The importance of trust and how to get it.

COMPELLING LEADERSHIP

CENTRE for RESEARCH INNOVATION & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

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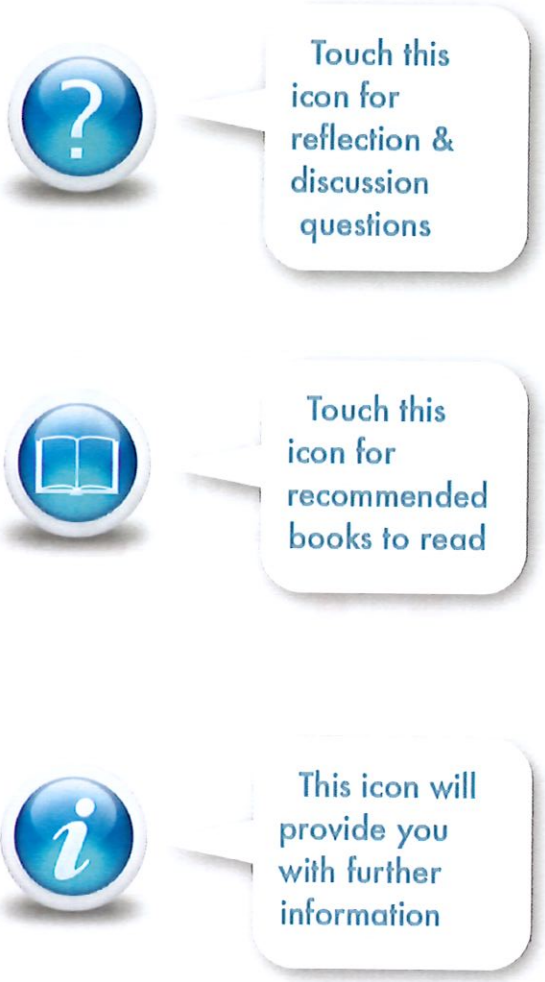
FOREWORD

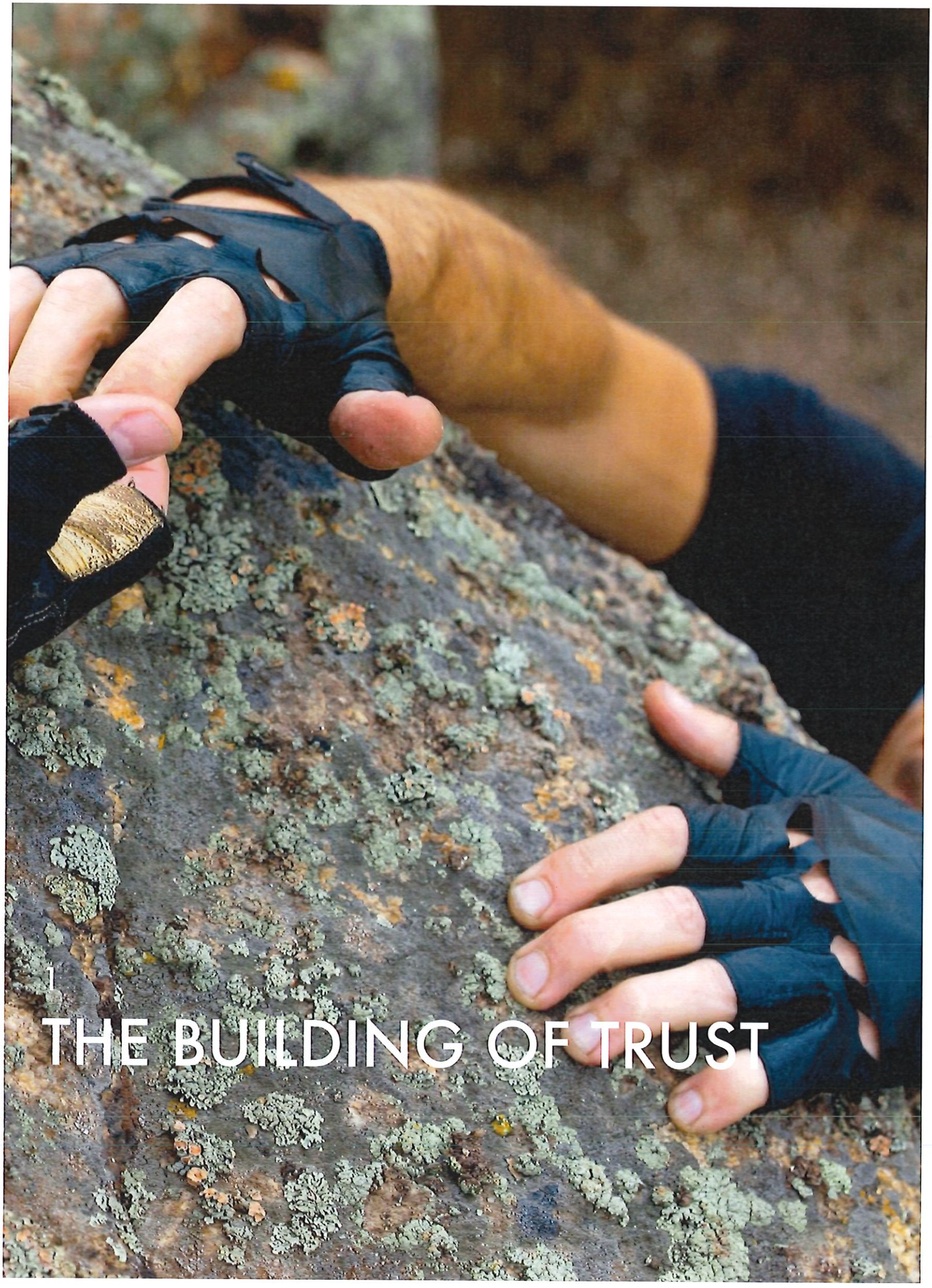
This iBook is designed to be a resource for anyone wishing to develop their leadership capacity and improve their school's learning environment. The resources contained within are a result of a PhD research study with the Queensland University of Technology. The findings are a practical guide for leaders wishing to create outstanding schools.

Throughout this short book you will find suggested resources, reflection questions, group discussion starters and an assessment tool that you can use to appraise your current leadership practice. I do hope that you find it both an encouragement as well as a prompt for growth.



DEDICATION

To the staff of Halse Grammar School who courageously shared their stories with me



1

THE BUILDING OF TRUST

TRUST: THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF LEADERSHIP

According to John West-Burnham, Professor of Educational Leadership at St Mary's University, Twickenham in the United Kingdom, "of all the personal qualities for a leader, trust is probably the most important". He continues:

> It is probably difficult to envisage any aspect of leadership work that is not profoundly dependent on trust: indeed it could be argued that it would be impossible for leaders to work without trust. (West-Burnham, 2010, page 1)

I have worked in schools for 24 years,16 of those years as a **Head**. I have witnessed first hand what happens in a school where trust has dissipated and I have seen what can happen when trust is abundant.

Through my years of watching and learning from others, and years of personal experiences where I have made mistakes and broken relationships, it is my conviction that the best way that I can create a school that students deserve is to focus all my energies on building trust. No vision, no strategy, no change reform or restructure will be achieved without trust. No amount of coercion, persuasion or force will ever achieve the results needed. Trust is the ingredient needed to take an organization—in the words of Collins (2001)—from good to great.

If the most important role of a Head is to inspire, build and sustain trust, what actions and behaviours can the Head practise to demonstrate trustworthiness? What can leaders do to build trust? How can trust be best maintained? These were some of the questions that drove my recent research into leadership and trust. I discovered 10 key trust building practices used by highly rated transformational leaders in schools, which I describe below. First, let me set the research findings in context.

TRUST AND VISION

There is a wealth of literature and research on leadership. Many academics and psychologists have committed years to studying and understanding the practice. There have been countless leadership models or styles proposed (e.g. **transformational**, **transactional**, **distributive**, consultative, **instructional**, **servant**, etc.), and lists of qualities or attributes of good leadership identified (e.g. honesty, humility, self-control, respect, empathy, inspiring, credible, moral courage, etc.). However, when it all boils down, good leadership is about just two things: vision and trust.

Many people (and leadership models for that matter) confuse leadership with management. A manager is responsible for directing and controlling the work and staff of an organization. Managers typically have their eyes on the bottom line, ensuring that things are functioning efficiently. Leadership on the other hand deals with the 'top line'; what are the things that I want to accomplish—in other words—vision. Covey (1989) provides a good analogy:

> Imagine a group of people cutting a path through the jungle with machetes. They're the producers, the problem solvers. They're

cutting through the undergrowth, clearing it out. The managers are behind them, sharpening the machetes, writing policy and procedure manuals, holding muscle development programs, bringing in improved technologies and setting up work schedules. The leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, 'this way'.

A true leader has a **vision,** and that vision is compelling enough to entice people to follow. A good leader is someone whom others choose to follow because they have been convinced that the vision is worth the effort. A compelling vision energizes people by providing them with an exciting picture of the future rather than providing them with rewards and punishments (Bartram & Casimir, 2007). It unites leaders and followers to pursue higher-level goals which are common to both (Sergiovanni, 2005), raising one another to higher-levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1985).

Vision (vĭzh'ən) n: an imagined idea or goal toward which one aspires

Visioning requires you to rise up out of the minutia to scan the horizon, to dream and to imagine what could be, to take a risk and trail blaze. Not everyone can envision; a true leader can. They are not held back by fear; they believe in themselves and what can be. They invest in the vision and keep pursuing it until it is achieved. Not until then is the job done.

In the literature this style of leadership is termed "transformational leadership". This style of leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Bass, 1978, page 20). Transformational leadership involves intellectually stimulating followers, encouraging them to learn new ways of doing their work (Bass, 1985) and ultimately improving their performance (Bartram & Casimir, 2007).

Bass (1985), the father of transformational leadership, described four components, or attributes and behaviours associated with the style:

1. Charisma or idealized influence - The transformational leader is a role model for their followers. They are admired and respected and trusted. They are confident, determined, persistent, highly competent and willing to take risks;

2. Inspirational motivation – The transformational leader inspires followers by providing meaning, optimism, enthusiasm and high expectations;

3. Intellectually stimulating – Transformational leaders question assumptions, reframe problems and encourage creative thinking and innovation;

4. Individually considerate – Transformational leaders pay attention to each follower's needs, ensuring each person feels valued, and serve as a coach or mentor.

However, in my experience transformational leadership is not enough. Setting a compelling vision is worthless unless someone wants to follow; and no one will follow a leader, particularly into the unknown, if they don't trust him or her. Trust is the critical ingredient that goes hand in glove with vision. Without it leaders cannot expect people to work together to achieve the vision: and ultimately, without trust, the leader will lose credibility and fail (Sergiovanni, 2005; Reina & Reina, 2006).

Trust

WHAT IS TRUST?

The topic of trust is both intriguing and elusive. The idea of trust is hard to define but we certainly know when it is missing. Baier (1986) noted "we notice trust as we notice air, only when it becomes scarce or polluted" (page 234).

Sometimes distrust and its patterns of vendetta and vengeance constitute a form of emotional violence (Flores & Solomon, 1997). Betrayal and distrust are particularly insidious behaviours in organizations, because they can undermine an organization's mission and objectives (Geist & Hoy, 2004). For this reason many say that trust is the lubricant that makes it possible for organizations to work.

When trust is low or missing in schools, staff may be evasive, dishonest, and inconsiderate in their communications. People perceive danger and go into a self-protective mode; "they personalise everything and assess risks in dealing with everyone, tending to cast themselves as the intended recipients of other people's harmful actions" (Reina & Reina, 2006, page 25). When teachers or students feel unsafe, energy that could be devoted to teach-

ing and learning is diverted to self-protection (Johnson & Johnson, 1987).

In the absence of trust people are increasingly unwilling to take risks and demand greater protections to defend their interests (Tyler & Kramer, 1996); issues are seldom discussed and never resolved; a school cannot improve and grow into the rich, nurturing micro-society needed by children and adults alike; and people are likely to say only those things they expect others want to hear (Lovell & Wiles, 1983).

A low-trust culture invariably can be the result of, or results in, a withdrawal of the leader to a traditional hierarchical and authoritarian form of control and leadership (Duignan, 2006). This in turn can become an endless cycle of distrust, broken only by the removal of the leader.

Conversely, the reward of a trusting school environment is immeasurable. Blase and Blase (2001) claim that the effect of a high-trust environment is likely to manifest in motivated, satisfied and confident teachers. Due to an atmosphere of trust, teachers are more likely to work harder, be optimistic and feel a sense of professionalism. More importantly, schools with high levels of trust have better academic performance.

Bryk and Schneider's (2002) discovered that schools that reported strong positive relational trust levels were three times more likely to be categorised as improving in reading and mathematics than those with very weak reports. Schools with strong positive trust reports had a one-in-two chance of seeing an improvement in academic outcomes. Of these schools, virtually all teachers reported a strong, positive relationship with their principal. They typically described their principal as an effective manager who supported their professional development, had concern for their welfare and placed the needs of the students first. In contrast, the likelihood of schools with very weak trust reports to improve was only one in seven. The most telling data showed that schools "with weak trust reports both in 1994 and 1997 had virtually no chance of showing improvement in either reading or mathematics" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, page 111). Teachers at these schools reported minimal, or no trust in their principal. They did not feel respected and did not feel comfortable confiding in him or her.

Bryk and Schneider concluded that a core resource for school improvement was trust. They stated that trust increases the capacity of a school to positively impact students for four reasons:

- It acts as a catalyst for transformational processes that instrumentally connect to improving academic performance;
- It facilities collaborative problem-solving with the organization;
- It undergirds teachers' understanding of professional standards, encouraging them to aim for more ambitious classroom instruction; and,
- It creates a moral resource for school improvement by binding staff to the organization's vision, encouraging them to give the extra effort needed to bring about lasting change, even when the work is hard.

Sergiovanni (2005) espouses the importance and value of trust in school leadership, particularly in relation to school improvement agendas. He states that school leaders should be trustwor-

thy. Without trust leaders lose credibility (Reina & Reina, 2006). This loss poses difficulty to leaders as they seek to call people to respond to their responsibilities. The painful alternative is to be punitive, seeking to control people through manipulation or coercion.

The building of trust is an organizational quality. Once trust exists it becomes the norm that sets the standard for how teachers behave toward each other and their students. Once part of the culture of the school, trust works "to liberate people to be their best, to give others their best, and to take risks: All of these behaviours help schools to become better places for students" (Sergiovanni, 2005, page 90).

Sergiovanni states that trust is so important in a school that it is vital to firstly build trust before anything else, even before a leader develops a vision. To build trust after setting a vision and developing strategy is nowhere near as effective. This is particularly relevant advice for transformational leaders. When staff members view their leader as trustworthy the vision, when well communicated, becomes collective and inspires and creates commitment on behalf of the school members to take the necessary risks and innovative steps required to realise that vision (Ghamrawi, 2011).

But trust is hard to pin-point. What is it? What does it look like? A person's understanding of trust will depend on the lens of their life experience; the way that they view the world because of their past experiences (Caldwell & Hayes, 2007). Because everyone's life experience is different it is virtually impossible to have a universal definition of trust: trust is a socially constructed phenomenon.

Acknowledging the difficulties of defining trust, Hall (2009) interviewed 600 people about what the word meant. Ninety per cent found this task difficult, yet the top five responses included: honesty, genuineness, integrity, selflessness and consistency. In contrast, the respondents were asked for words that described the person that they trusted the least. The top five words used included: dishonesty, selfishness, scheming, incongruence and backstabbing.

Trust is:
honesty
genuineness
integrity
selflessness
consistency

Trust isn't:
dishonesty
selfishness
scheming
incongruence
backstabbing

The list of 'qualities' Hall provides doesn't give very helpful advice for leaders. How then does a leader develop a culture of trust?

My research aimed to identify practices that leaders could use to develop and enrich a culture of trust in their school. As a result of four case studies of highly trusted transformational school leaders, 10 key practices that engender trust between a leader and his/her staff were identified. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, these four schools had very impressive academic track records. The practices were not dependent on personality; they can be learned by anyone wanting to improve the culture of his/her school:

1. Admit mistakes
2. Offer trust to staff members
3. Actively listen
4. Provide affirmation
5. Make informed and consultative decisions
6. Be visible around the organization
7. Remain calm and level-headed
8. Mentor and coach staff
9. Care for staff members
10. Keep confidences

These practices are relevant to anyone in a leadership position. They are also not dependent on context; even CEOs of the corporate world would do well to attend to them.

1 ADMIT MISTAKES

Leaders are not infallible; they are human, as one individual who participated in the research project described her leader:

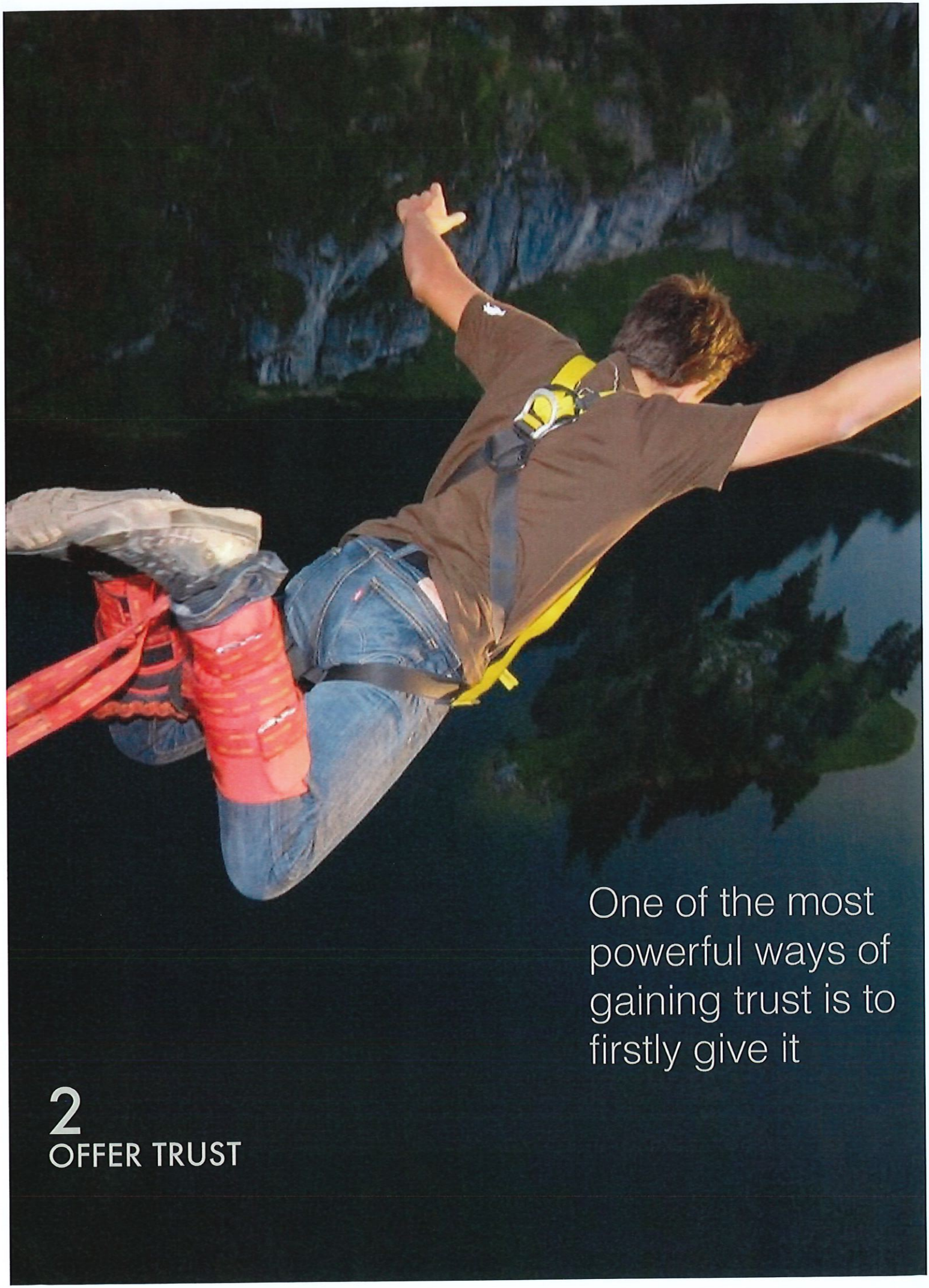
> He is very human; he displays a human error side of him... He is happy to admit when he makes mistakes. (Sam, teacher)

How leaders deal with their mistakes sets the tone for the rest of the organization and is a key factor in the creation of trust (Reina & Reina, 2006). A leader's willingness to display his/her vulnerabilities, both personally and professionally engenders a staff's admiration and trust. Staff members view this practice not as a weakness but as a key strength of leadership, connecting them to their leader on a very human level.

The willingness to be vulnerable, to have the ability to be self-reflective and recognise one's own strengths and weaknesses, to apologise when an error had been made or to reverse a poor decision portrays the leader's humility. Dickson (2009) describes humility in leadership as the ability to redirect your power, to forego your status and deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself.

Collins (2001) asserts that it is possible to be humble, iron-willed and successful—and many successful leaders have these qualities. These characteristics were certainly evident in one of the four highly trusted leaders studied during the research project: [Ella] was described by her staff as being very upright and professional, and even formidable or stern. Others described [Ella] as "very cut and dry," not letting emotions sway the decisions that she makes. [Ella] said that trust "isn't about being nice, because I am certainly not nice." Yet, [Ella] was happy to be vulnerable and admit freely to her staff that there is much that she does not know.

When was the last time you made a mistake or made a poor decision; how did you respond? Were you willing to be vulnerable in front of the people you lead? Did you have the confidence and humility it takes to say sorry? Did you then act and fix the problem? Are you willing to accept responsibility for other people's mistakes?



One of the most powerful ways of gaining trust is to firstly give it

2
OFFER TRUST

One of the most powerful actions for gaining the trust of others is to firstly give it. This was certainly evidenced in comments made by staff members interviewed at each of the schools participating in the study, for example:

She trusts me, and that is huge... (Jack, Head of Department)

Tozer (1997) states that to gain the trust of others we first have to give it; for leaders this means taking a risk and trusting in others first. All four highly trusted Heads studied saw a key responsibility of their role as being the empowerment of staff through the offering of trust. Consequently staff members expressed being appreciated and treated like colleagues and professionals, knowing that the Head was there in the background if they needed support and advice.

The concept of 'micro-management' was mentioned, the role of the Head is not to interfere with a staff member's work, but to provide feedback, mentoring and support if required. The offering of trust meant staff were allowed "to make the decisions in terms of the day-to-day running of their faculty" (George, Director of Faculty). These comments inferred that when a Head manages rather than leads their staff, trust is diminished.

The benefits of offering trust went beyond the empowerment of staff to perform their roles; it encouraged many staff members, to extend themselves and grow professionally. As a result, for those staff members self-doubt gave way to self-belief and career progression. The staff members spoke about the belief that their Head had in them even though they didn't feel that they had the capacity to do the role they had been appointed to, but they knew that their Head would provide them with further support in the form of another common trust building practice, mentoring and coaching staff, practice 8.

Do you find yourself referring to the staff you lead as 'my staff'? Do you regularly ask for reports and updates on progress and performance from 'your staff'? Do you sometimes feel that it is easier to do it yourself, or that you could do it better? Do you make the decisions?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then perhaps you have an issue with letting go, with trusting others and treating them as colleagues. The performance of an organization won't be improved through constant monitoring and management of people—it will improve when you get out of the way of people's work.

3 ACTIVELY LISTEN

Most people do not listen to understand; they listen with the intent to reply
Stephen R. Covey

Listening is often a mere mechanical process whereby a person is simply waiting for their turn to speak, usually motivated by the desire to impart their own view point. This type of listening is quite different from what staff members described as being evident in the practice of a highly trusted Head. Highly trusted leaders practice what Covey (1989) defined as empathic listening, or active listening. This type of listening is about opening oneself to the talker, seeking to identify what they are truly trying to say, to the point where one can actually feel what they are feeling.

When you are talking to him he maintains that eye contact, he doesn't stare you down; he maintains that eye contact. I believe he is genuinely listening, sometimes people can hear you and don't listen—he listens. (Kelly, teacher)

In the eyes of the staff members at each school studied for my PhD research, the Head listens far more than they speak. They have the ability not to be distracted, to give eye contact, ask clarifying questions, and listen carefully not just to what is said audibly by the staff member, but also for the words that are not uttered. They were then able to demonstrate that they had heard by repeating back to the person what was said, identifying succinctly the issue and the emotions felt.

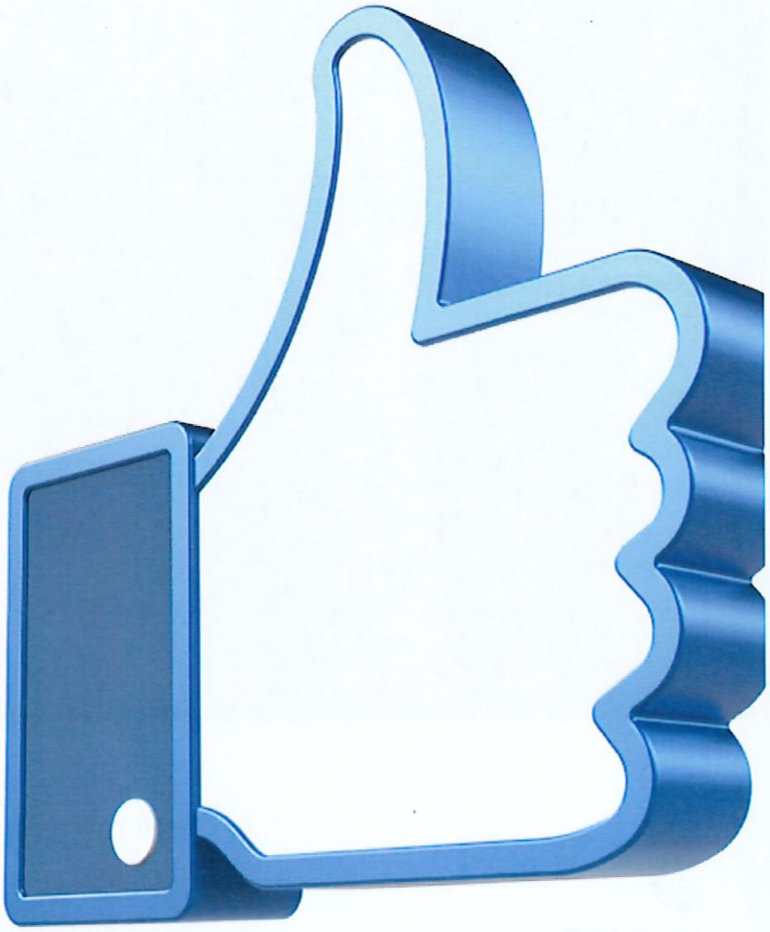
She's a phenomenal listener, she has the ability to sometimes endure quite dense conversations and she is able to distill the absolute essence of what people are meaning, or a clear way through that dense conversation. She is really able to let people speak and give them a sense that they have been heard, and respond in a way that often brings a greater layer of insight to that conversation than there had seemed to be at the beginning. (Sam, Dean)

How well do you listen? Does your mind wander while the person is speaking? Are you thinking of your defence/response while they are talking; or are you watching the person's body language intently, seeking to hear what they are actually saying but perhaps aren't able to articulate it clearly in words?

Seek first to understand before you seek to be understood. Listen for 80% of the time, speak for 20%.

If the person you are talking to doesn't appear to be listening, be patient. It may simply be that he has a small piece of fluff in his ear
Winnie-the-pooh

4
PROVIDE AFFIRMATION



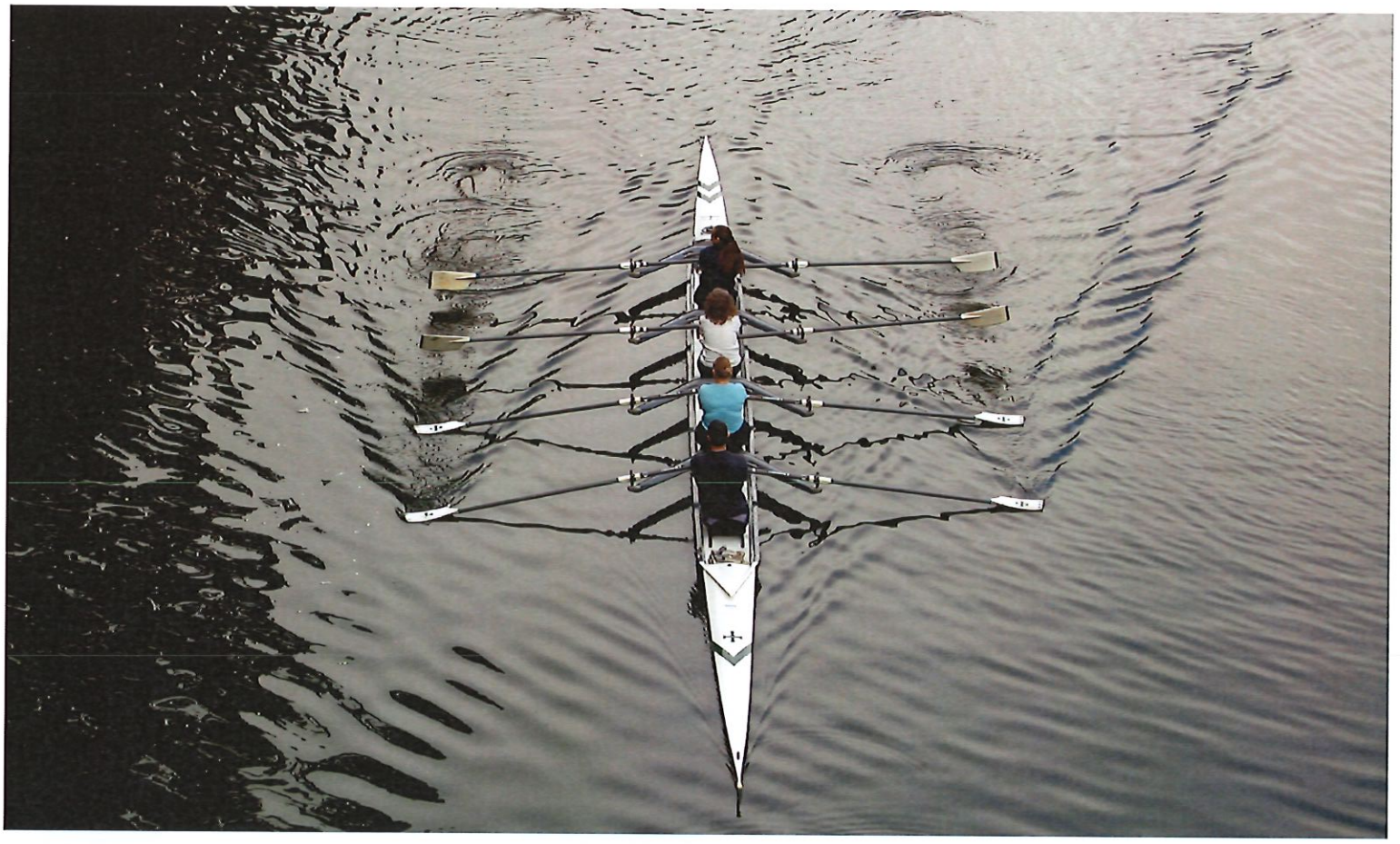
Humans have an innate desire to be appreciated and valued. Recent research has shown that organizations that excel at employee recognition are 12 times more likely to generate strong business results than those that do not (Bersin & Associates, 2012). Chris, the Head of one of the four schools who participated in the research, spends much of his time seeking ways to value the staff of his school, "because if you have got good teachers, you have got a good school... If they [the staff] know that you value the work they do, they're far happier."

All four Heads studied in the research employed a range of appreciation strategies including publicly thanking a member of staff at a staff meeting, sending an email or a handwritten thank you note, leaving a basket of fruit in a staff room to thank people for the extra effort, or simply speaking to the person privately to affirm them. Acknowledgement was not only given for the significant contributions but also for the small things a person had done. Staff members found affirmation very motivating, leading to a strengthening of trust because it left them with the impression that their leader knew them and the work they did, as these comments illustrate:

She does praise her staff very well. She takes the time to write a personal email back to you and thanking you and specifically making comments so that you absolutely feel that she knows who you are as a person which is something that I find very motivating and makes me trust that she knows me and understands me. (Amanda, Administrative staff)

It is one thing to say to a whole group, 'you are all doing a fabulous job,' and that's a bit, 'water off a duck's back.' People want to be told in an unflashy way, 'hey, you're doing a good job, appreciate what you're doing.' It's an acknowledgement that he is aware of what you are doing. (Mark, teacher)

What do you do to show your appreciation of staff members' work? When was the last time you said "thank you"? What about that quiet, reserved staff member who just goes about their job in an unassuming manner, when was the last time you patted him or her on the back?



5 MAKE CONSULTATIVE DECISIONS

Staff members look to their leader to provide clear direction; to form that direction decisions have to be made. During all four case studies of highly trusted transformational school leaders, staff members at each school spoke of their experiences with previous leaders who were not good decision makers. This subsequently left staff members feeling directionless, or, in the words of Renaye, a Head of Department, in "'no-mans' land, wondering what happened and if the issue had been swept under the carpet". Poor decision making practice undermines trust in leadership.

Highly trusted leaders made informed and consultative decisions. Some decisions have to be made promptly. Staff members often need an answer straight away; invariably a good decision maker is able to do that if the issue warrants it. However, for larger decisions, or decisions that will potentially impact others, trusted leaders use a consultative process, ensuring that the views of all stakeholders are taken into account.

Trust is the knowledge that the leader is not going to make some arbitrary, 'off the cuff' decision that impacts staff without involving

them in the process (Barna, 2009). Staff members at each school participating in the study knew that their opinions would be considered carefully and respectfully by the Head:

I trust her decisions because she consults with staff before making them, but I also trust her judgement. (Lauren, Administrative staff)

Reina and Reina (2006) state that a good leader is one who has enough self-trust and self-confidence to involve others and ask for input in the decision making process.

Interestingly, trust is not linked to the need to receive an affirmative decision. Trust is linked with the leader's ability to make a decision and act on it. Chris, one of the highly trusted heads studied, knows that his role is not to please everyone but to make a decision that is in the best interests of the school. What is important is that staff members are provided with the justification for the decision:

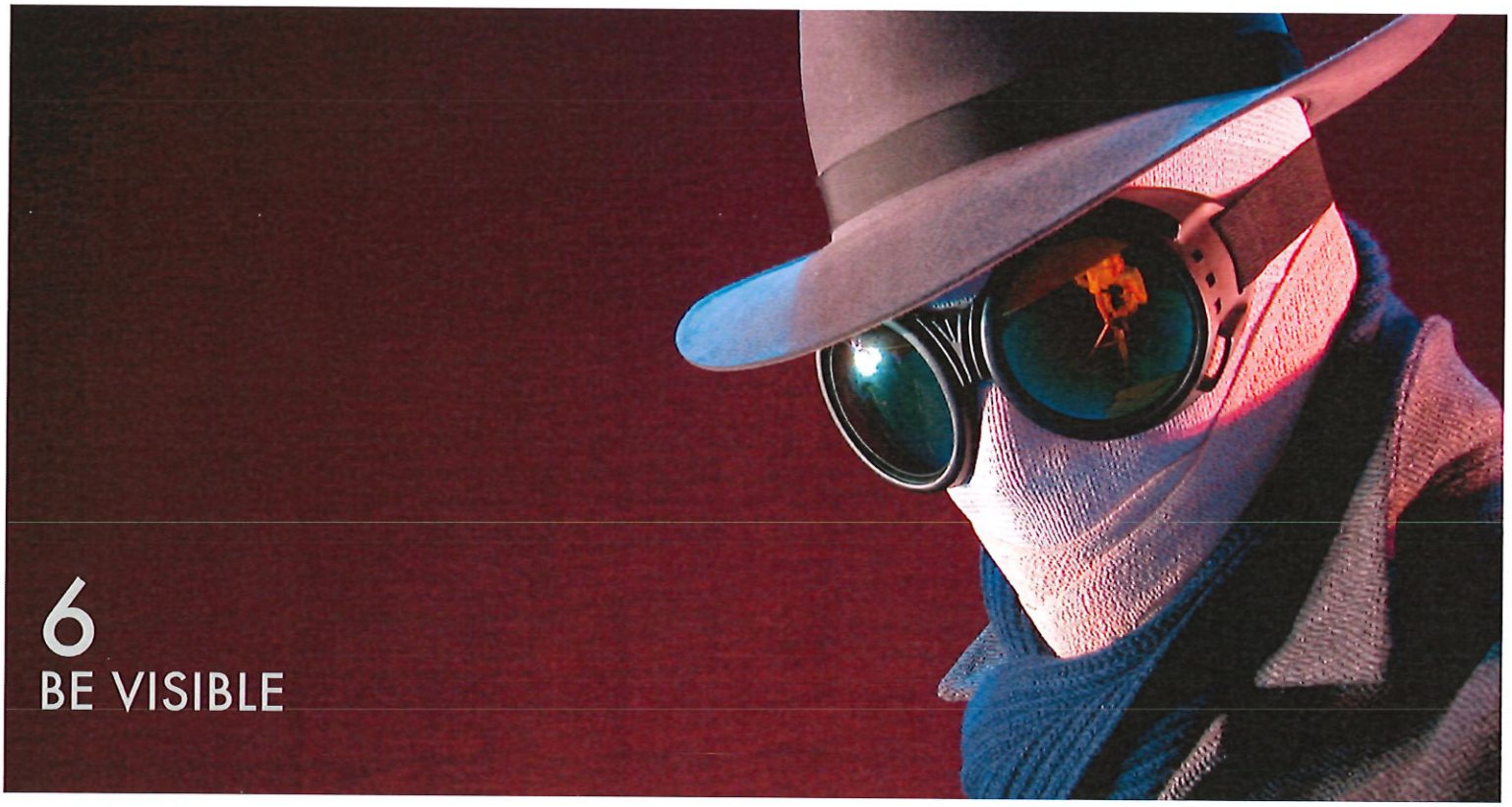
I work very hard to make sure when we make decisions they're informed, and that even if staff members don't like it, they understand the reason for it. (Chris, Principal)

A leader's ability to be transparent and provide justification for a decision engenders trust in the staff, even if the decision is a negative one.

While the leader is the person ultimately responsible for decision making, staff members of highly trusted leaders also commented that their Head was not afraid to change their mind if a decision did not work. They were willing to be vulnerable and admit mistakes, practice 1.

As a leader what decision-making practices do you employ? Do you put off what you could do today until tomorrow? Do you gather views and opinions before making a decision? When did you last give feedback to your staff about why you had made a particular decision?

Trust is the knowledge that staff will be involved in decisions that will affect them
Barna



6 BE VISIBLE

The sixth of the 10 practices, be visible, refers not only to physical presence but to an explicit demonstration of a leader's commitment to the values and ideals of the organization.

The administrative load of a **Principal** of a school can easily keep them confined to their office. The role can also require significant travel, and therefore time away from the school for meetings, conferences and functions. Being visible to the school community is an effective strategy for building trust between a Principal and his/her staff. Kouzes and Posner (2003) described this strategy as being part of leadership credibility.

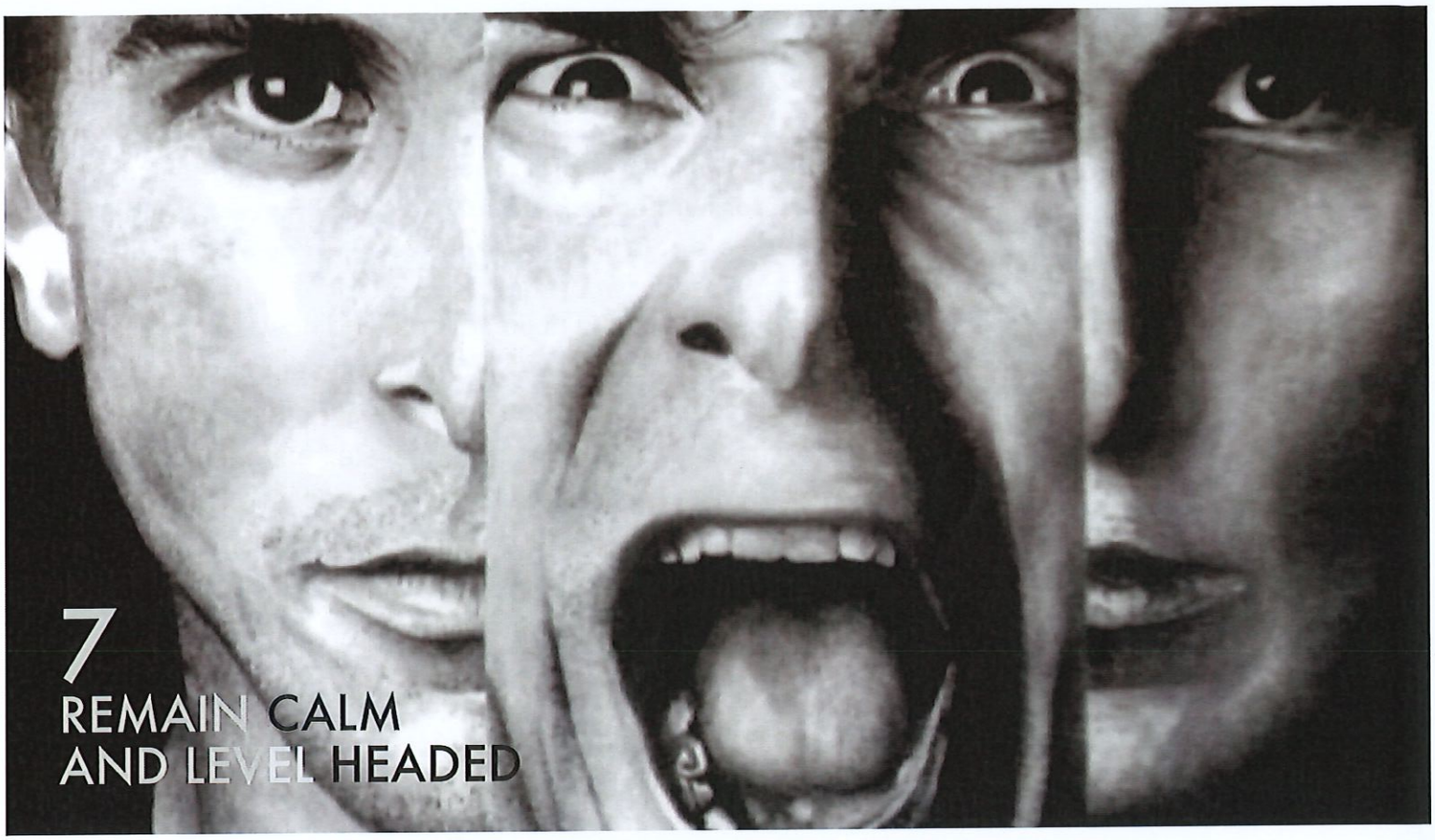
Many staff interviewed during the study reported how much they valued seeing the Principal around the school grounds, speaking with parents, students and individual staff, modelling and reinforcing behaviours and expectations. They also commented on how much they valued the leader's presence in the staff room, at school assemblies, chapel services, functions and performances. Staff trusted their Principal because he/she was part of the school; they could see that he/she was committed to the fundamental purpose of the school and its values.

For me he is very visible as a Principal. I often see him around the school talking to people; talking to students, talking to staff, talking to parents. (Glen, teacher)

For many staff, visibility is linked to the accessibility of the Principal. As Kouzes and Posner (2003, page 46) state, "leaders who are inaccessible cannot possibly expect to be trusted just because they have a title" . Staff of trusted leaders not only see the Principal but know that they have access to the Principal.

The location of a Principal's office can have a bearing on their ability to be visible. If you are able, locate your office on the ground floor overlooking an area of pedestrian traffic. Having a visible connection with the school as well as the provision to step out and interact with staff and students serves to increase a leader's visibility.

How often do you get out of the office? Do you make the time to speak with students?



7 REMAIN CALM AND LEVEL HEADED

Covey (2006) links the behaviour of respect, that is, acting in a manner that shows a fundamental valuing of people, to the development of trust. A consistent, predictable manner and approach to situations—and therefore respect—engenders the trust of staff.

People by nature want to know what they are going to get. If the leader acts in a reasonable and predictable way people will respect and trust them (Barna, 2009; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006):

> Every single week she is always the same, she's so level, she's never surprising and I think that engenders a huge amount of trust, she is very predictable... we see the same thing all the time which I think makes people feel very safe, they know what they are going to get... the unflappableness... stable. (Robyn, Director)

> When you are speaking with him he is calm, there are no prying questions. He allows you to divulge to him as much as you need to... He does seek further information... He respects my privacy. (Sam, teacher)

Each of the leaders participating in the study of trusted leadership possessed the ability to control their emotions and remain calm and level-headed. Knowing that a leader's behaviour will be respectful and focused on the agenda of the staff member rather than themselves, gives staff confidence and provides them with a feeling of safety. Even when faced with difficult or challenging issues, staff members know that their leader would be "unflappable" and not "knee jerk to anything".

When did you last feel yourself getting angry in a conversation or interaction with a staff member? Did the other person realise? What causes you stress and how do you respond when you are under pressure? Are you able to control your emotions or do they control you?

8
COACH AND MENTOR STAFF

'The real power of effective leadership,' writes Brigadier Jim Wallace, former head of Australian Special Forces, 'is maximising other people's potential' (Dickson, 2009, page 36).

When you reflect on the notion of trust and how to increase your leadership credibility few would imagine that the practice of coaching and mentoring would be linked. Perhaps too few leaders take the time to develop individual staff members, leaving the profession with only a handful of people applying for leadership positions or aspiring to become principals? Wallace's view of leadership certainly rang true for the four highly trusted principals in my case study research.

There is a difference between mentoring and coaching: coaching is task-orientated, performance driven and usually short-term; while mentoring is relationship-orientated, development driven

and typically long-term (Clutterbuck, 2008). Depending on the situation and the staff member, a highly trusted Head will take on the role of either mentor or coach. Neither role has a greater bearing on the development of trust; what is important to staff members is the investment on the part of their leader in their development. As a result staff members become empowered to manage difficult situations themselves.

I had quite a bad situation with another member of staff... I went to my principal and said, 'this is the situation, how would you handle it?' His view is that he wanted me to handle it, he wanted to give me the power and autonomy to handle it but he was totally supportive and he said, 'if you don't feel you are able to do it I will do it for you but I want you to have an opportunity to do it [yourself]'. (Sonya, Director of Technology)

The practice of mentoring and coaching includes the giving of critical feedback, which many staff members interviewed during the study said they valued. They saw it as being a vital part of their professional growth.

He is a critical friend for [sic] me, it's nice to be praised, but it's the feedback for me. If we are going to up the ante and improve, we need to have critical friends. (Prue, Head of Middle School)

As a leader do you see it as your responsibility to grow the next generation of leaders? Do you take the time to mentor and coach staff members or are you threatened by a subordinate's potential? How many staff members have gone onto promotional positions because of your support?

9
CARE FOR STAFF

Schools by their very nature are relationship-orientated organizations. Philosophically, education is about the relationships staff members develop with the students, enabling each student to flourish as a human. The same is true for the relationships between staff; a positive, vibrant school culture is not possible without effective working relationships built on trust.

Large schools were deliberately selected to be part of my research. With staff numbering between 140 and 207 it was somewhat surprising to hear how the Heads of the four participating schools extended a genuine care for individual members of their staff. The role of a Principal is an extremely busy and demanding one, it is hard to find the time to show a genuine concern for an individual, but these highly trusted leaders did:

> There is an absolutely amazing human side to [Ella, the Head], a very compassionate, caring side. (Joan, Support staff)

Staff members are naturally inclined to put their trust in a person who is interested in them as a person rather than as just an employee appointed to perform a role. Effective leaders care enough to want to learn about their staff so they can act with com-

passion and empathy towards them (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005).

I do trust him implicitly. He cares for people. Some of the things that I see that give me really firm belief in him as a Principal is that I see everyday people walking into his office sometimes not feeling so good and they walk out feeling buoyed. He is a wonderfully affirming person. It really is a gift that he has. (Margaret, Administrative support)

Outside school he is an amazing fellow too. If you have got any personal problems or whatever, he will be in touch. My husband is really sick at the moment and quite often [Chris] will ring and check up and see how he is... He cares, it's that caring thing... and it's not just about caring for his staff, it's caring about the extended wellbeing of the people and it's just lovely. (Angela, Head of House)

Each highly trusted Head in the case studies took the time to demonstrate a very real responsibility for the people in their community. Care was extended in very practical ways including: offering staff members an empathetic ear, granting time off work to support a family member, follow-up conversations to check up on a person, and attendance at weddings and funerals.

While not every member of staff at each school had experienced the personal concern of the Head, they nonetheless had heard of his/her authentic compassion for others. For these people the stories of his/her care had led them to offer their trust to a leader who was compassionate towards students and staff.

Do you have a genuine concern for the people you lead? Do you know anything about them as a person beyond their name and professional capacity?

10 KEEP CONFIDENCES

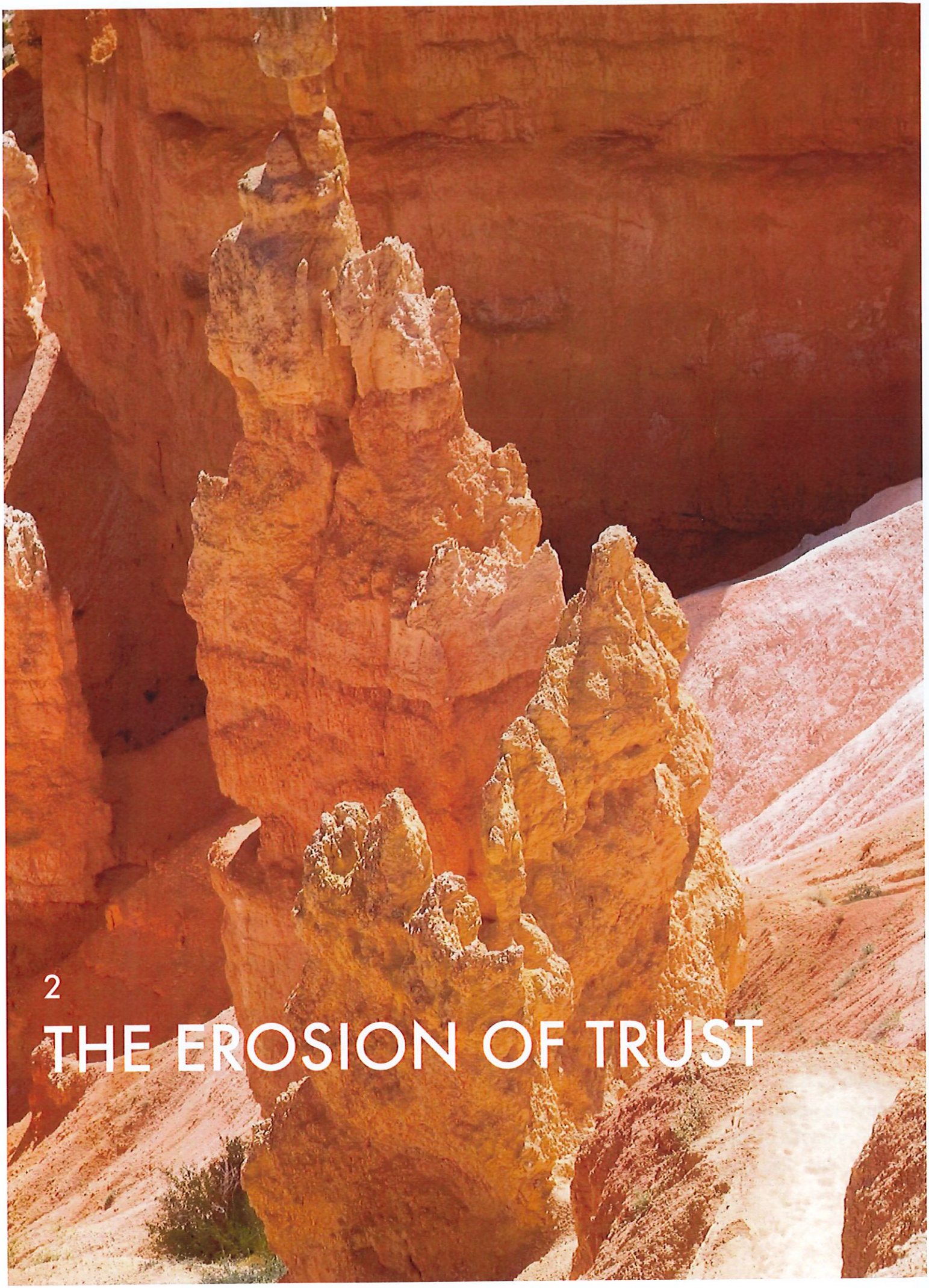
The final trust engendering practice identified by the study was an obvious one. In any kind of relationship, confidentiality is essential to maintaining trust. When others have entrusted a person with private or sensitive information they have a moral obligation to honour that trust; the breach of confidentiality may cost that relationship (Reina & Reina, 2006).

For members of staff in the four case study schools, trust for the Head came from knowing that they could share personal information with the Principal, safe in the knowledge that unless they granted permission, it would not go any further.

> You won't find that she has betrayed your confidence. Well, I have never found that she has betrayed confidence where I have had some of those difficult discussions and then found [out] that somebody has told me back part of that discussion... I feel that I can have faith in her that I can have a discussion. (Annette, Director of Faculty)

Knowing that the leader could 'keep their own counsel' encouraged staff members to broach difficult discussions that might otherwise have been avoided.

Are you a confidence keeper? Do you ask permission before sharing information that has been entrusted to you? Are your staff members able to engage with you in 'difficult discussions'?



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THE EROSION OF TRUST

To research the key practices used by Heads to engender trust among staff members I first had to identify those Heads who were highly trusted by their staffs. To do this, an invitation to participate in the study was issued to Heads of large schools (at least 120 staff) with open employment policies. Heads were then invited to complete the Tranformational Leadership Measurement tool (TLM) developed by Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Moorman and Fetter (1990). Nyhan and Marlowe's (1997) Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI) was administered to their **Chair** of **Council** and members of staff.

Nineteen schools returned reliable data from the TLM and OTI, and the four highest scoring schools on both those tools were then invited to participate as case study schools. We have much to learn about how to engender trust from the practices of the Heads of those schools. However, I was also interested by the school returning data from the TLM and OTI which showed significantly lower results than the other schools. Could we also learn about how to engender trust by knowing what not to do?

The following account traces the erosion of trust within a school over the seven-year period of one Head's tenure. It is a true story, although of necessity incomplete; only the most significant events have been included. The name of the school and names of staff members have been changed to protect the identity of those involved.

Read the case study through the lens of trust. To help you reflect, or as a discussion starter with a colleague, along the way you will find a number of questions. You can read the case in its entirety or touch the icon and use the questions to examine the practice of Johnson and reflect on your own leadership.

FIRM AND DECISIVE LEADERSHIP OR THE EROSION OF TRUST?

Halse Grammar School, a coeducational school, had a student population of 1250 from **Kindergarten** to Year 12 when Johnson was appointed as **Head**. Johnson had come up through the ranks of teacher, Head of Department and Head of Studies in other **independent schools** before moving to Sydney, NSW to take on his first Headship at Halse Grammar in 1999.

Prior to Johnson's appointment, Halse Grammar had had only two Heads since its inception in 1954. Johnson replaced Gregory, who had finished his 26-year term as Head somewhat disgraced. Gregory had failed to adequately deal with a scandal involving one of the teachers at the school. Gregory's poor handling of the matter had eventually forced his resignation.

Johnson was a diminutive man, but what he lacked in stature he made up for in charisma. His charm enamored everyone he met, but none more so than the members of the **Board** of Halse Grammar, who were responsible for his employment. Johnson had a natural gift for public speaking; his oratory skills inspired the confidence of his listeners. Johnson's passion was curriculum and pedagogy: he had been the Head of Studies at a large metropolitan independent school prior to his appointment, a role that oversaw the school's academic programs and to which Johnson was well-suited. Colleagues who had known him at previous schools said that he was an excellent practitioner in the classroom. He knew his craft and for that, his students respected him. He was forward thinking curriculum wise, and would be deliberately provocative when matters of teaching and learning were being debated. He would regularly challenge those in leadership roles above him: he had very high expectations of those who had positions of responsibility. He wasn't a person to shy away from challenging situations and, in enthusiasm, would often charge in, sleeves rolled up, to sort out a problem.

It appeared that Halse Grammar had found a competent person to lead the school into the 21st century. But long after the conclusion of Johnson's tenure at Halse Grammar, a senior staff member described him as:

> . . . a very social person who had a keen sense of humor. He enjoyed a good conversation and would be the life of the party. But at work he had an air of arrogance about him; an inflated sense of importance and expertise that I think masked a suppressed fear of inadequacy, accentuated by his small stature. (Head of Junior School)

As Johnson saw it, he had inherited a school that was stuck in the past: a very traditional school that had been led by a very traditional Head. Gregory had been an 'old-school' **Headmaster** who believed firmly in hierarchy. He had believed that it was his role to set standards and enforce those standards. He had commanded respect from the staff, students and parents. His presence evoked a reverent sense of fear in many, but numerous staff members fondly described

Gregory as 'eccentric'; he never did the same thing twice. He would change his mind often; things he had done one way one year, he would do differently the following year. He was never satisfied with what he had done and would continuously seek to improve. He was a Head who was out and about in the school; staff never knew when he would pop up. He would often enter the staff workroom unnoticed and listen in on conversations to ensure he knew what was happening in 'his' school.

Gregory was a person who valued and accepted individual differences. As an eccentric, he appreciated eccentricity in others. Over the course of his lengthy tenure he had collected an eclectic group of staff. He gave people the freedom to 'do their own thing' as long as they got results. However, Gregory's eccentricity, acceptance of difference and willingness to allow freedom in the classroom would have ramifications for many staff members as Johnson took the helm.

Halse Grammar's Deputy Head, who had been a Head himself at one stage in his career, was tasked with supporting Johnson as he moved into the role of Head. Johnson appreciated this; he had known Davidson as a colleague at a previous school. The two had got on well. Davidson supported Johnson, giving him an insight into the school and how it operated.

For the first few months Johnson was very visible around the school, speaking with students and staff. He also read through the school's curriculum documentation and reviewed academic results. By the middle of the academic year Johnson had formed an opinion of what Halse Grammar needed. His confidence had grown to the point that he could begin making his own decisions; consequently, he less and less sought the advice and counsel of Davidson.

In Johnson's view, the school needed sweeping changes educationally. The curriculum had not been reviewed, perhaps ever, and the school had not made any moves to implement the mandated government changes. Many of the Departments were poorly managed, had little documentation and no signs that teaching was either planned for, or reviewed. The 'old guard', as Johnson termed them—staff members who had been at the school for years, who were somewhat eccentric and preferred to do their own thing rather than follow the set curriculum—needed moving on. Education had changed since Gregory had begun his Headship in 1973, and it appeared that the school had fallen behind the times and was in a bit of a mess. Coupled with this, the scandal which had forced Gregory's resignation had rocked many staff members. They had been totally unaware of what their colleague had been up to. It had left them emotionally depleted, hurt and in some instances, very angry. It was a very complex and difficult situation for anyone to walk into. Johnson felt that he needed to roll up his sleeves to turn the school around and get it back on track.

THE FIRST CHALLENGE

For decades Halse Grammar had been very traditional in its approach to teaching and learning. After looking at programs, unit plans and assessment schedules, Johnson commissioned a curriculum review. He appointed the school's Dean of Studies, Burgess, as Chair of the review process and directed a number of key staff from across the school to be on the review team. A respected consultant from the local university was engaged to work with Burgess. The review took six months. A key recommendation from the review team was to implement a middle schooling program. The genesis of this recommendation was the notion of student engagement during the adolescent years.

With the Board's approval, Johnson appointed a dynamic Head of Middle School. Staff members took an instant liking to her. She had a genuine passion for adolescents. With Johnson's blessing staff members were invited by the new Head of Middle School to be part of the new program. A key reason for the program's success over the coming years was because staff had had significant input into its development, another was the charisma of the new Head of Middle School. She was a consultative leader with a clear vision for middle schooling.

Year 6 was taken out of the Junior School and coupled together with the first two years of high school to create a new sub-school within Halse Grammar: Middle School. The school's major enrolment intake year moved from Year 7 to Year 6. While a visionary and exciting move in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, Johnson failed to adequately consult with another key stakeholder group, the parents. Letters were written to the **Chair** of the school's Board by parents whose children were on the waiting list for Year 7 enrolment about the impact of the change in structure. Parents who had intended on enrolling their children at the school for high school, were now left with no option but to enrol them a year earlier in order to guarantee a place. The school's policy had changed and they felt that they had not been consulted. When they approached the school they felt that the 'administration' had been 'arrogant and dismissive' of their concerns—the implication was that Johnson was not at all interested in their concerns.

Johnson's charisma and bullish manner convinced the Board and the Chair that the decision was the right one and that, while parents would be naturally upset because the changes had impacted them, the concerns would only be short lived. The best approach was to stand by their resolve and push forward.

Halse Grammar was not a parent-controlled school, as some independent schools are. For independent schools that are governed by a Board of directors, parent input into strategic decisions is not the normal practice. Johnson had certainly made this clear at one of the Junior School Parents and Friends meetings (JSP&F).

JSP&F meetings were normally attended by the Head and Deputy Head of Junior School. Johnson's one and only appearance was at a meeting in 2000. Johnson had heard from a family that

the parents wanted to discuss the physical education program, and whether the school ever intended to appointed a specialist PE teacher for the Junior School. The Head of Junior School welcomed discussion at JSP&F meetings; it was a good opportunity to hear the views of the parents, but he had no idea that Johnson had determined to come to this meeting. Johnson arrived and immediately took control of the meeting. He made it clear as to what the parents' role in a school such as Halse Grammar was, and it wasn't the practice to invite parent comment in respect to strategic direction and operational matters. At that point he announced that 'his staff' agreed with him (Johnson regularly used the phrase, 'my staff'), stood up, and left the meeting, expecting 'his staff' (the Head and Deputy Head of Junior School) to leave with him.

That was the worst day of my entire career. I had no idea what to do, I was so embarrassed. One of the parents told me later that I looked like I was about to throw up. I had no choice but to leave the meeting with him. (Head of Junior School)

To enable the Middle School program, a capital works program was approved by the Board and the new Middle School precinct was constructed in stages over the following three years. The program and the school flourished. A combination of good economic times, an excellent Head of Middle School and good marketing of the program saw the school's enrolment grow from 1250 to over 1500. Halse Grammar School was no longer a medium sized school but a large school—a dominant player in the region.

The creation of the Middle School within the whole school meant that there were now three sub-schools at Halse Grammar: a Junior School, a Middle School and a Senior School. With the introduction of a third sub-school the management structure became more complicated. For decades the school had had in place a very traditional management structure. Junior School was basically a stand-alone entity, but the upper section of the school (Years 7-12) had a traditional organizational model, seen in many schools of its ilk. Heads of Department were responsible to the Dean of Studies for the academic program for Years 7-12. Heads of House managed the pastoral care program, reporting to the Head of Senior School (students at Halse Grammar are organized into House groups for the support and development of their wellbeing). A Dean of Administration took care of the day-to-day operations of the school, including coordination of relief staff, timetabling and the duty roster. All these operations were overseen by the Deputy Head, who reported to the Head. This structure was not changed with the introduction of Middle School; a Head and Deputy Head of Middle School were simply added to it. The Executive team of the school now stood at 14, plus the Head.

With the changes many people were confused as to what their job actually entailed. Existing position descriptions weren't reviewed and the changes hadn't been well communicated and explained. For example, the Head of Middle School had an understanding that she had control over curriculum development for Years 6 to 8, but the Heads of Department believed that this was their domain. This left many feeling like they were stepping on the toes of colleagues, intruding on their area. Others decided to guard their domain fiercely, fearful of the changes they didn't understand.

A CULTURAL SHIFT

2001 was the tipping point in the school's cultural change. Up to that time, under the leadership of the previous Head, Gregory, the school had valued diversity, creativity and independence. Teachers were trusted as professionals and as such had been largely left to their own devices. Over the years Gregory had collected a mixed bag of individuals. Their combined eclectic eccentricity engaged, and valued, a similar diversity in the student body.

Johnson was in no way eccentric. The only facet of the previous culture he valued was hierarchy. Under Gregory, hierarchy had reigned. For Gregory, it was important that everyone knew their place in the order of things. This order was reinforced by his insistence that staff referred to him as 'Headmaster', and students as 'Sir'. Johnson slotted into this established order comfortably. He was the 'Headmaster'. As Headmaster it was he who provided the direction the school needed. Consequently Johnson clashed with any staff member who was bold enough to express a different view point. For Johnson this was a signal of insubordination. It was important that the school was united in its efforts for educational reform. He aimed to achieve this by exerting control and educating staff as to what their role in decision making was.

On one occasion a group of Heads of House wrote to Johnson with their ideas for changes to the pastoral program. Johnson was having nothing of it. Without even considering the ideas he used the opportunity to reinforce to people what their roles were. Middle management was to oversee the day-to-day operation of the school; if the Head needed ideas he would ask for them. The letter was torn up and an email sent to the Heads of House: 'I saw no need to read your ideas pertaining to the school's pastoral care program. May I remind you that your role is to implement that program; if the program needs reviewing then the Head will authorize a review and any necessary changes would be made with [my] consent. Until that occurs your views are not required.'

Johnson's response left the group deflated. Their intentions had been the wellbeing of the students. They could see that there were things that could be done better. However, it was apparent from Johnson's response that their ideas and input were not valued. Their place in the school's hierarchy had been reinforced.

Strategic decisions were the domain of the **Board** and the Head. The Executive team's role, chaired by the Head, was to look after operational matters and enact strategic decisions. The Executive team met fortnightly. The agenda was set by Johnson, published three days prior, and typically contained a number of standing items including Apologies, Minutes from the previous meeting, Business arising, Items from the Head and What's on next fortnight, as well as Items for discussion and decision. At the meetings, Johnson would sit at the head of the impressive boardroom table. Made from local timbers by a past

student, the table was long and narrow, and seated 20 comfortably.

At the start of Johnson's tenure, Executive members would dutifully prepare for the meetings, but it quickly became apparent that the Head would come to the meeting with a decision already made: the discussion was more about the Executive coming to terms with the Head's reasoning, rather than him inviting participation in a collaborative decision making process.

At Executive level the decision often appeared to be made before you got there. It seemed pointless having the discussion. You would read the agenda prior to the meeting but the decision had already been made. He sat at the head of the table and chaired the meetings from there. Only transactional items were discussed at these meetings, no bigger picture things. This was the realm of the Head and the **Council**. (Head of Senior School)

The new Middle School program was due to commence at the beginning of 2001. With the new leadership positions established, Johnson called the expanded Executive team to his office to outline his expectations for the year ahead. Johnson began well, communicating his vision and outlining his expectations of the 'new team'. However, the Head of the Junior School, a man who probably wasn't well suited to the role, grinned immaturely at a remark Johnson had made. Johnson couldn't see a cause for mirth. He stopped his speech and angrily reprimanded the man: 'I'm not having this sort of attitude here.' Most of the Executive team, who were standing behind the Head of Junior School, had no idea of the reasoning for Johnson's apparent irrational change in behaviour. The atmosphere in the room changed; from being 'brethren together', the whips had suddenly come out and everyone felt like they were back in school, standing in the Headmaster's office being berated. The Executive team left the office very sobered. For many their confidence began to wane, as they were not quite sure as to who might be reprimanded next, and what for.

Johnson's delineation of roles and decision making authority was particularly obvious when he announced an expansion of the Junior School. In 2002 the Board had commissioned a demographic study. The results indicated that in the coming years Halse Grammar would experience a downturn in enrolment. However, the actual enrolment trend indicated otherwise. A healthy local economy (driven by the building trade), and the poor reputation of the surrounding government schools, were increasing the demand for Kindergarten places. An additional class per grade would take Halse Grammar enrolment to over 1650, making it one of the largest independent schools in NSW. This key strategic decision was made by the Board and Johnson. Johnson had not taken the decision to the Executive team; it wasn't in their remit.

Johnson decided to announce the intended expansion at the weekly staff briefing, held on a Monday. On his way to briefing, Johnson passed the Head of Junior School and briefly mentioned the announcement to him, so the Head of Junior School was not surprised when it was made to the staff.

When strategic decisions were to be announced Johnson would always have the Chair of the Board with him. This visual display of support left staff feeling that this was the wish of the Board and was the direction that the school was taking, even though they had no part in forming that

direction. It made it very hard for people to come up with ideas that could influence the direction of the school. As a result people bunkered down and supported each other. (Head of Junior School)

The Head of Junior School found himself in a reactive position over the announcement to expand the Junior School. He could see that the decision would benefit the school economically, but would alter the structures and culture of the Junior School significantly. Up until that stage, the Junior School had had a wonderful 'small school', 'family' feel. A 30 per cent expansion would put this culture under threat. As there had been no consultation, consideration had not been given to issues such as staffing and timetabling. For example, the timetable was developed around two classes per grade. Both teachers on each grade level were given relief from lessons at the same time to enable cooperative planning to occur. This would be nearly impossible to organise with three classes per grade. The decision had been made; the Head of Junior School was left with the responsibility to make it happen.

For Senior School staff, a definitive shift in culture occurred when Johnson terminated the employment of Roberts, the specialist Chinese language teacher. Johnson had gradually become less visible around the school. He kept to his office and when he was away rumour had it that he enjoyed traveling business class. Staff had already begun to feel wary, having heard of the Executive team's experience at the beginning of the year, but the case of Roberts demonstrated Johnson's apparent complete lack of empathy for anyone who was different.

Roberts was an excellent teacher of Chinese, but unfortunately he suffered from depression. His condition was controlled by medication and, as such, never impacted his performance in the classroom. Students adored him and staff held him in high regard. From the Deputy Head's (Davidson's) experience, the previous Head, Gregory, had been very empathetic of Roberts and had handled him with gentleness and understanding. Roberts knew that if he was depressed, in confidence he could share his feelings with Gregory. Gregory would then contact Roberts's doctor, requesting a change in his medication. However, Johnson was not so understanding. Roberts's mistake was to place the same level of trust in Johnson as he had placed in Gregory.

On an occasion when Roberts was feeling particularly down, he made an appointment to see the Head. When Johnson asked how Roberts was feeling, Roberts said that he felt like he wanted to hurt other staff. Johnson took the high ground. He summarily terminated Roberts's employment on the grounds of risk: depressed or not, Johnson could not have a person on the staff who was wanting to harm others. Roberts's colleagues saw this action as grossly unfair. They all knew that an adjustment in his medication would return Roberts to normality, but Johnson appeared to have a complete lack of understanding for his condition. It seemed to them that Johnson had over-reacted, was unreliable and couldn't be trusted if they had a concern they needed to share. The incident left the general staff population feeling unsure of themselves and they became increasingly unhappy.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

It often looked as if Johnson felt threatened by staff members who displayed talent, or whose careers showed promise. One such person was Burgess, the Dean of Studies, who had been employed by the previous Head, Gregory, just prior to his departure from the school. Johnson had delegated to Burgess the responsibility for the curriculum review which subsequently led to the creation of a Middle School at Halse Grammar. The external consultant running the review recognised Burgess's talent and took her under his wing. With mentoring, Burgess's confidence as a leader blossomed. She also grew further in her understanding of curriculum and pedagogy. As a result, Burgess became a driving force for pedagogical reform.

After the curriculum review, Burgess led a team of staff in the development of a Halse Grammar pedagogical framework. She challenged teachers, mentoring them and encouraging them to grow professionally. Jones, an English teacher, said he valued Burgess's honest feedback. Burgess regularly observed Jones in his classroom and reviewed his planning. Burgess always looked for the positives but ensured that her overall feedback was

aimed at promoting growth, challenging Jones—and others she mentored—to become better at their craft. For many staff members Burgess's drive was inspiring and infectious; for others it was incredibly threatening. Burgess was direct and forthright when speaking with people; if a staff member's performance could be improved, Burgess left them with no doubt where the improvements could be made.

Following the success of the curriculum review and the Middle School program, Johnson took a dislike to Burgess. Perhaps it was because she was a person who had the courage to express her views and ideas to the Head. Burgess was admired by many staff members for her intellect, her leadership, passion and drive; but Burgess certainly did not suffer fools. She would not tolerate people who made excuses. If a staff member had done something wrong she would prefer them to own their behaviour so she could support them to grow and move forward by offering mentoring and strategies to address deficiencies. Burgess preferred openness and honesty, only then would she be prepared to support a staff member and defend them when needed. She could see through a person who made excuses. Burgess expected the same of herself; she was prepared to acknowledge her deficiencies and mistakes when she made them.

For many staff members, Burgess's manner was very abrupt and forthright. Her manner could be very confronting and demanding. Those staff had the ear of Johnson. He listened to their concerns and sent a letter of demand to Burgess. In total, Johnson brought to Burgess 17 allegations about her performance while in the employ of Halse Grammar, including failure to: report a leave of absence; appropriately manage the Departments under her supervision; supervise Heads of Department and performance of the teaching staff; carry out administrative duties; and communicate with staff under her supervision.

Johnson's performance meetings with staff were mostly run according to correct procedure. The staff member would be given notice of the meeting and the concerns that they were to respond to. They were invited to bring a support person with them. Johnson would have the Deputy with him.

> Johnson's typical tactic in a performance meeting would be to lull the person into a false sense of security, giving them the impression he had empathy for them and their situation, to the point that the person would say something that they really shouldn't have. Johnson would then jump at the opportunity to tear apart the staff member's defence. He had always made up his mind beforehand; the meeting was just protocol, not an opportunity for the staff member to be genuinely heard. (Davidson, Deputy Head)

A formal warning was always given after a performance meeting with a member of the staff. Often a meeting resulted in dismissal. If Johnson could justify summary dismissal he would instruct the Deputy to escort the staff member as he/she cleared out their desk and left the school property.

With a Union representative as her support person, Burgess met with Johnson. She had a strong defence but the experience caused her significant stress and anxiety. Burgess went on leave and lodged a Work Cover claim for a workplace injury. The claim was rejected by the insur-

ers but the Union successfully negotiated a settlement between the two parties. Burgess resigned and received an ex-gratia payment. The agreement included the provision of a reference for Burgess from Johnson, which read:

> The relationships that Burgess established and sustained with individuals and professional bodies have contributed in no small way to the School's ability to engage with recent curriculum changes... Teachers not only respected her knowledge, but appreciated her active dedication to their professional growth and development. Her willingness to talk through issues characterised her relationships with staff.

Burgess's position was filled by a trusted colleague of Johnson, with whom he had worked at his previous school. Burgess gained employment in the education faculty at a nearby university. She would later lodge a successful appeal to the Work Cover decision.

Other staff members felt intimidated by Johnson. Two individuals felt that Johnson had treated them unfairly in what they considered as trivial matters; they each lodged a complaint with the school Board. A further two staff members lodged separate complaints the following year. But because Johnson's monthly Board report always contained an update of staff issues, including matters of under-performance, the Board members placed their confidence in him. They saw his transparency as a sign of his trustworthiness; his charisma had lulled them into a sense of complacency. Enrolments were strong, Johnson was managing with a strong hand, and because Board members had no contact with the general teaching staff, they had no reason to doubt his version of events. Johnson justified his actions: individuals would naturally feel intimidated if their conduct was called into question (Roberts, for example, could not be allowed to threaten other members of staff and Burgess was wanting in many areas of performance); staff had been left to their own devices by Gregory and consequently poor performance had never been addressed.

During 2003, Johnson appeared to become more fervent, and erratic in his management of staff. Formal warnings that year were numerous. On one occasion four of the eight Heads of House were warned for not turning up to a New Parent Information Night; Johnson had been marking off staff attendance at the event and noted their absence. The following month a member of staff was warned for being a 'destabilising' influence (the staff member had made a representation to Union about poor treatment of staff on the part of the school's 'administration'). Another teacher, to whom Johnson had taken a dislike, was warned for being 15 minutes late for class; yet another was warned for poor work output. A staff member who refused to adhere to the school's staff dress code by wearing thongs instead of closed-in shoes needed dealing with. All formal warnings appeared justified, but statistically it appeared that Johnson had far more than his fair share of poor performing staff members.

Many staff felt as though they were not trusted and respected by the Head. They had become increasingly unhappy, particularly when they saw colleagues treated unfairly. Johnson was systematically removing the 'dead wood' from the school: staff members who had been at Halse Grammar for many years. Johnson's reputation for managing staff with whom he was displeased

worsened. His office had been renamed 'the Chamber' and, because of his short stature and leadership style, he was nick-named 'Napoleon'. Staff members knew that if they were summonsed to 'the Chamber' by 'Napoleon' they were going to be berated or, worse, have their employment terminated. Johnson would enforce his expectations at the weekly staff briefings, often declaring that some aspect of the school wasn't good enough, or that a student had been let down by someone. He would demand to know who was to blame.

He had an ability to let everyone know who he was berating without actually saying their name. It wasn't uncommon for staff members to be brought to tears in front of their colleagues. Even senior staff members. (Head of Senior School)

Staff began coming to work with the attitude of 'keeping their head down'. Work was no longer enjoyable; it was about protecting themselves from the wrath of the Head. One staff member commented: 'To protect yourself and retain your job you speak to no one, you work as an individual. You don't ask questions, you conform to directives from above and you certainly don't speak to the Head.'

Johnson was unaware of the impact his form of management was having on the staff. In his mind he had wrestled with the 'dead wood' and won. Control of the school had been achieved, and the remaining staff would be compliant with directions and supportive of his vision.

In 2003 staff turnover reached 29 per cent—a combination of terminations, resignations and retirements. Several staff took long service leave that year, taking time away from the school to decide what their future might hold for them. Hiring staff became such a large job that a position titled Dean of Staff (human resource management) was created. Students began to complain that teachers weren't respecting them, resulting in an increase in parent complaints. A vicious circle had been created: staff felt threatened; they in turn managed their classrooms in a similar vein; parents complained; Johnson addressed the performance issues.

There were people who chose to leave before something happened to them. As a result it depleted the school of good male role models. When dealing with staff he didn't like [Johnson] wasn't very good at listening to their side of the story. He had already made up his mind. It would seem like the process of managing staff was skipped and a small matter escalated into a serious issue very quickly. They didn't get to be heard. It wasn't always about the issue but it was about a power struggle between the person and Johnson. Some people did need a shake-up, but it wasn't done in a caring, respectful manner. (Head of Junior School)

A NEW CAPITAL PROJECT

With the exception of the new Middle School precinct, Halse Grammar had many ageing buildings. In the first three decades of its existence the Board had approved the construction of new facilities if and when they could afford them, often built on a limited budget and without a master plan. As a result, many of the facilities were built as 'temporary', to be improved when the school was in a better financial position. There was no capital investment and renewal program.

One such building that was in a poor state of repair was the administration building. Aside from its appearance, the school had outgrown the building and was in need of new office space and staff facilities. The Building and Grounds Committee (a sub-committee of the Board) had the responsibility to engage an architect to design the new facility, assess tenders and make a recommendation to the Board for the capital project. The Head, Business Manager and the Deputy Head sat on this committee along with two members of the Board and an external consultant. General staff participation was not invited and staff members were not consulted during the design phase.

A loan was secured and construction commenced on a new two-storey administration building, located at the very front of the school. The imposing design would provide a central and defining focal point for the campus, clearly articulating the school's desired image: prestige.

Completed in 2003, the building surpassed the Board's and Johnson's expectations. Built with the future in mind, it dominated the landscape. The impressive design won several architectural awards. Shifting into the building, staff members had the feeling of moving from the sublime to the ridiculous; compared to the accommodation they had been used to, the facility was huge and extremely well appointed.

Johnson's sense of achievement was palpable. Halse Grammar had 'arrived'; in his mind the school could now be counted as an equal amongst the elite independent schools of the country. The school's advertising tag line was changed to say 'Halse Grammar, a leading independent co-educational school'.

The building reflected Johnson's values, his aspirations for the school and his leadership of it. Protocols designed to further impose the Head's control on the school were developed by Johnson and communicated to the staff and student body by the Deputy. Entering the main entrance of the building was taboo for staff and students; the rule now was that all staff and students were to enter via the rear of the building. The front entrance was for special guests. A glass wall and door divided the expansive marble entrance foyer in two. This wall effectively kept the students and staff at the back of the entrance foyer, away from any special guests. The main flight of stairs from the entrance foyer to the first floor was also taboo for staff. Staff members were only allowed to use a second set of stairs, which was out of sight.

Set at the far west of the first floor was the Head's suite. This suite was obviously built to intimidate, and became colloquially known by staff as 'the west wing'. To gain entry to the Head's office one had to go past three reception areas and through several closed doors. The Head was a busy man and, at this stage of his tenure, was rarely seen around the school. If a staff member did need to see the Head, they had to make an appointment with his Personal Assistant. However, it was typically Johnson who summoned a staff member to his office. A staff member coming to see the Head had to wait on a couch adjacent to the second reception area. It was a very public area, causing further humiliation to those summoned to see the Head.

Strict protocols were also introduced to protect the confidentiality of school documents. The 'outer office'—the term used by Johnson to describe the area containing the offices of the Deputy Head, the Director of Business, the finance staff and the Director of Development—was only accessible via a pass-restricted security door or if staff members were given permission to enter. This area contained the 'confidential' photocopier, a copier in a small room of its own which was primarily used by the Head's Personal Assistant to produce Board papers. Apart from a handful of senior staff members, all other personnel had to use another copier.

Johnson's office was handsomely appointed, with a beautiful timber desk and leather chair,

glass cabinets, art work hanging on the walls and a leather lounge suite. It boasted superb views of the mountains plus a private ensuite bathroom and an adjoining kitchen. One could be forgiven for thinking that it was the office of the CEO of a major corporation and not that of a Head of a school.

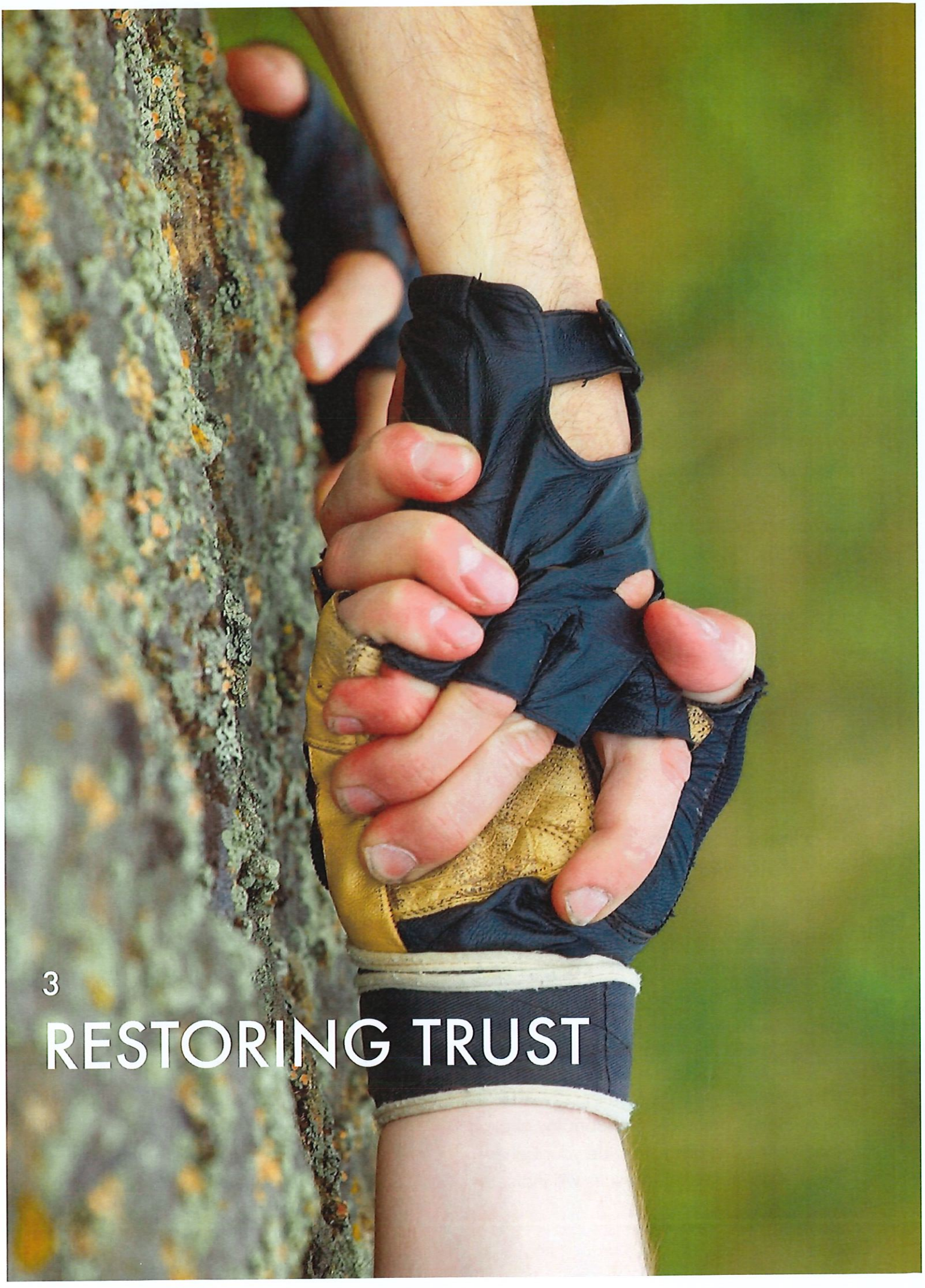
The new building had a basement that was primarily used for deliveries but which also had a parking bay for the Head and his Personal Assistant. Johnson could drive into the building, park his car and take the lift up to his office. Unless he chose to, the Head did not need to step out into the grounds of the school. He could come and go as he pleased, without people noticing.

The doors, physical set-up, procedures, policies and protocols of the new building sent a very clear message to the staff, which they heard loud and clear: no one is to be trusted until proven trustworthy. Hierarchy was enforced and the school was run from the Head's office.

THE JOHNSON LEGACY

Trust was measured at this school two years after Johnson was removed by the School's **Board**, using a tool developed by **Nyhan and Marlow** (1997). Trust amongst staff and trust in the new Head was found to be significantly low, so much so that the school's culture was described by one member of staff as being, "very, very sick."

Six years of concerted effort by the new Head to bring about healing and move the school forward still had not garnered significant changes. After that period trust in the Head had improved greatly but staff's trust of each other and trust of the organization itself had shown no improvement. People were still carrying the pain of the past, unwilling, or unable to let it go. This bore out in the wellbeing of the staff and their ability to cope with stress and change, effectively choking the school's ability to transform and achieve its vision.



3

RESTORING TRUST

CHANGING CULTURE

Once lost trust is very hard to restore; but it is possible. It is also possible to increase the level of trust people have in you and to positively influence the culture your organization. It does take time, but begins with you.

The very first step in the process is to honestly examine your current practices. This can be confronting and requires bravery, but the very action of reflecting on your behaviour, and asking others to support you, will garner new levels of respect and trust in your leadership; after all, we are all human.

A Trust and Transformational Leadership Assessment Rubric was developed as a result of my research and has been tested in schools across Australia. It has been shown to be a reliable way of measuring the level of trust people have in you, as well as your capacity to be a transformational leader.

The rubric lists the 10 practices highlighted in Chapter 1 and can be used in several ways, including:

(a) Personal reflection tool. For each practice highlight the behaviours that best describe you. The actions on the far right of the rubric describe the behaviours of a highly trusted transformational leader.

(b) Appraisal tool. Ask members of your team/staff to complete the rubric by circling the actions that best describe your behaviours. A collation of the results will indicate to you the level of trust people currently have in you, where your strengths lie, and which practices you need to work on. To be effective as an appraisal tool, the rubric should be distributed on the basis that responses will be anonymous.

It is important to remember that trust is a socially constructed phenomenon. What trust means to one person will be different to the next because we all have different life experiences. For example, trust to one person will mean keeping confidences (probably because their confidences were broken at one point in their life), to another it will mean the care and interest you take in them as a person. The lesson here is that a highly trusted leader will be good at multiple practices, not just one, two or three practices.

I am yet to come across a leader who has been rated as 'excellent' (the far right column) for each of the 10 practices. Highly trusted leaders are typically rated equally between the third and fourth columns, but this still gives them an indication of what they need to work on.

If you are rated in the first or second columns for a practice this will give you a clear indication of what you need to work on to restore and improve the level of trust your team/staff has in you, remembering that trust is a subjectively perceived phenomenon. For example, you may think you are very visible around the school but your team doesn't agree. This doesn't mean that anyone is

necessarily wrong, but does mean that you need to make a greater effort in this area.

If you choose to use the rubric as an appraisal tool, an important step in building or restoring trust is to thank your team/staff for the feedback and promise to make a commitment to improve in the areas highlighted. You might even ask them for help, or engage a coach.

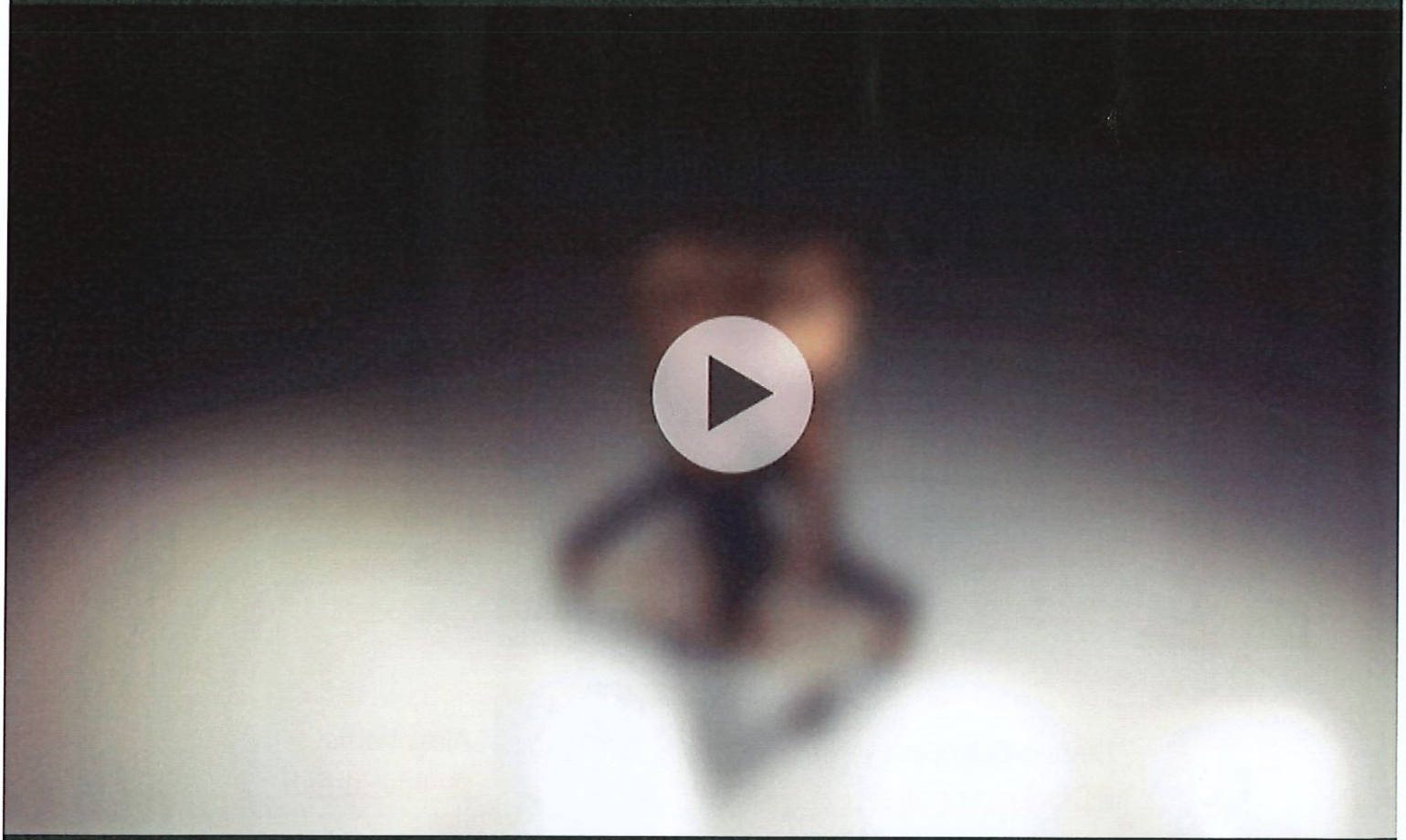
Remember, the practices are devoid of personality traits. For example, you don't have to be an extrovert to be a highly trusted leader. You may even be socially awkward and find it an incredible challenge to interact with people. These practices can be learned by anyone motivated enough to be the very best leader they can be.

For those interested, I can administer the rubric on your behalf, collate the results and produce a report. You can contact me at p.browning@stpauls.qld.edu.au

Rubric for assessing trust and transformational leadership practice

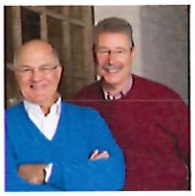
Admit mistakes	Never displays vulnerability nor admits his/her mistakes or accepts responsibility for poor decisions; blames others.	Rarely displays any form of vulnerability; acknowledges when a poor decision or mistake has been made but doesn't take any personal responsibility or acts to resolve it.	On occasions displays vulnerability; accepts responsibility for his/her own errors and poor decisions but doesn't apologize; admonishes others for their mistakes and poor decisions.	Displays professional and personal vulnerability; admits mistakes or poor decisions; apologizes publicly; is willing to accept responsibility for other's mistakes; actively rectifies mistakes.
Offering trust	Micro-manages staff; controls or interferes with staff members' decision-making responsibilities; ordering, directing, or commanding; feedback is primarily corrective, or limited, general.	Allows staff to perform their role to an extent, monitors and sometimes influences decisions and regularly checks on work; feedback is primarily in the form of advice.	Allows staff to perform their role and make decisions that affect their work with minimal interference; provides supportive feedback when asked.	Treats staff as professional colleagues by implicitly trusting them to perform their role; willingly provides mentoring and coaching when asked.
Active listening	Speaks far more than he/she listens; is easily distracted when the person is speaking; shows little interest; does not show empathy; is only keen to share his/her point of view.	Gives time for the other person to speak before he/she shares their point of view; can allow distractions to interrupt the conversation; demonstrates a level of understanding.	Balances listening with speaking; is not easily distracted; demonstrates that he/she has heard and understood what the person has said by summarizing their main points.	Listens far more than he/she speaks without distraction; asks clarifying questions; demonstrates empathy; can articulate succinctly what the person is feeling and what they have actually said;
Affirmation	Never or rarely gives staff members' affirmation or thanks.	Provides affirmation to staff members on occasions either publicly or privately for significant contributions and successes.	Regularly recognizes contributions staff members have made and provides affirmation either publicly or privately.	Actively seeks ways to affirm and thank staff members either publicly or privately; affirms not just the significant contributions but also the little things staff do.
Decision making	Either makes decisions with no consultation or consideration of its impact or rarely is able to make a decision; doesn't communicate a decision nor provides justification or explanation for it.	Makes considered decisions; superficial consultation that works to enact an agenda; enacts the decisions.	Seeks staff input using consultative decision-making process; makes decisions and enacts them; communicates decisions to staff.	Values staff input and views; uses consultative or collaborative decision-making processes; makes timely and informed decisions and enacts them; communicates the justification for decisions.
Visibility	Rarely seen around the school; mainly confined to his/her office or is away from the school; does not regularly attend assemblies, chapel services, events, etc.; not accessible to staff.	On occasions can be seen around the school; attends assemblies, chapel services, etc.; on occasions attends school events; staff can make an appointment to see him/her.	Often seen around the school speaking with students, staff and parents; often attends assemblies, chapel services and other school events; accessible to staff.	Regularly seen on the grounds speaking with parents, staff and students modeling and reinforcing expectations; attends assemblies, chapel services and other events; is very accessible to staff.
Demeanor	Is unpredictable; prone to losing control of his/her emotions in different situations; primarily focused on his/her agenda rather than the staff member.	Responds emotively to different situations, expressing their feelings accordingly; displays concern for both him/herself and the staff member.	Is able to keep his/her emotions in check; shows a level of restrain in difficult or challenging situations; demonstrates respect for the staff member.	Is consistent and predictable, always remaining calm and level-headed no matter the situation; always respectful of the staff member.
Coaching and mentoring	Displays little interest or support for staff professional development; feedback is primarily corrective and judgmental.	Supports staff professional development programs; feedback is primarily in the form of advice, or is limited or general.	Takes a personal interest in the professional development of teachers; provides supportive and honest feedback when asked.	Maximizes staff members' potential and career growth through coaching or mentoring; provides immediate, specific and accurate feedback aimed at promoting growth.
Care and concern	Does not display empathy for staff members; has little interest in knowing people as individuals.	Displays an interest in the wellbeing of staff members; knows staff members and their role in the organization; claims to know how others feel.	Considers staff members' needs and wellbeing; displays empathy; knows staff members professionally and personally but knows where to draw the line.	Extends a genuine care and compassion for individual staff members by offering practical support; invests time to get to know staff members as people.
Confidentiality	Does not keep a person's confidences when they come into possession of sensitive information; rumors occur on a regular basis.	Keeps information confidential when specifically asked by the member of staff.	Keeps the confidences of staff members; will make a professional judgment as to whether that information should be shared.	Keeps the confidences of staff members when he/she is entrusted with sensitive information; only shares information with permission.

/hy Trust Is Worth It



TWITTER PLN

Grow your Twitter Professional Learning Network. For inspiration, and to learn more about leadership the following people and organizations are worth following:



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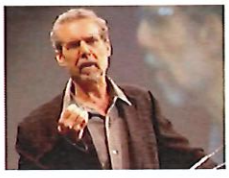

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Browning began his career as a primary school teacher. In 1999 he was appointed as the founding principal of Burgmann Anglican School in the ACT; a Pre-school to Year 12 co-educational school. Burgmann began as a green fields site but today has an enrolment of over 1500 students across two campuses. During his time in Canberra, Paul served as the Chair of the Association of Independent Schools ACT and was a board member of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA).

In 2008, Paul and his family moved to Queensland where he commenced the position of Headmaster of St Paul's School. He led St Paul's through a major restructure to create a unique middle management model designed to coach and develop teachers in key 21st century pedagogies. Paul is passionate about creativity and innovation in learning; a passion that led to the opening of the School's Centre for Research, Innovation and Future Development
www.thecentreonline.com.au

Paul's other passion is leadership and school culture. He believes that trust is the fundamental resource for successful leadership and a healthy school culture. Completed in 2013, Paul's PhD study identified key transformational leadership practices that successfully build a culture of trust. His Queensland University of Technology (QUT) study was awarded an Executive Dean's Commendation for outstanding contribution to the field of leadership and excellence in postgraduate research practice.

Paul has published a multitude of articles on school improvement and leadership, spoken at conferences, run courses on leadership, led workshops for AITSL on the creation of a performance and development culture and worked with Murdoch University to develop resources for a Masters Leadership unit.

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BOARD

another term for Council

Related Glossary Terms

Council

Index

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