

# Designing people strategies based on human instincts

## Successful Leadership Using Human Instincts

We can make workplaces fitter for humans. To do so we need to know the behavioural instincts of our species. Through using human instincts, leaders create workplaces that are highly engaging and high performing. If we ignore our natures then we are imposing a weight on our workplaces that inhibits performance.

The challenge for leaders is that offices are not our natural habitat! Through the long journey of human history it's only been the last 250 years since the Industrial Revolution we shifted from being hunter-gatherers and villagers to move into offices and factories. Two hundred years is no time to alter what it means to be human. Our nature was formed in our ancestral setting.

In the Hardwired Humans framework there are 9 instinctive behaviours. Through the lens of instincts we can suddenly make sense of how clan connections, hierarchy, gossip, politics, snap judgments and status displays show themselves in offices, corridors and meeting rooms. People's behaviour, including our own, suddenly makes more sense and leaders can make informed choices.

### How the framework helps

Most leaders find that it's the human element that most limits organisational performance. And the people element is the most unpredictable. A framework helps. Our framework is based on neuroscience, anthropology, zoology and evolutionary psychology.

Our framework helps organisations with:

- **Organisation design** so organisations are designed around natural groups of families and villages so that the organisation is designed to be functional and to avoid dysfunction.
- **Leadership development** to help leaders make conscious decisions around team dynamics and bonding, giving feedback, managing performance and leading change.
- **Executive team planning** so the top team consciously decides how to use the behaviours for the achievement of business plans and to avoid predictable human derailers.
- **Change management** so we go beyond conventional thinking about change management that says "people resist change". This can't be true, or we'd still be living in caves.
- **People practices** so HR practices are aligned to human instincts.

The questions that business people are able to answer with this insight include:

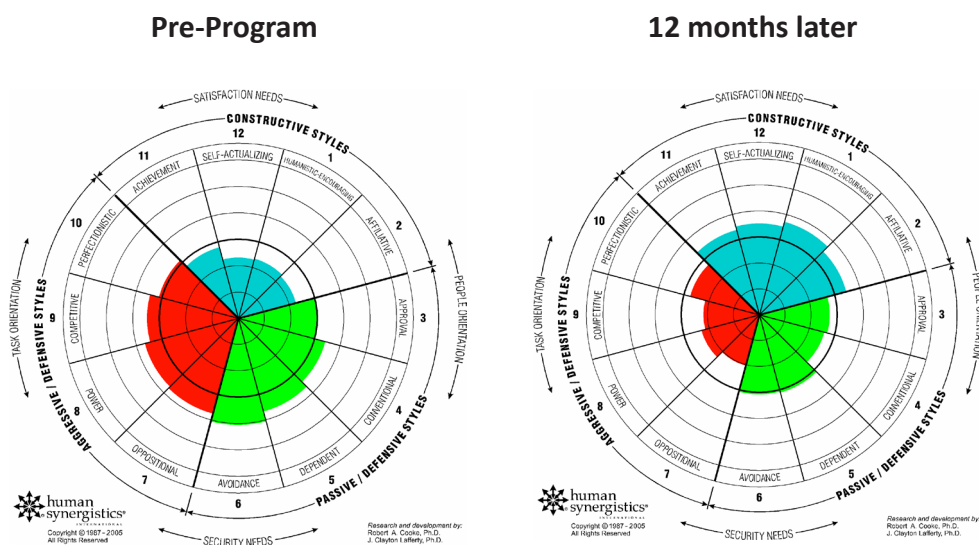
1. Why do silos appear in organisations and what can we do to avoid a "them and us"?
2. How can we design our teams and department to fit the laws of Nature?
3. Why do people, including clients, jump to conclusions with thin slices of data and how can we use this knowledge to increase our ability to persuade and influence?
4. What are the four reasons for gossip and how can we use this compulsion constructively?
5. Why is conventional thinking about change incorrect (that "people resist change") and what really happens when people face change and how can we use this concept?
6. Why do most managers find it hard to give negative feedback and manage poor performers and what can we do to help them overcome their reluctance?
7. What can leaders best do to be enablers of their people and have highly engaged followers?

## Workshop Setting

The ideal venue for a workshop on human zoology is the local zoo! Being at the zoo allows us to compare and contrast to other social species so we can make sense of the patterns in Nature. The closest comparison species is the chimpanzee. We have a strong relationship with Dr Jane Goodall and her institute. We hear about the complexity of chimp behaviours and the insight for leadership. For example, Dr Goodall observed in her studies from 1960 that constructive chimp leaders last as leaders for around 10 years. The tyrants only last for around two years.

## Leadership Impact

Hardwired Humans has a demonstrable impact on leadership impact. Below is the story of one organisation. In groups of around 12, leaders participate in a 5-day program over 12 months. At the beginning of the program they complete a Leadership Styles Inventory (LSI) and again at the end of the program. As well as their own profile they can see the shift for their group. Almost all nine groups in this organisation have shown a similar shift. Through acquiring leadership finesse they have shifted from being Passive/Aggressive (from around the 75 percentile to around the 25 percentile green and red) to being Constructive (from around the 25 percentile to between the 50-75 percentile blue) in just 12 months.



## Clients

Organisations that have benefited from using the Hardwired Humans for transforming their leadership and change management practices include Australian Defence, Brightstar, National Australia Bank, Metro Trains Melbourne, Office of State Revenue (NSW), Philips, Stroke Foundation, Symantec, Thales and the Wise Group.

HR and leader teams that have benefited from education in human instincts include AMP, ANZ, Australia Post, Brady, Cerebos, Ericsson, Flight Centre, GE, Hospira, Schneider, SEMA and PB.

## Principal

Andrew O'Keeffe is the director of Hardwired Humans ([www.hardwiredhumans.com](http://www.hardwiredhumans.com)). He is author of *Hardwired Humans* and *The Boss*. He is an associate of AGSM, MGSM and Mt Eliza. Andrew has extensive experience as a senior HR executive with IBM, Optus, Sinclair Knight Merz and Hewitt Associates. Early in his career he worked in industrial relations in the mining and manufacturing industries. He holds a bachelor of economics from The University of Sydney.

In 2011 and 2008 Andrew and Dr Goodall presented to business audiences around Australia. They spoke about the implications of our social instincts to leadership; Dr Goodall speaking about chimpanzees and Andrew speaking about humans!