

academic staff: are they different folks who need different strokes?

Dr Peter Langford
Director, Voice Project

Friday 17 September 2010
7th Universities HR Benchmarking Conference
Langham, Melbourne, Australia

p: +61 408 810 502

e: peter.langford@voiceproject.com.au

a: Lvl 2, 4 Research Park Drive, Macquarie University, NSW 2109

who is voice project?

- We specialise in surveying engagement, leadership and service quality
- We're a research consultancy based at Macquarie University
- Our team of 17 people has completed 420 surveying projects across 180 clients, collected benchmarking data from over 2,500 organisations, and “given a voice” to over 500,000 employees and clients
- We have completed over 60 surveys across 32 Australian and New Zealand universities



light bedtime reading

- This presentation was prompted by our recent publication in the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management and related AHEIA presentation
 - Langford, P. H. (2010). Benchmarking work practices and outcomes in Australian universities using an employee survey. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32 (1), 41-53.
 - Langford, P. H. (2010). Benchmarking university culture, leadership and engagement against private and public sectors. Higher Education HR Conference, Brisbane.
- Please contact me for copies of the paper or presentation



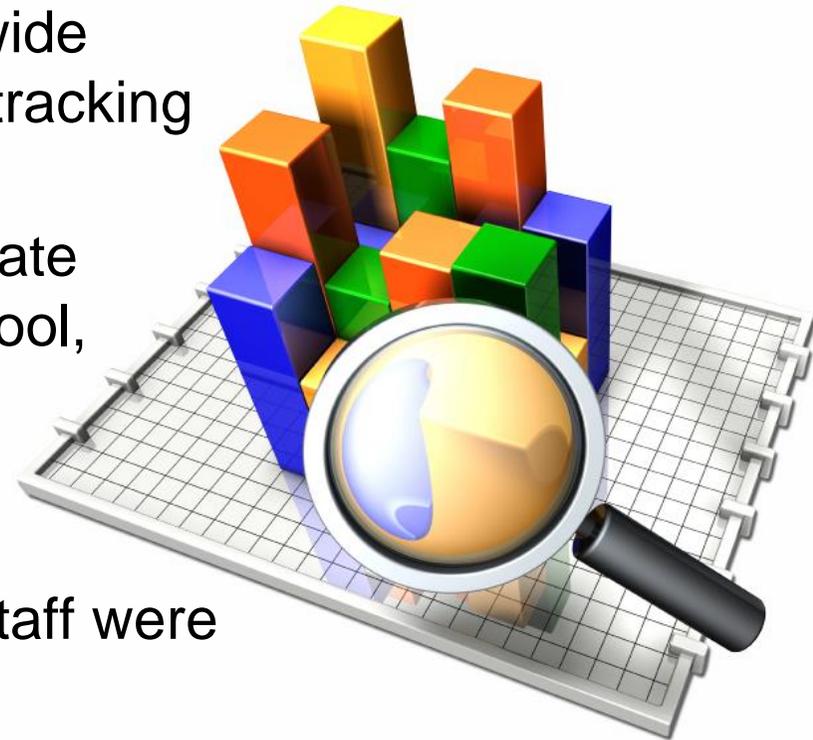
why we did the research

- The previous paper and presentation compared engagement and leadership in universities with other public and private sector organisations
- That investigation prompted the question of differences between academic and general staff within universities
- In particular, whether engagement levels differed between academic and general staff and whether these groups of staff demonstrated different “drivers” of engagement

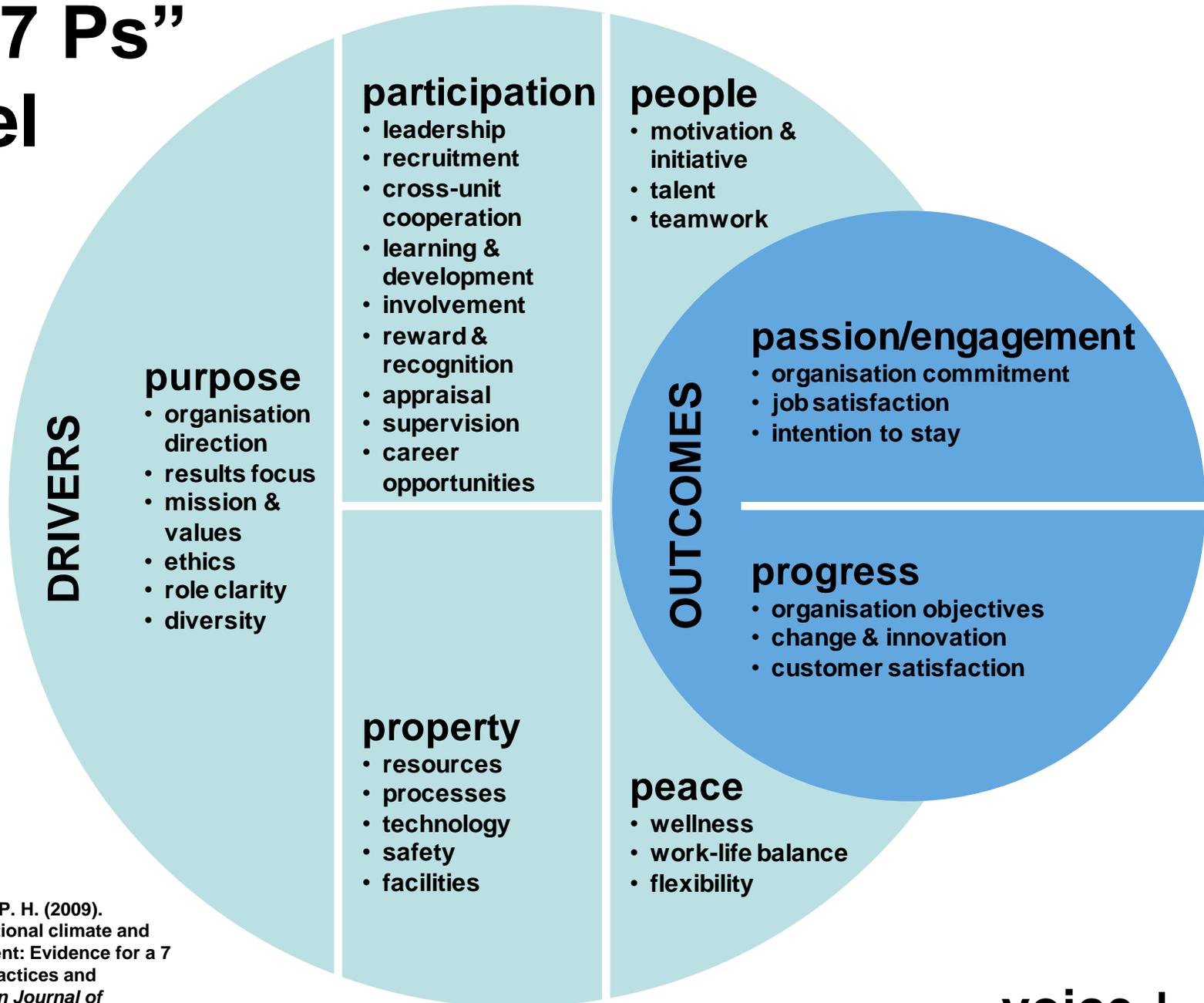


what we did . . . methodology

- Data from universities collected as part of Voice Project consulting projects
- Between 2003 and 2010, 14 universities completed 2 or more organisation-wide engagement surveys, enabling the tracking of changes over time
- Data collected using the Voice Climate Survey, a published well-validated tool, measuring 32 work drivers and outcomes as shown in the model on the following slide
- Results for academic and general staff were separately analysed to identify
 1. areas of greatest and least satisfaction
 2. the strongest drivers of Passion and Progress
 3. the practices showing the greatest improvements



our “7 Ps” model



Based on Langford, P. H. (2009). Measuring organisational climate and employee engagement: Evidence for a 7 Ps model of work practices and outcomes. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 61, 185-198.

top 5 drivers – academics

1 career opportunities
eg “Enough time and effort is spent on career planning”

2 resources
eg “I have access to the right equipment and resources to do my job well”

3 mission & values
eg “I believe in the overall purpose of this organisation”

4 leadership
eg “I have confidence in the ability of senior management”

5 recruitment & selection
eg “This organisation is good at selecting the right people for the right jobs”

rank for
general staff

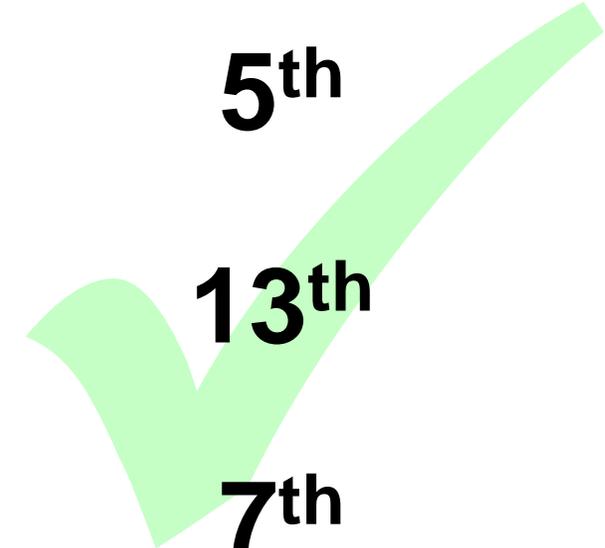
1st

5th

13th

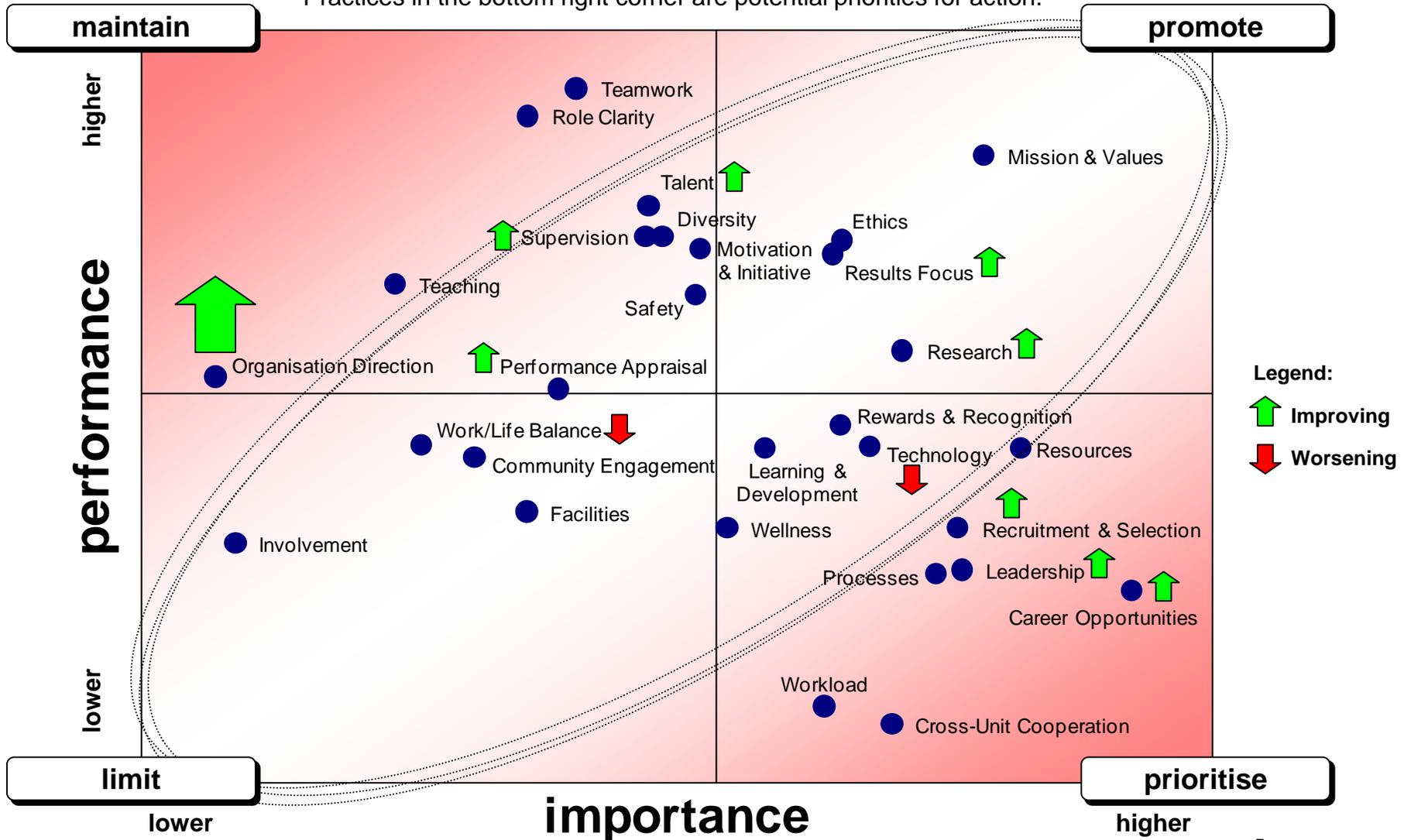
7th

9th



gap analysis - academics

Practices towards the right (higher "importance") correlate more strongly with Passion and Progress. Ideally, practices should rest in the oval where there is a good match between performance and importance. Practices in the bottom right corner are potential priorities for action.



top 5 drivers – general staff

rank for
academics

1 **career opportunities**
eg “Enough time and effort is spent on
career planning”

1st

2 **learning & development**
eg “There is a commitment to ongoing
training and development of staff”

13th

3 **ethics**
eg “This organisation is ethical”

10th

4 **processes**
eg “Our policies and procedures are efficient
and well-designed”

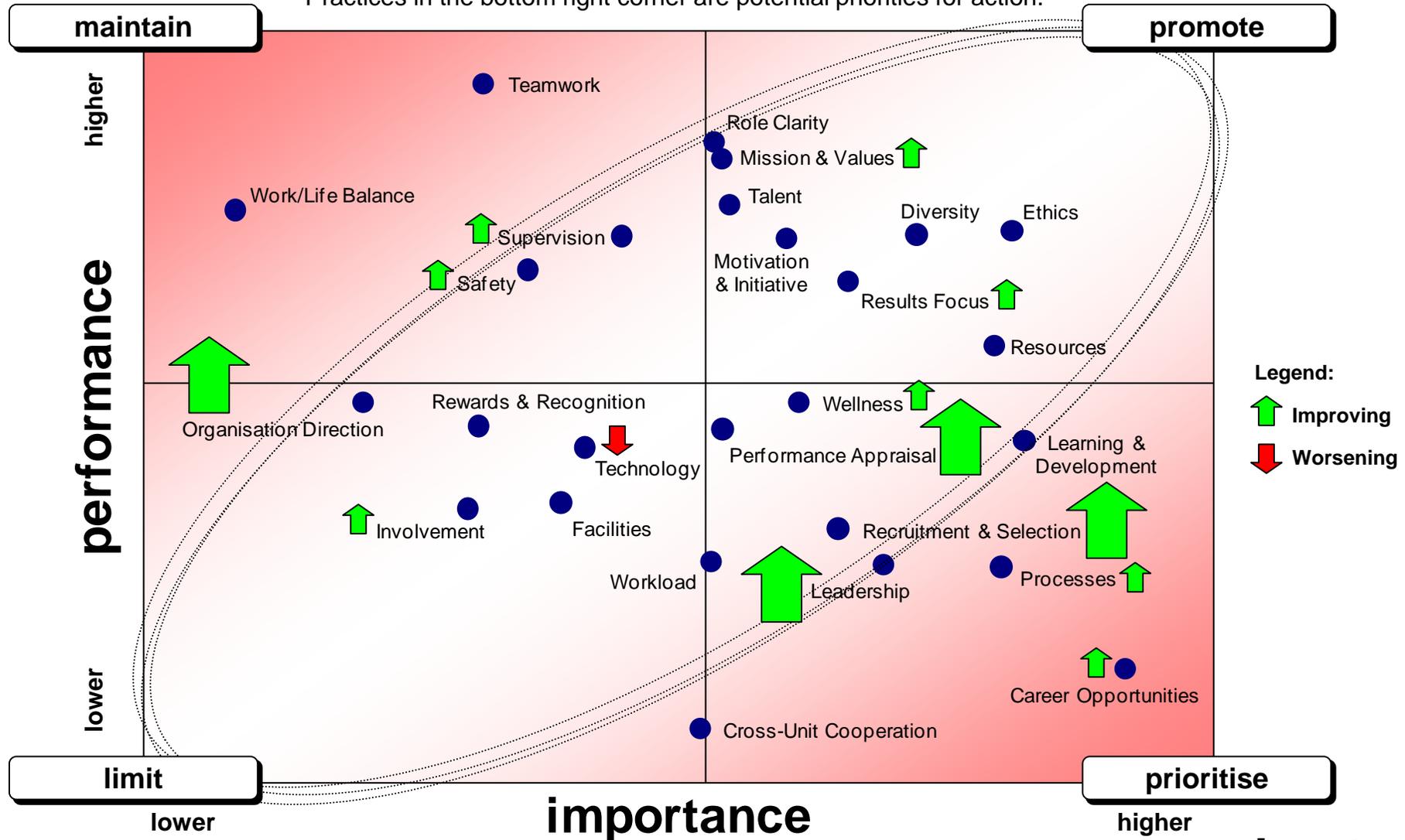
6th

5 **resources**
eg “I have access to the right equipment and
resources to do my job well”

2nd

gap analysis – general staff

Practices towards the right (higher “importance”) correlate more strongly with Passion and Progress. Ideally, practices should rest in the oval where there is a good match between performance and importance. Practices in the bottom right corner are potential priorities for action.



so what . . . action plan

- While there are some differences, there are clear similarities between what academics and general staff want
- “Career opportunities” is the single greatest driver of engagement, and the largest gap, for both groups of staff. Universities are improving career opportunities through:
 - More thorough performance appraisal
 - More conversations about career progression
- Senior leaders are improving their relationship with staff through improved competence, communication and visibility
- Processes and recruitment are being improved, in particular from the perspective of general staff



questions

- e: peter.langford@voiceproject.com.au
- m: +61 408 810 502 (direct)
- p: +61 2 8875 2800 (general office)
- w: www.voiceproject.com.au
- a: Lvl 2, 4 Research Park Drive
Macquarie University
NSW 2109 Australia

