



EngPro  
Solutions

4 EASY SECRETS  
TO BUILD THE RIGHT  
CULTURE FOR  
PLAN-LED EFFICIENCY

# INTRODUCTION

## A few myths and why superheroes need a day off

Planes, trains and automobiles.... all need maintenance, but is it a necessary evil? Sadly, we engineers mystify maintenance and exclude the 'un-blessed' with long words, three-letter abbreviations and complex technical speak!! Yet, commercially, maintenance is very simple to undertake efficiently.

Whether you run an airline or are a rail operator, delivering **service** is crucial to success. We don't have to look too far into news posts to see evidence of how service failure has a high impact in the media; Ryanair and Southern Trains are two recent high-profile examples. Typically, organisations have a good service focus with superheroes delivering '**service tomorrow**'. Superheroes? We all have them, those individuals who always deliver; the maintenance centre could be on fire, they still deliver. The higher the stress the better – they love it and do us proud! We often reward them well for this behaviour – yes?

In today's increasingly cost-conscious world, tomorrow's service needs to be delivered ever more efficiently. And, it can be!

A key question to ask yourself, is *"Who, today, is focusing on delivering service a week ahead?"*

If, as an Engineering Leader, you can't answer that question instantly, and go and touch that person on the shoulder, then it probably means your planning capability is not strong enough. A lack of planning capability will manifest itself in many ways, the most notable being:

- increased and unnecessary rework
- repeated defects
- reactive environment
- multiple short-term changes to plans
- hard to build a true picture of status

These all signal spiraling costs, that are often even hard to quantify!

Which brings us to a key myth, "maintenance is unpredictable". Untrue! 95% of all maintenance can be anticipated – even defects. And if we can anticipate it, guess what, we can plan it, and so we can predict it! So, we run off, 'buy' a planner, and problem solved – or not!

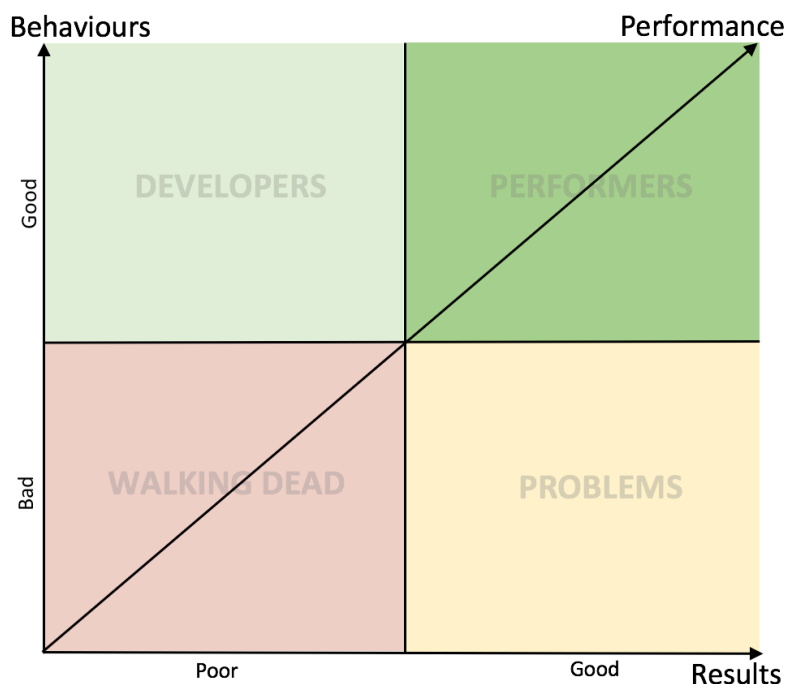
Well no, because to be Plan-Led requires an organisational change, we are moving from a reactive environment to one which is more planned, measured, some might even say boring! However, it will be more controlled, easier and cheaper! Easy as that is to read, it requires a shift in behaviours and is complex to achieve.

## Behaviours.

A strategy not aligned with the company's culture will fail to deliver; behaviours are intrinsically linked to culture. To change strategy to a **reliable service tomorrow in a cost-effective manner**, will mean behaviours need to change.

For example, in your plan-led world, what to do with the superheroes? – Those people who have tirelessly worked to deliver what you wanted 'yesterday'; their reactive fire-fighting behaviours you rewarded previously are now slightly counterproductive to your new strategy. Yesterday they were delivering performance, today they are a potential threat. Yet they haven't changed, they are just doing what you asked them to do - yesterday!

Anybody who attended one of our Engineering Core Leadership Skills programmes will know how important behaviours are. Behaviours both reinforce and define culture, and culture trumps strategy every time.



“Changing behaviours isn't easy; Dean Ornish undertook a study that revealed that only 10% of post-heart surgery patients changed their diets and lifestyle long-term. That might seem remarkable but serves to demonstrate that even when faced with compelling evidence and something so life-important, changing behaviour is not simple.”

Here are four simple secrets – that deliver

## Secret 1

### Set your structure for successful behavioural change

Often, we see company structures that have not been planned, more evolved out of operational and commercial needs. This leads typically to mixed performance and at times confusing accountabilities.

The first step to a plan-led culture is to review your structure. Be bold! Just because roles change or disappear, does not mean personnel must; all organisations have many great people our role as leaders is to engage their greatness in delivering our vision.

Being bold and brave is vital, but, we must make sure that we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. No matter how big the behavioural shift required, there will be pockets within your organisation already exhibiting these behaviours. Find them, feed them, nurture them. As the American entrepreneur, Derek Sivers, suggested.

*"A leader without followers is just a nut with an idea!"*

Keep your structure clean and simple. One of the key roles you must establish is a Head of Planning. A role senior enough to influence, then recruit well as this person is probably going to become your right-hand person.

## Secret 2

### Leadership capability and bandwidth

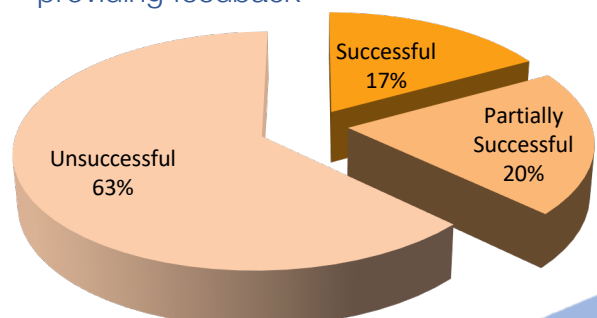
You've set your structure, established your leadership delivery team, now we turn to followers. Without followers supporting your vision, your cultural change will falter and ultimately fail. A 2014 study of 294 medium sized European companies concluded that only 17% of cultural changes are successful.

Research demonstrates that great vision and solid leadership alone will leave you in the 20% partially successful band. Only with dedicated and committed *follow-ship* will you achieve true success.

The middle management and team leader level play a crucial role in your success. Their behaviours will need to evolve from those of today's reactive world into the proactive organisation you are seeking. Some people are already there, some can change, and some are stuck! – Be ready and prepared to deal with all three variations.

Invest in these people three times over:

- Invest in their training
- Invest with your personal commitment to them and support of their decisions
- Invest by giving clear expectations and providing feedback





## Secret 3

### Measuring performance (control)

“What we measure is what we get!” Perhaps a slightly overused phrase, but one that has truth, certainly what management focus on will get attention. In moving to a new plan-led culture, it figures that we will need to set and measure new targets; targets that reinforce the behavioural shift we desire, not hold us in the behaviours of yesterday.

It is important that all the new KPI deliver management information, and don't just layer more data on existing records. Without thought it is very easy to generate an industry of data collection, which adds little value around the leadership table. Consider availability measure – what does it tell us?

It indicates how well service (today) has been met; it might be a contractual result indicator even but tells us nothing of what service will be like in [seven] days' time. What KPI do you have for that?

Plan stability, load and capacity, constraint management, system productivity are all examples of leading KPIs that will deliver tomorrow's availability result. Find the leading indicators of the results that you need to hit and then measure these on a daily basis and focus on the results at the leadership table.

And this brings me to the final part of this secret, communications. If you are communicating both visually and orally reactive measures; guess what? Your teams will behave reactively. Measure and reward 'boring'.

## Secret 4

### Celebrate successes big and small

You can't change culture without being public, celebrate where we have got the approach right; even if the outcome wasn't quite on the money. Results will follow, be patient, getting the approach right is crucial to changing the process.

Celebrate productivity improvements, celebrate good load and capacity management; and if you want to celebrate availability, be sure you trumpet this as a result of good capacity management.

Reinforce the behaviours you want.

- Secret 1 – Set your structure for successful behaviour change
- Secret 2 – Leadership capability and bandwidth
- Secret 3 – Measuring performance (control)
- Secret 4 – Celebrate successes big and small

We all build **OUR** plan

