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Shine People Consulting

- Professionally qualified HR specialist
- Investors in People Assessor & Advisor
- Business coach & mentor
- Vice President HRINZ Nelson Committee
- MHRINZ – Professional Member of Human Resources Institute of New Zealand
- MCIPD – Full Chartered member of Chartered Inst. of Personnel and Development
- Lominger certified

Managing difficult issues

- How to have a 'Courageous Conversation' (CC)

Let's face it, few people like or embrace conflict situations. Given the choice, most people avoid facing up to conflict, whether that's in the workplace, in our personal lives or when somebody has jumped the queue in the supermarket. It takes courage (and skill) to get the issue out into the open and move it to a positive resolution.

One of the main things that I find business leaders struggle with is managing the performance of their staff, especially when performance problems start to occur. When things get sticky in the workplace one of three things occur;

- a) early intervention in the problem to stop it becoming bigger
- b) avoid the issue & hope it will go away... and, when it doesn't
- c) exit the person out, either out of the company, or ... move them to another team where .. it becomes somebody else's problem

Cost to the business

The costs to the business of options b) & c) are huge and often not recognised; loss of a person who you might have been able to turn around, a personal grievance for a questionable exit, fractured teams, good staff leaving, higher absence, productivity dip and impact on your business and employer brand (reputation).

How do you know when you need a CC?

If the problem is at the front of your mind & won't go away, if it's keeping you awake at night, if you have other staff & work colleagues raising the issue, if your customers are starting to complain... then you need to have a Courageous Conversation.

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Helping your people, your workplace and your business to ...

shine

What's holding you back?

When you don't want to have the conversation you need to ask yourself why. Is it because?

- You've never had to do this before, it's a skills issue – get help
- You've done it before and it wasn't a good experience – again get help
- you're worried, even scared, of their reaction
- you're worried about the consequences of the conversation
- when you imagine the conversation, you feel uncomfortable

In a nutshell you probably haven't had the conversation because you're afraid of the outcome. We all do that. So here's some tips to get you started.

- Get in early before the problem gets too big and more difficult to manage
- Be clear about what the issue is, how it is causing problems and for whom
- Gather more information, such behavioural examples from a range of trusted sources. Be confident the issue isn't more about personal agendas or a personality conflict; i.e. two people who just don't get on (I have a code I work to "you don't have to like who you work with, but you do have to work with them. Bottom line.")
- Think about the person and how they are likely to react, what language do they respond positively and negatively to?
- If you're anxious about the conversation, get some coaching either from a trusted, confidential, internal person who's skilled at this stuff, or from an external coach.
- Role play it a couple of times; this will help to uncover objections or reactions you might encounter and be more prepared.
- Think about the key skills needed: active listening; open and non-confrontational questioning; positive body language; language, words and timing set the tone and can cause unnecessary conflict before you've even got started.

It's important to re-affirm organisational expectations and standards about "what good looks like". However this may need to take a back seat if the root of the problems are personal issues that need a different approach and compassionate level of support.

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How Shine People Consulting can help you. Services offered:

- Business improvement using the international Investors in People framework
- In house or outsourced Human Resources support
- Recruitment and selection support
- Helping you resolve those tricky people problems that keep you awake at night!
- Change management support – change planning & communications; upskilling your people leaders to lead and manage change; *Working with Change* workshops to help transition your staff from A to B
- Employer of Choice strategies – transform your business into one with a strong employer brand, enabling you to attract, recruit, engage & retain high performers that deliver on your business goals
- Strategic and operational planning – facilitation and development
- Project management – from project inception and design to execution and review
- Management skills training (change management, managing diversity, recruitment & selection, appraisal, managing performance & more)
- Staff development – from training needs analysis to personal development plans and development frameworks
- Coaching and mentoring (inc. leadership, performance management, delegation, communication, time management, career and interview skills)
- Employment policy, procedures, process and systems development and implementation – including staff handbook, job descriptions, performance management frameworks and practical guidance on how to apply them in the workplace
- Diversity specialist – strategies to create a diverse, inclusive and high performing workplace
- Internal communication strategies and planning



Managing difficult issues contd.

[Susan and Peter Glaser](#) in their book '*Be Quiet Be Heard*' suggest two simple models for having your CC:

Raising Delicate Issues

Step 1	Opener – Psychological agreement to have the conversation I-Feeling language – when people feel pushed, it creates a counter resistance Edit accusative language – avoid loaded language and red flag terms
Step 2	Pinpoint details – Tell the person exactly what they said, when they said it or exactly what they did and when they did it
Step 3	Acknowledge Your Part – Search for and communicate how you've contributed to the problem
Step 4	Agree on a solution – Develop a solution that you both create and both implement

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“Faced with apathy, I will take action. Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground”

- Bill Clinton

What's in a Name? ...brandinglogos ...cowboys & horses

Stay with me on this one, it'll become clear

A client asked me recently "what's the difference between an employer brand and corporate brand – shouldn't a corporate brand say it all?". Well yes .. and no. There should absolutely be clear alignment between a corporate and employer brand, but an employer brand will have specified messaging that seeks to attract, recruit and retain the best employees. Let's go back to branding basics.

Here goes with the Cowboys & Horses!

I find it useful to remember that business use of the term 'branding' stems from the practice of cowboys who would use a hot iron brand to indicate ownership of horses and cattle. As well as a visual mark, the brand also stood for other things that the mark brought to mind , quality and reputation. This would either be positive or negative dependant upon the quality of the experience with the owner and product. For those who had no previous knowledge or interaction with the brand or it's owner, it was nothing more than a name.

It's the same with business and employer brands. When I talk about brand many people think I'm talking about their logo. But brand is much more than a logo. A logo or 'visual identity' is the 'face', all the things one thinks of when they hear or see the company's name and logo. Brand is a promise, the big idea, and the expectations that reside in each customer's mind about a product, service, or company. People fall in love with brands, trust them, buy them, develop strong loyalties to them, and believe in their superiority. A brand stands for something.

A superior brand is a sum of all its parts – products, services, philosophy, name, story, employees, customer value, visual identity - it is an integration of multiple components, and a means of differentiating a company's products and services and gaining customer loyalty.

Brand development is an excellent channel for advancing vision throughout a company. Strong brands are the ones that are driven forward by owners who are champions for their brand. Strong brands can drive an increase in sales, attract and retain the best employees, and suppliers and investors will see a powerful brand as a valuable commodity.

What are you known for as an employer?

An employer brand is what the organisation is known for as an employer. But here's the catch, it's not what they think they're known for, or even the picture they paint of themselves. It's their reputation and quality of work experience that influences their brand. It's what their employees, current and past, along with the wider community have to say about them as an employer. It's what they say outside of the workplace, away from their manager, in the pub on a Friday night about "*what it's like to work there*". Whilst pay, benefits and opportunities for advancement are a driver at the attract & recruit stage, it is the quality of the work experience, the culture and leadership and management style that sets the tone for a positive, or negative, employer brand.

A while back a business leader shared with me that "*they just sorted their employer brand*". Intrigued, I asked them what they had done. They replied that they had sorted their recruitment advertising identity and core messages. I asked what they had done to internalise their employer brand. They looked puzzled and asked what I meant. I covered a range of things; what would their employees say about them as an employer; how did they work to ensure a connect between what they said and did – in essence deliver on the 'employment promise'; what were the range of ways in which they identified their employer brand offering and consistently communicated them through their employer brand touchpoints. We talked around the risks of 'over promising and under delivering' and the range of ways in which they could easily, and at minimal cost, confirm how they were perceived and, if there was a disconnect , what they could do differently as an employer.

Employer of Choice

A strong employer brand is the foundation of an Employer of Choice strategy. Research has shown that top talent and high potential staff are attracted by four key attributes: Excellence, Performance, Opportunity and Innovation. The challenge for the employer is to communicate not just what they do, but how they do it. That's what separates you from the rest and enables you to hook and keep your top talent.

Great brands aren't built overnight or set in a one-off session round the board table. Great brands take a long view, careful management and steady guidance.



Managing difficult issues contd.

What if the concerns are directed at you?

Responding to criticism

Step 1	Active Listening – Nonverbal attention and paraphrasing Nonverbal Attention – A posture of curiosity Paraphrasing – Listening to the message, reflecting it back, discovering speaker's intent
Step 2	Ask for Details – Requesting clarifying information
Step 3	Guess – When a speaker can't think of a specific, you come up with one
Step 4	Agree with Facts – Be explicit in your agreement
Step 5	Agree with Critic's Perception – Acknowledge the critic's perception is reasonable

What if the courageous conversation doesn't work?

If the informal route doesn't work, you may have to consider taking a more formal route. In this case I'd recommend you consult with your lawyer or other professional to ensure you follow a fair and reasonable process and are aware of the potential consequences.

So don't put it off, take a breath, make a plan and address the problem.

I hope some of these tips work for you. If they do let me know (and similarly if they don't let me know what went wrong!).



Psychometric Assessments



I've had a number of clients ask whether I work with a specific psychometric tool. Research has shown that psychometric assessments are among the best predictors of job performance and enhance the likelihood of employing high-performing staff, reducing selection errors and ensuring staff retention. I'm pleased to announce that I have recently partnered with [Profiles International New Zealand](#) who offer a broad, and leading edge suite of talent management tools. If you would like to find out more information please give me a call.

*"You don't have great organisations,
You have great workplaces"*

- Marcus Buckingham

contact

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