

## **Transforming Organisational Culture – City of Marion, Sarah Philpott**

It is great to be here with people who want to make a positive difference. Culture & excellence are great topics – they require good leadership. And leadership is the most important issue we face as individuals, groups, society and as a species. Our future in every sense will be determined by how we rise to our leadership challenge.

Building a culture that grows constructive and distributed leadership capacity – that's what I want to talk about today. This is not a labour - it is a love! Watching people grow and thrive – this is real joy – it is just beautiful to see. People heading for their full potential as leaders and human beings.

And it delivers the best results for our constituents and customers.

Developing our leadership is a very personal path. Our personal and professional growth depends on openness – a culture of openness.

This is about people, beliefs, aspirations.

Lets start with a story about integrity .. HR professional at St Peter's gate ..

Total borrowings for 08-09 (\$8.2m) to date (inc overdraft).

Plan to increase external borrowing by \$9m for 09-10.

Important lesson for us in here.

Our first attempt was based on creating the discussion, setting the target and leaving up to the managers to deliver. The results improved and then declined.

The post implementation review highlighted the need to more effectively engage staff in a “problem solving approach”. This is essentially using the business excellence approach to analysing the situation.

Approach - identify the target and intent. Goals. The strategies, structures, processes to achieve the intent. Clarify.

Deployment – Agree how the approach will be put into practice.

Results – monitor the data.

Improvement – based on the trends, what further improvement opportunities exist. Capture the learning and repeat the ADRI cycle.

This is a very brief summary and timeline of our approach. The big picture view of our use of these 2 methods.

You can see from this we started our cultural management in 2001 and Business Excellence in 2004.

With the benefit of hindsight, I probably would have started both together as early as possible. There are political and resource issues to consider. I cannot change the past. The learning I have taken from this that I am using now is to ensure our people have a focus on change (both methods) and have the resources and support to succeed.

So you can see our level of constructive behaviour is increasing and the passive defensive and aggressive defensive are reducing.

Lets have a look at outcomes and causal factors.

So, it was pretty hard to be upbeat in 2002.

Those staff talks – 27 of the 31 causal factors below average and many well and truly below!

We focused on the top 3 (plus 1 really)

1. Use of rewards (recognition)
2. Goal Emphasis
3. Employee Involvement &
4. Articulation of the Mission (Vision – remember our vision)

We also asked all our people in leadership positions to address the top 3 in their teams (optional at that stage – mandatory now)

The program is introduced and concluded by an individual LSI for participants to gain an indication of the journey to be made ...and the journey that has been made.

The four modules are of varying length:

Begins with 2 session on “Who am I” [Self Actualisation] where participants consider their strengths and values. We then introduce the notion of mental models and becoming aware of our mental models. The lens of viewing the world as a series of complex systems is introduced – providing a framework for working with complexity. We explore the personal qualities required of managers/leaders if the context is one of uncertainty, unpredictability, emergence and self organisation.

We take this with us as we move on to consider How can we set people up for success? Once again this is within a systems perspective. Managers are responsible for the systems and need to work with their people to improve the systems. This requires an appreciation of how to inspire the best from their people and we explore coaching skills. We consider what motivates people and conclude that people motivate themselves – the manager’s job is to create the environment for people to be motivated and to remove barriers to self motivation.... This links back to operating from strengths or talents. We consider how to have those really difficult conversation which sometimes, despite our best efforts at setting people up for success, need to be undertaken.

The third module collects up all we have known and offers an opportunity to exercise leadership in a specific sphere of the organisation. It is a 4 session “action learning project”. Importantly the projects are created by participants themselves depending upon what their passion is for. They form small groups in a self organised fashion; work with mentors; and attempt to move their leadership project forward. We debrief what they are learning and draw principles from it to serve them in the future. This real life experience has generated a great deal of energy within the group with feedback including “I have never felt so enthusiastic about work before” “I really feel valued and trusted by EMG to undertake this work”

The fourth module is a short one designed to assist participants reflect upon what they have learned during the program and develop stories to tell others they work with about it. They develop a presentation for EMG and present both their team vision for the Leadership in action project and a summary of their own personal leadership development journey over the course of the program.

Participant comments about the program include:

“This course gives you an opportunity to reflect upon and learn new ways of being a good leader without compromising your values or authenticity.”

“Being able to take time out and think and learn and challenge my thinking on work and beyond.”