

Workplace Psychological Safety Assessment

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How do you know which of your team members are struggling to cope in this COVID challenging time, and who are actually doing well? The research data has shown that over 55% of people struggled to cope with work and life stresses pre-COVID, and obviously this number has now significantly increased. The problem is...you don't know who.

One solution is to ignore it, and expect others to 'suck it up' like some managers think they do well. Another solution is a sheep dip approach, which is potentially wasteful, giving everyone some basic resilience training. Or a third approach is to offer to whoever wants it, some form of assistance. But many people who are suffering might not want to admit it, and will not participate. So again it doesn't hit the mark.

Consider This...

Imagine you're in a meeting, and your Manager has everyone in good spirits. There's lots of energy, ideas, eye contact, and laughter. But later in the day, in a different meeting with a different Manager, it's a whole other story.

People stare at the table or out the window. Nobody contributes unless they're asked, and then it's monosyllabic. Can you feel the tension in the room? These meetings have different levels of psychological safety.

And this is just as relevant in virtual meetings.

"Many of us can relate to when we have had difficult patches in our lives, and there was no way we would let anybody know!!"

If a team member is struggling, do your Managers have the skills to effectively discuss and support them?

Most Managers can't do this well. They haven't been trained in this skill. They will often try to solve the problem or avoid it, because they don't know how, and this can make things worse for the team member.

Safety

What is Psychological Safety?

Psychological safety is that quiet internal voice that protects each of us from ridicule and criticism. It's that tight feeling that prevents you from speaking up, or that easy feeling that tells you it's okay. A high level of psychological safety unlocks individual and team creativity. We feel comfortable contributing and sharing. Ideas flow and time flies.

Low psychological safety "freezes" our brain and shuts down performance.

This is even more critical for remote workers because people are isolated and potentially don't have connection, plus a range of other complicating elements in their home. Your people's vulnerability to lack of psychological safety will be heightened at this time.

The Australian data pre-COVID is that one in five people struggle with a diagnosable mental illness, and that number is rising during these very challenging conditions for many people. Hence your company could easily have 20-40% of your staff who are really struggling and need support.

But how do you know who might be really struggling when it is not as easy to see the signs because they are working from home?

The PS25 Assessment

The Psychological Safety assessment PS25 asks twenty-five very quick questions about how your team members are feeling. And because it is about how they feel, it is very fast; less than 4 mins on average.

Questions Such As:

1. I feel my manager cares about me
2. I feel I can share how I am feeling and not be ignored by my manager
3. I feel my skills are recognised and valued by my manager
4. My colleagues encourage me to share my views
5. Members of my team are able to discuss problems and tough ideas
6. I feel my manager values my contributions to the team
7. My team resolves conflicts together
8. Work is allocated fairly in my team
9. My team knows what we are trying to accomplish

Support

Does Psychological Safety Happen to Individuals or to Teams?

Psychological safety is a personal feeling that we experience as an individual. But it comes largely from the people around us. In the workplace, our immediate supervisor is responsible for up to 70% of our feeling of psychological safety.

Think of the examples above and recall your own experiences.

Our teammates also contribute to our level of psychological safety.

Emotions are contagious: when they feel apprehensive, we feel some of it, too.

When they feel more comfortable, so do we.

Psychological safety is experienced as an individual but arises from the group.

What are the Practical Implications for a Business?

Psychological safety affects everything we do. Here are three examples that businesses should know about:

1. Productivity, however you measure it, rises and falls significantly with psychological safety.
2. Loyalty and turnover are directly affected. High psychological safety increases loyalty and decreases turnover.
3. When psychological safety increases, then incidents and near misses relating to physical safety have been shown to significantly decrease.

When we examine them carefully, we see that each of these has a financial impact.

In 2014 Google's Project Aristotle started evaluating 180 teams to determine which factors make teams successful. Three years later, the conclusion: "Psychological Safety, more than any other factor, was critical to making a team work"

Are The Effects Measurable?

A recent survey by Gallup found that when companies doubled staff psychological safety levels, turnover dropped by 27%, safety incidents dropped by 40%, and productivity increased by 12%.

In 2012, Harvard's Dr. Amy Edmondson rekindled interest in psychological safety when she noticed that hospitals with higher PS levels had significantly lower medication errors.

What Effects Do Companies Experience?

Productivity

We see it every day in our client work. Some examples:

- A software company increased their daily output (lines of tested code) by almost 50%
- A retailer reduced "shrinkage" by almost 20%
- A local government realised over \$11,000 per person per year in cost savings and productivity increases

The more we look, the more we see psychological safety's measurable effect.

Steps to Improving Psych Safety in The Workplace

Link Psychological Safety levels with your organisations' challenges, concerns and internal metrics. Unlock your people's potential

1. Measure

Organisational psychological safety is measured by administering the PS 25™ assessment; a 25 question survey that takes less than 4 minutes to uncover how your team members are feeling.

2. Pinpoint

The PS 25™ software is specifically designed to show psychological safety levels within every team in an organisation.

3. Analyze

PS 25™ also helps you link psychological safety with business metrics. This helps you measure progress and develop business cases.

4. Improve

The robust software suggests ways you can significantly improve and maintain psychological safety in your teams.



A powerful and practical way to identify opportunities
and look out for your people

Bill Carson



Bill Carson brings expertise in Mental Health, Resilience and Emotional Intelligence to organisations in Australia, in the following industries: retail, legal, manufacturing, healthcare, aged and community care, and advertising. He is also a regular volunteer Lifeline Telephone Crisis Supporter.

Bill has over 20 years' experience and expertise in mental health, marketing, sales, management, service culture, business development, key account management, facilitation and coaching across a wide range of industries.

Bill has a strong background in personal and professional development, including facilitation and coaching gleaned from many different industries from Manufacturing, Professional Services, Banking and Finance, Insurance, ITC, Healthcare and Retail.