

The People Theme

A Mission Models Money project investigating the competencies, qualities and attributes which will enable creative practitioners and organisations to thrive in the challenging environment of the 21st Century

Report of research undertaken by Roanne Dods and Nadine Andrews for MMM

May 2010



“In a world of risk we can judge dangers and opportunities by using the best evidence at hand to estimate the probability of a particular outcome. But in a world of uncertainty, we can’t estimate probabilities, because we don’t have any clear basis for making such a judgement. We are surrounded by unknown unknowns.”

Thomas Homer Dixon 2007

“And I think what I have learnt in the last year is that it is fine not to know where it is going to lead. Although it is important to know why you are doing it, I mean you have a sense of it.

When you see dancers moving on balloons, they are trying to keep their balance and the whole thing is shifting underneath them all the time. And very good exercise because it exercises all bits of you... That is how I feel about trying to do something, that you are always having to be like that.”

The People Theme research participant

There are no answers only choices

Solaris, dir. Steven Soderburgh

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Over 260 people have been involved in the research contributing valuable information about their personal and professional lives in the arts and cultural sector.

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CONTENTS

READING THIS REPORT.....	5
PREFACE.....	6
1 SETTING THE CONTEXT	7
1.1 Challenges facing the UK arts & cultural sector.....	7
1.1.1 Uncertainty at work.....	7
1.1.2 Complexity at work.....	8
1.2 Mission Models Money and The People Theme	10
1.2.1 Background to the research	10
1.3 Positioning of The People Theme	11
1.3.1 Win-win or win-lose	11
1.3.2 A life-friendly approach to thriving	12
2 THE PEOPLE THEME	15
2.1 Research summary	15
2.2 Using the results	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3 MMM recommendations	18
2.3.1 Changes in concepts and definitions	18
2.3.2 Changes in approach	18
3. CQAs FOR THRIVING	19
3.1 Naming the CQAs and the factors that influence them	19
3.2 The interplay of CQAs + influencing factors.....	22
3.2.1 Reading the diagrams.....	23
3.3 Nested systems.....	31
3.4 The role of confidence	33
3.4.1 Self-efficacy.....	34
3.4.2 Social cognitive theory.....	35
3.4.3 Psychological capital	35
3.4.4 The illusion of control.....	36
3.4.5 Overconfidence	37
4. RESEARCH FINDINGS + THE SECTOR.....	39
4.1 Possession and relevance.....	39
4.1.1 Overall results by individual scores.....	40
4.1.2 Average scores by selected group	41
4.1.3 Results of the total sample by CQA.....	43
4.1.4 Results of selected groups by CQA	51
4.1.5 CQAs critical to thriving	54
4.1.6 Leaders and leadership CQAs	55
4.2 Patterns in the data relating to work context	61
4.2.1 Total sample.....	61
4.2.2 Highest scoring groups for CQA possession and relevance.....	63
4.3 Patterns in the data relating to personal context	64
4.3.1 Total sample.....	64
4.3.2 Highest scoring groups for CQA possession and relevance.....	64
4.3.3 On negative emotions.....	65
5. THE RESEARCH PROCESS	67
5.1 Approach	67
5.1.1 Theories in use	67
5.1.2 Reflexivity.....	67
5.1.3 Use of language	68

5.2 Research methods	68
5.2.1 Research questions	68
5.2.2 Scope and limitations	69
5.2.3 Methodology	69
5.2.4 Validity of data	71
GLOSSARY	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73



READING THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings from the first stage of MMM’s People Theme research. It discusses the context and rationale for the research, its implications and potential practical applications by individuals and organisations in personal, professional and organisational development, and in designing and implementing policy interventions.

Some of the terms used in this report have specific meaning in certain fields: these are explained in the glossary at the end of this report.

The report can be read from start to end or in a different order, for example by reading about the research process in chapter 5 before finding out about the research findings in chapters 3 and 4.

Invitation to respond

MMM is actively seeking feedback from those working both within and without the arts and cultural sector on the findings and their implications for individuals, organisations, the sector, and others outside the sector.

Contact us at peopletheme@missionmodelsmoney.org.uk



PREFACE

“The changes in which we will be called upon to participate in the future will be both deeply personal and inherently systemic.” Peter Senge 2004

In Mission Models Money’s 2007 paper ‘Invitation to an Alternative Future’, we encouraged people to maintain hope in these challenging times, and to accept confusion as the context, and challenge as the chance to grow. This research has reinforced quite how radical a change of perspective it is to embrace complexity and the unknown.

We have focussed on the arts sector for two reasons. It is the world we know and care about, and because much of the work of artists and creative people is about finding the unknown, though different disciplines, rigours and processes:

“Scientists... live ‘on the edge of mystery’ – the boundary of the unknown. But they transform the unknown into the known, haul it in like fishermen; artists get out into that dark sea¹.”

Nadine and I set out on this journey for different but certainly idealistic reasons. While the research is firmly grounded in a range of recognised academic and management disciplines and ideas, we have also approached this with our personal agenda firmly marked on the work. I am attracted to people and what they do, with a real desire to provide evidence that gives confidence to the cultural sector about how we contribute to a transformational society at this point of huge change. Nadine with her deep curiosity about the world brings an approach strongly influenced by systems thinking and complexity theory. She sought to keep the collecting and analysing of data as clean as possible and ensure the results shaped our interpretations and conclusions.

The partners in this work: MMM, CLP, ACE and SAC all believe in the importance of people as a part of the set of issues we need to address for the arts and cultural sector to thrive.

We don’t yet have all the answers to all the questions we set out to answer. This report provides a foundation from which we hope further dialogue and insight can happen.

I can’t thank Nadine enough. She has worked like an artist on this project – terrier-like with every detail, committing time beyond the call of duty and passion, determined to answer the questions we set ourselves with a deep sense of integrity. I hope it makes a contribution your thinking and understanding in a way that inspires you.

Many sectors are trying to understand this messy world, and the competencies that it takes to function at an individual level through change and uncertainty. It is vital the creative and cultural sector does so too: it will be the people, not the structures that will lead us through the uncertainties. We are grateful to all the practitioners, writers and thinkers and researchers who have joined us on this journey. Embracing complexity is hard work. But when you get it, I think it could be like great surfing...

Roanne Dods, co-director Mission Models Money

¹ Rebecca Solnit, also quoting J. Robert Oppenheimer, 2006

1. SETTING THE CONTEXT

1.1 Challenges facing the UK arts & cultural sector

“The arts sector in the United Kingdom is over-extended and undercapitalised, with organisations trying to do more things than they can possibly do well...”²

Adrian Ellis 2004

The pressures of being overstretched and under-resourced are familiar to many in the arts and cultural sector, even in times of relative plenty.

As the UK economy slowly emerges from the deepest recession since the 1930s, the challenges to sustainability are undeniably fierce with major cuts to public funding for the arts and radical changes in government policy a real possibility.

But these are not the only challenges facing the sector: technology is evolving at an ever accelerating pace offering a bewildering array of possibilities for creating, experiencing and sharing arts and culture that were unimaginable 20 years ago.

The future ain't what it used to be

Our 21st century world is increasingly interconnected in all sorts of ways: socially, economically, politically, legally, environmentally. It is messy and complex, and constantly changing. The uncertainty and unpredictability inherent in such conditions are challenges that can be felt in the arts and cultural sector at every level and in all aspects of work, placing significant new stresses on both individuals and organisations.

1.1.1 Uncertainty at work

There may be uncertainties around funding, whether for major capital investment projects, revenue funding for organisations or grants for arts projects. Perhaps redundancies are necessary leading to uncertainties for individuals about the security of their jobs.

“I am very thrilled about the result but the journey was ugly. So you have got to look at the hard moments. The hard moments when you are telling a whole company that we are going to change. You are telling the artistic director that his time has run out. But that is not so unusual, that happens sometimes. So it was taking people on a very difficult journey, which you knew was going to be difficult from day one, but you never quite know what the difficulties are on the route.”

The People Theme research participant

“I had a production meeting today here with two people, from visual art and one from theatre and then there is me from dance and sometimes it is like we are coming from different universes talking to one another. And you wouldn't think so.”

The People Theme research participant

Managing change such as an organisational restructure or introducing a new artistic direction, negotiating with consortium partners, dealing with shifting policy agendas, even in day-to-day communication with colleagues there is always some uncertainty, with lack of clarity leading to misunderstandings, disagreements and conflict.

² Adrian Ellis, Mission Models & Money: new ways of sustaining the arts in the UK, MMM 2004

Uncertainty about the future is not restricted to the arts and cultural sector; it is a feature of modern life that impacts on society in a very fundamental way:

“The whole culture of university life seems to have changed. On the one hand the students are more demanding and on the other hand they are much more passive and can’t be bothered now. I also think there is a bit of a culture of fear, maybe a bit unarticulated, about the future and is there any future for them? Are there jobs? Are there going to be opportunities to do things? And so I think we are in a real moment where we have to reinvent what the university is for and what education needs to be if it is going to survive. So I think we are actually at a very turbulent moment”

The People Theme research participant

1.1.2 Complexity at work

In a complex world, the myriad of nonlinear interconnections and positive feedback loops (virtuous or vicious circles)³ between all the different parts mean that it’s impossible to predict how a pattern of responses will unfold beyond a certain point⁴.

As Brian Eno once explained about his work, *“It’s like you shoot the arrow and then paint the bullseye around wherever it happens to have landed!”*⁵

From the same starting point things end up in different places, and different starting points may take you to the same place⁶.

“I kind of always have this, when it is going well I have this sense of never knowing what to expect. That is normally when it is going well. But if a day has gone well I will say to myself, don’t expect tomorrow to go well, there is this total sense of unexpectedness. So a sort of meditation state where you can, you expect the attack from any angle.”

The People Theme research participant

Not every sweet root gives birth to sweet grass

When complexity and uncertainty in a situation are not recognised or acknowledged, mechanistic or reductionist strategies designed for solving simple linear cause-effect problems may be mistakenly applied, and so the problems, in some form, are likely to remain⁷.

In complex situations there is no ‘best practice’ because the space of possibilities is too vast to try to untangle every interconnection to analyse every option and its consequences. As the economist Brian Arthur explains:

“So you go for viability, for something that’s workable rather than what is ‘optimal’ [because] optimization isn’t well-defined anymore. What you’re trying to do is maximise robustness or survivability in the face of an ill-defined future⁸”.

³ See glossary

⁴ Stacey, 2003

⁵ Interview with Brian Eno, BBC4 Arena Jan 2010

⁶ These are the concepts of equifinality and multifinality

⁷ Snowden, 2007

⁸ Brian Arthur quoted in Waldrop, 1992

“You have to use a language that can be heard, it is not one size fits all. And we find that very difficult in the structures we build for ourselves because it is much simpler if you can say, you have to wear a seatbelt and that is the solution.”

The People Theme research participant

“I think humility is terribly important. You have got to put your hands in the air and say, ‘I don’t know all the answers’. If people think they can rely on you for every answer that is not the real world. But they need to know that you can find your way. They need to know that you can find the answers.”

The People Theme research participant

“What it takes is an imaginative leap to a place of possibility that you then construct the path towards.

I can also sit and reflect. Walking through the woods is what I do, not hacking it down to find my way but waiting until the ideas evolve. I have to do that anyway, even if I am writing a speech or have to do a presentation, it is almost like waiting for the muse to arrive. Actually the muse is there, meandering about collecting information. There is definitely a bit between my subconscious and consciousness, there is activity that goes on there that quietly formulates ideas from complexity.

In order to make things happen, there is a point where it has to get pinned down, but I like a lot of swilling around.

[When working with others not like that] I keep talking to them so they understand that they need to have a complicated dialogue. So you emphasise complexity by showing them they haven’t got all the answers. So keep questioning. So reassure them that you are going to land eventually but keep exploring in a way that shows them that it needs to continue to be explored.”

The People Theme research participant

The recognition that new ways of working are needed to meet the challenges of complex situations is not new: the limitations of Newtonian influenced management theory has been talked about as long ago as the 1950s with seminal texts such as “The science of “muddling through”” by C.E. Lindblom.

Why they have not been widely adopted is a question repeatedly debated with suggestions that mechanistic linear thinking is deeply embedded in our society and in the culture of government.⁹ Its command-and–control, evidence based and target driven approaches are not conducive to dealing with complex nonlinear situations.

Whilst some people seem to be naturally more comfortable with operating in uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity than others, there is a need for all of us to develop a high tolerance for, and management of, these conditions of 21st century life.



⁹ Chapman, 2004

1.2 Mission Models Money and The People Theme

For the past 5 years Mission Models Money (MMM) has been working with its network of thinkers and doers through various strands of activity to build a more responsive, adaptive, resilient arts and cultural sector in the UK that can meet the challenges brought on by technological advances, global interconnectedness and shifting consumer behaviour.

MMM's vision is to transform the way the sector uses its resources to support the creation and experience of great art. The People Theme strand of activity focuses on one particularly vital resource: *people*. It seeks to transform the sector by deepening awareness and understanding of the ways of being and doing that help people to thrive in challenging conditions of complexity, change and uncertainty.

These ways of being and doing are encapsulated in The People Theme research as a set of 78 social, emotional and cognitive competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs) that enable people to make accurate sense of the changes around them, to adapt and learn, think critically and creatively, and to work with others to find positive ways forward to get great results. The research also explored the contexts in which these CQAs flourish and the factors that help or hinder people to draw upon their CQAs to good effect.

The People Theme offers a vocabulary for talking about the kinds of CQAs required for thriving in complexity, change and uncertainty, and provides evidence of their relevance and importance. People involved at various stages of the research, spoke of the resonance that the CQAs had and the associated power they felt through being able to 'name' them. In engendering this sense of identification, understanding and empowerment, The People Theme validates and instils confidence in this as a way forward for the sector.

The People Theme is not the end; it is merely the beginning of a new set of on-going conversations about how the sector (and the people in it) operate and how it organises itself to develop new models of work fit for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

1.2.1 Background to the research

Presenting the results of MMM's third cycle of action research activity, the 2007 report 'Towards a Healthy Arts and Cultural Ecology' described a pitifully inadequate infrastructure in the UK for the development of people in the sector and highlighted a range of concerning issues that need to be taken into account and addressed as part of the route to achieving greater resilience. These issues are still relevant three years later:

- The skills needed for effective arts leadership today are both complex, numerous and nigh on intimidating, including board development and management, programme design and administration, strategic planning and financial modelling, public relations and advocacy, marketing and branding, education, property development, commercial licensing, capital formation and fundraising, as well as a talent for diplomatically balancing the interests of diverse constituencies and responding to the changing regulatory environment
- The fragmented nature of the sector and the predominance of small organisations mean that training budgets are generally low, if they exist at all and that whilst the cultural leadership training initiatives such as the Clore Leadership Programme and the Cultural Leadership Programme are highly valued, ring-fencing bigger internal budgets to support people development is a matter of urgency
- Efforts need to be made to make pay more competitive with other sectors.
- There has been a growing movement away from traditional institutional settings towards more flexible forms of operation with a resulting increased number of freelancers, facilitators, producers and networkers as a result. However, much

professional development support continues to be focused on management of traditional non-profit organisations. Developing greater understanding of the professional development needs of individuals choosing to work in more networked, fragile, fluid environments and channelling greater resources into this group would help develop these creative ‘adhocracies’

The recommendations in the report also drew on a provocation paper by Graham Leicester for MMM: ‘Rising to the Occasion: Cultural Leadership in Powerful Times’, which proposed that the arts and cultural sector might be the place to find ‘21st century people’ - people who can ride the waves of these turbulent times - and emphasised the need to identify ways in which people can do that.

Leicester’s paper also identified several strengths in the sector that suggest it might be fertile ground in which to grow the competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs) which will enable all of us to thrive in the challenging environment of the 21st century. First, the substance of the arts is intimately connected to meaning making - making sense of the buzzing confusion of our world. Second, the sector is generally loosely organised and configured with plenty of room for personal passion and innovation. And third, observation of leaders in the sector suggests that some at least are already growing with and through our powerful times in ways that may be increasingly congruent with colleagues in the private and public sector who are facing similar challenges.

These findings and provocations provided the impetus for further exploration in the form of The People Theme.

In focussing on investigating CQAs in the arts and cultural sector, The People Theme can’t answer the question of whether it is different to other sectors or whether it is indeed uniquely placed as a breeding ground or watering hole for ‘21st century people’, that would require further research. However, it does provide a solid foundation from which the sector can transform itself and influence those around it.

1.3 Positioning of The People Theme

There is a growing body of work across the world exploring the topic of so-called 21st century skills or competencies in recognition of the new challenges to society and business of rapidly changing 21st century life. How to do well in times of turbulence and uncertainty is a topic that doesn’t fit neatly into one box. It is being explored from all kinds of angles including management and leadership theory, positive psychology, and educational and personal development perspectives.

Some of this work we refer to in discussing our findings in this report. The range of materials we reviewed is included in the Bibliography at the end of the report.

What sets The People Theme apart from other research in this field is the combination of our focus on people working in the arts and cultural sector, our attention in the research to the contexts in which people are using their CQAs and the factors that help or hinder their ability to do so, and our values based definition of thriving, which we discuss below.

1.3.1 Win-win or win-lose

Unlike some other approaches that appear primarily motivated by creating competitive advantage in a ‘global skills race’¹⁰, The People Theme is more interested in building a future in which by seeking win-win solutions we all can thrive:

¹⁰ Partnership for 21st century Skills, Transition Brief Nov 08

“In a non-zero-sum world you do not have to do better than the other player to do well for yourself”¹¹

People often assume that in order for them to win, others have to lose. This has been shown to be a fallacy by experiments such as the iterative Prisoner’s Dilemma game¹². The theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ is sometimes misinterpreted as meaning survival of the strongest rather than survival of the most well-adapted.

“It helps if I am able to respond in a more gracious way - not coming from the smallness of my own individual perspective”

The People Theme research participant

The field of biomimicry¹³ explains competition in nature as just short-term disturbances. Nature competes locally but within a cooperative framework: it pursues self-interest on the individual level and cooperates on a group level. The ultimate goal of nature, it proposes, is for everything to find its place.

Research has shown that competitive societies such as the UK tend to place a high value on winning, getting ahead, individual achievement and personal success, and measure success narrowly, often in terms of material success. In other more cooperative societies there is a higher value placed on interdependence and long-term social relationships. Quality of life is more important than winning or being Number One.¹⁴

Co-opetition strategy explains how we simultaneously compete and cooperate at work:

“Business is cooperation when it comes to creating a pie and competition when it comes to dividing it up. This duality can easily make business relationships feel paradoxical. But learning to be comfortable with this duality is the key to success”¹⁵

The best way to succeed, it says, is to let others do well, including your competitors. This will seem alien to those individuals and organisations that are overly focussed on short-term self-interest.

“So all this tension is already there. And the people I worked with had breathed in the tension and then injected themselves with more of it. So actually it was quite poisonous. But everybody functioned, everybody did a brilliant job in their own silos but they didn’t emotionally engage and they did not become generous, it was just functioning.”

The People Theme research participant

Reaching win-win is usually not easy. Finding genuinely transformative solutions, not compromised ones can be hard work. It is also not necessarily equitable: it could be that some win more than others, and once win-win is reached it doesn’t remain statically fixed. Further down the line, it may play out in such a way that what appeared to be a wholly positive solution turns out not to be because of unforeseen and unintended negative consequences. Win-win is also about creating synergy: something that is more than just the sum of its parts.

1.3.2 A life-friendly approach to thriving

With this in mind, and for the purposes of creating clarity of meaning within The People Theme research team, we developed our own definition of thriving:

Thriving adapting to changing conditions in a life-friendly way to people and planet in order to maintain the function of making great work happen

¹¹ Axelrod, 1990

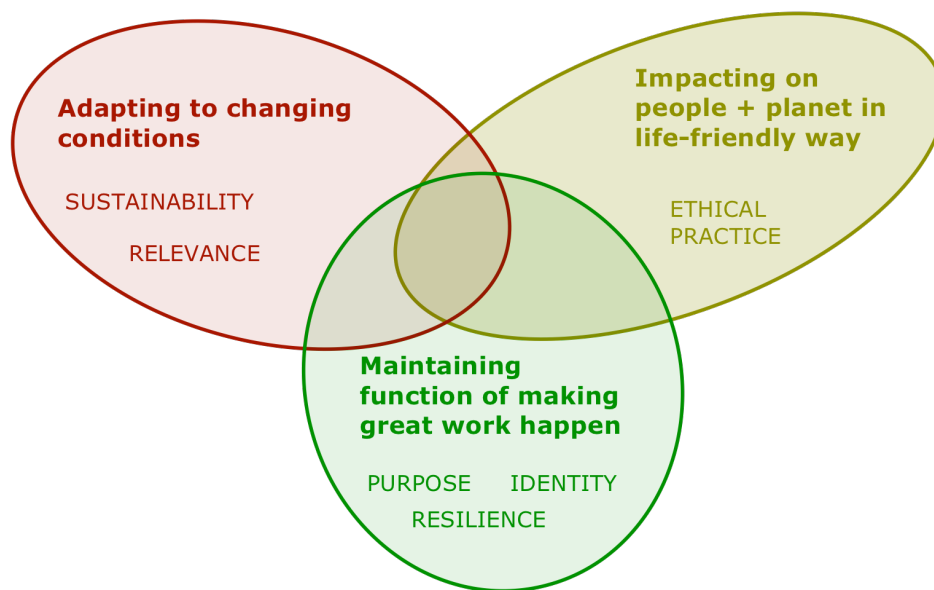
¹² *ibid.*

¹³ See www.biomimicryinstitute.org

¹⁴ Ferraro 2002

¹⁵ Nalebuff & Brandenburger, 1996

As shown below, this definition integrates key concepts of relevance, resilience and ethical practice:



In nature, change is prompted when changing is the only way for an organism to maintain itself¹⁶.

‘Making great work happen’ refers to any aspect of working life: a successful negotiation, an excellently delivered (and received) presentation, a critically acclaimed piece of art, an effective organisational restructure.

‘Life-friendly’ is a term we are using to mean having a benign impact on quality of life. All life. Akin to the Happy Planet Index’s description of a successful society as one that can ‘support good lives that don’t cost the Earth’¹⁷, The People Theme research wishes to avoid advocating for work practices that could enable people and organisations to thrive but at too high a cost to oneself, to other people, or to the plants and animals with whom we share the planet.

“I have learnt, the small things that make you feel a bit uncomfortable when you lie in bed at night, then those really are the things you need to follow up big time. It is a sort of artistic moral compass. A lot of it is to do with people when I think about it, and how we work with them and how we relate to them. It is really important how we treat people from one-to-one and personal support but also the rates of pay we offer dancers and stuff like that.”

The People Theme research participant

“And there was a moment in that conversation when she challenged me. And I challenged her back and said, actually I really don’t agree with that thinking, it really has to be this way because of this and this. And I could see through her body language that she sort of stepped back metaphorically speaking, took an in breath and realised that she would not be able to overpower me verbally, you know, pull rank as it were. And then when I saw that it worked, it was important then not to press home the advantage as it were. It was important just to sit back and then, you know, allow her to recover with dignity.”

The People Theme research participant

¹⁶ Wheatley, 1999

¹⁷ nef, The Happy Planet Index 2.0, 2009

Success defined solely in terms of economic growth is lessening its grip as a dominant worldview, with interest growing in also taking account of human wellbeing and impact on natural resources.

More and more people across societies are recognising that the enormous challenges facing humanity and the world today are the result of ways of thinking whose times have passed, and that the side effects of our industrial growth society are unsustainable, both for us and for our planet.

The Futures Company predicts a new ‘era of consequences’ in the post recovery consumer marketplace:

“Beware thinking that things will bounce back to business as usual. A fundamental value shift is underway. The era of consequences will be guided by responsibility, vigilance and resourcefulness”¹⁸

They expect consumers will look for brands that are less wasteful and more efficient in resource requirements.

The spring 2010 issue of Harvard Business Review OnPoint is devoted to the topic of ‘Make Green Profitable’ asserting, *“going green has become a strategic necessity in a carbon-constrained world”*. In an article on understanding the postrecession consumer, the authors anticipate that green consumerism although slowed by the recession will recover and accelerate post-recession. Ethical consumerism will also rebound though much slower as people focus on satisfying their immediate self interests before they return to prerecession levels of altruistic spending.

However we look at it, it seems we are on the verge of a paradigm shift that in reconfiguring what we believe to be important in life will set new frameworks for defining and measuring success.

Adopting a life-friendly approach to thriving may face pockets of resistance in the arts and cultural sector. Some may argue that life-friendly practice is not part of their core competency and regard it as a distraction from what they do best - an argument that has been used to reject triple bottom line reporting. Perhaps the benefits of a life-friendly practice seem too indirect, or the impact that one has on other’s wellbeing or on nature may feel to remote and disconnected from day-to-day life.

In promoting a definition of thriving that takes into account one’s impact on wellbeing and on nature and natural resources, we see a crucial distinction between doing so out of a sense of responsibility for ethical practice and in recognition of the essential interdependence of human economies and natural ecosystems, and evaluating impact in order to demonstrate instrumental value and argue the case for public funding for the arts. Our interest in a life-friendly approach to thriving is firmly rooted in the former intention.

As primary reflectors and generators of the values that make up our society, the arts and cultural sector are in an exceptional position to offer leadership. MMM believes that growing the cultural and creative vitality of our communities will encourage this values shift to take root; and in recognising the limits of our finite planet, enable all life to flourish.

Harnessing the restorative and regenerative power of arts and culture in building humanity’s psychological resilience and designing the transition to a more sustainable world is therefore imperative. In order to achieve this, arts and cultural organisations and the individuals who work in them urgently need to build their own resilience and design themselves for transition.

¹⁸ The Futures Company, A Darwinian Gale white paper, 2010



2. THE PEOPLE THEME

2.1 Research summary

The People Theme seeks to contribute to transforming the sector by deepening awareness and understanding of the ways of being and doing that help people to thrive in challenging conditions of ever-increasing complexity, change and uncertainty in ways that are life-friendly to people and planet.

What sets The People Theme research apart from other research in this field is the combination of our focus on people working in the arts and cultural sector, our life-friendly definition of thriving, and our attention in the research to the contexts that people are using their CQAs in and the factors that help or hinder their ability to do so.

Our list of 78 CQAs, developed from a review of literature in this area and tested in interviews and in an online survey, is not definitive and one could argue for others to be added or some to be re-worded. Our aim is not to create absolutes but to describe the types of CQAs needed. Our main focus was not on specific professional skills or subject specialist know-how but on ways of being and doing that help us in a fast changing, complex and uncertain world.

These approaches are certainly not unfamiliar: as we demonstrate in this report, the CQAs strongly resonate with our sample. On the whole people not only see the relevance of the CQAs to them getting great results at work¹⁹, they also believe themselves to possess them to some degree.

The sample as a whole had some notable and distinctive relative strengths in some CQAs but it was also significantly weaker in other areas.

Relative strengths (compared to overall response to other CQAs)

- Pattern recognition & making connections between things
- Motivating oneself; taking responsibility for oneself & for one's role in what's happening; using one's initiative
- Appreciating the value of diversity
- Being passionate & committed to things one gets involved with

Relative weaknesses (compared to overall response to other CQAs)

- Handling conflict; challenging others in supportive ways; willingness to hold others to account; drawing own boundaries and rules of engagement;
- Coping with ambiguity; working with emergent strategy; spontaneous decision-making; working at level of detail
- Telling compelling stories
- Taking time to reflect; accepting oneself

¹⁹ 78% of survey respondents thought that *at least* half the CQAs were 'very' relevant and the rest 'fairly' relevant

- Reaching win-win solutions with others
- Helping others feel comfortable with change
- Actively caring for nature & the environment
- Communicating effectively with web 2.0/social media
- Knowing when to move on

But it is not merely whether people think these CQAs are important or even whether they believe themselves to possess them but whether they **can actually use** them to perform at their best and achieve great results at work. People draw on their CQAs in different combinations and extents in different situations, and as we discovered in the research, people's ability to do this well is influenced by a variety of factors not entirely within their control. Some of these factors relate to personal contexts (e.g. state of health or personal life), some to work contexts (e.g. the culture of the workplace) and some to the wider world (e.g. social trends, political agendas and funding priorities) that influence the environments that individuals and organisations operate within.



Emerging as perhaps of most importance is the issue of people **having the confidence** to use these CQAs in their work. Confidence was cited unprompted by a third of survey respondents as a factor affecting their ability to draw on their competencies to good effect. In interpreting the data, we found confidence may play a role in explaining the results various ways. It featured to such an extent that we wondered whether it signalled a systemic issue of extreme fragility of confidence if not under-confidence in the arts and cultural sector. Self-confidence is at the forefront of a growing body of thinking about organisation behaviour, and according to recent research is increasingly being identified as one factor that 'carries some to achievement and, when missing, causes others to fail, or even fail to try', affecting performance by impacting on motivation, perceptions and thought patterns²⁰. Other recurring themes in the data included:

- Confronting issues and handling conflict (immediately, preferably face-to-face, and with on-going communication)
- Working cultures that enable people and the CQAs to develop and flourish, with mutual trust and respect, empowerment
- Doing reality checks (gathering information and feedback from multiple perspectives to ensure sense-making is accurate and weak signals are detected)

²⁰ Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004

- Creating clarity but without oversimplifying (e.g. in purpose and direction, in structures, roles and relationships, and in communicating with others)

Together with self-confidence, they appear to be so essential that without them, thriving in complexity and uncertainty is be much harder to achieve.

The sample as a whole has positive results for wellbeing in relation to state of physical and mental health, satisfaction with life, experience of ‘flow’ at work, feeling ‘in one’s element’ and engaging in free play. However, those with the highest self-perceived possession of the CQAs also have a significantly **higher incidence of wellbeing** than the sample as a whole and than those with the lowest perceived possession, which lends support to our hypothesis that the ways of being and doing encapsulated by our list of CQAs do help people navigate their way through the complexity of 21st century life with more grace and greater positive impact on one’s own state of mind.

Although we would question the sector’s sense of responsibility and commitment to addressing its impact on nature and natural resources (the data suggests that this may be being perceived by many as ‘someone else’s problem’), it would seem that **in general** the arts and cultural sector seems to have all the competencies, qualities and attributes it needs for thriving within it, it just doesn’t always access them or use them to good effect.

This is encouraging. However, research shows that both competencies and self-confidence can be developed but that these developments can erode without continuous nurturing, so we would caution against complacency.

2.2 Using the results

The People Theme research discussed in the following chapters can help individuals and organisations in the UK arts and cultural sector thrive in challenging conditions of complexity, change and uncertainty in two main ways:

1. Personal, professional and organisational development

People can use the findings discussed in Chapter 3 of this report about (i) the types of competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs) needed, (ii) the factors that influence how effectively these CQAs can be drawn upon, and (iii) the ways in which CQAs and influencing factors interplay, to gain deeper insight into their own situations by identifying the CQAs that are particular strengths or weaknesses for them and those they work with, and identifying the key factors that are helping or hindering them in their situation.

Organisations can use these findings to assess strengths and weaknesses across the workforce as a whole and identify organisational factors that are enabling or disabling people to thrive in the organisation.

In future and with further research to build upon the work to date, The People Theme could also offer practical support to individuals in finding ways forward to sustain or improve aspects of their situation by designing appropriate interventions to further develop CQAs and to influence their contexts so that they becoming more enabling to themselves and to others. It could also provide information on the full implications of adopting life-friendly practice and offer guidance on how to embed life-friendly approaches for thriving into organisational structures and processes.

2. Policy and strategy

The results discussed in Chapter 4 give an indication of the state of the sector with regard to:

- Relative strengths and weaknesses in perceived possession and relevance of the CQAs of the sector as a whole, and of certain groups such as CEO/directors and Board members, and leadership training recipients
- Personal wellbeing
- Aspects of the work context e.g. gender balance, average hours worked/week, take up of professional development opportunities

This information can be used to inform the design and delivery of policy interventions and professional/leadership development programmes.

Further research in other sectors to find out in what way the UK arts and cultural sector may be unique in growing people with 21st century CQAs could help evolve how creative practice is valued, organised and financed.

2.3 MMM recommendations

Recognising that this stage of the research presents data from only a snapshot in time and that further research needs to be undertaken both in order to develop larger and more comparative datasets, MMM makes the following practical propositions for policy and strategy across the arts and cultural sector:

2.3.1 Changes in concepts and definitions

- Recognise the limited nature of the concept of skills and adopt MMM's more holistic concept of CQAs
- Adopt our life-friendly definition for thriving

2.3.2 Changes in approach

- Policy-making on people development in the sector encourages an asset-based approach which builds on the arts and cultural communities capacities and assets
- Existing leadership development initiatives in the sector must consider how their approaches might help address the identified relative weaknesses
- The importance of context in enabling CQAs to flourish is better recognised across the sector resulting in more emphasis being placed on creating enabling environments in which the CQAs can flourish

MMM sees this moment of cultural under-confidence in the sector as an unsurprising and unavoidable consequence of turbulence and change, and we would like to see attention being paid to the importance of developing and applying CQAs relating to emergent strategy and decision-making to this reality.

We believe this would build upon the innate aptitude of the sector towards pattern-making and creative connectivity, and transform this into a more impactful leadership capacity in turbulent times.

He who thinks he leads but has no followers,
is only taking a walk

John Maxwell



3. CQAs FOR THRIVING

3.1 Naming the CQAs and the factors that influence them

The **first diagram** on page 20 shows our list of 78 competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs), derived from a review of literature on the topic and tested in interviews and through an online survey.

The CQAs are clustered under the headings of meta-competencies that relate to our definition of thriving as *adapting to changing conditions in a life-friendly way to people and planet in order to maintain the function of making great work happen*. However, there are many other ways of clustering them and many could appear on more than cluster.

The **second diagram** on page 21 shows the key factors related to personal, work and wider world contexts that emerged as recurring themes in our research as factors that affected people's ability to draw upon their CQAs to good effect and that they identified as making a significant difference in getting great results at work. The factors that are closely related are grouped together.

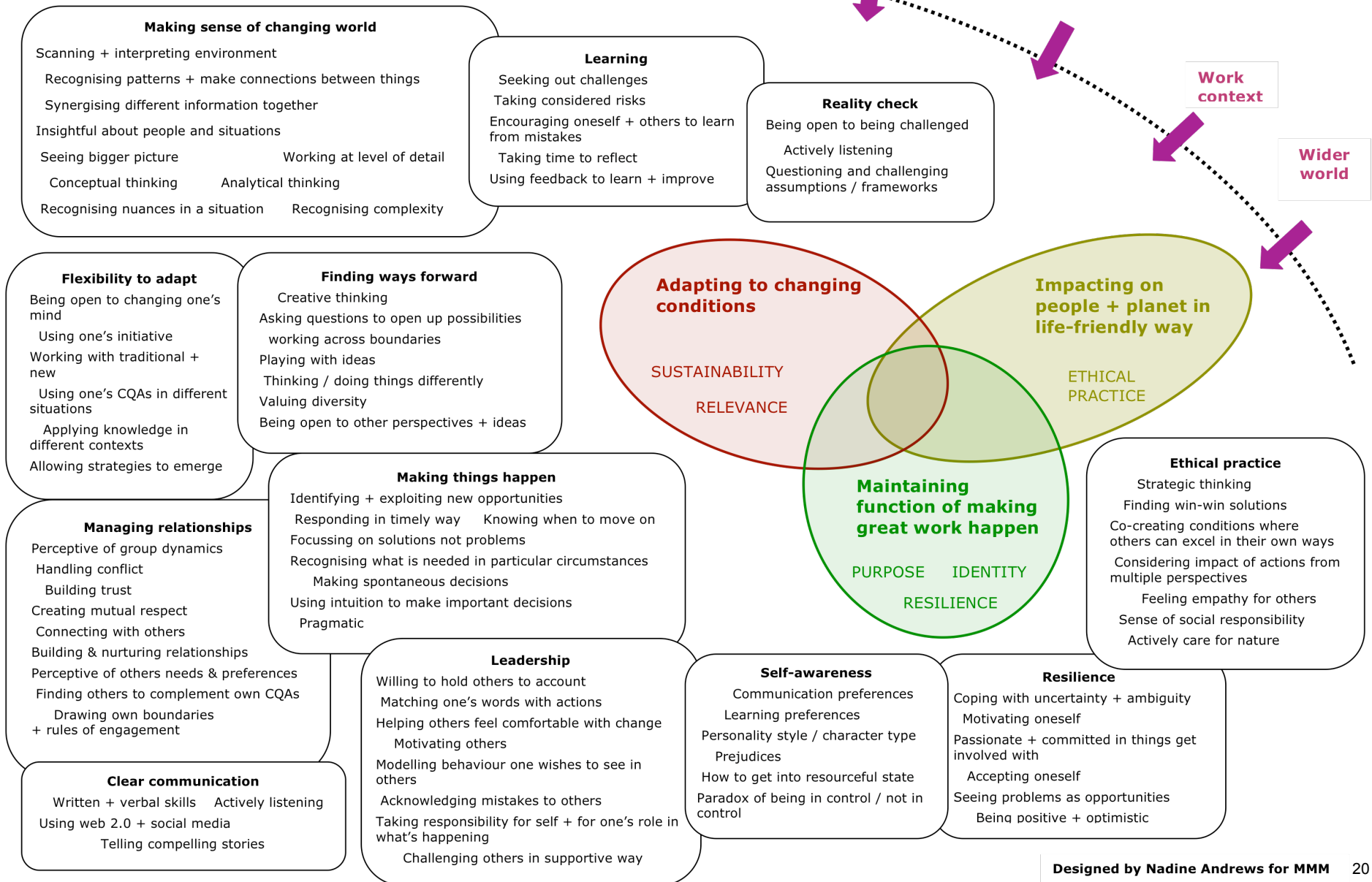
The CQAs and influencing factors included in these diagrams are not meant to be definitive, and one could argue for some to be re-worded or others added. The aim is to give an idea of the sorts of CQAs needed and the kinds of factors that enable them.

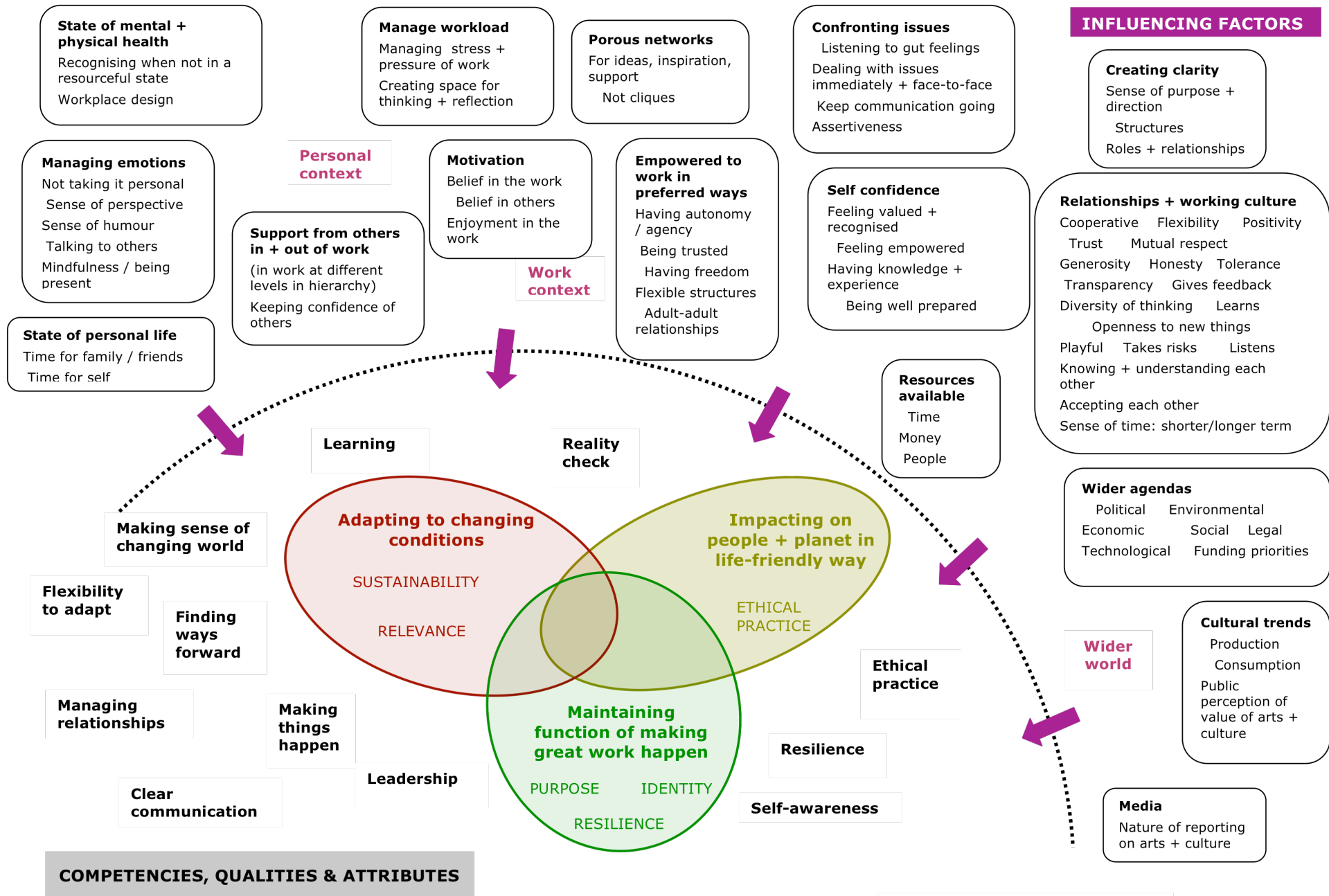
In this model, thriving for an individual is not a fixed state but the emergent property of the complex interaction of CQAs and influencing factors in a specific situation.

These diagrams can be used to help make sense of what is going in a situation at work. Individuals can assess the extent to which these CQAs and factors are present and determine the strength of their influence in their own situation.

COMPETENCIES, QUALITIES & ATTRIBUTES

INFLUENCING FACTORS





Designed by Nadine Andrews for MMM

The internal, personal context is often underemphasised in literature on developing competencies; we found state of health and state of mind to be very important influencing factors

“I am very keen to embrace new ideas and possibilities – sometimes to the detriment of myself and occasionally putting extreme pressure on my organisation. The difficulty is that once you have gathered momentum, there is an expectation from stakeholders (including internal ones, such as Board members) that such pace can be sustained – and indeed furthered. There seems to be an underlying assumption that we always must be doing more – and bigger and better – regardless of the personal cost.”

The People Theme research participant

“Now the key to managing all of this process I think was to be able to distinguish between those two, between me as the professional and me the person who has got a lot personally invested in the organisation. I had to learn to be able to disassociate my inner self from my professional self. Not to make them two separate things of course because I am who I am. I do the job I do partly because of who I am. But it did teach me then that I had to just learn techniques to distance myself from the actual pain and emotion I felt as a result of that.”

The People Theme research participant

“It is something that I struggle with when I am busy that I forget the kind of healthy living bit. And when I am really busy that is the very first thing to go. And then I get tired and so on. It makes it harder for me to be patient and to have a ‘whole body’ thing that I like to have if I am in a difficult conversation to be able to concentrate.”

The People Theme research participant

“I think I am sort of loyal to a fault sometimes and I think I can be loyal beyond looking after myself. And I think I decided for once I wasn’t going to do that. I wasn’t going to stick at a job because the Board had offered it to me and I wanted to be brilliant and stick it out regardless and triumph and come through and get to the happy ever after ending where it has all been worth it. And I think I just thought this isn’t good for me. I am not being the best I can be here and it is not good for me and it is not good for my career and I am going to put myself first which is quite unusual for me.”

The People Theme research participant

3.2 The interplay of CQAs + influencing factors

The interviews gave us great insight into how these personal, work and wider world factors influenced the ability of the interviewees to use their competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs) in real situations.

Using the information, we drew multiple cause diagrams²¹ that show how CQAs and influencing factors may interplay in aspects of a situation, and how one CQA or factor can contribute to a context that makes another CQA or factor more likely.

The 4 diagrams on the following pages of this report have been selected for inclusion for because:

1. The diagrams relate to recurring themes in the interviews and online survey about CQAs and factors that the research participants identified as playing a particularly significant role on the process and outcomes of their work. They appear to be so essential that without them, thriving in complexity and uncertainty would be much harder to achieve:
 - Having self-awareness and self-acceptance
 - Building mutual trust and respect
 - Confronting issues and handling conflict (immediately, preferably face-to-face, and with on-going communication)

²¹ Multiple cause diagrams show causal relationships in an aspect of a situation in simplified form - see glossary

- Working cultures that enable the CQAs to develop and flourish
 - Doing reality checks (gathering information and feedback from multiple perspectives to ensure sense-making is accurate and weak signals are detected)
 - Creating clarity but without oversimplifying (e.g. in purpose and direction, in structures, roles and relationships, and in communicating with others)
 - The vital yet fragile role of confidence (of self and others) in performing at one's best and getting great results at work
2. The diagrams also reveal the importance of those CQAs where our survey sample as a whole has a relatively low incidence of regarding them as relevant to their work:
- Self-acceptance
 - Taking time to reflect
 - Using intuition
 - Emergent strategy and spontaneous decision-making
 - Telling compelling stories
 - Drawing one's own boundaries and rules of engagement

The results of the online survey are discussed in depth in the chapter 4.

3.2.1 Reading the diagrams

The multiple cause diagrams on the following pages represent partial causal relationships in aspects of situations that will be familiar to many. The trick with diagramming is to simplify reality enough to make it understandable but without losing interconnectivity.

We have provided below examples of how these diagrams can be interpreted, and have included some quotes from the interviews as illustrations of the situations.

Following the arrows round the diagram reveals positive reinforcing feedback loops²², commonly known as virtuous or vicious circles. If one of the variables is weak or absent then this could flip the feedback loop from being virtuous to vicious. Finding the feedback loops in a situation helps identify where interventions are likely to be more effective because of their knock-on effect.

Creating and discussing these types of diagrams can help individuals and groups to make sense of a situation and to find ways forward to sustain or improve it. The value of diagramming comes from the insights gained in thinking and discussing them with others.

The interplay of CQAs and influencing factors modelled here were also mirrored in our experience of doing The People Theme research: it was a largely emergent process because of the complex nature of the subject and so clear and on-going communication, keeping the confidence of others, confronting issues, and doing regular reality checking of purpose, direction, our approaches and interpretations were dominant themes.

We used the models to help us understand what was going on when things weren't working so well and get ideas about where we might intervene to make improvements.

Diagram 1: relationships between self-confidence and keeping the confidence of others in making great work happen in complexity and uncertainty

²² See glossary

“There is a whole thing around confidence I think which is being able to confidently persuade people that you have really covered all the bases in your thinking, so you are well prepared for the sorts of questions and challenges and so on that come is critically important. But I think also that includes communications competences. So we have put an awful lot of effort necessarily into communications both internally but particularly externally.

We knew that there were a lot of risks in terms of bad news stories for our users, a lot of whom are very loyal. So we actually worked incredibly closely with the city councils, press and PR team and the Arts Council and we did regular press briefings and all those kinds of things. So there was never a question that we were trying to keep anything back, that we were being as open as we possibly could.

And I think I have developed that which was never an instinctive competency for me actually, but I have learnt that over the last probably twenty years actually that you are always in a better position to manage information if you are out there giving it out rather than responding.”

The People Theme research participant

Example in reading Diagram 1: being self confident (which may stem from a belief in the work, being well prepared, emotional resilience and previous track record in making great work happen), having awareness of how you communicate best, and having a strong sense of purpose and direction helps you communicate clearly and in a compelling way to others, which creates clarity for them in an otherwise uncertain situation.

This clarity helps to keep the confidence of others in your work, and so they lend their support, which builds trust and respect and this leads you to feel valued and recognised for your work. This in turn helps build your self-confidence.

This particular set of relationships is an example of a positive feedback loop, and it could easily flip into the reverse: if your self-confidence is dented, this may affect how you communicate with others, and they may lose confidence in your work, further denting your self-confidence.

There are several other positive feedback loops in this diagram, such as being trusted to work in your preferred ways to make great work. Your production of great work in turn builds the trust and respect of those who can empower you to work in your own ways.

Another important loop occurs around resilience in coping with uncertainty and bouncing back from setbacks to find ways forward.

Diagram 2: relationships between confronting issues and trust and respect in reaching win-win solutions

“You have to find ways of taking people on a journey – that’s what management of change is about. You start building your team. You then start finding ways of taking people to the future. And with a ballet company, the thing that affects the dancers most is who leads them. And that is their artistic director. If they don’t have a leader they feel fantastically vulnerable - like an orchestra feels vulnerable when it doesn’t have a music director. And finding a way through that was tricky because you are trying to sell a company that seems to be running on borrowed time. But as soon as a new artistic director was appointed, which was a long and difficult process, confidence increased incrementally. The immediate history had been one of instability – uncertain governance, threatened and capped funding, and a number of compounding bad management decisions. One of the issues was what the company could do with the public funding available at that point - it was a matter of building a long term story, working on the cash available but looking to the future to grow the level of activity, improve the company and ultimately seek an increase in public support. It was quite a difficult game keeping the confidence in that period.

I think the thing I learnt was to believe in your script. Because once you have done your homework, and you believe it, you have to stay with it. And you have got to be very clear about that because people are going to throw doubt at you the whole time.”

The People Theme research participant

Example in reading Diagram

2: knowing what your reality-checked boundaries are helps you cope with uncertainty, it creates clarity and helps you communicate clearly with others. It also gives you the confidence to confront important issues and work with others to reach win-win solutions, which build mutual trust and respect, reinforced by a positive working culture. This leads to you believing in your colleagues, which in turn gives you the motivation to handle conflict in a positive way.

“I think a lot of people in our business are not good at confrontation. Confrontation as not necessarily being an angry moment, but a way to impart information in a way which someone will go away and think is a useful thing to have said. Or something that needs saying that has to be said in a way that you are going to get a result from. And I think people find that very, very hard and I have had to learn that one I think over the years. And picking your moment when you do those things. Especially when you work with so many very senior management team members who have a lot of skills, who have developed in parallel with your own development over the years.”

The People Theme research participant

“It always helps if you are going to be up against it, if you are feeling... well I like being able to respond in a more gracious way, not coming from the smallness of my own individual perspective”

The People Theme research participant

If mutual trust and respect is damaged, then you may lack the motivation to confront issues because you deem the relationship to not be worth the emotional energy. Or it may be that when issues are confronted, the absence of mutual trust and respect means that emotions are not managed and win-win solutions are not reached, further damaging trust and respect.



The confronting of issues also needs reality checking so that they are properly identified as issues than need dealing with.

“But I didn’t identify clearly enough as there being a conflict I don’t think. I thought it was the general business of producing, so the cut and thrust of production and getting the show on and that sort of thing. And when it finished, only then did I really see how big a gap and how upset people had got. I didn’t notice clearly enough how big the conflict was, so I wasn’t dealing with it really as a conflict, I was dealing with it in a different sort of way. Something that needed to be ticked off to get through to the show going on.”

The People Theme research participant

Diagram 3: relationships between using intuition and emergent strategy in making things happen in conditions of uncertainty and unpredictability

Example in reading Diagram 3: using your intuition helps you make sense of a fast-changing world, and if flexible, you can adapt and respond to these changes with spontaneity steered by a clear sense of purpose and direction. In this way, strategies for finding ways forward emerge that fit the unpredictable changing landscape and you can make great work happen. Working in uncertainty inevitably involves making mistakes. Having the ability and flexibility to learn from these mistakes gives you confidence to continue to cope with working in uncertainty and the knowledge and experienced gained informs your intuition.

“I quite often don’t have answers. And I think that is very difficult as well. I think people want certainty, which in a lot of these situations you can’t give them. So they will read a certainty in things that aren’t certain.”

The People Theme research participant

Doing reality checks is vital to make sure your sensing, decision making and strategies for finding ways forward are indeed in touch with changing reality. It can be problematic when others don’t the same.

Diagram 4: relationships between self-awareness, self-acceptance and creating mutual respect in impacting in life friendly ways

Example in reading the diagram: with self-awareness and emotional resilience you can accept yourself for who you are, and this can give you the confidence and sense of security to create mutual respect by being open to others, forming adult-adult²³ relationships, acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility. This mutual respect as part of an ethical practice makes having a life-friendly impact on those you work with more likely, which in turn creates mutual respect.

“I think when there is enough mutual respect that enables me to see the other person’s perspective. I think where I haven’t been able to, it is fundamentally because I don’t respect that other person. Or I don’t sense that they respect me. I think that is what it is.”

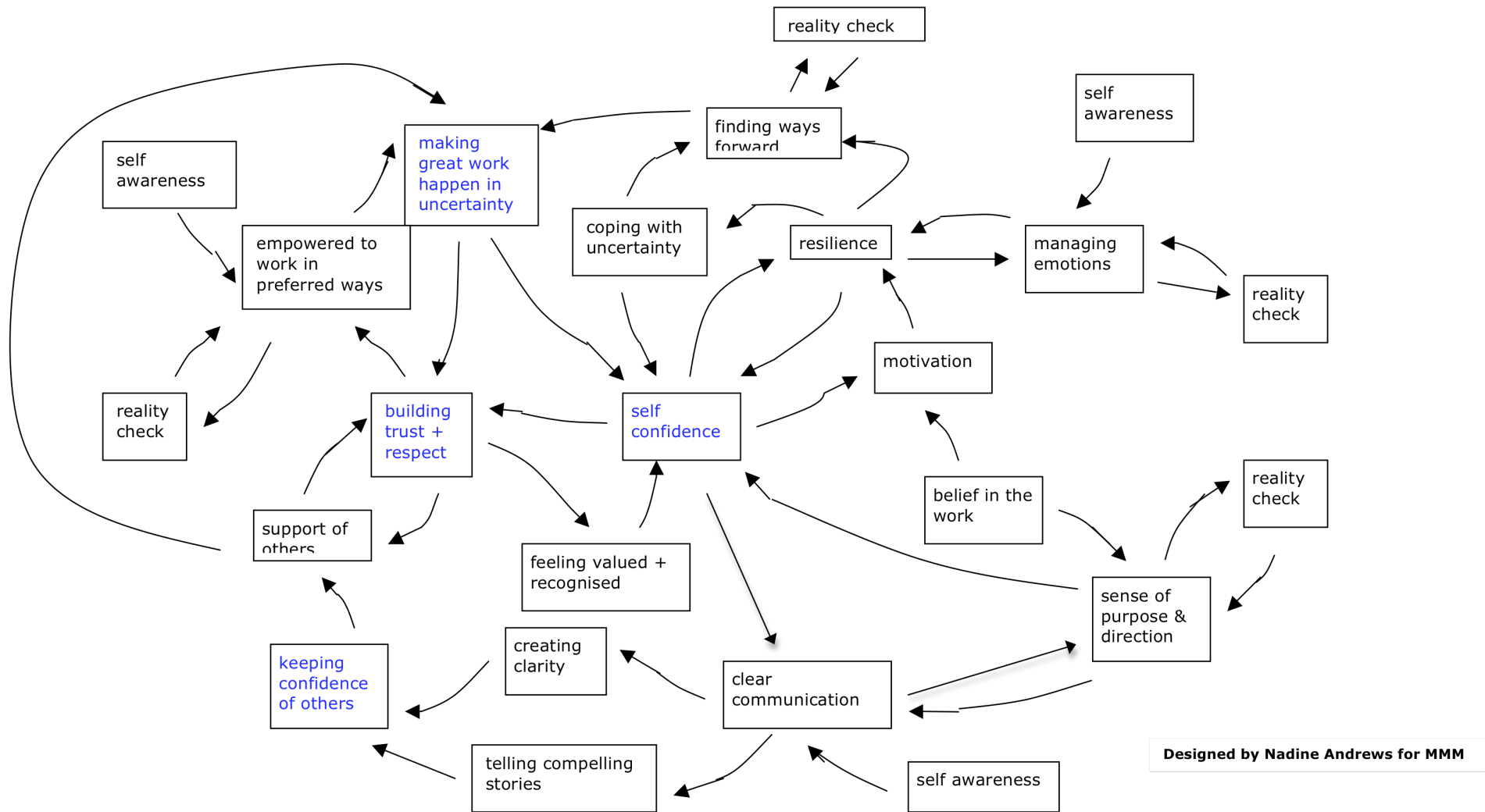
The People Theme research participant

Self-awareness needs to be reality checked to ensure your sense of yourself is grounded.

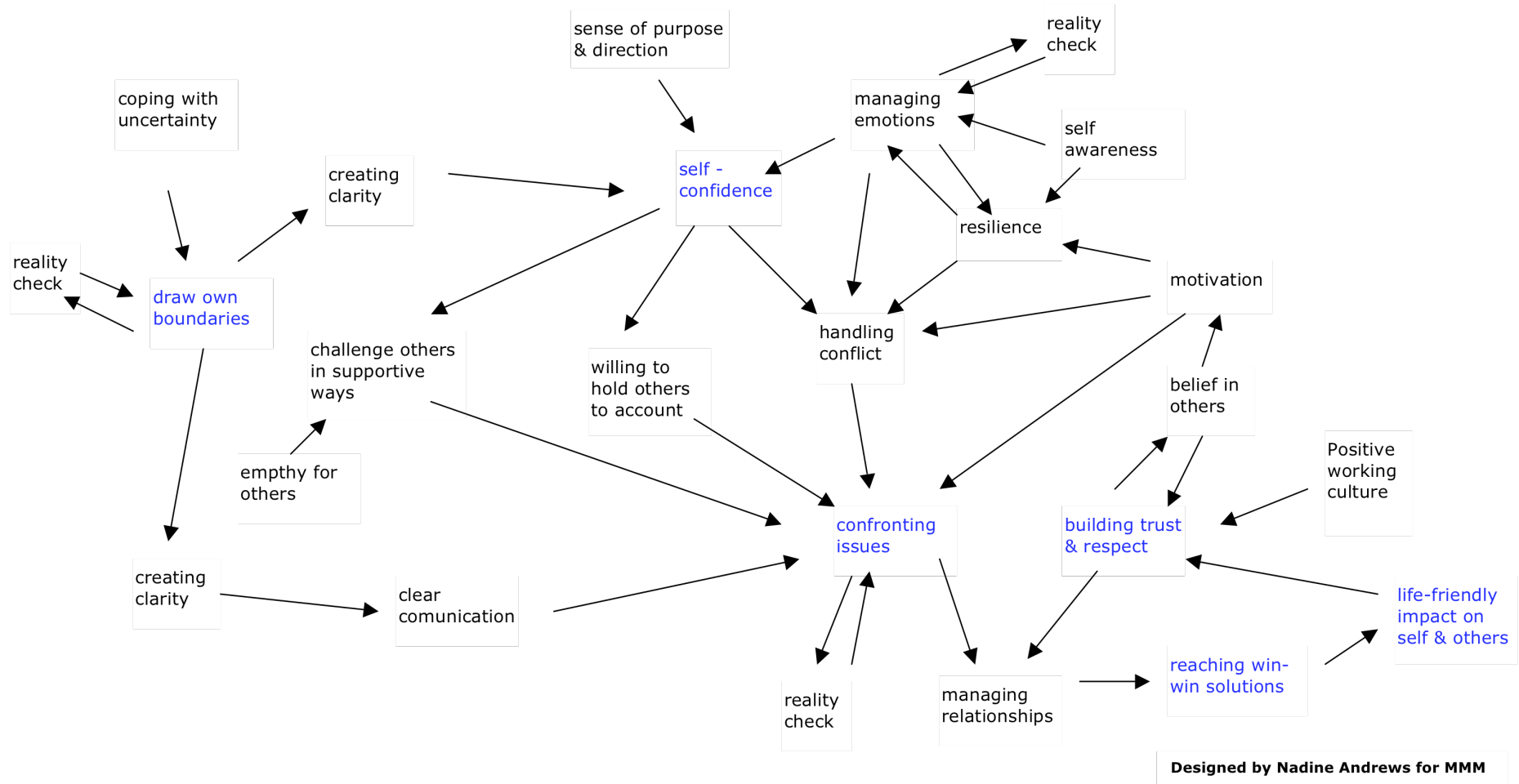
“If you don’t do the self-reflection, you will accept other peoples judgement of you. So you will either feel buoyed up by it or weighed down by it, and you are not putting that grit of, actually what is the reality here? And that is quite difficult to do both when things are riding and they are successful, and when things are going wrong and they are not successful. Because it is very nice to ride the waves when it is going well. But I think it’s about keeping your feet on the ground.”

The People Theme research participant

²³ From Transactional Analysis, see glossary



Multiple Cause Diagram #1: relationships between self confidence and keeping the confidence of others in making great work happen



Multiple cause diagram #2: relationships between confronting issues and building trust and respect in reaching win-win solutions

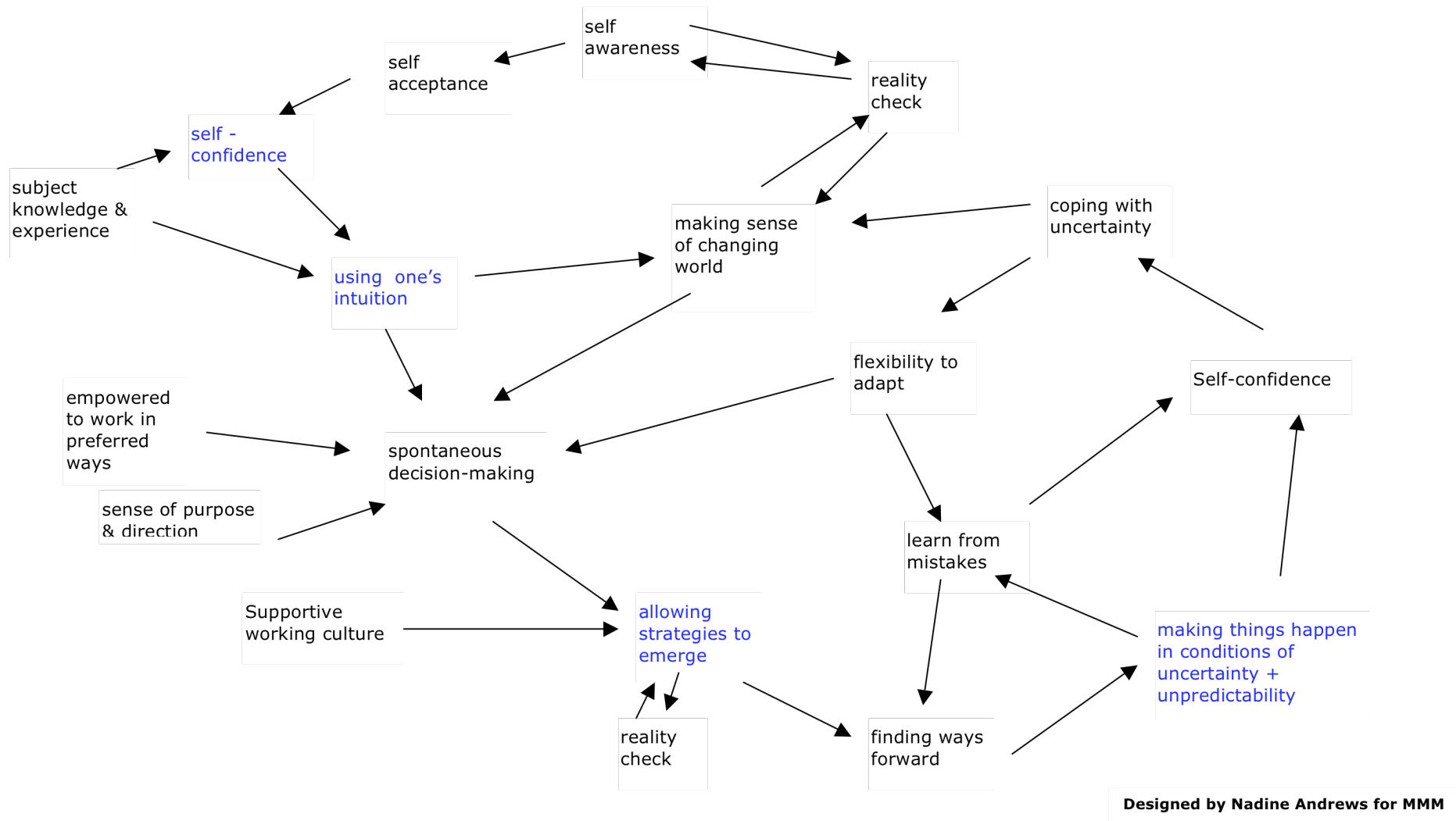


Diagram 3: relationships between intuition and emergent strategy in making things happen in conditions of uncertainty and unpredictability

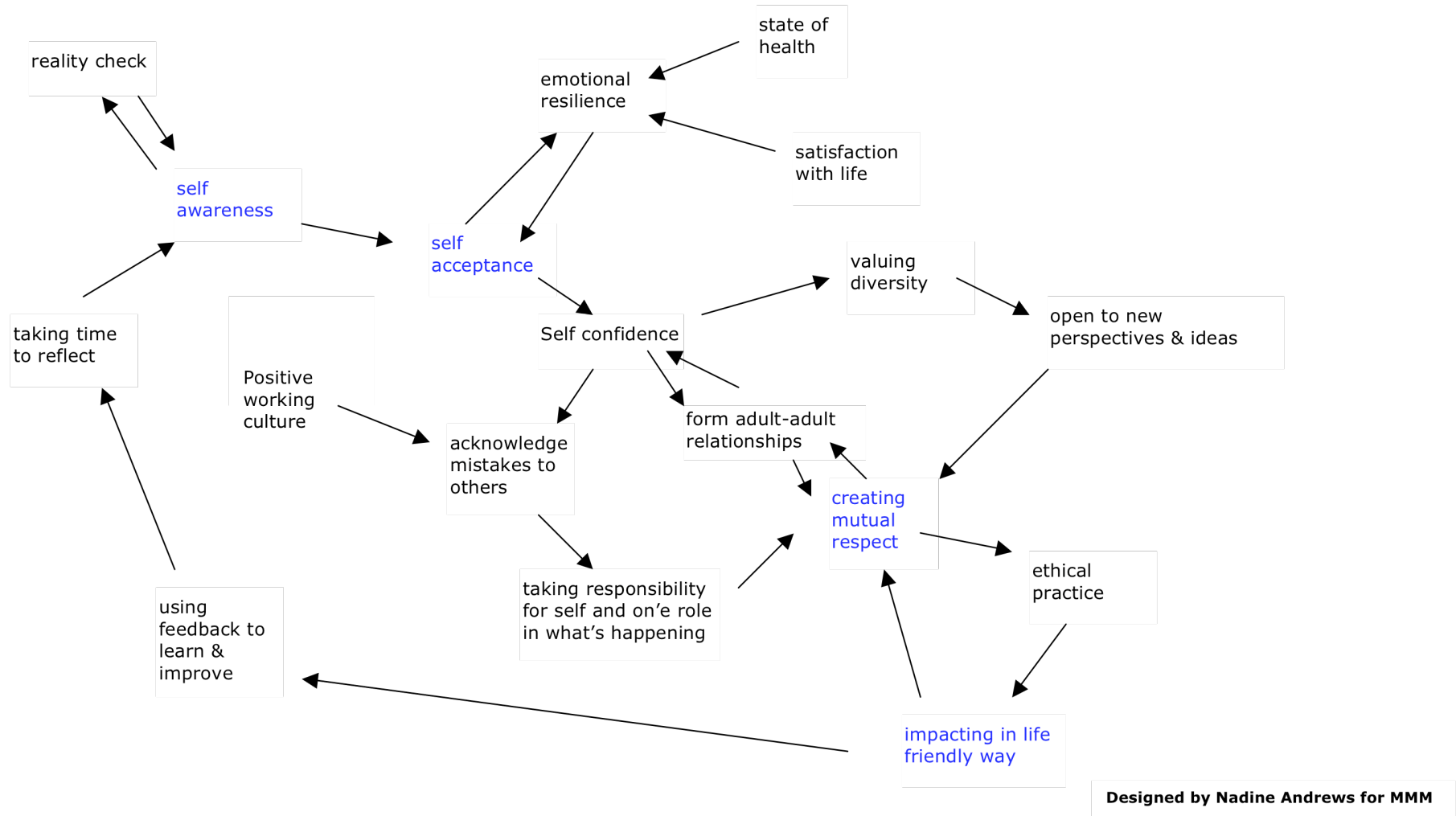


Diagram 4: relationships between self awareness, self acceptance and creating mutual respect in having a life friendly impact

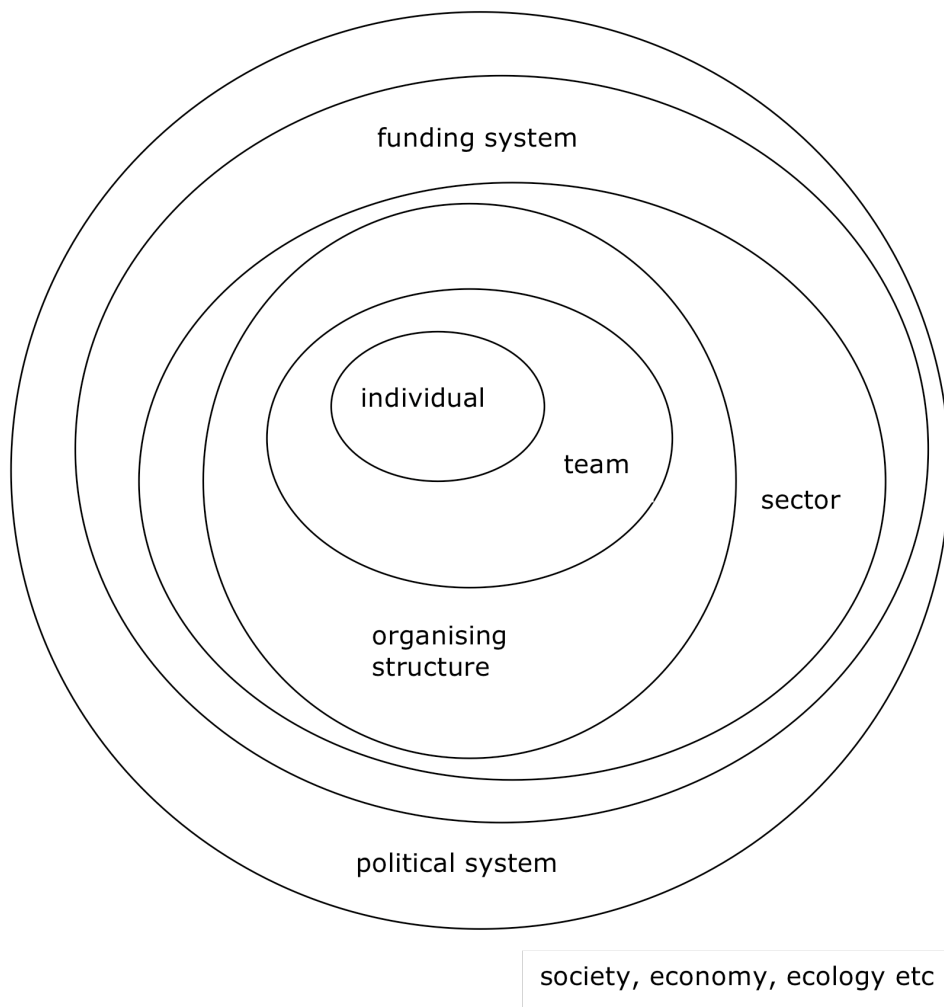
3.3 Nested systems

CQAs and influencing factors interplay at every level in the system, and wherever we choose to focus our attention we will find an internal and external aspect to the relationship.

For example, the cognitive and emotional CQAs and the personal influencing factors comprise the internal aspect to the individual. Organisational culture and wider political agendas for example, are external to the individual as they form part of the individual's environment.

Each level provides the external environment that is enabling or disabling to the level below. This means that although individuals may have these CQAs, their performance may be impaired by operating in organisational contexts that don't value them very much or don't fully enable them to be used to good effect. Or the organisation may indeed encourage and facilitate the use of the CQAs but it is constrained by its policy/funding contexts, which in turn are under pressure from the political context to operate in a particular way.

Wider agendas and funding priorities in particular emerged in the research as key influencing factors to do with the wider world, because of the power they have in shaping the parameters that the sector works within.



At the outer level of society one could argue that it comes back to individuals again, in the sense that it is people who do things and who construct their reality.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has

Margaret Mead

NESTA's recent research into innovation found that:

“The imperative to promote innovative working remains strong in all sectors despite the current economic climate. However, although these aspirations exist, many working practices that promote innovation are not being readily adopted by organisations. Some working practices may actually inhibit innovative working.”

It reached similar conclusions about the enabling aspects of working culture: tolerance of failure and valuing risk taking. Managerial support was also found to be a ‘key moderator for success’²⁴.

As we have already demonstrated in our diagrams, these organisational factors emerged as a theme in our research too.

“The flourishing of the arts depends on effective shared space between public policy and private patronage. If the private/public interface, at all levels, is open and mutually respectful that is enormously helpful to providing a structure within which different initiatives can flourish, even in, or particularly in times of recession. The fact however is that there is immense distrust on both sides. This tends to make the role of the leader of any arts organisation tricky - as they are bounced between the imperious language of business and the inexperienced language of art bureaucracy. Added to which proper debate about the real value of the enquiring, creative universe of all artistic endeavour is sadly lacking in the wider media which tends to make artists and their structures fearful of wider engagement on the world of ideas.”

The People Theme research participant

²⁴ Everyday innovation, NESTA research report Dec 09

3.4 The role of confidence

Confidence emerged as the most commonly cited influencing factor: it was identified unprompted by a third of survey respondents as affecting their ability to draw on their CQAs to good effect.

In interpreting the data we find confidence may play a role in various ways:

- a) Self-confidence in one's possession of CQAs or in one's capability to draw on CQAs when needed, would have an impact on performance
- b) Lack of confidence in the value of one's work or contribution may account for CQAs being perceived as more relevant to work than they are critical to one's sector thriving
- c) The low incidence in possession and relevance of *telling compelling stories* may be related to low confidence in the value of the arts and cultural sector to the wider world (and to low confidence in expressing its value)
- d) Keeping the confidence of others through clear and confident communication was seen as crucial in getting the support needed to be able to continue working in uncertainty with emergent strategy (though with a clear sense of purpose and direction). This is also linked to *telling compelling stories*

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall
prepare himself for battle?

1Corinthians 14, verse 8

- e) There is an association in the data between high possession of *self-acceptance* and *valuing diversity* and with *drawing one's own boundaries and rules of engagement*. It could be that *self-acceptance* helps you feel more confident to be yourself and to accept others for who they are.

The relative weakness in possession and relevance of *self-acceptance* would therefore impact on levels of self-confidence

- f) Self-confidence was enhanced by knowledge and experience of the subject, being well prepared, feeling valued and recognized at work, having the support of others and being trusted and empowered to work in one's preferred ways
- g) There an indication from the interviews that people may have more confidence in using the types of CQAs we describe in artistic and creative processes than they do in management decision-making.

This could be linked to a lack of confidence (dare we say inferiority complex) in using the sector's own resources and so the sector looks to the external world for reassurance and legitimacy for its methods.

If, as we propose, the sector lacks knowledge of progressive management theory influenced by systems thinking and complexity theory then it would also lack confidence in applying it and in employing an integrative approach that uses creativity in management as well as art. By default it would rely instead upon orthodox 20th century management approaches and reward those who promote them

With confidence as such a dominant theme we are wondering whether it indicates there is a systemic issue of extreme fragility of confidence if not under-confidence in the arts and cultural sector.

The link between confidence and performance are well known in sport. Self-confidence is also at the forefront of a growing body of thinking about organisation behaviour²⁵.

Due to its dominance as a theme, we think it merits dwelling upon theories about confidence in some depth.

3.4.1 Self-efficacy

Survey respondents and interviewees cited confidence in a general non-specific sense (which may be regarded as trait confidence) and in relation to particular contexts and situations (which would more accurately be called self-efficacy by psychologists, although none of our sample used that term).

The major body of research and theory on self-efficacy has been carried out by Albert Bandura who defines it as ‘people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives’ and finds a causal connection between belief and performance.

He posits that:

“A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal wellbeing in many ways.

In contrast to those with low perceived self-efficacy, people with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided.

Such an efficacious outlook fosters intrinsic interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. They heighten and sustain their efforts in the face of failure. They quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks.

They attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable. They approach threatening situations with assurance that they can exercise control over them. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishments, reduces stress and lowers vulnerability to depression²⁶.

There are clear links here to several aspects of our research: experiencing ‘flow’, being in one’s element, state of health, the meta-competency of resilience, and the CQAs of *seeking out challenges* and *seeing problems as opportunities*.

The highest scoring group for possession of CQAs have a higher incidence of ‘flow’, being in one’s element and very good mental health. It may be that this group comprises of people with high self-efficacy and that these beliefs generate self-fulfilling behaviour.

As can be seen in the next chapter, the sample as a whole does quite well across most of the aspects listed above but not all. We have clustered *self-acceptance* and *coping with ambiguity* under resilience, and both of these CQAs are relative weaknesses.

However, the sample as a whole also has relative strengths in CQAs relating to a sense of agency: *motivating oneself, using one’s intuition* and *taking responsibility for oneself and one’s role in what’s happening*. According to Bandura, beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency.

²⁵ Hollenbeck & Hall 2004

²⁶ <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/self-efficacy.html>

It seems that respondents to our sample may hold conflicting views about their self-efficacy. What is not in doubt is that they see self-confidence (or self-efficacy) as a major factor influencing their performance.

This chimes with the findings of NESTA's research into innovation that emphasises the need for a belief and confidence in one's ability to innovate in order for innovative working to happen²⁷. Research and practice into performance and career differences are increasingly identifying self-confidence as one factor that carries some to achievement and, when missing, causes others to fail, or even fail to try²⁸. Research has identified that self-confidence affects performance by impacting on our motivation, our perceptions and our thought patterns²⁹.

3.4.2 Social cognitive theory

The concept of self-efficacy is at the centre of Bandura's social cognitive theory that offers an explanation of human adaptation and change, and views human functioning as the product of a dynamic and reciprocal interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental influences.

"Perceived self-efficacy is concerned not with the number of skills that you have, but with what you believe you can do with what you have under a variety of circumstances"

Bandura's theory recognizes that different people with similar skills often perform differently, and the same person may perform poorly or extraordinarily depending on fluctuations in beliefs of personal efficacy.

Our approach to the research and to our interpretation of data aligns with social cognitive theory in:

- Understanding thriving as an emergent property of the complex interaction of CQAs and influencing factors in a specific situation
- Investigating wellbeing and the interplay of CQAs and personal, work and wider world influencing factors in aspects of a situation
- Our highlighting of the role of confidence in thriving
- Not aspiring to create a one size fits all model for developing CQAs in people

3.4.3 Psychological capital

The value of human capital to organisational performance is now well acknowledged. Reiterating a point made earlier in this report, it is not merely whether people possess these CQAs, it is how they use them to get great results at work or make great work happen: this is how intellectual and human capital is created.

However, there is now considerable evidence correlating psychological capital with performance³⁰. Psychological capital is defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development characterised by 4 interrelated capacities: confidence (self-efficacy), optimism, hope and resiliency.

Our research into context and influencing factors gives us some indication of the psychological capital of our sample. As noted earlier it would seem that capacities for self-efficacy and resilience are present in some aspects more than in others. We tested for

²⁷ Everyday innovation report: NESTA research report Dec 09

²⁸ Hollenbeck & Hall 2004

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Luthans et al 2006

positivity and optimism and found the sample rated itself fairly high: 58% stated this was 'very much like me' and 32% 'somewhat like me'. We did not test specifically for hope.

However, there is growing recognition that individuals can develop self-confidence through their own actions³¹ and Luthans asserts that these capacities can be developed with methods based on Bandura's social cognitive theory.

3.4.4 The illusion of control

There is a further dimension to Bandura's work that is relevant to our research.

Bandura's theoretical perspective of self-efficacy stipulates that people strive to control events that affect their lives, and that this need permeates everything that individuals do. Self-efficacy is a motivating force: as *'belief that one can produce desired effects provides incentives to act'*. The theory also says that uncertainty in important matters is unsettling.

"I don't fear the expression of emotion, what I don't like is the loss of control. Now if I can control my emotions I don't mind showing them at all. But if I haven't got them under control, to a large extent, I don't think it helps other people."

The People Theme research participant

"The very worst is feeling like you have somehow got to salvage control. Sometimes that is the very worst thing to do but that is what you want to do where you kind of want to take everyone together and 'come on everyone' and galvanise them all and take control. And sometimes that is the very worst thing to do in those situations, you just don't know. It is either take control or let it go. But something has gone wrong before and you are kind of too late so, yeah then when I am trying to have to really troubleshoot, I know I have missed something earlier, I have missed a sign earlier because there was probably an easier way or something that needed a little 'Are you okay?' or 'Have you done that?' I should have remembered to ask them"

The People Theme research participant

This relates to the concept of 'illusions of control'. There are many psychological experiments that show that people may develop more effective decisions if they have 'illusions of control' as it leads to more proactive and self-fulfilling behaviour³².

Stacey (2003) recites Streatfield's argument that:

"The distinguishing feature of management is not control but the courage to carry on creatively despite not knowing and not being in control, with all the anxiety that brings."

The key is to learn to live with the paradox of being simultaneously in control and not in control³³.

Mintzberg (1994) also discusses the issue of control, and quotes Worthy from 50 years ago:

*"The obsession for control springs from the failure to recognize or appreciate the value of spontaneity, either in everyday work or in economic processes. Hence the need for planning"*³⁴

Mintzberg wonders whether the obsession with control merely reflects an illusion of control. *Making spontaneous decisions* is of course one of our CQAs; it is also a relative weakness of the sample. Its relationship with making things happen in conditions of uncertainty is modelled in multiple cause diagram 3 on page 29. A quarter of our sample stated that *I always like to be in control of situations* was 'very much like me'. Half said it was 'somewhat like me'.

"I have a developing sense of something. But you don't know exactly how it is going to be taken forward by individuals into different places. I find that enormously exciting actually. Partly because it means you are not negative, but one sense of that is I don't have to try and kind of control and be responsible for everything, which is a very ridiculous and burdensome idea."

The People Theme research participant

³¹ Hollenbeck & Hall 2004

³² Hogarth & Makridakis 1981

³³ Streatfield 2001

³⁴ Worthy 1959

People with high self-efficacy generally hold the opinion that they are more in control of their lives. They tend to be ‘at cause’ rather ‘at effect’. Bandura states that people with high self-efficacy ‘attribute failure to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills which are acquirable’. Other psychological research indicates that generally, people attribute successes to their own efforts and failure to external factors. Interestingly, the reverse is true when we consider other people’s successes and failures³⁵.

Our observation of the arts and cultural sector is that it is fond of blaming arts councils for its failings.

3.4.5 Overconfidence

Hogarth and Makridakis (1981) discuss how research into forecasting and planning reveals that the need for feeling in control also leads to tendencies to see patterns where none exist. The availability of additional information increases confidence in judgement but it does not necessarily increase predictive accuracy. As more information becomes available it is increasingly easier to ‘prove’ what one wishes. The value of information is paradoxically often overestimated by unaided intuition, with the result that the search for additional information brings no more than false psychological comfort.

“The dangerous thing is when you don’t realise you are making a decision based on assumption which I think people do far too much. And I am sure I do it far too much as well. Because when they are your own personal beliefs or assumptions, you don’t recognise them as assumptions necessarily. It is a bit the same as prejudices.”

The People Theme research participant

Gladwell asserts that ‘society rewards overconfidence’, it is seduced by it³⁶. We can see in multiple cause diagram 1 on page 27 that self-confidence is crucial for keeping the confidence of others in making things happen in conditions of uncertainty.

Overconfidence is only really an issue if it goes unchallenged and adversely affects performance. Given that *challenging others* appears as a relative weakness in our sample, overconfidence may indeed be a problem for the sector.



³⁵ Hogarth & Makridakis 1981

³⁶ Malcolm Gladwell, talk at Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Hall 24/6/09

It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so

Mark Twain

As a counter to any miscalibration in sense-making and decision-making that may come from overconfidence, we included reality checking as a meta-competency in our model, with the CQAs of *being open to being challenged*, *actively listening*, and *questioning and challenging assumptions and existing frameworks*. These CQAs are critical for double-loop learning³⁷. In the multiple cause diagrams on the preceding pages showing the interplay of CQAs and influencing factors in an aspect of a situation, reality checking is a meta-competency that features heavily.

Related to overconfidence and reality checking is the phenomenon of believing in myths.

There is also the related theme to over confidence of being overly optimism: being optimistic is an important aspect of motivating oneself and others and in making things happen. Over optimism, like overconfidence can be dangerous.

The quote below from an interview emphasises the importance of listening to gut feelings that indicate that soething is not quite right.

“Was I motivating people around a myth or a reality? I felt I was motivating them around a reality, but I think they were believing in a myth. Reflecting back, a sign was their lack of really critical questioning to test whether it was a myth or reality. And then when the myth wasn't the reality, they were understandably angry and upset.

I was always very open with people and talked about risks etc. But I think if people get fired up by an idea and by how you sold the idea to them, then they don't see, they can't see the things that could go wrong, even if you are talking about them. They actually don't want to hear the things that could go wrong.

If you are not prepared to do the self-reflection, the danger is you will believe your own myth making and therefore you will just zip ahead irrespective.”

The People Theme research participant

“We had a project with some fantastic collaborators on board, And the weak part of the link was the director. And it came with quite a bit of money attached. And we decided to go ahead and it was a real mistake because the captain of the ship didn't know where he was sailing. And despite the fact that there were those wonderful artists on board, he was at the helm and it didn't take off at all. And in retrospect it was one of those things, and I have learnt it now I hope, which is you endlessly need optimism to make projects drive forwards, but in that case he was too key a figure to hope that he would pull something out of the bag even when he had never done so before, even though he was working with people who were really wonderful. And that kind of niggle and doubt is something I have really learnt to listen to.”

The People Theme research participant

³⁷ See glossary



4. RESEARCH FINDINGS & THE SECTOR

In this chapter we explore the results of our national online survey that was completed by a very diverse range of professionals and practitioners in arts and cultural sector across all cultural domains, fields of work, positions in a structure, scales of operation, geographic location, age group, ethnic background, and gender. Details of the profile of the sample can be found in an Appendix to this report, available for download from the MMM website.

The findings from our sample are indicative of the wider UK arts and cultural sector.

The survey enabled us to find out about the extent to which respondents believed they possessed our list of competencies, qualities and attributes (CQAs), how relevant they thought these were to getting great results in their work, and whether they believed the CQAs were critical to their sector thriving.

It also gathered a wide range of data relating to personal and work contexts, and qualitative information about personal, work and wider world factors that the respondents thought affected their ability to draw on CQAs to good effect. We asked about personal lives because of our interest in wellbeing and life-friendly impact on oneself.

With such a wide-ranging exploratory survey, the data we have collected is rich in breadth, making it possible to interpret from a variety of angles and with multiple layers. The number of possible permutations is huge but we have restricted our analysis in this report to areas where the dataset was large enough for us to have confidence that the emerging patterns were indicative of the wider sector.

We will discuss the results in 3 ways:

1. Perceived possession and relevance of CQAs of the total sample and of selected groups e.g. CEO/directors and Board members, recipients of leadership training, self-employed/freelance, highlighting areas of relative strength and weakness
2. Patterns in the data relating to work context
3. Patterns in the data relating to personal context (wellbeing)

4.1 Possession and relevance of CQAs

There are various different ways of presenting the results for possession and relevance of CQAs, each offering different insights. In this section we show:

1. The overall results by frequency of individual scores
2. Average and median scores of selected groups
3. The results of the total sample by CQA
4. The results of selected groups by CQA
5. The results for CQAs perceived as critical to the sector thriving
6. The results of the total sample and selected groups for leadership CQAs

As we are reporting across groups as well as on perceived possession and relevance to work, it is quite challenging to present the findings in an easily digestible form. It was important not to lose sight of the nuances in the results but we also wanted to avoid a lot of repetition in our interpretation of results. This tension is present in the commentary. It may require some re-reading of sections about the sample as a whole to fully grasp the meaning of the results by group, for example.

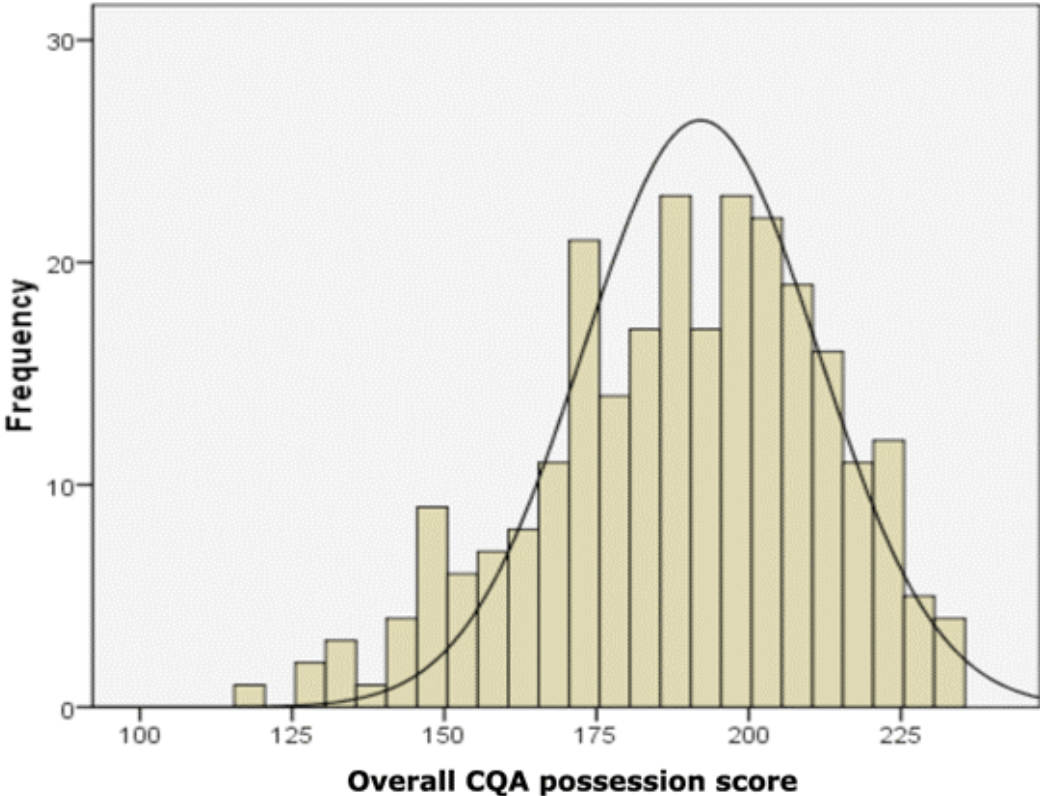
Given that our interest with this research lies in finding out what the survey sample says about the sector, the interpretation provided in this report highlights general trends in the data rather than focusing on the detail of the exact percentage variation of each result in the survey.

4.1.1 Overall results by individual scores

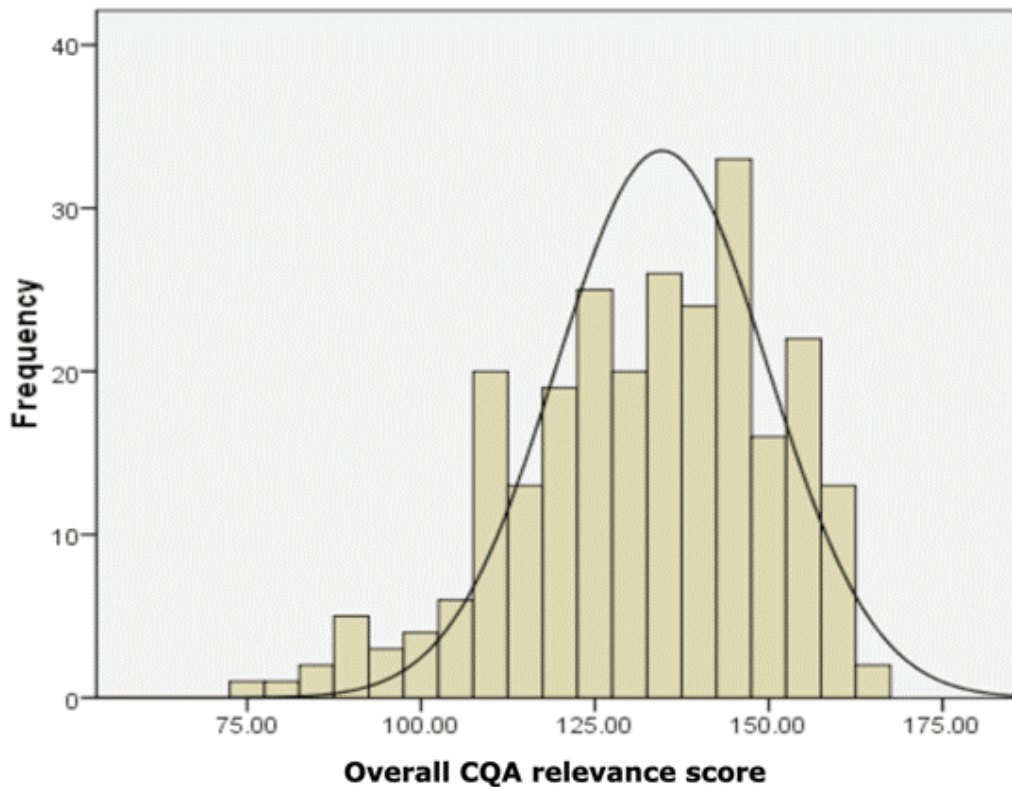
By rating each response on a scale of 0 to 3 (0 = not much like me, 3 = very much like me) we can give each respondent a total score for their self-perceived possession of the CQAs.

The graph below shows the scores along one axis and the number of respondents who received a particular score on the other axis. The pattern of response across the sample shows that in terms of overall possession of CQAs, most respondents rated themselves similarly to other respondents. As such, it appears to follow the normal bell curve for distribution in a population, which is what happens when data clusters around the average.

The peak of the curve in the graph below indicates where the average score is.



Using a similar method of scoring (where 0=not relevant, 2=very relevant), we can find out the frequency of scores for the relevance of the CQAs to work, and see again that most respondents have answered similarly in terms of overall relevance of CQAs to their work.



4.1.2 Average scores by selected group

We analysed the data by the following groups to see if there were any significant difference in response between them:

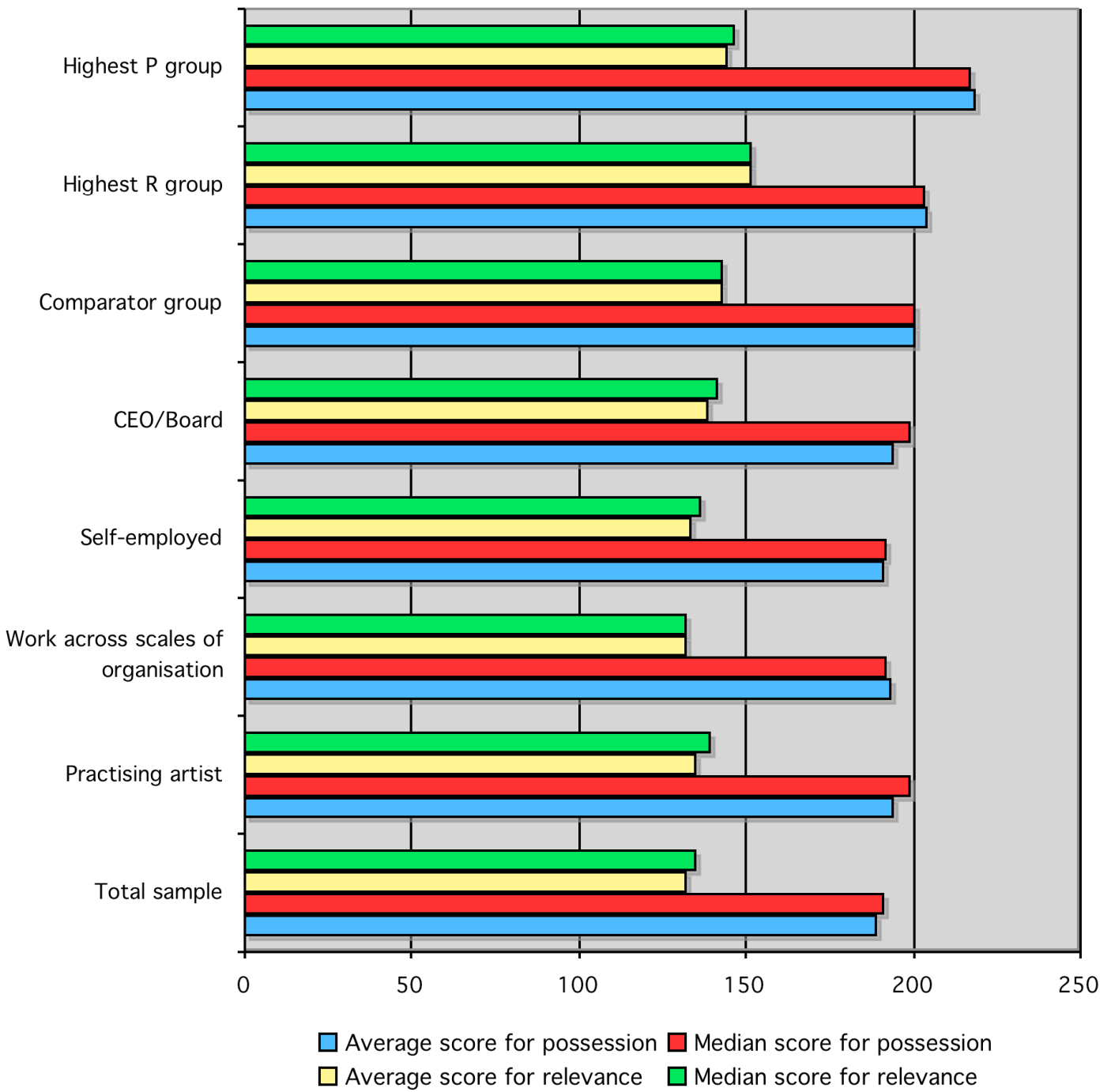
- CEO/Directors and Board members
- Comparator group (individuals we identified prior to the survey as ‘superior performers’ i.e. people who we had confidence possessed and utilised these CQAs to good effect)
- The highest scoring quartile for possession of CQAs (referred to in the graph below as Highest P group)
- The highest scoring third for relevance of CQAs (Highest R group)
- Self-employed/freelancers
- Those who work with organisations of different scales
- Practising artists

The graph below shows the differences between certain groups by average and median scores.

We assumed that a wide variety of our CQAs would be needed by those who are self-employed or working with organisations of different scales (mostly consultants) to get great results in their work in conditions of change and uncertainty. We wondered whether this assumption would be reflected in their scores. We also wondered whether practising artists would score highly, due to the nonlinear and uncertain nature of artistic processes.

As can be seen in the graph below, the scores of these groups are indeed somewhat higher and are actually very similar to each other. They are also similar to the CEO/Board group for possession but slightly lower for relevance, which is interesting. 40% of practising artists in our sample are also CEO/Board members.

Graph 1. Average & median scores



4.1 3 Results of the total sample by CQA

We can also show see how the sample as whole responded to each CQA.

The graph on the next page shows the frequency of response for both perceived possession and relevance to work for each CQA, identified by number. It shows the percentage of the sample that thought a CQA was like them. The options were 'very much', 'somewhat', 'not much' or 'not at all'. It also shows the percentage that thought a CQA was 'very' or 'fairly' relevant to them getting great results at work.

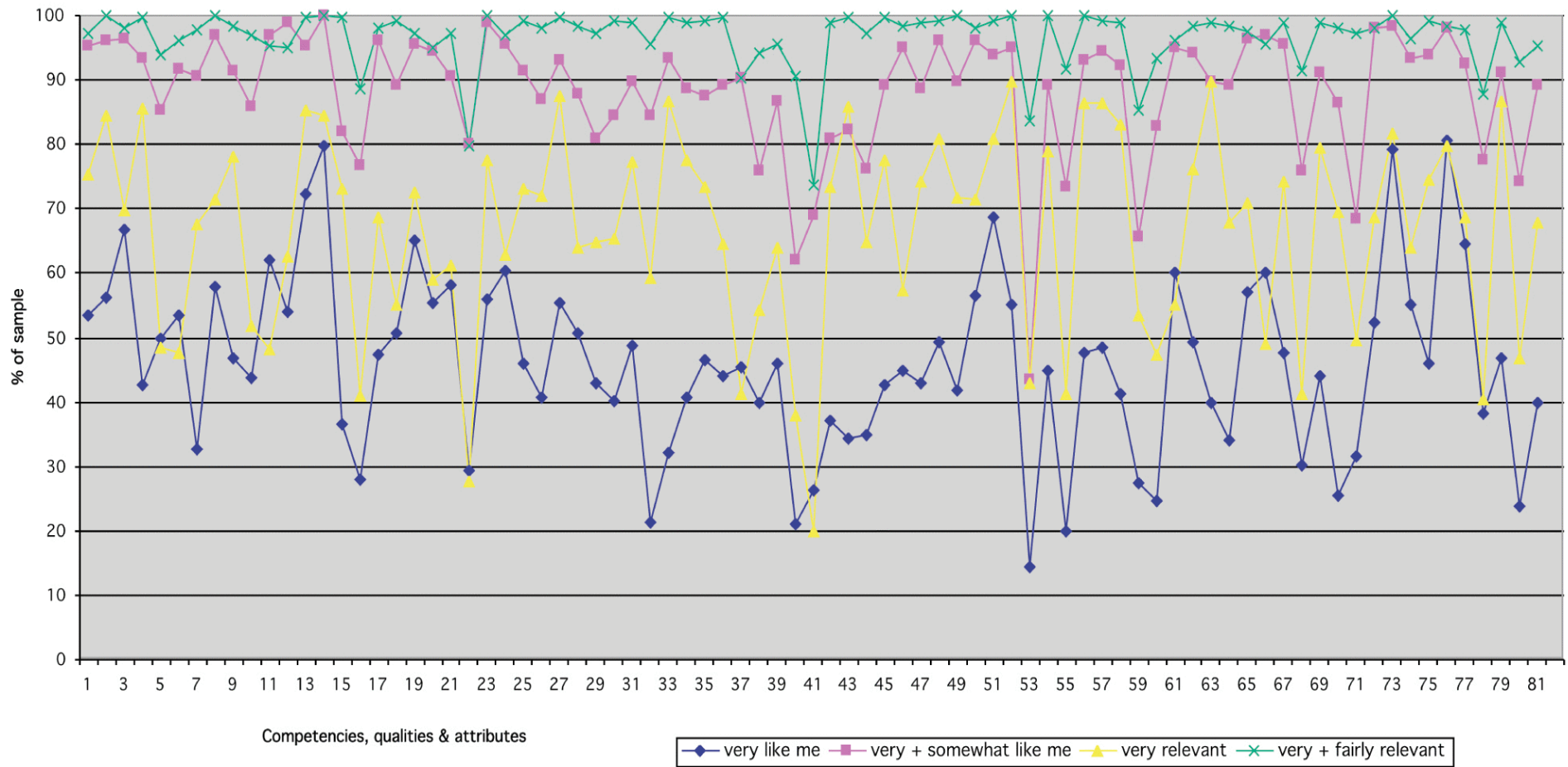
The first point to note is that evidently our list of CQAs strongly resonates with people. In fact, 78% of respondents thought that *at least* half the CQAs were very relevant and the rest fairly relevant.

Although the rate of possession is generally lower than the rate of relevance, we can see that across many of the CQAs, the sample is not far off. There are clear parallels between levels of perceived possession and relevance.

Looking at the data we can see that some CQAs are perceived to be more predominant than others, and there are also some significant gaps between relevance and possession, suggesting there are several CQAs where there may be a sectoral weakness, indicating possible areas for development.

There are also several CQAs that are considered to be not as relevant, with possession also dropping at these points.

Graph 2. CQA possession and relevance to work (total sample)



List of CQAs by number

1. Scan and interpret the environment
2. See the bigger picture
3. Recognise patterns and make connections between things
4. Identify and exploit new opportunities
5. Seek out challenges
6. Recognise nuances in a situation
7. Respond to new events or stimuli in a timely way
8. Being insightful about situations and people
9. Knowledge of how one communicates best
10. Knowledge of how one learns best
11. Knowledge of one's own personality style /character type
12. Knowledge of one's own prejudices
13. Motivating oneself
14. Taking responsibility for oneself and for one's part in what's happening
15. Taking time to reflect
16. Accepting oneself
17. Matching one's words with one's actions
18. Being pragmatic
19. Appreciating the value of diversity
20. Having a strong sense of social responsibility
21. Being positive and optimistic
22. Actively caring for nature and the environment
23. Being open to other perspectives and ideas
24. Thinking and doing things differently
25. Use feedback to learn and improve
26. Questioning or challenging assumptions and existing frameworks
27. Think creatively
28. Think conceptually
29. Think analytically
30. Seeing problems as opportunities
31. Focusing on solutions and not the problem
32. Reaching win-win solutions with others
33. Recognising what is needed in particular circumstances
34. Asking questions to open up possibilities
35. Synergising different information together
36. Being open to being challenged
37. Using one's intuition when making important decisions
38. Coping with ambiguity
39. Taking considered risks
40. Allowing strategies to emerge
41. Making spontaneous decisions
42. Considering the impact or implications of actions from multiple perspectives
43. Think strategically
44. Coping with uncertainty
45. Being flexible so can adapt to change easily
46. Being open to changing one's mind
47. Collaborate or negotiate across boundaries with ease
48. Perceptive of other's needs and preferences
49. Perceptive of other's motivations
50. Perceptive of group dynamics
51. Communicate effectively in writing
52. Communicate effectively verbally
53. Communicate effectively using Web 2.0/social media
54. Listen closely to other people
55. Handle conflict
56. Connect with others
57. Build trust with others
58. Create mutual respect with others
59. Tell stories that others find compelling
60. Challenge others in a supportive way
61. Feel empathy for others
62. Share one's knowledge with others
63. Build and nurture relationships
64. Motivate others
65. Encourage oneself and others to learn from mistakes
66. Acknowledge one's mistakes to others
67. Exhibit behaviour that one wishes to see in others
68. Being willing to hold others to account
69. Creating working conditions where others can excel in their own ways
70. Helping others feel comfortable with change
71. Work at the level of detail
72. Apply knowledge in different contexts
73. Using one's initiative
74. Work easily with both traditional and new things
75. Use one's CQAs in different situations
76. Being passionate and committed to the things one gets involved with
77. Playing with ideas
78. Drawing one's own boundaries and rules of engagement
79. Making things happen
80. Knowing when it's time to move on
81. Find other's to work with that complement one's strengths and weaknesses

Relative strengths of the total sample

The CQAs discussed below had a much higher incidence of self-perceived possession in the sample compared to other CQAs.

1. *Recognising patterns & making connections between things*
This CQA plays a fundamental role in sense-making.
2. *Motivating oneself; taking responsibility for self and one's role in what's happening; using one's initiative*
These CQAs are connected to a sense of agency and might indicate a strong emotional maturity in the sector. These CQAs are critical in forming adult-adult³⁸ relationships.
3. *Appreciating the value of diversity*
Public funding bodies should be pleased to see that all that money spent on *appreciating the value of diversity* has not been wasted! It is also associated with *having empathy for others* and *collaborating or negotiating across boundaries*³⁹.
However, this CQA refers to much more than an ethical position about cultural diversity: it is closely associated with the CQAs of *being open to new perspectives & ideas; playing with ideas; and thinking & doing things differently*⁴⁰. This clearly demonstrates how diversity of thinking is a key component of creative thinking.
4. *Passion and commitment*
The high incidence in perceived possession of *passion and commitment* will no doubt come as no surprise to those who work in arts and culture. However, this may lead them to work long hours: a third of those who said this was 'very much like me' work on average 41-49 hours per week, and a further third work 50+ hours.

Relative weaknesses of the total sample

The following CQAs had a significantly lower incidence of self-perceived possession than other CQAs.

1. *Handling conflict; challenging others in supportive ways; willing to hold others to account; and drawing one's own boundaries & rules of engagement*
These are closely interrelated CQAs.
Analysis of the interviews reveals that confronting issues immediately, preferably face-to-face "*touching base at a very physical level*" and with on-going communication makes a significant positive difference in dealing with problems well. The interplay between these CQAs has been modelled in multiple cause diagram 2 in the previous chapter on page 28.

"So it was about as soon as there was a difficult email or a difficult conversation, get right back in there and talk to people immediately. Don't send an email, don't. This is face to face. And I think that is really important. Go and have a face-to-face conversation with somebody. It really was about immediate communication and keeping open the lines of communication. I think that was really the thing that made all the difference in the end."

The People Theme research participant

"But I remember those conversations particularly in the canteen there with the dancers. Those were quite dark moments. Well you just keep on talking really. You have got to keep the communication going. That is important. Don't hide is the first thing to do."

The People Theme research participant

³⁸ See glossary

³⁹ Based on SPSS crosstab analysis –see Appendix for details of analysis methods

⁴⁰ SPSS cross tab/correlation shows that a very high proportion of those who answered 'very much like me' to diversity are also 'very much like' these other CQAs

Conflict is an inevitable feature of working life; it is what happens when different ways of thinking and working collide. Diversity of thinking is essential to finding ways forward in complexity, so if managed well, conflict can be a powerful source of creativity and innovation.

“It is where my values and my empathy meet. So if someone is coming from a different perspective, then it might not be exactly meeting your own values. But there is an area you can be flexible, but I think the challenge of really being empathetic is where someone’s values bumps up against what are your core values. It is about managing it by thinking where can I be flexible on this value and where can I be flexible and accommodate where they are coming from and where is that not appropriate. So negotiating that sort of both outside but just as much within yourself.”

The People Theme research participant

There is an intriguing tension between the relative strengths of *valuing diversity* and the relative weaknesses of *challenging others/holding to account* and *drawing own boundaries*: if people are uncertain about their boundaries in working with others then that would make it harder to manage the crossing from accepting difference to saying “this wont do”.

“People have some contribution to make by different means. You think about your own behaviour, you think about everybody else’s, and you need to recognise that you have to have that respect even for those whose views you do not share and whose approaches you find challenging, and that is the toughest of all. Maintaining respect for their way rather than trying to change them. That doesn’t mean to say you can’t challenge the ideas”

The People Theme research participant

However, it seems the arts and cultural sector is not alone in avoiding dealing with conflict:

A recent report identifies **conflict management** as a particular weakness in the public sector, stating that getting to grips with it is an ‘absolute priority’ in facing the challenges of budget cuts that lie ahead.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development Building Productive Public Sector Workplaces, 2010

2. *Emergent strategy, spontaneous decision-making, coping with ambiguity, working at level of detail*

Emergent strategy is the vision towards strategy formation in organisations that emphasises the benefits of letting the strategy emerge as things gradual become apparent. Strategy is viewed as an ongoing process of constant learning,

“And I think what I have learnt in the last year is that it is fine not to know where it is going to lead. Although it is important to know why you are doing it now. I mean you have a sense of it. When you see dancers moving on balloons, they are trying to keep their balance and the whole thing is shifting underneath them all the time. And very good exercise because it exercises all bits of you. And it is true. That is how I feel about trying to do something, that you are always having to be like that.”

The People Theme research participant

experimentation and risk-taking. It does not mean doing nothing upfront or reacting completely ad-hoc to things as they evolve.

These 4 CQAs are closely interconnected and critical to working well in uncertain conditions, as is modelled in multiple cause diagram 3 on page 29. Operating well in a world of complexity and unpredictability requires the ability to respond to emerging events by detecting weak signals, gathering detailed

information and checking the accuracy of interpretation. Being able to both *see the bigger picture* and *work at level of detail* is therefore a very valuable attribute.

How do you make God laugh? Tell him your plans!

Planned or designed strategy produces detailed information and works only if everything is known and under one's control making the outcomes predictable and predetermined. Mintzberg has written extensively on this topic⁴¹.

“Nothing existed and then a load of people did exist and a product exists and I felt it and I tasted it and I knew there was something there”

The People Theme research participant

Given that the sample is showing strength in recognising patterns, we believe there would be advantages in developing support structures and confidence to move from identifying those patterns to being confident with *emergent strategy* and *spontaneous decision-making*.

3. *Telling stories that are compelling to others*

It is possible that some respondents may not have fully understood what we meant by this phrase. However, being able or equipped to ‘sell’ the work of the arts and cultural sector externally as well as ‘sell’ a vision internally is absolutely key to generating support and buy-in.

4. *Accepting oneself; taking time to reflect*

Self-acceptance requires self-awareness, which comes with self-reflection. All of these play fundamental roles in learning from experience – a key component of thriving in changing conditions. The interplay between these CQAs in making things happen is modelled in the previous chapter on page 30.

“It is my experience that to do extraordinary work, whatever that is and whatever shape it takes, requires an enormous amount of honesty with oneself. Something which most of us find very difficult.”

The People Theme research participant

“I suppose it was the emotions and analytical side of me having a bit of a fight. I think I had seen the emotional side as a weakness. I think possibly it is this ability to acknowledge weakness that I am realising is actually quite a strength. I started to find a way to bring the objective and the emotion together again. A way of integrating the analytical and the emotional side and giving due weight to the emotional in decision-making”

The People Theme research participant

“I think there was a skill in learning about yourself. It is very hard to judge yourself, but I did learn a lot about how I would react or how I would deal with it I suppose. You learn your tolerances, you learn your parameters about what you can put up with.”

The People Theme research participant

How you feel about yourself - your abilities, your character, your patterns of behaviour – affects how you are with others. It affects your emotional resilience, your capacity to bounce back from setbacks.

⁴¹ Mintzberg, 1994

From analysis of our data, we can see *accepting oneself* appears to be closely associated with good mental health, high satisfaction with life, and being *positive and optimistic*.

However, it does not imply complacency: those who see this as ‘very much like me’ also tend to rate themselves high for *using feedback to learn & improve, taking responsibility for self & one’s role in what’s happening, acknowledging mistakes to others, questioning or challenging assumptions / frameworks, and being open to changing one’s mind*

I've changed my mind a dozen times.
It seems to work better now

“Personally I suppose what helps me is I think I am a secure person. I don’t have any deep insecurities about myself. And so it doesn’t cost me anything to accommodate other people. You know I am not on the defensive and I don’t feel that if I give way to somebody or if I allow somebody to assert themselves, I don’t feel as if they have taken a slice of me with them sort of thing. So I am not easily threatened by anybody and also because of that I don’t need to be liked by people. So I am not seeking. I think I am fairly self sufficient in that respect.”

The People Theme research participant

Accepting oneself is also associated with other CQAs such as *drawing own boundaries & rules of engagement* and with *appreciating the value of diversity*.

We would interpret this as self-acceptance bringing a sense of security and confidence to be yourself, and that this enables you to accept others for who they are.

The Work Foundation identifies **self-awareness** as one the ‘fundamental attributes of outstanding leadership’.

“The key tool they have to do this [achieve excellence] is not systems and processes, but themselves and the ways they interact with and impact on those around them.

This sense of self is not ego-driven. It is to serve a goal, creating a combination of humility and self-confidence. This is why they watch themselves carefully and act consistently to achieve excellence through their interactions and through their embodiment of the leadership role.”

The report continues:

*“All leaders recognise their own weaknesses and acknowledge they are not perfect and also understand what has shifted their own behaviour. All leaders speak of moments of success and a belief in their own abilities but outstanding leaders are much more explicit and direct about their own sense of confidence, **self acceptance** and the importance of these as tools for their performance.*

As a result outstanding leaders are comfortable with the leader they are and not nervous or intimidated by those who might be considered better than them. In fact they actively seek out great people.”

Exceeding Expectation: the principles of outstanding leadership, 2010

5. *Knowing when to move on*

We see this in much broader terms than succession: for example in moving on round each stage of the learning cycle of ‘act-reflect-theorise-plan’ thus avoiding getting stuck at any one of these stages resulting in navel gazing, analysis paralysis, fire-fighting or post-mortemising. In this regard it is linked with the CQA *taking time to reflect* which as we have just seen also appears as a relative weakness in our sample.

Reflecting doesn't often happen when individuals and organisations are overstretched and under-resourced as they spend most time in fire-fighting mode.

"This ability to draw and reflect on experiences is much more developed amongst outstanding leaders who are generally more deeply reflective on their experiences and what they take from them."

The Work Foundation Exceeding Expectation: the principles of outstanding leadership, 2010

6. *Actively caring for nature & the environment*

Whilst this seems to be not as relevant as other CQAs to many in our sample, we would emphasise that ensuring we have benign or restorative impact on nature and natural resources is a responsibility that should be a central to our working lives. It may require people to not only have greater sensitivity to these issues, but also to think more laterally to find connections with this CQA in their practice.

Interestingly, we see in our data a positive association between this CQA and wellbeing. Those with 'very much like me' possession of this CQA have a higher incidence of very high/above average satisfaction with life⁴² and 'very good' mental health⁴³ than the sample as a whole. This trend also works the other way, with a higher proportion of those reporting 'very good' mental health and very high/above average satisfaction with life saying that *actively caring for nature and the environment* is 'very like me'.

7. *Reaching win-win solutions with others*

As we explained at the start of this report, it is through finding solutions that work for all parties concerned that the sector as a whole, indeed the global community at large can thrive.

8. *Helping others feel comfortable with change*

Given that change is a feature of life, and especially so in turbulent times, this CQA as a relative weakness must surely be of particular concern if we aspire to work in life-friendly and win-win ways with others.

9. *Communicating effectively by web 2.0/social media*

This was the lowest scoring CQA for both perceived possession and relevance. Unsurprisingly, the 25-34 yr olds in our sample show much greater possession with 49% saying this is 'very much like' them compared to 22% of 35-44 yr olds. It indicates that the sector may be seriously lagging behind here. Interestingly it seems that respondents' pattern of response to this CQA is similar to their pattern for *working easily with traditional and new things*.⁴⁴

Gap between relevance and possession in total sample

These CQAs listed below are recognised by our sample as being very important, but the proportion that felt the CQA was 'very relevant' was significantly higher⁴⁵ than the proportion that thought it was 'very much like me', indicating that these CQAs are obvious areas to target for development in the arts and cultural sector generally.

⁴² 67% compared with 55% of the total sample for Satisfaction with Life

⁴³ 73% compared with 65% of total sample for 'very good' mental health

⁴⁴ Analysis with SPSS cluster analysis

⁴⁵ With these CQAs there was more than a 30% variation in response between possession and relevance

- *Taking time to reflect, Reaching win-win solutions, Help others feel comfortable with change, Identifying & exploiting new opportunities, Connecting with others*

4.1.4 Results of selected groups by CQA

We also analysed the data by the following groups:

- CEO/Directors and Board members
- Comparator group (individuals we identified prior to the survey as ‘superior performers’ i.e. people who we thought possessed and utilised these CQAs to good effect)
- The highest scoring quartile for possession of CQAs (referred to in the graph below as Highest P group)
- The highest scoring third for relevance of CQAs (Highest R group)

We wanted to find out how the responses of these groups compared to each other and to the total sample.

Graph 3 on the next page shows how these groups compare for perceived possession of CQAs with Graph 4 on page 53 showing how the groups compare for responses to relevance of CQAs to work.

We can see from the graphs that overall there is a similar shape to the pattern of response across the groups. However, there are also some very notable differences between these groups in terms of possession, less so in regard to relevance.

There are two different ways of exploring and comparing strengths and weaknesses of each group: relative to the sample as a whole or relative to their responses to other CQAs. We have taken both into account in our analysis.

CEO/Board group

As shown in the graphs on the following pages, this group has just a slightly higher than average score for CQA possession and relevance. Notable strengths compared to the total sample include *identifying and exploiting new opportunities*, and *taking considered risks*. There are no significant weaknesses that are different to those of the sample as a whole. 44% of CEOs are also in the highest scoring group for perceived possession, and 43% are also in the highest scoring group for relevance.

Comparator group

As we anticipated, the Comparator group scores higher than the total sample across the majority of CQAs.

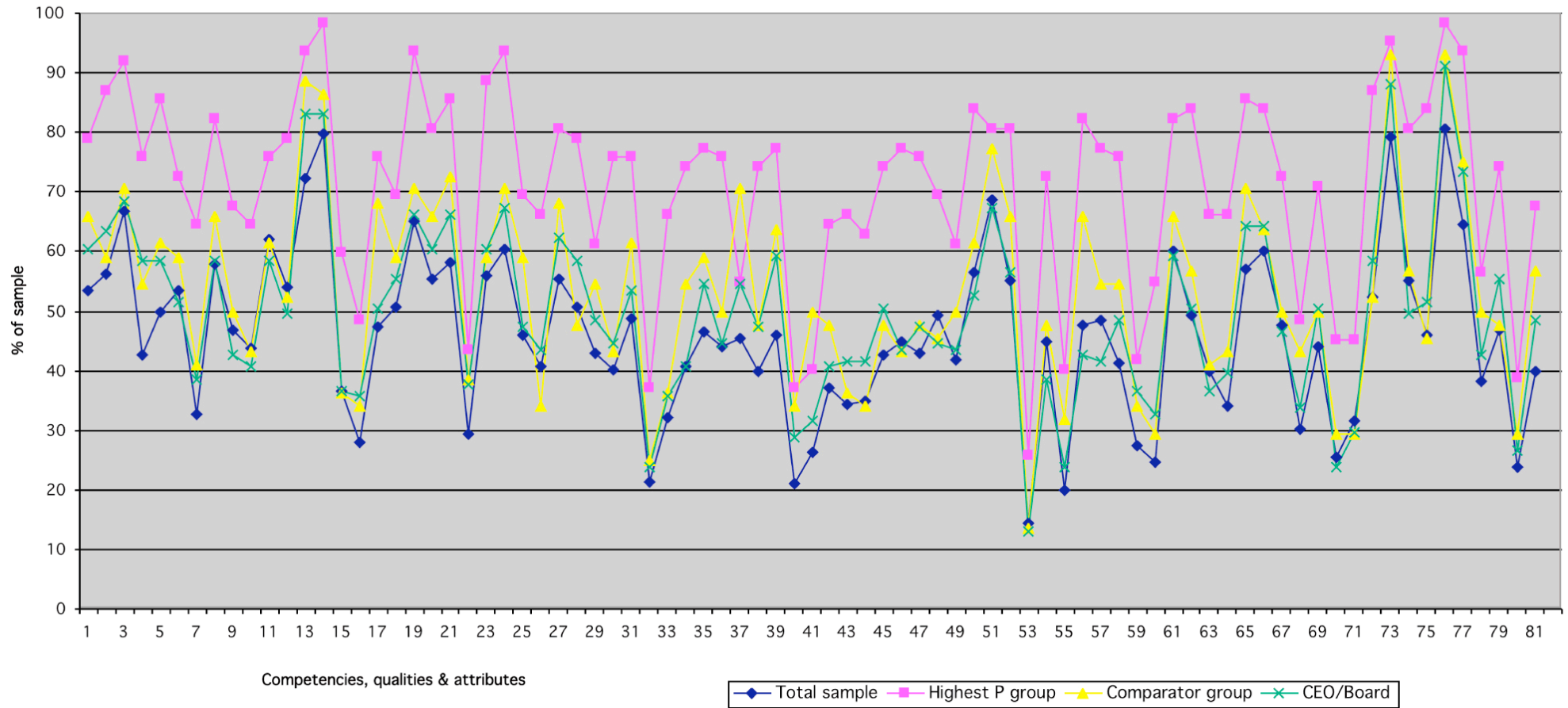
It shares some of the same strengths and weaknesses (relative to their response to other CQAs) as the total sample.

Relative to the total sample, a higher proportion claim they are ‘very much like me’ in *matching words with actions, taking considered risks, connecting with others* and *finding others to work with that complement own strengths*.

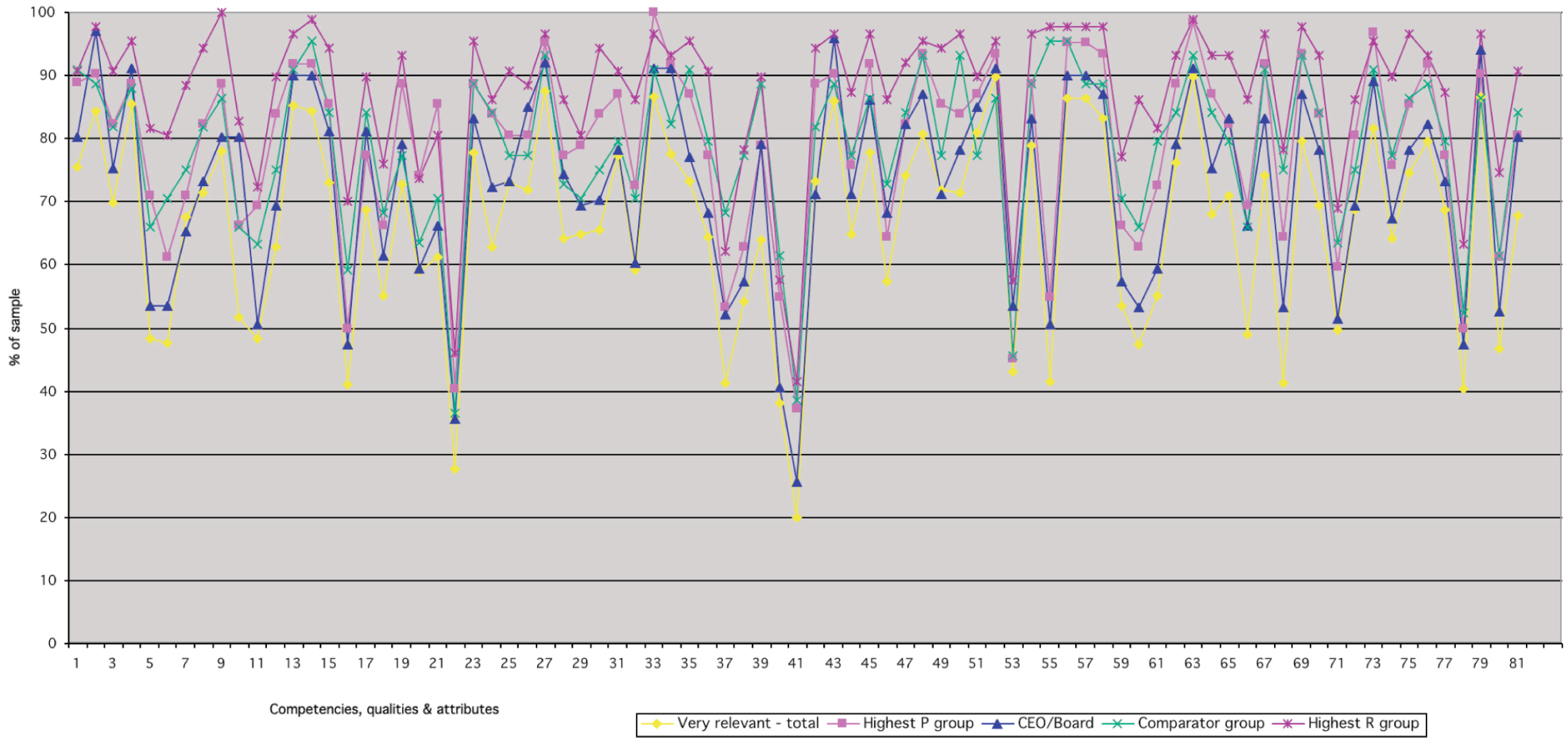
And intriguingly this group also has a much higher incidence of *making spontaneous decisions*. This is the only instance of a CQA appearing as a strength for one group and as a relative weakness for others. The relevance of this way of decision making to making things happen in uncertain conditions is discussed in the section on the sample as a whole above, it is also modelled in multiple cause diagram 3 on page 29.

70% of the comparator group are also in the CEO/Board group. Just over a third are in the highest group for possession and just over half are in the highest relevance group.

Graph 3. CQA possession 'very like me'



Graph 4. CQA 'very relevant' to getting great results at work



Highest scoring group for possession of CQAs

By scoring the responses, we were then able to divide the sample into 4 groups. We were interested to see how those who rated themselves the highest for possession of the CQAs compared to the other groups and to the sample as a whole.

As the highest scoring group, their responses to perceived possession of CQAs are obviously much higher than the sample as a whole, but they do follow a similar pattern of response across the CQAs. Their relative strengths include the same CQAs as the total sample but interestingly also include the added strengths of *thinking and doing things differently* and *playing with ideas*: CQAs related to creative thinking.

They also share some of the same weaknesses as the total sample, relative to their responses to the other CQAs.

The results for *using one's intuition in making important decisions* are interesting: the proportion who said this is 'very much like me' is most similar to the proportion of the total sample who answered in this way. Compared to the much greater relative difference for the others CQAs, this is the one CQA in which they do not perceive themselves as possessing to any greater extent.

60% of respondents in this group are also in the highest group for relevance.

4.1.5 CQAs critical to thriving

In addition to questions about perceived possession and relevance to work, we also asked survey respondents to select the CQAs they thought were critical to their sector thriving. The results to this question are less conclusive: 39% thought at least half the CQAs were critical. However, the overall responses for 'critical to sector' were consistently lower than 'very or fairly relevant to my work'. We propose there may be several reasons for this:

- People feel detached in some way from 'their sector' and do not see that in fact they *are* their sector, leading to a belief that although these CQAs may be very relevant to them getting great results, they are not so relevant to anyone else
- And/or it may be connected to an issue of lack of confidence in the value of their work meaning that they do not see the work they do as important to their sector thriving. Confidence is a recurring theme in the data, discussed more fully in the previous chapter on page 33
- Or less sensationally, some respondents may just have not understood the 'critical to sector' question in the way we intended (even though we tested this in the pilot and deliberately used the term 'your sector' to make it more personal). The extremeness of the term may have deterred some from selecting it

We wondered whether there were any instances in the reverse where a significant proportion of respondents selected a CQA as critical to the sector but not very relevant or important to their work.

We limited the analysis to the CEO/Board group, and discovered that there was only one instance: *actively caring for nature & the environment*.

A quarter of those who said it is critical to the sector thriving also said it was either not at all or only fairly relevant to getting great results at work. This could be to do with how CEOs/directors and Board members define success. Or it could be that they see it as 'someone else's problem'. This might also explain why this CQA is less predominant in terms of perceived relevance within the sample as a whole.

4.1.6 Leaders and leadership CQAs

Typical lists of leadership qualities include: seeing the bigger picture, communicating a compelling vision, integrity, building trust and respect, managing change and so on.

However, we would argue that many of these are not unique to just leaders but apply to anyone who works with others to make great work happen.

Because of the very direct impact that a leader's behaviour has on organisational culture, and the influence that organisational culture has on enabling (or disabling) employees to perform at their best, our leadership list focuses on those CQAs of particular pertinence to influencing people by leading by example with integrity and with ethical values:

- *Matching one's words with one's actions*
- *Exhibiting/modelling behaviour one wishes to see in others*
- *Helping others feel comfortable with change*
- *Motivating others*
- *Challenging others in supportive ways*
- *Willing to hold others to account*
- *Taking responsibility for oneself and one's role in what's happening*
- *Acknowledging one's mistakes to others*

You never learn from doing something right because
you already know how to do that

Russell Ackoff

And it includes some that we have also clustered under ethical practice:

- *Co-creating conditions where others can excel in their own ways*
- *Reaching win-win solutions*
- *Strong sense of social responsibility*
- *Actively caring for nature & the environment*

Research on ethical leadership shows that some of the CQAs listed above such as *modelling behaviour* and *holding others to account* are critical to its effectiveness. Leaders are also likely to underestimate the degree to which they are being scrutinised by others in terms of ethics⁴⁶.

"It is my big anxiety at the moment is that because we have to be delivering, delivering, delivering, that we are at risk of generating an inappropriate or unwanted organisational culture. That is my fear because I really do think that you show the way by doing, modelling the behaviours that you want to see. The vast majority of staff who will be opening that centre in 5 ½ months time are people who haven't worked for us before. So they are the new organisational culture. So we are putting a lot of emphasis on our training programmes and our induction programmes to kind of generate a 'treat people as you would like to be treated yourself' culture."

The People Theme research participant

⁴⁶ Brown & Trevino, 2006

Our approach shares some common ground with recent research in other sectors:

Everyday innovation: how to enhance innovative working in employees and organisations

*‘Leaders **modelling behaviours** that encourage innovation’ was identified in the survey as one of the three top catalysts for innovative working.*

*To keep innovative employees motivated, leaders should adapt a transformational leadership style (more inspiring, **motivating** and collaborative) to generate a shared commitment amongst employees.*

NESTA research report Dec 2009

Executive Leadership Survey

The Fuqua/Coach K Center on Leadership & Ethics (COLE) prelim results Oct 08

Leadership Skills Rated as Most Important:

1. Promoting an **ethical environment**
2. Acting with **authenticity**
3. Interpreting the competitive environment
4. Developing trust
5. Demonstrating optimism and enthusiasm

The leadership skills executives identified as being important for senior executives in their organizations highlighted a set of skills that are critical in challenging times. In particular, by emphasizing the combination of **ethics, authenticity**, understanding and ability to interpret the competitive environment and developing trust, executives highlighted the skills required for a leader to have credibility. People want to believe that their leaders understand the real challenges faced by the employees, and that the leader's rhetoric on critical issues, such as **ethical behavior** and demonstrating optimism and enthusiasm, is **authentic** and can be trusted.

*“When it came to creating the right working environment, all leaders understood the need for trust, respect and honesty. But outstanding leaders understood how they combined to **create the conditions** for exceptional performance. They also understood the role they played in creating these conditions and were careful to be consistent even though that might mean controlling their emotions and not betraying their own fluctuating mood.”*

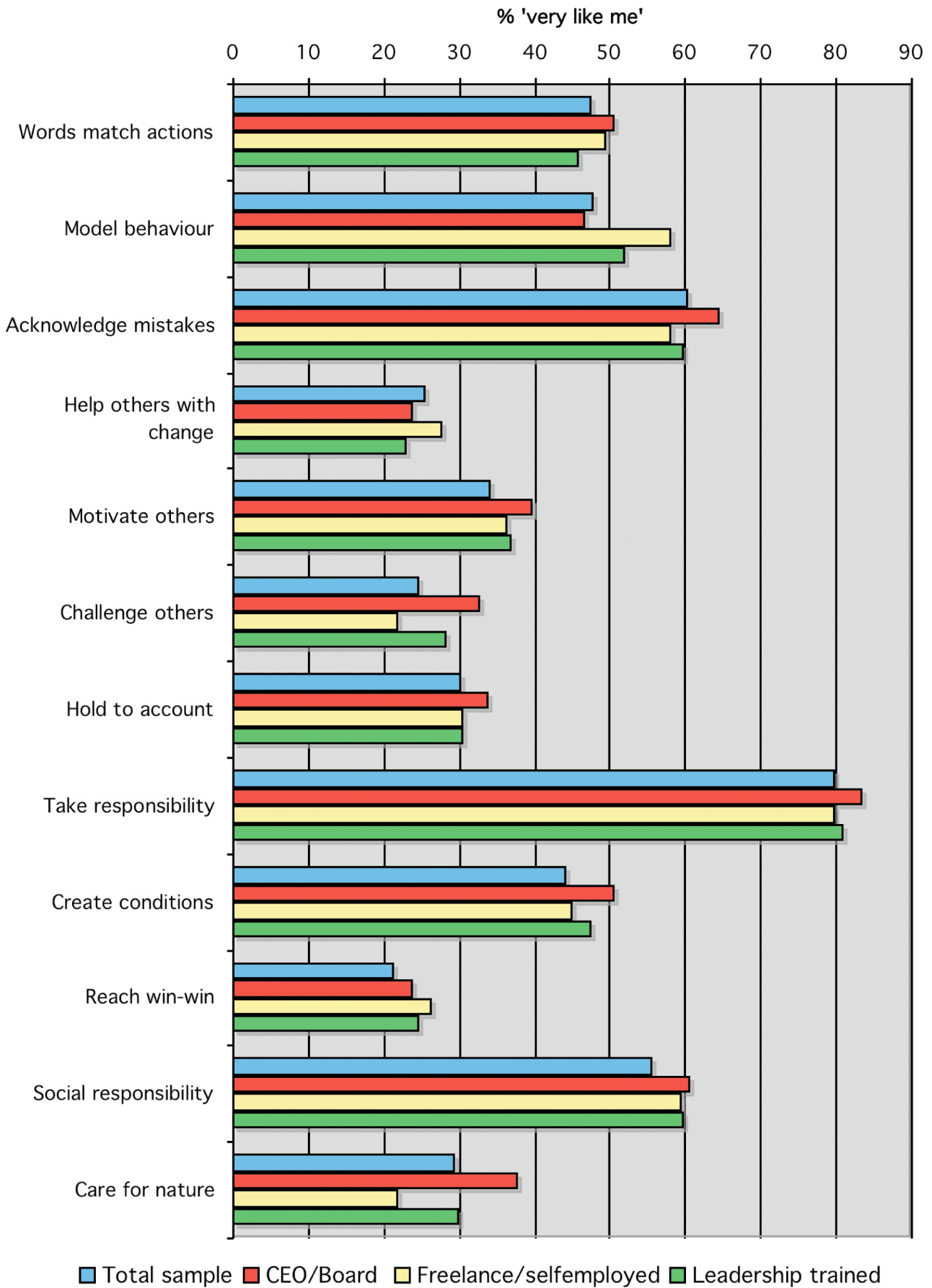
The Work Foundation Exceeding Expectation: the principles of outstanding leadership, 2010

Possession and relevance of leadership CQAs

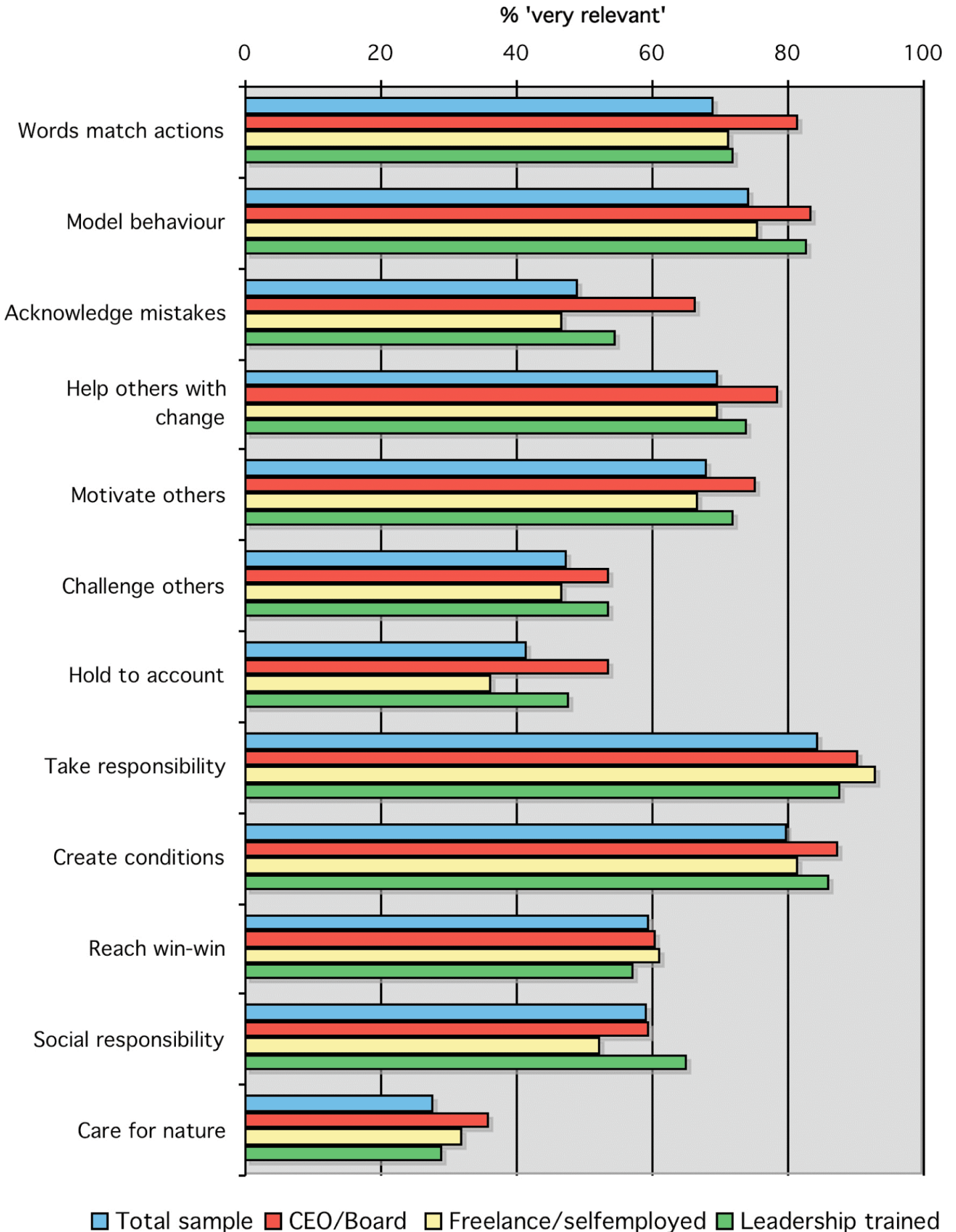
We wanted to find out how our survey respondents and some selected groups (CEO/Board, self-employed/freelance and those who have taken part in leadership development) perceived our leadership CQAs with regard to possession and relevance to work.

The graphs on the following pages show the results for the sample as a whole and by group. The first graph shows the percentage who said a CQA was ‘very much like me’. The second graph shows the percentage who said a CQA was ‘very relevant’ to getting great results at work.

Graph 5. Possession of leadership cqs



Graph 6. Relevance of leadership cqs



Leadership + the total sample

We have already discussed some of these CQAs in the section above, as five of those on our list appear as weaknesses (relative to other CQAs) in perceived possession by the sample as a whole: *actively caring for nature, reaching win-win solutions, challenging others in supportive ways, willing to hold others to account* and *helping others feel comfortable with change*.

Only one appears as a relative strength: *taking responsibility for oneself and one's role in what's happening*.

The remainder of the leadership CQAs are somewhere in the middle: neither relative strengths nor weaknesses.

Leadership + CEO/Board group

As shown in the tables and graphs above, those respondents occupying traditional positions as 'leaders' as CEOs/directors and Board members rate themselves slightly higher on possession and/or relevance for most CQAs comparative with the sample as whole, and the pattern is reflected here also. In only one of the leadership CQAs do they rate similarly low for both possession and relevance: *reaching win-win solutions*.

In all the others they either have a higher incidence of 'very much like me' responses and/or 'very relevant' to work. As a group their greatest difference from the total sample is in their higher relevance results for *matching words with actions, acknowledging mistakes to others* and *holding others to account*.

As with the sample as a whole, relative to their possession of the other CQAs, only one of the leadership CQAs appears as a strength in this group: *taking responsibility for oneself and one's role in what's happening*.

In almost all instances, there is a significant gap between relevance, which is mostly high with over 60% finding the CQA 'very relevant to work', and perceived possession. Where the gap is smaller, it is generally because the relevant to work score is lower.

Other CQAs of particularly low relevance and perceived possession (relative to their responses to the other leadership CQAs) are *challenging others in supportive ways*, and *willing to hold others to account* with around a half seeing these as very relevant.

Only around a third see *actively caring for nature* as very relevant but of those that do, two thirds think it is critical to their sector thriving. As discussed earlier, a quarter of those who said it is critical to the sector thriving also said it was either not at all or only fairly relevant to their work. This CQA was also relatively lower in perceived possession.

Considering this result for *actively caring for nature* together with just over half seeing the importance of *feeling a strong sense of social responsibility*, and yet with the high results for *taking responsibility for oneself and one's role in what's happening*, it would appear that the boundary that most people draw around their sphere of responsibility has a fairly small radius in that it does not extend out very far into social and natural environmental impact.

But lowest of all for perceived possession are *reaching win-win solutions* and *helping other feels comfortable with change* with just a quarter of CEOs/Board members citing these as 'very much like me'. We have already discussed in the previous section why we think these CQAs are so important to thriving.

There are some intriguing results when considering responses to 'very relevant' with 'critical to your sector thriving': in six of the CQAs, responses are as you would expect: those who think a CQA is very relevant to getting great results at work tend to also see it as critical to their sector thriving.

But in the other six leadership CQAs, around half of those of who think the CQA is very relevant do not think it is also critical to their sector thriving:

- *Matching one's words with one's actions*
- *Acknowledging one's mistakes to others*
- *Exhibiting behaviour one wishes to see in others*
- *Willing to hold others to account*
- *Helping others feel comfortable with change*
- *Challenging others in supportive ways*

As proposed in the previous section, either respondents did not complete the 'critical to your sector thriving' question in the intended manner, or half of the CEOs, directors and Board members in our sample think that what is important to them isn't also important to their sector as a whole.

Leadership + Freelancers/self-employed

Given that leadership does not belong solely in the domain of 'leaders', we wondered what the responses of those who are self-employed or freelance would be like.

We discovered that in general they were fairly similar to the sample as a whole and to the CEO/Board group with some notable exceptions:

- A higher proportion than the total sample and CEO/Board group believe that *exhibiting behaviour one wishes to see in others* is 'very much like me'
- A lower proportion than the CEO/Board group think *matching words with actions, acknowledging mistakes to others, challenging others in supportive ways* and *holding others to account* is very relevant to their work
- A lower proportion than the total sample and the CEO/Board group think that *challenging others in supportive ways* and *actively caring for nature* is 'very much like me'

This is both odd and interesting and may reflect the different working environment of freelancers/self employed where the teams with which they work tend to be momentary or short lived, and where they often may not have subordinate reporting relationships with others. A question it raises is whether this is a consequence of them being self-employed or part of the reason for it?

Leadership + Recipients of leadership development

Finally, we looked at the responses of those who stated they had received some form of leadership training and development: it includes Clore Leadership Programme fellows and short course participants, Cultural Leadership Programme course participants and those who indicated they had taken part in 'other' leadership training.

The responses were very varied with some similarity on perceived possession or relevance to the CEO/Board group and to the total sample. The most significant differences:

- A lower proportion than the CEO/Board group think *matching words with actions, acknowledging mistakes to others, and holding others to account* is 'very relevant'
- Following the pattern of the self-employed group, there is a slightly higher incidence of 'very much like me' possession of *exhibiting behaviour one wishes to see in others* than the CEO/Board group or the sample as a whole
- Like the CEO/Board group, the lowest incidence of responses for possession are for *helping other feel comfortable with change, and reaching win-win solutions* with just under a quarter saying this is 'very much like me'
- A higher proportion think *having a strong sense of social responsibility* is very relevant, compared to the other groups and to the total sample.

Could this be because through the training/development they have been able to step back from day-to-day operational aspects and consider their work in the wider context of society?

If we take our results as indicative of the sector as a whole, it would appear that some shifts in emphasis of leadership training and development would be required if these CQAs are to be encouraged and used to enable the sector and those who work within it to thrive in life-friendly ways.

Research suggests that 21st century competencies can be developed in people but that these developments can also erode:

Emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies that predict effectiveness in management and leadership can be developed in adults. These improvements can sustain out as far as seven years. But this degree of value added can be eroded by a tumultuous organizational climate... [and] that development can be eroded without continuous improvement and renewal.

Beyond knowledge and competencies, the additional ingredient necessary to outstanding performance appears to be the desire to use one's talent.

Journal of Management Development Vol. 27 no 1 2008

'A 20-year view of trying to develop emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies in graduate management education' by Richard E. Boyatzis & Argun Saatcioglu

4.2 Patterns in the data: work context

4.2.1 Total sample

Survey respondents came from across Scotland, England and Wales and represented the full spectrum of cultural domains and field of work from heritage, performing arts, multimedia and crafts to policy, education, research and governance. 17% are practising artists of whom 41% are also CEO/directors or board members.

The survey was primarily targeted at established professionals, this is reflected in the age groups of respondents, with higher incidence of 35-44 and 45-54 year olds than would be found in the workplace. It is also reflected in their position in a structure: around a third are CEOs or directors. A quarter are self-employed or freelance, and a fifth are consultants.

All scales of operation were represented but over half work in micro or small organisations.

Respondents **tend to work long hours**: indeed a quarter work on average more than 50 hours/week. We wondered whether we could detect any costs associated with this in the survey data in responses to questions about mental and physical health or satisfaction with life. To our surprise we couldn't find any, possibly because 93% of people who work 50+ hours/week are also very *passionate and committed to the things I get involved with*.

It could be due to the phenomenon of reducing cognitive dissonance by changing your view of yourself to make it consistent with what you've done: "I'm spending all this time at work therefore I must be really passionate and committed" or "I must be satisfied with my life otherwise why would I spend 50+ hours/week at work?"

However, we know from the interview data and responses to qualitative questions in the survey that the pressure and stress of large workloads without sufficient resources can impact negatively on your personal life and also have significant costs for other

"So we had a whole period where we were very, very overstretched. I slightly got to a point where I burnt my own self out. There was no space for me, no room for my own personal life and I think that limits, eventually limits your creative thinking, your resourcefulness and your passion."

The People Theme research participant

people with whom you are involved, at home and at work.

“There was a point that coincided with me breaking my arm. I had a bicycle accident. So I absolutely had to disappear. It helped me to put things into perspective a bit. The self-care I had to do. And looking after yourself is part of any really difficult situation I think. I think until that point I had maybe put myself much more fully at the service of the difficulty of the situation and it made me find the ability to hold back a bit. And I probably dealt with it just as well after that if not better because I was looking after myself more”

The People Theme research participant

“I became really aware of how my behaviour affected others. I was overstretched and working flat out and that started to become a culture in the organisation. But unintentionally. So everyone was overstretched which I didn’t want at all and certainly wasn’t directly coming from me, but clearly it was indirectly. I certainly wouldn’t ask that of anyone else. But it started to happen because you know by osmosis or whatever or you know people feeling like that was needed or whatever. And so I did become aware of that and then modified my behaviour because I realised it wasn’t helpful for me but also it wasn’t helpful all round.”

The People Theme research participant

There is an issue about working long hours being part of working culture in the arts and cultural sector: 44% of CEO/directors in our sample work 50+ hours/week. 57% of those working 50+ hours also who said that *exhibiting behaviour one wishes to see in others* was ‘very much like me’, which is rather concerning.

The sample is **overwhelming female**: 71%. We can’t find evidence that this is because women prefer to take part in exercises of self-reflection (only 35.5% of female respondents said *taking time to reflect* was ‘very much like me’ compared with 41% of males). Without data specific to the arts and cultural sector⁴⁷, we don’t know how our sample compares to the workforce as a whole, though we suspect it may be fairly representative. Research on the creative and cultural sectors finds that only 39% of that workforce is female, compared to a UK average of 46%. It also finds that in the creative and cultural sectors male leaders outnumber female females by 2.5 to 1⁴⁸. We also discovered that males in our sample were overrepresented at the most senior positions, accounting for 40% of CEOs and 32% of Board members.

Ethnicity is comparable to the population for England and Wales⁴⁹ with 8% from non-white backgrounds. There is no detailed data for ethnicity in the UK arts and cultural sector either. Research on the diversity of workforces in the creative and cultural sector in England shows that the percentage of those of Black, Asian and minority ethnic background in some parts of these sectors varies between 2.3% and 12.8%. This compared to 11.9% of the population of England of working age⁵⁰.

Respondents have been **taking advantage of development opportunities**: almost half have had mentoring and a third coaching. A fifth has been a fellow or short course participant with the Clore Leadership Programme and 8% have been on a Cultural Leadership Programme course. Only 12% stated they had not had any professional development and 21% had not taken part in any leadership training.

92% of the sample has been through the higher education system: half have a first degree with the other half attaining a postgraduate degree.

⁴⁷ Data exists only for creative industries as a whole

⁴⁸ Cultural Leadership Programme, Women in leadership in the creative and cultural sector

⁴⁹ Census 2001

⁵⁰ Cultural Leadership Programme, Black, Asian and minority ethnic leadership in the creative and cultural sector

4.2.2 Highest scoring groups for CQA possession and relevance

Taking into account the size of the dataset, we checked the data to see if there were any significant differences between high scorers for perceived possession and relevance to work and the remainder of the sample. We made some intriguing discoveries:

- A higher proportion are CEOs/directors or self-employed, and are also in our Comparator group
- A higher proportion also works in organisational development. We don't know whether this is because this type of work develops these CQAs or whether people possessing these CQAs are attracted to this field of work. Or both
- More also work 50+ hours/week
- There is a large gender difference: 30% of all females are in the top possession group whereas just 9.5% of all males are in this category. The difference is slightly less extreme in the top relevance group (39% of all females compared to 23% of all males). Males are underrepresented in the highest scoring group for both possession and relevance and are overrepresented in the lowest scoring groups. So it seems there may be some truth in the commonly held assumption that these sorts of CQAs are 'feminine'. However we did discover a fascinating and unexpected result: although a lower proportion of males than females stated that *using one's intuition in making important decisions* was 'very much like me' the figures were reversed when it came to relevance: 45% of males said it was 'very relevant' to them getting great results at work compared with 40% of females. This demonstrates just how complex this territory is!
- There are proportionally more non-white respondents in the highest possession group than in lower scoring groups: is this evidence that to get ahead in an institutionally racist society you need to be better than average?
- Slightly more in the highest possession group have postgraduate degrees than the lowest possession group; although there was no significant difference between the relevance groups
- A higher proportion of the highest relevance and possession groups have had mentoring and coaching. The latter have also taken more Cultural Leadership Programme courses, and done personality profiling. The highest relevance group also has a slightly higher proportion of respondents who have had other forms of professional/personal development and leadership training.
- But curiously, a lower proportion of the highest possession group had been on a Clore short course. There were no significant differences in relation to fellows on the Clore Leadership Programme between these groups and the sample as a whole

With regard to the above findings on professional/personal development, we should remember that the data captures *self-perceived* possession of CQAs.

The sample we are looking at is fairly small so we would urge caution in extrapolating these results further, but it does raise interesting questions. For example, it could be that as each development opportunity has a different approach and focus, they influence participants' self awareness and perception of possession of CQAs - and of how much more they still have to develop in themselves – in different ways. Additionally, each type of development offering may also by its nature attract people with different beliefs about their self-efficacy⁵¹.

⁵¹ See glossary

4.3 Patterns in the data: personal context

4.3.1 Total sample

Respondents reported high levels of health: with 50% citing very good physical health and 55% very good mental health. Most of the others rated their health as fairly good.

Satisfaction with life⁵² was also good: with an average score of 26 this is higher than for the population as a whole (20-24). At the time of completing the survey, a third were in the highest 'very satisfied' category. The practising artists in our sample also had an average score of 26, not quite fitting the old Romantic notion of artists as anguished and tormented.

Research suggests that not only is free play crucial for social, emotional and cognitive development in childhood but it also promotes the continued mental and physical wellbeing of adults. Without play, adults may become burnt out from the busyness of everyday life and end up *'unhappy and exhausted without understanding exactly why'*.

Scientific American Mind vol.20 no. 1
The Serious Need for Play by Melinda Wenner

"I kind of always believe your injuries come from more than just an accident in a way... and when you are not doing what you really want to do, I think your body sort of tells you a little bit as well"

The People Theme research participant

Just over half experience 'flow'⁵³ at work about every day, and almost two thirds strongly agree that they are 'in their element'⁵⁴ at work.

Respondents also engaged in unstructured free play⁵⁵: a fifth found time about every day, just under a third about once a week.

These aspects of the personal context are associated with self-confidence (self-efficacy) and psychological capital⁵⁶ as we explored in the previous chapter on pages 34-35.



⁵² Using the Satisfaction with Life survey by Ed Diener

⁵³ By 'flow' we mean times when you are totally engaged, lose track of time, are highly alert and deeply focussed. See Csikszentmihalyi, 1990

⁵⁴ You are in your element when the things you love doing and the things you are good at come together. See Robinson, 2009

⁵⁵ This is where you use your imagination and have no specific outcome in mind

⁵⁶ See glossary

4.3.2 Highest scoring groups for CQA possession and relevance

We surmised that those who naturally understand we live in a complex world of messy nonlinearity and who possess many of the CQAs we have been exploring are likely to navigate their way through complexity and uncertainty with more grace and higher positive impact on their own state of mind.

This seems to be supported by the data, where we found significant differences in results between those with the highest perceived possession of CQAs and both the sample as a whole and those with the lowest perceived possession:

- The highest scoring group for possession of CQAs has a much higher proportion of respondents in the very satisfied with life category and more also cite very good mental health
- In both the highest possession and relevance groups, there is a much higher incidence of those who experience flow about once a day, who strongly agree they are in their element at work, and who find time for unstructured free play about once a day

4.3.3 On negative emotions

Although we find associations in the data between high satisfaction with life and good mental health with the CQA of *generally feeling positive and optimistic*, and there is extensive research that shows that focusing on positive outcomes can become self-fulfilling, we would emphasise that experiencing negative emotions as a consequence of not-knowing or making mistakes is not only inevitable and inherent to living in a complex uncertain world, these emotions also serve useful functions.

They alert us that something requires our attention and our action.

“But by analysing what led into it and what could have been avoided and what to learn from the future I kind of found ways to sort of remind myself in future, okay if I am feeling worried, pay attention. Don’t think it will get better. It won’t, it will get worse.”

The People Theme research participant

“I think it is identifying this is a crisis. That is probably the best thing to realise is, ‘this is a crisis, good okay’. Because once you know it is a crisis then you have to deal with a crisis, whereas when you are in it you are being a crisis yourself then. For me it is quite a physical sensation. It is normally like a surge of anger. If I feel I want a shout then I know to calm down.”

The People Theme research participant

Indeed, there is now a new way of thinking about depression:

Perhaps in most instances, depression should not be thought of as a disorder at all. Perhaps depression is not a malfunction but a mental adaptation that focuses the mind to better solve complex problems.

Depression is a state of mind that brings real costs but that also brings real benefits. During depression the mind becomes more analytical and focused – a useful response for solving the complex problems that probably triggered the depression in the first place

Scientific American Mind Jan 2010

Depression’s Evolutionary Roots by Paul W Andrews & J Anderson Thomson Jr.

“I like goals and I like pushing it but then I sort of had to plan in drop out times as well where I feel a bit low and I don’t feel very motivated. And I kind of come to learn that some of those are motivated probably depressive periods are when new ideas get formed. Although it is not always that pleasant.”

The People Theme research participant

The point is not whether we experience certain emotions: it is how we manage them, and this has emerged in interview as a key factor affecting performance.

“So that you are able to respond to the situation at the time right in front of you rather than coming with yesterday’s baggage. So you are able to sort of bat and bowl and juggle and be calm all at the same time. That is when it works. It doesn’t always feel like that.”

The People Theme research participant

It seems that those who perform better than others at work have various strategies for managing their emotions and for getting themselves back into a resourceful state⁵⁷ where they have flexibility in how they choose to respond to events.

“I sort of learnt this quality of like, when things go really badly wrong, it is like really quickly swallowing it, really quickly learning to quickly accept things, to go ‘oh okay’, like really shouting out and then going ‘okay but what can we do?’ So being quicker about things.”

The People Theme research participant

“I think the one thing you do learn around conflict and getting things done, is when not to rise. That is quite a common issue. Rising too fast. Becoming emotional or getting angry about something as opposed to working something through, finding another way, thinking it through. What is the long game on this conversation as opposed to what you think at this moment.

There lies a bit of a muddle in our industry in a way about positive and negative emotions. You need the enthusiasm. You need the love and the emotion and the passion and all that. You also need the ability to stand back and put that in a box for a while.”

The People Theme research participant

“Knowledge of my own resilience, trying to remember that none of this is really about me, it is about trying to achieve something for everyone involved and trying to remember to take myself out of it. Focus on what is the intention you are going for, that is the best way to do that. So I think there is a moment of being knocked by a setback where you forget that you have resources at hand to meet it. And then when you get to a point where you go ‘right, well here I go’.”

The People Theme research participant

Effective strategies for managing emotions identified by research participants are summarised in the second CQA/influencing factors diagram in the previous chapter on page 21.

⁵⁷ See glossary



5. RESEARCH PROCESS

5.1 Approach

5.1.1 Theories in use

The People Theme work has been informed by systems thinking and complexity theory, and by fields as wide ranging as organisational learning, organisational development, leadership development, competition strategy, action learning, competency modelling, Neuro-linguistic programming, psychology and positive psychology, Transactional Analysis, social cognitive theory, neuroscience and biomimicry. The glossary gives an explanation of these approaches.

How to do well in times of turbulence and uncertainty is a topic that doesn't fit neatly into one box. It is being explored from all angles, and we took account of any literature we came across that seemed relevant in some way, however indirect. By its very nature, systems thinking is interdisciplinary. It considers through multiple partial views the nature and behaviour of the whole and the relationships between the parts.

5.1.2 Reflexivity

A notable feature of the research has been how the *subject* of the research – working in uncertainty - has also been the *nature* of the research process.

We attempted to 'model the content' by investigating what CQAs we were utilising in developing and doing the research, and what factors were affecting our ability to use them to good effect.

This highlights how the internal and external are interconnected in this research, a topic also discussed in the section on nested systems on page 31. In approaching the research on a personal level rather than in a detached way, deep learning is more likely to happen. As is discussed in the previous chapters, self-awareness and self-acceptance have a critical role to play in thriving in uncertainty. Therefore they were also at the heart of our process.

Objectivity is the delusion that observations
can be made without an observer

Heinz von Foerster

As we were interested in gathering information about the unintended and negative consequences for oneself and others in making great work happen in challenging circumstances of change and uncertainty, we were also conscious that engaging with our research may itself contribute to or result in negative consequences for participants.

For example, as the survey asked people not just to look at themselves honestly but to also share that with us, this may have elicited strong emotional responses in people who

experienced cognitive dissonance⁵⁸ between their image of who they want to be and who they actually are. As people were also not told why we were asking the questions that we did, the survey required people to let go of control and to go with the process. For those with a strong need for certainty and control, this may have been challenging. Social psychology finds that with dissonance, not knowing, and lack of control often come feelings of anxiety or anger.

Although these emotions are negative, they are not necessarily bad as they are signals alerting the individual to something that requires their attention. The useful function of negative emotions is discussed in the previous chapter on page 65.

5.1.3 Use of language

We have paid attention to our use of language and metaphors in the research. For example, we previously used terms like ‘driving success’ until we realised it represented a mechanistic, linear worldview at odds with the systemic one required for thriving in uncertainty.

We have played with the word ‘competencies’ over the course of the research. It has been defined by one source as *‘the underlying characteristics of a person that lead to or cause effective and outstanding performance’*⁵⁹. However, we have discovered that different people interpret this term quite differently, and some of the meanings don’t convey all the ways of being/doing that we are exploring. We therefore defaulted to using the term ‘competencies, qualities and attributes’ (CQAs) to emphasise that this is about more than skills and knowledge, but we are not entirely comfortable with this term either, and will change it if we come across something more elegant.

5.2 Research methods

5.2.1 Research questions

Framing the work of The People Theme are the following research questions:

1. *Understanding competencies, qualities and attributes*

- a) What CQAs are needed for thriving in uncertainty?
- b) How can these CQAs be developed in people?

2. *Understanding contexts*

- a) What contexts enable these CQAs to flourish and be used to good effect?
- b) How can personal and work contexts be influenced to co-create these enabling conditions?

As people draw on their CQAs in different combinations and to greater or lesser extents in different situations, influenced by a variety of factors not entirely within their control, investigating context and influencing factors has been a critical aspect of the research.

⁵⁸ See glossary

⁵⁹ Boyatzis 2008

5.2.2 Scope and limitations

This report presents the key findings from the research to date, addressing the ‘what’ part of our research questions: what CQAs are needed and what contexts enable them to flourish.

It is through an intended next phase of research that we can attend to the ‘how’. This phase involves piloting a programme of practical interventions to develop CQAs and influence personal and work contexts with a small number of individuals as action research subjects. As we gain more in-depth understanding about *how* these CQAs and enabling conditions can be developed in real situations, we can develop and refine our model to ‘maximise its robustness’ and relevance for use in personal, professional and organisational development.

5.2.3 Methodology

The People Theme research began in January 2009 and concluded in March 2010. Our methods included:

1. Review of literature on the topic of 21st century competencies.

This informed our list of CQAs that comprised a wide range of intrapersonal and interpersonal CQAs and ways of making meaning and responding to the external world across cognitive, social and emotional intelligences. The CQAs relate to self awareness and emotional resilience; sense-making, learning and reality checking; adapting, finding ways forward and making things happen; and managing relationships, communication and leadership.

2. Semi-structured depth interviews with 8 senior professionals in the arts and cultural sector to test the relevance of our list of CQAs and find out what else the interviewees thought were important; and to check the clarity of our communication and understanding of terms used
3. Online exploratory survey to examine our revised list of CQAs, and gather information on personal and work contexts and other influencing factors. The survey was piloted with 10 arts professionals and amended accordingly

As an exploratory survey it sought to gather data in much greater breadth than a survey that would be used to test known factors. As such, it was less likely to be completed by large numbers of people than a shorter and simpler survey would achieve. We received 254 complete responses, slightly lower than our target of 300. Notwithstanding, this still gives us confidence levels of 95% (+/- 6.1%)

Respondents could choose to receive personalised reports showing how their responses to possession of CQAs compared to the mode, highlighting where there were significant differences. It also included their Satisfaction With Life⁶⁰ score with accompanying explanation.

The survey data was analysed using SPSS and Excel software.

4. Semi-structured depth (critical incident technique) interviews with 28 selected survey respondents to gain more detailed knowledge about how CQAs are used, the factors that influence them in real situations of complexity, change and uncertainty.

These situations were chosen by interviewees as personally challenging but that were navigated to successful outcomes. The focus of this aspect of the methodology was on modelling excellence.

Quotes from survey respondents and interviewees have been anonymised in this report.

⁶⁰ The Satisfaction with Life Scale by Ed Diener is recognised within the field of positive psychology as one of the most widely used tools for measuring happiness

For further details of methodology and on analysis methods such as cluster analysis, factoring and crosstabulation, see an appendix to this report, downloadable from the MMM website.

Feedback on the methodology

One of interviewees said this about our process:

“Why I ticked the box of yes I would be willing to be interviewed was because doing the questionnaire was helpful in itself. Well because I am quite a reflective person anyway, but it was another exercise through which I could reflect and I think it was like a learning exercise, preparing to meet you and being here now is also a learning exercise.”

The People Theme research respondent

We found this to be a typical response to both the survey and the interviews.

“Just wanted to say I really enjoyed meeting you earlier this week and found the interview process very interesting.”

The People Theme research respondent

“I found the individual MMM report very interesting and caused me to reflect quite a bit.”

The People Theme research respondent

“Thank you for sparing the time to conduct the interview - it provided a rare opportunity to reflect on important issues and I look forward to being involved in the next stages of your research as well.”

The People Theme research respondent

Use of comparator group

We identified a number of individuals that we have confidence perform well and invited them to complete the survey, emphasising the need for honesty. This was in case we needed to use their results in weighting the results of the main sample. In the event, this was not necessary, as our comparator group scored higher than the main sample who, as described above, seemed to answer honestly enough.

Representative sample

We received 254 complete responses from a very diverse group of professionals working across the UK in all cultural domains and fields of work. At the time of completing the survey, round a third were CEOs or directors and around a quarter of respondents were self-employed or work freelance. 17% were practising artists.

Although accurate national data specifically on the profile of the arts and cultural sector (i.e. not the wider creative industries) is not available, we estimate that the proportion of respondents by age group, gender, ethnicity, and by scale of operation is broadly representative of the sector. See Appendix for details⁶¹.

The final list of survey respondents we interviewed were selected across age group, gender, geographic location, cultural domain and field of work.

Although the survey sample seems representative of the sector, the sample is not sufficiently large for us to draw robust conclusions from analysis of all the sub-samples explored. As such, the results should be interpreted as indicative of the current state of the sector and therefore should be used with caution.

⁶¹ Appendices to the report are available for viewing and download from www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk

5.2.4 Validity of data

There is very good evidence of different types that gives us confidence in the reliability of the data:

- Individuals gave varied answers to each question rating themselves lower for some competencies than for others. None selected the highest option for possession ('very much like me') or relevance ('very relevant') for all of the CQAs
- The frequency of overall response for both presence and relevance of CQAs appear to follow the normal bell curve distribution (see page 40)
- There is internal consistency between individual responses to questions across the whole survey, and patterns of response to perceived possession of CQAs across the whole sample cluster in unsurprising ways. See Appendix for details⁶²
- The quality of response to open questions also provides evidence of honesty, thoughtfulness and self-reflection.

As with any social research, we are reliant on the honesty and accuracy of what people tell us. To increase the likelihood of open and honest responses, the survey was completed online, which reduces the sense of revealing oneself to a real person. On each page we asked people to answer openly and honestly, assuring them that their responses would be analysed anonymously. For contact details (to send personalized reports or to contact regarding interviews or interventions) we asked only for usernames and email addresses. We also included a statement at the end of the self-rating section *'If you were to show your responses to 3 people who know you best, would they agree? Please make any amends to your answers now before you go to the next page'*.

Inevitably, there will be some bias in the data as the survey respondents were a self-selecting group, likely to have an interest in personal and professional development.

What we observe is not nature itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning

Werner Heisenberg

⁶² Appendices to the report are available for viewing and download from www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk



GLOSSARY

Biomimicry is an emerging scientific discipline that studies nature's best ideas and then imitates these designs and processes to solve human problems sustainably

Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding two conflicting thoughts or ideas simultaneously. Used in social psychology, cognitive dissonance theory proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by changing or rationalising their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours

Competency is the underlying characteristics of a person that lead to or cause effective and outstanding performance

Competency modelling is the activity of determining the specific competencies that are characteristic of high performance and success in a given job

Complexity theory is the study of complex and chaotic systems and how order, pattern, and structure can arise from them

Coopetition is the state of simultaneous competition and cooperation

Double-loop learning involves questioning the underlying assumptions, values and frameworks unlike in single-loop learning where these are taken for granted

Equifinality is a condition in which different initial conditions lead to similar effects

Element you are in your element when the things you love doing and the things you are good at come together

Emergence is the process whereby new properties are revealed at a particular level of organisation as a result of the interaction of components at a lower level, which do not possess these properties (e.g. human organs interacting to create the digestive system)

Emergent strategy is the vision towards strategy formation in organisations that emphasises the benefits of letting the strategy emerge as things gradual become apparent. Strategy is viewed as an ongoing process of constant learning, experimentation and risk-taking. It does not mean doing nothing upfront or reacting completely ad-hoc to things as they evolve.

Feedback loops can be positive or negative. A positive feedback loop is a virtuous or vicious circle: a circular causal process in which a system's output is returned to its input and the input is amplified. It is inherently destabilising. A negative feedback loop regulates through self-correction by decreasing the input and is therefore inherently stabilising. An example is a room thermostat.

Flow you experience flow at times when you are totally engaged, lose track of time, are highly alert and deeply focussed

Free play this is where you use your imagination in an unstructured way with no specific outcome in mind

Multifinality is a condition in which similar initial conditions lead to different end effects

Multiple Cause Diagrams are a tool used by Systems Thinking practitioners to represent the causal relationships in an aspect of reality in a simplified form

Neuro-linguistic programming is a collection of therapeutic models, tools and techniques to detect and re-programme unconscious patterns of thought and behaviour in order to alter psychological responses. The basic principle of NLP is that it is in an individual's power to change their own subconscious programming for the better

Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning; the study of strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive

Psychological capital is an individual's positive psychological state of development characterised by 4 interrelated capacities: confidence (self-efficacy), optimism, hope and resiliency.

Resourceful state is the total psychological, neurological and physiological experience when a person feels resourceful i.e. has adequate information, choices, flexibility in behaviour, and self-reference in directing oneself in the world.

Self-efficacy is a person's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives; a person's belief in their ability and capacity to accomplish a task or succeed in reaching a specific goal

Social cognitive theory is a theory of human adaptation and change, and views human functioning as the product of a dynamic and reciprocal interplay of personal, behavioural, and environmental influences. It is a development of social learning theory, which is the theory that people learn new behaviour through observational learning of the social factors in their environment or through overt reinforcement or punishment. If people observe positive, desired outcomes in the observed behaviour they are more likely to model, imitate and adopt the behaviour themselves

A **System** is a set of components interconnected for a purpose

Systems thinking is a set of interdisciplinary approaches for understanding a complex phenomenon by looking from multiple partial perspectives at the behaviour of wholes and the relationship between the parts. It uses a variety of methods and tools to generate new insights and learning

Transactional Analysis (TA) is an integrative theory of personality, communication and child development, and a systematic psychotherapy for personal growth and change. It describes how people are structured psychologically. Its best known model is the ego-state (Parent-Adult-Child). Learning to strengthen the Adult is a goal of TA. While a person is in the Adult ego state, he/she is directed towards an objective appraisal of reality.



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“I think the most striking thing to come out of the research for me is how important the soft and intangible – and ultimately human – qualities are, and that we need to pay more attention to those as opposed to the hard-nosed mechanical approaches advocated in so many management and leadership manuals. I find particularly interesting the creeping up of words such as faith, hope, intuition, gut instinct etc! For me this fits into the broader context of a shifting world view in light of the recession, which seems to be returning to values of a more humane and sustainable world as a reaction to the violence of capitalism.

Personally, I find this research particularly interesting as I am observing my own progress as a manager with growing responsibilities and particular ideas of how I think our sector should develop. I can attest to the importance of paying attention of the types of attributes and competencies cultural professionals need and how dependent they are on context, and how important it is to create the right context to enable the right energies to flow for things to thrive and change for the better.

For our sector, I think this research is a real opportunity to be bold and export the ideas to other sectors - after all, we are all dealing with uncertainty and we can all learn from this. The report has started to coin a particular language for this new way of looking at leadership, and that is certainly something our sector can 'sell' as something we have come up with.”

The People Theme research participant

www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk