

Education & How to Turn Around Your Organisation

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Driving back from the NSW Schools Bursars' Conference in Coffs Harbour, I had opportunity to listen to extended radio coverage of what Queensland was doing to shape education for the next 30 years. Over several hours, I listened to experts discuss what they believed the education sector needed.

The most significant take-away was this: 80% of future economic growth is dependent on the quality of education. It is by far the most important lever our society can pull to ensure our future success. This reminds me of a line from my favourite fictional drama, *West Wing*, where President Bartlett says, "Education is the silver bullet". Extending on this, learning and development programs can also deliver real growth and success for any organisation.

Another take-away from Queensland's education reform, with relevance for the broader economy, is what educators are trying to engender in students. What educators are trying to build in children is no different to what our society must strive to create and what we are working with our clients to develop:

- Resilience – being able to respond effectively to challenging situations
- Well-being – to be able to flourish and feel positive about yourself
- Adaptability – to keep learning and to respond positively to change

The third take-away centred on a discussion about turning around an under-performing school. Here again, the lessons are instructive for the broader world of work and for turning around any organisation. What are the characteristics of those schools that have shifted from under-performance to high performance? This is a question we often discuss with clients looking to turn around their businesses. Organisations that have succeeded are characterised by the following:

1. A new leader who brings a new vitality and new ideas and has a different leadership style;
2. New goals are set to 'raise-the-bar' and set higher standards for the organisation and for peoples' performance;
3. These new standards and expectations are communicated, they are understood and people are aligned to them. What is critical is that people understand what is required of them; and
4. People are given honest, accurate and timely feedback on their performance in relation to the new standards and expectations.

We work with many organisations to help lift the quality of their feedback. Research suggests that fair and accurate feedback from a knowledgeable source is the most simple and effective action an organisation can take to drive performance. It is worth remembering that the first rocket that went to the moon was on course for less than 5% of the time – the rest of the time it was correcting its course in response to feedback on its trajectory.



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