

ODI High Performance Work Initiative Programme 2015/16

Case Report – Cawthron Institute Climate and Culture

Organisation Background

Cawthron Institute (Cawthron) is New Zealand's largest independently owned science organisation. Owned by a charitable trust, the Institute was founded in 1919 by the last will and testament of Nelson philanthropist Thomas Cawthron. A visionary, Thomas Cawthron believed that science could contribute to the growth of a young New Zealand. Following his death in 1915, he bequeathed the equivalent of \$127 million in today's New Zealand dollars – to establish and maintain a technical school, institute and museum, the forerunners of today's Cawthron Institute.

Almost 100 years on, Cawthron Institute delivers world class science that builds a better future for New Zealand. Employing nearly 200 scientists, laboratory technicians, researchers and specialist staff from over 20 different countries globally, Cawthron offers a unique mix of expertise and services to help build and sustain environmentally and economically resilient communities, businesses and industries. Cawthron scientists have unique expertise in aquaculture research, marine and fresh water resource management, food safety and quality, algal technologies, biosecurity and analytical testing.

Based in Nelson, Cawthron operates in a diverse multi-stakeholder environment, working with councils, governments, major industries, private companies and other research organisations throughout New Zealand and the world. Approximately 60% of Cawthron's revenue is derived from the private sector with the remaining 40% sourced from government scientific consultancy work.

As Cawthron Institute continues to explore and challenge the boundaries of new science, and make ground breaking discoveries that support the sustainable advancement of key industries for New Zealand's prosperity, creating and enabling an organisational culture of innovation is critical. As such, fostering a culture of innovation has been identified as a key strategic priority identified in Cawthron's strategic plan and is the focus of this consultancy as part of ODI's High Performance Work Initiative programme (ODI HPWI).

Consultancy Goal

Following the diagnostics phase of the ODI HPWI, Cawthron has engaged in a consultancy aimed to assist with developing a culture code and action plan that will assist Cawthron in fostering a culture of innovation. Specifically, the consultancy goal is to create a set of guiding values, behaviours and actions that:

- respect Cawthron's unique history, expertise and capabilities;
- are aligned to Cawthron's future strategy and direction; and
- foster a culture of innovation.

The programme allowed for 35 hours of external consultation with Teresa Callow from ODI to work with Cawthron on refreshing and revisiting Cawthron's 'Who We Are' document (including purpose and values) to form a culture code and drafting an implementation plan to address any significant gaps.

Consultancy Action Plan

Following initial discussions and consultation with Sarah Brown, HR Manager, it was agreed that a culture team would be formed to guide the development of the culture code and action plan. The culture team was a cross functional team comprised of senior members of each Cawthron team / unit

(Coastal and Freshwater, Analytical Services, Aquaculture, Corporate). This team played a critical role in fostering support, information gathering, contributing to and drafting consultancy outputs.

The culture team attended three half day workshop facilitated by our consultant. The focus of each of the workshops is outlined below:

- **Understanding Culture Workshop (Workshop 1)** focused on understanding the current culture of Cawthron Institute. This including understanding what culture is, revisiting Cawthron's purpose and values (as mapped out in their 'who we are' document), and designing an approach to solicit feedback from staff regarding the current culture.
- **Developing a Culture Code (Workshop 2)** focused on developing the guiding behaviours and principles that support each of the values identified as important by staff and the culture team.
- **Drafting a Culture Implementation Plan (Workshop 3)** focused on identifying the practices that support the development of a culture of innovation to be populated into an action plan.

With the assistance of our consultant, the culture team played a critical role in:

- gathering and analysing the thoughts and perspectives of staff regarding the current culture (between workshop 1 and 2);
- refining values behaviours (between workshop 2 and 3); and
- drafting the culture action / implementation plan (post workshop 3).

Two video conferences were also held with the consultant post workshop 2 and 3 to sense check and validate outputs.

Consultancy Outputs Produced

As an outcome of the consultancy, Cawthron revisited their purpose statement, values and value behaviours. The output of this work is as follows:

Purpose: Creating a better future

Values and Value Behaviours:

The values identified by staff as important were initially portrayed in a word cloud, that assisted in the development of the refreshed values and associated behaviours. These were then designed into a graphical representation, consistent with the outputs from concurrent strategy work. That representation is on the next page.

At the final workshop ideas were gathered regarding the actions required to assist in dissemination, engagement and reinforcement of the refreshed culture code. Actions identified include (but not limited to):

- Updating board and management team
- Build staff involvement and enthusiasm by conducting group exercises to build ownership and meaning, and linking to existing activities e.g. The Race
- Integrating into HR recruitment and development practices e.g. Performance Development Review
- Establishing supporting indicators for each value behaviour
- Develop new idea / proposal pathway incorporating values as guiding principles
- Provide opportunities for purposeful ideas harvest (non funding driven)



Issues, Opportunities and Solutions Identified during the Consultancy

A key challenge for the development of a Cawthron wide culture code was the diverse stages each of the units were at in defining their own divisional cultures. Some units already had identified their own purpose, values and associated behaviours, while others had not. Secondly, it was a challenge to identify a purpose that resonated with science and support staff, respected Cawthron's history, was inclusive, and articulated why Cawthron exists.

A key opportunity presented by the workshops was the opportunity for members of different parts of the organisation to work together to define the united purpose, values and behaviours required to foster an organisational culture of innovation. The information gathering that occurred between workshops by the culture team showcased the strengths of the Cawthron Institute and reinforced why staff are proud to work at Cawthron. Furthermore, the inclusive and collaborative way in which the consultancy was conducted reinforced Cawthron's own value of collaboration, and could potentially act as an internal case study.

Solutions identified included the development of a new ideas pathway process that would assist in streamlining or fast tracking innovative ideas that are aligned to Cawthron's purpose and values. By using Cawthron's values as guiding principles for pathway progression, it is expected that the quality of ideas progressing would improve.

Assessment of Results and Outcomes Achieved

HR Manager Sarah Brown views the consultancy as a success; its low key approach through using the culture committee, rather than a wider consultation across the organisation, was consistent with Cawthron's high trust culture. Success also came about because the consultancy complemented other strategic initiatives running concurrently. Cawthron has engaged a graphic designer who has created two 'matching' one-page documents that cover Strategy (the What), and Culture Code (the How). A third similar graphic will be generated from another ODI HPWI consultancy concerning KPI's (How we will know Success). These three graphical representations will be circulated widely within Cawthron as complementary 'plans on a page'.

The combined effect of these three pieces of work in 2016 has been to consolidate Cawthron thinking and planning, establishing a platform for growth in 2017 and beyond.

The Way Forward (90-day and 180-day Implementation Expectations)

During the next 90 days it is expected that the culture code (purpose and value statements / behaviours), will be approved by the SMT and board and internally distributed. An action plan for incubating innovative ideas within a consistent and values-centric process will also be crafted.

During the next 180 days it is expected that actions will be taken to build engagement, enthusiasm and reinforcement of the culture code and embedding it into company processes and documentation, including new staff induction and performance review processes.

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ODI
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