

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition. At the center is a glowing lightbulb, its glass and filament visible. Surrounding the lightbulb are numerous colorful paint splashes and brushstrokes in shades of blue, yellow, red, and purple, creating a sense of dynamic energy and creativity. The overall effect is one of artistic inspiration and innovation.

the
field

THE SMALL
Extraordinary
Handbook

The Four Principles for Leading an
EXTRAORDINARY WORKPLACE

Part 3:
Extraordinary Human Connection

THE LOWDOWN



Connection as the new work



Have strong values around deep caring



Acknowledge our social brains



Create memories that connect



Stop giving feedback



Let people own their culture

EXTRAORDINARY HUMAN CONNECTION

Connection as the new work

In Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends¹⁰ for 2016, one of the greatest trends coming our way is an organisational model that builds networks of teams that are fully resourced to collaborate on specific projects and challenges. Only 14% of the executives that took part (the study involving 7000 leaders and HR professionals from 130 countries) thought that their organisation was ready for this. But people are.

With trends also showing careers moving away from the notion of 'one job for life', people are starting to see their careers as a series of excellent experiences and opportunities in meaningful work. People also want to have great working relationships; in fact, this is something that they readily refer to when you ask them about the best place they have ever worked. But don't take our word for it... Ask 5 people about the best place they have ever worked and see what they say! You want people in your organisation who want to expand their minds and talents through their work which means you need to have the kind of culture and leadership that will support this.

Have strong values around deep caring

Which of your current organisational values calls people toward genuinely caring for the people they work with? And how do you embed that regularly?

It is amazing to see a workplace come alive when we encourage them to do Small Extraordinary Actions (SEA) for each other. Recently, we developed SEA cards to give away to people in organisations to spread the care around. This wasn't to be a random act of kindness (although they are awesome too!!). The SEA cards were designed so that people could do small extraordinary things for themselves and others that would bring out the best in them, even if for a short time. It is one thing to be kind to people in the workplace but we think that what is needed more is the encouragement to develop the skills of everyone caring enough to take each other to the next level of awesome. Here are some well-known companies and their values around caring for people:



Respect for
people



Stewardship



Embrace the
SWA family



Together we make
a difference



Build a positive
team and
family spirit



Communicate
fearlessly to
build trust

An old friend and colleague of mine used to tell the story of when he was in the Australian Army, and one morning while doing a routine line up for inspection, his friend next to him had his shirt untucked. The parade officer looked his friend up and down and commented on his neglect to present himself respectably. The officer turned to my friend however and proceeded to hand him the punishment for allowing his friend and fellow soldier to be present that day without caring for his success.

Organisations need values that bring people together, with a responsibility for each other's success. Like with Virgin's "Together we make a difference", it should be clear that "apart, we don't".

What organisational values bring people together in your workplace?

What personal values bring out deep caring in you?

Visit our website www.thefield.com.au and check out our EPIC (Extraordinary People Initiate Culture) Experience brochure to help organisations bring their workplace cultures to life.

Acknowledge our social brains

There is a fantastic Youtube channel called 'Soul Pancake'¹¹ which conducts some great social experiments. One, called "Take a seat my friend" is where two strangers are invited to climb into a big tank in the middle of the city, filled with plastic balls. When they sit down in the 'ball pit', they pick up a ball and it has a random action on it like 'Share 3 things on your bucket list' and 'find one thing you have in common'. They find things in common, share deep stories and connect on a level they would never have had the opportunity to connect, all in the space of about 20 minutes. There is something incredible about human beings. We thrive on human connection, and if we don't, it is because we have been very hurt from our past. It is natural for us to have a tribe, to care about others and to work alongside others. If the environment is right, people will find what they have in common and develop close bonds. This used to be for evolutionary reasons of survival, and that will still kick in when we feel threatened, however we are reaching a new level of connection, including in the workplace, where we KNOW that rich working relationships increase happiness and success.

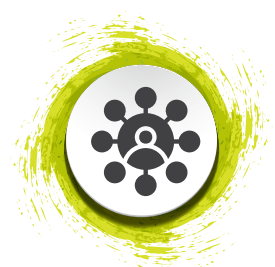
In his popular Tedtalk, Shawn Achor¹² states that from his global research in positive psychology, that there are 3 things that predict our happiness and therefore more success at work. They are:



Knowing our
behaviour
matters



How we
perceive stress



Our social
connections

Matt Lieberman¹³, a Professor and Social Cognitive Neuroscience Lab Director at UCLA Department of Psychology, wrote a book called 'Social' where he details how our brains are wired for social connection. David Rock¹⁴ developed 'The SCARF model' which outlines the ways that we are threatened and rewarded by our social connections at work and how much of an impact this plays on culture.

- ✓ How many social connections do you have with your colleagues at work that go beyond just a 'we just work together' deal?
- ✓ How many people would you trust to drive your car? Look after your loved ones in an emergency? Give you feedback that you know would come from the best intention?
- ✓ What importance (on a scale of 0 – 10 where 0 is none) do you put on your working relationships?

I'm guessing that you have a group of special people in your life outside of work that you invest in. When things are good there, sometimes life just feels good all round, doesn't it? Investing in working relationships is not just a nice thing to do anymore. It is part of that social fulfilment for us as human beings. And it makes outstanding business sense. People thrive, want to come to work, collaborate better and want to give more. It is no wonder that when you ask teams what it would take to work better as a team that they say 'BBQ' (in Australia at least!). They know that social connection, in its various amounts and forms depending on different personalities, works for human beings.

Create memories that connect

As mentioned in the introductory, running a yacht charter company is an interesting adventure. Something we noticed after meeting people from all over the world who come to Australia to enjoy our beautiful weather and landscape, was that Australian teams seemed to follow a well-trodden path when spending time with their teams.

Small business teams would say: "We have done ten pin bowling and go karting, however this day has been the best! Ten pin bowling and go karting seemed to be the 'done thing'.

Now as fun as those things are, I noticed that when we spoke with larger teams about the experiences that stood out for them as most memorable, they weren't the fun, cool, organised events. Instead they were the deeper ones. "We were paired up and we had to say something we noticed about the other person that was a unique strength. Some-one said that I was caring and compassionate. It meant so much to me because that is what I aim to be". "We sat in pairs knee to knee and looked at each other's eyes which was weird and a bit awkward, however it was so powerful". "We were asked to deeply listen to others and fully attend to them. I realised how much I didn't listen, and was always just preparing what I was going to say".

People are deeper than we give them credit for. People want to learn ways to truly communicate better and they want to do it together.

A fantastic activity we once did with a team was 'Left Hand Column Conversations' (look it up, it's a great tool) where people distinguished between what they were thinking in their heads in conversations and what they actually said (which can sometime be completely different – sometimes thankfully different!). It transformed the way people communicated. People would approach another person in the business and say "I just want to share a left hand column conversation I am having in my head to just run it past you" or "I have a story going on in my head right now which is distracting me from this conversation – can I just share that with you?". Conversations immediately became more authentic, brave and real.

- ✓ Ask people what kind of development they would like to do TOGETHER as a team.
- ✓ Let them help organise it and come up with the content.
- ✓ Make it clear that it might not be perfect, however if everyone is willing to contribute one thing, it will be worth it.
- ✓ Have fun, but also have depth to what you do. People want to have those moments where there is a sense of safe vulnerability, realness and growth together.
- ✓ Think about what you can do to create the space at these times that are most real and authentic. What can you share of yourself to bring some depth to what you do together?

What activities would you really love to do in your organisation to connect people?

Stop giving feedback

If someone walks up to you and says 'can I give you some feedback?', what happens next? Here is what normally happens. Neuroscience tells us that your brain experiences a strong threat response just hearing the word 'feedback'. Your physiology tells you that you are under threat and your body prepares for fight or flight. Simultaneously your brain scans its memories for what this feedback might be about and a potential counter argument, which is where all sorts of biases come into play. However, in the true spirit of perception management, the words that come out of your mouth are 'sure'. The other person awkwardly gives you feedback, generally from their own subjective perspective of life, and then you awkwardly accept or rebut. The conversation ends weirdly, or you both make jokes to make light of it, you make some vague statement about how grateful you are for the feedback, and then you walk away and think about it for the next 4 days.





Ok, slight exaggeration. Or is it? If we knew how many unconscious emotional triggers, biases and social rules we all had, we would deem ourselves unfit to offer feedback. However, unfortunately if they are unconscious, we simply don't know, so we do it thinking we are coming from a rational and well informed stance. And worse still, if we feel intolerant or uncompassionate about why people do what they do, we are even less fit to give people feedback. But organisations all over the world are drilling leaders to give more feedback and hold more people to accountability, even though a lot of it doesn't seem to work. When did you have a feedback conversation that didn't work? When did you have one that did? What was the difference?

- ✓ Create a safe culture first, then focus on 'feedback'.
- ✓ Use this rule: If feedback is not about solutions, suggestions and the future, then it is not the right feedback. It could also possibly do damage. The purpose of 'feedback' should always be on behalf of bringing out the extraordinary in people, and creating a better future.
- ✓ Sure, accountability is paramount, so connect it to the next best version of them, and engage them in the consequences for not learning. It will work a whole lot better than current organisational methods.
- ✓ Create processes where people go looking for feedback, and have the environment to support them in doing this. Preceding this is the need to fill the tank: Focus on what people are doing right and their skills and strengths in what they do. Without this, every suggestion for improvement will feel like it is taking rather than helping them develop the best version of themselves.

Let people own their culture

Seth Godin¹⁵ describes “tribes” as groups of 20 – 100 people who are connected to each other, connected to a leader and connected to an idea. He quotes Senator Bill Bradley in defining a movement for tribes as needing a narrative that tells a story about who they are and the future they’re trying to build. They also need something to do and the fewer limits the better. This absolutely fits in with what Daniel Pink¹⁶ communicated in his book ‘Drive’ about what motivates people: Mastery, autonomy and purpose. People need to feel that they are accomplishing something that means something, and that they have some control and freedom in the outcome. Too often, the talent and drive in people in the workplace is ignored because people are simply told what their organisational values, decisions and direction are without engaging their hearts and minds in the process. Leaders who really want to create something great aren’t attached to receiving credit in building a great culture. J. Paul Getty once said “I would rather have 1% of the efforts of 100 people than 100% of my own efforts”. Putting this into a cultural context, the more autonomy and purpose people have in their culture, the more likely they are to own it.

However, there is some work that leaders need to consider before doing this...

-  1. You need to work out the non-negotiables. What are the things that must remain in place for logical and valid reasons? For example, working with a lot of large organisations in the heavy industry, safety is a non-negotiable. It must be present in everything they do, and reflected in their culture. Work output might be another one. Particular structures, channels of communication, organisational values that have been a part of the organisation since its conception... you get the idea. What would yours be?
-  2. Work out who your tribe is. How many people are in your tribe that can work together on their culture? How many would be too many people for this? Where are people located? How many tribes would you have?
-  3. Deliberately communicate to the tribe or tribes the things above with complete transparency. Invite them to be a part of building their culture in ways that no one can take from them. And work out ways to share the learning, especially with interconnected tribes.
-  4. Use some of the ideas from the ‘Extraordinary Thinking’ part of this book to create ideas together for this very thing.

Facilitate people leading their own culture. People are wildly creative and wired to connect. They will create something far better than an organisation can ever hand to them and they will become stronger, closer and more collaborative in the process.

MORE TO COME!

Please subscribe below to be notified when the next chapter has been released.



Notify Me

REFERENCES

10. Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2016

<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/HumanCapital/gx-dup-global-human-capital-trends-2016.pdf>

11. Soulpancake: "Take a seat, make a friend"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfHV4-N2LxQ>

12. Shawn Achor:

https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work

13. Matt Lieberman: Social (2014)

<https://www.amazon.com/Social-Why-Brains-Wired-Connect/dp/0307889106>

14. David Rock: SCARF

<https://neuroleadership.com/solutions/licensing/>
<https://www.amazon.com/Your-Brain-Work-Strategies-Distrac-tion-ebook/dp/B002Q1YE3K>

15. Seth Godin: Tribes: We need you to lead us (2008)

<https://www.amazon.com.au/Tribes-We-Need-You-Lead-ebook/dp/B001FA0LAI>
http://www.sethgodin.com/sg/free_stuff.asp

16. Daniel Pink:

http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation
<http://www.danpink.com/books/drive/>