Taking a quick check of your work environment

The quick check tool allows you to quickly assess your work environment. It has ten tables covering the three strategic and seven operational elements that influence culture.

Ten Elements, Three Perspectives and Four Stages

Elements

1. Vision and Values
2. Leadership and Accountability
3. Organisational Communication
4. Recruitment and Selection
5. Learning and Development
6. Human Resource Policies and Strategies
7. Workflow Management
8. Performance Management
9. Risk Management
10. Workplace Dispute Systems

Perspectives

Each table asks you to look at the work environment from three perspectives:

1. Organisation
2. Managers
3. Individuals

Stages

Within each table there is a description of the type of practices to be found at four different stages of development of a positive work environment:

1. Beginning
2. Emerging
3. Consolidating
4. Established

Take a quick check

Your task is to rate your environment from the three perspectives for each of the ten elements and then transcribe the results onto the summary sheet to indicate your priorities for change.

In the next section you will be given resources to improve your work environment.

1. Vision and Values – Inspiring, Inclusive and Genuine

An organisation's vision inspires staff to work towards a compelling shared goal. The values support the vision. They reflect the organisation's beliefs and guiding philosophy. In the Victorian public sector the values and employment principles in the Public Administration Act 2004 underpin the relationship employees have with the Government, community and each other.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

Vision and value statements are in corporate publications, but not widely known or actively promoted.

Emerging

The vision and values are displayed at reception and on business cards but are not yet drivers of policy and practices on unacceptable behaviour.

Consolidating

The vision and values of respect and dignity at work influence decision making in the organisation and provide a point of reference for policy makers.

Established

The vision and values are organisational reality. Respect and dignity at work are practised in all aspects of organisational life.

Managers

Beginning

Managers regard the vision and values as organisational propaganda and adopt a 'wait and see approach'.

Emerging

Managers recognise the importance of the vision and values but their behaviour is not always consistent with them.

Consolidating

Managers use the vision and values to guide their decisions and promote them to staff.

Established

Managers model the vision and values every day and refer to them when making decisions. They encourage their staff to support the vision and values.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals regard the vision and values as organisational propaganda and await evidence of a real commitment to them.

Emerging

Individuals can recall the vision and values but don't necessarily see the relevance of them to their work.

Consolidating

All individuals attempt to put the vision and values into practice every day.

Established

All individuals act in line with the vision and values in all aspects of their work.

2. Leadership and Accountability – Strong Role Models

Leadership is the ability to influence others' behaviour, decisions and actions. Accountability is the willingness to accept responsibility for the impact of your decisions and those of your staff, and not to blame others or your circumstances when things go wrong. Accepting responsibility for things that go wrong is the first step towards making improvements.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

Leadership and accountability are not evident in the organisation. The focus is on getting tasks done not on how they are done.

Emerging

Leadership and accountability may be evident in some pockets of the organisation.

Consolidating

Leadership and accountability are evident at senior levels of the organisation or in particular business units only.

Established

Leadership and accountability are evident at all levels of the organisation in behaviours, decisions and actions. The organisation has a strong reputation in the community for integrity.

Managers

Beginning

Managers are autocratic and either unconcerned about or unaware of their impact on others. They may also be inconsistent in their decisions or behaviour. They are primarily interested in staff completing tasks to their requirements.

Emerging

Managers support staff to complete tasks by providing them with sufficient resources and guidance. They may adapt their style of management to suit different staff members' needs. Accountability is clear in most cases.

Consolidating

Managers help staff to understand the work of the organisation beyond their particular role by sharing information about future plans. They are interested and involved in their staff's career development. Accountability is usually clear.

Established

Managers are strong role models and inspire trust and respect. They invite staff to participate in decisions and give them encouragement and clear direction. They take responsibility for their actions and decisions. Accountability is always clear.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals lack good role models and focus on completing tasks on time and to agreed standards. They may be unclear about accountabilities within the organisation.

Emerging

Individuals may sometimes participate in decisions and development opportunities but the primary focus is on completing tasks. They are held accountable for only some decisions and actions.

Consolidating

Individuals often participate in decisions and may also develop their skills. Their relationship with their manager is positive and open. They are held accountable for the results of their decisions and actions.

Established

Individuals trust and respect their managers and one another. They participate in decisions and develop their skills to complete tasks better. Accountability is clear at all levels of the organisation.

3. Organisational Communication – Effective Networks

Organisational communication is the myriad of ways in which information about the organisation and its environment is shared between members. Communication can be formal or informal. Formal communication will normally be part of a well thought out communication strategy that includes forums, workshops and publications. Informal communication is the daily conversations that people have with their managers and colleagues in different parts of the organisation.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

Communication about unacceptable behaviours takes place predominantly between individuals and groups but only as necessary.

Emerging

Information about the organisation and what is acceptable and unacceptable is communicated to staff as necessary. Feedback is encouraged on specific issues.

Consolidating

Discussion including information sharing and feedback is encouraged between different levels of the organisation.

Established

Effective formal and informal networks throughout the organisation mean that staff communicate freely with others and report unacceptable behaviours.

Managers

Beginning

Managers give staff formal direction on how to complete their tasks. They speak to their peers at scheduled meetings on work related matters.

Emerging

Managers encourage staff to discuss work related matters and give feedback at scheduled meetings.

Consolidating

Consolidating regularly meet with staff both formally and informally to share organisational information and invite open discussion.

Established

Managers are members of effective formal and informal networks which they use to deal with unacceptable behaviours at an early stage.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals speak to others when they need information to complete their tasks. Communication is most often within their business unit rather than between business units.

Emerging

Individuals are confident that their suggestions and feedback on particular issues will be seriously considered.

Consolidating

Individuals freely discuss and share organisational information with their manager.

Established

Individuals are members of effective formal and informal networks and feel comfortable speaking to anyone in the organisation.

GO TO Organisational communication

4. Recruitment and Selection – The Right Skills and Attributes

Definition: Organisations compete with others for applicants. A recruitment and selection campaign that promotes the organisation's positive work environment could lead to the attraction and retention of staff who have the right skills and 'fit' the workplace culture. It could give the organisation a competitive advantage

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

The organisation seeks to attract staff with the right professional skills but ignores applicants' other attributes.

Emerging

The organisation seeks to attract staff with the right professional skills and the right values. It considers whether the applicant's values are incompatible with the organisation.

Consolidating

The organisation differentiates itself from other employers by promoting its values and positive work environment.

Emerging

The organisation is known for its positive work environment and for being an employer of choice.

Managers

Beginning

Managers are selected on the basis of their professional skills rather than also on their values or ability to manage staff well.

Emerging

Managers are primarily selected on the basis of their professional skills but some weight is also given to their values and ability to manage staff well.

Consolidating

Managers have a good knowledge of the unique characteristics and needs of the organisation and translate these into effective recruitment strategies.

Established

Managers are selected on the basis of their professional skills, values and ability to manage staff well. They see the skills and values they and their staff possess as being important for career development and progression.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals are selected on the basis of their professional skills only rather than also on their values.

Emerging

Individuals are primarily selected on the basis of their professional skills but some weight is also given to their values.

Consolidating

Individuals think about how well their values fit with the values of the organisation before deciding to apply for jobs that match their skills. Where the fit is poor they decide not to apply.

Established

Individuals are selected on the basis of their professional skills and values. They see both their skills and values as being important for career development and progression.

GO TO Recruitment and selection

5. Learning and Development – Supporting Change

Organisations offer staff professional development to keep their skills and knowledge up to date, improve their work performance and prepare them for career advancement. Development can range from formal studies to mentoring programs. Of particular importance is the transition to management, where an individual must learn how to encourage good staff performance and positive work relationships.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

Most training is ad hoc or unplanned although the organisation may also offer mandatory training in OHS or other legislated areas. Few are skilled in dealing with unacceptable behaviours.

Emerging

The organisation has systems in place to develop professional skills. No attention is given to reinforcing the organisation's values.

Consolidating

The organisation offers a broader and more systematic development program. However the main focus is still on professional skills rather than on values or behaviours.

Established

An equal focus on values and professional competencies ensures the organisation is sustainable and innovative. Workplace behaviours are a feature of all development programs.

Managers

Beginning

Managers seldom attend training sessions to develop their professional skills.

Emerging

Managers sometimes attend training sessions to develop their professional skills.

Consolidating

Managers recognise the importance of developing both their professional skills and their ability to manage staff well and reinforce the organisation's values.

Established

Managers develop their leadership capabilities through a system of course work and mentoring, coaching and buddy systems. They become skilled in reinforcing the organisation's values and dealing with unacceptable behaviours.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals seek permission to attend training sessions that are of interest to them or relevant to their current projects or role.

Emerging

Individuals identify training sessions relevant to developing their professional skills in discussion with their manager.

Consolidating

Individuals work with their manager to identify a broad range of options for developing their professional skills and reinforcing the organisation's values. These include courses, work assignments and job rotations.

Established

Individuals discuss their skills, values and career aspirations with their manager to prepare a comprehensive development plan. The plan is reviewed each year.

GO TO Learning and development

6. Human Resource Policies and Strategies –

Relevant and Flexible

Human resource policies and strategies define the relationship between the individual staff member and their organisation. At their best they help to create a positive, safe and supportive work environment. They enable staff to balance their work and private commitments by removing unnecessary restrictions.

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Organisation

Beginning

The organisation has a 'one size fits all' approach to HR policies. These cover standard pay and conditions for individuals rather than having a broader organisation development focus.

Emerging

The organisation is more willing to support HR because of its potential benefit to workplace culture and productivity.

Consolidating

The HR manager reports to the senior management group in recognition of the importance of HR to achieving organisational objectives.

Established

The HR manager is an important member of the organisation's senior management group. Critical indicators of HR performance are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Managers

Beginning

Managers have little or no involvement in the development, implementation or review of HR policies. This role is performed by HR alone.

Emerging

Managers have some involvement in the development and implementation of HR policies. They may provide feedback to HR on their use.

Consolidating

Managers regularly consult HR on the development or application of HR policies and see them as responsive to their needs.

Established

Managers have the freedom to develop, implement and review local HR policies and strategies in partnership with HR.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals have standard pay and conditions. They may apply for different forms of leave but there is little flexibility to adapt policies to their particular needs.

Emerging

Individuals have a growing awareness of HR policies but no involvement in their development, implementation or review.

Consolidating

Individuals are encouraged to pinpoint HR pressure points or areas of concern as a means of developing or reviewing HR policies and strategies.

Established

Individuals are confident that HR policies and strategies are sufficiently flexible to meet their needs and assist them to perform their work.

GO TO Human resource policies and strategies

7. Workflow Management – Autonomy and Participation

Workflow management is about having the right skills, support and resources to complete tasks to the right standard. Tasks may provide staff with a personal challenge to extend their skills and experience in areas that are of interest to them and relevant to their career goals. Staff work autonomously and are able to vary their day-to-day activities to meet deadlines and respond to changing circumstances. They can talk about workflow problems with their manager and colleagues.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

The standardised, quantitative and centrally controlled process for managing workflow discourages a positive work environment and encourages negative behaviours.

Emerging

Standard workflow processes are informally adapted in some areas of the organisation to address special needs or demands. Negative behaviours may be known but are largely ignored because of the quantitative measures used.

Consolidating

Qualitative and quantitative measures are formally adopted to provide an overview of organisational workflow patterns and demands.

Established

A formal, continuous improvement process is in place to encourage participation and innovation at all levels of the organisation. Effective use is made of qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Managers

Beginning

Managers have little or no ability to make changes to the work program at the business unit level. The use of quantitative measures may encourage them to focus on outputs and ignore negative behaviours.

Emerging

Managers have some ability to make changes to the work program dependent on organisational needs. They listen and respond to their staff's concerns.

Consolidating

Managers have the skills and authority to vary the work program at the business unit level to match staff skills and organisational resources and needs.

Established

Managers are skilled in the principles and processes of continuous improvement and innovation. They vary the work program to suit the business unit.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals cannot vary their work program. They may be working to tight timeframes with limited resources. The tasks may not be a good match for their skills, either too hard or unchallenging.

Emerging

Individuals may raise issues and concerns about their work program. They are sometimes invited to contribute their ideas at planning and review sessions.

Consolidating

Individuals are often invited to participate in planning and review processes. They help to identify the skills and resources required to complete tasks to a good standard.

Established

Individuals work autonomously on interesting tasks that extend their skills. Managers and colleagues provide them with support as needed. They raise issues and contribute ideas for improvement through planning and review processes.

GO TO Workflow management

8. Performance Management – Reinforcing Behaviours

Performance management contributes to the effective management of individuals and teams. It establishes a shared understanding of what is to be achieved during the year and an approach to leading and developing staff to ensure that it is achieved.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

Performance management is a mandatory annual activity completed in an ad-hoc manner with cursory attention given to personal development or behaviours.

Emerging

Performance management has the potential to reward, develop and retain good staff and reinforce positive behaviours.

Consolidating

Performance management is an important element for recognising and rewarding good performance and positive behaviours.

Established

Performance management is crucial to developing staff and reinforcing positive behaviours. Formal and informal processes operate throughout the year.

Managers

Beginning

Managers see performance management as an onerous task and do the minimum necessary to comply with its requirements. They pay primary attention to outputs and ignore personal development or behaviours.

Emerging

Managers annually review the performance and behavioural standards of their staff and agree on a development plan. They recognise the process can lead to improved results for the organisation.

Consolidating

Managers set their staff challenging but achievable goals to develop their skills and further their careers. They value the opportunity to discuss performance and behavioural standards with their staff.

Established

Managers are adept at assessing the performance, potential and skill development needs of their staff. They are comfortable providing staff with feedback at formal meetings or in spontaneous conversations.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals see performance management as an unrewarding and irrelevant process. They see no link between the process and their personal career aspirations, development or behaviours.

Emerging

Individuals see performance management as a routine activity. They have input to the process but are sometimes sceptical about the long term results.

Consolidating

Individuals use the performance management process as an opportunity to discuss all aspects of their work life including their skills, interests and career aspirations.

Established

Individuals welcome feedback on their performance throughout the year and particularly upon reaching major milestones in their work. They see the feedback as an opportunity to develop their skills and advance their career.

9. Risk Management – Identifying Risks and Opportunities

Risks are anything that stands in the way of an organisation achieving its goals. Risk management is about identifying, evaluating and minimising those risks. It helps the organisation to take advantage of opportunities while also taking calculated risks based on an analysis of their likelihood and impact.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

The organisation annually assesses risk at a corporate level but is largely risk averse. The assessment has little impact on daily operations or thinking.

Emerging

The organisation is aware of the need to manage risks on a daily basis but tends to concentrate on minimising risks rather than on looking for opportunities for improvement.

Consolidating

The organisation promotes the importance of managing risks to its staff as a means of improving results, and provides them with training.

Established

Risk management is an integral part of daily work. Mistakes when they do happen are regarded as an opportunity to learn and make improvements.

Managers

Beginning

Managers encourage staff to apply standard techniques well and assume any mistakes are due to negligence. Opportunities for the team to identify and try better ways of doing things are lost.

Emerging

Managers identify risks and approve some 'safe' risks being taken when there are opportunities for reward, or mistakes are unlikely to be punished.

Consolidating

Managers identify and manage risks while also seeing them as an opportunity to find better ways of doing things.

Established

Managers encourage their staff to identify and address problems before they occur while also encouraging them to find better ways of doing things.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals avoid taking risks because they are afraid of making mistakes. They may attempt to blame others for their mistakes. Opportunities for trying new and better ways of doing things are lost.

Emerging

Individuals see risks as something to be avoided and will only take them when there are limited alternatives, or clear benefits for doing so.

Consolidating

Individuals identify and manage their risks. They begin to accept that innovation is dependent upon taking calculated risks.

Established

Individuals manage the risks inherent in their work and accept responsibility for the decisions they make. They learn from their mistakes and this leads to innovation.

GO TO Risk management

10. Workplace Dispute Systems – Resolving Issues Fairly

Workplace dispute systems provide a fair and effective means of resolving overt and covert conflict between managers, staff and clients. While conflicts and differences of opinion are a natural part of life and can result in new ideas and improved practices, some conflict is destructive and reduces productivity. Such conflict should be dealt with quickly.

Open allClose all

Organisation

Beginning

The organisation's basic workplace dispute policies and practices fulfil a legal requirement. Complaints are seen as negative and therefore something to discourage.

Emerging

Workplace dispute policies and practices are publicised and therefore quite well known in the organisation.

Consolidating

Workplace dispute policies recommend informal local resolution of problems is tried before embarking on more formal processes. The policies are well understood by staff.

Established

Workplace dispute policies and practices reflect the values of respect and dignity for all. Complaints are viewed as problems needing resolution and are therefore accepted as a normal part of work life.

Managers

Beginning

Managers feel uncomfortable dealing with staff complaints. They may ignore evidence of problems in the workplace or refer complainants to HR and formal processes. They have some knowledge of policies and practices.

Emerging

Managers have adequate knowledge of workplace dispute policies and practices. They cooperate with HR to resolve disputes.

Consolidating

Managers have good knowledge of workplace dispute policies and practices. They appreciate the benefits of resolving problems locally and informally before more formal processes are followed.

Established

Managers respond quickly to any sign of problems in the workplace. They encourage their staff to raise concerns with them and seek to resolve their complaints sensitively. They fully support workplace dispute policies and practices.

Individuals

Beginning

Individuals are reluctant to raise concerns either because they will not be taken seriously or they may suffer negative consequences for doing so. They may not know who to talk to or how to lodge a complaint.

Emerging

Individuals have some knowledge of the workplace dispute policies and practices in place. They may lodge a formal complaint if they have a concern.

Consolidating

Individuals are willing to discuss their concerns first with their manager before deciding to lodge a formal complaint.

Established

Individuals confidently discuss their concerns with their manager. Most concerns are resolved locally and informally. Those requiring further investigation are handled sensitively through a formal process.

Summary sheet: What should your priorities be?

Strategic

Organisation	Managers	Individuals	1. Vision and values	2. Leadership & accountability	3. Organisational communication

Operational

Organisation	Managers	Individuals	4. Recruitment & selection	5. Learning & development	6. HR policies & strategies	7. Workflow management	8. Performance management	9. Risk management	10. Workplace dispute systems