

ODI High Performance Work Initiative Programme 2015/16

Case Report – Tasman District Council Culture and Climate

Organisation Background

Tasman District Council (TDC) is a Unitary Authority (combined regional and territorial authority) employing more than 250 people. As a public benefit entity, whose primary objective is to provide goods and services for community or social benefit, TDC (like other councils) is required to make decisions and set directions for promoting the social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing of their communities. TDC also has a responsibility to lead, provide for and contribute to the good governance of the Tasman community.

Tasman District Council is unique from other councils in that it is one of only five unitary authorities in New Zealand, covers a large geographical area (9,786 square kilometres and is bounded to the west by the Matiri Ranges, Tasman Mountains and the Tasman Sea), has a fast-growing population, a large area of Crown estate and a City as a near neighbour.

Under the leadership of Lindsay McKenzie (Chief Executive), there is strong commitment to building a more 'Able Tasman' with the organisation 'Changing for Good'. This is supported by an organisational vision and plan that focuses on value, leadership and reputation through becoming "recognised leaders, who provide good value and have a reputation for being among the best at what we do". To achieve this TDC is currently focusing on improving outcomes in five key areas:

- High quality customer services
- Quality partnerships and relationships
- Better engagement and story telling
- Decisions that enable
- Staff development.

While actions to support each of the outcomes identified above are in progress, Tasman District Council recognises the importance of organisational culture in supporting and creating commitment and engagement for employees to perform. With the existing organisational culture only partially supporting the business strategy, the creation of culture plan to support the achievement of the organisational vision was identified as a key strategic priority 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, Tasman District Council has engaged in a consultancy aimed to conduct a stock take of the current organisational culture to assist in developing an implementation plan to support TDC in achieving its organisational vision.

The programme allowed for 40 hours of external consultation with Teresa Callow from ODI to work with TDC on understanding the gaps in their organisational culture (focusing on purpose, philosophy, priorities and practices) in supporting the organisational vision, culminating in forming a draft implementation plan to address any significant gaps.

Consultancy Action Plan

Following initial discussions and consultation with Lindsay McKenzie (Chief Executive) and Joanna Cranness (HR Manager), it was agreed that four half day workshops would take place to explore the current culture, and guide the development of an implementation plan. The Senior Management Team

attended all four workshops, and were supported by a culture team (a member from each department of the Council) for workshops 2, 3 and 4.

The focus of each of the workshop is outlined below:

- **Understanding Culture Workshop (Workshop 1 & 2)** focused on understanding the current culture of the Senior Management team (workshop 1) and the Council (workshop 2). This including understanding what the current purpose (why) and philosophy (how) of the SMT and Council.
- **Refreshing TDC Purpose and Values (Workshop 3)** focused on refreshing the organisational values of Tasman District Council, and defining the behavioural indicators that support each value.
- **Drafting a Culture Implementation Plan (Workshop 3)** focused on reviewing the feedback from staff on current organisational practices (what to stop, start, keep, improve) to identify cultural related actions to feed into an implementation plan.

With the support of our consultant, a significant amount of information gathering occurred between workshops to guide values refresh and implementation plan actions. This included:

- Surveying staff to understand the alignment of existing values and organisational practices to the organisational vision (between workshop 2 and 3);
- Refreshing purpose and values behaviours (between workshop 2 and 3);
- Gathering and synthesising data from staff regarding what actions to stop, start, keep and improve in relation to Tasman District Council's organisational practices (post workshop 3); and
- drafting the culture action / implementation plan (post workshop 4).

Consultancy Outputs Produced

As an outcome of the consultancy, Tasman District Council revisited their purpose statement and values, and prepared a draft culture implementation plan. The output of this work is as follows:

Purpose: Making Tasman Great

Values and Values Behaviours:

Giving Service

The people and places of the District are at the heart of everything we do. Our services touch the lives of everyone and enable communities to reach their potential.

- We deliver quality services and provide the best possible advice
- Our interactions with people should be guided by cordially helpfulness and respect
- We help others
- We act professionally, showing respect, honesty, integrity, reliability, empathy ethically
- We add value that others feel
- We balance the needs of everyone

Communicating Effectively

Open and effective communication is critical to our work. It engages and connects us and shares understanding and knowledge from which everyone benefits.

- We speak to and listen to others respectfully.
- We engage and collaborate with an open mind
- We anticipate and actively share information to create an inclusive culture
- We communicate clearly and tell stories to enable understanding and shared meaning
- We have the courage to say and listen to what needs to be said

Working Together

We are all one team, achieving more by working together as a team and with our partners. Sharing our problems and solutions leads to better decision making and outcomes.

- We work together to the best overall result/outcome/decision.
- We treat others the way they want to be treated – with respect and understanding.
- We promote team work and collaboration.
- We share our knowledge, information views and talents.
- We can rely on, and are supportive and encouraging of others.

Showing Leadership

There is a leader in every one of us. Leadership is a shared value that we show. This means demonstrating leadership in our own work and when leading our people and communities.

- We will support and encourage each other to lead.
- We are accountable for our actions and decisions.
- We acknowledge and celebrate success and inspire others to achieve.
- We care for and develop people.
- We take opportunities to build trust.
- We take responsibility to develop ourselves as leaders.

Working the Tasman Way

We value Tasman's unique and diverse people and places. We are resourceful, innovative and committed to meeting our communities' needs and aspirations.

- We care about each other and enjoy what we do.
- We choose to bring the right attitude to our work.
- Our collective knowledge is nationally recognised and how we do business is seen as innovative.
- We encourage collective efforts and take personal responsibility for our actions.
- We punch above our weight in **Making Tasman Great**.

Draft Implementation Plan:

While the internal staff survey indicated that the organisational practices relating to performance management, rewards and recognition and internal communications were the least supportive in assisting staff to achieve TDC's vision, staff feedback was gathered on what to stop, start, keep and improve on all organisational practices to ensure completeness and breadth of information (Systems, Internal Communication, Leaders Image, Training and Development, Technology, Values, Reward and Recognition, Performance Development, Work Areas/Layout).

During the final workshop, this feedback was synthesised into suggested actions to be included in the implementation plan. Actions identified in the three top priority areas included (but not limited to):

- Performance Development and Training
 - Review of performance development process including performance matrix
 - Upskilling managers and team leaders in coaching and mentoring techniques
 - Implementing a system to identify individuals career, leadership, training, promotion and ambition goals
- Rewards and Recognition
 - Review of reward and recognition options
 - Create stronger links between reward and recognition and values/culture
- Internal Communications

- Ensure everyone is aware of communication responsibilities
- Leverage greater range of communication tools e.g. skype, video, TED talks, you tube
- Senior leaders to be visible, available and approachable taking time to explain 'why' and 'what'.

Further work is to be done post-consultancy to finalise the Implementation Plan prior to its deployment.

Issues, Opportunities and Solutions Identified during the Consultancy

A key challenge for Tasman District Council was defining the current culture and its alignment to the strategy and organisational vision. Tasman District Council performs a diverse range of services for the Tasman Community, with each of the five work streams having their own distinctive unique culture characteristics. By focusing on the culture characteristics that represent a unifying element across the organisation and describe what is unique or different about the Council, serves to provide a central focus, however is less tangible and specific for teams or units.

Culture by its very nature encompasses many qualitative and contextual characteristics that are often hard to explain or can be ambiguous or 'fuzzy'. As part of this consultancy a wide range of views and perspectives were shared by staff. At times, it was a challenge to identify the central culture themes, and isolate the core cultural issues.

A key opportunity presented by the workshops was the opportunity for members of the Senior Management Team to work together to explore the current culture (purpose, values and behaviours) required to deliver on their organisational vision. With the SMT playing a critical role in refreshing the purpose and values, this consultancy provided an opportunity for SMT members to share and discuss their own perspectives and insights, enabling a greater depth of understanding. This also served as a foundation for the SMT to live, breathe and be accountable to the values and each other in consistently displaying and reinforcing the organisational values.

Assessment of Results and Outcomes Achieved

The consultancy delivered a recrafted Purpose, a statements of Values and Values Behaviours and a draft Culture Implementation Plan. The Chief Executive has reported that these provide value to the organisation because the consultancy offered external resources and marshalled internal resources into workstreams aligned to Tasman's own development plans. Additionally, he confirmed the consultancy caused participative work between workshops that increased senior management engagement, although the work did not fall evenly across those leaders.

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

During the next 90 days it is expected that the Senior Management Team will hold each other to account on the refreshed values, making efforts to lead by example, and set the tone for the wider organisation. It is also expected that the implementation plan will be finalised and signed off by the Senior Management Team. The process of fully socialising the consultancy outcomes and achieving endorsement of the changes made will also take place.

During the next 180 days it is expected that Tasman District Council will take steps to build engagement, enthusiasm and reinforcement for the refreshed purpose and values. Furthermore, it is expected that any short term, easily executed actions identified in the culture implementation plan will commence, in particular in performance management, service delivery performance, adaption to change, in future budget bids including resourcing, in business process changes and in the way Tasman prioritises work.

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