building a high performance culture in higher education

Dr Peter Langford
Director, Voice Project
e: peter.langford@voiceproject.com
university relative strengths & weaknesses

DRIVERS
- purpose
  - organisation direction
  - results focus
  - mission & values
  - ethics
  - role clarity
  - diversity

- participation
  - leadership
  - recruitment
  - cross-unit cooperation
  - learning & development
  - involvement
  - reward & recognition
  - appraisal
  - supervision
  - career opportunities

- people
  - motivation & initiative
  - talent
  - teamwork

- passion/engagement
  - organisation commitment
  - job satisfaction
  - intention to stay

- property
  - resources
  - processes
  - technology
  - safety
  - facilities

- peace
  - wellness
  - work-life balance
  - flexibility

OUTCOMES
- progress
  - organisation objectives
  - change & innovation
  - customer satisfaction

what does a performance culture look like?

- We examined this question with data from 36 Australian & New Zealand universities that have completed engagement surveys with Voice Project since 2010

- Performance outcomes:
  - “Engagement” = Employee survey scores
  - “Teaching” = Employee survey scores for teaching priority, quality, evaluation and support
  - “Research” = 2011 research output per FTE employees
drivers of engagement

Example statements:

✓ This organisation is ethical
✓ I believe in the work done by this organisation
✓ There are clear policies and procedures for how work is to be done
✓ This organisation has a strong focus on achieving positive results
✓ This organisation is good at selecting the right people for the right jobs
drivers of teaching

Example statements:

- My manager gives me help and support
- Managers in this organisation are clear about the type of people we need to employ
- I have input into everyday decision-making in this organisation
- I feel in control and on top of things at work
- There is equal opportunity for all staff in this organisation
drivers of research

Example statements:

☑️ I am satisfied with the benefits I receive
☑️ We are given all necessary safety equipment and training
☑️ I have access to the right equipment and resources to do my job well
☑️ Discrimination is prevented and discouraged
☑️ I can change my working hours if I need to
gap analysis for composite performance
how much change is achievable?

- Take a long term view
- Plan big and quick wins
- Benchmark achievable change
- Manage expectations
- Floss! (need to regularly review and “polish” what’s working well)
is OD up to the task?

Yes!
- ✓ Increasing number of OD-minded VCs and senior execs
- ✓ More respect than in past years
- ✓ Dedicated staff and budgets

No!
- ✗ Continues to be an early casualty when there are financial problems
- ✗ Sometimes too nice and reasonable and not enough mongrel and political nous