



## Aligning innovation with organisational strategy, and solving a cultural problem

### The problem

Many of the executive team had joined the organisation in the last 18 months. They were pleased to find that the organisation was appreciated by its customers, receiving high feedback scores.

But this masked some internal challenges. They were surprised to find a culture where, routinely, decisions were pushed up the hierarchy, and more senior managers were involved in decisions they needn't have been. Too much micro-managing, because of too little confidence.

And the executives also wanted to release the ideas of their workforce. They wanted to encourage them, give them freedom to act, and coach them to implement changes. But not in a vacuum – the ideas had to be aligned with the recently formulated strategy.

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## What we did

After a discovery phase of interviewing stakeholders in the business, we designed a series of learning interventions that took place over a 18-month period.

We ran three leadership modules for 180 leadership staff:

- Focusing on Aligning Leadership to Strategy for impact.
- Focusing on Enabling Innovation in teams.
- Focusing on implementing and sustaining change

Executive leaders joined the programme and outlined the strategic aims: a focus on becoming a supplier of choice in the marketplace; equipping the workforce with the skills and support it needs; through careful financial management, ensuring the long-term viability of the organisation.

Leaders worked in cross-departmental groups, expanding their range of contacts and building relationships with others through the organisation.

We measured the organisational climate for innovation at start and end of the programme, to detect evidence of any shift. We also used staff

## Aligning innovation to strategy and confidence to act

We received anecdotal feedback that the efforts of the Executive team and Senior Leaders to foster an open and supportive culture were starting to work. And end-of-programme staff satisfaction scores confirmed this, showing improvements over a 2-year period:

- I am aware of our strategic aims (from 76% - 88% agreed or strongly agreed)
- We work well with other teams in the organisation (from 70% - 82%)
- I am able to make suggestions to improve the work of my team (79% - 88%)
- I am able to make improvements happen in my area of work (67%-77%)



*The problem that our group decided upon initiated from frustration with a situation which for years has been 'an impossible nut to crack' – turning into a situation that I am now highly excited to be involved in and we want to be a huge success.*



**Improved climate for innovation**

The survey results were confirmed by improvements in the organisational climate for innovation, with the case organisation compared against its prior scores and organisational benchmarks. (Note the improvements in aligning people to meaningful challenges; freedom to act, idea time, idea support, debate and risk-taking.)

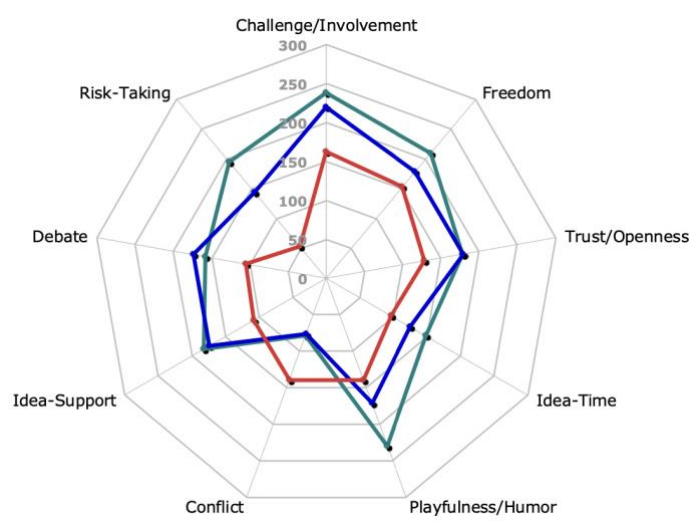
**Key:**

**Stagnated organisations benchmark**

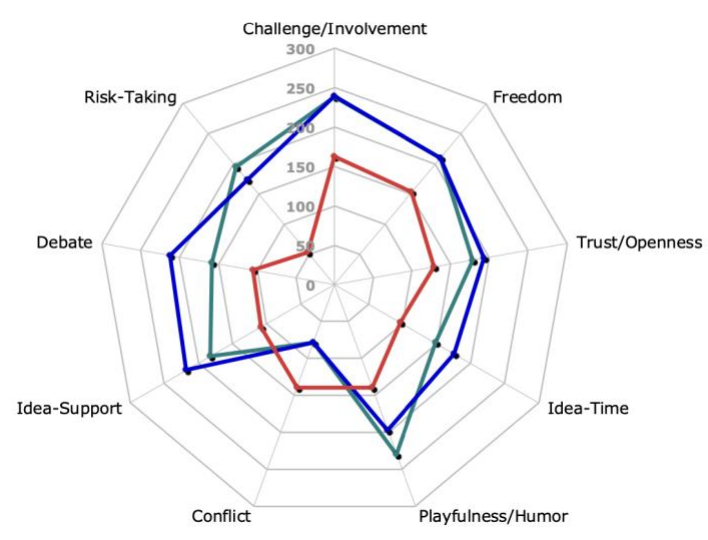
**Innovative organisations benchmark**

**Case organisation**

**Time 1:**



**Time 2: 16 months later**



*This course has been liberating from an innovation and ideas point of view.*



*Being trusted by my manager is the most significant factor in enabling my creativity.*



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