

The logo for the Voice Project, featuring the word "voice" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font, with the word "project" in a smaller, black sans-serif font directly below it. A vertical line is positioned to the left of the text, and a horizontal line is positioned below the text, intersecting at the top-left corner of the word "project".

voice
project

improving organisations by giving people a voice



Improving Employee Engagement During Change in Australian Universities

Dr Peter Langford

**Voice Project
Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia**

**The Higher Education HR Conference, Sydney
11 April 2008**

Contents/Agenda

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- > Aims of current study
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 - > The changes that universities have been able to achieve
- > Conclusions & implications
- > Confessions of a “data dude” . . .

Background To This Research

- > Voice Project is a research and consulting practice based at Macquarie University, Sydney.
- > We specialise in organisational surveys and the diagnosis of culture, leadership and engagement.
- > Across all industries we've conducted 250 projects with 130 clients, and nearly 300,000 people have been "given a voice".
- > In higher education we've completed organisation-wide employee surveys across 16 Australian universities and 40,000 academic and general staff, with 2 more universities currently completing surveys.
- > Of our university clients, we've completed consecutive/follow-up surveys in 6 of the universities.

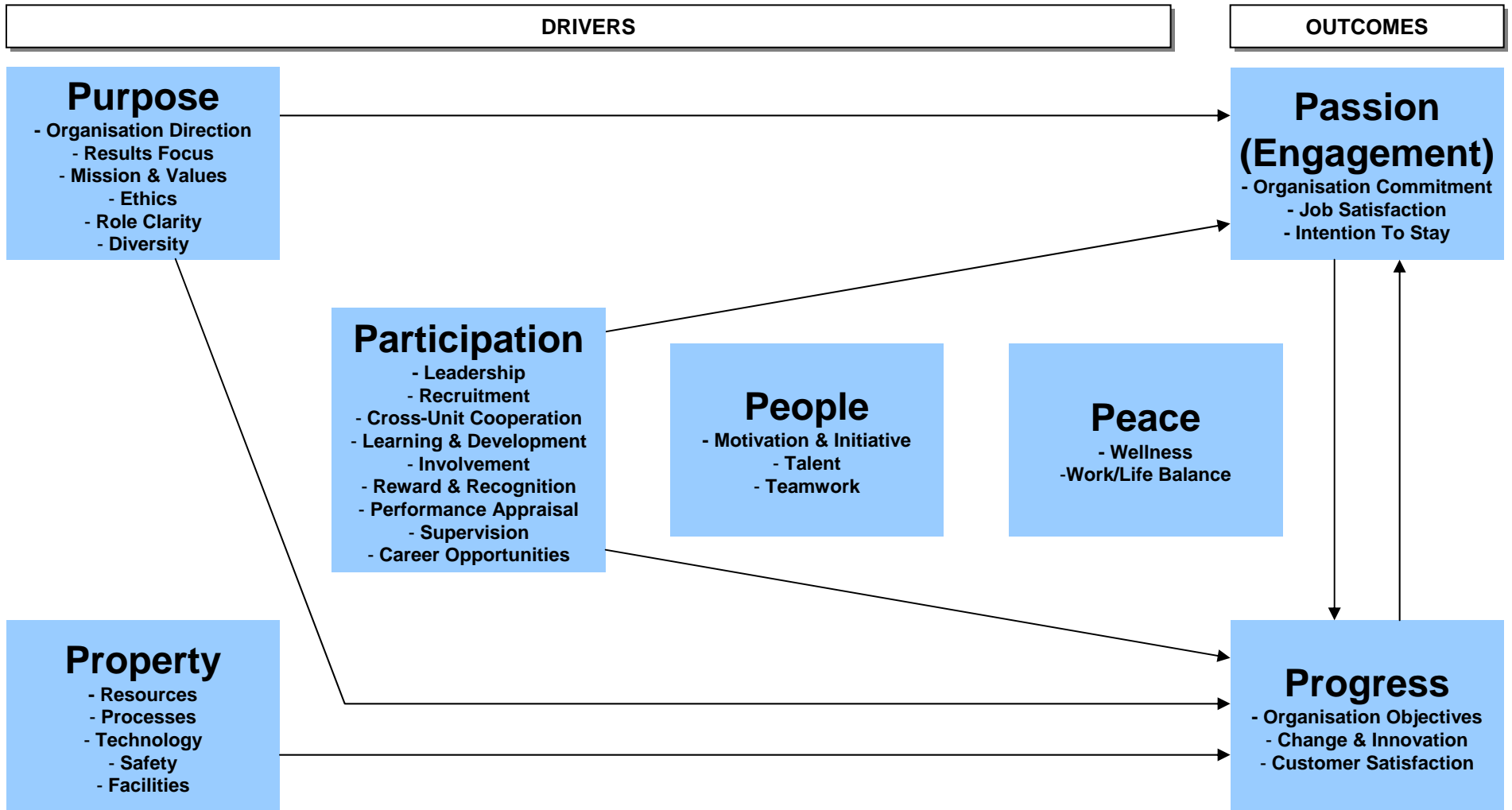
Aims Of Current Study

- > We wanted to know:
 - 1) whether universities could achieve positive change,
 - 2) which management practices could be improved, and
 - 2) whether we could measure that change.
- > If change is possible and measurable, then:
 - 1) what average change was achieved (i.e., what's typical for the sector), and
 - 2) what was the maximum change achieved (i.e., what's possible for high achievers).
- > The next step in the research would be to develop best practice case studies from the high achievers and share that knowledge throughout the sector.

Method

- > Responses from nearly 8,000 academic and general staff across 6 universities (average response rate 62%).
- > Each university completed two organisation-wide surveys.
- > Average period between surveys = 2.5 years.
- > Surveys were based on our standard university employee survey (120 agree/disagree questions) but all tailored to meet the specific desires of each university.
 - > Questions covered employee engagement, organisational performance, and a multitude of management practices that impact engagement and performance.
 - > Surveys completed almost entirely online and “live” for approx 2-3 weeks.
 - > Not shown in this presentation, but the surveys included many demographic questions enabling reporting of results by different organisational units and groups of staff.
 - > The survey has extensive prior use and validation.

The Model Behind The Measure



Based on Langford, P. H., Parkes, L. P., & Metcalf, L. (2006). Developing a structural equation model of organisational performance and employee engagement. Proceedings of the joint conference of the Australian Psychological Society and the New Zealand Psychological Society, Auckland, New Zealand.

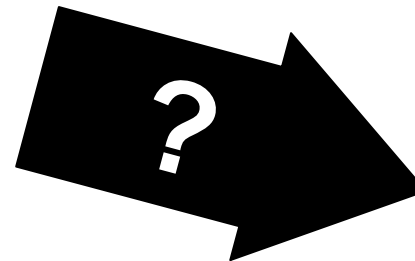
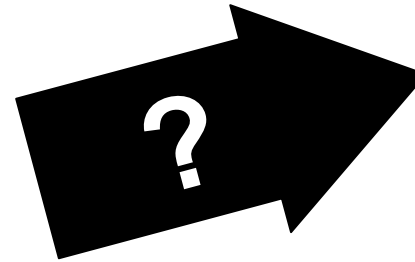
The Model Behind The Measure

DRIVERS

OUTCOMES

University Specific

- Workload
- Research
- Teaching
- Community Engagement
- Entrepreneurship



Passion (Engagement)

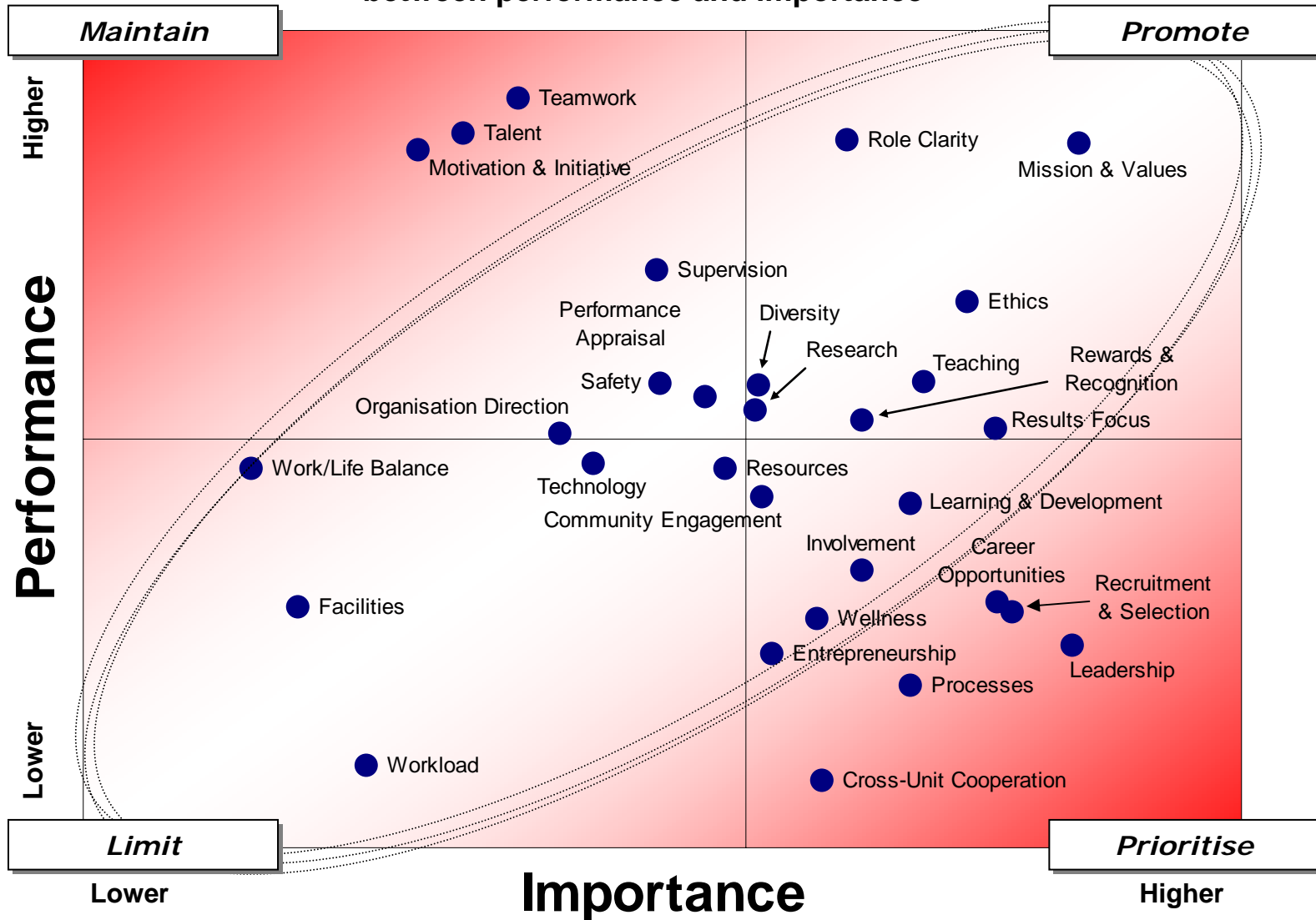
- Organisation Commitment
- Job Satisfaction
- Intention To Stay

Progress




- Organisation Objectives
- Change & Innovation
- Customer Satisfaction

Gap Analysis – 16 Universities, 40,000 Staff

Ideally, management practices should rest in the oval where there is a good match between performance and importance

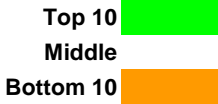


Change Across Time

Top 10 
 Middle 
 Bottom 10 

		Unis Included	Mean Starting Score	Mean Follow-Up Score	Mean Increase (What's Typical?)	- / +	Strongest Increase (What's Possible?)	- / +
PURPOSE	Organisation Direction	6	46%	62%	16%		31%	
	Results Focus	5	63%	62%	-1%		1%	
	Ethics	4	72%	70%	-1%		1%	
	Diversity	6	66%	68%	2%		7%	
PROPERTY	Resources	6	57%	55%	-2%		9%	
	Processes	5	40%	33%	-7%		-1%	
	Safety	6	64%	67%	3%		13%	
	Facilities	5	43%	40%	-3%		11%	
PARTICIPATION	Leadership	6	37%	43%	6%		12%	
	Supervision	6	70%	73%	4%		8%	
	Recruitment & Selection	6	41%	43%	2%		4%	
	Cross-Unit Cooperation	5	21%	24%	3%		5%	
	Learning & Development	6	48%	46%	-2%		5%	
	Involvement	6	49%	45%	-3%		8%	
	Rewards & Recognition	5	53%	56%	3%		9%	
	Performance Appraisal	6	52%	56%	4%		8%	
PEOPLE	Career Opportunities	4	29%	31%	2%		7%	
	Talent	5	73%	77%	4%		9%	
	Teamwork	6	84%	86%	3%		4%	
PEACE	Wellness	6	51%	50%	-1%		4%	
	Work/Life Balance	6	64%	64%	0%		8%	
PASSION/ ENGAGEMENT	Organisational Commitment	6	72%	73%	1%		6%	
	Job Satisfaction	6	77%	78%	1%		6%	
	Intention To Stay	6	62%	63%	1%		5%	
PROGRESS	Organisation Objectives	6	57%	58%	1%		9%	
	Change & Innovation	4	32%	34%	2%		10%	
	Customer Satisfaction	4	61%	59%	-2%		5%	
UNIVERSITY- SPECIFIC	Workload	5	36%	34%	-2%		5%	
	Research	6	55%	57%	1%		8%	
	Teaching	6	63%	63%	0%		6%	
	Community Engagement	6	53%	54%	1%		8%	
	Entrepreneurship	4	42%	37%	-5%		0%	

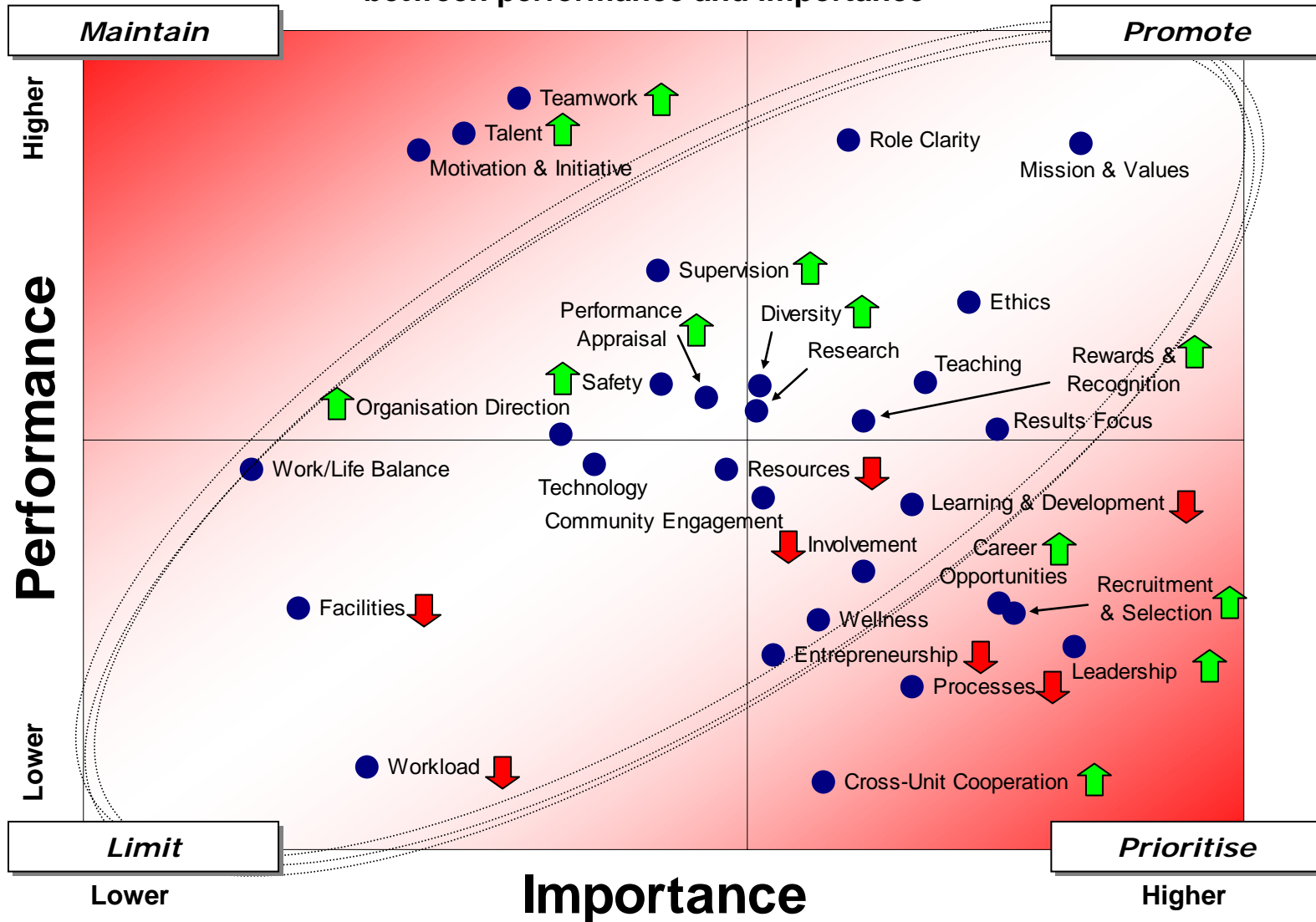
Scores Sorted By Mean Increase



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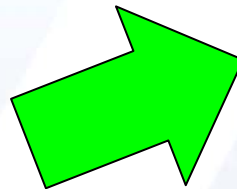
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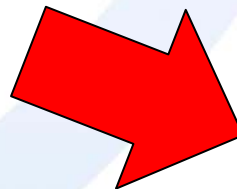


Conclusions

**Stronger “business”
model of running
universities, pushing
for greater efficiency
and performance from
existing resources**



**Improving management skills;
stronger relationships between
staff and managers; clearer
direction; greater communication;
more effective appraisal and
recognition of high performers and
management of underperformers;
greater satisfaction with quality of
coworkers**



**Dissatisfaction with stronger
enforcement of processes; reduced
sense of involvement and
autonomy; facilities being strained
through heavier use; possible
“collateral damage” with perceived
reduction in student satisfaction
and learning and development
opportunities for staff**

Conclusions

- > These results are suggestive of ongoing turbulence; the sector as a whole is still quite volatile, with most universities improving in most areas while a minority continue to experience difficulties.
- > Change “won’t happen overnight, but it will happen.”
- > Large positive change is possible, and strong role models are increasingly available which can facilitate further improvement across the sector.
- > The observed changes are evidence of the early stages of revitalisation of the sector. The challenge will be to continue to develop management skills, recognise high performers, embed the positive changes, increase resource availability, and minimise and recover from the “collateral damage” of significant organisational change.

Questions & Contact Details

- > Email: peter.langford@voiceproject.com.au
- > Phone direct: +61 2 8875 2801
- > General office: +61 2 8875 2800
- > Mail:
 - > Voice Project
Lvl 2, BD Building
4 Research Park Dr
Macquarie University
NSW 2109 Australia