

Fearless Leadership[®]

Creating conditions for organisational success through one executive team, aligned and fearless

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FEARLESS LEADERSHIP® UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

The courageous shift to engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us forward.





Leading in a challenging environment

The challenges facing leadership teams today are complex, broad-reaching and rapidly changing. In an interconnected world, where information can be communicated instantly via social media, decisions made in private can quickly become public. Competition comes from both predictable and unexpected places and often in ways we don't anticipate. In an environment that operates 24x7, there is little downtime and opportunity to recharge—it can feel like the world is spinning faster.

With this challenging and fast-changing environment, more is expected of leaders than ever before. COVID-19 provided a perfect example of that! **A global pandemic changed the way we work almost overnight. There was no 'playbook for leaders' for handy reference, either going into the pandemic or coming out of it and into a new world of work.** Connected and aligned leadership teams clear on purpose and able to communicate effectively have been able support each other as they learned together, brought their people through the challenges, and collaborated on a new way of arranging work.

Fearless Leadership provides a conscious choice to maximise opportunities to positively impact your team, your organisation and the world.

Fearless Leadership is accessing untapped potential. It's the courageous shift to engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us forward. **Fearless Leadership is the essential competitive edge.**

Are you ready for Fearless Leadership?



What's happening now in executive teams?

Through working with senior leadership teams, I have gained insights into what's commonly happening around the executive table.

Big delivery agenda and/or significant change is planned. There is a lot at stake: board, key stakeholders and markets are watching executive performance. Measurement is more precise, constant than ever before, with shifting community and regulatory expectations on transparency and accountability. Not many leaders complain that they are over-resourced. The market is tight, changes are rapid, and the environment is challenging; leaders have to be agile and do a great deal more with less, often under the spotlight.

Leaders are tired and need to develop a new model of working. After leading through the immense challenges of a global pandemic, many are deeply tired, having drawn on all their reserves of resilience during the first two years of COVID19. Office-based staff have become accustomed to flexible working, and many do not want to give this up. While it's clear that the new world of work is 'hybrid', it's not yet clear how to do this successfully, balancing the needs of customers and staff, while maintaining a focus on organisational culture.

Leaders are working in silos. The leadership team lacks a shared purpose and is not a cohesive team providing organisation-wide leadership. Divisional heads are independently strong, and their slice of the organisation may be performing, yet their individual achievements are not enough to secure the organisation's future. Silo structures and thinking – in many further entrenched by remote working – leads to tension around the executive table. Strong divisional allegiances, reinforced by ego, can result in competitive behaviour that team and organisational effectiveness.

Low trust within the leadership team. Building an aligned executive team is always a challenge in the detail of delivery. Teams frequently balance competing priorities with contrasting deliverables and drivers. In a low trust environment, different styles are interpreted as difficult or undermining, leading to misunderstanding and friction, further reducing trust and damaging the fabric of the team.

Lack of cabinet solidarity. When it comes to tackling issues or questioning decisions, your team feels insecure or unsafe. Defensiveness is their default. Healthy conflict is non-existent. Decisions and agreements are made with little real debate and are not supported outside the boardroom.

Inappropriate or incongruent behaviour goes unchallenged. Unethical behaviour, possibly driven by remuneration structures or incentive schemes is allowed to continue because dissenting voices are stifled, and the culture supports a 'win at all costs' mentality.

Leadership teams can lose sight of community values and stakeholder expectations. At best, this leads to a values conflict around the executive table, and at worst, can result in significant reputational damage, and even criminal charges.


Staff is watching and not liking what it sees. People across your organisation aren't listening to what's being said nor are they adopting the values posted on the walls. They are following the lead from the executive behaviour they experience, and it's not always pretty.

The focus is limiting and inward facing. With tension around the executive table and challenges experienced across the organisation, attention is focused on internal relationships and organisational processes. Social and industry trends outside the organisation are given little thought, so faint signals of opportunity and risk are easily missed. This puts a sustainable future in jeopardy.

Perhaps you encounter some of these within your own leadership team?

A client of mine (CEO of an Australian company expanding into the US market), was reflecting on the shifts in his existing markets as well as exciting new opportunities. He lamented, 'leaders are afraid to make the wrong decisions. Things are moving so quickly. Who's been to school to learn how to deal with situations like this? None of us have experienced or have been trained to deal with situations that are so new and complex.'

These challenges, competing demands and apparent contradictions can result in leaders questioning whether they have what it takes to thrive in the current environment. Can they build a Fearless Team? And a courageous organisation?



Leaders are afraid to make the wrong decisions. Things are moving so quickly. Who's been to school to learn how to deal with situations like this?



How was your experience in the first two months of COVID?

Many leaders have commented on how effective their leadership team was in the initial two months of COVID. People have said things to me like:

- ‘Old animosities were put aside while we all focused on what needed to happen’
- ‘We all pulled together’
- ‘People sacrificed individual goals to support the team’
- ‘Everyone was willing to try things out – even when we weren’t sure they would work’

They lament that the team doesn’t operate this way ‘normally’, but this doesn’t surprise me. In this crisis, the mandate was clear – ***Get people working from home as quickly and safely as possible, and work out how to keep essential business services running. Everything else can wait.***

Clear purpose. Clear priorities. Essential to work together. No space for egos or infighting.

The question is, how do we achieve that without a crisis?

The answer is Fearless Leadership.

Why it matters when Fearless Leadership[®] is missing

Why do some leadership teams create great dynamics enabling them to lead high performing organisations, while others appear dysfunctional, even though on paper both may appear to have the same potential?

‘Toxic corporate culture’ was 10.4 times more likely than compensation to contribute to attrition during ‘The Great Resignation’ between April and September 2021, according to research published in *MITSloan Management Review*⁵. It is the responsibility of the top team to create the culture and behavioural expectations for the whole organisation. A toxic culture is not Fearless Leadership!

The Fearless Leadership Ladder below highlights the correlation between leadership team development and organisational development. The quality of the leadership team, and the leaders’ willingness to step up individually and collectively in the team, impacts organisational culture, the ability to achieve organisational purpose, and a corresponding effort to achieve positive results.




Figure 1: Fearless Leadership Ladder © Corrinne Armour 2018



Oblivious

Oblivious leadership teams are blissfully unaware of their personal and team alignment with organisational purpose. They lead an unfocused organisation. While the organisation may have a level of success, this is more likely to have resulted from good luck and timing than from action taken by the executive. This success is unsustainable—don't expect to see this organisation operating for much longer.



While an organisation at **Oblivious** may have a level of success, this is more likely to have resulted from good luck and timing than from action taken by the executive.



Dysfunctional

Dysfunctional leadership teams have low morale, poor communication, little or no trust within the team or outside of it, and low clarity around organisational purpose. Organisational and team objectives are not a priority. Diversity in style leads to judgment and the occasional explosive conflict, and it is hard work getting anything done. Across the business—as well as within the leadership team—there is a sense of doing things just to survive.



Functioning

Functioning leadership teams have some idea of their purpose, and yet despite their effort, objectives are missed. Diversity is tolerated but not leveraged, so the benefits of inclusion are not realised. Conflict may be avoided by suppressing disagreement, resulting in either groupthink or decisions made in an executive meeting and then unsupported when everyone leaves the room. There may be excessive reliance on the leader or lack of leadership altogether. It takes significant effort to make any real impact with a culture of patchy engagement, at best.



Performing

Performing leadership teams believe they can go places. Team purpose is understood, and goals are clear and shared. Conflict is surfaced—and may even be messy—and the team learns from this. Within the team and across the business, people are engaged and wanting to contribute, so it's easier to get things done.

Within every team journey there is a tipping point, where the impact of the leadership team is magnified with no more effort—think domino effect. This is where the team magic begins to materialise. The executive team is working well and is bringing out the best in people across the organisation. Effort, which in lower levels is expended in less than optimal relationships and protocols, is now directly applied into achieving the organisational purpose.



Successful

Successful leadership teams fulfill their potential. There is heightened trust, clear and agreed goals, and shared understanding. Individual self-awareness and collective team-awareness is high, with diversity valued and leveraged. The leader leads with confidence, and follows equally well when it suits team and organisational objectives. Rigorous debate leads to impactful decision making. There is a strong alignment between individual, team and organisational purpose. Regularly scanning the external horizons influences the constant refinement of that purpose. Making progress towards that purpose generates energy. People across the organisation are inspired to bring their best game to work, meaning that everyone can make an impact.


To be successful is the aspiration of most teams, and yet I know there is another level of team development above successful—Fearless.



Fearless

Fearless Leadership teams optimise performance by operating in a flow state to achieve amazing results with what appears to be minimal effort. Productive conflict is the team's source of creativity. It is able to leverage thinking diversity and access the collective wisdom of the group. Communication is open and collaborative, and people are playing to their strengths. Organisational priorities are clear; they are informed by a strong understanding of current and future shifts in the external environment and focus that drives the whole organisation forward. Power structures are dynamic and based on what is needed in the situation. Activity generates energy, so people leave on Friday night just as energised as they were on Monday morning, and there is a culture of courage across the business.

When I work with leadership teams, I am often surprised by their honesty in assessing the current level of their team, and this leads to a valuable discussion. Enabling a frank conversation about where the team is at now, and the evidence for that, allows a shared understanding to develop. This discussion also surfaces inherent strengths within the team, as well as opportunities for improvement.



Where is your team on
the Fearless Leadership
Ladder?

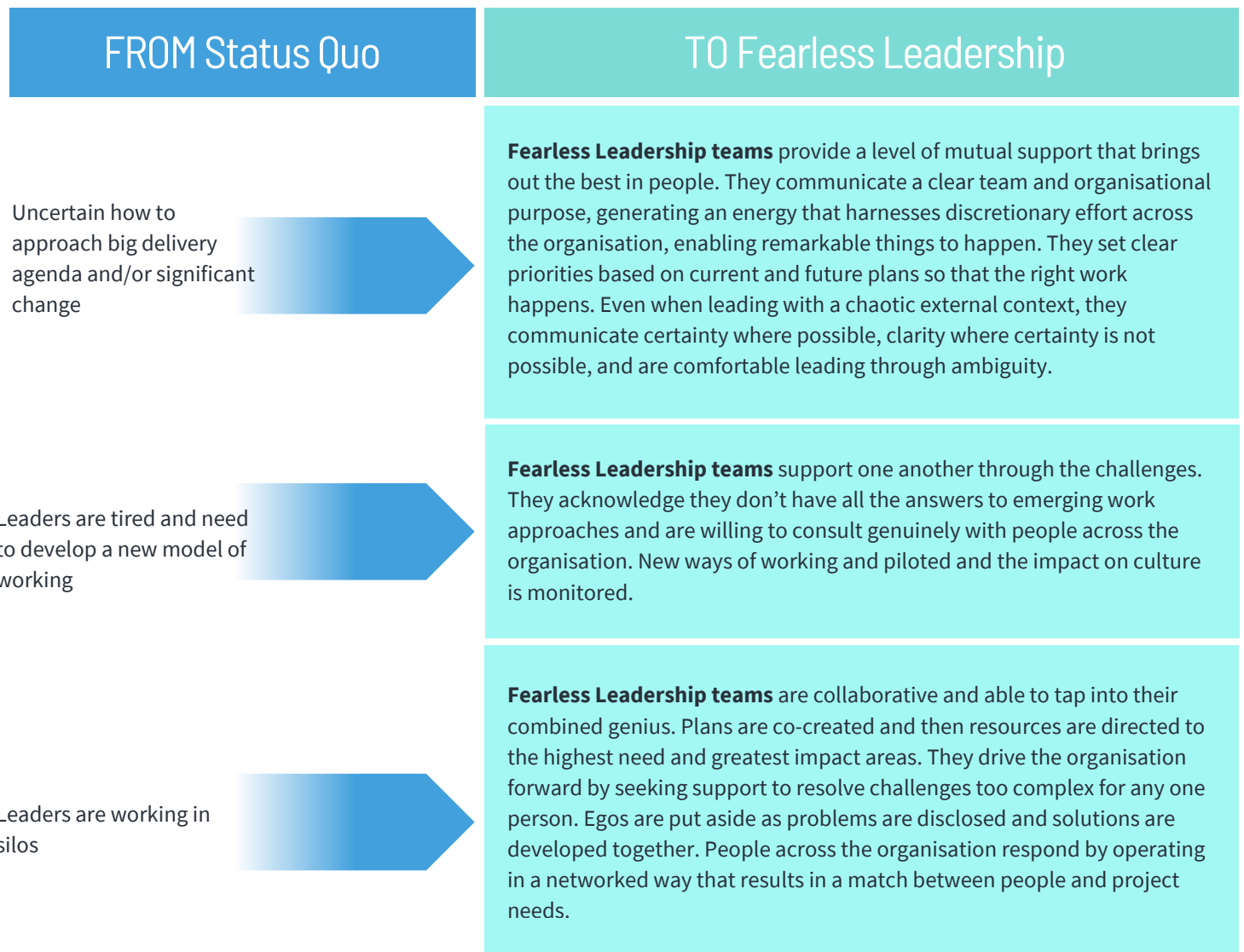
What causes you to
think that?

Leading a courageous culture: Why Fearless Leadership[®] is the vital ingredient

Fearless Leadership is not an absence of fear—that would be dangerous. (In fact the only time you will ever feel a complete lack of fear is when you are dead, or dead drunk! Neither are useful states for leadership.)

Fearless Leadership is drawing on courage to push through despite the fear, using the fear as data, and fearing less. This courage to step up begins with the leadership team. The rest of the organisation wants inspiration from their leadership. They want to work with and for leaders who have a sense of purpose, and can guide them to make an impact in the world.

One way to understand the impact of Fearless Leadership is to consider the challenges we discussed above.



Low trust within the leadership team



Fearless Leadership teams that appreciate and trust one another can leverage thinking diversity and are well placed to compete. Inclusive organisations are twice as likely to meet or exceed their financial targets and eight times more likely to have better business outcomes overall (Bersin by Deloitte, 2017). The trusting leadership team environment creates safety and leads to healthy risk taking and innovative thinking, not just in this team, but across the organisation.

Lack of cabinet solidarity



Fearless Leadership teams have robust and constructive conversations in the boardroom solidarity outside of it. Conflict fosters creativity, innovation and growth. Their willingness and ability to give and receive constructive feedback produces better decisions and builds rather than bruises relationships.

Inappropriate behaviour goes unchallenged



Fearless Leadership teams know that culture is the sum of every little thing we do each day. Team values and expected behaviours are agreed and leaders hold themselves and each other accountable. Structures that do not support Fearless Leadership are removed. Through open discussions of ethical issues and community standards, the team ensures that decisions made are for the organisation’s long-term commercial future, as well as securing the firm’s social license to operate.

Staff are watching and not liking what they see



Fearless Leadership teams model the values and behaviours of the organisation to set a standard to which others aspire. Staff take its cue from how your executive team behaves—in a positive way. They are energised to come to work each day and contribute their best. A culture of growth results as people want to increase their performance and support others to do the same.

The focus is limiting and inward facing



Fearless Leadership teams are externally aware. While they provide strong leadership within organisations, they are also tuned in to the external context and keep abreast of strategic opportunities and threats. They invest time and energy into understanding the shifts going on around them and identifying opportunities to secure the organisation’s future.

As we leave behind the status quo, we build a Fearless Leadership team that leads a courageous organisation to achieve its purpose.

Fearless Leadership teams model the values and behaviours of the organisation, setting a standard to which others aspire.

Creating Fearless Leadership®

Fearless Leadership is the courageous shift to engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us forward. Fearless Leadership is created at the intersection of purpose, motivation and communication and in nurturing an environment of trust.

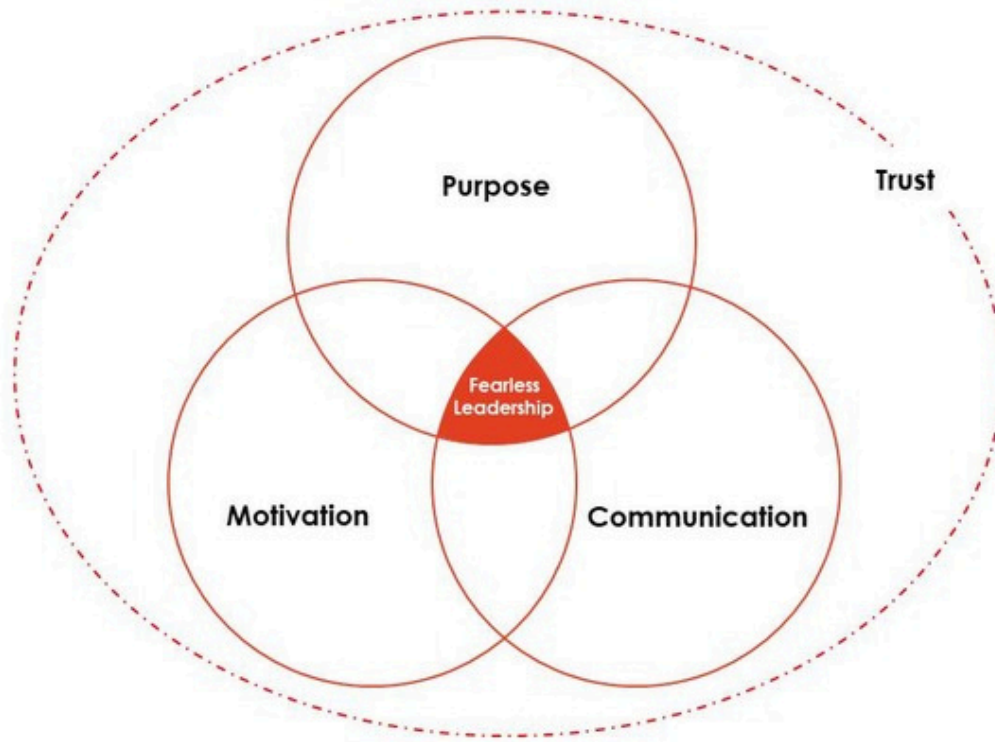


Figure 2: Fearless Leadership © Corrinne Armour 2015

We think of trust as precious, and yet it's the basis for almost everything we do as civilized people... Trust is also one of the most essential forms of capital a leader has.

Frances X. Frei and Anne Morriss

Trust

Trust is like oxygen. You don't notice it's there, but when it leaves the team, it's in trouble.

If you have concerns about trust in your leadership team you are not alone. 63% of Australian CEOs think that a lack of trust is a threat to their organisation's growth, according to a PWC 2020 study⁶.

Trust is central to powerful teams. It enables leaders to be vulnerable and open, and lead from whom they truly are. Trust provides the safety net in a culture that allows people to be creative, innovative and take risks. Building trust must come first because trust is essential for any team to be Fearless.

The Oxford Dictionary defines trust as 'firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something'. While this is a reasonable intellectual definition, it falls short as it fails to capture that inherent sense when we feel trust in someone or something. Trust is more than just reliability, truth and ability. Connectedness and common purpose or beliefs are essential factors of trust in a Fearless team.

Workplace trust provides a competitive advantage – and greater enjoyment and satisfaction within and outside the workplace. Compared with people at low-trust companies, people at high-trust companies report⁷:

- 74% less stress,
- 106% more energy at work,

- 50% higher productivity,
- 13% fewer sick days,
- 76% more engagement,
- 29% more satisfaction with their lives, and
- 40% less burnout.

Trust also fosters organisational resilience. Australian research commissioned by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department (Dr Robert Kay, 2012) considered the organisational resilience and found that CEOs believed trust is vital in fostering an organisation's resilience. Trust was considered three times as important as the next cultural characteristic of 'staff committed and engaged'. Given the evidence now emerging from neuroscience, this is not surprising.

In short, trust matters.

Every year since 2001, global PR company Edelman has undertaken an extensive global survey on trust across four key domains: Media, Business, Not-for-Profit and Government.

The 2022 'Edelman Trust Barometer'⁸ found declines in trust across all four key Australian institutions, eroding the record-high levels of public trust recorded in 2021 when our institutions were seen to be providing effective leadership through COVID-19. 58% of Australians surveyed trust business to do what is right – down from a high of 63% in 2021 (2020 – 52%).

There is a real opportunity right now for corporate leaders, with 74% of Australian employees having trust in their own employer compared to 58% who trust business in general. Employers are also the most believable source of information for people, with 70% saying they will believe communications from their own company. Edelman found that providing "quality information" was 'the number one most powerful trust builder'.



In Australia, our community's desire to trust extends beyond our own employer, with a strong expectation that will take a stand on issues that align with their values and beliefs. 56% of people will buy or advocate for brands based on their belief and values and 57% will choose a place to work based on their beliefs and values. Eight in ten Australians believe CEOs should be visible discussing policy with external stakeholders or company has done to benefit society. What more could your executive team do to build trust with broader stakeholders and the community?

Trust impacts a company's bottom line. AMP in Australia is one example where damage to trust translated directly into significant loss of market capitalisation (\$5.47 in early March 2018 to \$3.60 in mid-July 2018) after admissions to the Banking Royal Commission.

A Citigroup and LinkedIn survey⁹ found that nearly half of employees would give up a 20% raise for greater control over how they work. A pay rise wasn't necessary. All we needed was a global pandemic and we have been forced into trusting our people and giving discretion over their own work.

Ask people what they have enjoyed about working through COVID, and most will talk about greater autonomy – the ability to make their own decisions and influence their own environment. This is inherently rewarding to the brain. That’s why everyone hates working for a micromanager and is just one reason why creating a trusting environment generates better business and personal outcomes.

What about the brain?



Recent advances in neuroscience provide insights into the biology of trust and how, as leaders, we can respond.

- 1) The brain perceives a threat five times faster than a reward. So when tensions are heightened around the boardroom table, it’s not surprising that people imagine the worst. A threat response reduces the capacity for insight and solution focus—not a state you want for your leadership team.
- 2) Different areas of the brain are involved when we engage with friends and foes. When you perceive your colleagues as competitors or enemies (and, therefore, invoke a threat response—no matter how mild), you may be reducing your access to creative thought and limiting the capacity of the team.
- 3) Trust releases oxytocin that calms the amygdala. The amygdala is responsible for your fight-flight-freeze response. You may have heard the term ‘amygdala hijack’ that describes an immediate and overwhelming emotional response that is out of proportion to the actual stimulus. The hormone oxytocin has been associated with decreased amygdala activation and is stimulated by trust. In times of change or uncertainty, the greater the trust in the team, the faster the threat response can be reduced and the more quickly the team can move on.

Developing and maintaining trust is
critical in becoming a Fearless
Leadership team.
How’s your team doing on trust?



CASE STUDY: Executive team learns to trust

The board at a utilities company appointed a new CEO to modernise the business. A few months into the role, the new CEO had little faith that the executive team could, in its current configuration, lead the organisation successfully into the future. The CEO's diagnosis of the team being dysfunctional was largely based on its inability to trust one another:

- **Confidence:** The CEO had little confidence that the team had her back, and this resulted in her feeling a greater need to be involved in things she would normally have left to individual executives. It also generated a constant level of wariness and low-grade stress.
- **Toxic relationships:** One executive was openly hostile towards his peers, resulting in two others playing peacemaking roles, and another actively retreating. This impacted the level of debate that was possible. While these incongruent behaviours went unchallenged, other supportive behaviours were withdrawn and open debate stifled as energy was challenged into survival.
- **Poor decision making:** Executive team conversations were either short and focused with no opportunity for debate and decisions were made through false consensus, or they were long and complicated, taking multiple tangents, and making no decisions. This dynamic was replicated through all levels of management as staff throughout the organisation watched and followed the example set by the executives.
- **Blame:** A culture of blame, which began around the executive table, negatively impacted people's ability to be innovative and their readiness to take positive risks. Responding to shifting community expectations, the broader sector was moving to customer-focused systems, and language and pricing packages, while this company remained internally focused on traditional technical outcomes.
- **Lack of psychological safety:** With a lack of trust displayed in so many ways, this was not a safe place to work, reducing discretionary effort and engagement through the company, and leading to low accountability.

A lack of trust, at an executive level, was having significant impact on the current business. It was also generating a threat to the company's future viability.

Our work progressively developed trust within the team. We did this both through an overt focus on trust and indirectly through focus on purpose, motivation and communication. After 6 months, the Engagement Survey indicated a 17% increase in 'regard for senior leadership', providing additional external validation for the sense of alignment experienced from within the team.

Now, within the leadership team, there is an ability and a desire to debate the tough stuff—about people and issues. While this can be uncomfortable, the team chooses to stay with the debate until a decision is made and everyone feels heard. The stronger communication channels have allowed for a strategic planning process in which the executives challenge one another and are able to generate a robust plan because thought is focused on extending ideas and not on defence.

Operating as a Fearless team, energy is being channelled into modernisation and fulfilling the organisational mission and not into self-defence. Three tiers of management are now in alignment. An Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI) measured a statistically significant cultural shift across the organisation over two years, with the desired constructive culture being evidenced at all levels. The organisation feels like a different place to work, and the results show that.

**Name changed to protect the privacy of the individuals and the company.*

What energy is wasted in your team through low trust?

Great leaders motivate and inspire people with why they're doing it. That's purpose. And that's the key to achieving something truly transformational.

Marillyn Hewson

Purpose

People want to be part of something bigger than themselves but don't often see this is possible at work. A well-defined shared purpose is a necessary foundation for Fearless Leadership, underpinning vision and enabling results. When executives are all pulling in different directions, the waves are felt throughout the organisation. Conversely, with a shared objective everyone is pulling in the same direction for the same reason, and anything is possible.

As Simon Sinek says in his powerful TED talk, 'People don't care what you do, they care why you do it.' (Sinek, 2009) In other words, get clear on purpose.

When the three levels of purpose are aligned—individual, team and organisational purpose—within each person and the team—unstoppable momentum is created and almost anything is possible.

In my experience, while the organisational purpose is usually clear and people may know their own personal purpose, the leadership team purpose typically has the least clarity and requires the most work. Paradoxically, leadership team members often think they share a team purpose and are surprised when through a short team discussion we uncover a significant lack of alignment on team purpose. This is such a lost opportunity and not hard to address.

At one end of the spectrum, executives see themselves as a group of divisional heads lobbying for the best outcome for their part of the organisation. At the other end, the leadership team is making decisions that support the whole business and enables everyone to contribute to achieving the organisational purpose.

Divisional heads lobbying for their patch

Leadership team making decisions for the whole business towards the organisational purpose

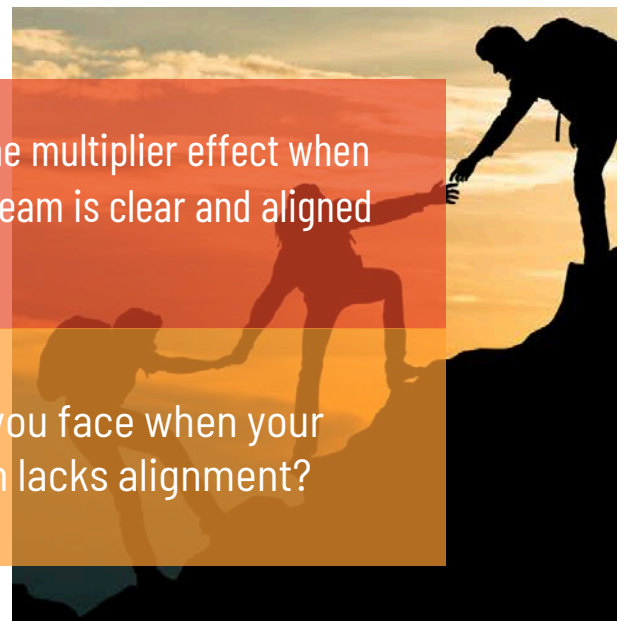
Figure 3: Executive team sense of purpose

Too often, leadership teams operate too far to the left. Developing a shared sense of team purpose is an important first step to developing Fearless Leadership.

It's also at the executive leadership team level where apparently competing demands are reconciled in line with organisational purpose. For example, balancing rapid growth with sustainable development or balancing commercial imperatives with societal licence to operate. Findings from the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry illustrated this tension playing out.

What would be the multiplier effect when your leadership team is clear and aligned on purpose?

What risks do you face when your executive team lacks alignment?



CASE STUDY: Purpose moves a mountain

The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme in NSW is one of the seven civil engineering marvels of the world. Commenced in 1949 and built over 25 years, it covers 5,124 km (Wallance, 2013) and includes:

- 7 power stations
- 16 dams
- a pumping station
- 225 km of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts.

Impressive right? More amazingly, the scheme was built within heavily wooded mountainous country that was mostly unsurveyed until then. 98% of the entire construction was built underground and within solid granite foundations.

More than 100,000 people from over thirty countries worked on the Snowy Scheme (McHugh, 1995). 70% of workers were migrants who came to Australia after the Second World War, so English classes were held at night. It wasn't unusual to receive instructions in sign language; nor was it unusual for former foes to work side-by-side to build a new life for themselves in the Australian Alps.

Leadership underpinned by a strong vision and purpose brings people together, focuses energy, grounds action, and unites adversaries that enable many people to work under hard conditions to achieve a great outcome.

The bold vision for the scheme was to divert water from the Snowy Mountains to provide irrigation, household water, and a capacity to generate electricity for communities in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It was a purpose that captured the imagination of all those who worked on the project, as well as the Australian public.

What's your purpose? Could you sign up 100,000 people to work on your vision?



We can learn to see each other and see ourselves in each other and recognize that human beings are more alike than we are unlike.



Maya Angelou

Motivation

Talented individuals don't automatically form a talented team. Working closely with others can be frustrating, and sadly sometimes the more you try, the more misunderstanding you create.

Knowing what truly motivates your peers assists understanding, increases connection and leverages diversity.

Our motivational profile is a powerful force in the way we filter and translate experiences; this influences how we show up at work.

Motivational patterns are the building blocks of a motivational profile. These motivational patterns are the unconscious sorting filters in our mind that determine what we pay attention to in our environment; what makes it from our unconscious into our conscious experience. This sorting function happens outside our conscious awareness and drives how we think, feel and act, and is central to communication and leadership style, and the quality of relationships.

You can think of a motivational profile as the strings that control the puppet. While we see the behaviour—what the puppet actually does—we know it's the strings that direct the activity.

Accessing this Motivational Map provides the necessary clues to self- and team-awareness, allowing you to customise your leadership and communication style.

In an environment of low trust, or when people lack awareness, differences in style can be judged as difficult or undermining, causing people to become more entrenched in their position. With an understanding of motivation, 'difference = wrong' shifts to 'difference = difference' and then to 'difference = diversity we can leverage'. This allows everyone in the team to play to their strengths.

Understanding motivation provides the enabler to leverage diversity, leading to true inclusion across the executive team. An article in the The Deloitte Review (2018)¹⁰ highlights that inclusive organisations have better business outcomes, including:

6x more likely to meet or exceed financial targets

6x more likely to be agile, able to anticipate change and respond effectively

3x more likely to be high performing.

The Bible tells us 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. Fearless teams make an important distinction on motivation to get the best results from their peers, instead following the approach, 'Do unto others as they would be done unto'.

How well do you understand what motivates each of your peers, and how to engage each of them effectively through those motivators?

What could be possible with access to the motivational map?
What is at risk without this level of understanding and ability to include everyone on the team?



CASE STUDY: The Motivational Map enables growth

The executive team of an engineering firm knew that revenue growth would not occur without leadership growth. A key barrier to leadership success was the team members' inability to understand one another and to utilise thinking diversity on the team. Succession of the Managing Director, within a complex ownership structure, was a major challenge in growing the company and needed to be addressed. Two internal candidates were competing and neither were ready to take over the firm's leadership, so poor handling of this situation was a major risk. The inability to have strong conversations around strategic direction, and to consider all perspectives, was a limiting capability.

Motivational profiling, and individual and team debriefs, provided immediate and actionable insights, in particular:

- the extent to which individual executives were conceptual or structural in their thinking preferences, understanding of which helped them as a team to interrogate issues
- the way in which they each preferred to receive (seeing, hearing, reading and doing) and process information in order to make a confident decision. Knowing this shifted each of them from presenting information in a way that works for them to a style that worked for their peers, increasing shared understanding on key issues, reducing conflict, and speeding up the decision-making process
- the extent to which they were motivated to work individually or as a team, and the impact this had on collaborative decision making, as well as their interactions with key clients
- whether each person was more influenced by the goal (what we want) or the risks that need to be avoided, moving them from seeing one another as 'Pollyanna with the rose glasses' at one extreme, to 'negative and obstructive' at the other. Instead, they were able to appreciate and draw on each other's perspectives.

This deep understanding of one another's motivation profile, and the knowledge of the evolving team Motivational Map, provided the platform for team and business growth. Subsequent leadership team development over the next two years built on their individual and team awareness and supported each executive to understand the styles of others while building their own behavioural flexibility.

The team stepped up the rigour of discussions and decision-making, and this translated into a strong leadership team having robust discussions before making decisions endorsed by all.

They successfully transitioned the MD role to one of the two internal candidates. With the support of the rest of the executive team, the new MD grew into the role and built support across the organisation and the client base, averting a significant risk.

The company has grown; it has made a significant strategic shift from engineering projects to a solutions provider, and has undertaken a major rebranding initiative. This has provided the foundation for significant growth and acquisition in Asia.

Six years on, the MD and the CFO talk about the significant part our work—and understanding the Motivational Map—played in the development of the firm. 'We were aware of the actions needed for strategic change. Corrinne facilitated the start phase for the realisation of those actions. She helped set us up for the success we have since experienced.'

If you don't learn to communicate well, you don't get to do anything that's fun.

”

Peter Drucker

Communication

Economic times are uncertain. For a team to make sense of all the information available, to understand indicators, and to draw on the talents of the whole executive team, open, intelligent and Fearless discussions are the price of entry.

The environment in which we operate is increasingly complex and fast paced. To match this, organisations are increasing in complexity.

‘Complicatedness’ increased by an average of 6.7% a year over the past 50 years (Morieux, 2011). In 1955, CEOs committed to 4–7 performance indicators, whereas in 2011, this number was six times that (at 25 to 40 KPIs).

To stay across this level of complexity, good open communication is necessary. In an environment where the consequences of not making decisions are greater than the consequences for making the wrong decisions, we need everyone to work together. As Charles Darwin said long ago, ‘It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.’ Fearless Leadership teams hear and debate all points of view, and then make and enact courageous decisions, with full and ongoing commitment to implementation. Cabinet solidarity is more than a phrase borrowed from politics and bandied around.

Within the team, relationships are built one conversation at a time. As Susan Scott says in *Fierce Conversations* (Scott, 2002), ‘While no single conversation is guaranteed to transform a company, a relationship or a life, any single conversation can. Speak and listen as if this is the most important conversation you will ever have with this person. It could be. Participate as if it matters. It does.’

High-performing leadership teams engage in creative conflict; they have the tough conversations that need to be had. Disagreements are surfaced and addressed in ways that build relationships rather than bruise them.

An MIT study (Pentland, 2012) has shown that 50% of the difference between low-performing and high-performing teams is the quality of conversations. Fearless teams have the knowledge of communication, skills, frameworks and agreements to communicate openly and powerfully.

CASE STUDY: Amazon leadership team ‘disagree and commit’

One communication protocol in place at Amazon, and embraced by some of my clients, is to disagree and commit. When executives are unable to reach an agreement after much discussion, they ask, ‘I know we disagree on this but will you gamble with me on it? Can you disagree and commit?’

How powerful is that?

Jeff Bezos, Amazon CEO says that this phrase takes time off the decision-making process, and provides a way forward (Amazon aims for ‘high velocity decision making’) when consensus hasn’t been achieved (Amazon, 2017).

This approach means:

- open discussions expressing difference of opinions with the intention of reaching an agreement
- genuine listening
- everyone on the team having the right and responsibility to ‘disagree and commit’—including the CEO
- ending in sincere support for the decision made—disagreed and THEN committed.

How about trying ‘disagree and commit’ in your leadership team?

CASE STUDY: Fearless Leadership strengthens communication channels

A regional health network had excellent systems and governance frameworks and provided great patient care. A new CEO brought in a stronger people focus, with her overt focus on organisational values and behaviours well received across the organisation.

Fulfilling an ambitious strategic plan to move from being a ‘hospital’ to a ‘health service’ would be underpinned by:

- Strengthening the culture by empowering leaders to build engagement and accountability, hold fearless conversations, and ensure each leader and manager is fulfilling their role.
- Developing the capacity of senior leaders and the leadership team to extend their focus, communicate outwards into the community and think and operate strategically.

The Fearless Leadership program (an initial 12 months and then 2 years of lighter touch ‘maintenance program’) included people leaders at CEO, executive, and manager levels. The Board also undertook a half-day Fearless Leadership workshop at the end of the first year, both to support board development, and to help directors understand the journey the leaders had been on. Communication was a major focus.

The leadership group moved from ‘just people with titles’ to being a leadership team, evident through high levels of team collaboration and unity, clarity of purpose, and the ability to say ‘no’. People learned about themselves and others, while using common language connected leaders to shared goals, building a strong sense of collaboration and togetherness. Hospitals are traditionally hierarchical, and Fearless Leadership helped to break down these barriers and build strong relationships between leaders, as well as between leaders and their people. Positive changes have flowed down to operational teams, with one example being a significant shift in initiative and ‘can do’ attitude seen in a support team that in the past had just done the minimum.

One valuable and tangible communication outcome was been creation of the daily ‘Toolbox’, opening up communication across the organisation in ways that didn’t exist previously. This (initially) daily meeting focused on problem-solving and keeping Fearless Leadership alive, creating a platform for people to be heard and support one another.

Open communication and collective problem solving across departments allowed blockages to be shifted quickly and supported the organisation through COVID-19.

At the executive level there is competence and confidence to have conversations that in the past were pushed underground, both at executive level and with the board. There is a strong sense of mutual support, and the team has moved from constant reaction, to making time for reflection and ongoing learning.

What is the biggest blocker to open communication in your leadership team? What would it take to shift that?

The finer distinctions of Fearless Leadership®

A deeper level of understanding of Fearless Leadership comes from exploring further distinctions of the Fearless Leadership model.

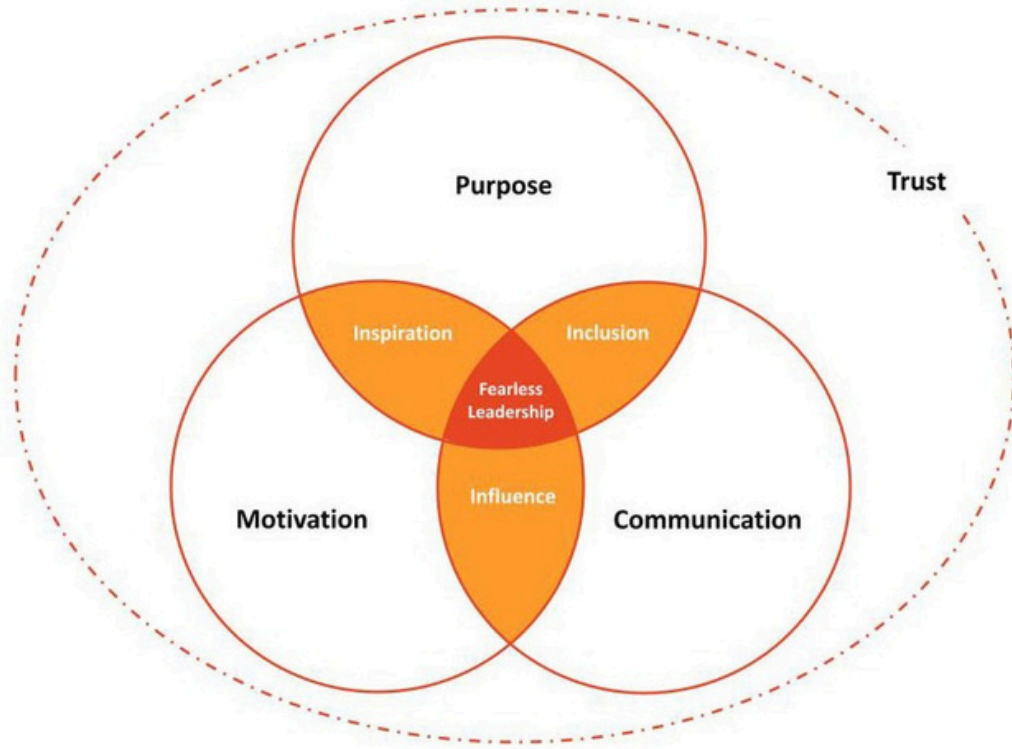


Figure 4: Fearless Leadership Distinctions © Corrinne Armour 2015

Inspiration: Inspiration is the reason we do what we do. Inspiration results when the team shares a common purpose and is working with what motivates team members both individually and collectively. Inspiration is contagious, and a Fearless Leadership team provides inspiration across the whole organisation, contributing to the development of a courageous culture.

Influence: Influence gets the right things done effectively with the right people involved and engaged. A team without influence is a wasted opportunity. When you know what motivates people and how to communicate effectively, influence is a natural consequence.

Inclusion: Humans are social creatures and work is a social setting. Being together in social groups has kept us alive for thousands of years, and so exclusion triggers threat states in the brain, while inclusion stimulates a reward response. Social psychologist Heidi Grant warns that ‘if you aren’t actively including, you are probably accidentally excluding’¹¹. Fearless Leadership teams leverage the professional expertise and collective genius of everyone through inclusion.

Inspiration, inclusion and influence create the magic experienced within a dynamic, energised, collaborative and effective leadership team that leads a courageous organisation to achieve organisational objectives. This magic is also evident to others outside the team—staff, customers and stakeholders. A magic comes from fostering purpose, motivation, communication and trust.


This magic is Fearless Leadership.

The Fearless Leadership[®] opportunity

What would be possible for your organisation when your leadership team embraces Fearless Leadership?

What could each person across the organisation achieve when they are inspired, included and able to influence? Is it time to challenge the status quo?


Committed leaders build Fearless Leadership teams by investing time, energy and focus into their people, and the outcomes are game changing.



Organisational success flows from a leadership team that connects deeply, leads fearlessly and delivers transformational results.


Are you ready?

What do our clients say?




Fearless Leadership has had an exponential impact on our business. Corrinne's methodology brings out the right conversations and holds us there while we work through issues. With a combination of this program with the exec team, strategy work driven internally, and a focus on accountability, we hoped we would make a movement into a <OCI – Human Synergistics Organisational Cultural Inventory> blue constructive culture, and shift one layer of leadership. We have actually delivered on three layers of leadership, positively impacting culture across the whole organisation.

Sarah Cumming
Managing Director Gippsland Water




The executive team were tired and coming off the back of a major restructure. They were working in isolation, busy in the day-to-day and had lost sight of the important leadership role they play in the organisation. Corrinne's work with the team couldn't have come at a better time. The discussion was challenging and uncomfortable leaving us all vulnerable, but ultimately it was the start of a journey to build our trust in one another.

CEO, Local Government




Corrinne didn't just bring a formula that was laid over our business - she took the time to understand our business, us, our context, and what we wanted to achieve.

Damien Afxentis
Project Director - Metropolitan Projects Western, VicRoads



We went into this as a dysfunctional team. Corrinne provided an energy and process that has enabled barriers to be broken down and opened the gateway for the leadership team to be more sharing and trusting with each other. We now look past perceptions to interpret behaviour as it is intended. Corrinne has a unique way of working. During one session around feedback, rare nerves were uncovered and light bulbs went off. Despite discomfort, people were able to give genuine feedback and also to receive it in the spirit it was offered. We are encouraged to build a strong team.

Executive Director of Nursing, Health Organisation




This program has helped us to mature – in our individual leadership and as an executive team. We are prepared to have challenging conversations in respectful way. We now have less silos and greater collaboration, making better use of resources across the organisation. We have brought these insights into working with senior leaders across the business. You would be surprised about how far you can come... It's not until you go through this program that you realise what you could gain and have gained.

Damien Walsh
Managing Director Bank Australia




Corrinne has been a great asset to the growth of our organisation. Prior to meeting Corrinne, we had a successful business and leadership team who focused on leading their own division within the company. Now we have a leadership team who are committed to working together to lead the entire organisation fearlessly. For the first time our company leaders are aligned as one on a mission to take the business to new heights. I would highly recommend Corrinne if you're wondering how to take your company to the next level.

Mark Ipaviz
National Sales Manager, Ozdare / Eleven Australia



Corrinne reads people very quickly and is able to bring them into the conversation because she understands them. She gauges group dynamics and creates an environment that brings out the best in people.

Natalie Ruuska
General Manager – Dulux



We have been able to handle COVID-19 as well as we have, and achieve amazing culture scores, because of the level of trust and connection we have built in the executive team. Corrinne and Fearless Leadership have been instrumental in helping us get there.

Michael Crane
General Manager People & Culture, Gippsland Water

Profile - Corrinne Armour

Fearless Leadership - Untapped potential. The courageous shift to engage in essential conversations that build trust and move us forward.

Corrinne is Australia's leading thinker in Fearless Leadership. Through 10 years in corporate leadership roles, 2½ years living and teaching in the jungle on the edge of a warzone, and almost 15 years in and out of board rooms working with senior leaders, she's gained much to share about leadership.

A well-recognised instigator of change and growth, she empowers leaders to realise the potential in their careers, teams and organisations. Corrinne draws on experience in the corporate world heading large teams and projects with budgets in excess of \$80 million. She knows, firsthand, the practicalities of juggling multiple priorities and perspectives.

Additional to a science degree and postgraduate business qualifications are her impressive accomplishments as a registered Project Manager with the Australian Institute of Project Management and a certified Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioner. In 2022, inspired by a 2019 program onsite at Harvard University, Corrinne completed Case In Point accreditation, a facilitation approach developed at Harvard.

Living and working in a jungle refugee camp gave Corrinne powerful insights into Fearless Leadership and an active passion to enable others to fulfill their potential. Married to an ex-freedom fighter and mother of two daughters, she appreciates the importance of balance in a team.

Corrinne is a dynamic speaker and influencer, with a natural ability to inspire.

Empathic, honest and results-focused, Corrinne helps you leverage your team's diversity and collective brilliance to establish a leading edge that carves out your organisation from its competitors. Her Fearless Leadership framework is innovative and trusted, informed by positive psychology and underpinned by Neuroscience.

Renowned names attest to the success of her approach including Royal Children's Hospital, Bank Australia, DEWLP, Worksafe, NAB, Alfred Health, Moyne Health Service, Gippsland Water, Dulux Group, Pitcher Partners, Griffith and Monash Universities, numerous local councils and may others.

Author of **Leaders Who Ask: Building Fearless Cultures by telling less and asking more**. Co-author of **Developing Direct Reports: Taking the Guesswork Out of Leading Leaders** and two specialist texts in human behaviour used by coaches and consultants worldwide.



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