as being very severe and stressful life events (on par with the loss of a loved one or important relationship). This level of distress places us at risk of serious mental and physical health problems so rapid recovery from the grief and loss associated with such major changes is important to maximise our overall wellbeing.

Grief and loss, no matter how mild or severe, is a normal part of the healing process after major change. Just as physical wounds such as cuts and abrasions must first weep, scab, peel, scar, and gradually recover, the emotional wounds of grief and loss pass through several stages.

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, in her seminal work '*On Death and Dying'* and more recently in her follow-up work *'On Grief and Grieving',* showed the normal and natural stages of grief and loss. These include initial Shock, then Denial, followed by Anger, then Sadness, which may include symptoms of depression, and then finally Acceptance – all important stages. We pass through them in varying degrees along the road to recovery from major change.

SHOCK ▸ DENIAL ▸ ANGER ▸ SADNESS ▸ ACCEPTANCE

The length of time each stage lasts and the way in which people behave in each stage of grief varies enormously, so having a supportive and flexible approach is vital. When it comes to how long it will take to move through the stages of grief and loss from change, there are three important predictors.

i. **Our level of resiliency and coping skills –** Having a previous history of excellent stress management and coping skills will increase the likelihood of a short and healthy grieving process. Having the *"good luck of (previous) bad luck"* whereby you have had to manage previous adversity will be an advantage during this time of recovery. Alternatively, having the *"bad luck of (previous) good luck"* may mean you have not developed high levels of stress management and coping skills.

ii. **Our general health and wellbeing –** Needless to say, having mid-life health problems such as being overweight, having a heart condition, blood pressure problems and/or chronic injuries or illness will create a heightened vulnerability for complications in managing change whilst high levels of physical fitness, nutrition and sleep will be a tremendous buffer.

iii. **The presence or absence of social support –** Having a supportive spouse and family and a good network of friends will significantly decrease the risk of complex or lengthy grief and loss. On the other hand, having low social support and heightened family conflict will increase the risk of problems when managing change at work.

2. Crossing Over:
Learning New Skills Quickly

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

—Old English Proverb

"There are three steps to adult learning:
(1) identify the specific need;
(2) unlearn the old way; and
(3) learn the new way.
Most people understand Step 1 and Step 3 but not Step 2
which is why they don't succeed."

—Anthony Green

To survive and thrive amidst major workplace change people must learn new skills and information concurrent to their recovery from the stress of change. When it comes to learning and change, adults are characterised by both positive and negative attributes.

Positive attributes include maturity, self-confidence, autonomy, solid decision-making, and being generally more practical, purposeful, self-directed, and capable of multi-tasking. Potentially negative attributes common to adults include being less open-minded, managing multi-level responsibilities, slower to learn and having high expectations of others.

The theory behind how adults learn is known as Andragogy. As you can see in the diagram showing the effectiveness (i.e., retention) of various adult learning techniques, lecturing them, sending them information to read, and telling them to watch videos are the LEAST EFFECTIVE yet MOST COMMON tools used in workplace change.

Change management in the workplace often relies on passive teaching approaches (i.e., reading updates, briefings from management, training videos etc.), which are the worst possible methods for retention. Mid-lifers undergoing career transitions may also be going back to university, often having to adapt to passively learning through lectures and reading which can be very slow and stressful ways to learn. Not to mention timing, which is often 'after hours' [to fit in with existing work schedules], when attention and concentration is at its lowest.

"By teaching we are learning."
—Seneca

The best way for adults to learn is through active teaching methods such as peer discussion groups, skills demonstrations and role-plays, and peer coaching and mentoring techniques, which sit at the core of any effective professional learning community or community of practice. However, these are time intensive and much less common in corporate change management programs.

The Solution:
The 20 Mile March & Pacing Yourself

"The journey of 1000 miles begins with one step."

—Lao Tzu

"Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline."

—Jim Collins

Change is constant, yet our energy to cope and enthusiasm to learn is variable. Therefore, the most important question facing us all is how to *'bridge'* between the constant of change and the variable nature of our emotions, energy, and learning ability. To be able to build such a bridge is not a luxury item but rather a survival skill if we are to adapt to and *'cross over'* into the future world of work. The answer clearly is not about the Western idea of pursuing one-off goals to live stress-free or to try to gain a single magical qualification that sets you up for life. Rather more like the Eastern idea of a life-long journey of learning, such as how to maintain our wellbeing, and how to keep learning new ways and unlearn old ways.

"A world of ceaseless change means that a useful education involves not merely the mastery of facts, as it might at a western university but also the training of a vigilant instinct."

—Joshua Cooper Ramo

Q: How do we cross over into the new world of work?
A: Through a lifelong cycle of both letting go and learning.

I have heard a number of fantastic speeches about ways to adapt and thrive in the ever-changing world of work and read some great articles and books on the same. However, I heard the most powerful idea about how to cope with the new world of work when I went to a conference in Sydney, Australia to hear Jim Collins, author of the business best sellers *'Good to Great'* and *'Built to Last',* speak about an important concept he identified in successful people called the 20 Mile March.

The 20 Mile March was the strategy employed by a famous Antarctic explorer Roald Amundsen who beat Robert Falcon Scott to become the first person to reach the South Pole. Amundsen's team methodically marched 20 miles per day - consistently everyday regardless of the weather, whilst Scott's team were more inconsistent with long marches in good weather and no progress at all in bad weather. Amundsen's team not only beat Scott to the Pole but also returned safely with no loss of life whilst Scott's team lost the race and all died on the journey back. Collins believed it was this discipline and consistency of effort that was the foundation of Amundsen's success.

However, what has the 20 Mile March got to do with each of us adapting to the constantly changing world of work? Everything! The 20 Mile March is about creating constancy in our own coping and learning, constant self-care and nurturing of our wellbeing, along with prioritising our self-care and coping equally with the priority of continuous learning. It encompasses the eternal vigilance and openness to change and the unlearning and letting go of old ideas and embracing the new; to step away from the old ideas of one-off goals and to learn how to live in a state of continuous self-care and continuous learning within the finite limitations of our available energy and time.

"All great achievements take time, there is no overnight success."

—Leo Tolstoy

Life is a marathon not a sprint, and we all need to become much more disciplined about the specific self-care and learning agendas within each of our personal 20 Mile Marches. Just like Amundsen, we need to learn to be disciplined and avoid both the temptation of *'rushing ahead'* when the skies are blue OR *'giving up'* when the storm arrives.

Are you on the 20 Mile March to effectively maximise your career and personal success in the fast changing world of work, or is it time for you to make some changes to get yourself back on track?
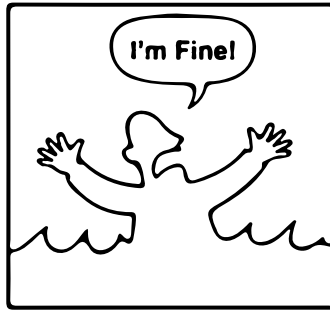
Why Change Fails: Classic Leadership Mistakes

"The fish rots from the head."

—Fred Hilmer

"Change is the only constant in life."

—Heraclitus

"Up to 70 per cent of all change initiatives fail."

—Ken Blanchard

Change is essential for all employees, more so today than at any point in history. We are facing some undeniable accelerators of change never seen before. According to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), technology and automation could make almost 40 per cent of all Australian jobs, including highly skilled roles, redundant in 10 to 15 years.

However, improving the effectiveness of workplace change initiatives is not simply a matter of *'smoke on the horizon'*

warnings to staff. We know staff are more than capable of change given we change jobs, on average, 11.7 times in our working lives (Bureau of Labour Statistics). If the reality is that most people are more than capable of changing roles and adjusting to new organisations and cultures then why do up to 70% of all workplace change initiatives fail? To answer this question we must dig deeper into the complexities of organisational change and in particular the role of leaders in managing change.

Workplace Change: The Responsibility of Leaders

Leading workplace change is a double-edged sword. On one hand, most people are creatures of habit and leaders need to promote stability and predictability in their work routines, as these routines are the most familiar and reassuring behaviour patterns we engage in throughout our lifetime. On the other hand, the undeniable advances in technology and automation impacting upon almost all jobs, creates an urgency bordering on crisis levels for leaders to help people break away from their preference for stability and instead become increasingly open to change and learning.

Whilst each individual ultimately bears the potentially catastrophic consequences of not changing and adapting at work, leaders and managers face an important responsibility in either helping or hindering this change. Leaders, who themselves are bound by the same forces of technology and globalisation requiring them to change and adapt, need to develop effective change management skills if they are to help

their staff change and evolve to maintain and/or grow their competitive advantage in the marketplace.

However, having the necessary resilience, skills and insights to lead people through change in the many and varied *'heat of the moment'* conversations, whilst managing their own change adjustment challenges, borders on impossible for many leaders. Thus, they invariably make one or more of the following mistakes that diminish the otherwise well-intentioned Change Management Support Strategies they may be implementing.

Classic Leadership Mistakes

1. Smoke & Mirrors: The False Perception of Choice & Overstating the Benefits

> *"People don't like to be sold, but they love to buy."*
>
> —Jeffrey Gitomer

> *"Human beings can think at 800 words per minute but only speak at 150 words per minute."*
>
> —James Borg

As human beings, we are clever creatures capable of processing information at up to 800 words per minute whilst our bosses can only speak at 150 words per minute. Therefore, we have 650 words per minute of bandwidth we can use to *'smell a rat'* or *'spot a fake'* among the words we are told about workplace change. When it comes to the various *'smoke and mirrors'* strategies managers inadvertently, or purposefully, use to *'sell'* change, two of the most commonly used approaches are (a) **The False Perception of Choice** and (b) **Overstating the Benefits.**

a. **The False Perception of Choice** – this change management leadership mistake occurs when managers wrongly tell staff that a new idea is being introduced as a trial or option for people to use and give feedback on, when in fact it has already been approved as a permanent change.

Managers do this on the false assumption people will feel better about the change if it is (falsely) portrayed in this manner. However the subsequent effort and feedback staff give to the new changes on trial do not produce any productive improvements or changes to the strategy, and trust is broken and morale drops when staff realise later that they were lied to in the first place, further weakening the effectiveness of communication between managers and staff.

b. **Overstating the Benefits** – by far the most common new age management strategy is to introduce change as an amazing opportunity for everyone with amazing benefits. Massive expensive campaigns are rolled out across the organisation and countdown timers to *'go live'* begin to roll whilst paid idiots run around in branded t-shirts looking deliriously happy about the future. This is all to no avail as the cynical alarm bells in people just get louder and expectations increase ever higher in response to attempts by management to maintain the energy of change.

If only they had understood the secret to the most powerful and effective changes in modern corporate history. If only they followed the reverse rule of *'make change boring'* by playing to the natural comfort zone of staff and selling change as a minor tweak on what we already do well as opposed to a fantastic opportunity to be a part of the future.

2. The Reliance of Positional Power: *"I'm the boss – and you'll do as you're told..."*

"…people resist being controlled more than they resist change…"

—Ken Blanchard

"People don't care how much you know until they first know how much you care..."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Managers require power to make things happen in their organisation. Power can be defined as a manager's ability to influence others. Managers require different types of power to make things happen and there are five types of power that managers use to influence others.

1. **Expert power** refers to the manager's ability to use knowledge and information to influence staff behaviour;
2. **Reward power** refers to the provision of positive consequences such as bonuses, public praise and promotions to staff to shape behaviour;
3. **Coercive power** is used when managers punish subordinates for not meeting performance expectations through reprimands, demotions or dismissal and withholding pay increases;

4. **Personal power** refers to the manager's ability to build effective relationships with staff; and

5. **Positional power** refers to the manager relying on their role and authority in an organisation as a basis to get things done.

Categories of power in organisations:
- **Personal** power - strongest
- **Expert** power
- **Reward** power
- **Positional** power - weakest
- **Coercive** power

When it comes to change management it will come as no surprise that the most effective forms of power to guide change are a combination of mainly **personal** power with some **expert** and **reward** power whilst the worst possible combination is mainly **positional** with some **coercive** power – yet under pressure this is all too common!

3. The Assumption of Comprehension: Closeness-Communication Bias

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

—George Bernard Shaw

"People are always down about what they're not up about."

—Graham Corney

Effective communication is the most important ingredient in change management. Most managers have taken courses

on effective communication in their
leadership development and have
received feedback to improve their
communication through 360-degree
processes. Therefore, most managers
rightly believe they are generally very
good communicators.

However, when it comes to communication with staff we
have worked with for a long time, we have a risk of *'closeness-
communication bias',* which is where we overestimate our ability
to communicate effectively when interacting with people we
know well. When communicating with people we know well,
we make presumptions about what they understand. These
are presumptions that we don't dare make with strangers and
this creates an assumed understanding akin to group thinking
where in the interests of moving things along quickly, everyone
nods in agreement yet everyone has a slightly different view
about what was agreed upon – the result ends up a disaster!

The solution of course is to embrace over-communication,
a term coined by Patrick Lencioni in identifying the effective
communication patterns of successful leaders. Over-
communicating is about repeating the same message at
least once, if not more, <u>and</u> repeating the message using
different words and through multiple channels such as
speaking, gestures, and writing, <u>and</u> getting feedback that
the message is understood. All effective delegation strategies
use these principles to maximise organisational success.
With all the distractions and noise in today's world of work,
over-communication should be the rule rather than the
exception. Remember, just because you understand what you
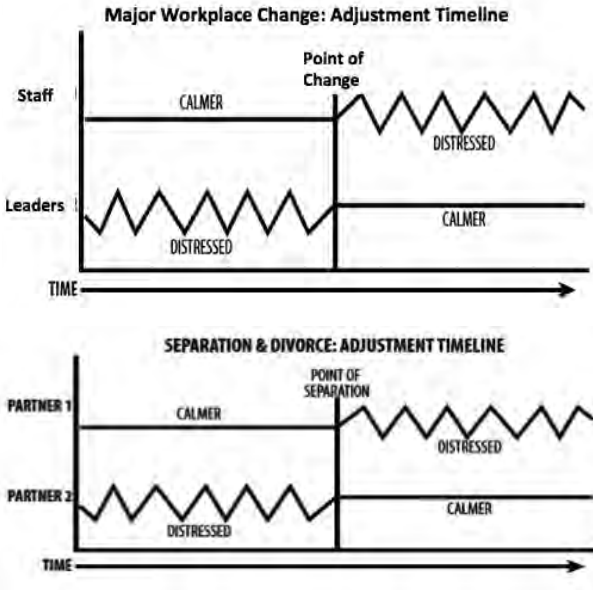have said does not mean everyone else does.

4. The 'Unreasonableness' of Time: The Relationship Adjustment Model

Prior to implementation, almost all large-scale organisational change processes are the subject of extensive analysis and debate among the senior managers of an organisation. Often advisors are called in to further assess and evaluate the problems and solutions needed and the merits of various strategies that could be used in workplace change.

This extensive planning phase, including extensive testing and trials of new solutions, whilst necessary to minimise the risk of errors, if done in isolation creates an even bigger risk – the failure to assess the timeframes for accommodation or adjustment in the workforce. It is easy to see how assessing change in a lab environment creates a massive risk of failure in the real world especially if everyone involved does not fully understand the business case for change and therefore are biased on what they have to lose, not what they have to gain.

The mistake of assuming staff will quickly adjust to the new ways of working that have been so painstakingly well thought out and tested by managers prior to implementation is a trap many organisations fall into, leading to quite extreme and polarising differential response patterns by managers and staff once change is rolled out.

We see this differential response pattern to change in a very common and very distressing event – divorce. Understanding the adjustment problems of change in divorce can be compared to the cycle of adjustment in workplace change in these simple diagrams:

Major Workplace Change: Adjustment Timeline

Point of Change

Staff — CALMER — DISTRESSED

Leaders — DISTRESSED — CALMER

TIME

SEPARATION & DIVORCE: ADJUSTMENT TIMELINE

POINT OF SEPARATION

PARTNER 1 — CALMER — DISTRESSED

PARTNER 2 — DISTRESSED — CALMER

TIME

The party initiating divorce often goes through the change adjustment process BEFORE the implementation whilst the other party begins the change adjustment process AFTER the implementation. This is similar to managers doing all the pre-work and wearing all the stress of the problems and solutions PRIOR to change and then the staff having to play catch-up on both the extent of the prior problem and solutions now being implemented AFTER the change has occurred.

This differential adjustment pattern is easily identified in the chatter and gossip among staff and leaders. Leaders vilify their staff, labelling them as resistant, ignorant, foolish, and disruptive as their adjustment process begins and they react and question the change process. Staff will vilify their leaders as sneaky, under-handed, uncaring, and foolish as they have been kept in the dark in the lead up to change and thus lack

the level of awareness of both the extent of the problem and the effort to consider a wide range of solutions before arriving at the strategy now being implemented.

Leading Change: Strategies for Success

When it comes to workplace change, having seen the disastrous nature of these four costly leadership mistakes, let's bring it all together by looking at the flip side of failure – the strategies leaders can use to make workplace change a success.

1. Communicate Honestly & Accurately

Remember most people can see right through *'smoke and mirror'* approaches to change management and providing *'false choice'* and *'over-selling the positives'* can backfire dramatically. Instead *'make change boring'* and honest by maximising the connection to current and familiar routines and openly explaining situations where choices are made without consultation.

2. Lead From The Front & Be Real

Use personal power to build effective relationships. Using information and positive rewards such as praise and thanks will go a long way to leading effective change whilst relying on *'command and control'* authority from coercive and positional power will ignite a fire of passive-aggressive resistance.

3. Over-Communicate & Check For Understanding

Remember the closer we are to people the higher the risk of ineffective communication and misunderstanding. Therefore,

be clear, seek feedback and briefs, follow up, and err on the side of too much repetition as opposed to too little. Better that they roll their eyes and groan as you explain it again than anxious glances at the ceiling as they leave without fully understanding.

4. Allow Time To Both 'Learn' & 'Adjust'

Change is a double-edged sword about letting go of the past as well as learning new information needed for the future, and staff need time to go through this process, often only beginning the change journey – just as you, as a leader, are finishing the journey. Be patient, flexible and available to dialogue and engage as long as necessary (i.e., twice as long as you think is reasonable).

In putting it all together, it is important to remember that whilst each individual ultimately has to choose the extent to which they will change and adapt at work, there is nonetheless a very important responsibility leaders and managers must face in either helping or hindering change at work!

Change:
The Myths & Misuse of Modern Management

"I feel like everything I know is wrong,"

"I feel like everything I know is wrong," remarked one of the senior leaders I was working with. We had just finished a change management workshop looking at how to improve a *'low trust'* workplace from a behaviour analytic approach compared to an emotional intelligence approach. Low trust is caused by uncertainty about the social rules and processes used for disclosure and feedback and/or the inconsistent use of such rules and procedures in teams.

As I sat with the leader after the session, I quietly listened to his frustrations about all the contemporary theories and coaching workshops he had been to which were recommended to help people embrace different ways of thinking; embracing a positive mindset as a solution to overcome workplace problems rather than examining the underlying behavioural patterns of dysfunctional teams. His angst reminded me of

my own watershed moments of confusion and uncertainty after I had read Thomas Kuhn's classic work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and realised that science was really just another form of religion.

As the conversation progressed, I found out this particular leader had himself become a qualified coach and was a passionate advocate for changing mindsets to change behaviour, something that was certainly true from an individual perspective and something I also firmly believed in as a clinical psychologist with a PhD on the subject! However, he had made the mistake that many of us make, which is to assume that addressing people's attitudes towards problems at an individual level would somehow solve group based problems, such as dysfunctional team dynamics. He thought that if everyone could learn to think the same way, at the same time, with the same empathy and insights towards each other, the team would move from low to high performance.

The assumption that agreeable and unified thinking creates high performance teams, of course, is false and seriously misguided. High performance teams by nature need healthy dissent and constructive conflict by a group of people extremely capable within their expertise. To bring out the best in high performance teams, we are not primarily interested in their attitudes and mindsets, but rather the clarity of their understanding and consistency of their behaviour in following agreed team rules and norms around respect and disclosure. Where such consistency exists then psychological safety is maximised, which in turn leads to high levels of social risk taking in terms of professional feedback, innovation and discretionary effort, and support among peers.

While I was busy reassuring the frustrated leader that what he knew was not necessarily wrong but rather simply a matter of the misuse (or rather over use) of some otherwise quite reasonable and helpful ideas, I began to ponder upon some other popular ideas in modern management. These were ideas that I had recognised that I had misused causing unnecessary chaos and turmoil in organisations already facing extraordinary challenges and pressures.

In the pages that follow, I want to go through some of the more common myths and misuses of popular management ideas and then do a deep dive with you on emotional intelligence – a concept which is important for personal growth but (potentially) disastrous for change management!

My Top 5 Myths & Misuses of Modern Management in Change

1. The Misuse of "Change Management" – taking people on 'your version' of their journey

People know how to manage major change at work – after all, they change jobs 11.7 times in their working lives and navigate an enormous amount of change with or without extra help. The only factor that complicates this within a workplace is where they do not have control over the changes and thus resist the perceived loss of control more than they resist the change itself. Fix the perception of loss of control by aligning people with the reality of the situation and you will increase their control and choice in adapting to change or seeking alternate career choices.

2. The Misuse of "Emotional Intelligence" – teaching people skills they already have

People have much higher levels of emotional intelligence (EI) than many 'experts' give them credit for. Outside of work nearly everyone has a network of friends and family, and a stable relationship demonstrating that they possess good levels of social and emotional capability. The only factor that separates these higher levels of EI capability outside of work compared to in work hours is the higher clarity of social rules and established norms about reciprocal disclosure and lowered perceived risk of information being misused. Fix the lack of clarity and consistency about social rules and norms for disclosure and confidentiality in your workplace and you will massively improve upon the apparent lack of EI in the workforce by tapping latent potential that already exists.

3. The Misuse of "Innovative Thinking" – teaching people skills they already have

People are natural problem solvers quite capable of extraordinary feats of innovation when facing personal crises and unexpected opportunities. Their ability to organise economic, logistic and social resources to solve important personal problems is regularly seen after natural disasters and personal tragedies where they have very little to lose and a lot to gain. Therefore, the barrier to innovation at work is the limited upside of risk taking compared to the massive downside of negative social and professional consequences of failure. People do not need endless training in blue-sky thinking. Simply fix the downside through more consistent behavioural patterns of reward for risk and you will

incrementally fix the innovation crisis and the ideas will begin to flow more freely.

4. The Misuse of "Leadership Capacity" – suggesting essential everyday team skills are special skills reserved only for elite leaders

People are more than capable of following leaders who display common sense, communicate clearly, and can work effectively with others. That is why in any given family the leaders are not necessarily the oldest male of female (matriarch/patriarch) but rather the better communicators, problem solvers and collaborators. We don't need more strategic/amazingly special people with magic powers, what we really need to do is to grow people's problem solving, communication and collaboration skills as these are more important *'team'* skills than *'leadership'* skills.

The elitist mantra about building leadership capability fosters an individual and somewhat competitive approach to our working lives at a time when collaboration is an increasingly important survival skill; no matter how senior your leadership role may be. This is made worse by the cloning phrases of modern management (i.e., you are not a leader until you have made another leader who has made another leader…*WTF?*). Fix the 'team' level skills of your leaders and you will build a more capable and enduring organisation at all levels.

5. The Misuse of Employer of Choice – additional benefits and abolishing KPIs will maximise organisational performance outcomes

The idea that there is a competition out there in the workplace where the brightest and best minds will only come to us if we lead the way in perks and benefits seems to defy both logic

and history when we study the origins of some of the greatest companies today, such as Matel and Apple.

If you can only grow your workforce through having better lunches, dinners, parties, snacks, benefits, bonuses, than your competitors, then you are unlikely to be building a highly loyal and hardworking culture. Whatever happened to the *'why'* culture fostered by Simon Sinek and the *'cult'* like cultures espoused by Jim Collins and Jerry Poras in the classic study *'Built to Last'*? We need to spend less time selling the *'benefits'* of our organisation to prospective employees and more time selling the *'purpose'* of our organisation if we are to build truly great companies.

While I am talking HR, there is an even greater sin along the same lines – the anti KPI movement. This ideal says *'no'* to measuring employee performance on the basis employees will already know how they are going and are both capable and willing to correct such issues in some magical shared understanding of urgency aligned to their supervisor and the wider company's needs – it's ludicrous.

Perhaps we should run society in the same manner and drop all the mumbo jumbo about law and order. Clearly, we need performance management systems and feedback in the same way we need law and order. The keys to success here are:

1. Not to over-use and over-regulate KPIs but rather to strike the balance between autonomy and direction, and

2. To adopt a collaborative approach between management and staff in setting KPIs with realistic and locally relevant targets and benchmarks.

The Myths and Misuses of Modern Management: Your Experiences?

Have you suffered the nasty side effects of some of these myths and misuses of modern management? How do we bring common sense back into the strategies people develop based upon these well-intentioned ideas?

It is time for the wise old owl of behaviour analysis to fly back in through the window and restore the importance of clarity and consistency in workplace behaviour and communication. Reinstating this principle as the paramount virtue among all the great, and not so great, ideas shaping modern management theory will be a major contributor to us seeing an increase in the number of truly *High Performance Teams* in our organisations!

Part 1: Workplace Change 101
1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Takeaway Messages	Actions/ Next Steps
1. What They Don't Teach You About Change - Brace For Impact!			
2. The Personal Impact of Change: Crossing Over & Letting Go			
3. Why Change Fails: Classic Leadership Mistakes			
4. Change: The Myths & Misuse of Modern Management			

Part 2:

The Culture Change Fast-track

- Changing Light Bulbs: The Psychology of Change
- Workplace Transformation: The Need For Speed
- The Change Fast-track: 4 Success Factors
- Two Roads to Scotland: A Case Study In Fast-tracking Change

Changing Light Bulbs: The Psychology of Change

"How Many Psychologists Does It Take To Change A Light Bulb?"

I am sure you have heard this rather lame riddle: Question: *How Many Psychologists Does It Take To Change A Light Bulb?* Answer: *Just one – but the light bulb has to really want to change!* It references a deeper misunderstanding about change. Can change really happen whether people feel a deep need to change or not? Yes of course, absolutely! We change constantly. As the quote from Lillian Hellman reads, *'we make incremental changes to our lives so often that we forget to tell each other and thus change 'creeps up' on us unexpectedly.'*

So why do we harp on about the fact that people do not change – that once they become adults they become increasingly stuck in their ways? That you cannot teach an old dog new tricks? Why does the change research from organisational psychology seem to reinforce this viewpoint whilst research from clinical psychology and consumer

psychology (a.k.a marketing) seemingly contradict this point? Why do we assume that workplace change must always require some form of intervention by management as a precursor for success when so many people manage much bigger life changes without the "help", or hindrance, of others? In Section 2 of this book, we will take a deeper look at the psychological science behind change.

Firstly, let us examine organisational transformation and hear some eyewitness accounts of the successes and challenges in real life scenarios of major change. I want to answer these questions: *how long does it take to change organisational culture and what are the most important do's and don'ts we need to consider?*

Secondly, I want to revisit some of the theories relevant to change from organisational, clinical and consumer psychology and establish some of the important irrefutable facts that can enable any change to be fast-tracked to maximum effectiveness as quickly as possible. Has the organisational change research overlooked some important principles we can apply to organisational change from clinical and consumer psychology? By combining the wisdom from these different fields of research, can we discover new and better ways to manage change in the workplace? I'll let you be the judge.

Thirdly, I want to examine a case study on different ways of developing change management strategies. I want to explore the pros and cons of different strategies which can, in their own ways, address similar workplace problems and how the selection of a strategy should take into account the practicalities and complexities of the organisation's context (operating environment).

Workplace Transformation: The Need For Speed

"The rate of change is not going to slow down anytime soon. If anything, competition in most industries will probably speed up even more in the next few decades."

—John P. Kotter

"Your success in life isn't based on your ability to simply change. It is based on your ability to change faster than your competition, customers and business."

—Mark Sanborn

"If everything seems under control, you're not going fast enough."

—Mario Andretti

"So how long did it take to change your organisation's culture from low trust silos to high trust collaboration?" This question was on everyone's minds as we sat listening to the journey of cultural transformation of a large organisation providing education services, with three large divisions, as part of our experience share during the afternoon session of a recent leadership mastermind forum that I was facilitating.

The question was not only topical because of the importance of promoting collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within the organisations represented by the attendees, but also because our group of 17 senior leaders had repeatedly identified the issue that *moving beyond compliance and supporting staff with change* dominated our hot issues feedback sessions over the last year.

This realisation led us to ask a very challenging question of our leadership group; why had the issue of 'managing change' become a reoccurring hot issue for our group? Was this due to deficits within us as leaders, and our inability to deal with the issue effectively? Alternatively, did it keep re-appearing as a hot issue because 'managing change' was a bigger issue then we had expected? Whatever the answer, perhaps this issue would take longer to change than others we were facing as senior leaders.

So to return to the question of how long does culture change take, let us continue to hear from the senior leaders sharing their experiences as well as have a quick look at some research on cultural transformation.

Research on Cultural Transformation in the Education Sector

A quick look at the research shows us that there is no universally agreed benchmark timeframe for culture change in any industry, as it largely depends on a range of local variables and the scale and context of the change itself. However, there are some quite good papers on change management in Education, which can shed some light on our central question. My favourite is from our own Australian based researchers, Peta Blood and

Margaret Thorsborne who address the difficult question of the timeframes for changing culture.

As you can see in the table below, they share some of their experiences around timelines for change over a 4 to 5-year cycle. However, they also highlight the overlapping nature of various change stages and the shortening of the timeline where interventions may be run in parallel, which is excellent news for us!

12-18 months	Gaining Commitment. Changing dialogue. Pockets of practice. Improved statistics. Increased options for managing behaviour.
12-24 months	Altered dialogue & processes. Alignment of policy & procedure. Increased skill development. School community commitment.
24-36 months	Embedding of practice at all levels. Altered operating framework. Reviewing policy and procedure. Creative solutions emerge.
4-5	Best Practice. Behaviour change embedded. Cultural change across school community.

Changing Culture Akin to Learning New Language

For some staff involved in massive cultural transformation, the experience is akin to learning a new language or being uprooted into another country. Old habits, routines, jokes, jargon, and norms are swept away with new organisational values and ways of working, often accompanied by restructures and new teams being formed with new and unfamiliar people.

		Language Category			
		I	II	III	IV
Hours of stydying per week	5	3 years	4 years	6 years	8 years
	10	1.5 years	2 years	3 years	4 years
	20	10 months	1.25 years	1.5 years	2 years

In this context, we can compare the 3-5 years of workplace change with the time taken to learn a new language fluently. You guessed it, a similar time period to consider. However, as the table above shows you can fast track a new language by increasing your exposure and practice. Based on our work in high performance schools, we believe the same principle of increasing exposure and practice applies to fast-track workplace culture change, but more on that later.

Experience Share Continued: Our Guest Leader

So returning to the question of how long culture change took across the large organisation being discussed at our forum experience share session, our guest answered the following; *"We had different experiences across the divisions of our organisation. The fastest group to change took 2 years whilst another group took 4 years, and yet another is only now getting to the point of transformation needed 5-6 years later. So if I was to offer some advice on timelines for changing workplace culture I would say 2 years is fast, 4 years is average and 6 years is slow but still a reasonable timeframe based on my experience."*

4 Years to Change Culture – Is This Too Long?

What did he just say? Four years as an 'average' time to change workplace culture? While this may be the reality many organisations must face, let's be honest, 4 years is just too long for customers, staff, and leaders, as all of them need quicker results to enjoy better lives.

Four years is far too long for clients exposed to poor workplace cultures and sub-optimal levels of service. Four years is far too long for staff who suffer the health problems associated with unhealthy workplaces, and too long for leaders themselves who have to maintain the energy and motivation over the longer term. Four years is excessively long to embed a culture change when considering undeniable accelerators of change never seen before. With technology and automation making almost 40 per cent of all Australian jobs, including highly skilled roles, redundant in 10 to 15 years we must adapt to massive changes in our organisations in much shorter cycles in order to maintain relevance in the rapidly changing economy and labour market.

Something has to change, and quickly!

How Do We Fast-track Workplace Transformation?

Once our guest had told us the 2, 4, and 6-year timeframes for the various sub-groups we naturally jumped to the question of how do we effectively fast-track the change process?

One of the audience members asked what the key differences were between the slower and faster changing groups. The response was; *"Well, one of the most important things we learned was to start slow and not rush getting engagement and alignment around vision and values. Where we took additional time to ensure everyone was fully on board with change and work through the 'yes buts', so they became 'what ifs' we ended up moving much faster in the latter stages of change. Where we rushed through initial engagement, we later suffered all sorts of setbacks due to unspoken concerns and fears that were never addressed at the start."*

He went further; *"Another really important difference between the faster and slower changing groups was the clarity of processes and documentation that supported improved practices - staff meetings and professional community forums were very well structured with clear agendas and good governance of meetings and outcomes sent out quickly and reminders were put on designated notice boards between sessions.*

Also, trust, and people's willingness to be open and vulnerable and to respect each other's individual ideas and journeys as teachers, was a big factor between slower and faster changing schools. Not only was trust important in the initial engagement, it became even more crucial as the change journey progressed and the opportunity to present, lead and receive feedback was rotated among all staff members. This was helped greatly by role modelling humility and vulnerability among the leaders as well as initial team building exercises sharing career highs and lows, personality profiling, and morning or afternoon teas prior to (or after) meetings.

Trust also played an important part in dealing with performance challenges brought about by work/life problems. In the fast change groups where there was a high level of trust, people were much more likely to proactively seek support when struggling to deliver on their team accountabilities due to personal problems. This proactive approach meant the teams could show empathy and compassion rather than feel frustrated at a lack of performance and thus avoid misunderstanding the cause of issues due to personal stress as opposed to poor work ethic."

Adjusting Our View of Timeframes for Change

Prior to this watershed moment, our senior leaders typically looked at a 3-6 month timeframe to implement change. Yet

this was entirely out-of-sync with the reality of timeframes for genuine transformation of workplace cultures.

Our short horizon thinking had set up unrealistic expectations for our staff and had left us no room for errors and setbacks, which are a normal part of the change journey.

Clearly, we as senior leaders needed to change our expectations around the time needed to transform workplace cultures.

Getting on the Fast-track for Workplace Transformation

So how do we get our workplace transformation and culture change agenda on the fast track in order to complete the transformation process in as little as 12-months compared to the average of 4 years?

The answer lies in the comments of the experience shared above. We need to deeply and genuinely engage with staff around the change agenda, set very clear processes, structures and accountabilities to support staff and drive the change agenda to ensure that all staff are actively participating in, and driving the change process. We need to ensure we are respecting each other's individual perspectives and contributions, and foster a climate of trust and openness to genuinely manage the setbacks and unexpected work/life challenges that may influence upon the change process as the journey progresses. Even more important than that, we need to take a step back and re-visit some of the success factors which lie beneath the foundations of behaviour change.

The Change Fast-track: Four Success Factors

"The best way to get people to 'do the right thing' is to make 'doing the right thing' the easiest thing to do!"

Most large corporations, schools, governments and not-for-profit organisations have cultures that are inherently difficult to lead and manage. Currently, many leaders in these fields are grappling with a range of challenges including changing roles and responsibilities among senior staff as leadership teams expand in high growth areas.

They are also challenged in staying ahead of the competition by implementing new innovations at a faster rate than at any time before; on-boarding of an increasing number of fresh and inexperienced people filling the gaps in workforce shortages (increasingly contract workers) so they can fit in to local culture quickly and effectively; and developing and getting staff commitment to a consistent organisational-wide operating procedure.

With so many different changes needing to be implemented, it is no wonder many leaders struggle with change management strategies to fast-track sustainable culture change.

Consider the following statements we hear from leaders about their difficulties with culture change:

> *"We introduced those changes months ago, yet still everyone is claiming they were never told and don't understand why we did it.'"*

> *"Staff say to each other 'What, another change? We'll simply wait this out until it goes away!'"*

> *"They still won't give me (or each other) honest feedback when I ask them despite the fact their previous not-so-good manager left a long time ago."*

> *"Changing the culture in any lasting way is impossible with all the temporary or casual positions – just as we start making progress key people leave and we have to start all over again."*

Now think about the last change you implemented in your organisation. Did this change genuinely reduce staff pain and/or increase pleasure? Did you expose your staff to the idea 20 times and then give them a personal experience 3 times before expecting commitment? Did you create some simple changes to relevant structures and procedures to make

the new change the easiest and most logical thing to do? Did you allow twice as long as you had planned to expect results before you threw your hands up in frustration and declared it a failure?

Let me explain. But before I do, let us focus on two important questions;

Question: Can you really fast-track culture change and still get sustainable results?
Answer: Yes

If so, then;

Question: How do you fast-track sustainable culture change?
Answer: By using structural changes, which are relatively quick and painless, to drive deeper behavioural changes, which are much slower and more painful?

Culture Change: My Top 4 Basic Principles

Let me spare you a boring lecture on sociology and psychology theory on organisational change, (however for anyone interested I have included this in short form summary as well) and instead share the four factors I believe are most important in successfully managing workplace change.

Reduce Pain &
Increase Pleasure

Success Factor 1 - Reduce Pain & Increase Pleasure:

For people to become genuinely interested in your product or initiative, they will need to feel a degree of pain to stay as they are and also believe that what you're offering will reduce pain and increase pleasure (Behavioural Psychology).

Application to Workplace Change: In simplest terms, the pain/pleasure principle applied to change management would suggest that for people to become genuinely interested in your product or initiative, they would need to feel a degree of pain to stay as they are, and also believe that your offering will reduce pain and increase pleasure.

Examples of integrating the pleasure/pain principle into workplace change initiatives include:

- Making a new procedure more enjoyable using rewards, stimulus and praise.
- Re-engineering older procedures to be slower and more difficult to use.
- Providing training and incentive programs linked to the use of a new procedure.

- Using 'change champions' to actively role model positive engagement with change.
- Openly reminding people of the normality of short-term pain for long-term gain where new procedures do require some time and adjustment.

The Pain Pleasure Principle: Since ancient times, punishments and rewards have been used to maintain law and order in societies. This created a powerful expectation in the minds of citizens in relation to the consequences of good and bad behaviour. Ancient philosophers have also discussed and debated our instincts for pleasure seeking through discourse around short-range and long-range hedonism. Over the last hundred years, many different branches of research psychology have explored the usefulness of this concept in changing human behaviour

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalytic psychology, put forward the idea that the mind seeks pleasure and avoids pain in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* of 1895. Freud called this idea 'the pleasure/pain principle', which describes the instinctual seeking of pleasure and avoiding of pain in order to satisfy biological and psychological needs.

In the early 1900s, Behavioural Psychologists, such as Ivan Pavlov and John Watson, explored the use of pain and pleasure interventions linked to neutral stimuli to create emotional responses. This is the process commonly referred to as psychological conditioning.

The discovery of this 'conditioning' process became a central pillar of behaviour modification where positive and negative experiences (i.e., pleasure and pain) were linked to either desirable or undesirable behaviour. These

principles are now foundations behind a multitude of different treatment approaches including recovery from psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety, as well as foundation principles in the design of consumer psychology strategies such as marketing, weight loss, fitness, etc.

Structure Supports Behaviour

Success Factor 2 - Structure Enables Behaviour (but not vice versa):

Changing the structure or environment people work in can fast-tack changes in behaviour when we make the new behaviour the easiest thing to do. Alternately, people may aspire to changing their behaviour and even attempt to adopt new behaviour but unless the structure in the environment supports these changes, the result will not last (Safety Culture Design Principle).

Application to workplace change:

- If the old behaviour is walking into a ditch, the replacement behaviour is walking around the ditch and thus the intervention is the fence.

- If the old behaviour is using an old version of the form or file on the system and the replacement behaviour is using the current version form or file, then the intervention is to remove or block access to all old copies of forms and files.
- If the old behaviour is arriving late while claiming your normal hours on your time sheet and the new behaviour is arriving on time and claiming correct pay then the intervention in a biometric (i.e., fingerprint) start/end shift clock.
- If the old behaviour is turning up late at meetings or leaving early and the new behaviour is attending on time with full engagement then the intervention is assigning roles and responsibilities in meetings to everyone, sharing accountability for group behaviour within team via moderator and publishing names of people who attend late/leave early in minutes.
- If the old behaviour is refusing to provide feedback to other people about their work performance and new behaviour is providing real-time feedback, then the intervention is regular cycles of group based peer feedback structured into normal work routines and written into employment contracts.

Structure Enables Behaviour (Applied Behaviour Analysis). One of the most obvious (yet often ignored) factors explaining why change fails is that the environment around the behaviour supports the old way, not the new way. It is easy to see this in the diagram below where people take the short cut instead of following the path because it is quicker and more convenient.

correct way   easiest way
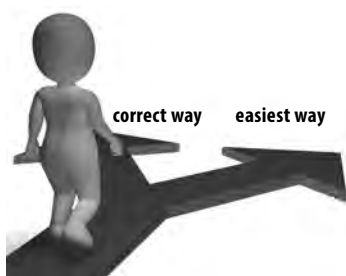
If we tried to change this short cut behaviour without actually understanding the environment it operates in we would invariably fail.

We see many change failures in therapy simply because we do not understand people's behaviour in their natural environment and so miss the cues that created it in the first place. Thomas Sasz and RD Laing highlighted the power of understanding the environment in their classic study on *Sanity, Madness and the Family* where they showed how seemingly insane behaviour in children was entirely sane when we saw the difficult social environments they lived in.

Moreover, fixing the family environment was the main trigger of recovery as opposed to individual therapy itself. The popular phrase 'insanity is a sane reaction to an insane world', was derived from this work, as was much of the modern behaviour therapy that underpins positive parenting strategies being utilised today. Understanding behaviour and its connection with the environment and then modifying the environment to modify the behaviour is one of the powerful ideas that come from Applied Behaviour Analysis.

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is a scientific discipline concerned with analysing the principles of learning theory and systematically applying this technology to change behaviour. Whilst there are similarities between ABA and behaviour modification, discussed in the previous section, there is a very important difference, which is that behaviour modification approaches and attempts to change behaviour

without clarifying the relevant behaviour and environment interactions. In contrast, ABA tries to change behaviour by first assessing the functional relationship between a targeted behaviour and the environment. This approach often seeks to develop replacement behaviours, which serve the same function as the aberrant behaviours. When it comes to workplace change, human factors and safety research also utilise this important principle in assessing unsafe work practices in connection with the work environment, and designing subsequent safety systems where the easiest thing to do is also the right thing to do.

Try Before you Buy

Success Factor 3 - Try Before You Buy:

For people to make a genuine commitment and buy-in, they will need to have been exposed to your offering (i.e., heard about or saw it) approximately 20 times (Smith's Advertising Theory) and/or experienced it personally at least 3 times (Krugman's Theory).

Application to workplace change:
- Begin dropping ideas into conversations well ahead of actual formal discussion.
- Break down new initiatives into smaller components and introduce various aspects of ideas into workplace routines before the formal introduction of initiatives.
- *'Pilot'* or *'Road Test'* ideas in leadership teams to 'de-bug' them and maximise leaders confidence in using approaches so they can be effective and authentic change agents.

Try Before You Buy (Effective Frequency Theory): Consumer Psychology is the study of individuals, groups, or organisations and the processes they use to select, secure and use, products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy their needs and wants. One of the most important 'holy grail' questions business' want to know is how many times do they need to promote their product to a person before they will buy it?

There are some classical examples of answers to this question, which still ring true today. Thomas Smith was an early pioneer of print advertising and wrote a guide called *Successful Advertising* in 1885, where he outlined a 20-step model required for people to become engaged to the point of decision in regards to a new product or service promoted in printed material.

Herbert E. Krugman (1965) was a TV advertising executive whose theory has been adopted and widely use in the advertising arena. Krugman believed that there were only three levels of exposure necessary for people in their experience of watching a television commercial; (1) curiosity,

(2) recognition and, (3) decision, with any further exposure simply being repeats of the third exposure effect (i.e., a reinforcement of the decision on the third exposure).

Since these early ideas of advertising there has been a lot of further research and much debate about the various technical aspects of these early theories of exposure however consensus still remains on the importance of multiple exposures to a new idea and personal experiences of various elements of the new idea prior to making a purchasing decision.

Realistic Timeframes

Success Factor 4 - Realistic Timeframes:

It is widely accepted that a carefully planned new product or initiative will take twice as long as predicted to deliver, while a poorly planned new product or initiative will take 3 times as long as predicted (Project Management Theory).

Application to workplace change:
- Meetings: Book additional time into the diary to allow for over-runs and for post meeting discussions with the team, especially during periods of organisational change.
- Delegating tasks: Get a 'brief back' on the steps needed to complete task and risks, and analyse any handoff or integration issues as well as get the person to provide both their estimate and worst-case completion time. Always plan against their worst-case time period, never their agreed deadline.
- Data walls for project management have clearly marked timelines and stages on any project data walls displayed around the office. Engage visually with this material during meetings to increase conversation and feedback around timelines and allow updates according to real-time feedback.
- Role changes recognise that even simple changes to people's roles could take many months to fully integrate into their work routines.
- Culture change recognises the complexity of organisational transformation, so break this down into simpler structural and process changes to increase speed and certainty of change.

Realistic Timeframes (The Uncertainty Principle): Have you ever tried to get fit or lose weight? How about building or renovating a house? Did you make it to your goal on time? Did it take roughly twice as long as expected? Are you still working on it even now?

There is some helpful science behind why things take longer than expected and, you guessed it, we totally need to factor this into any workplace change initiatives.

The Uncertainty Principle – From Quantum Physics to Project Management - Werner Heisenberg is famous for his Uncertainty Principle – you either know the position of a particle or its velocity, but not both at the same time. This is because observing a particle involves shining light on it; the light transfers energy to the particle, increasing its speed, or changing its direction. The Uncertainty Principle is a true universal principle; we can conclude that every process in the world should have a built-in uncertainty, indeterminacy, and unpredictability. For project managers, the Uncertainty Principle means that the time and scope of the project cannot be precisely measured.

How Uncertainty Behaves - Most people have an intuitive feeling that tasks are more likely to require more effort than planned, rather than less. This feeling is correct, for two reasons. First, we are likely to omit scope or tasks that contribute to the work, and so underestimate the effort. Second, there is more likelihood for work to grow beyond expectation than to shrink below expectation.

The Avoidable Timeframe Mistakes We Make - There are some causes of schedule slips that are completely unpredictable and unavoidable. Human brains are lousy at making estimates, and are notoriously poor at accurately estimating probabilities. Left untrained, our brains are wired to make guesses based on a 50% chance of success. As a result,

people tend to underestimate the duration of a task, or over-estimate the likelihood of completing a task in a given period of time.

When most people estimate how long a project will take to complete they simply add up the time for each component to get a total time – this is often referred to as bottom up scheduling. Bottom up methods give too little attention to the delays and errors that may occur at handoffs and integration points. A simple example on a personal level, is planning 30 minutes of exercise into our workdays which may take longer or simply not occur at all if we fail to connect with all the additional integration points like access of venue, traffic, interruptions, energy levels, etc.

The solution that project management theorists arrived at, given the previously mentioned complexities of human error in estimation, scheduling methodologies and unpredictable events, is to always plan twice the estimated time needed for delivering a new project.

A Couple of Additional Factors to Consider…

There are a couple of other important factors that missed my Top 4 cut-off. Firstly, regarding changes to internal moods and attitudes (after all a lot of managers I speak to want their staff to have a more positive attitude at work), research from the field of clinical psychology suggests that in the absence of any consistent additional support, it will take between 8-12 months for a person to significantly change their attitudes and behaviours to enable recovery from conditions such as depression (NHS UK).

Secondly, in regards to learning new languages that closely match your current language (so many new workplace

initiatives have new phrases, jargon and acronyms to adjust to), research on language fluency suggests that through full time study and immersion it will take at least 10-12 months or 2-3 years part-time (US Foreign Services Institute).

Thirdly, habit change researchers from University College London (Lally et al., 2009), examined the new habits of 96 people over the space of 12 weeks, and found that the average time it takes for a new habit to stick is actually 66 days; furthermore, individual times varied from 18 to a very lengthy 254 days. This is important when understanding how long the shift from conscious incompetence to unconscious competence can take.

What does all this mean? Well, when it comes to culture change these principles help me understand that the error score I should apply to my own planning, in terms of how long it will take for my culture change initiatives to work, should be at least twice as long as carefully planned. They also showed the typical timeframes and points of contact people need to have with new change initiatives to make genuine and lasting changes to their behaviour and language in the workplace. They give me the understanding of the genuine personal benefits of the new change, or lack thereof, in reducing pain and increasing pleasure; and the need to modify the structure/environment related to the change so the new behaviour becomes the most logical and easiest thing to do.

Fast-tracking sustainable culture change therefore is about making sure these 4 Success Factors are incorporated into any initiative to shorten the timeframe needed to achieve a sustainable result. Where one or more of these Four Success Factors cannot be adequately addressed then we will need to

develop compensatory strategies and adjust timeframes back to normal change management parameters.

Fast-tracking sustainable culture change is about making sure the 4 Four Success Factors are incorporated into any change management initiative to shorten the timeframe needed to achieve a sustainable result.

Predicting Timeframes for Culture Change:

When we seek to introduce new proactive culture change initiatives into a workplace, our strategies can target a number of different aspects of workplace culture.

At a theoretical level Daniel Kim's model, *Levels of Perspectives*, neatly highlights the various layers of perspective to consider in change management (i.e., Vision, Mental Models, Systemic Structures, Patterns of Behaviour, and Events) with greater impact and leverage achieved by intervening on higher levels of perspective.

At a practical level, most workplace changes can be categorised as either, structural and procedural (i.e., roles, duties, policies and procedures) or, behavioural and attitudinal (i.e., professional practices and cultural norms of behaviour and language).

The table below summarises different aspects of workplace culture typically addressed in change management strategies and the difficulty and timeframes associated with such strategies.

	Types of Workplace Changes	Type of Learning	Difficulty to Learn	Minimum Timeframe for Competence (FASTRACK)	Normal Timeframe Required (×2 Minimum)
STRUCTURAL & PROCEDURAL CHANGES	Roles and Duties	Learn who does what	Easy (Relies on following organisational chart and job description)	1-3 months	3-6 months
	Policies and Procedures	Learn new standards and consequences	Easy / Medium (Relies on following documented steps)	3-6 months	6-12 months
BEHAVIOURAL & ATTITUDINAL CHANGE	Professional Practices	Learn new skills	Medium (Relies on demonstrating skill)	6-12 months	12-24 months
	Cultural Behaviours and Attitudes	Learn new emotional, cognitive and behavioural reaction patterns	Hard (Relies on engaging in alternate behaviour when under emotional pressure)	12+ months	24+ months

The Magic: Structural vs. Behavioural Changes

As you can see, structural changes are far easier and faster to deliver upon than attitude and behaviour changes. This is where some of the magic lies because by using structural and procedural changes to trigger massive shifts in attitudes and behaviours of teams, you as the leader will be able to minimise the extent to which you need to undertake intensive individual support interventions along the way.

Let me explain with two simple common workplace culture problems, being poor behaviour in staff meetings and lack of developmental feedback among peers.

Changing Poor Behaviour in Staff Meetings: How do we stop staff meetings from running over time or being a waste of time? How do we keep people engaged and involved? How do we deal with interruptions, side conversations and the bad behaviour of checking phones and looking at laptops?

- **Structural Approach:** The structural solution is to implement an effective team charter about *'above and below the line'* behaviours and introduce a 'moderator' in team meetings (rotated among team members) whose job it is to use red and yellow cards as needed to support the team to address *'below the line'* behaviour and optimise their 'above the line' behaviour.

- **Behavioural Approach:** This is the personally confronting counselling/coaching approach where the line manager follows up directly on bad behaviour in meetings.

The outcomes from such structural approaches are fast and sustainable beyond the individuals involved and will quickly become a part of the wider workplace protocols and processes lasting beyond the tenure and turnover of staff. The behavioural approach is high risk emotionally, demanding and not sustainable beyond the individuals involved.

Lack of Developmental Feedback Among Peers: Many staff struggle with having peer observations in the workplace, attending peer feedback meetings and spontaneously offering feedback to colleagues to prevent minor issues turning into major problems. So how do we get staff to become more open

to disclose their professional challenges, along with giving and receiving feedback with each other?

- **Structural Approach:** Use an agenda item in the structure of meetings among employees that requires self-disclosure on strengths and areas to develop as part of a quick round the room warm-up to begin the meeting. After three months add another item requiring each employee to share a professional learning and growth story followed by feedback from his or her peers on a rotational basis.
- **Behavioural Approach:** Use 1:1 meetings to explore the employee's inner motivations and desires to encourage feedback and/or threaten to commence disciplinary action if they refuse to engage in peer feedback processes.

The outcome of these structural approaches is a short, fast process that when repeated multiple times will increase the trust and willingness to disclosure, building up to professional growth and learning discussions. It is sustainable beyond the individuals involved and has benefits across the workforce through group participation. On the other hand, the behavioural approach is time intensive and high risk with lengthy professional and personal challenges to overcome. Whilst we do need behavioural approaches to help staff engage with feedback, we will be fast-tracking sustainable culture change by focusing all our effort in succeeding at the structural changes as a first step.

Your Strategies & Expectations for Culture Change

Take a look at your team's action plans (i.e., Strategic and Operational Plans) and the strategies you are implementing. For each strategy you are implementing consider the following:

1. What types of changes will you be making in the workplace?
2. Are the timelines you have
3. set realistic for a minimum standard of competency to emerge?
4. How will you expose staff to the idea of your proposed change numerous times and what experiences will they have before needing to fully commit?
5. Are there structural approaches that you could introduce to fast-track any learning and behavioural changes you are seeking among staff in your higher performance workforce culture?

Remember to Address ALL Four Success Factors in Fast-tracking Change

Finally, as you get started on your new and improved approach to change in your workplace, do not forget to incorporate ALL 4 Success Factors into your strategies to Fast-tracking Change:

- **Factor 1:** Decrease Pain and Increase Pleasure - you need to be able to decrease pain and/or increase pleasure.

- **Factor 2:** Structure Enables Behaviour - do not forget to ensure the structures and processes you implement consistently support the behavioural culture change you are seeking.
- **Factor 3:** Try Before You Buy - you need to be able to expose people to ideas 20 times prior to giving them 3 actual experiences.
- **Factor 4:** Realistic Timeframes - you need to allow twice as long as you thought it would take (and three times as long if poorly planned!).

A great saying to remember when it comes to workplace culture change is; *"in the end everything works out perfectly so if it's not perfect yet, then keep working, as it is not the end!"*

Two Roads to Scotland: A Case Study In Fast-tracking Change

"You take the high road and I'll take the low road –
and I'll be in Scotland before you."

—The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond (1841)

There is an old song my grandfather taught me, which has a chorus line of; *"You take the high road and I'll take the low road – and I'll be in Scotland before you".* The simple and obvious message is that there are at least two roads to Scotland and one will be faster and the other slower. The assumption of course is we should all take the low road BUT what if the low road is rougher and damages the car more? Or has water crossings that are flooded the majority of the time? What if the high road is a safer, smoother ride for everyone? What if we need to be in Scotland on Tuesday, which by taking the low road, we can achieve, while taking the high road will get us there two days later? What if Tuesday is a deadline that we need

to meet or risk losing our jobs/damaging a company, versus simply a preliminary meeting about a new opportunity? The reality of choosing the right road to Scotland is not as simple as it first seemed and this mirrors the deeper complexities we face when managing change.

Change is complex. Complex because each workplace change scenario is unique and there is no single universal right or wrong strategy. Complex because there is usually a range of strategies that all will effectively address a target problem however they will have different impacts in terms of timeframes, resources, and short- and long-term adjustment reactions by staff. Therefore selecting the right change strategy is as much about understanding the root cause of the workplace problem creating the need for change as it is about understanding the real world demands (i.e., expectations about timeframes and quality of solutions) and constraints (i.e., available resources and competing priorities) for delivering an effective solution.

A Case Study In Fast-tracking Change:

"A bad system will beat a good person every time."

—W Edwards Deming

"Well Pete, you may fix the underlying problem but that won't change their attitudes."

—Anonymous

I have heard some crazy things from managers in my time, some really mind-numbing, jaw-dropping moments of nonsense from people who really should know better. The other day, while I was working with a team of very experienced senior

managers, I experienced a new low point in my career working in change management and organisational transformation.

We were in the middle of a workshop on Fast-tracking Sustainable Culture Change working through a serious safety related concern. Namely, the issue of staff having a poor attitude towards, and a mixed compliance response to, the safety procedure involving the lock-down of a high security dangerous goods area in their workplace; specifically, ensuring that two consecutive doors were never left unlocked at the same time.

The workshop began with a simple exercise to identify the culture change 'hot issues' facing the organisation with some consensus among the leadership group about the most important topics to focus on. By far the issue most important to this particular group was changing staff perceptions on the burden of safety procedures.

We then quickly worked through the theory of fast-tracking sustainable culture change using the four success factors previously outlined and the applicable timeframes for various types of workplace change.

Once we had the basics covered we then broke out into smaller groups to develop some possible change management strategies to address their nominated *'hot issue'*, with each group required to design a change strategy to address the *'hot issue'* and assess the pros and cons of their strategy against the four success factors.

Once the breakout groups concluded, we reconvened to share some of the change management strategies we had developed. There were three different strategies developed by the leadership team with some interesting debate and commentary among team members about the relative merits and drawbacks of each one.

Strategy 1: Develop a 'safety conversation' procedure for frontline supervisors to use with safety critical staff to improve compliance.

Sustainable Culture Change: Fast-track Planning Tool: Group 1

Culture Change Target Area: *Changing staff perceptions on the burden of safety procedures*

Specific Strategy To Implement: *Develop and implement a "safety conversation" protocol for supervisors to seek genuine informal feedback and increase understanding of procedures.*

Key Personnel & Resources: *Senior Managers, Supervisors, Time and Training*

The 4 Factors	Fast-track Questions	Strategy Assessment	Risks to manage
Pain/ Pleasure	*"How is the new way less painful and more pleasurable than the old way?"*	Fail because we have to change the communications of supervisors. Need to over communicate the long term benefits of the strategy so they engage in the training	Consistency of delivery through low buy in. Inspect skills of staff and roll model prior to roll out
Structure Enables Behaviour	*"What structures need to change to sustain new behavior over the long-term?"*	Fail - Need a new capture loop for feedback. Include the outputs from safety conversations during set meeting agendas	Reporting without buy in. No output from senior management about analyses of trends and future focus for spotlight. People reporting what they think we want to hear. Need to role model it first.
Try Before You Buy	*"How can people try out your new ideas multiple times before having to commit?"*	Start at the top first - Leadership roll out end to end and refine prior to supervisor roll out	Roll out is incomplete or only partially done by some leaders
Realistic Timeframes	*"Does our plan allow twice as long as we predict for changes to work?"*	6 months before reliable supervisor check in data 18-24 months to assess attitude changes	Loose focus on day to day business. Staff turn over. No cultural on boarding of new supervisors on safety conversation strategy

This strategy fits with many contemporary trends in safety culture particularly with regard to the language of safety and importance of constantly reinforcing the right messages among staff, as well as ensuring an open two-way dialogue between staff and managers about important issues.

When the rest of the group discussed this strategy, there was general agreement about the usefulness of the approach. However, some of the operational managers were concerned about the length of time it would take for genuine changes in behaviour and attitudes (i.e., 12-24 months), and the lack of quality assurance about supervisors actually complying with the protocol as opposed to making a joke of it to appear popular with the staff.

Importantly, when looking ahead over the next 12-24 months it was also highlighted that the political environment surrounding the organisation, such as contract re-tendering and challenges from head office implementing new workforce management systems, created a real risk that this initiative would quickly get lost and forgotten amongst all the other important agendas and urgent tasks supervisors were constantly responding to.

Strategy 2: Implement an improved safety compliance dashboard and agenda item seeking feedback in team meetings.

Sustainable Culture Change: Fast-track Planning Tool: Group 2

Culture Change Target Area: *Changing staff perceptions on the burden of safety procedures*
Specific Strategy To Implement: *Introduce new safety dashboard and protocol for team leaders in meetings to engage staff in relevant data sharing, analysis and feedback.*
Key Personnel and Resources Required: *Team Leaders & Senior Management Team to Design & Deliver.*

The 4 Factors	Fast-track Questions	Strategy Assessment	Risks to manage
Pain/Pleasure	*"How is the new way less painful and more pleasurable than the old way?"*	Short term fail - New way is another change for team leaders to have to learn but longer term making meetings more effective and easier to run.	SMT is to deliver a prepopulated dashboard report to use to fast track the meeting. SMT needs to deliver the dashboard regularly and on time or strategy will fail and revert to old way
Structure Enables Behaviour	*"What structures need to change to sustain new behavior over the long-term?"*	Short-term fail. Whilst using an already existing meeting, current meeting agendas and times, don't allow for this - need to add in an item and time.	Length of meetings and adding new items. Introduce it as a new and permanent improvement process and take out old agenda item. Report Stepwise by exception based on audit process. Reporting up for SMT updates - fixed agenda meeting item
Try Before You Buy	*"How can people try out your new ideas multiple times before having to commit?"*	Need a gradual phase in with role modeling and shadowing. Training of supervisors on process including told, playing. Support then and shadow at first few team meetings. 2 SMTs to attend meetings where possible in increase visibility of support f	Setting up procedure and protocols to commence and ensuring it is robust. Spot checking by SMT as change champions.
Realistic Timeframes	*"Does our plan allow twice as long as we predict for changes to work?"*	3-6 months for procedures to embed and 12-18 for attitude change - enough time given length of current contract.	May get distracted /off track during the process. Next FY management objective - normalise into the strategic plan.

Once this strategy was shared to the whole group, there was a consensus that quickly developed among the wider leadership team about the value of improving score-carding on safety compliance issues, and creating a dashboard that could be a visual aide to encourage better structure for discussion and engagement in team meetings, especially if this new meeting item replaced others, and did not increase the length (i.e., pain) or complexity of the team meeting agendas.

The risks in this strategy appeared to relate primarily to the additional hassle and demand on management to generate the necessary reports, and managers being able to effectively run the team meetings where the data was discussed. However, these risks seemed manageable in the circumstance. The timeframe for embedding the changed meeting procedure also seemed quite reasonable with staff likely to be engaging in genuine and helpful dialogue during the meeting (a precursor to shifts in behaviour and attitude) within 3 months.

Strategy 3: Change the lock system in the high secure area so it is impossible to have two doors unlocked at the same time.

Sustainable Culture Change: Fast-track Planning Tool: Group 3

Culture Change Target Area: *Changing staff perceptions on the burden of safety procedures*
Specific Strategy To Implement: *Change the lock system in the high secure area so it is impossible to have two doors unlocked at the same time*
Key Personnel & Resources: *Locksmith & Safety Manager & Supervisors to Brief Staff*

The 4 Factors	Fast-track Questions	Strategy Assessment	Risks to manage
Pain / Pleasure	*"How is the new way less painful and more pleasurable than the old way?"*	Achieved – changing the lock system to a simpler more fool proof approach was not anymore painful compared to the current procedure nor is it a radical new idea people have to think through extensively	Ensuring the changeover process runs smoothly and the briefing process is effective for staff.
Structure Enables Behaviour	*"What structures need to change to sustain new behavior over the long-term?"*	Achieved – the new lock system will make the correct behaviour much easier to do	Nil
Try Before You Buy	*"How can people try out your new ideas multiple times before having to commit?"*	Start at the top first – Leadership roll out end to end and refine prior to supervisor roll out	Supervisors to tolerate mixed attitudes during adjustment phase
Realistic Timeframes	*"Does our plan allow twice as long as we predict for changes to work?"*	Yes – behavior change is immediate and new habits formed in 66 days with no external deadlines to meet	Nil

The last group to present had several senior managers who had military and police backgrounds, and unlike the other breakout groups who focused on directly engaging with staff about their attitudes and behaviours on an individual or team level, the final breakout group simply opted to change the lock system to stop the risk in the first place. They reasoned this would immediately solve the most urgent problem of safety and people would like it or lump it, and eventually get used to it and stop complaining.

After their short presentation, the room erupted with concerns raised by the other two groups that such a strategy was not actually addressing the question of changing attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, they contended simply changing the locks was akin to treating the staff as incompetent fools who would resent such change. To the extent it would make the problem worse, with possible sabotage and damage to equipment a real problem not to mention industrial action in the form of strikes along with bans and the original biggest risk of all – possible harm to staff from exposure to dangerous goods. *WTF???* Was I hearing this correctly? Why are they seriously saying that changing the lock system was not a valid change management strategy when it came to modifying staff attitudes and behaviours towards safety? Perhaps they had forgotten some of the basic rules of behaviour change. However, before we unpack this further let us quickly assess this strategy against the four success factors needed to fast-track sustainable change.

Regarding the first factor, (Pain vs. Pleasure), changing the lock system to a simpler more fool proof approach was not anymore painful compared to the current procedure nor was

it a radical new idea people had to think through extensively.

Regarding the second factor, (Structure Enables Behaviour), the new lock system made the correct behaviour much easier to do.

With the third factor (Try Before You Buy), people did not have to like it as a precursor to trying it out. They could engage with it many times and gradually adjust their attitudes at their own pace without compromising the security.

Finally, regarding the fourth factor (Realistic Timeframes), because it was a simple system change, the timeline for attitude adjustment from the old habits to the new ones was not only predictable, but also quite fast* compared to the other groups proposed strategies.

(*Habit change research indicates constantly engaging in new behaviours creates habit. An automatic response not raising any significant adverse emotional reaction within an average of 66 days).

Culture Change & The Myths of Modern Management

So what was the big argument really about? As we stepped through the issues further, some myths of modern management were revealed:

1. **To change behaviour you must first change attitudes:** This is proven wrong on so many levels. The simplest and most powerful refute is through the work of Amy Cuddy who showed that making people behave differently ultimately adjusted their emotions and attitudes.

2. **People need to come up with ideas themselves if they are to 'own' them and buy-in:** This is false and the false perception of choice and tokenistic consultation process many organisations undertake can make resistance to change much worse.

3. **People need a lot of time to gradually adjust to change:** False. Whilst it is true that people need multiple exposures to new ideas and changes to understand and assimilate them, nonetheless it is also true that clear, specific and well-structured change can be done rapidly. It can be quite damaging to suggest to people they have a genuine choice to act the old or new way when management is fully invested and biased in making the new process the default option, honesty is always the best policy when making change.

4. **People never accept change that is forced upon them:** So untrue. Changing habitual behaviour patterns takes on average 66 days and most people with a near death experience due to a health problem accept the need for change and make radical changes to improve their longevity rather than reject the change and speed up their own demise.

So what does this all really mean? Well the right answer is from the behaviour analysis viewpoint and looking for the fastest, simplest, and safest path for change with the right behaviours, almost guaranteed by structural changes and allowing plenty of time for individual adjustment to occur once the new behaviour is occurring.

The wrong answer is from the emotional intelligence viewpoint, which takes people on a long and winding personal development journey where ultimately they have to choose to change, this uncertain timeframe disconnected to the urgency needed to avoid major damage to the organisation in the interim.

Remember whilst there is usually no perfect change management strategy per se, some strategies are clearly going to be more effective than others when dealing with the real world constraints of time, people, resources and risks.

My ABCs of Culture Change

In summary, when it comes to culture change my personal rules, which I refer to as my ABCs, are:

A. Maximise the structure needed to make the new behaviour stick.
B. Minimise the messaging of change (make it a minor tweak to business as usual as opposed to a massive breakthrough in the way we work together) to lessen the pain of change, and increase the pleasure of the familiar (better the devil you know).
C. Get people trying (i.e., pilot project, test drive, trial phase) the new behaviour without having to like it and do not expect smiling faces for a while. New habits will form and happiness will appear if you remain consistent and supportive in implementing your changes over the longer term!

Part 2: The Culture Change Fast-track

1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Takeaway Messages	Actions/ Next Steps
1. Changing Light Bulbs: The Psychology of Change			
2. Workplace Transformation: The Need For Speed			
3. The Change Fast-track: Four Success Factors			
4. Two Roads to Scotland: A Case Study In Fast-tracking Change			

Part 3:

Workplace Change: The Hot Issues

- The Hot Issues of Workplace Change
- Trust & Accountability
- Innovation & Collaboration
- Customer Service

The Hot Issues of Workplace Change

*"Res ipsa loquitur" (**"Let the evidence speak for itself"**)*

—Latin saying

For me, one of the most important parts of group mentoring and coaching programs with leaders is regularly running a session called *'hot issues'*. Unlike many other pre-planned development sessions, which have targeted skills development or scheduled reviews of strategic plans or personal development goals, *'hot issues'* sessions (a form of organised brain storming and problem solving) are about working through the most pressing issues that leaders are struggling with at the time.

The exercise is quite simple, after a quick breakout discussion in pairs, each leader writes one of their current major challenges up onto a white board. Then with everyone contributing at least one hot issue, the whole group examines the list. The issues are prioritised by *'Vegas votes'* (i.e., each person is given 5 votes or ticks to place on the items they

think are most worthy for full discussion by the group). The top 3-5 issues are then allocated equal time for the remainder of the session for a stepped discussion. Step 1 clarifies the issue, step 2 brainstorms relevant ideas and solutions, and step 3 reflects on the takeaway value.

This is an incredibly powerful technique to use simply because many of the most difficult and distressing issues leaders face are not easily converted into prepared organised agenda items and therefore, are minimised or ignored in coaching, despite being profoundly difficult and distressing for the individual concerned.

Hot issue sessions are a core part of Communities of Practice among peer groups of leaders I have worked with over a number of years and I have been privileged to observe the evolving nature of their concerns over a long period. The montage of pictures on the following pages shows several examples of what these actual messy whiteboards look like for one particular group that I have worked with and the final image illustrating an example of the final part of the process where leaders prioritise their most important issues in managing their workplaces.

As you can see, there are some significant reoccurring themes, which are deemed the most important issues to address. Most of them are change related, in particular, issues of trust, accountability, innovation, collaboration, and customer service all rate highly on a regular basis and clearly warrant special focus. In the last section of this book we will share some of the lessons learned on these *'hot issues'* for leaders, in particular the strategies you can use to change workplace behaviour and improve outcomes accordingly. So let's get into it!
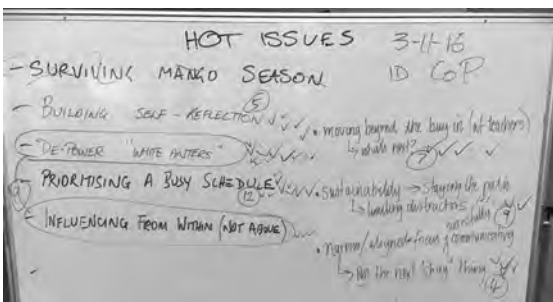
Top 3

1. Working with staff (collaboration) on improvement (innovation) agendas that include change
2. Staff interactions & relationships (trust & accountability)
3. Community engagement (customer service)
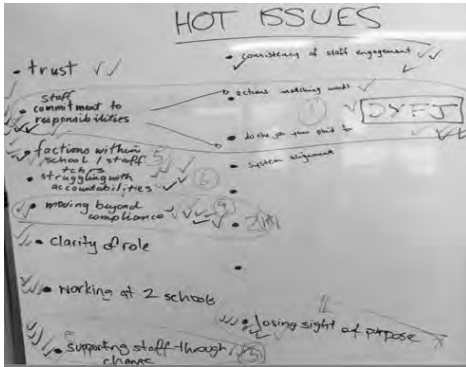

Top 3

1. Managing *'white-anting'* during change (breakdowns in trust and accountability)
2. Sustainability and progressing strategic initiatives (innovation & collaboration)
3. Staff buy-in to vision (improving customer service)

Top 3

1. Staff commitment to responsibilities (accountability)
2. Factions within organisation resisting change (collaboration) & losing sight of purpose (customer service)
3. Moving beyond compliance & supporting staff through change (innovation, collaboration & trust)

Top 3

1. Inflexible practice of staff (customer service)
2. Empathy and understating of staff perspective (trust and collaboration)
3. Having to put out bushfires caused by other people (lack of collaboration and accountability)
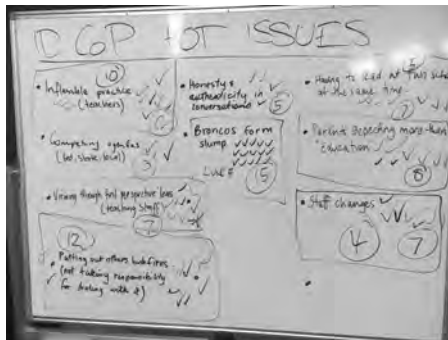
Trust & Accountability

"Trust is the glue of life. It is the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships."

—Stephen Covey

In a workplace *'Trust'* and its twin sister *'Accountability'* are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, of all *High Performance Teams*. Teams with high levels of trust have a firm foundation to build a high performance culture. Teams with low levels of trust, regardless of their current level of performance, face a downward slide, which if not addressed, leads to eventual failure.

The Fragile Nature of Trust

The nature of trust is both highly subjective and impermanent, making it fragile and difficult to maintain in the fast paced and constantly changing world of work.

Trust is defined as *"the belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone"*. When we trust someone it means we literally believe that what they say is, or will be, true. In addition, when subsequent events occur where the other person behaved as expected we further increase our trust in them.

Therefore, levels of trust are fluid, building up, and are destroyed, over multiple encounters with people, and our observation of the consistency, or inconsistency, of their subsequent actions with their stated intent. The fact that trust is built over time and can fluctuate is an important part of understanding workplace relationships, which we will return to shortly.

> *"Trust is built with consistency."*
>
> —Lincoln Chafee

Trust is also highly subjective with each person having their own version of understandings of decisions and agreements with others, yet believing in the moment of the conversation that their combined understandings are the same and the reality of a situation unified. The unspoken assumption of a shared objective reality creates the first cracks in the bond of trust between two people.

As Susan Scott, author of *Fierce Conversations* points out, there is no objective reality only subjective reality. How often and how deeply we connect and communicate to interrogate our subjective realities and realign to a shared understanding dictates how long our trust in each other will last.

Trust and High Performance Teams

When it comes to *High Performance Teams*, trust is the precursor seed to growing the disciplines needed to build a highly engaging and high achieving team.

In order to *Engage* effectively we need to have high levels of trust, specifically to enable us to disclose our work/life and wellbeing needs, and be able to reciprocate support to others regarding their needs. We also need to be able to have courageous conversations, giving people feedback when we are uncomfortable with their behaviour towards us, and also receiving this type of feedback from others to maximise the benefits of our diversity (our individual differences) and create effective and harmonious relationships at work.

In order to maximise team *Achievement*, we need high levels of trust to openly and supportively embrace high levels of accountability and proactively update and engage the team when problems emerge that jeopardise the completion of critical tasks/deadlines in our action plans, which are part of achieving our team's mission and vision.

We also need a high trust environment to enable ongoing performance feedback and innovation as we seek ways to improve productivity and performance for the benefit of the team and the organisation.

The Top 4 Trust Breakdowns

Trust is very important in building *High Performance Teams*. However, given both the subjective nature of trust and the fluid nature of trust rising and falling based on multiple

experiences, there is ample room for problems causing trust breakdowns. Here are my Top 4 indicators of this occurring.

1. Tyranny Of Distance: Life Changes

One of the most difficult situations to either build trust from scratch or repair trust when previously broken is where there is a lack of regular contact among people. Teams who work remotely, people who simply feel hurt and avoid others, and personality types, which thrive on autonomy and independence, all accidently create barriers to building trust. Even well-intentioned, skilled communicators still face risks of trust breakdowns when the distance between meeting together and communicating is too great.

After all, our subjective reality changes constantly and our failure to update others on these changes creates a void, which becomes a chasm, when circumstances change to the point we do not fulfil our agreements with others.

2. Reality Check: Failure To Communicate & Brief Back

The commanding officer: *"Send a team of six soldiers to the front gate at 0900 to unload the supply truck".*

"Roger that, six soldiers, front gate 0900 unload supply truck" replied the staff officer.

The failure to communicate clearly and then accurately repeat back is perhaps, the biggest, yet simplest problem I have encountered in trust breakdowns. Listening and observing many frontline managers working with teams, I am consistently amazed at how poorly managers communicate tasks to staff. For

example, *'can you sort 'that' out soon?'* What exactly does *'sort',* *'that',* and *'soon'* actually mean? Also noticeable is how staff fail to repeat back or check for understanding after an instruction is given; *'yeah, yeah I get it… will do.'*

We could all learn from the military that cannot afford such problems and have protocols for providing instructions and then protocols for clarifying instructions. Such a simple system, yet overlooked by most people at work and at home!

3. Great Expectations: Over Estimating Capability & Capacity

Most of the 7 billion people on Earth are 'sociotropic', which simply means they like to be liked. This means most of us, to varying degrees, are 'people pleasers' wanting to minimise conflict and maximise stability in our relationships at work and home. So we agree to all sorts of expectations placed upon us by others, which are beyond our available time or skill leading to much frustration and blame when results are less than expected.

Combine this sociotropic tendency with another important fact, namely the human tendency to under-estimate the time needed to complete tasks, and we are set-up for some real trust breakdowns based on unrealistic expectations we set for others and ourselves.

4. Passive Aggression: Deception & Harmful Intentions

Thank goodness there is only a small group of people referred to as workplace psychopaths, who on purpose, seek to harm you by breaking trust through not delivering on promises made. Research

suggests only 1% of the population have a tendency to harm others for their own personal gain or pleasure, but that 1% can end up filling the ranks of management making it more problematic in senior leadership roles where 3-4% may have this tendency.

Trust & Accountability: Poor Theory Creates Poor Practice

"You can trust people to serve their own interests."

—Machiavelli

"Behaviour never lies."

—J. Sheridan

"Water follows the contour to charter its course."

—Sun Tzu

The Misuse of Emotional Intelligence to Improve Trust and Accountability

Trust and Accountability are the hallmarks of any *High Performance Team*. Any team moving from good to great needs to improve both Trust and Accountability. This process of change and improvement is commonly referred to as *'culture change'*.

Needless to say, culture change strategies that effectively promote trust and accountability directly predict the longer-term outcomes for *High Performance Teams*, yet research suggests that 70% of all culture change initiatives fail. Why?

The answer is both simple to understand and hard to address. Simple to understand because change initiatives only

succeed when they actually address the real underlying factors causing the problems. Hard to address because of the inherent difficulty of adequately developing and implementing effective behaviour change strategies in resource constrained and time pressured teams and also, the myths of modern management. In particular, the incorrect use of emotionally intelligent leadership approaches to attempt to solve workplace behaviour problems that occur because of poor systems and structures.

Trust & Accountability: Problems & Culture Change

Consider these two recent statements from CEOs who were seeking help in changing their organisation's culture:

> *"I'm sick and tired of everyone in this organisation blaming each other for problems and failing to take responsibility – we need people to be more accountable for their own actions and start showing some initiative."*

> *"I knew something was wrong with our culture but I had no idea how bad it really was. The survey results show 'Trust' is at an all-time low – we need to start getting people to open up and trust each other more ASAP!"*

These two statements are reflective of countless conversations I have had with senior leaders of public and private sector organisations over many years. When we ask them what

they have done prior to working with us many of them describe a number of activities, initiatives and campaigns they have implemented to increase Emotional Intelligence in the workforce – with only marginal improvements in the underlying problems of Trust and Accountability.

Trust & Accountability: Emotional Intelligence vs. Behaviour Analysis

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity of individuals to recognise their own, and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour, and to manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one's goals.

EI is arguably one of the most important factors in individual success in both work and life but not necessarily the most important factor in group/organisational culture problems. EI approaches to Trust and Accountability focus on leaders and teams increasing their awareness and interpersonal skills which, by assumption of consistent application among all staff, would naturally decrease low Trust (avoidance) and low Accountability (blame) behaviours and increase high Trust (disclosure) and high Accountability (acknowledgement and help seeking) behaviours.

However, there are limitations of relying on EI strategies alone as they assume consistent application among people receiving training. The core problem in a lot of organisations is not necessarily a lack of EI, after all most people have some

degree of EI to have got their jobs and formed adult relationships in the first place, but rather a lack of consistent application of EI practices among all staff. As we know in psychology, when people get mixed messages or inconsistent behaviour from their leaders or peers they become distrustful, sceptical, and cynical and start a bigger pattern of avoidance of both disclosure and responsibility.

If we rely on EI approaches alone, they will be resource heavy and time consuming as people adapt their behaviour at different rates and in different ways whilst ultimately striving to get to a point of consistency across the organisation. By relying solely on EI strategies for culture change, it will take anywhere from 2-6 years to significantly improve Trust and Accountability in the workplace.

Don't misunderstand this point though as EI is a powerful and essential personal leadership development framework for individual skill building but not necessarily the most powerful tool for addressing wider workplace cultural problems. I would argue that the most powerful and fastest tool to address wider workplace culture issues is Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

Deep Dive: Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA).

As previously discussed, ABA is a scientific discipline concerned with analysing the principles of learning theory and systematically applying this to change behaviour of social significance. ABA tries to change behaviour by first assessing the functional relationship between a targeted behaviour and the environment. This approach often seeks to develop replacement behaviours, which serve the same function as the problem behaviours without producing the associated negative consequences.

In regard to problems with accountability, when we analyse the root cause of *'blaming'* behaviour at work it is often the result of being asked about whether or not a task has been done and the fear of judgment by disclosing a negative response. Thus to replace the problem response (blame) with the healthy response (accountability), we need to change the environment around the behaviour (i.e., make it safer for people to be accountable).

A similar analysis applies to Trust. The most common root cause of trust problems is the failure of the other party seeking information to also make disclosures and be vulnerable in communication, which creates an unbalanced or inconsistent pattern of disclosure and fear of being unfairly judged. When this happens, people avoid or withhold information in future conversations creating a *'low trust'* environment. However, when there is consistent and fair disclosure by both parties then the problematic withholding response is replaced with healthy disclosure responses.

By using an ABA approach to trust and accountability problems at work, it immediately becomes obvious that many examples of blame and avoidance of disclosure are related to uncertainty about the social rules and processes used to seek help and support at work and/or the inconsistent use of such rules and procedures in teams. Therefore, if we seek to change low trust and low accountability behaviours in the workplace we must increase both the clarity and consistency of the social rules and procedures to enable personal disclosure and support seeking in the workplace.

Low Trust Workplaces: Emotional Intelligence vs Applied Behaviour Analysis

Theory: Emotional Intelligence

'The capacity of individuals to recognise their own, and other people's emotions, to discriminate between different feelings and label them appropriately, to use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour, and to manage and/or adjust emotions to adapt to environments or achieve one's goals.'

Cause – due to leaders and teams having low self-awareness and poor interpersonal skills.

Solution – Train staff on interpersonal communication and relationship skills.

Strategy – Staff reluctantly engage in training and workshops about values, attitudes and discuss scenarios and role plays they find belittling and unconnected to their work.

Outcome – Increase in organisational cynicism and inappropriate humour and sarcasm among existing cliques and limited improvement (if any) in culture.

Problem – Most staff actually have quite satisfactory interpersonal communication and relationship skills outside of work – able to make friends and be in relationships – thus it is not a problem of skill but rather application...

Theory: Applied Behaviour Analysis

"Uses the principles of learning theory and systematically applying this to change behaviour of social significance by first assessing the functional relationship between a targeted behaviour and the environment and then developing replacement behaviours, which serve the same function as the problem behaviours."

Cause – a lack of clarity and consistency about the social rules and processes for personal disclosure and support seeking in the workplace. Disclosure is not reciprocal and levels of confidentiality are unclear.

Solution – Increase staff engagement in clear and consistent patterns of disclosure and feedback.

Strategy – use your team meetings to increase reciprocal disclosure and boundaries of confidentiality by: (1) clarifying team behaviour rules at the start of every meeting and appointing a moderator as well as (2) using ice breakers and warm-ups that are quick and mandatory for all team members 'round room' enabling safe disclosures.

Outcome – Increase in comfort and skill of disclosure and discussion of work-related issues in groups and increased confidence in consistency of social rules spreading beyond meetings into everyday interactions.

*Risk – inconsistent or irregular meeting cycles (and poor moderation) slow down the effect of improved trust.

Increasing Trust and Accountability: Fast-tracking the Change Journey

When it comes to building trust in new teams or repairing trust in established teams the fast-track approach has two layers; (1) the implementation of group structures to enable higher frequencies of consistent behaviour, and (2) the implementation of personal skills training and coaching to lower individual conflict avoidance and increase tolerance of developmental feedback.

1. Personal Resilience: Reduce Conflict Avoidance & Increase Feedback Skills

Conflict avoidance is a primordial self-protective urge to reduce pain and increase pleasure. This urge or impulse moves us away from giving and receiving genuine feedback to enable us to fit in better and optimise team engagement. Thus, the other layer of fast-tracking trust is to increase people's resilience and skill in giving and receiving feedback.

Training people in feedback is primarily about practice, practice, practice! There are some important self-awareness/body language exercises and basics on showing respect and communicating clearly but beyond this, it is all about role-plays and repeatedly doing the skills.

This desensitises people to their fears of conflict and rejection and increases their tolerance making them more powerful and effective communicators and team members.

2. Team Structures: Consistency & Frequency Of Contact

Given we know that the fluid nature of trust builds up or breaks down over many interactions between people, the obvious fast-track is to implement structures that increase the consistency and frequency by which people have positive and reliable encounters with each other.

Therefore, the focus on team meetings and regular check-ins becomes crucial for fast-tracking success. However, it is not simply about increasing the frequency of team meetings and check-ins with colleagues. It is also about the structure of these meetings and check-ins; agreed protocols that everyone follows so vulnerability to disclose and accountability to report back is shared by all. Do not fall into the trap of making trust building activities optional, either *'all in'* or take a step back and start smaller.

The other part of team structures for trust is the *'above and below the line'* team charter with agreed do's and don'ts for the team and an agreed way to call people on their behaviour. When teams take the time to actually discuss and document the important positive and negative behaviours that affect the team, and the agreed way to tap each other on the shoulder to prevent minor niggles becoming major problems through informal feedback, they are much less likely to suffer trust breakdowns.

Spotlight On Team Meetings: A Golden Opportunity

An extremely simple and effective way to get consistency in the social rules and procedures to enable personal disclosure and support seeking in the workplace is to use your team

meetings more effectively. Specifically tighten up the team behaviour rules in meetings and appoint a moderator to help manage team behaviour, as well as using ice breakers and warm-ups that are quick and mandatory for all team members enabling safe 'get to know you' level disclosures as well as safe commentary on successes and challenges at work. This strategy is even more powerful when the chair and moderator of team meetings is rotated among all team members who then have experience of both leading these interactions as well as participating in them as a team member.

By hardwiring these agenda items and team activities into the start of weekly team meeting agendas, using a *'round the room'* feedback cycle, and rotating the roles of chair and moderator in implanting this agenda item, everyone in the team will be clear and consistent in their engagement with the social rules and procedures and jointly responsible for enabling personal disclosure and support seeking in the workplace. Within 12 weeks, there will be a massive shift in the culture of the team in both trust and accountability. Why 12 weeks? Let's take a more intensive look at the 4 success factors of fast-tracking sustainable culture change we mentioned earlier, to double check our timeframe for success.

Pain Pleasure: *'The easiest way to get people to do the right thing is to make the right thing the easiest thing to do.'* **(Safety Culture Design Principle).** The *'round the room'* warm-up strategy in team meetings reduces the pain of disclosing for participants through an equal and fairer amount of disclosure among all parties. Any increased pain caused to previously non-disclosing parties is minimal as it occurs in the context of everyone engaging.

Structure Enables Behaviour: *'Changing structures enables new behaviours but not vice versa.'* (**Behaviour Therapy**). The warm-up strategy is clearly articulated in meeting agendas, time bound and governed by the chair and moderator with the *'round the room'* methodology creating the expectation for all team members to participate.

Try Before You Buy: *'People need to have been exposed to your idea approximately 20 times and/or experienced it personally at least 3 times.'* (**Smith & Krugman's Theories**). The level of disclosure is minimal with Level 1 Ice Breakers used in low trust teams and no rules about level of depth required on success and challenges enabling people to ramp up the depth of their disclosure at their own pace.

Realistic Timeframes: *'It is widely accepted that a carefully planned new product or initiative will take twice as long as predicted to deliver.'* (**Project Management Theory**). Changing any procedure within an existing team meeting has minimal wider impact. Based on the notion of at least 10-20 exposures (chatting about meeting pre and post, seeing agendas and notes, etc.) and 3 deeper experiences during weekly team meetings, it would likely take 3-6 weeks, which if doubled would suggest 12 weeks, as a minimum timeframe for success. This is consistent with habit changing literature such as Lally et al. who suggest 2-3 months.

The Culture Change Fast-track: Trust and Accountability

High Performance Teams have high levels of both trust and accountability, and contrary to conventional wisdom, this

is not rapidly established due to intensive work on the EI skills of team members, but rather by the development and consistent application of social rules and procedures around disclosure and support seeking.

Contrary to conventional management thinking, these powerful positive high performance behaviours can be developed in teams within weeks and months without radically altering the team's level of EI. Remember EI is a great longer-term personal leadership journey, while implementing consistent social rules and procedures is the fast-track for whole of team high performance.

Bringing It All Together: Maximising Trust & Accountability in High Performance Teams

In bringing it all together, we can see just how important trust is for *High Performance Teams*, as well as how difficult it can be to both establish and maintain high trust in the constantly changing world of work. We can also see how easy it is to fall into the four traps that lead to trust breakdowns.

The secret to success for building high trust teams is to make sure teams have effective and frequent meetings and check-ins where everyone is involved in both disclosure and accountability and that each team member has high levels of skill and tolerance for feedback. By developing these two layers, team and individual, of structure and support in your team, you will quickly establish sustainable levels of high trust and not only prevent trust breakdowns but also be able to repair relationships should this ever be necessary.

Innovation & Collaboration

"Though this be madness, there is method in it."

—William Shakespeare

The Chief Executive's level of frustration about the current problems in the Department was almost unbearable:

> *"After 20 years in government, I simply cannot believe the lack of progress of my teams in implementing these reforms! If they don't start thinking and acting strategically the entire department may fail! Why do such bright and capable people lack the drive and initiative right when we need it most?"*

This was not the first time I had heard such statements. Many senior leaders feel frustrated about the lack of innovation, strategic thinking and collaboration among their peers and subordinates.

They mistakenly think the problem is capability and send their leaders to countless courses on strategic thinking, planning, and innovation. However, the problem is not caused by a lack of capability but rather a lack of empowerment.

The Misuse of Innovative Thinking – Teaching People Skills They Already Have

People are natural problem solvers quite capable of extraordinary feats of innovation when facing personal crises and unexpected opportunities. Their ability to organise economic, logistic and social resources to solve important personal problems is regularly seen after natural disasters and personal tragedies where they have very little to lose and a lot to gain. Therefore, the barrier to innovation at work is the limited upside of risk taking compared to the massive downside of negative social and professional consequences of failure. People do not need endless training in blue-sky thinking. Simply fix the downside through more consistent behavioural patterns of reward for risk and you will incrementally fix the innovation crisis and the ideas begin to flow more freely.

The system bureaucracy often disables and disempowers leaders, blocking innovation and strategic thinking. Hierarchical structures and internal politics lead to a culture where risk taking is punished. Allies are rare, and blame reigns supreme in the wake of political risk. It is no wonder, when it comes to change and reform that most large organisations behave like a slow moving Tortoise instead of embracing the speed of the Hare.

Whilst in Aesop's fable *The Hare and the Tortoise*, the Tortoise eventually wins, in real-life, our slow moving bureaucracies

need to discover and empower the Hares to increase the speed of adjustment to change and innovate rather than create cultures where only the Tortoises survive.

So how do we help these organisations build empowered, strategic cultures promoting innovation and collaboration whilst still respecting the existing hierarchies, politics, and agendas outside our control?

To find the answers to this question we need to examine innovation and collaboration on two levels. First, the individual level – what are the barriers to innovation at the individual levels and how do we remove these barriers to empower individuals to pursue innovation and improvement within their jobs? Secondly, the organisational level - what are the mistakes organisations make which reduce the effectiveness of innovation and improvement initiatives, and how can we develop more effective knowledge sharing and cross-team engagement? When we address the individual and organisational barriers to innovation and collaboration, we can empower the Hares that live within the Tortoise and unleash new levels of collaboration and innovation!

Barriers to Innovation & Collaboration Part 1: Individual Factors

When we examine the barriers to innovation and collaboration at the individual level, we need to consider personality and workplace relationships, and why we are risk averse and quick to ostracise people outside the *'norm'*, along with job design and KPIs, and how jobs are designed and what gets performance indicators measured and rewarded.

Personality & Workplace Relationships: We know that in the workplace not only is laziness and failure punished, but also people striving for massive success – with many teams cutting down the 'tall poppy'. The reasons for the punishment of laziness and failure are obvious as they threaten the survival of the wider team and organisation. However the reasons behind the persecution of people striving for massive success are a little more complex… So why do people cut down the 'tall poppies' in their teams? (see 'spotlight' section below.

Spotlight: The Personal Impact of Striving For Success & The Tall Poppy Syndrome

There are two important reasons to consider about why people don't strive for massive personal success and why they instead 'cut down the tall poppies' and persecute members of their teams who do show such ambition.

First, the process of actually making plans for massive success (AKA live out your dreams) forces you to become fully responsible for your own life. You will need to accept, and find as you go that in fact, you do accept the size of the effort involved and the numerous false starts and failures you may encounter along the path to success. By the size of the effort, I mean the intensity, duration, and number of areas of effort.

Dealing with failures and setbacks, not to mention the extreme effort at times to move from idea to action, and the regular, and at times brutal trips, outside your own comfort zone, are just too much for many people. They opt for a good life instead of a great life, or worse, become zealots against people striving for massive success, and

---

end up in a cycle of blaming others for their setbacks and inability to adapt and persevere. Author Jim Collins sums this issue up well when he says, *'Good is the enemy of great.'*

Secondly, the confronting aspect of massive success occurs, strangely enough, after the first few major goals have been achieved and dreams indeed have become reality. The actual experience of living your dreams must, by necessity, make the dream die so it can be born in reality. The reality of living your dreams will have unexpected blessings and curses. The blessings are the obvious joys and happy moments of experiencing what you had so long imagined. The curses are the hassles, unforeseen additional problems and the new challenges that such experiences might bring you.

In psychology, *'the death of a dream'* is a very important issue to consider when seemingly wealthy, famous, or successful people suffer unexpected depression. The classic case study is about a deaf mother who is given an operation to be able to hear. Within weeks of being able to hear her children's voices for the first time, she becomes clinically depressed, as her imagined sound was so much better than the subsequent reality. The death of a dream is also seen in mountaineering where it is widely known that reaching the summit is a bittersweet experience for many. The greatest chance of an accident is always on the way down rather than on the way up.

People, who do not understand the core disciplines necessary for adult development, personal responsibility and continuous learning, invariably give up despite their initial success. They abandon the notion of a great life, retreating for the easier and less confronting option of merely a good life. They thus avoid both the joys and the challenges of future success.

Job Design & KPIs: KPIs and jobs are designed around delivering immediate measurable benefits to maximise organisational performance and productivity. When organisations are under additional performance pressure to improve productivity and reduce costs, which these days is constant, the links between short-term productivity and KPIs tighten even further. The net result of this is the trade-off of longer-term improvement brought about by knowledge sharing, collaboration and trial and error, none of which carries any KPI rewards, in favour of short-term output gains.

For example, we can address some aspects of information sharing, innovation, and collaboration through *High Performance Teams* strategies. These include *'new and cool'* discussions at team meetings, buddy check-ins, specifically focusing on improvement strategies, the need to re-examine our job descriptions and KPIs to enable recognition and reward for long-term improvement, as well as short-term outputs. These are essential if we are to create a systemic and long-term improvement in innovation and collaboration at the individual level.

Barriers to Innovation & Collaboration Part 2: Organisational Factors

Let's face it, leading an organisation can at times be extremely complicated and demanding. Leaders must routinely juggle five different management responsibilities:

1. Staff performance
2. Customer satisfaction

3. Stakeholder engagement
4. Facilities and asset management, and
5. Innovation improvement initiatives linked to annual operational plans, whilst also dealing with the unexpected daily challenges of the business as usual.

Given the myriad of management responsibilities facing leaders, it is completely understandable that some of the more long-term and complex strategic management functions such as improvement initiatives are deferred.

However, this need not be the case if we clarify and simplify the process of developing effective frameworks for governance and collaboration for general improvement initiatives. This in turn would weave this very important aspect of high performance into the roles, responsibilities, structures, and communication cycles of their business as a usual environment.

To apply this, I'd like to explore how these concepts play out in a sector of significant importance; let's look at the concepts of management, governance, and collaboration in schools and the three biggest mistakes school leaders can make. Throughout my career I have worked in some challenging sectors indeed. I have worked in health and government during times of extreme tension and scandal. I have worked in private enterprise during times of exponential growth and decline. However, the work that I have recently done in schools over the past three years has topped all of this. You see, I have come to appreciate that the level of complexity in running a school dwarfs that of all other sectors that I have worked in. I believe that if you can make it as a school leader, you can make it anywhere.

Governance vs. Management in Schools

Governance refers to the oversight and accountability functions involved in the development and implementation of organisational strategy and relevant compliance systems. Governance structures typically include a board, which is a group responsible to set the organisational strategic direction and develop associated plans and strategy documents as well as design and implement relevant accountability processes to monitor progress.

These structures also include sub-committees, which are groups tasked with the deeper and more detailed analysis or strategy and accountability around a pre-defined topic, and then a third group of working parties, who are formed to address key issues of strategy and risk not adequately addressed by the board, sub-committees or existing line management structures within the organisation.

Management refers to the functions needed to implement the strategic plan and effectively manage the day-to-day operational and service delivery functions of the organisation. Management structures typically include an Executive Leadership Team (ELT), which is a small team of typically 4-6 individuals who oversee the running of key aspects of the entire organisation. This could include finance and administration, staff, and service delivery, etc. and would meet frequently and often have a fluid and reactive agenda.

There would be a Senior Leadership Team (SLT), which would include the ELT members plus a larger team of 7-15+ individuals, who lead each of the relevant departments and faculties within the organisation. They would also meet regularly with a clear and focused agenda addressing both strategic and operational issues.

Finally, there would also be a Departmental (or Faculty) Leadership Teams (DLTs), which, depending on the size of the school, may be a smaller leadership team or simply the full group of members of the department itself.

Whole School Improvement Strategies

It may come as no surprise that most schools use a combination of management structures, being layers of leadership teams, and governance structures, the use of committees and working parties, when implementing school improvement strategies.

This is a sensible approach, providing the committees and working parties have clear accountabilities and lines of reporting and communication, if the school improvement strategy requires collaboration between groups who do not normally work together, nor report to each other through the normal line management structures. Examples of topics that may require a hybrid model include Strengthening Community Partnerships, Student Wellbeing, Behaviour & Attendance, School Wide Pedagogy, and School Wide Data Literacy.

However, there are other school improvement strategies that already have designated and specific teams and leaders responsible in the organisational chart. For example, topics such as developing and implementing reading & writing programs, the implementation of C2C Maths, ensuring systematic delivery of the Australian Curriculum, and improving performance of U2B (Upper Two Bands) students.

These all have designated faculties, departments, and teaching staff that have line management responsibilities to deliver on such topics. These departments should have their

own performance development and feedback systems through individual and group coaching and observation for quality assurance. As such, these school improvement strategies do not require the use of sub-committees or working parties used in Hybrid Structures. Worse still, if such strategies are delegated into sub-committees or working parties then conflict and confusion is created among staff and leaders due to the incorrect use of a governance structure to address a line management responsibility.

Collaboration & Governance in School Improvement: The 3 Big Mistakes

Hybrid leadership structures within schools are very common. However, there are serious hazards caused if school improvement strategies are assigned to specific teams when they require collaboration across teams; strategies which belong to specific teams are assigned to committees or working parties; and if committees and working parties, whilst working on appropriate issues, are not integrated effectively into the reporting and accountability cycle of management structures. Let us unpack each of these three mistakes of governance and collaboration when implementing whole school improvement strategies as well as look at some ways to prevent such problems.

1. School wide collaboration strategies are incorrectly assigned to specific departments:

This occurs when school leaders delegate a whole school improvement strategy, which required inter-departmental cooperation, onto one departmental group, which creates a

power imbalance and confusion regarding line management and accountability as they assert their school wide agenda over peer management teams.

This mistake occurs because we did not fully understand the scale and impact of the improvement strategy, and thus wrongly minimised its importance to be an 'add on' to an existing team. The other reason this occurs is we did not have the calibre of high performance leadership teams needed to distribute the burden evenly and thus relied on more competent and naturally action orientated management teams.

Getting it right: Having up-to-date roles and responsibilities and accurate organisational charts to prevent risks of error during issues identification, as well as making sure the full SLT is engaged and active in the setting of priorities for whole school improvement, is critical. A bonus tip here is always have a copy of your organisational chart and strategic plan visible on the *High Performance Teams* School Data Wall when meeting with SLT to set operational plans and discuss how to implement school wide improvement strategies.

2. School leaders assign responsibility for improvement strategies to collaborative working groups when in fact the accountability for these strategies already exists in line management structures:

This mistake occurs because of either ignorance about the organisational chart or an assumption of greater engagement through assigning groups to be 'co-responsible' with the staff and leaders designated on the organisational chart.

It backfires horribly when the group members hold the staff responsible, within the organisational chart, hostage to

committees or accused of not being team players when they try to deliver on their role. This is a common risk for Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) when the performance development accountability process is unclear and there is risk of conflict between the PLC members and the line manager, when a teacher is being managed for under performance.

Getting it right: Don't confuse awareness and support with action. Working parties are all about action whereas awareness and support can come through effective use of organisational data walls, meeting updates, peer coaching and explicit linkages between Professional Development Plans (PDPs) and PLC's.

3. Committees and working parties, whilst working on appropriate issues, are not integrated effectively into the reporting and accountability cycle of management structures:

This mistake occurs when school leaders correctly develop collaborative groups or *'working parties'* using the governance model, but fail to develop clear structures, goals and reporting mechanisms.

This causes confusion and conflict between senior leaders within the school and committee/working party members when there is a mismatch of expectations about timeframes, deliverables and reporting requirements. Senior leaders face external pressures in delivering on key goals and objectives whilst group members may struggle with juggling their own full-time roles and responsibilities within the school, as well as their committee responsibilities. Such pressure and conflict need not occur if the committee or working party is correctly established in the first instance.

Getting it right: Governance of collaborative groups such as committees or working parties can be defined through the key factors, a clearly defined purpose and action plan; clear meeting protocols; and regular reporting mechanisms.

1. **Purpose:** linked to an end goal, important in the school's operational plan and easily understood in terms of solving a relevant and specific real world problem. Clear action plan with clearly defined objectives, timelines, and accountabilities shared among members of group.

2. **Meeting Protocols:** use of a clear and well-organised agenda managing both time and content effectively against the stated goals of the working party. Also the use of an effective chair and moderator to maximise the engagement and achievement of the participants.

3. **Reporting Mechanisms:** milestones, meeting notes and updated action plan on shared drive or cc'ed to relevant stakeholders after every meeting and *'on track'* traffic lights for each group on the school leadership team dashboard. A bonus tip here is to have each working party 'chaired' or using a *'secretariat'* function performed by one of the SLT members to facilitate a more streamlined cycle of feedback between the work group and leadership team.

Leading Organisational Improvement: Bringing it all together

Delivering on school improvement is a critical part of a school leaders' responsibilities and it can either fail because it is lost

amidst the urgent daily challenges or succeed because it is woven into the roles, responsibilities, structures and communication cycles of a business as usual environment. This is true for all workplaces. To maximise the success of your organisation improvement initiatives, consider the following questions:

- Are the roles and responsibilities of your leadership team and organisational chart up-to-date?
- Do you avoid the traps of misaligning strategy to either line management or working parties by accurately understanding how your organisation is governed and managed?
- What are the governance and collaboration frameworks you use in your organisation to drive improvement?
- Are you facing any risks associated with the 3 common mistakes leaders can make?
- How can you make the most of your next staff and leadership team planning days to refresh and refocus your organisations improvement agenda, so to engage the right people for the right tasks in the right way?

Innovation & Collaboration: Unleash the Hares In Your Organisation

Many of us can see the problems that are created within a large organisation that may need to rapidly respond to change when innovation is stifled and there is an absence of strategic action. We can also intuitively understand how the barriers of bureaucracy, hierarchy, risk aversion and blame, lead to an ever slower moving Tortoise despite the urgent need,

that sometimes borders on desperation, of the most senior executives to empower their own leaders to unleash much needed innovation and strategy to respond to the challenges.

Through effective collaboration strategies we can foster empowered, innovative and strategic cultures whilst still respecting the existing hierarchies, politics, and agendas that are outside our control.

Is it time for your organisation to embrace effective collaboration strategies, as opposed to evermore training on strategy and innovation, and unleash the Hares within the Tortoises to discover new levels of organisational agility and effectiveness?

Customer Service

*"If you look after your staff, they'll look after your customers.
It's that simple."*

—Richard Branson

"Take care of your people and they will take care of your customers."

—J.W. Marriott

"Let them eat cake."

—Marie Antoinette

*"When relationships drive performance the status
quo prevails BUT when performance drives
relationships continuous improvement is inevitable."*

—Dr Pete

Richard Branson is a business guru; there is no doubt about that! He has many great insights and powerful experiences that he generously shares. However, the other day when I came across this quote from the guru himself I found myself feeling quite frustrated and annoyed.

> *"If you look after your staff, they'll look after your customers.*
> *It's that simple."*
>
> —Richard Branson

I felt frustrated because the statement implies that by looking after your staff it is almost a guarantee that they will then look after your customers. While this makes sense at a superficial level, and indeed, I have heard this from many different business gurus over the years beginning with the legendary hotelier J.W. Marriott, it represents a somewhat simplistic view, which belies a more complex reality when it comes to staff performance and customer service.

I felt annoyed because such simplistic statements, when spoken about and repeated by many people, have a way of becoming irrefutable facts that in turn become common sense and practical wisdom which then get interpreted and applied in ways that they were never intended. This results in many confused and frustrated managers and employees becoming collateral damage from poorly conceived staff engagement strategies.

Consider the following cases where the over focus on looking after staff had unexpected negative consequences not only on customers but also on the survival of the organisation itself.

Case Study 1: Let Them Eat Cake!

John was a brilliant technician and team leader. He was great on the tools, great with customers when attending call outs to repair equipment, and great with staff always cheering the team on

and making sure regular morning teas occurred with fantastic coffee, cakes, and treats.

The staff loved John and loved his morning teas even more. However, things began to go sideways when John's partner had a baby and, amidst his fatigue and exhaustion from sleepless nights, he forgot to bring in the amazing cakes. People began to murmur and grumble and before too long standards began to slip and customers began to complain.

When John followed up the complaints with staff they blamed him for the decline in morale among the team and told him he had changed and people were struggling, things just weren't as good as they used to be.

Case Study 2: Team Building Nirvana

None of the staff could believe it when two security guards escorted Sam from the office after he was suddenly fired from his job as their team leader. They were in tears, completely shattered, as Sam had been the best boss they had ever worked for.

The enormous effort Sam had put into building the team was absolutely incredible, from the regular social drinks, footy tipping and weekly offsite lunches, through to the intense off-site team building sessions with rock-climbing, jet-skiing and even the surprise trip to Fiji! No one had ever been part of an amazing team like this before

and most doubted, for good reason, that they would ever experience something like this again.

In the aftermath of Sam's dismissal, as auditors, investigators and senior managers began asking questions, it became obvious that this team was the worst performing sales team in the entire company despite being located in one of the highest growth areas for sales of their products.

Whilst the details of these case studies have been changed for reasons of confidentiality, the facts on which they are based on are true. They provide a powerful lesson to us on why solely focusing on looking after your staff does not equal looking after your customers.

High Performance Teams Need Engagement AND Achievement

I chose these two case studies because of the scars they left upon me in the aftermath of working with their teams. Each team had, during its lifecycle, reached a point where *'Engagement'* became far more important than the corresponding need for *'Achievement'*. To the extent that in my interviews with staff in the aftermath of the team's breakdown, they seemed entirely pre-occupied with their need to be looked after by the organisation and distressed by the loss of perks and benefits that they had grown to expect.

There was no pattern of additional customer service or care resulting from the additional benefits they received, but rather a sense of entitlement prevailed despite the damage

being done to the organisation through the neglect of their core business. These real life examples were the exact opposite of what Richard Branson and J.W. Marriott were quoted as saying. These cases showed the alternate reality of *"look after your staff and they will get used to it and enjoy it to the extent they will forget about other important things and expect even more".*

Such disasters do not happen in *High Performance Teams* where there is equal focus on both Engagement AND Achievement. As you can see in the diagram below there are two distinct factors that define the success of high performing teams, Achievement and Engagement, and beneath these, four KPIs for success.
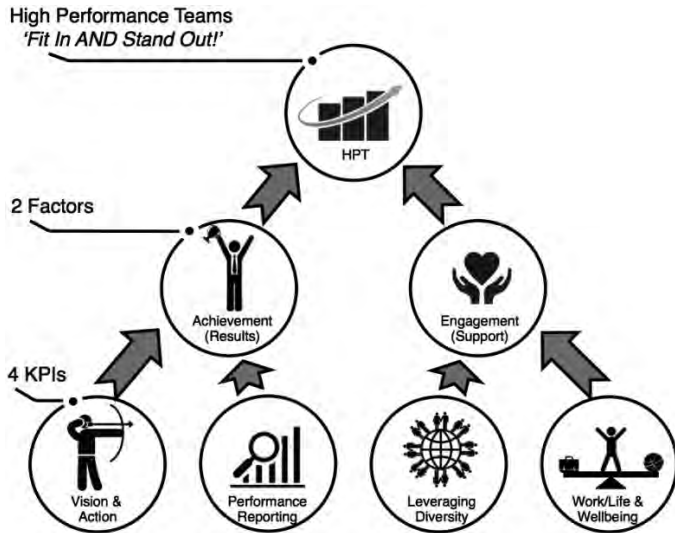
'*Achievement'* is the ability to consistently meet and exceed business performance targets with the two KPIs of vision and action, and a culture of performance reporting.

'Engagement' is the ability to generate positive team dynamics to create long-term working relationships and enable innovation based on cumulative knowledge. Within the factor of engagement, we find the remaining KPIs of leveraging diversity, and supporting other's work/life and wellbeing.

A focus on only '*Achievement*' or *'Engagement'* will not create sustainable *High Performance Teams*. Solely focusing on '*Achievement*' may create short-term high performance, but excessive competition and isolation will cause low morale and unwanted turnover. Solely focusing on *'Engagement'* will create cohesion, but risk organisational failure due to the lack of attention to results, especially when it comes to customer service and sales as evident in the case studies outlined above.

Employee Engagement: Don't Throw The Baby Out With The Bathwater

Before you brand me callous and cold, let's get one thing clear. Relationships are important; moreover, positive working relationships and high engagement are essential for a *High Performance Team*. However, having high engagement is no more important than a correspondingly equal focus on high achievement.

The secret to success, unfortunately not understood by the leaders in our case studies, is to intertwine the achievement goals with the engagement goals. That way the rewards and celebrations to enhance team engagement, beyond the normal healthy teaming activities within regular meetings and check-ins, are triggered by successes in important work-

related achievement goals. For example, completion of work ahead of deadlines, exceeding sales or productivity targets, and receiving feedback showing above benchmark quality in services provided, as opposed to becoming a part of *'business as usual'* regardless of performance and productivity.

Does Performance Drive Relationships or Vice Versa?

A good way to bring this together is to consider this quote:

"When relationships drive performance the status quo prevails leading to failure. When performance drives relationships continuous improvement prevails leading to success."

When we spend our time prioritising workplace relationships and maintain harmony over the need to improve productivity and performance, we invariably fall into the trap, often very gradually, of avoiding hard conversations and performance feedback. It is less important to be keeping everyone happy and maintain the status quo, than to push performance higher and inadvertently cause a degree of tension in the team. The more the status quo prevails the faster an organisation

declines towards failure as more growth and change-focused competitors overtake them in the market.

However, when we prioritise organisational performance over relationships, contrary to the sceptics, we still seek to build supportive relationships, but in the context of ongoing feedback and desire for growth. This creates a culture where constructive criticism is always welcomed, and shared by all team members, as they pursue a jointly understood vision and goal.

Increasing Customer Service: Fast-tracking The Change Journey

"What gets measured gets managed."

—Peter Drucker

"Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion."

—Simon Sinek

Are our employees clear about our core purpose and vision, and do they connect this with their daily tasks? After years of trial and error, I have distilled my many successes and failures into five key strategies to help teams align vision with action:

1. **State the vision at the start of meetings:** Just as we repeatedly say the Lord's Prayer in the Christian Faith, so too, we must repeatedly remind ourselves of the company vision at the start of each meeting.

2. **Round the room living the vision and values:** Every month, each staff member shares an example of something they have done to live out the

company vision and values in their daily work. Examples may include extra diligence or quality in work, or care and empathy in working with others.

3. **Over-communicate – see it daily:** See the vision on email signature blocks, letterheads, and headers or footers of all internal documents such as meeting agendas and memos.

4. **Reward it:** Have recognition processes to reward staff alignment to vision and values such as, smaller prizes monthly and bigger prizes and plaques/ trophies annually.

5. **Local folklore & mythology:** Encourage senior staff to share stories of amazing achievements and exemplary behaviour when interacting informally with individual staff or at group social functions. *'Remember the time when Scotty (staff member) pulled an all-nighter to deliver the project?' 'What about the time Kate kept her cool when a whole batch of product was faulty and replacement stock had to be in the customer's hands within 24 hours.'*

Are We Measuring And Managing The Important Aspects Of Customer Service Behaviour With Our Employees In A Meaningful Way?

"What gets measured gets managed."

—Peter Drucker

A high performance team has clear roles, accountabilities, and performance reporting systems that provide transparent

real-time data to keep people focused on critical accountable success factors such as customer service. How does your team regularly measure and report their important performance metrics both within the team and to key stakeholders?

Would we find success indicators such as effective team meeting cycles to update and report on action plans, a team self-governance system, and use of regular pulse metrics on organisational health and customer satisfaction in your team? Here are some ideas and strategies you can implement to assist:

1. Create clear accountability for action plans.
2. Hold effective team meetings with a strong emphasis on customer service.
3. Generate regular pulse metrics on important KPIs.
4. Use flowcharts to align customer service goals and timelines.
5. Systematise your team process. Define individual roles and create cascading accountability documents and timeframes around a review process.
6. Create dashboards and metrics measures to report customer service performance indicators within the team and to key stakeholders.

The main thing to remember is to always link *'Engagement'* activities with *'Achievement'* milestones to ensure your team celebrations and parties occur when customer successes, or other important work goals, are achieved. Therefore, performance drives relationships to the benefit of the organisation, its staff, and its customers.

Part 3: Workplace Change: The Hot Issues

1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Takeaway Messages	Actions/ Next Steps
1. The Hot Issues of Workplace Change			
2. Trust & Accountability			
3. Innovation & Collaboration			
4. Customer Service			

Afterword:

Success After Failure: Root Cause Analysis

"Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

—Winston Churchill

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work."

—Thomas A. Edison

"Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline."

—Jim Collins

Wouldn't it be great if, after massive failures like mine, you could do a root cause analysis of the situation as they do after a plane crash, and identify a single issue, which if corrected, would stop such major problems ever occurring again? Wouldn't it be great if you could simply re-wind history and playback in slow motion various critical moments on the journey towards disaster where, in hindsight, obvious blunders and mistakes were made? Where classic errors relating to well known risks of Team Failure were made; or Change Management mistakes occurred; or *High Performance Teams* strategies were poorly conceived and implemented.

The Missing Link: Culture Change
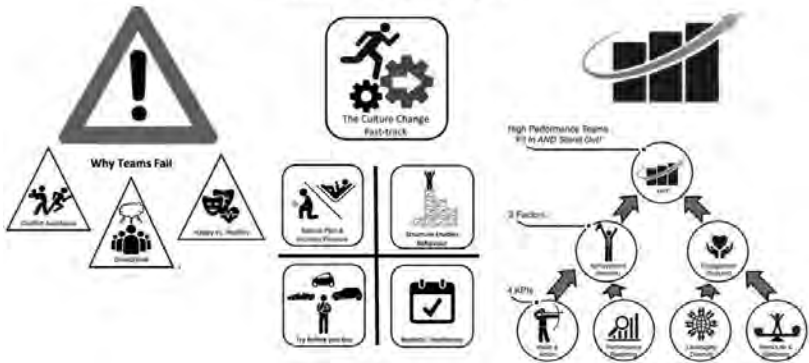
Unfortunately, the failure of organisations is not as linear as the failure of machines such as aeroplanes. However, there is still much benefit to be gained by systematically working through the sequence of problems and causative factors therein. A good starting point for the root cause analysis of organisational failure can be found by analysing the four KPIs from *High Performance Teams* that, if working well, create outstanding levels of engagement and achievement. Accordingly, in studying organisational decline, if these two factors are not working well, it would seem logical to look for the root cause of failure in one or more of the four key performance indicators that underpin organisational performance.
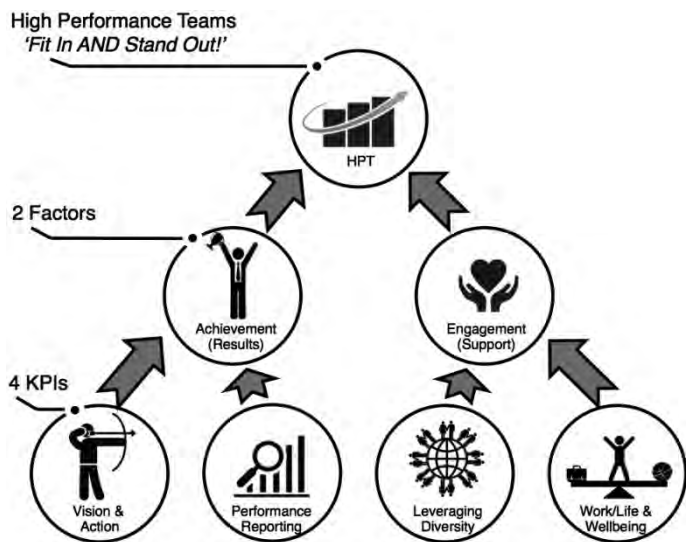
So let's do a post-mortem on my own failed organisation examining each of the key performance indicators that lead to success or failure in achievement and engagement. The first factor to examine is *'Achievement'*. Achievement is the lifeblood of our organisation related to the quality of our services and connected to the evolving needs of our customers – KPI 1; vision & action – and the systems needed to effectively manage human resources, financial and operational functions – KPI 2; Performance Reporting.

The first and most obvious factor in the demise of a once successful organisation lies in the clarity of its purpose and strategy in connection with the current opportunity in the community. We started out with a fantastic core purpose, helping our clients become more calm and successful, and a fantastic strategy to both get referrals and remunerate our staff, which worked for many years. Then government subsidies

were introduced into our industry bringing an influx of competitors with new business models and marketing systems, which reduced our referrals. They also offered better wages to staff leaving us with less work and lower quality staff. This led us to spend more time training and performance managing staff and less time marketing and delivering services ourselves creating a gradually worsening workload and profit slide until doomsday. The root cause here was our failure to recognise and adapt to change. If only we had regularly asked ourselves the question: *"Is our core purpose and strategy still aligned to the needs and wants of our staff and customers?"*

The second factor evident in the decline of our organisation relates to system failures in the quality and timeliness of performance feedback to staff. We initially had a simple system of weekly supervision, which is normal among psychologists to check that all referrals were progressing well, and a payment system dependent upon staff actually correctly lodging time sheets. If there was no timesheet, then there was no pay. When our company expanded beyond individual casework into corporate consulting, projects were then block funded and work was more varied.

This model of performance monitoring was not used among staff in this division, and given staff worked across divisions, the core performance monitoring strategy was gradually weakened and slippages in both customer service and financial management became increasingly common and more dramatic as things worsened. The root cause? Failure to identify and adapt to change, and ensure two different and strong performance management systems were implemented, instead of simply diluting one that had previously worked well in one part of the company. If only we had regularly

asked ourselves the question, *"What do we need to measure and manage to ensure the health of our organisation and satisfaction of our customers"?*

When it comes to *'Engagement'* within our business, it was certainly true that our people were our most valuable asset. We needed a range of different, highly qualified specialist consultants who had a diverse mix of backgrounds and personalities. Our ability to leverage diversity – KPI 3 – was ultimately critical in determining the fate of our organisation as was our ability to be both self-aware and aware of other people's changing work/life needs and goals – KPI 4 – work/life & wellbeing.

The third factor evident in the decline of our organisation was workplace relationships. As our organisation expanded, the bond between the once tight knit small team of specialists who had worked together for many years and prioritised regular team development days gradually eroded, replaced by a much larger and much busier workforce. Our most senior consultants no longer enjoyed the peer support and camaraderie from fellow senior leaders, but rather became consumed by the management responsibilities of leading smaller teams and supervising junior staff. As the distance between leadership team meetings increased and the competing needs of a larger workforce took over, workplace politics was an inevitable consequence. Human energy is finite and the ability to regroup, recover, and reconvene on the important difficult conversations, which were so desperately needed, among the senior leaders, was lost amidst a sea of organisational and personal turmoil. If only we had regularly asked ourselves, *"Are we doing enough to consistently promote*

inclusion and feedback so that the diversity of our people is our greatest strategic advantage?"

The final factor in our root cause analysis is self, and others', awareness of work/life and wellbeing needs. The central theme of this book has been about Change and learning how to fast-track workplace change. One of the most important pre-requisites for any successful change is self-awareness and just as important in a workplace, other awareness.

As Lillian Hellman said, *"People change and forget to tell each other"*. Looking back, many of our staff were in two life stage categories. Either graduates in their mid to late 20's prone to overseas travel, upheavals of relocation due to permanent relationships, and the urge to make radical career changes prior to settling down and raising a family. Or they were mid-life career professionals juggling family needs, normal material ambitions for a better home, car and life, as well as managing the life stage challenges related to relationship strains, health complications, younger or older children, ageing parents and unfulfilled life dreams.

All of these complications, of course, are part of the wonderful tapestry of life. However, with so much going on in the lives of our staff and such a limited amount of time to share and communicate with each other, the risk of mis-apportioning personal struggles and work performance problems inevitably grew larger, and the subsequent resentment and withdrawal corroded the once high trust and disclosure amongst us. If only we had asked ourselves, *"Are we continually up to date in our understanding and ability to support each other's work/life needs and wellbeing?"*

The Four Questions Fuelled by Courage and Discipline

"Life is a team sport."

When I consider these four questions through the rear view mirror of organisational failure, it would seem simplistic and naive to suggest we were not overtly aware of some, if not almost all, of these issues in the last stages of our decline. However, like many of life's tragedies, it is usually not a case of *'a lack of knowing'* but rather a lack of *'doing',* having the courage and discipline to regularly stop and examine yourself and your organisation. To be able to identify both the gradual and seismic changes approaching, confront the brutal facts, and make the need to change integral to ensuring you operate as a *High Performance Team.*

There is good news! Anyone reading this book is capable of reflecting on these four questions and considering their own responses and need for change. Furthermore, we are all born with a measure of courage and discipline, enough to start a conversation with your team about these four questions. We need to do this often, and begin sooner rather than later. I can confidently say that had we had these conversations on a regular basis, recognised the changes taking place, and adjusted accordingly, there is no way our organisation would have failed!

- When was the last time your team talked about each of the 4 KPIs of *High Performance Teams?*
- How is your team currently tracking on each KPI?
- What do you do within your team that is working well and where could you make improvements?

Remember continuous improvement, however big or small, in each of the 4 KPIs is what we're striving for. Because if we are constantly up-to-date with our colleagues, our customers and ourselves, we will live in a continuous cycle of change maximising the success of our organisation and the value we contribute to our world.
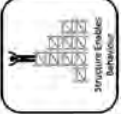
Appendix:
Fast-track Planning Tool

Part 1

Culture Change Target Area: _____

Specific Strategy To Implement: _____

Key Personnel & Resources: _____

Part 2

The 4 Factors	Fast-track Questions	Strategy Assessment	Risks to Manage
 Pain/ Pleasure	*"How is the new way less painful and more pleasurable than the old way?"*		
 Structure Enables Behaviour	*"What structures need to change to sustain new behaviour over the long-term?"*		
 Try Before You Buy	*"How can people try out your new ideas multiple times before having to commit?"*		
 Realistic Timeframes	*"Does our plan allow twice as long as we predict for changes to work?"*		

About the Authors

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD, is a workplace psychologist and executive coach. With many years of research and professional practice behind him, he has managed to complete and evaluate numerous leadership and team transformation projects, providing the groundswell for the common sense approach of the High Performance Teams Framework. Pete is an active and enthusiastic leader of various transformation projects in the Private and Public Sector. Contact Pete at drpetestebbins@gmail.com, www.drpetestebbins.com or HPTSchools.com.


Alistair Kerr, MPsychOrg, MAPS, is a psychologist and leadership development professional with three driving passions at work: (1) Building sustainable, high performance teams; (2) Using technology to change the way that businesses support employee wellbeing at work; and (3) Building bridges across cultural divides. Over the last eight years Alistair has had the pleasure of working on his passion every day with teams and leaders at all levels, both locally and overseas. Contact Alistair at alistair.r.kerr@gmail.com.

Ocean Reeve is Australasia's leading Author Success Coach. With over 20 years in the creative industries, he has guided thousands through the writing, publishing and marketing process. Ocean believes we all have an inherent desire to express our creativity and discover our unique value offering, and through his 10X Author Success Strategy, he helps clarify idea and goal and then connect the dots in between. Contact Ocean at oceanreeve@gmail.com or www.oceanreeve.com

Books by Dr Pete
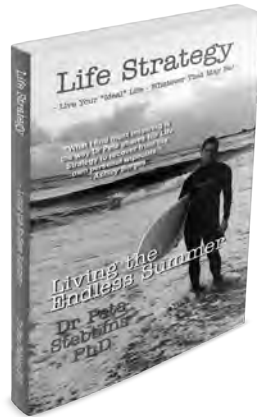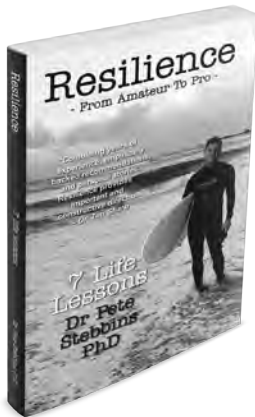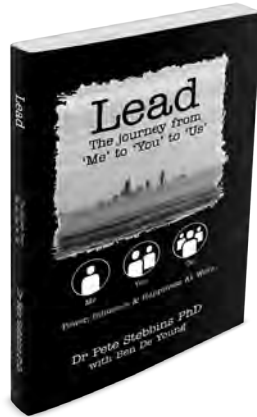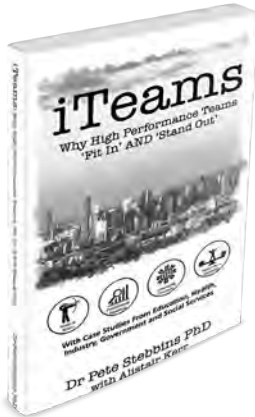
Change has always been 'the only constant in life', but the pace, magnitude, and impact of workplace change today dwarfs anything that has come beforehand.

In *Change: The Fast-track To Sustainable Culture Change*, the authors share a practical step-by-step roadmap to help answer one of the most important social and economic questions facing current and future generations of employees and managers:

How do we manage the collision between the opposing forces of (1) the unstoppable acceleration of workplace change, and (2) our need for stability and predictability in our work lives so we can thrive in this new world order of work?

In this 3-part book the authors distil years of change management experience into a masterclass that will allow readers to (1) Manage the personal impact of change (2) Avoid the management mistakes created by popular yet dysfunctional ideas; (3) Use a powerful evidenced based formula to maximise the success of any workplace change.

Give yourself a competitive advantage in the changing world of work today!

"Change is a must read for anyone serious about surviving and thriving in the rapidly changing world of work. We all need to embrace the lessons in this book and use them to positively shape the workplaces of the future"

Dr David Turner,
Director of Professional Learning, QASSP

Dr Pete is a workplace psychologist and executive coach. With many years of research and professional practice behind him he has managed to complete and evaluate numerous leadership and team transformation projects, providing the groundswell for the common sense approach of the High Performance Teams Framework.

Pete is an active and enthusiastic leader of various transformation projects in the Private and Public Sector.

Contact Pete at drpetestebbins@gmail.com or www.drpetestebbins.com or www.HPTSchools.com