High Performance Teams In ITB:
Team Transformation Project Report

Department of Education (DoE)

IT sector organisations, particularly internal service providers within government can be extremely complex and challenging work environments. On one hand, the customers they serve demand agile services that keep pace with rapidly evolving technology. On the other hand, as public sector organisations themselves, they are working with a resourcing and workforce profile that favours stability and cost minimisation over risk-taking and major capital investment. This dichotomy creates significant cultural and change management challenges that are most effectively targeted by team level interventions which can then act as a catalyst to drive wider agency transformation.

The Cost of Lowered Performance

Accompanying these cultural and change management challenges is the risk of higher burden and stress and lowered team morale and performance. The costs of lowered team performance are often underestimated in terms of conflict, absenteeism, disengagement, workplace stress, lost time injuries (LTIs) and significantly lower quality production hours.

To fast track agency transformation and manage the risks to wellbeing and productivity during change, we developed the High Performance Teams Program which targets team level performance - addressing 4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) (see Figure 1).
- KPI 1 – Vision & Actions;
- KPI 2 – Performance Reporting;
- KPI 3 – Leveraging Diversity; and
- KPI 4 – Work/Life & Wellbeing.

Performance is a spectrum, with all teams able to be classified according to both the VALUE they produce (a combination of direct and indirect productivity benefits) through achieving their targets and goals over the short- and long-term, and the CONFIDENCE they have as a team to share information with each other and provide frank and fearless feedback to achieve their goals. It is necessary to understand a team's current level in order to target appropriate interventions for team improvement. The High Performance Teams Program does just that.
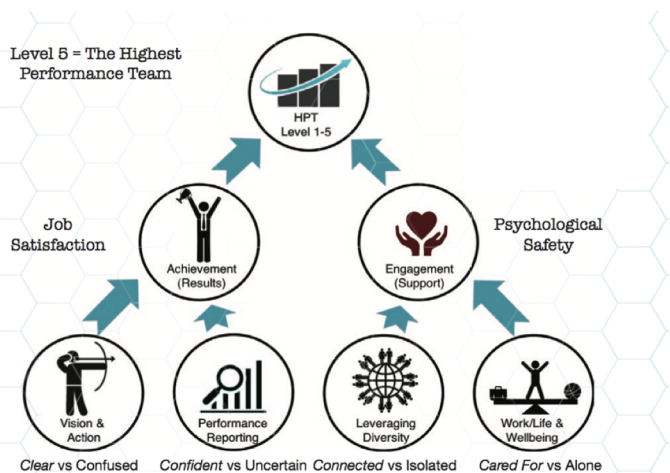

Figure 1: The HPT Model

HPT Level	Value* (Focus)	Confidence (Driver)	Challenge (Approach)
Level 5 Elite HPT	10x (Leverage)	100% (Legacy)	Super-Stretch (& Coach)
Level 4 Adv HPT	5x (Strategic)	90% (Growth)	Stretching (& Coach)
Level 3 HPT	2x (Collaborative)	75% (Understanding)	Improving (& Mentor)
Level 2 Functional	1x (Constructive)	50% (Acceptance)	Systems (Manage)
Level 1 Dysfunctional	-2x (Destructive)	0% (Distrust)	Structures (Manage)

Figure 2: The Level Up Framework

The Client & The Challenge
The Information & Technologies Branch is a large Government Agency (700 FTE) dispersed across 7 geographic regions providing end-to-end IT software, hardware, network security, and helpdesk and consultancy services to over 1000 individual internal Government client sites across the state of Queensland, as well as providing helpdesk support directly to the general public. In addition to the FTE compliment, the Branch contracts a large number of highly sought-after technical specialists to support the organisation to deliver against dynamic projects, and to ensure that critical systems and infrastructure run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Based on concerning trends in their agency-wide culture benchmark surveys which showed lowered morale, as well as performance and communication challenges, a whole of agency High Performance Teams (HPT) Program was implemented to improve Achievement and Engagement performance outcomes across the entire workforce.

The Intervention

Using the HPT methodology, a multi-staged multi-tiered approach to embedding cultural transformation was adopted.

Stage 1: Executive Development
Within Stage 1 of the rollout, 22 Executive Level Leaders were engaged in a series of workshops that provided:

- An introduction to the HPT methodology.

- Opportunities for the Executives to assess and benchmark their peer level and downstream team performance based on the 5 Levels of Team Performance in the HPT Model (see Figure 2).

- Whole of agency assessment (results were aggregated across the Branch giving the Executive Team an overview of hotspots where more targeted support was needed).

- Tools and systems to support immediate behavioural change and enhanced governance (e.g., clear meeting structures, meeting moderators, and team data walls and dashboards).

- Support through targeted Executive Level and peer led coaching strategies.
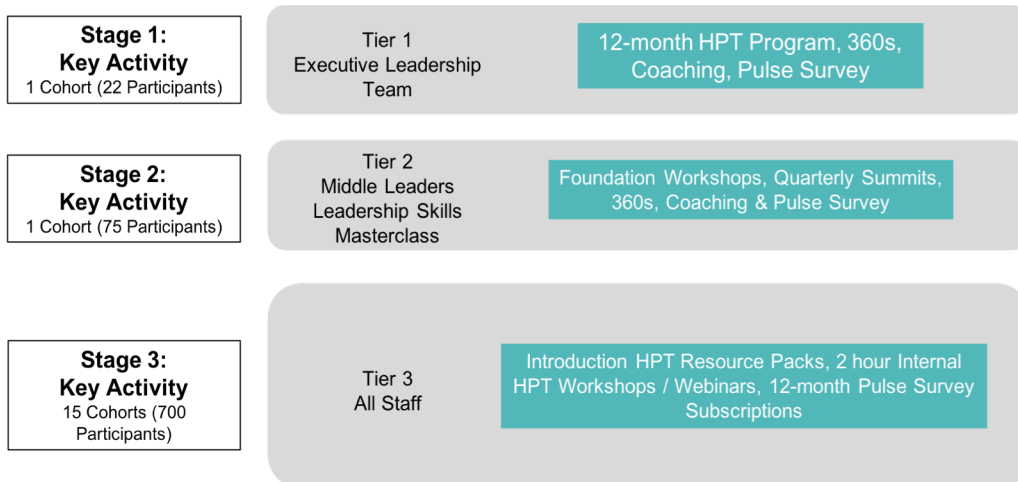
Stage 1: **Key Activity** 1 Cohort (22 Participants)	Tier 1 Executive Leadership Team	12-month HPT Program, 360s, Coaching, Pulse Survey
Stage 2: **Key Activity** 1 Cohort (75 Participants)	Tier 2 Middle Leaders Leadership Skills Masterclass	Foundation Workshops, Quarterly Summits, 360s, Coaching & Pulse Survey
Stage 3: **Key Activity** 15 Cohorts (700 Participants)	Tier 3 All Staff	Introduction HPT Resource Packs, 2 hour Internal HPT Workshops / Webinars, 12-month Pulse Survey Subscriptions

Figure 3: Team Transformation: Information & Technologies Branch

Stage 2: Middle Leader Development

Within Stage 2, 75 mid-level leaders (A08 to Junior Executive) were onboarded by attending quarterly leadership summits where they were trained to facilitate the roll out of the 5 Foundational Modules of the HPT Program in the teams they led. Mid-level leaders were supported with 3 structured telephone coaching sessions with an expert HPT Coach and a 360 Leadership Assessment.

Stage 3: All Staff Roll Out

All 700 agency staff were invited to attend a 2-hour, interactive quick start webinar where key program content was delivered by a master HPT Trainer to assist middle leaders in rolling out the program across their teams.

This was further supported by providing all staff across the Branch with key messaging from the Chief Information Officer, access to onboarding explanation videos, and customised 'how to' books. Across all stages of the project, team performance on the 4 KPIs was continuously tracked by an automated weekly pulse survey with results used to lead monthly local level team improvement discussions.

Webinar: All Staff HPT Quick-Start Sessions

The Results

At the 12-month program evaluation it was clear that program activities were beginning to reshape the workplace culture to strengthen team Achievement and Engagement across the Branch.

Stage 1: Executive Development

All teams assessed by the Executive Management Team had improved from Time 1 to Time 2 (through both self-report and the quantitative HPT Level Up Assessment). The Executive Management Team had also fully embedded new HPT Meeting structures and governance, dramatically improving the quality and efficiency of their strategic meetings. Further a

whole of agency HPT Team Data Wall was established, ensuring that HPT activities were hard wired into business as usual.

Stage 2: Middle Leader Activity

Levels of engagement from the Middle Leaders was high as indicated by their participation in the initial High Performance Teams Masterclass and quarterly summits, development of individual team data walls (see Figure 4), and the large number of staff in attendance at the all staff quick start webinars. Conservative estimates are that over 75% of all FTEs attended the program onboarding webinars that were encouraged by their team leaders.

Figure 4: Showcase of Team Data Walls Presented by Middle Leaders at Quarterly Leadership Summits

Additionally, 100% of the Middle Leaders made use of the developmental coaching that was on offer, and established stronger relationships with peers at level through attendance at the quarterly summits where leaders met in forum groups to problem solve, provide feedback, and guidance to each other on leadership and strategic issues.

Stage 3: Whole Branch Change

There was clear evidence that cultural change was gaining momentum as a result of behavioural change across the Branch (e.g., implementation of new meeting protocols, above and below the line protocols) and team artefacts (e.g., team data walls, use of meeting moderator cards).

Further, there was a strong positive trend in wellbeing data across the workforce over the course of the program with levels of Job Satisfaction, Performance Feedback, Co-Worker Support, and Work/Life Wellbeing all significantly improving (see Figure 5).

Finally, the project was delivered on time and on budget, and the capability that was built within the Branch will ensure that the gains from the intervention can continue to scale as the Branch enters into the consolidation phase in year 2.
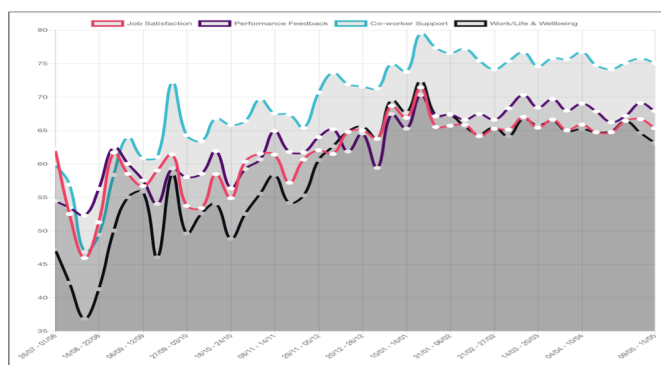

Figure 5: Branch Pulse Survey Data

Consolidation Strategy in Year 2: Our previous research into organisations that implement transformation across multiple teams^ has revealed significant sleeper effects still remain following the completion of the 1 Year strategy. It can take a further 12 months to realise these additional benefits across the organisation using a streamlined 'consolidation strategy' (group coaching cycles, team pulse and refresher sessions). This consolidation strategy is the basis for I&T Branch's Year 2 intervention to maximise the organization wide benefits of HPT transformation.

Key Learnings & Conclusions

During the implementation of the HPT Program there were several key learnings:

- Firstly, engaging Middle Leaders as key vehicles for the program roll out ensured that whole of Branch cultural transformation was achievable in a timely, cost effective and scalable way with little disruption to business as usual activities.
- Secondly, the High Performance Teams Framework appears to be robust and adaptable, enabling teams of varying capability, size, function, and geographic location to enhance their performance outcomes.
- Thirdly, if an organisation is committed to a consistent approach, significant whole of team cultural transformation can occur in as little as 12 months, with further benefit emerging over 24 months.

In conclusion, the current findings highlight the successful application of the HPT Program as an effective intervention that can be used to support Branch Wide Cultural Transformation, significantly enhancing both employee wellbeing and performance.

References

- Level Up: Building The Highest Performance Teams
- Level Up Team Guidebook – IT Edition
- HPS Leadership Shares: The Power of Teams & Technology In Education with Michael O'Leary, CIO
- ^ HPT Transformation Case Study: School-Wide Transformation at Emerald SHS