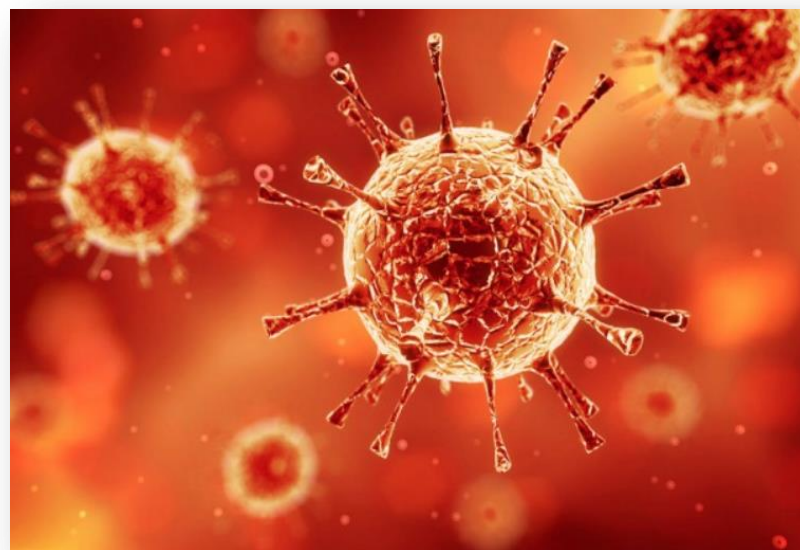




Image: Courtesy Sylvanvale Foundation

It begins and ends with workplace culture

COVID-19 & the Australian Disability Sector



**The sector is “traumatised”.
Pre-existing workplace culture issues were amplified
by urgent operational issues.**

APRIL 2020

“There are widespread perceptions that the disability workforce is being dangerously overlooked. Staff are extremely anxious...”

‘The Disability workforce and Covid-19: Initial experience of the outbreak’
April 2020 N Cortis, G Van Troon

What does this mean for culture?

JULY 2021

“We have largely been forgotten in the pandemic.
Our workers have not been granted essential worker status.
We were told to source our own PPE.
We are still at the back of the queue.”

Kate Macrae, CEO Able Australia.

What does this mean for culture?

WORKFORCE FRAGILITY

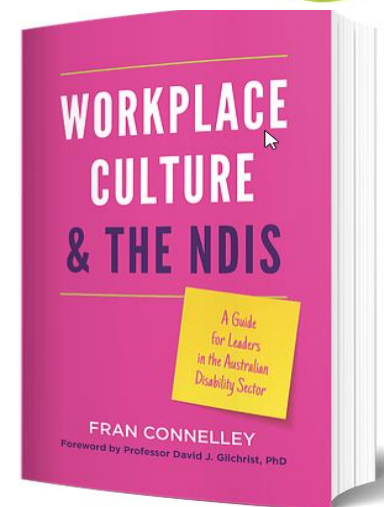
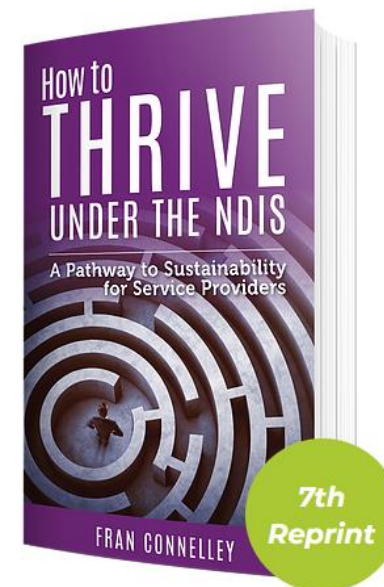
- **June 2020:** 20% DSWs could not pay a bill, or their mortgage or rent, or went without meals. Source: Kavanagh A, Dimov S, Shields M, McAllister A, Dickinson H & Kavenagh M (2020). *Disability support workers: the forgotten workforce in COVID-19, Research Report*.
- **March 2021:** Only 42% of employees have monthly check-ins with their manager. Source: *The Support Workforce Guide*, Good Human March 2021
- **June 2021:** 45% of workers said they were aware of harms in the last 12 months. Source: *Safeguarding in Australia's new disability markets: Frontline workers' perspectives*. N.Cortis and G.Van Toorn, June 2021. University of NSW

What does this mean for culture?

About me



14 years corporate sector, 22 years non-profit sector,
200+ workshops, 2 books



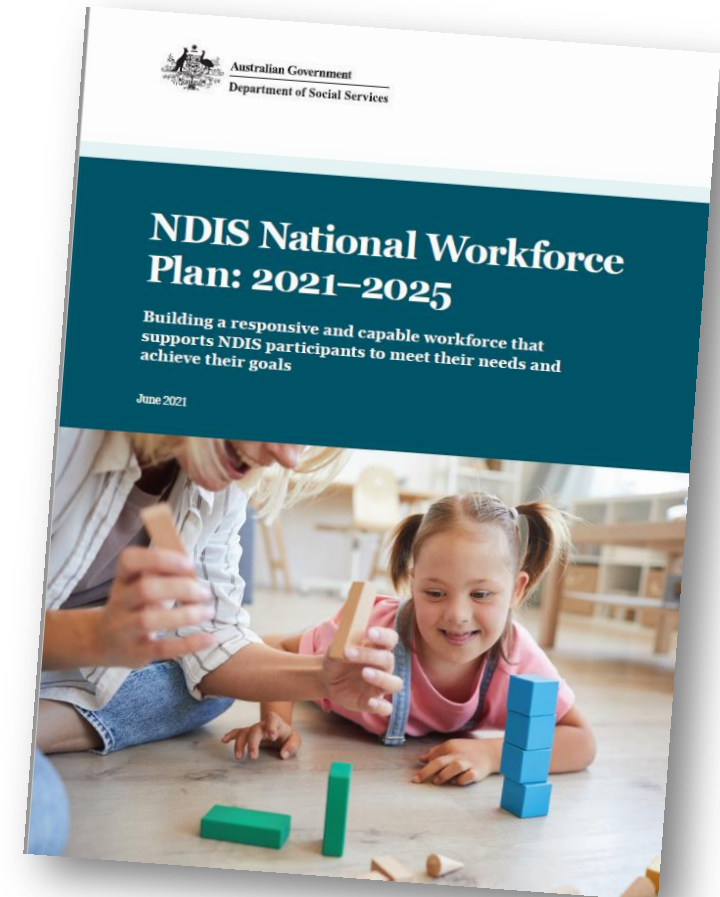
**So why am I here talking about
the disability sector?**

So why is culture now the key business driver in disability?

1. Workforce shortfall

The sector needs to attract 83,000 more workers (31%) and address its high staff turnover (17-25%) in order to support 500,000 NDIS participants by 2024 .

NDIS National Workforce Plan: 2021 -2025, Commonwealth of Australia (DSS) June 2021



2. The customer



The disability customer is not looking for a transaction. The NDIS is NOT Medicare. They are looking for someone they can TRUST.

3. The new key relationship

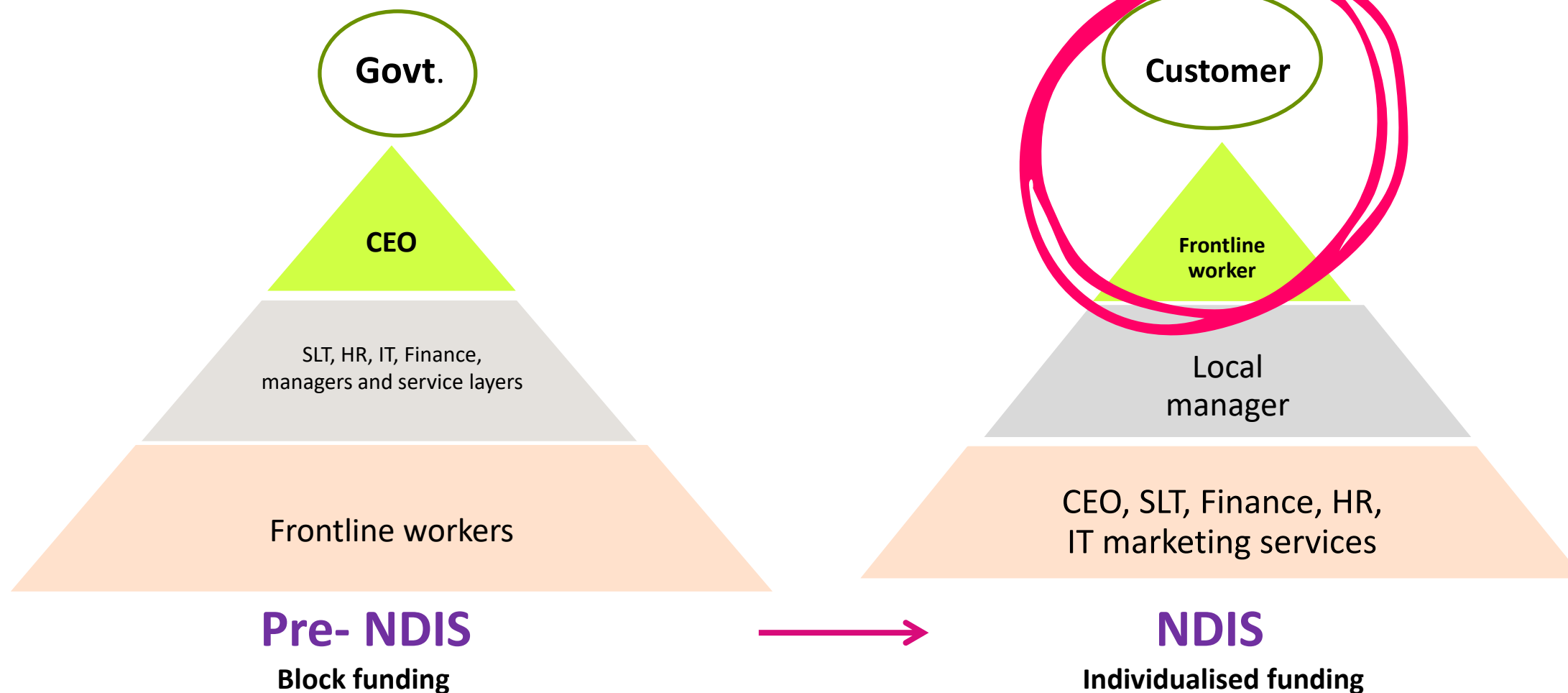


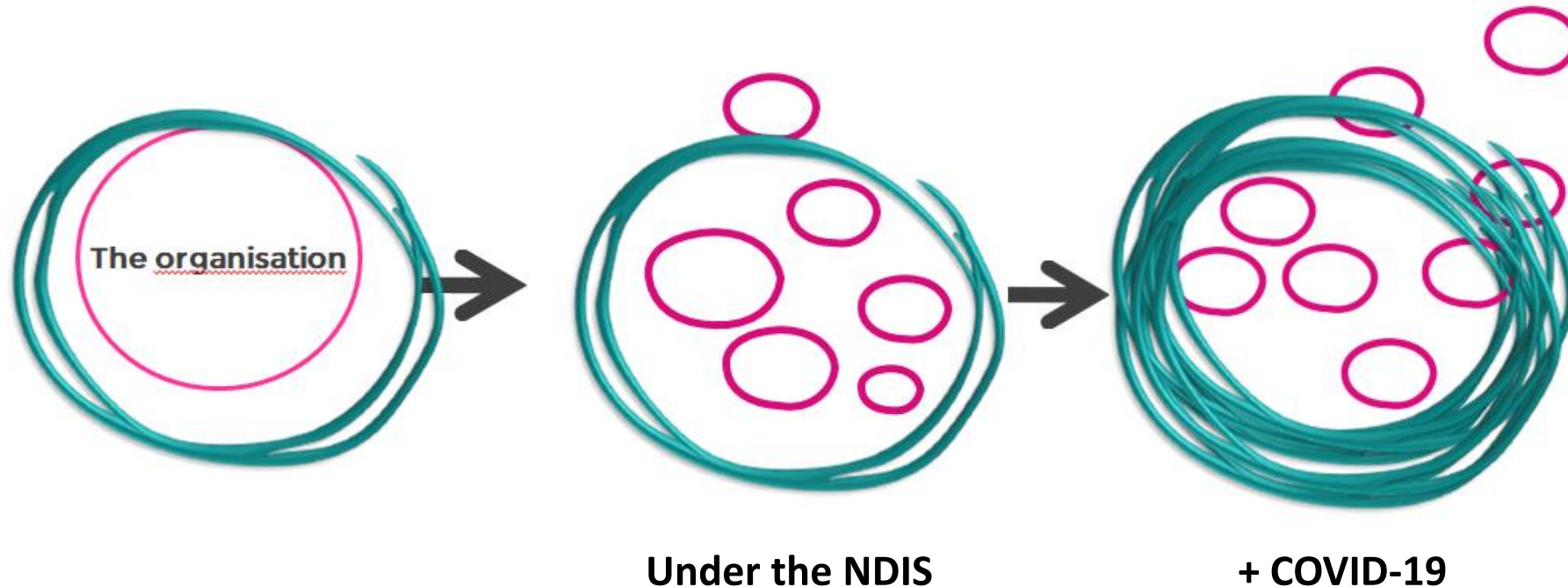


Image: Courtesy Sylvanvale Foundation

In disability the frontline IS the business.

Yet the two groups most overlooked by providers in the NDIS rollout were the two most important: **Existing staff and clients.**

4. Massive external pressure



In the perfect storm of the NDIS, 5 different Ministers (in 8 years), the Royal Commission and Covid-19 many organisations split into sub-cultures or silos of 'safety' as stressed employees looked for security... and good people started leaving.

5. Quality

Quality is contingent upon a culture embedded in values.
Frontline culture is key to safety outcomes.



Image: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/public-hearings>

5 Reasons culture is the key business driver

1. The workforce shortfall
2. The customer needs someone they can TRUST
3. The new key relationship IS the business
4. The external pressures are unsustainable
5. Quality

What practical lessons can we learn?

1. Reconnect with Vision, Purpose & Values

PEOPLE + CULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

94% of staff believe our vision, mission and values statements are inspiring.

88% of staff believe CLO is an inclusive place to work with a diverse workforce.

70-90% of staff believe their opinions matter and feel comfortable raising issues at team meetings and with Managers.



“The CEO role is pivotal. The team needs **to see me** leading by example. I think the Culture and the Vision is the collective soul of an organisation. I need to articulate our culture at every point to ensure that people are ‘on the bus’.”

Melinda Kubisa, CEO, Community Living Options

The Values First Approach



The role of the CEO is to champion the VALUES and MISSION and **embed them into every 'HOW'** – not just recruitment. In this way the organisation begins to tie values to behaviours.

E.g: How well do you exit people?

Personal, Human, Visible Leadership (HUMILITY IS ESSENTIAL)

- Handwritten thank you cards to frontline staff
- Frequently shares his story and what the mission means to him personally.
- Frequent 'whole of organisation' updates via '*Mark's Vlogs*'
- Regularly phones employees to check how they are
- His key question when meeting employees face to face:

What are the 2 things you'd love to change about CLA?



“There is no ‘top down’ in our organisation- only us and the different roles that make us up.”

Mark Kulinski, Chief Executive,
Community Living Australia

“We’ve got so many things that we are responding to, that we can forget that our culture not only impacts our efficiencies, but also how we support each other and our clients.
Our culture makes everything else work.”

- Mark Kulinski, Chief Executive, Community Living Australia and Chair, National Workforce Committee

2. Embed Storytelling

(Your brand's superpower)

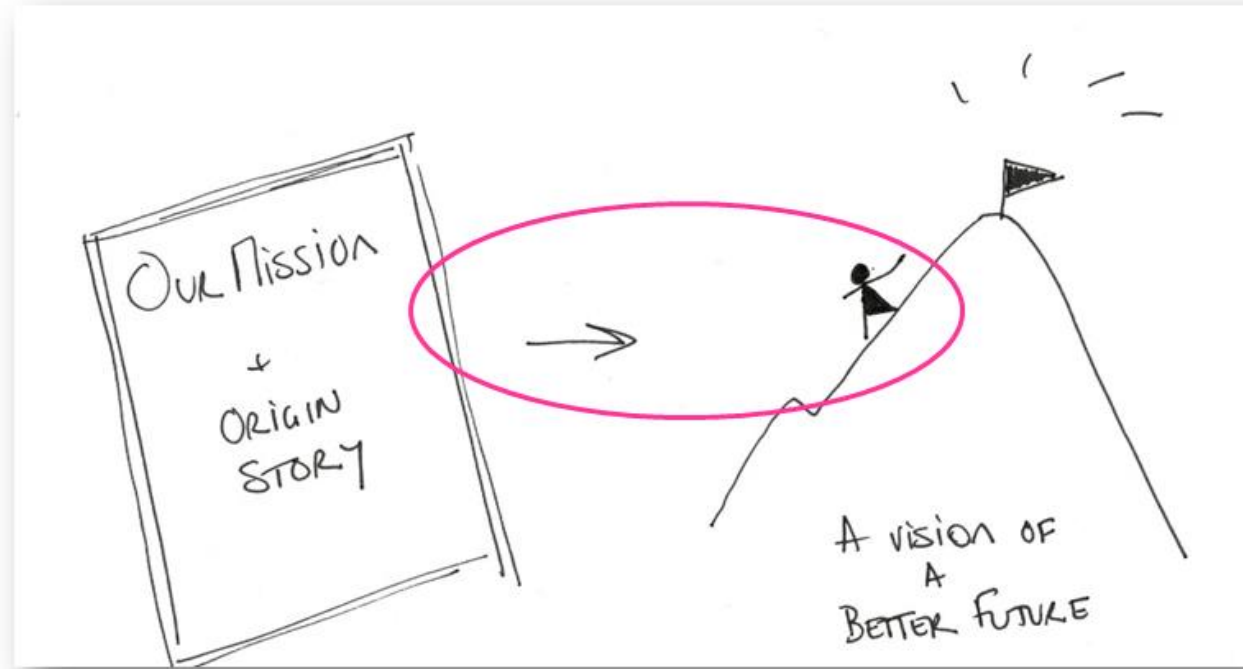


The human brain loves stories because they take people on a journey.
They make it **EASY** to absorb and remember your message.
People need to hear your story, before they know they can **TRUST** you.



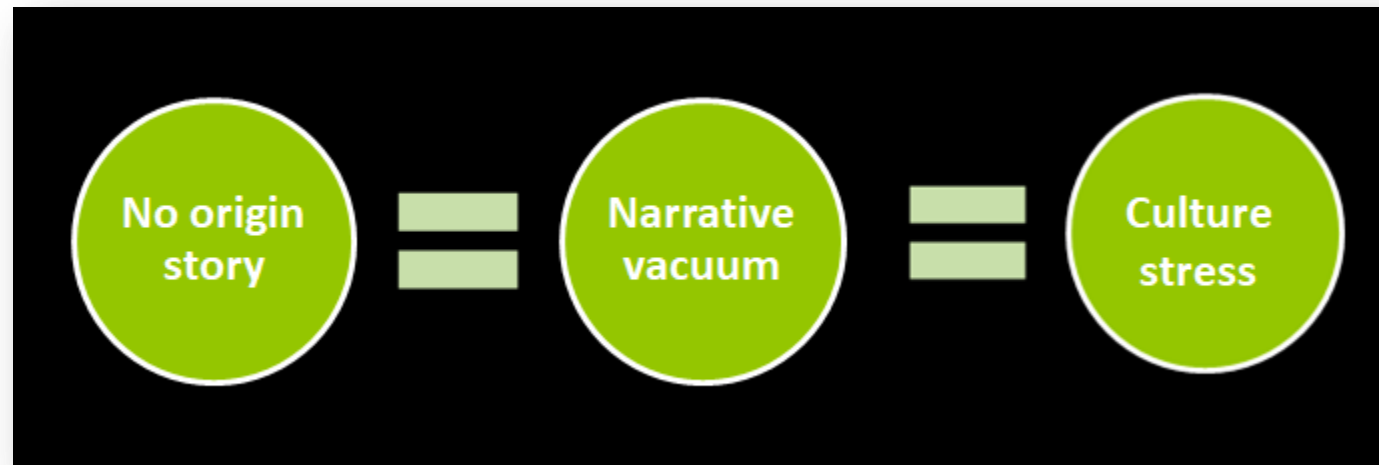
Shared storytelling drives engagement, builds empathy, deepens a sense of belonging and transforms a group of people into a **TEAM**.

The Origin Story



Connects your mission to the present and reminds people **WHY** you are all here.
It also connects your mission to your vision of a better future
and offers employees a **shared purpose**.
This provides meaning and direction in the face of complexity.

The Origin Story



22 managers interviewed

20 'knew the mission statement' but could not share the origin story

Only 2 people could tell the story (one was the CEO)

THE MAN WHO INSPIRED US TO THINK.. **WHAT IF ?**

“The origin story IS our culture.
Storytelling, and the origin story in particular, is the
most important tool in our armoury.”

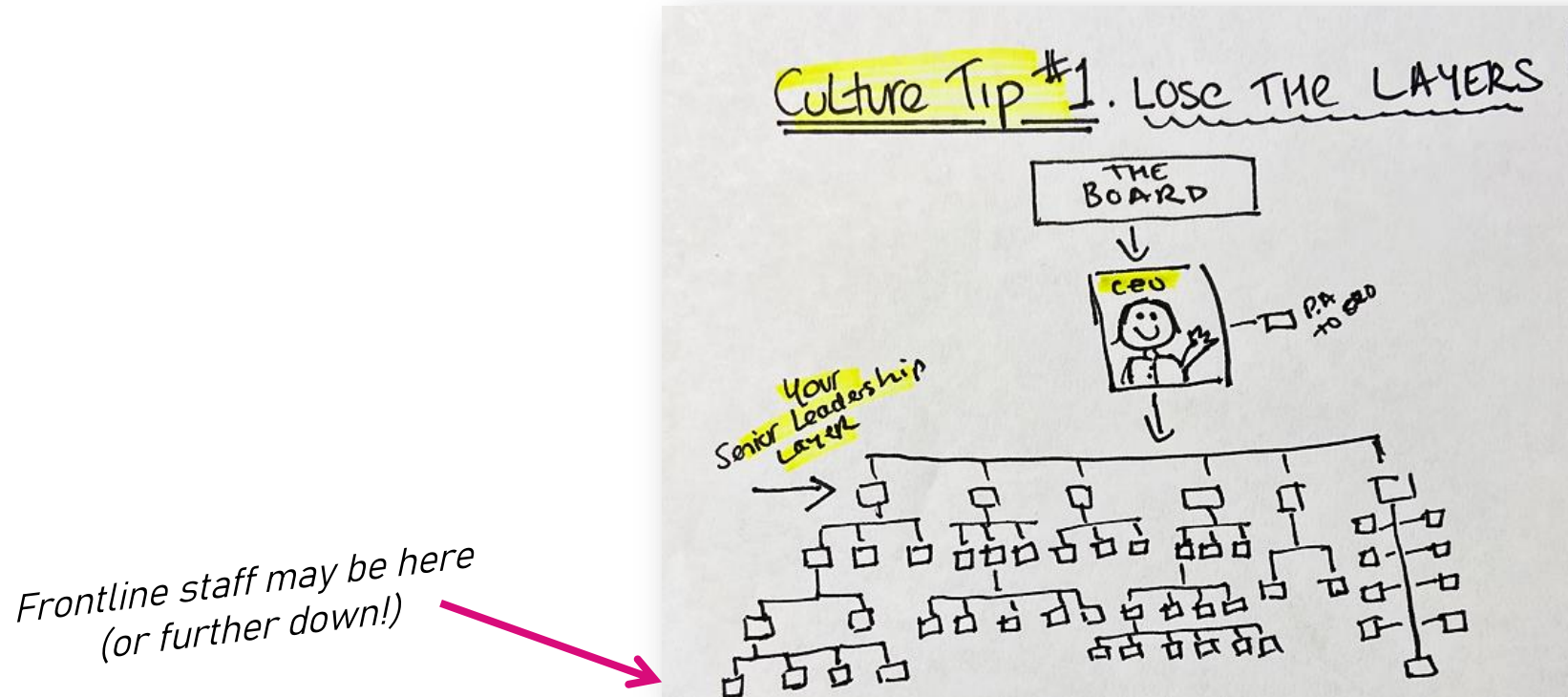
–Laura O'Reilly, CEO Fighting Chance



SHANE O'REILLY

1989-2011

3. Lose the Layers



An outdated structure erodes TRUST, blocks communication channels, undermines culture and inhibits your ability to lead sustainable, positive change.

“There are 7 layers between myself and the DSWs. I don’t think that’s too many. But we’re having a real problem with interpersonal communication issues in our leadership team.”

- CEO, state-wide disability provider



THE CO-OPERATIVE LIFE
Getting you back into life

FRAN CONNELLEY
Culture & Communications

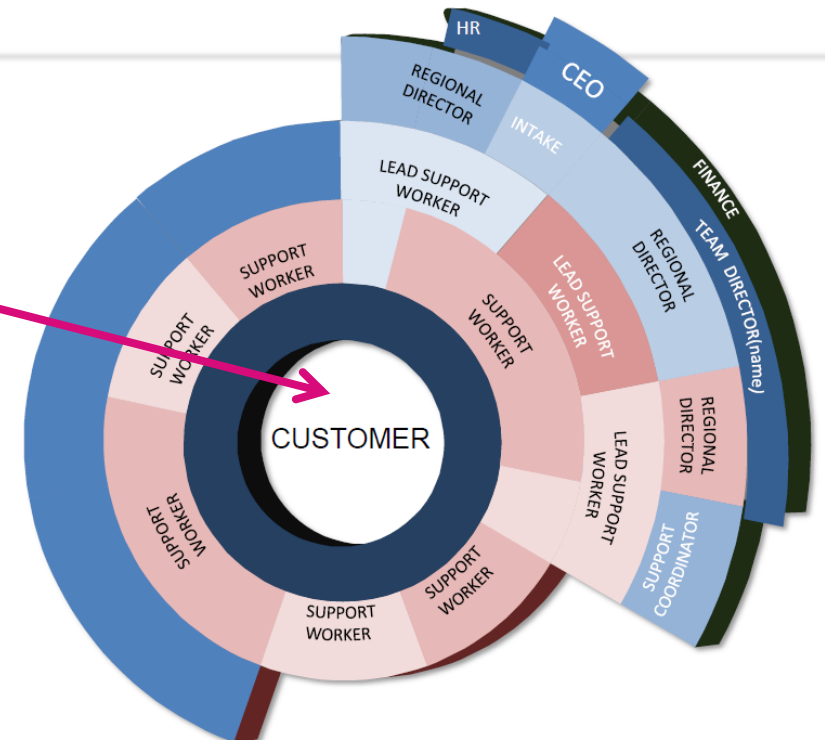
A decentralised 'hub-and-spoke' structure with the customer at the centre.

This facilitates **LOCALLY RESPONSIVE** decision making.

The 'Act Like an Owner' Program:

All staff must understand the service model, the financial model, core policies and procedures and the operating environment.

CIRCULAR ORG CHART
THE CO-OPERATIVE LIFE



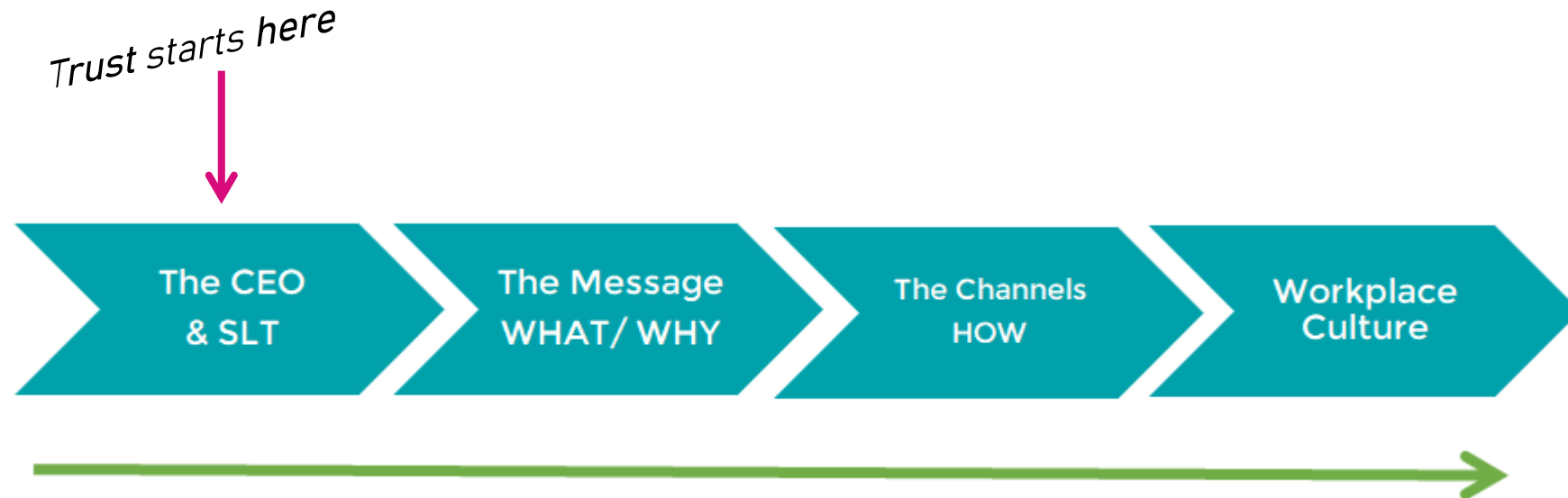
Source: The Cooperative Life

4. Structure internal communications



The Trust Framework
CLARITY, CONSISTENCY, FREQUENCY

The Trust Framework



1. CEO and the SLT trust each other and **be seen** to trust each other.
2. A strong internal brand links all messages to values and outcomes. (Every **WHAT** has a **WHY**). HR and marketing must work as one to deliver clear, consistent and frequent communications.
3. The channels you use and **HOW** you use them must reflect your values. All platforms and meetings need clear and agreed protocols.

Marathon Health: Best practice internal communications



May 2020

“Covid-19 has brought us closer. We provided people with the opportunity to ask questions safely. We have come through a stronger organisation.”

- Megan Callinan CEO, Marathon Health



July 2021

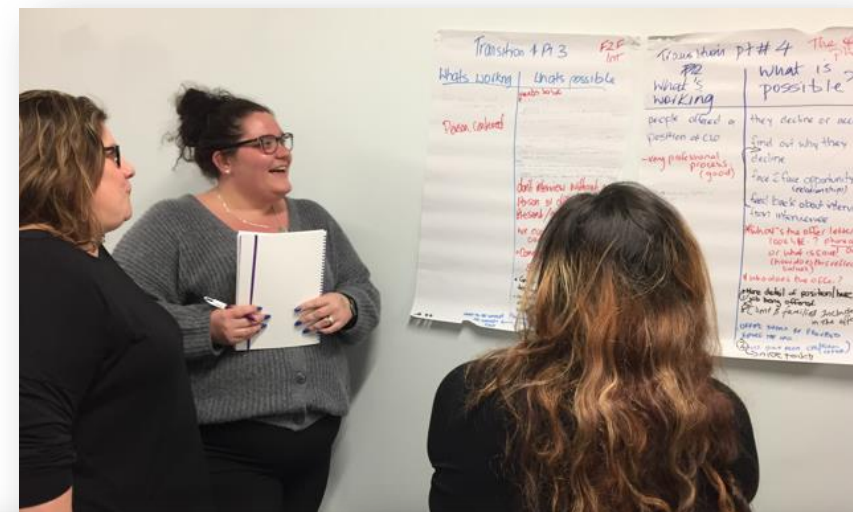
“It’s not even crisis management. Our team just swung into place. We work across 4 states where risks are changing fast. We can flex in and out of it as required. This is our new normal.”

9.30am Daily "STAND-UPS" CEO, SLT & senior managers	Single source of TRUTH for messages from all managers	Bi-weekly Lunch forums for health and safety Q&A to reduce anxiety
Fortnightly iPhone video updates from CEO	Raised the profile of senior staff	Daily Lunch "IT Q&As" to support remote working
Staff held Lunchtime learning sessions	9am Mondays Mindfulness sessions	FUN challenges: trivia, pets, piñatas, cooking

Structured internal communications provided clarity, confidence and consistency.

5. Pause & reflect as a team

Ask, listen & collaborate on your culture plan.
The team builds the plan.



It begins with SAFETY

ASK the right questions and **MAKE IT SAFE** for people to speak the truth and be ready to **LISTEN** with an open mind and heart.

1. What's working well?
2. What's life like for you? What's not working? Where did we fall down for you?
3. What's possible if we were truly living our values?



5 things you can do

1. Reconnect with the Vision, Purpose & Values
2. Embed storytelling
3. Lose the layers
4. Structure internal communications
5. Ask, listen & then collaborate on a practical Action Plan



When we commit to culture, we're committing to being a champion for our employees as well as our clients.

Tomorrow, when you start your working day, ask yourself:
What could I do differently?

Questions??

Thank you.



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www.cultureandcommunications.com.au