ANTHROPOGENISIS
Research & Design Anthropology

Truth and Reconciliation

How Anthropology can Improve Relationships between Consultants and Contractors

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Executive Summary

The Queensland Infrastructure Industry has a culture problem.

Some of this problem originates from within the male-centric national culture and identity that exists in Australia, with the rest stemming from the organisational cultures of the companies and businesses that make up the industry.

There are certain aspects of Australia's male cultural identity, that have been described within academia as 'toxic masculinities'. These guide male behaviours and tend to be the root cause of some of the problems that have been identified by the workshops jointly organized by Queensland Major Contractors Association and Consult Australia. For example, the fear of being seen as weak or inferior by others leads some men to close up, become aggressive and refuse to cooperate or communicate effectively with those around them.

Most of the problems that stem from the organisational cultures centre around concepts such as communication, collaboration, trust, knowledge, risk assessment and value. This latter concept refers to the values placed upon having an active company culture, the values placed on training and educating staff and the values placed on creating strategic partnerships and reciprocal relationships with staff and stakeholders.

These cultural problems can be addressed and rectified if a number of steps are taken and considerations are made. Organisations have to examine their own company culture in order to determine what their problems are and where their own weaknesses lie. There is no 'one size fits all' solution. They have to communicate this with all of their stakeholders and agree on a plan of action that centres around a collective plan of cooperation. This means companies need to share pertinent knowledge and information with each other.

The industry should also try to find solutions by looking at, and examining, specific cultures that already deal with these concepts and that have already addressed many of these issues and problems. The Australian Defence Force was used as an example because it has to deal with Australian toxic masculinities amongst its recruits and does so successfully, using its understanding of many of the concepts discussed in this report and by creating a strong and active culture and identity. It is also important to look at, and examine, how other countries and cultures deal with the same and similar issues. All of this knowledge can be adapted to fit in with the Australian culture, company culture and the industry's goals.

While the QMCA/CA workshops largely centred around the problems that exist with the 'Tender' process and between 'Contractor' and 'Designer' it is our belief that the actual problems spread further and run deeper than this and encompass the whole of the industry.

1.   Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Queensland Major Contractors Association (**QMCA**) in conjunction with Consult Australia (**CA**).

QMCA represents the interest of the Civil Contracting industry in Queensland.

Consult Australia represents the interest of consulting companies in the built environment nationally.

QMCA and CA have commenced a process including a number of workshops (**Truth and Reconciliation Workshops)** to investigate ways to create a more balanced, positive culture within the construction industry by improving the working relationships between Consultants and Contractors. Anthropogenesis was engaged to provide a cultural and anthropological view of the inherent problems and how they may be addressed.

The workshops were conducted over two days (20th Nov. & 28th Nov. 2019) and were informed by a survey of QMCA and CA members prior to the workshops.

The first workshop further defined the aims of the process as follows:

- ***To improve relationships, increasing collaboration or reducing disputes to improve the sustainability at a business interaction level***
- ***To enable an open discussion on current industry issues, but more specifically issues directly relating to the relationship between contractors and design consultants***
- ***To develop ideas, solutions and action plans on how to achieve an ideal*** "***Future State" of the industry with regard to the relationship between contractors and design consultants***

This ambitious plan to change the culture within the industry can be achieved through the understanding and consideration of a number of concepts such as; Culture, Social Values, Motivation, Reciprocity (reciprocal relationships) and Productivity. Attention to these fundamentals is vital when implementing any kind of cultural change. They must be understood in order to affect positive change to culture and behaviour.

The report is divided into four sections, the first being this introduction.

Section two provides a simple definition of the term *culture*, followed by a brief definition of a stereotypical Australian national culture and identity and the problems that such stereotypes cause.

The third section takes a closer look at some of the problems the report uncovered and recommends solutions.

Finally, section four provides brief definitions of some of the key concepts that must be considered and understood if the industry wishes to make positive changes and rectify current problems.

2.0 Defining Culture

Put simply 'culture', as a social scientific concept, is a shared set of beliefs, practices and symbols that unite people and bring them together to form distinct social groups. Most cultures are comprised of smaller subcultures that are usually variations of the larger parent culture. Regardless of the size of the group, whether national cultures, ethnic cultures or organisational cultures, members must share some of the same values, knowledge, language, history, myths, traditions, symbols, rituals, rules and geography. The more they share the stronger the group cohesion will be.

Cultures are organic in their nature and change and evolve from generation to generation. They are influenced by the individuals who live them, and they are shaped and affected by geography, environment, ontologies, language and technologies.

It is an intricate web of interconnectedness. Understanding the specific cultural settings and the environment of a problem goes a long way to understanding it better and making informed decisions about how to find a solution to rectify problems that may exist.

2.1 Australian National Culture and Male Identity

Much has been written about Australian Culture and Identity in recent years, in academia and the popular press. While white Australian culture has its roots in Anglo-Celtic culture it has developed its own distinct flavour over the last 230 years. Its citizens are described as 'friendly', 'liberal', 'egalitarian', 'relaxed', 'humorous', 'tolerant', and fond of sports and a drink[1] .

Whilst most of these cultural stereotypes date from the 1950s and the foundations of Australia as a penal colony[2], they persist today. Despite the influx of immigrants from the Mediterranean, Asia and the Middle East since the 1960s, that image of Australian cultural identity has remained largely unaffected in popular imaginations both at home and abroad.[3] This is not to say that the arrival of these non Anglo-Celtic Australians has not changed the face of Australian culture, it can be seen in the food Australians now eat, the clothes they wear and the language they speak, but with government institutions, many national holidays and popular sports rooted in the British past, it is easy to see why real cultural evolutions are ignored.

Most national cultures and identities traditionally originate from masculine stereotypes, and Australia is no different. In the 1950s when Australians were

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[1] Bryson 2000, Crawford 2003, Toby 2013, Smith 2018, Muir 2019, Salt 2019
[2] Ward, [1958] 1966
[3] Hudson & Bolton, 1997

predominantly of Anglo-Celtic descent, historians such as R.B. Ward described the Australian national identity as one partly based on the myth of the rugged bushman from the outback; a rough and ready, foul-mouthed improviser who likes a drink and a gamble, a man who believed in hard work and that everyone should get a fair go, sceptical of authority and strangers but a loyal friend to his mates.[4]

More recently Callum Scott described Australian national identity as "built upon hard masculine foundations, using the harsh nature of the bush to exemplify these character traits".[5] Today, in the 21st century, little has changed and the idea that men have to be tough, stoic, aggressive, competitive, honest, reliable, hardworking, funny, self-reliant, heterosexual and promiscuous still persists.[6] While Australian men are informal and relaxed even with strangers, they are also distrustful of the abilities of others and usually expect people to step up and prove their worth especially in a working environment.

Because part of Australian cultural identity aligns with sport, Australians shun celebrities other nations hold as icons such as scientists, writers, musicians, and artists, in favour of athletes with the exception of entertainers. Australian national icons tend to be swimmers, cricket players, rugby league and union stars and Australian rules football players.[7] The extreme physical and violent nature of the latter three sports further fuel the idea of Australian masculinities. The players are expected to put their bodies on the line, to dish out and take big hits without showing signs of pain or weakness. In cricket, a sport without physical contact, verbal attacks in the form of '*sledging*' and viciously aimed balls at the opposing batsman ensure that the game is in keeping with certain masculine ideas.

2.2 Toxic Masculinity

It is these societal expectations and cultural stereotypes that are causing problems, not only for men, but for Australian society at large. In recent years several articles have appeared in both the popular press and from academic circles that throw light on a phenomenon known as 'toxic masculinity'. Toxic masculinity is defined as the narrow, traditional, or stereotypical norms of masculinity which shape many boys and men's lives. They include the expectations that boys and men must be active, aggressive, tough, daring, and dominant.[8] It is a term coined by psychologist Shepherd Bliss of the *Mythopoetic Mens*

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[4] Ward, [1958] 1966
[5] Scott 2011
[6] Flood 2018, TMP & Flood 2018, Winton 2018, Willis 2019
[7] Broman 2005, Saad, 2011
[8] TMP & Flood 2018, Flood 2018, Bar 2019, Jotanovic 2019

Movement in the 1980s to differentiate between positive masculine traits and those that are damaging.[9]

Recent Australian research, commissioned by the Jesuit Social Services: Melbourne and conducted by Hannah Irvine and Michael Livingstone of *The Men's Project,* and Dr. Michael Flood of *Queensland University of Technology,* argue that the societal pressures that exist around being a 'real man' in Australia are strong and can lead to problems from an early age. 67% of respondents in the study reported that they had been told since they were children that men behave in a certain way. It is not uncommon to hear both men and women telling young males that '*big boys don't cry*'. Such utterances can make it difficult for boys and men to show their true emotions and as a result many of them often transform those emotions into aggression, which on the one hand is an expected male behaviour and on the other is detrimental to them and those around them.

How real is the problem of toxic masculinities in Australia? It is serious enough for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and State Governments to take note. Suicides have increased dramatically over the last 10 years with male suicides three times higher than those amongst females in the country.[10]

According to a report produced by Anne Goyne for the Department of Defence (2017) suicides amongst males serving in the ADF are 53% lower than in the rest of the Australian male population, but rise to 13% above the national average for veterans, demonstrating that when men have strong support networks around them they respond better to stresses. The report also argues that suicide is the leading cause of death of middle aged and elderly men in Australia. This figure stood at 2349 men who committed suicide in 2017 according the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2017). Goye adds that male socialisation not only increases the risk of suicide but that it also increases the risk of death and injury and makes men more likely to be the perpetrators of violent crime and homicides. This latter point is backed by figures collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology and Crime Statistics Australia showing that the clear majority of homicides, violent assaults, abductions, robberies and sexual assaults are perpetrated by males.[11]

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[9] Bliss 1995, Snyder 2017, Barr 2019
[10] Lifeline 2015
[11] Goye 2017:23, CSA 2017

3.0   The Problem

The *QMCA/CA workshops* identified several problems within Queensland's infrastructure sector that are having adverse effects on the Industry, on the companies that make up the industry and on individual employees.

The problems identified relate to a variety of interconnected concepts such as: *Values, Trust*, *Professional Knowledge*, *Responsibility, Expectations, Communication, Collaboration* and *Behaviour.*

While it was suggested that these concepts are the cause of the problems within the industry, I would suggest that they are merely the symptoms of a larger problem that centres around culture. The concepts that were highlighted during the workshops and behaviours observed on construction sites across South East Queensland, are shaped and influenced by culture. In short, the industry has a culture problem, and in this instance the problems stem from both the national male culture and individual organisational cultures.

3.1   Culture Problem

As noted previously, Australian men are expected to behave according to a certain set of cultural values focused around what it means to be a man and that these behaviours are damaging to both men and those around them. Being such a male centric industry, it is therefore not surprising that these behaviours can be observed on construction sites and in businesses across the building industry. These behaviours can be seen in the way workers interact with each other, how they talk to each other and the language they use. They can be seen in the way teams are formed, how they operate internally and how they collaborate with other teams, inside and outside of their own organisation.

Research on Australian culture within the working environment indicates, it is quite normal for Australian men to view strangers with a certain amount of suspicion when they first meet. I have only encountered this lack of trust in the workplace where it is centred on the other newcomer's professional competence and requires them to step up and demonstrate their abilities and qualities as a worker.

3.2   Organisational Culture

Of course, not all of the problems outlined in the report can be blamed on the national culture. Some of the problems that were identified also stem from the individual organisational cultures, or lack of them. Again, the problems centre

around concepts that relate to *knowledge*, *behaviour*, *collaboration* and *communication* and are shaped and influenced by social value systems. One of the most obvious problems within the industry is the reluctance of many Australian companies to invest in training their own staff. The common argument is that '*it is a waste of money because the staff will leave once they've been trained*'. Australian companies prefer to recruit overseas applicants, who possess the desired qualifications and experience rather than train their own employees. Unfortunately, such attitudes are a part of the problem and shape organisational cultures in a negative way.

Failing to invest in the training of staff, which includes investing in apprenticeships and continuous professional development, means that companies not only struggle to control the skill sets of their employees but also the quality of the work or the professional standards that they expect from them. Businesses that fail to train their own staff also miss out on an opportunity to instill and promote specific company values that may include professional pride, high work ethics, the importance of teamwork, attention to detail or communication skills.

It is important to keep in mind that cultures must be taught, lived and reified daily for them to exist and thrive. Failing to do so within any organisation means that employees do not always share the same value systems as their co-workers, which can make cooperation difficult. No one understands the importance of teamwork and collaboration better than the military and it is one of the reasons why they place such emphasis on training their staff to operate at high levels and as members of teams.[12]

The Australian Defence Force (ADF), for example, not only teaches its service personnel the necessary military skills required to be a functioning soldier, it also teaches everyone the values and expected modes of behaviour demanded of them at all times. During the process of militarisation recruits are taught the importance of personal responsibility, the importance of professionalism, the importance of planning and of paying attention to the details. They are also taught about the importance of working as a member of a team, which is vital to success of any military.

The Defence Force understands that sharing the same values improves cohesion within and between the units and services. It is vital to function and essential for any kind of cooperation. Emphasis is placed on personal motivation and in maintaining high standards.

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[12] Simons 1998; Kirke 2008b, 2009b, 2010b

Adapting the methods taken from the British Armed Forces, the ADF has become a master at creating these kinds of social bonds amongst young Australian males (and more recently females). They have come to understand that creating a strong operational culture requires cohesion and that means they must create solid group identities based on a shared set of values and trust. This in turn reinforces their sense of belonging and subsequently the group identity.

The ADF has successfully harnessed the very male culture that has been identified with causing several social problems, including some of the problems within the Queensland Infrastructure sector. The Defence Forces are proof that it is possible to change cultural behaviours and to get to people to work together and cooperate to extremely high levels.

Beyond the military there are a number of countries that place great value on training and educating their own workforce. Germany is the economic powerhouse of Europe and one of the leading economies world. However, what many people do not realise is why German industry is so successful.

The Germans produce some of the world's most iconic brands. *Made in Germany* has become a symbol of quality and workmanship around the world that has fuelled the German economy. To achieve such a dominant position, the Germans invest heavily in apprenticeships and have been doing so since the middle ages, '*It really is a cultural thing!*'[13] The system the Germans have created, is known as Vocational Education and Training (VET) or the dual system.[14]

The main characteristic of the dual system is cooperation between small and medium sized companies, and publicly funded vocational schools that is regulated by law. Trainees in the dual system typically spend part of each week at a vocational school and the other part at a company, or they may spend longer periods at each place before alternating. Dual training usually lasts two to three-and-a-half years.

German apprenticeships are highly sought after and are viewed by some on an equal footing with a bachelor's degree. Companies like Mercedes, Siemens or Bosch receive tens of thousands of applications each year for a limited number of positions. The lucky few are guaranteed an apprenticeship with an industry leader and the possibility of a permanent position after the successful completion of their training. German businesses train their staff to ensure that they perform according to the company's values and work ethics. Employees

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[13] Tremblay, et.al. 2003; Niranjan 2018
[14] Deissinger, et. al . 2005; Walden et.al. 2011; BMBF 2019

are expected to work hard and demonstrate a strong work ethic, initiative and attention to detail at all times. Organisations expect staff to represent them and the company's culture and values continually. This is how they ensure consistently high standards of their product and their modes of production.

4.0   Charting a way forward: Basic concepts of culture

When trying to address the problems highlighted in this report, there are a number of concepts that need to be understood and taken into consideration. Only by understanding the problems in the entirety is it possible to make informed decisions.

Too often decisions are made based on assumptions rather than facts, which can be costly, both in time and money. To avoid such issues, it is essential to conduct research based on qualitative methodologies that have been developed specifically to make sense of human-centric behaviours. Conducting an ethnographical study to understand the organisational culture will also help to determine and understand the exact nature of the problems, which will ultimately help in finding lasting solutions to the problems.

Each organisation needs to understand its own company culture and how that culture affects the motivation and productivity of its employees. Company values and achievable KPIs need to be established that promote professionalism, teamwork and communication. In order for any of this to happen the stakeholders must create strategic partnerships and enter into reciprocal relationships with each other.

Organisations also need to recruit the right staff. It is vital to have individuals who will buy into the company culture and values. Employees need to be ambitious, self-motivated and enjoy working closely with others if the industry wants to eradicate the kind of problems identified in this report. This might mean that in some instances it is more important to hire someone with the right personal attributes than with the right qualifications and experience.

4.1 Values

The idea that social and cultural integrations are based on a shared set of values has been central to a lot of anthropological theories over the last century. Values are also central to the concept of culture. Value means a set of 'principles and standards of behaviour' as well as 'a judgement of worth or importance'.

Value systems are influenced and determined by the cultures that create them and are viewed by many as a basic requirement for any kind of social cohesion and integration. However, while this is might appear to be true at first glance, there are also plenty of examples of the existence of multiple, internally contradictory and conflicting values and value systems within a single culture, and there are anthropologists who argue that 'value systems' in themselves are not strong or powerful concepts but merely expressions of other forces at work.

Whatever the theory, there can be no doubt that shared values facilitate with group cohesion.

Motivation should not solely focus on increasing productivity it should also focus on motivating employees to buy into the company culture, and that means having an active culture, one that is lived and reified daily. For that to happen everyone within the organisation has to know how to behave, which means knowing the social rules and understanding them, they have to know what to do and how.

There must be a shared narrative and a common language as well as symbols and values, in order to create a cohesive group. This is how children are socialised to be members of given group or society. It is also how the Armed Forces militarise civilians and in some countries, it is how apprentices and employees are trained.

For individuals to want to be members of the group there has to be some benefit, whether real or perceived, be it security, prestige, money or all of the above.

Identities are shaped by what a person or organisation does as well as how they do it and why they do it. To improve relationships and trust across the industry, there needs to be agreement on a desired set of industry values and behaviours and then action taken by individual companies to support these.

4.2 Risk

Risk is defined by culture. It is the product of uncertainty and is linked to knowledge and trust. Without knowledge, risks cannot be assessed and trust cannot be established. Throughout history humans have tried to mitigate risk and uncertainty through the use of religion and magic. People have prayed, made sacrifices and cast spells in order to achieve favourable outcomes for their endeavours.[15]

Today, it sometimes seems like little has changed, and while most of us have removed 'magic' and 'religious beliefs' from the equation, and replaced them with science, there is still the problem that many people base their decision making on 'assumptions'.

In western industrialised countries, people try to assess risk through the acquisition of knowledge. The greater the knowledge a person or group possesses of a particular subject, the lower some of the risks tend to be, but the

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[15] Alaszewski 2015

risks can never be truly eradicated, merely mitigated. As Strier and Brenneis have argued "*a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing, presumably because insufficient knowledge can increase the dangers of risk-taking behavior*"[16]. At the same time factual knowledge is often confused with popular opinion, which can be swayed and influenced by social, political or economic motivations.

This is a problem for many industries in an age of litigation and blame. It requires individuals and organisations to assess their values, communicate more effectively and to share knowledge.

4.3 Motivation

It is believed and accepted within most economic philosophies that 'incentives' promote 'motivations'.[17]

According to mainstream academic thought, motivations can be broken into two main, or basic, types; *Intrinsic* and *Extrinsic*. Intrinsic motivations are those that can be defined as originating from within the individual, such as a genuine interest in the task one performs or professional pride in what one does.[18]

Extrinsic motivations, on the other hand, are generated externally from the person and take the form of a 'reward', whether in the shape of praise, financial incentives or physical awards, which Luthans calls monetary and non-monetary incentives.[19]

An article published by 'EHS Today', conducted by the **Society for Incentive & Travel Excellence Foundation** into 'How incentives work', argued that: "...*tangible incentives dramatically increase work performance by an average of 22* percent." (Smith, 2001). The study argued that 'incentive programmes', aimed at individuals, saw an increase in productivity of up to 27%, while programmes aimed at team performances increased productivity by up to 45%.[20]

...employees must be motivated through adequate incentives, plans and reward systems and this will invariably encourage them to be proactive and have [the] right attitude to work, thereby promote organizational productivity".

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[16] Strier & Brenneis 2014

[17] Gibbons 1997; Lazear 2000; Smith 2001; Diener & Biswas 2002; Sezen 2002; Condly et al. 2003; Lawler, 2003; Mueller, 2011; Al-Nsour 2012; Dixit & Bhati 2012

[18] Ryan & Deci, 2000; Olubusayo et al. 2014

[19] Luthans 1998; Olubusayo et al. 2014

[20] Olubusayo et al. 2014

4.4 Crowding Out Theory

Crowding out theory posits that extrinsic motivators have the potential to crowd out intrinsic motivators. i.e., that internal desire or interest to perform a function is undermined by an offer or a reward of some kind.[21]

While many economists refute this argument and insist that incentives clearly work as an extrinsic motivator,[22] many psychologists and sociologists disagree, arguing that rewards and punishments are often counterproductive or only prompt short term motivators that peter out once the extrinsic incentives have been removed.[23] However, while extrinsic motivators do work in some instances, they don't in others.

Monetary incentives have two kinds effects: the standard price effect, which makes incentivized behavior more attractive, and the indirect psychological effect."[24]

The authors of the cited reports argue that in some cases the *price effect* and the *psychological effect* work against each other resulting in a crowding out of the incentivised behaviour. In a 2006 paper by Benabou and Tirole, it is argued that individual agents have three main components to their motivations. These are: the value of extrinsic rewards, the enjoyment of doing certain activities and caring about personal image and that of others. The latter theme depends on the value the individual agent places on their own image and that of others, and vice versa.

There is evidence to suggest that extrinsic incentives work better when applied to teams and collectives rather than individuals.[25] The military is a prime example of such strategies, where rewards and punishments for individual behaviour are handed out to the collective. When individuals become responsible for the wellbeing of others teams bond together in reciprocal relationships that are both social and professional.

However, it must also be noted that people's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are shaped and influenced by their personality, agency, gender and cultural background. These factors can affect the cohesion of team or group performances.

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[21] Gneezy et.al. 2011:192
[22] Gibbons 1997; Lazear 2000
[23] Benabou & Trole 2003:489 Gneezy et.al. 2011:193
[24] Gneezy et.al. 2011:193
[25] Kirke 2008b, 2010b; Porter 2014

4.5 Reciprocity

Anthropologically, reciprocity is a mutual exchange or obligation between people in a social and economic system. The obligations that the participants share between one another can be broken into 3 types:[26]

- **Generalised reciprocity** (giving without expectations)

- **Balanced reciprocity** (giving with the expectation of an equal value in return)

- **Negative reciprocity** (giving with the intention of gaining a value over the other)

'*Generalised reciprocity* can be found between family members and close friends who give to each other without the need to immediately return an item or service of equal value, whereas '*balanced reciprocity'* is what one would expect to participate in when shopping for goods or when involved in a bartering system.

'*Negative reciprocity*', on the other hand, is usually found in low paying jobs where the wage doesn't reflect the labour provided, or in situations where a worker is expected to work extra hours for free. This kind of relationship has been on the increase in recent times due to Global Financial Crisis and the austerity that ensued. It is a practice that can be found in the many Asian countries, especially in Japan and South Korea, where many workers often work an extra 80 to 100 hours of unpaid overtime every month. While this is less common in Europe and North America it is on the increase.

4.6 Productivity

Productivity is linked to profitability and is affected by motivation, which in turn is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic incentives. Productivity drops when personnel work over eight hours per day. Errors and accidents go up dramatically after 10 hours of work.[27]

A 2017 study by Nakata demonstrated the link between long hours, depression and low productivity due to health-related issues among Japanese employees in small and medium sized businesses. Research conducted in South Africa also reported on workplace depression and the effects it has on productivity.[28]

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[26] Sahlins 1965
[27] Galinsky et al. 2004; Pencavel 2014
[28] Stander et al. 2016

A study conducted by Evans-Lacko and Knapp (2016) showed the same trends amongst workers in Brazil, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, South Africa, and the USA.

It is not only depression or other medical conditions that reduce productivity in the workplace. One of Europe's biggest online discount app. companies, vouchercloud.com polled 1989 office workers in the UK regarding their online habits and discovered that the average UK office worker spent less than three hours per day involved in productive work, spending the rest of the time engaged in other activities such as searching social media, reading the news, chatting with colleagues, going for smoke breaks or making food and drinks, amongst other things.

It should be noted that while vouchercloud's poll found extremely low productivity amongst UK office workers, the same cannot be said for workers in other countries. It's known that culture plays a major factor in a nation's work ethic and productivity. Japan and Germany are well known for being two of the world's major hi tech producing nations, however, when it comes to productivity the Germans appear to be ahead of the Japanese.

While the Japanese are famous for their strong work ethic and long working hours, the Germans manage to produce as much as they do, but in less time. How is this possible? Most Germans currently work between 41.5 and 35 hours per week,[29] their Japanese counterparts, on the other hand, are clocking up those hours plus up to 100 hours per month extra in overtime, which is adding to a rise in suicide rates and not necessarily an increase in productivity.[30]

Germans are very strict about habits and conduct in the workplace, and being at work really does mean 'being at work', and working, while at the same time avoiding unnecessary distractions[31]. Germans aren't very often late, don't partake in gossip or chatting whilst in the office, and communicate in such a direct manner that it is often seen as rude by outsiders. Private emails, social media and personal phone calls aren't only frowned upon by supervisors but also work colleagues. However, when it comes to productivity the results speak for themselves as Germany continues to be the economic engine of Europe. Nor is it all about work. Germans are fiercely protective of their 'free time', with many Germans being members of sports and social clubs. The government

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[29] Finegan, 2017; Paul, 2014
[30] BBC 2017; Nakata 2017
[31] Paul, 2014

has also been considering banning employees from answering work related emails after 6 pm to further enforce workers' rights to free time.

What has to be understood here is that working more hours does not equate to a greater level of production or a better product.

4.7 Case Study

Perpetual Guardian

One example of a company that decided to transform its organisational culture and adopt 'balanced reciprocal relationships' with its employees is New Zealand based company, Perpetual Guardian. In 2018 the company's founder, Andrew Barnes, decided to reduce the working hours for 200 of his staff, from 40 hours a week to 32 hours a week. In February 2018 he gave his teams one month to prepare for the trial, during which time the staff got together to ensure that effective measures were in place to enable them to be more productive and that the requirements of each team were adequately assessed. The trial commenced on the 5th March 2018 and ran until mid April, resulting in an astounding success.[32]

Barnes noted the importance of communicating to staff, from the start, that the relationship between the employer and employees was one of reciprocity. He wanted his staff to be more productive and in return he was willing to give them one extra day off per week and continue to pay them for five days. This example illustrates an *extrinsic motivator* for staff being offered a better work-life balance in return for an increase in daily productivity. Helping all members of staff understand that the success of the initiative was based on team work and individual time management practices have had a positive effect on the staff at *Perpetual Guardian,* according to Barnes. This has further been reinforced by making the '*gift*'a 'team 'based reward, which is a practice that is also favoured by many militaries around the world, precisely because of its effectiveness at improving cooperation and cohesion.

Perpetual Guardian has demonstrated that reducing office hours to 32 hours a week is possible if the KPIs are clearly defined and are achievable. This requires the staff to pull together as a team and to enter reciprocal relationships with each other. They have to combine their knowledge and efforts in order to help each other if the 32-hour work week project is to be successful.

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[32] See Perpetual Guardian Website for further details about the 4 day week and the outcome of the trial https://www.perpetualguardian.co.nz/news/the-four-day-week-is-here

If the KPIs stop being met the hours return to the contractual 40. This prevents contracts having to be rewritten and protects the franchise owner.

Conclusion

The construction industry in Queensland has a culture problem.

It is a problem that is negatively impacting on the people who work in the industry and the performance of the industry as a whole. If not addressed it will also significantly affect the ability of companies within the industry to attract and retain the next generation of industry employees.

The problem is centred on 'toxic male masculinity' and the failure of companies and Clients within the industry to adequately realise the importance of and promote positive business culture.

This problem can only be addressed through a concerted effort by industry to identify the necessary cultural changes required within the industry and to put in place plans to achieve that change.

As major industry associations, QMCA and CA can both play a major role in facilitating this process.

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