Leadership, Emotional Intelligence and the Fire Service

Phil Smith
Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board
456 Albert Street
East Melbourne 3002
Tel: 03 9665 4301
Author's email: psmith@mfb.vic.gov.au, phil@imteam.com.au

Presenter: Phil Smith
Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is now the new focus for developing superior Leadership skills within all organisations. Originally the term was developed by psychologists John Mayer and Peter Salovey of Yale University. Reuven Bar-On, working independently on his concept of "emotional quotient" led the way for journalist Daniel Goleman to write the first best-selling book ("Emotional Intelligence – *Why it matters more than IQ*") on the subject.

Many Australian organisations embrace the benefits of EQ. The leadership style of the fire service is predominantly 'command and control', a style of leadership that is losing much of its relevance. There are two crucial challenges facing the Fire Service:

- Adapting leadership skills to cater for fire new fighters entering the fire service. These people now come from more diverse backgrounds, ages and nationalities than ever before. As the generation X and Y enter the fire service, along with the broad skills found in the more mature applicants, the pressure is on present managers to embrace leadership skills that are effective.
- Getting the best from the current employees. It is reasonable to assume that industrial issues and internal conflict could be leading the workforce to work at a reduced capacity. A ten percent drop in efficiency across the organisation can result in the loss of millions of dollars in productivity. Managers equipped with better developed EQ skills will be much more effective in winning the hearts and minds of employees.

Dr Martyn Newman (PhD, D.Psych), a leading international expert in Emotional Intelligence, has identified the seven "must haves" for building EQ in an organisation. This paper is based on the research efforts of both Newman and Goleman and will discuss:

- Getting people "on-board" in your organisation
- The fifteen competencies of EQ
- Why EQ is essential in Leadership and why it is more important than IQ
- What are the seven 'must have' emotion competencies that define outstanding Leaders

Key Words
Leadership
Effective leadership
Managing people
Emotional Intelligence

Leadership, Emotional Intelligence and the Fire Service

Research shows convincingly that emotional intelligence (or EQ) is far more important than IQ in almost every role and many more times important in leadership roles.   Consider most job advertisements in any Saturday paper and look for the qualities they are seeking. What is the ratio of 'people skills' criteria versus 'technical skills'? In many of the selection criteria the focus is on 'people skills':

Articles from Seek.com.au August 2007

> **Director - Professional Services**
> - Leading this specialist team of recruitment professionals will require both strategic and tactical skills. From market positioning and key client negotiation, to day-to-day business management activities including performance management, sales leadership and coaching.
>
> **Account Manager**
> - Cultivate relationships with clients.
>   Attending to any client issues.
>   Regularly meet with team members to review revenue, status and further opportunities.
>   Developing sales proposals and customer loyalty retention.
>   Provide the most desirable solutions to your clients.
>   Introduce potential products and services.
>   Liaising with various firms, registries & financial institutions.

Increasingly, advertised positions are placing more focus on 'people' skills (soft skills) with fewer criterions focused around technical skills.

Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Effective leadership in the workplace is the by-product of three ideas:

1. A by-product of emotions such as self-confidence, optimism, independence and enthusiasm,
2. That these emotions are valuable because they create strong relationships between organisations, customers and their employees which, at the end of the day create a real competitive advantage for any business, and
3. These emotions can be developed and used intelligently to solve problems, create products and deliver superior performance.

When talking of emotions in the context of emotional intelligence, it's not so simple an emotion as crying when someone's cat dies, or hugging everyone at the start of their day. Rather, we are talking about the skills you can use to motivate, understand, connect with and inspire others through understanding yourself: Why you think and feel the way you do about issues and situations; how that is interpreted by those around you; and how your thoughts and actions affect people with whom you come in contact with.

As this paper is entitled "Emotional Intelligence and the Fire Service", and considering that emotional intelligence is (in very simplistic terms) about your own "people" skills, I thought I would start by looking at the conference agenda to determine the balance between 'people focus' content and 'task focus' content.

My observations interested me greatly, confirming two points:
- Where the industry focus is, and
- Where the industry could place more focus

Conference Statistics

This conference, spread over four days, covers eleven topics:

- Agency Initiatives
- Volunteerism / Managing People
- Diversity
- OHS
- Innovation
- Emerging Technology and Applications
- Interoperability / Community Engagement
- Lessons Learned / Case Studies
- Business Systems / Continuity /
- Equipment / Group Purchasing
- Other

It is interesting to note that two of the topics relates specifically to managing people (*volunteerism/managing people* and *diversity*). So, if I create a pie chart to visually represent the focus of this conference, it looks something like this (Purple represents 'Task', Lilac represents 'People'.).
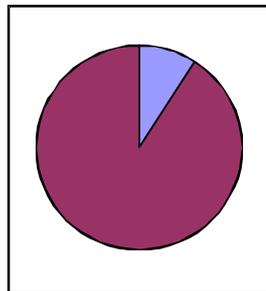

Totalling up the number of hours of presentations over the four days I found the following statistics:

> *Seventy-eight individual topics over sixty-three hours are being presented. Of those topics, two topics (totalling one hour – lilac colour) relate specifically to people (as employees), whilst seventy-six topics (totalling sixty-two hours – purple colour) relate to task. (Task vs People below)*
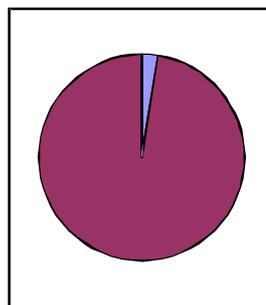

(This is in no way meant to make any comment on the professional quality of content or speakers presenting at this conference. My observation is purely and objective observation of 'task vs. people' content).

Focusing on 'Leadership', a crucial balance to achieve is that between 'Task' focus and 'People' focus. This can be represented by the following simple diagram:


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     Task                          People
     Focus                         Focus
     50%                           50%
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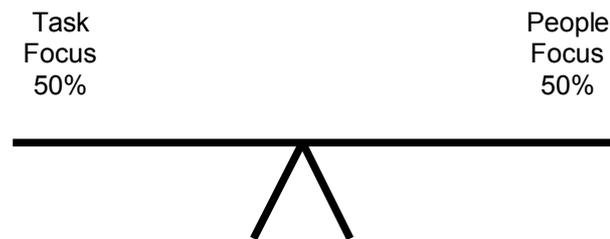
A recent survey (how employees perceived the focus of senior management on both them and their roles) conducted between three (fire service) workplaces totalling forty-eight employees found:


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                                   People
                                   Focus
                                   13%

     Task
     Focus
     87%
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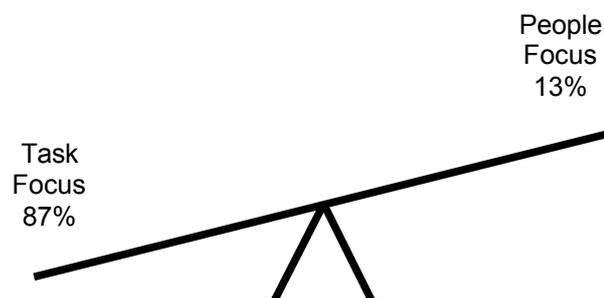
A simple outcome of this perception by employees is that they feel undervalued, unmotivated and suffer low morale. "Task' is important, but you can't lose sight of the fact that 'Task' is achieved *through* people.

What is the impact of employees feeling undervalued, unmotivated and suffering low morale? In a recent survey the Gallop Poll found that a huge 62% of employees are disengaged, which means that they are likely just to be doing the barest minimum of work – only enough to avoid being fired. Another 20% are actively disengaged and likely to be sharers of misery and negativity[1].

A survey of the same group of forty-eight employees (earlier, above) found that 7% felt they worked at 80%, 73% felt they worked at 40% capacity, with the remainder (20%) working at less than 40%. It is staggering to calculate the financial cost to an organisation with this level of disengagement.

A recent article in The Age entitled 'Bosses behaving badly move up'[2] reflected on poor behaviours by bosses. Not only did sixty-four percent of respondents feel that bosses are rewarded for bad behaviour, the respondents were left feeling combinations of anger, annoyance, bitterness, frustration, lowered self-esteem, felt not valued or needed and had a feeling of 'vengefulness'. Seventy percent felt their work suffered and experienced lack of motivation or a general decrease in performance.

Another important factor in 'Leadership' is the way managers relate to their staff. Traditionally, 'Command and Control' style of leadership was accepted. Generation Y employees (aged between 20 – 30 years) are extremely reluctant to respond to this style – only in extreme circumstances.

[1] "The Key to Employee Engagement", *The Situational Leader^{TM} Article*, Vol 1 No. 1, 2005
[2] 'Bosses be having badly move up' *The Age* (p 5) David Wilson, August 2007

The respect for 'authority' is no longer there. The older workforce (the baby-boomers) are catching on to this attitude – 'If the kids get away with it why don't we?' they think.

There are three styles of leadership generally displayed by managers:

1. Constructive – I'm ok, you're ok – focus on intrinsic rewards (relationships, encouraging growth, people)
2. Passive/Defensive – I'm not ok (coping mechanisms)
3. Aggressive/Defensive – I'm ok, you're not – focus on extrinsic rewards (promotion, money, power)

A healthy dose of each style is required for positive leadership and may look

Constructive
80%

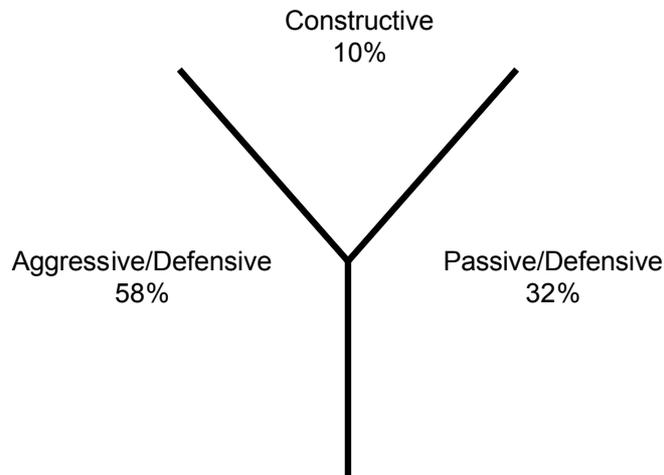Aggressive/Defensive
10%

Passive/Defensive
10%
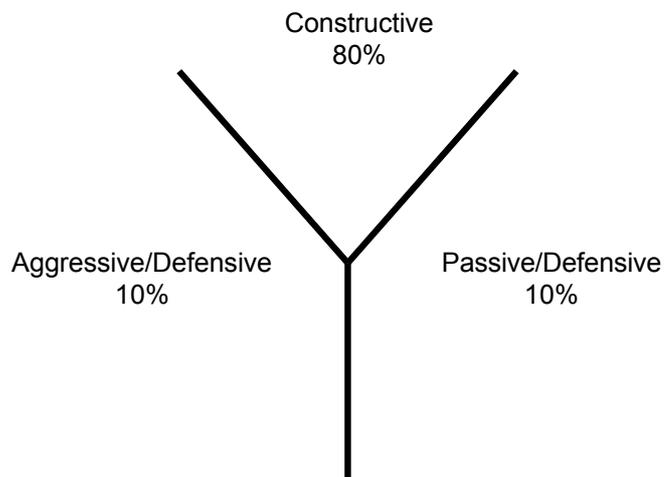
like:

The same group of forty-eight employees were asked to reflect on the styles predominantly used by their senior managers in a 'non-emergency' situation[3]. The survey found that respondents experienced:

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[3] It is accepted that in emergency situations 'command and control' is the appropriate style for most situations

The Power Point presentation of this paper delivered at the conference is available from www.imteam.com.au

Constructive
10%

Aggressive/Defensive
58%

Passive/Defensive
32%

Managers should be asking themselves 'Are the behaviours I exhibit giving me the best chance of being effective (and getting out of it what I want)?' If they are not focused on crucial emotional competencies (described later in this paper) then they will find employees turning up for work disengaged, disenchanted, taking sick leave and becoming potential Workcover statistics through lack of attention and focus.

Maybe they should leave if they are that disillusioned. But, as Homer Simpson says:

You don't like your job, you don't leave. You go in every day and do it really half-assed.

Emotional Intelligence

The most crucial (and confronting step) for many traditionally male dominated organisations is to understand what Emotional Intelligence is:

- Essentially, it is the ability to perceive, understand and manage your own emotions, and the emotions of others.
- It is non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence your ability to succeed in coping with demands and pressures.

Based on 19 years of research by Dr. Reuven Bar-On and tested on over 48,000 individuals worldwide, the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory is designed to measure a number of constructs related to emotional intelligence. The Bar-On EQ consists of five composite scales and fifteen sub-scales:

1. **Intrapersonal**

   - Self Regard
   - Emotional Self Awareness
   - Assertiveness
   - Independence
   - Self Actualisation

2. **Interpersonal**

   - Empathy
   - Social Responsibility
   - Interpersonal Relationships

3. **Adaptability**

   - Reality Testing
   - Flexibility

4. **Problem Solving**

   - Stress Management
   - Impulse Control

5. **General Mood**

   - Happiness
   - Optimism

Daniel Goleman, an internationally renowned author and psychologist, summarised much of his research showing that the 'good guys' – emotionally intelligent men and women – finish first by almost every standard used to measure business success.

A number of recent studies by Multi-Health Systems have identified the distinguishing characteristics of 'superstar' CEO's and corporate leaders. Dr. Martyn Newman Ph.D., D.Psych. (Emotional Capitalists –Wiley & Sons 2007) has documented these seven dynamic emotional competencies.

1.   Independence

What is it?

Of those surveyed, the most important strength for building emotional wealth is independence. Independence gives you the power and responsibility to make decisions and choices, and the confidence in your judgment and willingness to take action and put yourself on the line. You are secure enough in yourself to turn to others and take into account their view whilst being responsible for the decisions that have to be made. John Peters, CEO of Technology Inc, puts it so eloquently: *'You can't lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse'*

Independence comes from you being, thinking and feeling confident in what you are doing, and having people around you having confidence in your attitudes, actions and abilities.

How do you develop it?

- Aim to overcome an approval seeking mindset (the need for acceptance that fuels insecurity and self-doubt – use 'debate, dispute, dump' for self-talk
- Accept personal responsibility for who you are, who you become and what you want
- Develop belief in your ability through Mastery, Modeling, Mentoring and Mood

2.   Assertiveness

What is it?

The second highest score, involves being able to communicate your message honestly and directly, while respecting that others may hold a different opinion or expectation. Assertiveness is not just about you having the confidence to say what you think. What is just as important is that you have an awareness and respect for the feelings, attitudes and beliefs of the other person.

People want to be inspired by their leader. Credible leaders recognise their beliefs, values and assumptions that drive them, and then ensure that their actions consistently reflect those beliefs.

How do you develop it?

- Assertiveness is developed by understanding and focusing your attention on the things you can control – your thoughts, feelings and actions, and letting go of things you can't control – what other people think, say or do.
- Assertiveness is developed by controlling your negative thoughts and emotions.
- Assertiveness is developed by having confidence in your ability to formulate ideas of your own (whilst aligning them with both yours and company values), seek out ideas of those around you (whilst understanding their motivations and values), making decisions, then selling your ideas and views to people even when they don't agree with them.

3.   Optimism

What is it?

Optimism is possibly the most important quality you can develop to achieve greater success as a leader.

Optimism is not about believing every cloud has a silver lining, or that everything will be ok! Optimism is about dealing with difficulties and sensing opportunities. Whilst being optimistic implies you always see the positive, optimism is being resilient in the face of adversity and looking for ways and means to successfully challenge every hurdle.

Optimists learn from every mistake and realise that the next time they face the same obstacle it is, in fact, not an obstacle but an opportunity to do better. Optimists experience setbacks just like everyone else. What sets them apart from others is their attitude to adversity, and the lessons they learn from problems and difficulties.

Incidentally, there is a myth that the word 'crisis' in Chinese is made up of two characters – one character meaning 'danger', the other 'opportunity'. Regardless of the accuracy of the interpretation, it demonstrates an *optimistic* view to a *difficult* situation.

How do you develop it?

- Optimists persist in seeking goals despite obstacles and setbacks.
- Optimists operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure.
- Optimists see setbacks as due to manageable circumstance rather than a personal flaw.

> *"Recently a shoe factory sent two marketing reps to Africa to study possibilities for their shoe business expansion. One rep sent back an email saying 'Business situation hopeless – no-one wears shoes!' The other rep emailed back saying 'Business situation unbelievable – no-one wears shoes!"*

4.   Self-actualisation

What is it?

Self-actualisation, the fourth highest scored competency, is a combination of two components:

1. Having a passion for what you do, enjoying going to work, the challenges and the relationships. More than hard work, it is your passion for what you do that inspires and empowers people.
2. Achieving a work-life balance. A crucial leadership skill as it ensures the demands can be minimised on your personal time, it allows you time to develop interests and skills outside of your work environment, and allows you the time to mentally and emotionally recharge yourself for your work obligations.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs puts self-actualisation as the final stage of meeting all other needs:
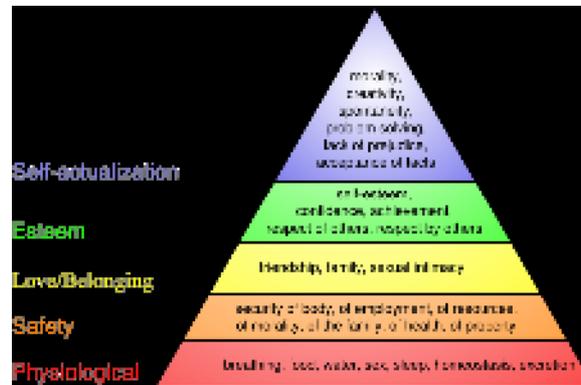
How do you develop it?

- Set high, realistic work and personal goals for yourself and others and help each other achieve them
- Encourage and respect diversity in thoughts, ideas and people within your workplace
- Continual focus on personal priorities between work and life interests and responsibilities

5. Self-regard

What is it?

Self-regard consists of two components:

1. A feeling of self-worth – how you see your accomplishments, liking and accepting yourself, shifting your focus from making your decisions based on what people think, to basing decisions based on your values and beliefs.
2. A feeling of self-confidence, where you have the capacity (resources and skills) to deal with all of life's challenges and issues.

Self-regard is having the strength to ignore that inner critic inside your head that constantly tells you all the negative things you don't want to hear. It's ignoring the 20,000 thoughts we have daily and being happy with the person you are, not trying to be the person others want you to be.

How do you develop it?

- Recognise your accomplishments and look for opportunities within and outside of the work environment to share them with others
- Listening to the views of others, use it as an opportunity to challenge or re-affirm your values
- Be open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development.
- Use the 3 D's – Dump, Debate or Defer – the thoughts of your inner critic.
- Be able to show a sense of humour and perspective about yourself

6.   Inter-personal Relationships

What is it?

So far there has been no gender difference in the emotional competencies of successful leaders. Inter-personal relationships is the first competency where there is a distinct gender difference favoring women, suggesting that women are better at cultivating and maintaining relationships.

In the current environment of a skills shortage, inter-personal skills could very well be the most crucial competency required. Three conditions are required to for superior inter-personal skills:

1. An environment where people are treated as equals
2. An environment where there are wins (benefits). People will work well if there are intrinsic benefits gained
3. An environment that allows autonomy for decisions and actions

It now becomes crucial to understand the absolute limit of 'command and control' management. People will no longer respond to managers who have neglected development of inter-personal relationships.

Inter-personal relationships involve treating people as equals which creates win-win situations for all. Contrasting that with other models that are paternalistic, autocratic and adversarial in this new environment of skills shortages, generational expectations and behaviors highlights how irrelevant these old models now are.

How do you develop it?

- Cultivate and maintain extensive informal networks
- Seek out relationships that are mutually beneficial
- Build rapport and keep others in the loop
- Make and maintain personal friendships among work associates
- Promote a friendly, cooperative climate
- Spot and nurture opportunities for collaboration

7.   Empathy

What is it?

Through the research conducted by Multi-Health in determining the top seven emotional competencies of 'superstar' CEO's and leaders, when considering age, sex and years of experience, the most distinguishing competency was empathy – again scored higher by women than men.

Empathy and inter-personal relationships are the two emotional intelligence competencies where a significant gender difference is observed. Men are generally reluctant (or unable) to share their emotions or thoughts readily. When men praise a colleague on their ability it may be easier to praise them by putting them down rather than opening up emotionally to be positive and sincere.

'Empathy' is not to be confused with 'sympathy'. Empathy is not about being warm and fuzzy. Rather, it is about you being able to demonstrate that you can see the world from another person's perspective, that you can understand how another person feels in an emotional situation.

How do you develop it?

- Be attentive to emotional cues and listen well
- Show sensitivity and understand others' perspectives
- Help out based on understanding other people's needs and feelings
- Make time to cultivate inter-personal relationships
- Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing of information fully
- Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news as well as good

Conclusion

There are a number of great challenges facing the Fire Service when considering Leadership and Emotional Intelligence. Whilst the organisation might talk widely of Leadership programmes and changing attitudes, you need to look at two things:

1. The content of Missions and Value statements, Corporate Plans and flyers that are widely distributed by the Fire Service, and
2. The behaviours and relationships that occur within the Fire Service across all levels, all people and all facets of the organisation, and how they align with the information distributed.

The Fire Service's primary role is for the protection of life and property. For this, the appropriate management style is 'command and control'. Fortunately fires and emergencies account for approximately 3% of the emergency response activities.

A recent survey of twenty-four Officers felt that, in their experiences, the 'command and control' approach to general day-to-day management was used 60% of the time by over 70% of middle management and above. Considering that the most appropriate use of this style is during an emergency (and that only 3% of activities are directly emergency related), one would expect that the other 97% of management time would be based on the proven principles and philosophies of positive Leadership and Emotional Intelligence.

A quantum leap still needs to be made to balance the 'command and control' style.

In many Leadership courses there is a constant philosophical discussion regarding the question "Are true leaders born or made?" It depends on what you believe and who you listen to.

I believe leaders *are* made. Of course, some rise to it, some have it thrust on them, some fall into it. What makes a leader is not only their ability to inspire people and make decisions, but their ability to connect with people, stand up for people's rights, grow within themselves, modify their values in accordance with moral and ethical issues, understand, encourage, mentor, continually demonstrate integrity, and show strength not only for corporate mission statements and values, but for values that are socially responsible and are aimed at creating better lives for all of society.

All these abilities I have just mentioned exist to a certain degree within each one of us. They are skills that can be developed. They are Emotional Intelligent skills that can be learned. IQ is set by the age of 16. EQ (emotional intelligence) develops as we grow, and continues to develop even after retirement age. So we can all learn to be better communicators, better partners, better leaders.

Our aim above all should be to leave this place a better place than we found it.

I am inspired and moved by a quote, which to me resonates with great leadership, by H. Jackson Brown Jr:

"Live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you."

About the speaker…

With over 20 years experience as a trainer and educator within a wide range of industries, Phil draws on a vast knowledge of experience and techniques. Ask Phil what his specialty is and he will tell you simply - PEOPLE. Whether it is through skill development at a technical level to changing the attitudes and behaviours of managers, his audience will always walk away feeling inspired, motivated and capable.

Through his role in Training and Development with a leading emergency services organisation, Phil has extensive experience with the design of training resources, implementation of competency based training, assessment and evaluation and substantial experience in the area of adult learning.
Phil has served as a Senior Station Officer at many Fire Stations throughout Melbourne and maintains his passion for leadership, communication and personal development. He also holds tertiary qualifications in Education, Leadership, Applied Sciences and Fire Technology.

Over the last three years Phil has worked, through his consultancy group 'IMteam' (IMagine, IMprove, IMpact www.imteam.com.au), with a number of corporate clients in the manufacturing and corporate areas using a range of psychometric tools including Myers Briggs, Emotional Intelligence and Human Synergistics, specifically in the area of Leadership Development. His programs are innovative and engaging. He is committed to his own ongoing professional development and has an innate capability to build rapport with people and get results. Phil has a strong ability to focus clearly and simply on the message and facilitates energetic training sessions that are fun, educationally sound and relevant.

His most recent successes have come from his program entitled 'My Shed', a workshop specifically for men which covers a range of men's health and happiness issues in an interactive and enjoyable 3 hour workshop. Phil's style of presentation ensures his audience enjoys a memorable, educational and motivational experience.