



# Unleashing People Power

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When Refining NZ launched the idea of building a 'values based' organisation almost two years ago, it was considered a bit of a hot potato, because no-one really knew where to begin.

After plenty of research and reading, project sponsors Peter Gubb and Anna Meyer were able to define a starting point and with the help of values expert Rachel McInnes, they have since shaped up a values framework unique to Refining NZ.

Rachel says looking back, it was the beginning of an exciting journey.

"Defining and understanding your own personal values can be much harder than you'd think.

"We're not talking about beliefs or morals or behaviours, which values are often mistaken for. Values are simply the things that are important to you, for example your family, your faith, being creative or working hard. They're not right or wrong. It's a case of identifying what your values are and helping you work out how you've formed these values."

Rachel says helping people understand their personal values is the first vital step in this journey.

And the bigger picture with the project is to understand that values create culture and culture creates success.

"It's been proven," says Rachel, "that when a company's employees understand their own values and also understand the company values, they are a much more productive, satisfied employee, husband, wife or friend."

The second step in the process is about understanding the company values.

"It's about asking, 'How do I take what's important to me and stay true to this in the workplace?'

We know that how we work together and how happy we are has as much influence on the success of our company as our strategic plan, and this means we all have the power to make this a more successful place.

"People often think they know their values but what they learn about themselves through this process can be a real eye opener."

Rachel says about 270 staff and contractors have attended one or two values based workshops over the last two years. The plan is that by the end of 2013 most staff will have attended at least one workshop.

Alongside this, a second series of training modules has been taking place across Refining NZ with the help of facilitator and trainer Ross Gilmour as part of the Learning Organisation project. Based on the strong synergies between the values and learning organisation projects, the two will be combined in 2012.

Rachel says some people have heard about the training second-hand and made assumptions about it being some kind of 'brain washing' or 'sausage factory' project to get everyone to think and act the same.

"Thankfully, we're not in the business of making sausages! This project is about inviting people on a journey of discovery – about themselves, their values, their ability to take control of their thoughts and their actions and their capacity for

success and satisfaction in all aspects of their life. These are powerful tools that we are making available to our people so they can achieve their best, both at work and at home. And we hope this will help us take our great organisation and make it even better."

While the development of the project has been slow, it has also been evolutionary, with many changes along the way to better meet the needs of staff. Rachel says more tweaking is planned.

"We're looking at establishing a smorgasbord of training options, so people can opt for the style of learning that will best suit them. A huge amount of time and energy has gone into this from the project owners, Anna Meyer and Wade Alsweiler, as well as Leadership Team sponsor Peter Gubb and the project team. We're all looking forward to being able to roll this out to more staff."

The merging of the Values and Learning Organisation projects will also add to the evolution of these tools and ideas.

## For those people who don't think they'll get anything out of the training, Tony says 'give it a go'.

"This company is amazing because they're always willing to put their hand up and say, 'what could we learn from this?' and 'how can we do things even better?'"

Three staff who were willing to ask the same questions of themselves are Transpacific Solutions site manager Dave Rewha, process engineer Tony Vranjes and IT business analyst Rob van Gelder.

Dave says the workshops have helped him both personally and at work, having a positive influence on his approach to management.

"The workshops help give you an understanding of your values and have also helped me make decisions with some areas of my personal life.

"When you're managing staff you need to be able to work within the company values as well as the values of your staff. From a managerial perspective, I had to think about how I treat and talk to staff, how I praise staff and how I support staff as a manager. The training was great as it gave us tools to apply the new strategies that we learnt."

Dave is looking forward to more staff going through the training so they can also benefit.

Tony has worked through both the values workshops and learning organisation sessions and says it's been a hugely valuable experience.

"I thought I had a good idea how I felt about most things but I'd never really considered why I thought that way. I'm not someone who regularly connects with my emotions, but I certainly found the values process evoked some strong emotions.

"It just made my values make sense and it's meant I've changed the way I look at things."

Tony says it's had a positive impact on everything from how he communicates at work to saving for his first home and helping him get over the finish line with his first marathon, completing the Auckland Marathon in a personal best time of 3½ hours.

"Planning backwards is also a concept that's helped me a lot. My partner and I had been trying to save for a house but it felt like it was never going to happen. Planning backwards, we've worked out where we want to be in five years, we know what that looks like and feels like and we know it will happen."

For those people who don't think they'll get anything out of the training, Tony says 'give it a go'.

"It's far easier to be negative and cynical than it is to be positive. You just need to be open to new ideas."

Rob van Gelder agrees, saying he found himself exploring parts of his mind he didn't even know existed.

"This training was totally out of my comfort zone. I've always preferred to keep to myself, so this really challenged that thinking for me. But I also knew there were areas in my life that I needed to change."

Rob says the training methodology made sense to him because there's some science behind it.

"My job is to be analytical and this training definitely used a method I believed in from a technical point of view. It was a valuable reminder that people are more complex animals than we think."

Rob says in one of the workshops, Refining Manager Peter Gubb told his own story.

"He told us about mistakes he'd made, just like the rest of us. He told us how he'd learned and grown and asked us to give people a break, and let the mistakes of the past stay in the past.

"It got me thinking about how I had labelled some people as 'mistake makers' and I realised I was setting the bar impossibly high for people, especially for managers. I'm slowly learning when I should give people a break."

Rob has also used the learning to help with his fitness training, knocking out the Kerikeri Half Marathon in just 1 hour 35 minutes and has also challenged himself to add some fun back into his life.

"I took the plunge and finally said yes to some mates who were going spear fishing. I was completely out of my comfort zone and had a bit of a disaster on my first trip, coping with sea sickness, a split fin and getting completely tangled in my float line to the point where I was struggling to stay afloat. It was far from ideal but I didn't give up. I'm still not the best spearo but I'm really enjoying getting out in the water."

Rob says for those with doubts, you just have to look around to see this project is here to stay.

"When I look around the organisation, I see a lot of the 'tools' being used. These things aren't coming off the walls; people are using them from the top down.

"It's as simple as giving it a go. It's quite a personal thing. It can't be injected into your way of life - you've got to embrace it if you want to make positive change in your own life."