



SUSTAINABLE HIGH PERFORMANCE

Delivering on the NSC Group High Performance Model™

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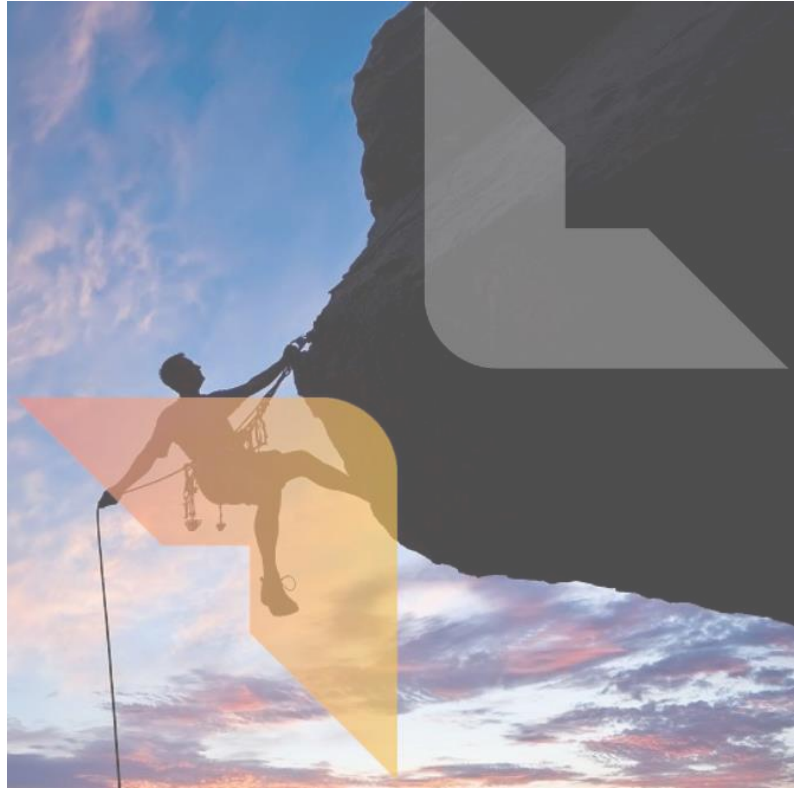
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INTRODUCTION

Substantial commentary is available on organisational performance from social platforms and in the general media. Many pundits and influencers have put forward their view of how successful organisations have delivered higher levels of performance than their competitors. However, little empirical or applied research is offered as support for stated positions. Opinions are plentiful and cheap, however sound understanding of how high performance is delivered is scarce. Even in organisations that deliver better performance than competitors, a detailed understanding of how the higher performance was achieved is rare.

NSC Group published its *High Impact High Performance Whitepaper*¹ in 2021 and later updated in 2022. The paper presented our eclectic High Performance Model™ and discussed the empirical and applied research which supported the construction of the model and its impact on organisational performance. Since the release of this paper, further literature research by NSC Group culminated in our whitepaper *The Leader, Communication & High Performance: Emotionally Intelligent Leaders Communicate Differently*². Our premise in this paper was that leadership has a substantial and enduring impact on employee engagement and performance by directly influencing deep human emotive states of vulnerability, whole-heartedness, and trust through the leader's ability to resonate with employees. Through the drafting of this whitepaper, we were challenged that the delivery of organisational high performance was even more complex and multidimensional than we had considered in *High Impact High Performance*³. Moreover, the achievement of high performance could be escalated and achieved in shorter timeframes by carefully considering the contribution of leader communication and emotional intelligence. Additionally, *The Leader, Communication & High Performance* challenged us to reconsider the Principles of Enterprise Leadership, encouraging us to add a sixth principle, *Resonant with others. Enterprise leaders are emotionally intelligent leaders who are in touch with those around them, interpersonally connected in thought and emotion.*

In this new whitepaper, our hypothesis is that sustainability in high performance is hidden in plain sight. Successful Enterprise leaders build community but not just any community, a high performance community that delivers on the promise of "organisation", that is, we organise so as to achieve greater than the sum of our individual parts. The promise of community is so strong, that we have a word in English for the desired, communal outcome – synergy. It has been referred to as synergy is 1+1=3, that is, the result of synergy is greater than its contributing parts. Successful Enterprise leaders



resonate with their people to positively influence the creation of a sustainable, high performing community. Through the building of trust, employee mood towards the organisation alters strongly to the positive thereby creating the opportunity for sustainable high performance.

During the planning of this whitepaper, it was our intention to present the organisational high performance concepts derived from the applied research alongside the data from our surveying, supported by interview content from discussions about the topic of creating high performance communities with a range of leaders. We have analysed more than 2,500 responses to the NSC Group High Performance Survey[®] and interviewed several leaders who have successfully implemented the NSC Group High Performance Model™ to create high performance communities.

HIGH PERFORMANCE COMMUNITIES

Communities form because of a central cause, it may be an interest in a communal activity, such as, sport, children's play, pets, or similar interests. They may have core principles which guide the forming and operation of the community, but high performance communities are different.

Insync Surveys 2013 study³, *Seven organizational habits that drive high performance* provides an insight into the difference between interest communities and high performance communities. The study identified the most important differentiator of a high performance community is the connection of the community members to their organisation's strategic intent. *Living an inspiring vision* was identified as the #1 habit (a behavioural concept that the organisation has committed to implement every day).

A senior leadership team that espouses a vision for their organisation that inspires their employees is far more likely to gain employee buy-in, followed by the extra discretionary effort, energy and focus from employees that are essential to achieve sustainable high performance. (Insync Surveys, 2013)

In the whitepaper *High Impact High Performance*¹, we identified the critical role of vision in the development of a high performance community.

The NSC Multi-faceted High Performance Culture Model[®] presented the interaction between the critical, central driver, core principles of a high performance culture, and the enablers of the culture.



The guiding force is the vision, values, mission, and strategy of the organisation. It can be referred to as the corporate DNA. It is a cause more significant than any individual or group, an all-prevailing cause that guides the workplace microcultures and the actions of all employees.

Core Principles are a reliable formula to create a distinctive high performance culture. Core principles guide senior leadership to keep focused on what matters.

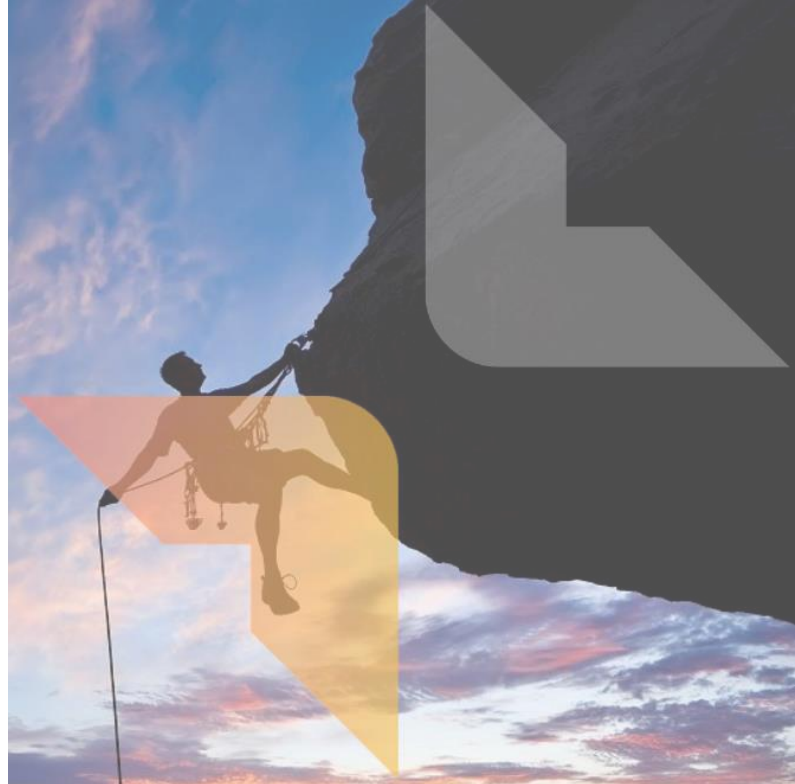


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Enablers of high performance are organisational and individual behaviours that drive employee engagement, innovation, and accountability, raising individual, team, and organisational performance.

The *High Impact High Performance*¹ paper stated that the presence of these artifacts indicated that a high performance culture was present. Furthermore, the action of the guiding force and contributory elements deliver higher employee engagement, innovation and accountability, thereby raising individual, team, and organisational performance. Insync Surveys was really on to something powerful when they identified the presence of *Living an inspiring vision*.

When we present this concept to leaders in learning events, I use the analogy of a sporting team that always loses. I ask the group who would like to join me in this sporting team that will always lose. As you would expect, no one raises their hands.



When asked to explain, they indicate no one wants to constantly fall short, not win, it would be demoralizing, causing anxiety, and helplessness. Human conditions that none of us wish to experience. We want to experience *the promise of organisation*, to achieve greater than the sum of our individual parts. We want to win together to create a better organisation.

LEADERS OF HIGH PERFORMANCE COMMUNITIES

Not only is a high performance community very different from an interest-based community, the leaders of a high performance community adopt an idiosyncratic leadership style which is not found in other forms of community or in low performing organisations. It has to do with the expectations of members of high performing communities. They have clear expectations of the members of their communities and their leaders.

High performance communities are typified by high-levels of semi-autonomy; substantial, solutions-based communication; highly competent community members; significant mutual expectations of contribution, proficiency, openness, and transparency. As these mutual expectations are required of peer members of the community, similar expectations are placed on leaders. Consider a high performing sporting team that regularly wins. They expect excellence from each other, they are very supportive, respectful and encouraging of each other, but it is their absolute expectation that they will regularly win.

In a community environment with such exacting mutual expectations, the leadership needs to be different to most of the work environments that we have experienced. It needs to be unique, inspiring, supportive, and highly competent.

In the NSC Group High Performance Model^{TM1} which demonstrates how the critical elements of the Model interact to deliver high performance, we defined Enterprise Leadership as

authentic people-centred leadership which fosters enterprise-wide collaboration and communication through sound, respectful relationships. Enterprise Leadership Principles are critical behaviours that nurture and enhance high performance.

To truly care for their people, an authentic people-centred leader must be emotionally connected to their people, but there must be boundaries. We are not advocating that leaders need to be weak, wishy-washy, and emotive. Emotional connection does not diminish the leaders responsibility to achieve strategic outcomes, be decisive, and lead by example.

In previous whitepapers⁴, we have discussed the role of the leader in building trust between team members and the leader. Trust is iterative and slow building, and we discovered the important role of the *in-between moments* in creating trust. Leaders who build trust and belonging with their people are *Authentic People-centred Leaders*. This form of leadership aims to create a positive, attractive future workplace culture which resonates with team members. In doing so they utilise human motivation and organisation to fashion a community of belonging which is highly attractive to team members.

This concept of trust and belonging is so important, that in our work with organisational leaders, we tell them – the development and sustainment of a community of *trust and belonging* is the leader’s #1 job!

A community of trust and belonging is so powerful, so attractive, that it is the foundation of sustainable, high performing teams. Building trust and fostering a sense of belonging within teams is essential for the team’s success and productivity. Trust is the foundation on which teams thrive, while belonging strengthens the bond among team members, leading to increased collaboration, engagement, and innovation.

Leaders of high performing communities must be Authentic, People-centred Leaders who are inspirational role models encouraging their people to actively and emotionally engage with the organisation. They promote teamwork, personal responsibility, learning and growth, achievement, and commitment to the organisation.

They create a positive, attractive future-focused workplace culture which resonates with team members. Authentic, people-centred leaders fashion a community of trust and belonging.

THE DATA OF HIGH PERFORMANCE COMMUNITIES

NSC Group designed a survey to measure the progress of organisations in their high performance journeys. The survey items are segmented into six sections. The cumulative data from 2,500 respondents has been analysed to identify several important trends from three significant organisations. One of the contributing organisations provided three years of data. Trends in the item analysis of the first three sections of the survey, Organisational Commitment & Performance, Leadership Characteristics, and Work Characteristics have highlighted critical learnings for leaders.

High performance communities and leaders of high performance communities have several formative hallmarks which are idiosyncratic to their environment and style, including strategic intent particularly living an inspiring vision, synergistic community, expectations of excellence, authentic people-centred leadership, and trust and belonging.

In analysing the trends of the responses, we noted specific patterns that were significant, appeared early in the organisation’s high performance journey, and were sustained over time.

The organisational commitment and performance section of the survey measures behaviours, perceptions, and attitudes which reveal respondents’ commitment to the organisation and performance. The items in this section focus on the strategic intent of the organisation, respondents connection to it, and implications for their work. The analysis of this section identified the presence of primary conditions of community, belonging, and consideration. Secondary conditions of values and resourcing were also present.

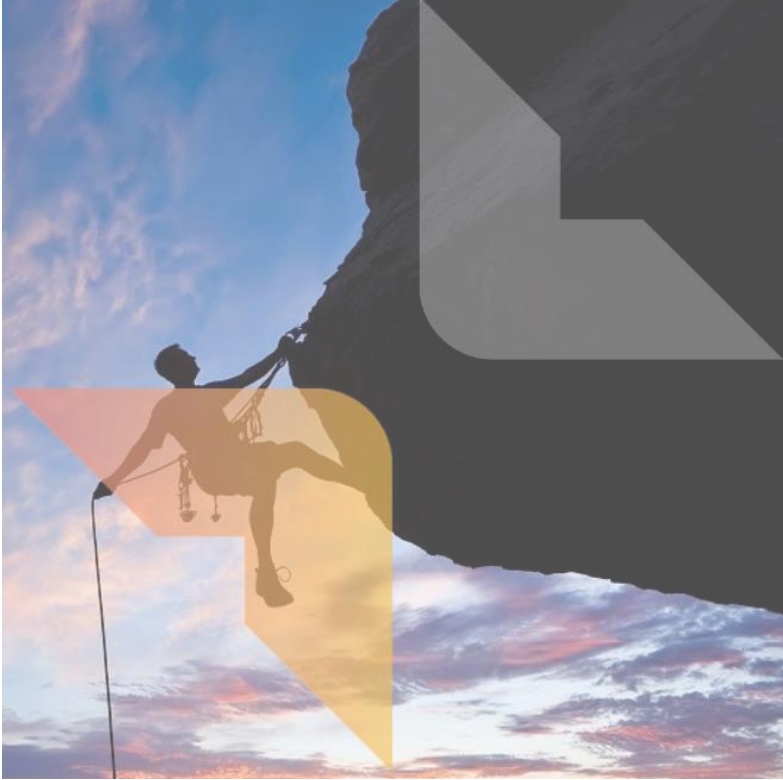


Figure 1. Organisational Commitment & Performance

Community and belonging are clear in the organisational commitment and performance section data. The primary nested data trends of Organisation 2 speak to the desire for community and delivery of service to the community as represented in items 17 and 20. This is more than customer service. It is a desire to provide high quality service to the organisational broader community. Two other primary conditions present are belonging, a desire to feel part of the community, and a sense of consideration, that is, the organisational community not only considers its customers but it also considers it's employees through flexibility and work-life balance initiatives. These conditions are represented in items 14, 23, and 24 and 12 and 15 respectively. These are the primary drivers of organisational commitment and the preparedness to deliver higher performance.

The secondary conditions of the data are the evidence of the organisation's positive behaviour of building trust, belonging, and community. These conditions are evidence-based drivers including the organisation living its vision and values, the organisation living an inspiring vision, and the organisation being prepared to equip its people with the necessary tools and equipment to deliver excellent service to the community. Evidence that the organisation is committed to the community as well as its people.

The second section in the survey of interest is leadership characteristics. This section of the survey measures the respondents' evaluation of immediate leaders' authentic, people-centred leadership style and their engagement with the workforce. The items in this section focus on leadership behaviours, the impact of these behaviours on the respondents, and the outcomes.



setting realistic expectations, explaining goals, and demonstrating honesty and integrity.

Employees need to perceive their leaders truly care and they want to be inspired by their leader as a role model. These conditions established, they want their leaders to demonstrate honesty and integrity, set reasonable expectations, and explain

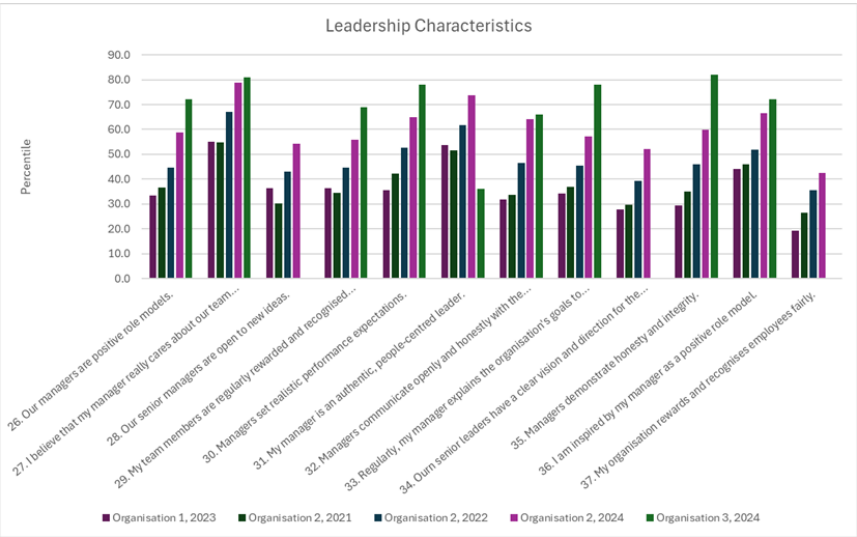


Figure 2. Leadership Characteristics

Items	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
Item Category	role models	really cares			expectations	people-centred		explain goals		honesty	inspired	
Conditions	outcome	personal impact			outcome	behaviour		outcome		integrity	positive role model	
										outcome	personal impact	

Central to these data trends is the respondents' evaluation of their leaders. Authentic people-centred leadership is the central, primary condition. Two further primary conditions are evaluated by the respondents as their leader truly cares, and the leader as a positive role model. These primary conditions are personal impacts of the central, primary condition, and the two primary conditions drive the secondary outcome conditions of organisational leaders are viewed as caring,

the goals of the organisation to the team. These secondary, developing conditions affirm the building trust model⁵. It also supports Brown's⁶ work on vulnerability and genuineness which create a safe space for a culture of trust to develop.

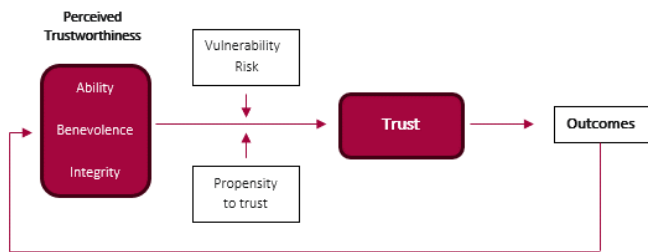


Figure 3. Model of Trust (Adapted from Mayer, et al,

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman in 1995 presented an integrative model of trust in which individuals evaluate the perceived trustworthiness of their leader through three conditions, ability or competence, benevolence, and integrity. The results of this test and the demonstrated vulnerability of the leader determines the individual's preparedness to trust. The process is iterative, in that, every interaction affirms or denies the original evaluation. Vulnerability of the leader is central to the building of trust. Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston, whose work has focused on the power of vulnerability in building trust and fostering connections among individuals. Brown has emphasised that vulnerability is not a weakness, rather a source of strength that allows individuals to build authentic relationships. When leaders and team members embrace vulnerability within reasonable boundaries and show their genuine selves, it creates a safe space for others to do the same, promoting a culture of trust within the team.⁶

The final section of the survey of interest is work characteristics. This section of the survey evaluates the presence of a workplace environment which enables employees to be successful in their job and which enhances high performance. The items in this section focus on the connection of work with strategy, the link between work and organisational success, and leadership support.

The primary condition operating in the work characteristics data is role connection. That is employees' understanding of the importance of their roles, and connection of their roles to strategy and the success of the organisation. This is seen in items 39, and 41. The secondary condition is leader support of the employees through provision of information and leader support for work projects. This condition is demonstrated through items 40, and 42.

The enactment of the primary condition relies on the establishment of trust between the leader and belonging to the work group. The secondary condition augments community through belonging and encouragement of trust. These conditions enable the team leader to have conversations with employees about role connection, and the connection to strategy represented by item 44.

Work characteristics data is the practical implementation of organisational community and connection. Major drivers in this data set are employee connection to role and leader support of role connection. The positive outcomes of employee role connection leads to employee acknowledgement of the connection to strategy. As employees realise the strong connection between their work and strategy execution, it becomes the #1 driver of employee emotional engagement and consequently high performance.

In summary, the realisation of the desire for community and the synergistic outcomes of community leads to the building of trust, belonging, and community. Leader's operating in a people-centred manner amplify these outcomes through an iterative development of trust, being vulnerable, and a role model of integrity and honesty. Finally, people-centred leaders cement the gains through development of employee connection to role and its connection to strategy to grow employee emotional engagement and high performance.

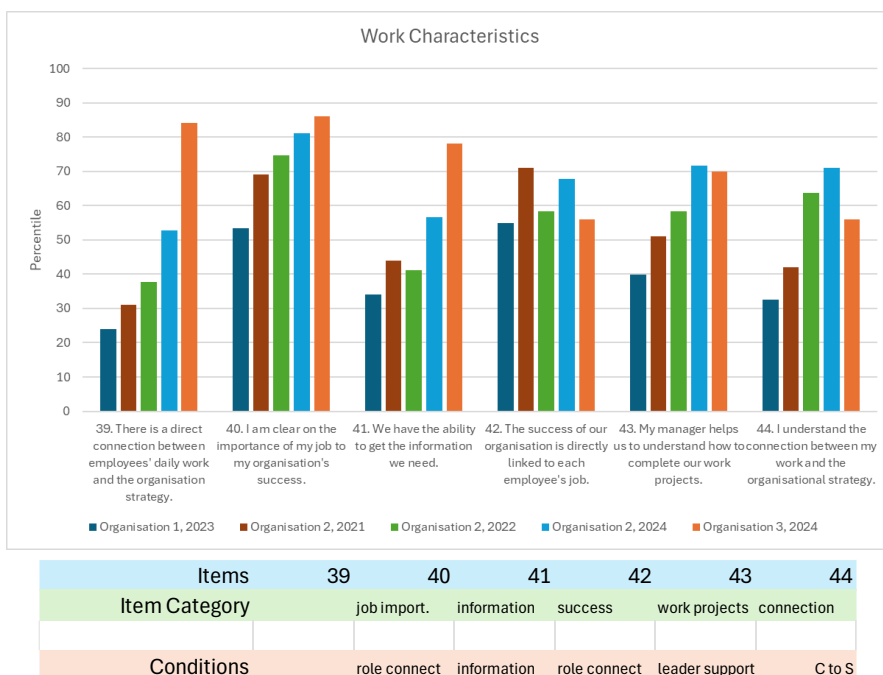


Figure 3. Work Characteristics

ORGANISATIONAL & TEAM LEADERS EXPERIENCE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE COMMUNITIES

In writing this whitepaper, it was our intention to present the organisational high performance concepts derived from the applied research alongside the data from our surveying, supported by interview content from discussions about the topic of creating high performance communities with a range of leaders. We were very fortunate to have access to several high quality, senior leaders from public and private organisations. Our leaders are Scott Waters, CEO City of Moreton Bay, Lloyd Smith Executive Partner Vytal Health, Alice Percy, General Manager Innovation, City of Darwin, and Toni Gilliver Change & Engagement Manager, Cairns & Hinterland Hospital & Health Service. In this section, we will focus on the key components of high performance communities and add the voices of our senior leaders to the conversation.

Experience the promise of organisation, live an inspired vision

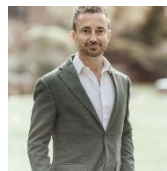
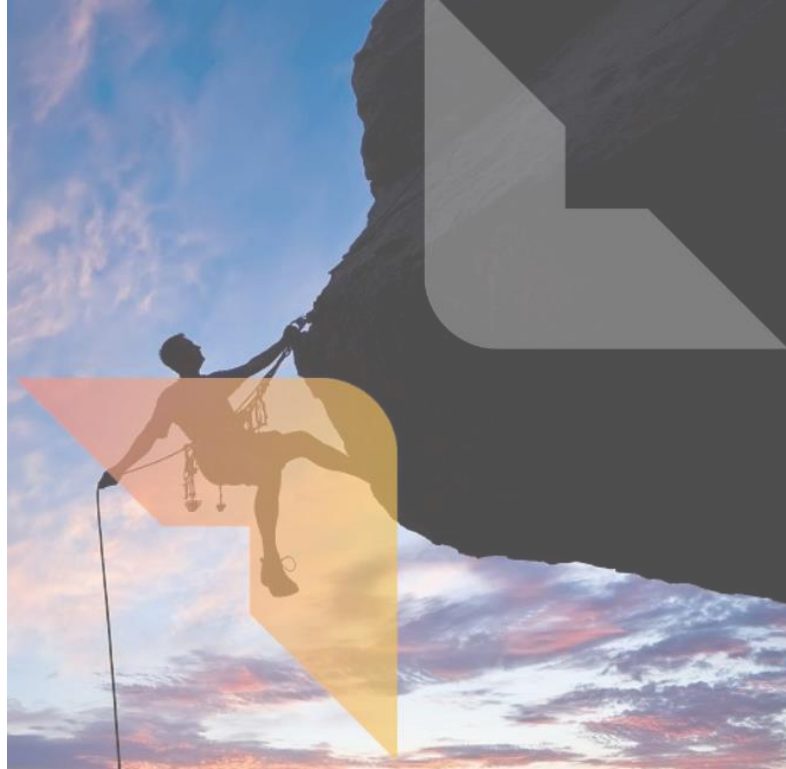
Insync Surveys in their ground breaking research on organisational high performance identified *living an inspired vision* was the #1 habit of high performing organisations. Earlier, we identified that connection to strategy was the #1 driver of employee engagement.



Scott Waters is CEO of the third largest council in Australia. He has a large workforce of approximately 2,500 staff. He uses a range of communication processes to interact with the team members on a continuous basis.

Scott stated the need to present the organisational objectives to staff in a manner that encourages them to personalize the connection to strategy through their daily interaction and support of the community.

We encourage our people to focus on “my local government area”. As a staff member, I’m doing good things for my community. The brand of the Council and the City are important. I wear a uniform and I’m proud to wear it. It means something to me. I have those conversations with staff and absolutely say to them, no matter whether you are front facing or you’re back of house, you either are directly helping someone every single day because that’s your job as Council delivers services, or you enable frontline staff to help somebody every single day. Because you help your community, you deliver good value to your community. You’re able to develop and see a future for your community and from a personal perspective, you get a degree of “I built that”, or “I work there”, or “we have done this together” and I think that is important. Thereby, employees develop a tangible bond and relationship with Council, the community, and their work.



To place another perspective on experiencing the promise of organisation, Lloyd Smith is the Executive Partner of Vytal Health, a community pharmacy group employing over 100 staff in four locations across three states. He considers the communication of the organisation strategic intent, living an inspiring vision, is paramount to the success of the organisation.

The communication needs to be done in such a way that the information connects to the intended outcome for the organisation. If we cannot connect the vision to the day to day activities of the organisation, the staff may not be able to put all the puzzle pieces together because they haven’t experienced it previously.

Lloyd expresses the importance of taking his people on a journey thereby living the vision.



Alice Percy, General Manager Innovation at the City of Darwin focuses on bringing the vision to life for her people.

We encourage staff to go to community events and actually work at the event. At the quarterly hub [department] meetings, my managers and I will do an external kind of road trip. An example was last Hub meeting we went to Bundela Beach. Council is about to commence a revitalization project, we visited so staff could see the before and then we’ll go back so they can see the after.

We do a monthly newsletter which has photos of all the achievements across our strategic directions each month, which is shared with each other, but also with the senior leadership team so they can share it with everyone across the organisation.

I encourage staff to work from the operations centre [where the outdoor workforce operate from] for one day a week. We invited team members to attend fortnightly team meetings for each program area, we discuss the relationships the team are making across the organisation, and we invite staff to do presentations at team fortnightly meetings.

Although these leaders are taking different approaches to living an inspired vision, multiple forms of communication and experiencing the vision coming to life is important to all of their approaches.

Truly caring for our people, authentic people-centred leadership

Earlier, we stated that employees need to perceive that their leaders really care, and they want to be inspired by their leader as a role model. With these conditions established, they want their leaders to demonstrate honesty and integrity, set reasonable expectations, and explain the goals of the organisation to the team.

We asked our leaders to describe their leadership style. Due to their positions, these leaders will be influencing the leaders that report to them to do the same. Alice Percy described her leadership style as:

Inclusive, caring, collaborative, and outcomes-focused. Kindness is the biggest one I think; empowering people, being authentic and accepting of others. Just being a person, understanding that people are people, and they've got stuff going on outside of the workplace, putting on the empathetic hat.



Toni Gilliver is a manager in Cairns & Hinterland Hospital & Health Service. She is part of the leadership team of the Mental Health Services, a 500 person service unit. Toni explained her leadership style as:

I am very open. I treat people around me and my team as I would like to be treated, and my leadership, I think it is a coaching style. I like to work alongside my team rather than above it and coach along the way. I think a good word for my style is gentle.

Toni went on to say that when required, she can have disciplinary conversations, but she prefers to adopt a style that reduces the need for disciplinary action.

Scott Waters, as CEO of a large organisation, stated that his leadership style was:

I'd like to say its authentic. What you see, is what you get, and I lead by example. In my time in local government, I've had the opportunity to do pretty much all leadership roles whether it's been leading the infrastructure team, all the way through to corporate services and community [departments]. Knowing what my leaders need to do helps me set expectations and not ask anybody to do anything that I wouldn't do myself. I'm not going to put my people in a position that I haven't encountered. I'm always here to help and I always put that forward to the team.

Trust and belonging is the leader's #1 job!

This concept of trust and belonging is so important, that in our work with organisational leaders, we tell them – the development and sustainment of a community of *trust and belonging* is the leader's #1 job! How do our leaders deliver on building trust and belonging?

Toni Gilliver works closely with her team in a coaching-style relationship. How does she go about building trust and **belonging**?

I think that humans aren't solitary creatures, they like to feel needed and in a work situation, they want to know their role, they want to know how to contribute, how they can participate. Trust is about a personal connection which creates trust. As trust is built and respected, and it builds over time. The leader sets the tone of the relationship, as the leader goes about building relationships so too will the team.

So, we talk about trust being one on one, but it's also one on group for a leader and then belonging really being between the leader and the members of the team. Toni went on to state that trust builds through relationship in which confidentiality is shared and not broken thereby growing the trust and mutual bonds between team members and the leader.

In building trust and belonging, Lloyd Smith indicated that he considered that he needed to be open and make himself vulnerable to commence the process of trust building. Lloyd stated:

Trust is an essential pillar of success of a leader. Without trust the leader will fail. As trust is established, I can predict how my people will respond in most circumstances. As the leader, I need to be prepared to take risks through vulnerability and openness to build trust. It is an iterative process which builds trust. It is the after-work telephone calls, it is the check-ins, it is the side conversations, understanding what is important to the individual, that builds trust over time.

Scott Waters focused heavily on the importance of consistency as a leader if we are to build trust and belonging.

You build trust by being consistent in your approach as a leader. A lack of consistency will lead to a lack of trust, particularly if you're going through any level of change management. Deviation from your message as a senior leader will erode trust. People's job security is important to them, so they may continue to be a member of the team, but the erosion of trust will dilute the outcome and the sense of belonging in the team.

Alice Percy took a structured approach to building trust and belonging.

Oh, it probably comes down to structure. I was doing one on one meetings with my direct reports before we started with you [NSC Group]. Having at least an hour with them once a week to talk about them, and their progress. More than anything, it was an opportunity to just vent about stuff. And then high level talking about any issues or opportunities and projects. We use project plans so people get an understanding of expectations early on and the they can be empowered to deliver that project without having to regularly check in. And we develop annual plans and a performance plan for people, so they know what their expectations are and then check in every month on how that's going and every six months on the PDR.

CONCLUSION

The summary of the survey data section produces a clear outline of what is required to produce sustainable high performance.

In summary, the realisation of the desire for community and the synergistic outcomes of community leads to the building of trust, belonging, and community. Leader's operating in a people-centred manner amplify these outcomes through an iterative development of trust, being vulnerable, and a role model of integrity and honesty. Finally, people-centred leaders cement the gains through development of employee connection to role and its connection to strategy to grow employee emotional engagement and high performance.

We have found in drawing together the research, real-world data, and highly competent leaders personal views, that the critical objective to attain high performance over the long term is to enable all employees to realise the desire for community. To set up a platform to achieve this goal, the organisation needs people-centred leaders who understand the need for and are capable of delivering trust and belonging.

In reading this whitepaper, some will consider the work required to achieve these outcomes is costly in leader time and salary. Many leaders may feel they are not sufficiently equipped to deliver the necessary outcomes to derive high performance. The danger is to consider that the delivery of high performance is costly but doing nothing, or at least focusing on BAU has no cost. In an article entitled *Real cost of not pursuing performance & engagement improvement*²², we identified the potential impost of doing nothing to improve performance and employee engagement for a company of 200 employees could be as much as \$1-1.5 million of lost performance improvement and reduction of unnecessary costs. With the investment to gain these improvements can be less than \$100,000 depending on the size of the organisation.

At the outset, our hypothesis for the creation of this whitepaper was that sustainability in high performance was hidden in plain sight. Successful Enterprise leaders build community, a high performance community that delivers on the promise of "organisation", that is, we organise so as to achieve greater than the sum of our individual contributions. The promise of community is so attractive, so powerful, that successful Enterprise leaders resonating with their people will positively influence the creation of a sustainable, high performing community. Through building trust, employee mood towards the

organisation alters substantially to the positive thereby creating the opportunity for sustainable high performance.



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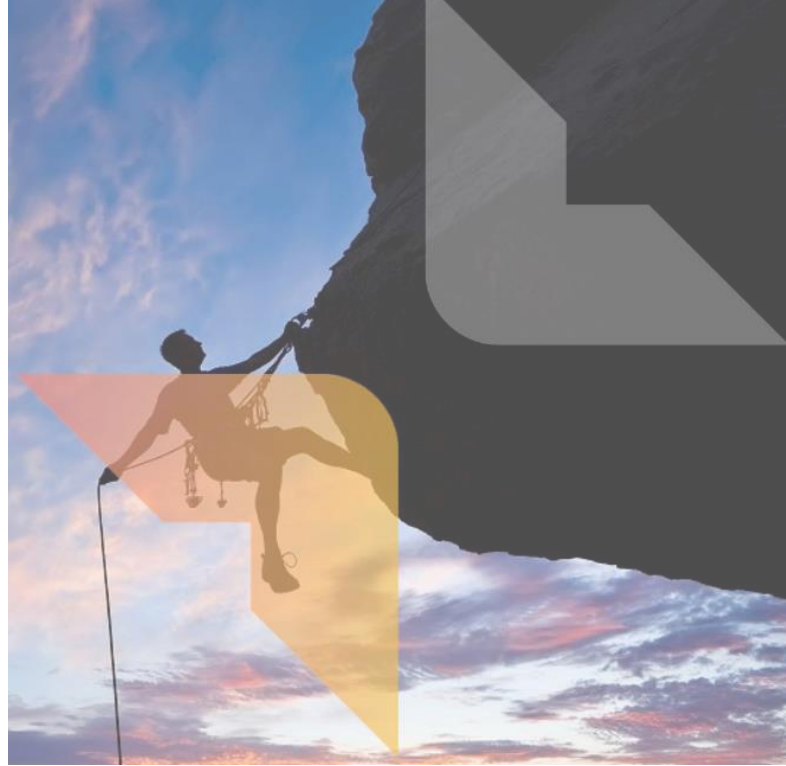
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NSC offices are located in Brisbane, Sydney, and Darwin Australia. Our directors are available for no obligation discussions to determine how we may assist your organisation.

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