

Winter 2014 Newsletter

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Dear Colleagues,

We would like to welcome two new clients: Leading commercial law firm, Clarke Kann and one of Australia's largest independent grain merchants and seed specialists, Associated Grain. We look forward to working closely with them and helping them to be their best.



Over the last few months we have been listening to and reading the work of Jason Drew. We love his optimistic view of the future where a sustainable revolution is taking place. It's wonderful to think that we are getting smarter – evolving beyond the 19th Century with its focus on production and the 20th Century with its focus on consumption, to a 21st Century that is about sharing, repairing, durability and upgrading, where we will consume little in the process of consumption. According to Drew, upgradability will be the core attribute of all new products and asset sharing will redefine ownership. Ethical frameworks will replace legislation as drivers for organisational behaviour and individuals will take more responsibility for determining what is appropriate. What we really love about this future-view is that we will have severed the 'extract-manufacture-throw-away' cycle and replaced it with a different paradigm based on durability and repurposing, where the gaps in the product lifecycle have been closed.



In a similarly optimistic mood we have been focusing this year on workplace engagement and the huge productivity and performance gains to be made by better engaging your staff and aligning them to the goals of your organisation. Employment law expert, Geoff McGill writes, "It is the substance of the employment relationship not its legal form which determines whether people are engaged and productive. Productive workplaces are not the outcome of legislation but of the quality of leadership and culture at the workplace". We believe our society needs business leaders who know how to cultivate engagement and discretionary effort.



Speaking of engagement, we have been analysing Gallup's latest State of the Global Workplace report that found only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged or emotionally invested in their work. While Australia fares a little better it is estimated that poor engagement costs the Australian economy over \$54 billion a year. What this means is that most workers are simply 'turning-up' and not doing all they can to



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provide great service, reduce errors, help colleagues, reduce costs, improve their work or innovate and drive new processes, products and services. In short, most workers display all the hallmarks of low discretionary effort.

Supporting these results, a new survey by FASTLEAD has found that Australia's front line managers are operating under significant stress and struggling with basic leadership responsibilities, especially managing performance. The Australian Institute of Management has also found that a significant proportion of managers do not have the skills they need to be successful in their roles. There is no doubt that these capability gaps contribute to Australia's sluggish productivity and competitiveness.

You can drive performance in your organisation by focusing on the four areas of great engagement:

- Give staff the chance to share their views with you
- Communicate the future direction & goals of the organisation
- Provide honest feedback on performance & set expectations for future work
- Explain the link between the work people do & success for the organisation

Overlaid on these four pillars is the need for belonging. People need to feel that they belong to a common undertaking and are part of a shared effort and endeavour.



We take the evaluation of our leadership programs very seriously, especially in light of the January edition of the McKinsey Quarterly, which led with 'Why Leadership Development Programs Fail' and the proposition that investment dollars are wasted due to poorly designed programs. You can be assured that People At Their Best avoid the 4 common pitfalls listed in the McKinsey article in the following ways:

1. We understand the organisational context and set defined aims to improve the business in specific areas like BD or coaching skills or communications rather than an alphabet soup of defused initiatives.
2. We make development stick by tying learning directly to activities that people perform back on the job. All our programs are built around requirements that people face in their roles and we practice 'live' and real situations like upcoming difficult conversations, presentations or negotiations.
3. We understand mindsets and identify why people may not be performing - often not a skills deficit but a mindset like a lack of confidence or will or a reluctance to deal with conflict. The front-end of our programs provide participants with insights, awareness and understanding through psychometrics, 360-feedbacks and reflection exercises.



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4. We measure return on our programs through feedback, evaluated behavioural change and most importantly through improved organisational performance like cost savings, increased revenue and productivity improvements.

While most companies have business strategies in place, we have found that many do not have the leadership capabilities to execute those strategies. This gap is holding organisations back - this gap is where we help leaders develop and where organisations get the most return on their investment. Leadership capability gaps present massive opportunity for organisations. Development investment should be on those roles and skills that matter most in terms of an organisation achieving its goals.

We want to alert you to an interesting book by Daniel Priestley: [Become A Key Person of Influence](#). To be more credible and valuable, to have more vitality and access to more opportunities, Priestly recommends you develop the following 5 capabilities:

- Pitch and communicate your message clearly
- Publish in a way that says you have insights into your subject matter
- Convert your insights into products and services that can scale
- Build your profile and gain visibility for your cause and ideas
- Form partnerships and alliances with others to make things happen

In our next Newsletter:

- Creative disruption; the collision of necessity and possibility; the path to innovation
- Thinking dexterity and the making of a great sales team
- Emotional agility and its impact on leadership
- The launch of the new People At Their Best website



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