

# Building One Organisation

## pulse check findings summary

As part of the Portfolio Change Management Strategy and Values and Behaviours Strategy a *Building One Organisation* Pulse Check was undertaken. The pulse check consisted of an online staff survey and focus groups with a cross-section of employees to measure engagement, change readiness, behavioural indicators and to seek feedback on progress, challenges and key initiatives.

The first Building One Organisation Survey and ten focus groups were held in April/May 2015. 3,300 employees completed the survey and over 200 employees participated in focus groups in ACT, NSW, QLD, SA, VIC and WA. To understand change over time, the survey results have been compared to findings from the One Organisation, One Future Survey held in July 2014, which established a baseline for change readiness and agency engagement.

### There were six key findings in the Pulse report:

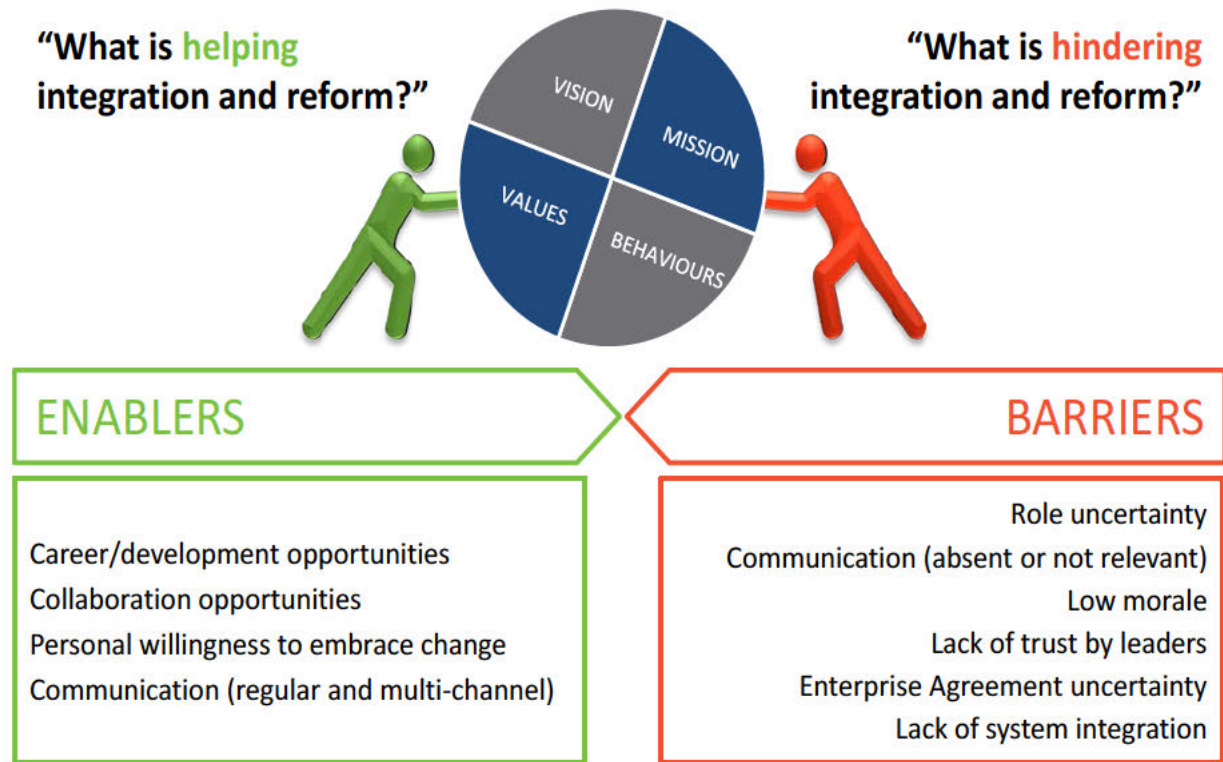
- Agency engagement and change readiness is low; particularly change understanding.
- There is low confidence in senior leaders to achieve integration and reform.
- While the pace and extent of change varies by location, the overall impact of change is experienced as more negative than positive.
- Integration and reform is currently helped by; career/development opportunities, collaboration opportunities, personal willingness to embrace change, and communication (when it is regular and multi-channel).
- Integration and reform is currently hindered by; role uncertainty, communication (when absent or not relevant), low morale, lack of trust by leaders, EA uncertainty, and lack of system integration.
- Integrity is the most consistently lived behaviour and the least lived are; skills development, collaboration, innovation, and honest communication.

The Values and Behaviours leadership conversations further confirmed this when SES commonly identified 'collaboration' and 'honest communication' as key behaviours for focus in their leadership teams.



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The workforce identified **four key enablers** and **six key barriers** to integration and reform. In addition, employees identified where the organisation should focus its attention in future to effectively leverage enablers, address barriers and support integration and reform.



Each enabler is discussed in turn below.

*1. Awareness of career and development opportunities has increased*

Increased exposure to potential career and development opportunities has enabled employees to be more comfortable with the outcomes of integration and reform. Initiatives such as career coaches and career paths outlined in the Blueprint for Integration and Plan for Integration have increased individuals’ awareness of benefits and opportunities.

*2. Collaboration opportunities have built effective working relationships.*

Combined meetings, information sessions and social activities between ACBPS and DIBP have supported effective ‘cross pollination’ and cross-agency networking.<sup>1</sup> Such activities have increased collaboration and built effective working relationships between employees from both organisations. Integrated teams have taken best practice from both organisations and merged them to achieve optimal outcomes on shared goals. Integrated teams are removing the ‘us and them’ mentality still evident in some areas of the workforce.

<sup>1</sup> Building One Organisation focus groups 2015; Building One Organisation survey 2015

3. *The workforce is willing to embrace change*

The workforce strongly believes that, as individuals, they are flexible and personally exhibit a willingness to embrace change.<sup>2</sup> This is seen by the workforce as integral to achievements so far.

4. *Communication (when it is regular and multi-channel) has contributed to increased employee awareness*

Communication, when content is informative, timing is appropriate and regular, and feedback opportunities are provided (i.e. all-staff emails and weekly newsletters), has contributed to employee awareness and understanding of integration and reform outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Multiple communication channels, such as roadshows, professional launches for the Blueprint for Integration and the Plan for Integration, online newsletters and email messages, have provided employees with informative material regarding progress.<sup>1</sup> Feedback channels such as 'Have your say', pulse surveys and focus groups have allowed employees to provide feedback, ask questions and have enabled genuine consultation.<sup>2</sup> Communication in both ACBPS and DIBP has become more open and supports employees by allowing for genuine two-way dialogue.

**Each barrier is discussed in turn below.**

1. *Lack of clarity around roles creates uncertainty and reduced productivity*

Lack of clarity around structure, roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and reporting has caused confusion and discontent within the workforce. The workforce believes productivity is reduced due to employees focussing on efforts to navigate the change and understand its implications instead of everyday work.<sup>3</sup>

Integration of teams, whilst creating positive interactions between agencies, has increased confusion around team accountabilities. Employees are unsure who is responsible for what or who to go to for help. Some teams are aware that others are doing similar work but are unclear where they sit in the new organisational structure and unclear how best to engage with them.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Communication (when absent or not relevant) has decreased employee engagement*

Communication, when regular and multi-channel, is considered by the workforce as an enabler to integration and reform. However, when it is absent or not relevant (i.e. it has high level messaging but little targeted information), communication has decreased employee engagement and is considered by the workforce as a barrier to integration and reform.<sup>3</sup>

Communications thus far have failed to provide relevant, targeted detail that is satisfactory to employees. This is particularly true for regions outside of ACT.<sup>3</sup> Some of the workforce have felt overwhelmed by too many high-level, untargeted all-staff communications. Key messages in emails are lost in large bodies of text and are not effectively disseminated to employees by their leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> Building One Organisation survey 2015

<sup>3</sup> Building One Organisation focus groups 2015; Building One Organisation survey 2015

Reasons behind key decisions are not shared, which creates scepticism that leaders are not being transparent, or even honest, with the workforce.<sup>3</sup>

*3. A number of barriers are impacting employee morale*

Morale in the organisation has been negatively impacted by the other barriers to integration and reform described here. In addition, physical relocations and leadership changes have also contributed to a decrease in employee morale and engagement.<sup>4</sup>

*4. The workforce believes senior leaders do not trust them*

Some of the workforce believes that senior leaders do not trust them. The workforce generally does not feel encouraged to take accountability for their own actions and decisions; neither do they feel supported to raise questions or concerns with their leaders. Indeed, some employees are worried about potential repercussions if they do, particularly around new integrity requirements such as drug and alcohol testing.

*5. Enterprise Agreement negotiations have caused uncertainty and concern*

Protracted negotiations for the new Enterprise Agreement have created uncertainty and concern from both DIBP and ACBPS. The workforce is worried about loss of entitlements, salary freezes and potential requirements for additional duties, and wants a quick but fair resolution. There is particular concern that an agreement will not be reached by 1 July 2015. Communicating the progress of negotiations will help alleviate concern.

*6. Ineffective or inefficient system integration has decreased productivity*






Lack of system integration is inhibiting successful collaboration within integrated teams, particularly in relation to people management (i.e. Human Resources Information Systems, leave requests). Current 'work-arounds' are not always effective, nor efficient. 'Work-arounds', coupled with the requirement to navigate multiple systems, have decreased productivity. It is unclear whether all current systems have been documented, or whether consideration has been given to which systems are the most appropriate to adopt (taking the best from either agency).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Building One Organisation pulse survey 2015

<sup>5</sup> Building One Organisation pulse focus groups 2015; Building One Organisation pulse survey 2015

**The workforce identified five key areas where the organisation should focus attention in future:**

	<p><b>Invest in targeted communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a targeted communication approach</li> <li>• Assist leaders to extract key messages to disseminate effectively with their teams</li> <li>• Support ELS to deliver messages face to face</li> <li>• Continue portfolio communication and feedback channels, for example: roadshows; Reform News; Border Force Bulletins; Have your say; Pulse checks</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Ramp up collaboration opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to integrate teams</li> <li>• Identify and create opportunities to collaborate, share information and network with each other</li> <li>• Look for examples of great results through collaboration and recognise</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Fast track career/development opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simplify the process</li> <li>• Focus on targeted, actionable career planning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for mobility across vocational streams</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Support leaders to role-model, value, trust and listen to staff</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives outlined in the V&amp;B Strategy and Leadership Strategy</li> <li>• Ensure every level of leader is clear about their accountabilities</li> <li>• Support leaders to build their leadership capability</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Clarify the vision and benefits of integration and reform</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share workforce input</li> <li>• Explain decisions</li> <li>• Outline benefits, with an immigration, customs and border protection lens</li> <li>• Outline the plan to get there</li> </ul>

Each is discussed in turn below.

*1. Invest in targeted communication*

Investment in improved, more relevant and more targeted communication was seen by employees across the organisation as overwhelmingly critical to success.<sup>5</sup> Long, wordy emails can swamp the key messages within, which results in team leaders being unable to quickly identify critical information to disseminate key messages to their teams.

A targeted communication approach with separate information for each vocational stream, Group, Division, region and Branch will improve leaders' ability to identify value for their team and improve understanding organisation wide. Targeted communications may consist of concise, relevant information that is new information for the reader.

Important information is best delivered face to face where possible, from all levels of leaders including the Executive. Team leaders may require additional support to help them facilitate regular conversations with their teams and better disseminate information to their staff.

High-level portfolio communication on whole of organisation topics remains important. Similarly, feedback channels to consult on whole of organisation topics are critical for successful integration and reform. Employees appreciate regular opportunities to provide feedback or have their questions answered. Channels that have been successful to date include roadshows, Together We're Talking, Border Force Bulletins, 'Have your say' and Pulse checks.

## *2. Ramp up collaboration opportunities*

Integrated teams have successfully commenced work on shared goals and combined processes. Employees have embraced their new colleagues and are quickly removing the 'us and them' mentality still evident in some non-integrated areas of the workforce. Further integration of teams will continue to cement working relationships and provide increased stability for the workforce.

Both integrated and unblended teams will benefit from ongoing opportunities for cooperation, information sharing and networking, such as combined meetings, information sessions and social activities between employees. Great examples of results driven by collaboration exist throughout the organisation. Public recognition of these results, along with examples of role modelled behaviours will encourage others to embrace opportunities to collaborate.

## *3. Fast track career/development opportunities*

The workforce has been responsive to career planning and development initiatives, including career coaching sessions and career information in both the Blueprint and Plan for Integration. Employees are now more aware of opportunities and prospective career paths, however the process to move between roles feels overly complicated to the workforce.<sup>6</sup> Mobility across streams will be increased if the recruitment and transfer process is simplified. Further, a continued focus on targeted, actionable career planning will contribute to increased mobility, a more motivated workforce and better equipped employees.

## *4. Support leaders to role-model behaviours and value, trust and listen to employees*

Encouraging leaders to actively role model the organisational behaviours and lead by example will assist the organisation embed lasting cultural change. Increased support for leaders may be required to: ensure that every level of leader is clear about their leadership accountabilities; further develop their leadership capabilities; and help leaders lead their employees through the integration process.

Encouraging an environment where leaders effectively support people, value and listen to their opinions, and empower them to be accountable for their actions and decisions may improve the level to which employees are inspired by their leaders.

## *5. Clarify the vision and benefits of integration and reform*

Employees generally understand the strategic direction of the new department, however some struggle to identify their roles in the mission and vision statements. This is particularly true for

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<sup>6</sup> Building One Organisation pulse focus groups 2015; Building One Organisation pulse survey 2015

employees in humanitarian aid or visa processing roles, who feel there is a need to balance these elements with border protection.<sup>7</sup>

Sharing a clear explanation of the vision development process and the level of workforce input will help individuals relate their work to the vision, as will an explanation of the reasons behind the choice of words.

Employees also struggle to see the benefits that the new organisation will bring to their work or their current organisation. They may gain some clarity from a clear outline of the benefits that the new organisation will bring, with an immigration, customs and border protection lens, along with a well-articulated plan to get there.

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<sup>7</sup> Building One Organisation pulse survey 2015