GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP SOLUTIONS

ROI of Ownership

How Empowerment of Frontline Leaders Pays Off

The ROI of Ownership:

How empowerment of frontline leaders pays off

Remember the last time you contacted your local government office to resolve an issue, file a complaint, or seek out a needed service?

What was your experience like?

Were you met with a smile, a pleasant voice and a can-do attitude that could-do what you needed, when you asked? If so, count yourself lucky.

Unfortunately, interactions with government employees typically conjure up memories of a far different type of experience. One filled with long, tedious lines, poor service, and unhappy employees who are quick to shuffle you to another department without understanding your needs, a cycle that often times leads to the very same cyclical response — over and over again.

Regrettably, local government isn't often praised as a shining example of leadership, efficiency, or employee empowerment. And that's too bad, because most government employees didn't apply to work at their local government office because they wanted to be powerless, which led them inevitably to becoming disengaged, and passionless. It's fair to say that regardless of where someone is employed, they want to make a genuine difference and to create positive impact as a result of their work. But if you're the leader of a local government office, it's more likely you'll find yourself frustrated with your employees because they don't step up, won't take ownership or shun exerting leadership. If government employees want to be empowered, and their leaders want them to step up and lead, why isn't it happening?

One reason may be more straightforward than you expect.

The purpose of government is to control and regulate policies and laws. Accordingly, this organizational mission permeates the culture and is reflected in the attitude and behaviors of employees, just as you would expect it should. An aerospace business focuses on safety, and that's reflected through a culture of rules and process, while a marketing agency's culture often reflects creativity and spontaneity. The purpose of each organization becomes intertwined with the culture, you can't, and don't want to, separate them out.

However, you *can* change the culture by shifting the focus of business purpose.

The secret lies with senior leadership, and how they empower employees at every level to lead. In fact, the #1 distinguishing characteristic between government organizations that land on the great places to work lists, and those that don't, boils down to one concept: leadership[1].

This paper shares the experiences of a local government organization (and their senior leadership) that made a commitment to changing their long-entrenched negative culture by focusing on empowering their own frontline leaders, and the startling difference it's making throughout the organization.

What We Did

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION:

The target of our Study is a county government organization in the southwest region of the US. The government office serves all of the departments supporting the county such as: the Airport, Animal Control, Environmental Health, Housing, Judicial Court, Library, Medical Examiner, Parks, and more. Offices are run by elected officials as well as individuals who have been appointed or hired into their role.

A HEAVY HISTORY:

Government organizations, in general, have a reputation for passing-the-buck, not being accountable, and lacking in leadership throughout the organization. While most people want to be involved in careers that are meaningful and make a difference, many don't view government as the type of work that will allow them to be empowered enough to create positive impact.

Five years prior, this local government organization brought in a County Manager to lead a business transformation. His arrival delivered fresh energy, new perspective, and a spirit of hope to the team. With the help of his leadership team, he made incredible progress towards transforming the organization.

The leadership team worked with Dr. Maria Church and her company, Government Leadership Solutions to transform the organization and spearhead the task of creating a significant culture change. Phase I of the work resulted in a number of quantifiable positive improvements by working through the discussion, clarification, and coming to agreement on the organization's Purpose, POV (Point of View) and Non-negotiable Values. With everyone in leadership finally on the same page and feeling like they've had valuable input into the organization's direction, this effort naturally led to Phase II: Implementation and empowerment of leaders at every level to take ownership.

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[1] Ogrysko, Nicole (2018). Leadership, or lack of it, made the difference in the 2018 Best Places to Work Rankings. https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2018/12/leadership-or-lack-of-it-made-the-difference-in-2018-best-places-to-work-rankings/

THE RIGHT PARTNER FOR SUCCESS

The partnership with Dr. Church, an expert in transforming government culture, was key to success in both Phases I and II. During Phase I of the transformation, Dr. Church worked with the County Manager and his leadership team to focus on engaging the hearts and minds of employees throughout the county. Among the many outcomes of this work together, a set of seven (7) project ideas emerged that would further bring to life the mission and values of the organization leading to improvements that were experienced throughout the county.

Phase II of the transformation required the County to empower their individual contributors and supervisors to lead the projects identified in Phase I. Using this tactic, Dr. Church implemented the concept of leadership at every level within the organization.

How We Did It

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF PHASE II

Beginning in May 2018, Dr. Maria Church partnered together with fifty (50) leaders throughout the organization over the course of ten (10) months. During that time, Dr. Church facilitated both leadership training and provided individual 1:1 coaching sessions for those who requested the sessions.

Phase II was focused on empowering employees at various levels of the organization to step up in their leadership abilities and step into leadership roles as they brought to life the project plans identified in Phase I. The ultimate results of their work led to improved county services, as well as improved employee engagement and retention.

THE APPROACH

Phase I resulted in a *Why Statement* that aligned with the mission, a *Point of View (POV) Statement to support purpose, Non-Negotiable Values*, and a set of seven (7) carefully identified projects that would allow the county to improve its service to their constituents. Once these projects were identified, Phase II began.

PHASE II: PLANNING

In Phase I they pinpointed *'the why'* POV, and the values of the organization, guiding their impact and value to the community rooted in a greater sense of purpose and a stronger mission. In addition to developing a Culture Map, the leadership team identified seven (7) important goals to implement in Phase II. These goals brought the Culture Map to life, aligning teams with what they said they were, with who they wanted to be.

> " *I am communicating differently with others who pose a challenge for me in turn has really achieve some successful working relationships.*

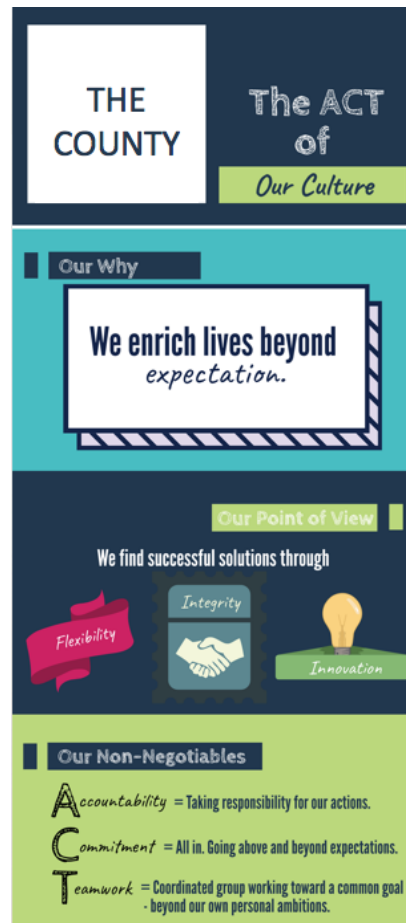GOVERNMENT
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Figure 1. Culture Map.

Phase II began with seven (7) cross functional teams that were formed within the group of fifty (50) participants. Over the course of 12 months, the teams met together on a regular basis with the intention of creating an implementation plan for each of the seven (7) project topics created (Table 1). Upon completion of the planning, each of the teams presented their project topic plans prior to the end of March 2019. None of the project plans were intended to be implemented before March concluded.

Each of the project team topics are listed below:
1. Technology (Self-Service) for Citizens
2. Technology (Self-Service) for HR
3. Volunteers for the Community
4. Signage
5. Training for Supervisors
6. Lobby Registration
7. Performance Management

Table 1. Project topics.

In addition to the project teams who collaborated on their implementation plans, the Phase II participants engaged in the following:

1. Culture Assessment Pre & Post
2. Leadership Training
3. Optional: 1:1 Coaching

Results

In addition to the development of clear implementation plans created by each of the seven (7) project teams, the entire process had a remarkable impact on the participants themselves. By empowering the participants, regardless of their role to lead… *they led!*

Data captured at the end of Phase II illustrates the overall impact the project planning work in Phase II had on the employees and the organization, including financial improvements.

WHAT HAPPENED FOR LEADERS

The design of Phase II provided empowerment for each team to create county-wide plans for projects that would better serve the community. The teams *stepped up* to the challenge and *stepped in* to finding the solutions.

More importantly, a by-product of this process required the participants to collaborate across departments, growing their leadership and teamwork as they stepped into more complex roles. This process fostered a new level of collaboration and cross-functional development. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the employees reported that they gained insight when collaborating with others. Employees also gained insight by ensuring all ideas are included (92%), eighty-eight percent (88%) gained insight by listening to what was important to others and creating a positive team dynamic. Eighty-two percent (82%) reported that they gained insight by speaking from the heart to connect to their head and heart (Figure 2).
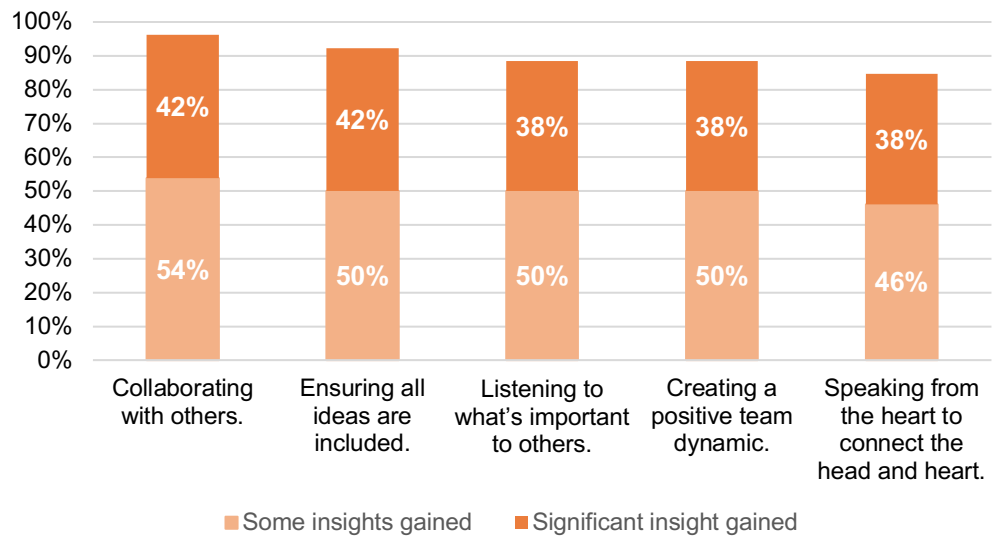
Figure 2. Leaders' Top Five Insights Gained.

STEPPING UP AS A LEADER

While the data illustrates the improvement in collaboration and connection on both an emotional and practical level, the ripple effect of the culture work was best realized by the leadership transformation that occurred within the participants and throughout the organization.

Specifically, employees applied new skills related to reflecting on their personal leadership, creating a positive team dynamic, engaging other team members, and listening to what's important to others and acknowledging the contributions of others (Figure 3). This transformation would be remarkable in any organization, and was especially so for a local government organization.

Figure 3.

Finally, in addition to stepping up in their leadership abilities, *every single project team* made progress in their project plans. And, while there was no an expectation that teams implement any of their plans prior to the end of the Phase II, several did.

One team was responsible for improving the user experience on the website; to make it more intuitive and promote an enjoyable self-serve experience. Without being requested to do so, the team took it upon themselves to begin implementing their project improvement plans. Their initiative and end results ultimately saved time for both their colleagues and their citizens using the website.

The team created online applications for housing, a once manual and long-drawn out process. The implementation of this application reduced the number of calls per day from 50 to 15. Financial impact was experienced as well. This improvement resulted in significant time savings, monetized at $19,616.

PROJECT IMPACT, RETENTION, AND ROI

The impact of Phase II's work was widespread. All of the teams in Phase II collaborated and brought their projects to life. More importantly, the turnover rate began decreasing and reputation improving.

At the start, turnover rates were at 16.21%. At the conclusion of Phase I they were reduced to 11.01%, resulting in a savings of $368,555, half of which was attributed specifically to the culture work with Dr. Church.

Reputation also improved. At the start, GlassDoor ratings were 1.2% and by the end of Phase I ratings were up to 3.5.

AREA	IMPROVEMENT	VALUE
Productivity + Time Savings	**HR technology so that employees can self-serve.** Saves time for HR team because employees can enter data and update information on their own.	$14,334
Value Creation	**We created a forum for outside people to solicit for county volunteers** and it's an incentive for the employees to volunteer. We believe this will impact employees engagement and retention to the county and will positively impact the community.	$19,864
Time Savings	**Signage for the county buildings.** The issue was a lack of signage that became frustrating for the citizens when they would get to the wrong building.	$2,389
Forecasted **Retention**	**Supervisory training for employees.** The more we strengthen their competency to lead, the greater likelihood of increased retention and increased engagement for their direct reports ($142,800 estimated).	Not monetized.
Consituent Satisfaction	**Lobbying registration.** There is a need to provide transparency to taxpayers and let them know who and what organizations were lobbying and this provides transparency to taxpayers and to shine a light on who is having the conversations with the board.	Not monetized.
Consituent Satisfaction + Time Savings	**Improve website for citizens to direct them to the right place and allow them to self-serve.** This impacts time of staff and will lead to increased citizen satisfaction.	$19,616
Retention + Engagement	**Turnover rate is going down.** At the end of 2018, turnover was 10.68% and the most recent is 8.72%. That's a savings of $243,246 and 50% due to the culture work with Dr. Church. Employee satisfaction is going up. We started at a 1.2% on GlassDoor and now are 3.6 rating GlassDoor.	$121,623

Table 2. Team member's list of monetary value impact as a result of their gains from the Culture Work.

Finally, when all of the costs of this investment were taken into consideration, Phase II of the project resulted in 189% ROI. For every dollar this organization invested in their work with Dr. Church, they received $1.89, after all costs of their investment with Dr. Church were taken into consideration (Table 3).

IMPROVEMENT	VALUE
Productivity and Time Savings	$36,339
Forecasted **Employee retention** ($142,800 not included)	Not Monetized.
Actual 2-year **Employee retention**	$121,623
Constituent Satisfaction	Not Monetized.
Community **Value Creation**	$19,864
TOTAL MONETARY GAINS	**$177,866**
COSTS	**$61,460**
ROI	**189%**

Table 3. Costs and ROI of the County's investment in Phase II of the Culture Work.

LEADERS AT EVERY LEVEL

As a result of the empowerment entrusted by senior leaders to their teams, the county is well on their way to demonstrating leadership at every level and delivering a substantially improved customer experience.

The organization's dedication to serving the community, to enrich lives beyond expectations, and the way they are committed to bringing their mission to life by engaging the hearts and minds of their employees is paramount. And now, their dedication can be experienced in new ways by citizens — resulting from empowering individual leaders throughout the organization.

> " *The biggest impact is working in different areas that we wouldn't typically work in to* **broaden our knowledge of what the county does** *and how we can have a direct impact even though we are not normally part of that particular group.* "
>
> — Phase II Participant

About Dr. Maria Church

Dr. Maria Church, CEO of Government Leadership Solutions, and author of *Love-Based Leadership: Transform Your Life with Meaning and Abundance*, the upcoming book *A Course in Leadership: 21 Spiritual Lessons on Work, Love, and Miracles*, and co-author of best-selling book, *Answering the Call*, has started a movement to revolutionize the workplace with a shift from fear to love.

Dr. Church and Government Leadership Solutions specialize in organizational culture, change agility, strategic off-site facilitation, and leadership development with over 25 years working with Fortune 500, local governments, non-profits, and academia. Maria holds a doctorate of management degree in organizational leadership and currently teaches for several universities.

She has been featured on radio shows, television interviews, and in magazines. Maria writes a weekly newspaper column on leadership and hosts an online leadership series, *Dr. Maria TV*. Splitting her time between Scottsdale and the canyons of Southern Arizona, Maria continues to work with high-performing local governments and is working on her next book about exemplary corporate and local government cultures.

About Lisa Ann Edwards

Lisa Ann Edwards, winner of the 2019 Leading Global Coaches Award, founder of MyExcelia.com and leading expert in the field of coaching, possesses a unique skillset — cultivating excellence in others while delivering tangible results. Her specialized ability to provide measurable return on investment for clients has demonstrated upwards of 251% ROI, and lifted employee engagement nearly 20%. Lisa is the globally acknowledged pioneer and thought leader on Coaching with ROI, a methodology she developed specifically for coaches to deliver measurable and tangible results in a traditionally unmeasured space, elevating the perception, impact, and importance of coaching worldwide.

A featured speaker at 150+ universities and professional associations around the world, she has trained more coaches how to measure, evaluate, and demonstrate the monetary impact of coaching than any other and has authored, co-authored or contributed to over 15 publications, translated into more than 4 languages. As a globally respected collaborator, author, speaker, and educator of more than 10,000 coaches globally, Lisa has developed MyExcelia.com, an automated platform to measure and communicate the ROI of coaching. Lisa's current pro bono work includes evaluating the impact of the International Coaching Federation Foundation's coaching work in collaboration with the United Nations.

Contact Information
Dr. Maria Church

4400 N. Scottsdale Road, #9-762
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Office (480) 535-5023
Cell (520) 559-5106
Maria.Church@GovernmentLeadershi
pSolutions.com

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