

DEALING WITH PEOPLE CHURN

With the growing importance of 'soft skills' in FM, is it time to get a bit more scientific about it? SIMON ROUNTREE and PAUL FINDLAY talk about the benefits of the ORANGES program.

FM: Why is there so much churn in organisations at the start of a year?

Paul Findlay: Many Australian workers end the year short-fused, with their resilience falling and pessimism rising. In corporate and government organisations alike, it can be caused by change fatigue. For emergency and health workers, it can be the cumulative impact of regularly facing distressing situations. For others on the frontline of service delivery or customer engagement, constant knocks or unpleasant experiences can sap the will to bounce back into work.

Relentless change challenges the resilience of these workers. They can get worn down and cynical or counterproductive in the face of restructuring and organisational redesign. With low resilience comes poor attitude, infectious negativity and absenteeism.

It's common for disengaged workers to return to work in the new year actively looking for a new job. They've had a break, and reviewed their year and chances of promotion, their manager and organisation's

culture, and decided to actively look to move. Some will leave because they don't have a strong affiliation with an organisation's brand and culture, others because they don't feel supported and appreciated. It's often a time when organisations are recruiting. Organisational leaders can do a lot to counter this drift early in the year because the cost of losing good people and rehiring is significant.

FM: What is ORANGES and how can it benefit facility managers?

Simon Rountree: It's a scientifically-based workplace program that uses positive psychology to boost the resilience, optimism and self-management of people. Businesses constantly ask their people to do more with less, but they don't always equip their people with the tools and skills to do so. ORANGES offers a toolkit for the user to implement in their daily lives to build their resilience and support their overall well-being.

The program is underpinned by strong academic rigour and closely aligned with the latest research from universities such as Harvard, Stanford, Melbourne and Oxford. It has seven modules on areas of importance to the well-being of individuals and organisations: Optimism, Resilience, Attitude, Now (mindfulness), Gratitude, Energy and Strengths – hence, the acronym. Participants can measure their level of resilience, optimism and so on before they start to use the program's tools and later remeasure themselves to see the positive difference the program can make.

All professional facility managers are concerned with the health and sustainability of their assets while some are in sectors undergoing transition in terms of ownership.

PF: If you can improve the lives of your people, support their well-being and get them more engaged, you'll improve the organisation's performance. When people are happy, positive and resilient, organisations are healthy, stable and profitable.

FM: How did the program benefit Camp Quality in terms of metrics? What other industries/groups has it been rolled out to?

SR: Camp Quality was in serious financial difficulties and faced having its charity licence revoked. Morale was low and people were working in silos. An organisation supporting children with cancer was itself riddled with issues. It hit me that a lot of things had to change, starting with processes and business practices, and then the mindset of our people. We needed to create good thinking habits for our people, giving them skills to be more resilient, to deal with adversity and challenges every day, not only at work, but at home and in life.

After Camp Quality implemented ORANGES, sick leave fell from 6.3 to 3.2 days per person per annum. We moved to a strong cash position and balance sheet. From 20 staff and hundreds of volunteers running programs supporting hundreds of children, we grew to 120 staff, 2500 volunteers and 6500 programs supporting 230,000 children. On the way Camp Quality was ranked the most trusted children's charity in Australia and went from zero growth in customer service to developing and launching a world-first cancer education app for children.

We then piloted the program with commercial clients, first the NRL (National

Businesses constantly ask their people to do more with less, but they don't always equip their people with the tools and skills to do so – Simon Rountree

Rugby League) club Canterbury Bulldogs, then a dozen businesses including Canon Australia, Westpac, APN Media and Estée Lauder. As a result, we decided to commercialise the program and chose PDT (Professional Development Training) to be our partner in Australia.

PF: The interest and successful delivery of ORANGES has been outstanding across industry sectors and job roles. We have had participants from junior level through to senior management in large corporates, utilities and the tertiary sector. The positive feedback has been overwhelming.

For me personally, it's been equally rewarding to hear people have also immediately used tools in their personal and family lives. In just the last month I've heard of at least four people using tools they learned in ORANGES to improve situations with their partners, children and their own mindset in facing personal challenges. It's a direct example of our brand living its 'why', and I'm excited ORANGES is such an effective new channel we have to improve lives.

FM: Facilities managers need to be solutions-focused – is there a particular element of the program that will be of most benefit?

SR: Many organisations could improve their effectiveness through Learning and Development. There is a huge need for people and organisations to be more mindful, resilient and optimistic. Being more mindful helps in improving communications and eradicating minor mistakes, and allows for greater focus, which in turn supports productivity and creativity. ORANGES helps people to become more resilient and bounce back further when setbacks occur. It gives people tools to create the right attitude so they're always looking for an opportunity, solution or possibility. It shows

participants how they can maintain energy within their day rather than going up and down like a yo-yo. It identifies participants' natural strengths – the stuff they are hardwired to do – and it shows them how to maximise these strengths to optimise their performance.

PF: Facility managers need to run high-performing teams and get the best out of their people. They need to learn how to spot strengths in people, identify what energises them and give positive feedback that motivates them to perform at their best. To understand what strengths are, how to use and develop them so more of their team's potential is realised. Strengths are traits that come naturally to us and allow us to perform at our best. When used properly, individuals and teams flourish. Research shows that people who use their strengths on a regular basis are less stressed, more resilient and more engaged with the teams that they work with. When people are given the opportunity to focus on those areas in which they can contribute most and enjoy the work, they stop clock watching, work harder and naturally go the extra mile because they want to. Having people want to work, and choose to be more proactive because they are 'in the zone' is a great outcome.

FM: Facilities managers not only have to deal with their own teams, but they are also often exposed to a wider group of contractors. Is there anything in the ORANGES program that can help them create sustainable relationships with external parties?

SR: Being skilled in the areas of Emotional Intelligence (EI) and awareness is a benefit for facility managers inside and outside their organisation. Research shows that leaders who have EI scores of 75 percent or more have employees who almost entirely rate themselves as 'engaged' with the business and virtually

no staff who rate themselves as 'not engaged' or 'disengaged'. Therefore, having a stronger emotional awareness means you are able to identify and manage not only your emotions, but those of others around you to support clearer communications, understanding and awareness, which all support productivity, collaboration and innovation.

More of our communications are being done online through quick emails and texts. This can lead to a gap in the true emotional connection people can have with one another. The EI skills learned through ORANGES will support their ability to develop, grow and sustain relationships both internally within the business as well as externally.

PF: One of the elements of ORANGES is gratitude. Most of us can think of a time when we knew we needed to do something but felt like no one cared anyway, so we completed it to our own standard of 'done'. We can also recall a time when we knew the outcome really mattered to one or more people, so we were particular about the details and the standard we delivered was our very best because we knew it was going to have an impact on others and we were going to receive personal feedback.

Research backs up our own experiences, that people go the extra mile, perform better and support a business and its stakeholders when their efforts are appreciated. Facility managers can learn how to have staff and contractors wanting to provide the best they possibly can. ●

Paul Findlay is managing director of PDT, an Australian-owned professional development company. It is the exclusive Australian reseller of Camp Quality's ORANGES.

Simon Rountree is CEO of the ORANGES Toolkit and former CEO of CAMP Quality.