Driving performance through times of change

Professor Deborah Blackman

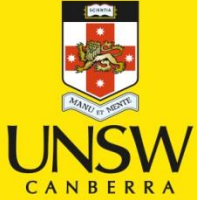**Public Service Research Group, UNSW Canberra**

Overview

- What is change and why does it fail
- Why link performance and change management
- Presenting conversational types
- Learning from the projects
- Conclusion

Performance Management

… a mechanism that underpins and integrates other management practices
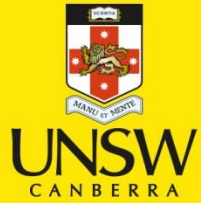
Why is High Performance so hard to attain

❑ Multiple perspectives

❑ Expectations

❑ Experience

❑ Communication styles

❑ Who knows what it looks like

❑ and more

How does culture grow

Culture
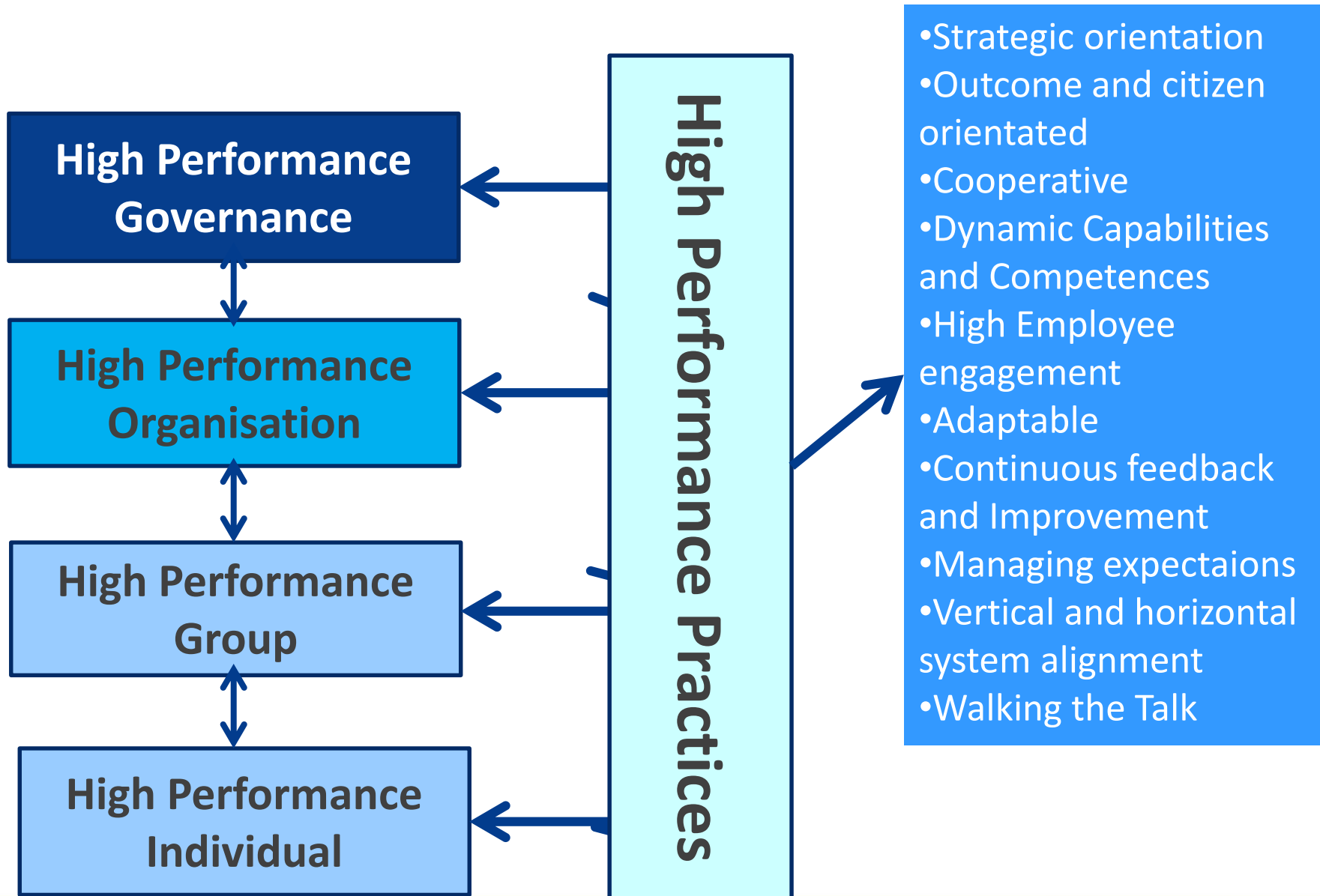
Identify Behavior

Reward

Norms

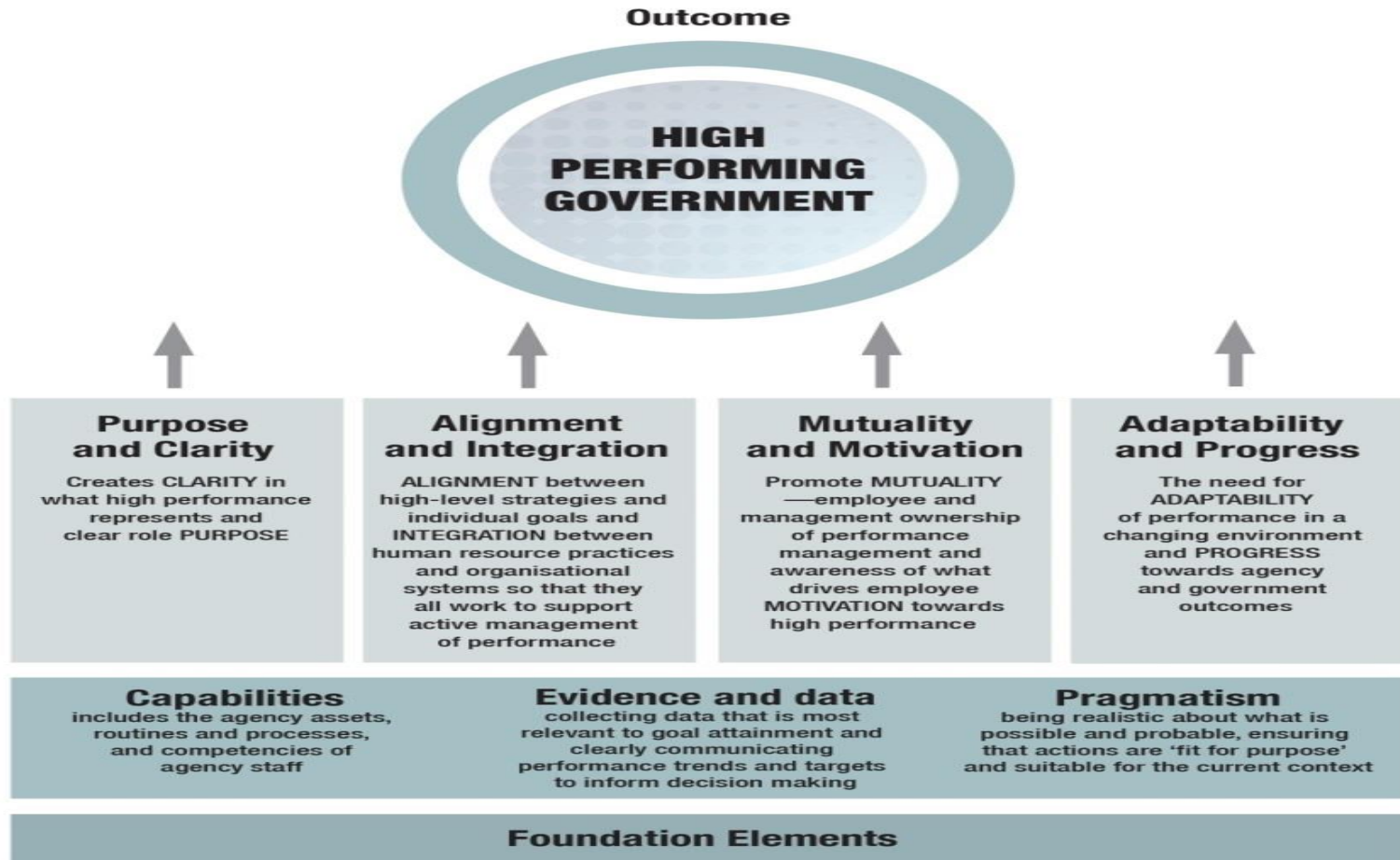# Characteristics of High Performing Organisations

❑ **Strategic Orientation and individual role clarity**

❑ **Outcome and Citizen Orientated**

❑ **Cooperative Partnerships**

❑ **Capabilities and Competences**

❑ **High Employee Engagement**

❑ **Ongoing feedback**

❑ **Management of expectations**

❑ **Continuous Learning and Improvement**

❑ **Vertical and Horizontal System Alignment**
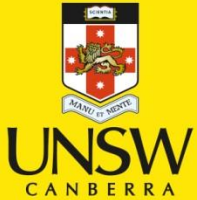
❑ **Walking the Talk**

A Framework for High Performance

High Performance Governance

High Performance Organisation

High Performance Group

High Performance Individual

High Performance Practices

- Strategic orientation
- Outcome and citizen orientated
- Cooperative
- Dynamic Capabilities and Competences
- High Employee engagement
- Adaptable
- Continuous feedback and Improvement
- Managing expectaions
- Vertical and horizontal system alignment
- Walking the Talk

A Framework for High Performance

Outcome

HIGH PERFORMING GOVERNMENT

Purpose and Clarity

Creates CLARITY in what high performance represents and clear role PURPOSE

Alignment and Integration

ALIGNMENT between high-level strategies and individual goals and INTEGRATION between human resource practices and organisational systems so that they all work to support active management of performance

Mutuality and Motivation

Promote MUTUALITY —employee and management ownership of performance management and awareness of what drives employee MOTIVATION towards high performance

Adaptability and Progress

The need for ADAPTABILITY of performance in a changing environment and PROGRESS towards agency and government outcomes

Capabilities
includes the agency assets, routines and processes, and competencies of agency staff

Evidence and data
collecting data that is most relevant to goal attainment and clearly communicating performance trends and targets to inform decision making

Pragmatism
being realistic about what is possible and probable, ensuring that actions are 'fit for purpose' and suitable for the current context

Foundation Elements

What is Change?

- To make the form, nature, content, future course, etc., of (something) different from what it is or from what it would be if left alone
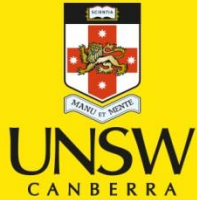
- To become different or undergo alteration

What matters about these definitions?

Perspectives of Change

❖ Structural-functionalism: *'the job of change agents is to align, fit or adapt organizations, through interventions, to an objective reality that exits "out there"'* (Ford, 1999).

❖ Constructivism: *'knowledge comes from the interaction of information with the context in which it is presented and … the individual's pre-existing knowledge'* (Ortony, 1993).

Perspectives of Change
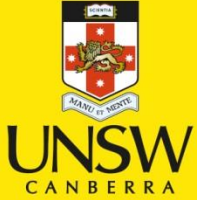
❖ A constructionist world is different from that of structural-functionalist in that a change is not a discrete entity that can be described and identified. Instead, it can be seen to be a series of conversations organised around a particular theme.

❖ '*It is more like experimental theatre, in that the script is being written while the play is being performed'* (Ford, 1999, p. 492).

Why Link Change to Conversations?
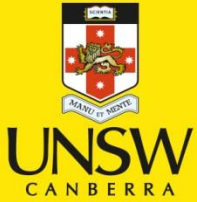
❖ Organization as a network of conversations interacting to creating reality for individuals.

❖ Performance conversations can support the development of new realities.

❖ Failure to perceive conversations as central to organisational change may contribute failure.

What do conversations need?
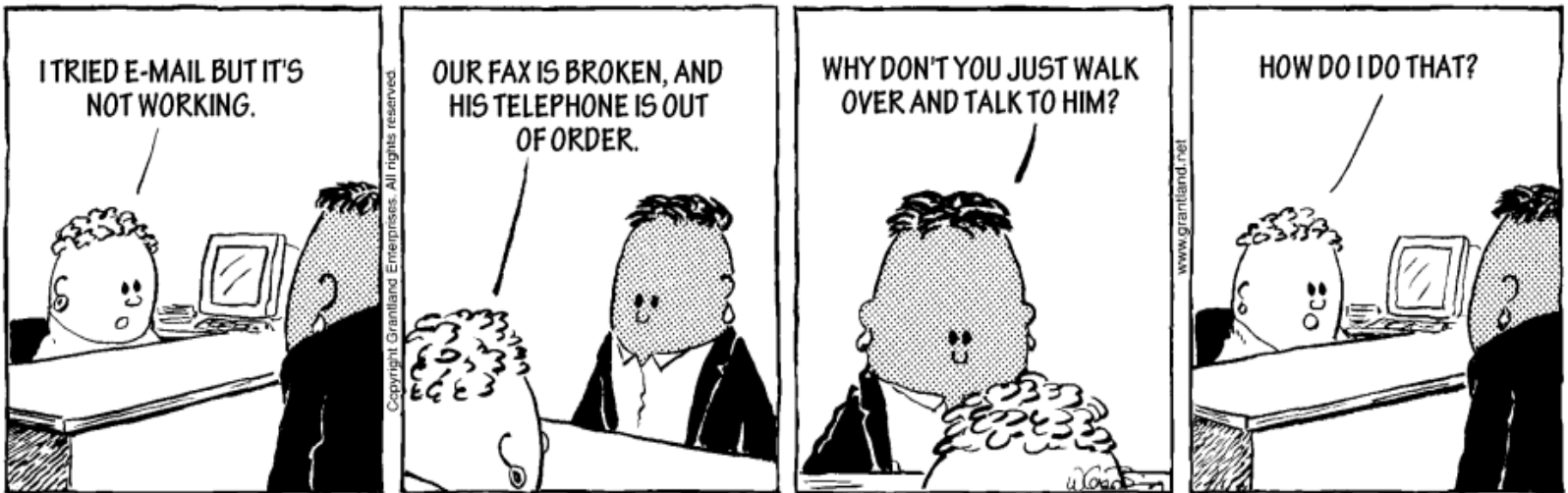
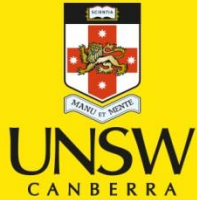# No Shared Understanding

Person 1

Person 2
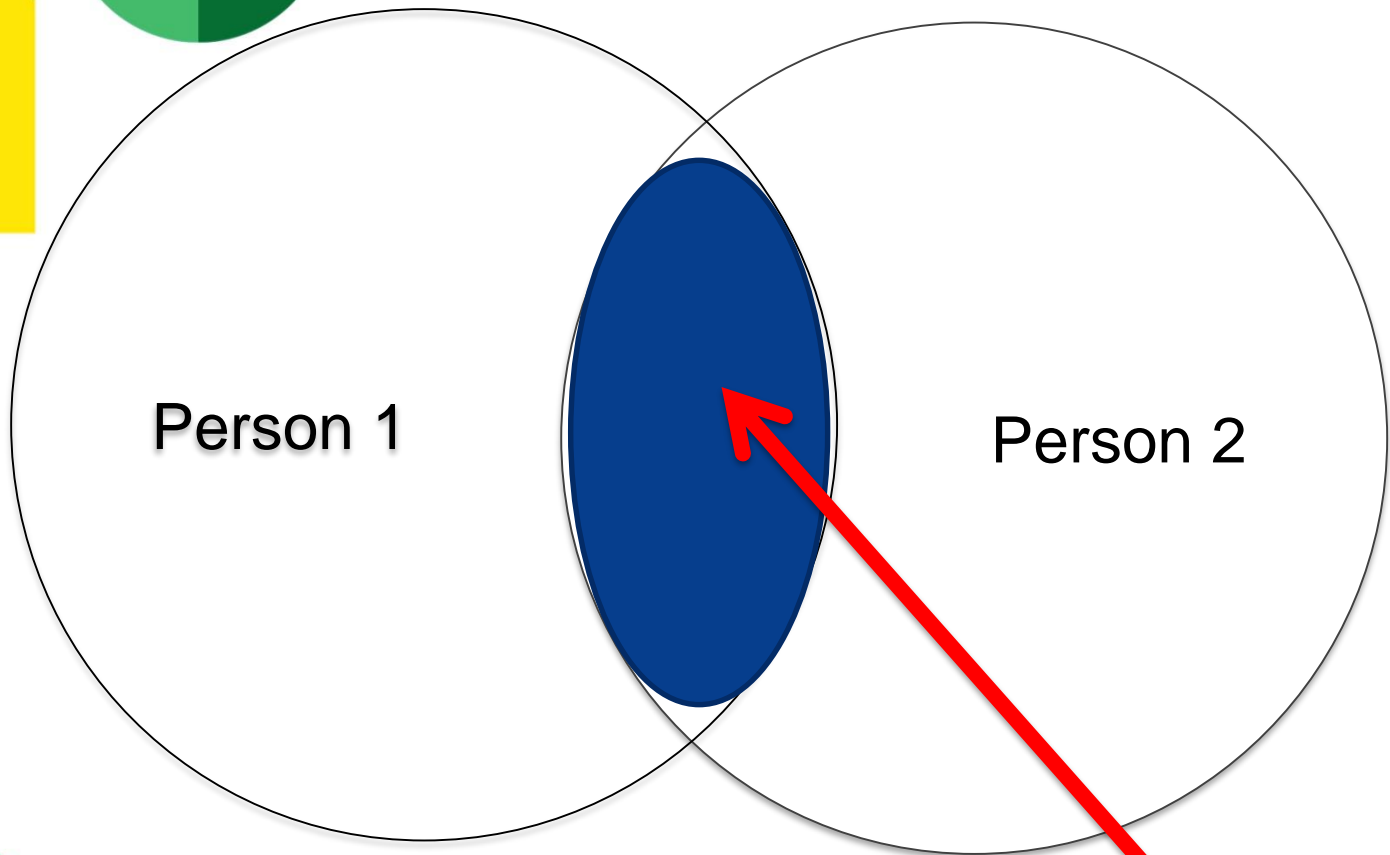
Shared Understanding

How do we change a conversation?

What do you want to be different?
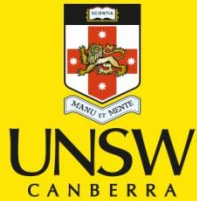
What might it look like if it works?

Types of Conversation
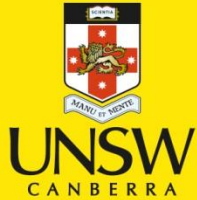
❖ **Initiative:** start changes, act as a new input or stimuli to the mental models, explain why, triggering ideas and suggesting the need for alternatives.

❖ **Understanding:** develop awareness and shared mental models of concepts and ideas.

❖ **Performance**: generate action, clarifying what will be different.

❖ **Closure**: provide completion, sustain changes made.

Initiative

Organisational Level: Senior managers determine why doing PM in terms of the required changes. Sets the capabilities required

Individual Level – Frame the conversation as a high performance setting. Be prepared based upon the organisational understanding and desired capability developments

# Types of Conversation – Applied to the Performance Management Process

Understanding

Organisational Level: Senior Managers share the direction they are setting with those who actually do PM and develop indicators based on the change outcome

Individual Level: Use the PM conversation to develop a shared view of what needs to be different and how it aligns to the desired change
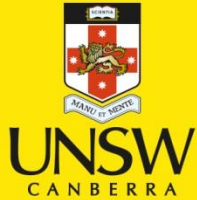
Performance

Organisational Level: Implement and Evaluate PM strategically linked directly to the desired change

Individual Level: Developing and evaluating on going targets through regular conversations
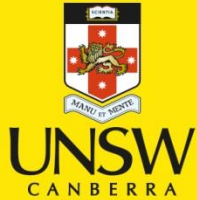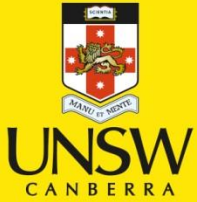
Conversations first, forms second

Closure

Organisational Level: Evaluate the change in capability: talking to middle managers **AND** look at the analytics. Start new plan

Individual Level: Review targets and discuss new behaviours. Seek positive stories **for** them and **from** them to help frame the future

Five Most Important Things I Have Learnt

- Need to know why you are doing it

- Need to know why you are doing it

- Need to know why you are doing it

- Need to know why you are doing it

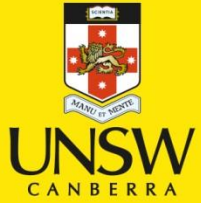- Need to know why you are doing it

Five Most Important Things I Have Learnt

- Strategically underused – link to change

- Needs to look at High Performance primarily

- Management not HR must drive PM so the conversations are valuable

- PM needs to be seen as core business with ongoing conversations

- PM should be 'tick' and 'flick'

Thank you

Questions?