# Quirk

# ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE REPORT

February 2025

Our diagnostic brings market leading culture and leadership measurement tools together and blends them onto a single platform. This online survey gathers input from employees and leadership teams, enabling analysis of the variances in perceptions across the organisation. The tool evaluates peoples' opinions, using frameworks developed by Cameron & Quinn, as well as Robert House, to determine organisational effectiveness criteria.

## The Culture assessment

Cameron and Quinn's model states that all organisations have a culture that sits on axes of flexibility vs control, and internal vs external focus. They define four quadrants within those axes, which are often called the 'competing values'. These are shown on the diagram below as Create, Collaborate, Control and Compete. Every organisation will have a presence in each of the quadrants. What becomes interesting is the relative proportion in each quadrant, as this helps us to understand whether an organisation is more attuned to structure and control, or innovation, or hitting targets etc.

## The leadership effect

Our diagnostic then layers on a **leadership analysis**, which assesses how leaders in the organisation tend to act, based on the four predominant leadership styles defined by Robert House. This enables us to determine how leadership is affecting the culture and vice versa.

**Supportive Leadership**
Builds relationships and understands team members' needs. Effective for repetitive tasks.

**Participative Leadership**
Prioritises mutual participation, consulting with the group and valuing their ideas and expertise before making decisions.



**Flexibility**

**Supportive**

**Participative**

**Internal Focus**

**External Focus**

**Collaborative**
Family
Mentoring
Nurturing
Participation

**Create**
Dynamic
Entrepreneurial
Risk-taking
Values innovation

**Control**
Structure
Control
Coordination
Efficiency

**Compete**
Result oriented
Gets the job done
Values competition
Achievements

**Directive**

**Achievement**

**Stability and Control**

**Directive leadership**
Communicates goals and clear tasks. Suitable for complex projects or inexperienced members.

**Achievement leadership** Sets challenging goals, maintains high standards, motivates unmotivated team members. Focus on extrinsic rewards.

We're delighted to present your organisation's **Cultural Diagnostic** results.

**Diagnostic type: Full** – online survey, with interviews to validate results

**Date completed: Q4** 2024

**Completion Rate: 81%** of delegates sent the survey completed it.

\<COMPANY\> has undergone a major cultural shift over the last five years, with a significant change in the leadership style at the very top of the organisation. This survey and the associated interviews were conducted purely within the Technical team.

The IT team has a different cultural perception to the rest of the technical 'division', i.e. the Image Management, WCS and UK Invoicing elements. Although the recommendations will be relevant to all, many of the findings relates predominantly to the IT team.

There is a great deal of positivity towards the organisation, with most people saying they would recommend it as a place to work and are very happy there. The current culture is predominantly seen as controlling, with collaboration and competition fairly close behind, and creativity much lower. Overall, people would like to see less internal competition and greater collaboration and creativity.

There is a marked difference in how the Executive/Leadership team view the current and desired culture, with a much more radical shift away from control and towards creativity. The IT department are not so concerned with creativity, they would prefer greater collaboration. These subtle differences in the desired future will need to be addressed if they are not to frustrate progress, as the IT potentially do not want to see the same degree of change as their senior leadership team do.

The overall leadership style is seen as highly Achievement-oriented (these reflects and will be perpetuating the 'Control' element of the culture), and low on Supportive (reflecting the desire for greater collaboration).

The interviews have drawn out several nuances to the data. People want a more collaborative (rather than 'top-down') approach to change, and to have it communicated to them more clearly *throughout* the change process (not just at the end). Desired leadership behaviours need to be more consistently benchmarked, trained and applied, to enable a truly empowered organisation where people are ***not just told it, they feel it***. Processes need to be more thoroughly investigated for the role they play in frustrating change and decision-making.

## Recommendations at a glance

| Collaborate on and Communicate change better | Have clear boundaries for decision making | Clarify career and pay progression (esp. IT) | Leadership training to embed behaviours | Review attitudes and 'blockers' to process change |

# Overall Culture Results

**Collaborate:** There is an increase in the preference for a collaborative culture, indicating a desire for more teamwork and building better relationships across the business. It also suggests that employees would value more mentoring and a higher level of supportive & nurturing leadership.

**Create:** The score for a creative culture has increased, which implies a preference for greater emphasis on innovation and new ways of working in the future. Employees will feel a sense of value and purpose if they are allowed to contribute to ideas and new suggestions, enhancing retention.

26.58
32.29

17.57
23.73



■ Current
■ Preferred

30.99
26.55

24.86
17.43
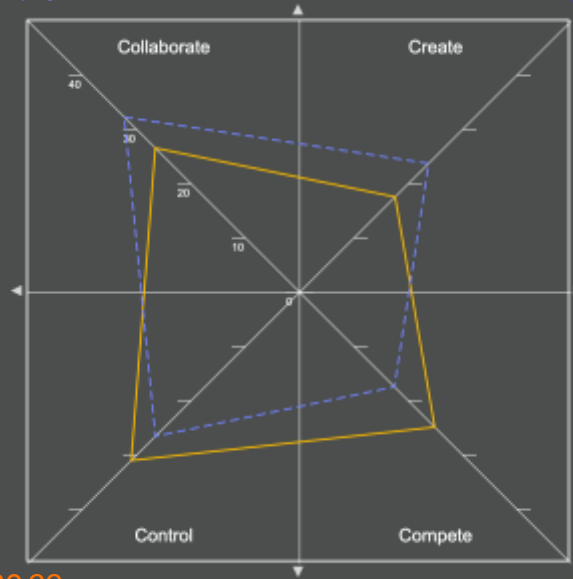
**Control:** The results for this quadrant show that employees would prefer a more flexible and less process-driven or hierarchical culture, with more latitude and empowerment. It echoes their desire for a more innovative and creative approach, as shown in the 'Create' score.

**Compete:** The desire for a competitive culture has decreased in the preferred state - and is the most significant variation of all the scores. This indicates an employee preference to move away from 'the numbers' being the sole measure of success.

## Key Take Away

The organisation shows a clear collective desire to shift the culture towards the top of the model, i.e. to become more flexible, nimble & acting with higher tempo. Employees will be more productive and effective, with higher engagement rates, if they sense a more supportive and nurturing culture is evident – with less emphasis on financial and operational numbers / targets. The team also are expressing a desire for less rigidity in processes and systems. A 5 point change is considered significant; so the desired 7.43 point shift in compete is something to really focus on. It is recommended that the <COMPANY> leadership prioritise initiatives which enhance teamwork & foster innovation, as well as discussing with colleagues why they feel constrained by the current systems & processes.

# All Participants & the Executive
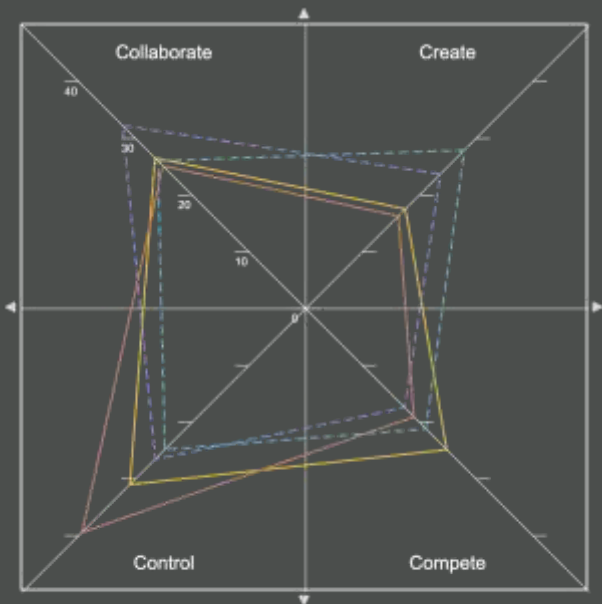


**Legend:**
- ☐ All Current
- ☐ Executives Current
- ☐ All Preferred
- ☐ Executives Preferred

**Executives –** There is a quite a stark difference in the view of the Executives/Leadership. The Executives feel that the current levels of collaboration and competition are about right, but would like to see a move from control towards much greater creativity. To 'bring people with them' on the journey, they need to consider how to foster a more collaborative approach to achieving this creativity. How current controls and competition impact this is explored in the interview notes.
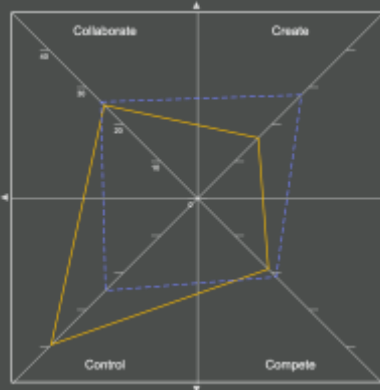
# Seniority at a Glance

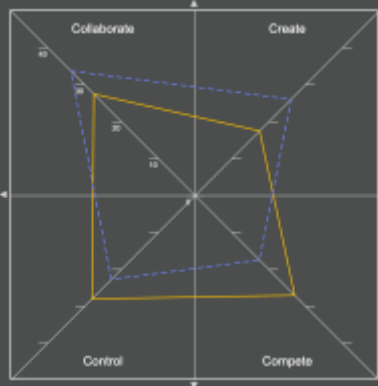- ☐ Current
- ☐ Preferred

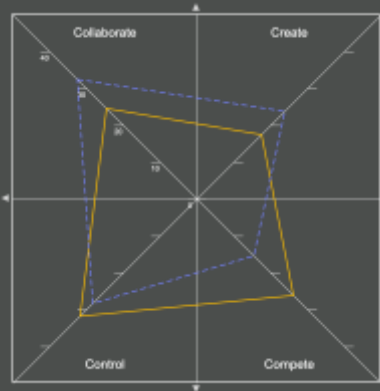### All Participants
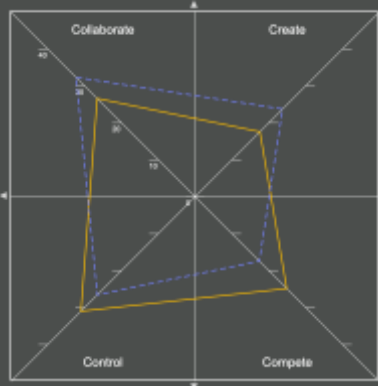


### Leadership



**Seniority –** the Associates are generally very content with the current culture, which chimes with the Image Management department. Leadership may need to consider what they can do to reduce the level of internal competition (or ensure it is of a 'healthy' nature), which others are keen to see but which they feel is about right.
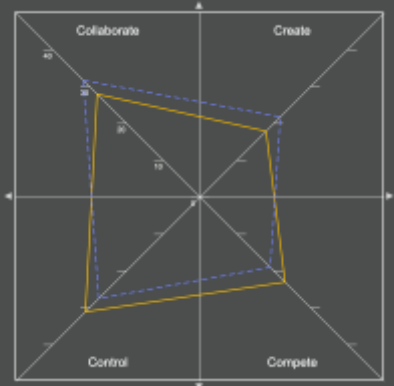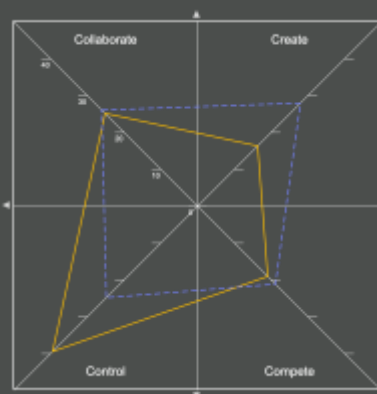
### Middle Management



### Technician



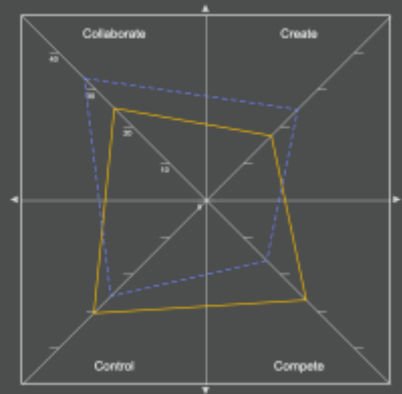### Associate

# Departments at a Glance

■ Current   ■ Preferred

**All Participants**



**Executives**



**IT Department**
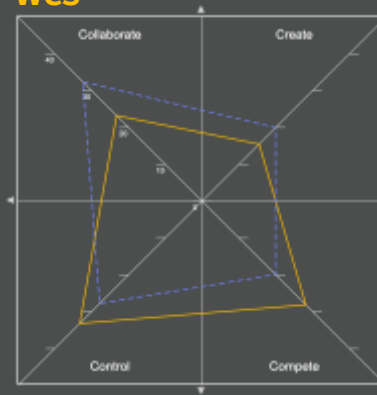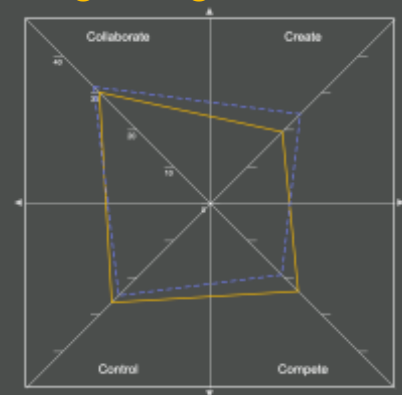


**UK Invoice**
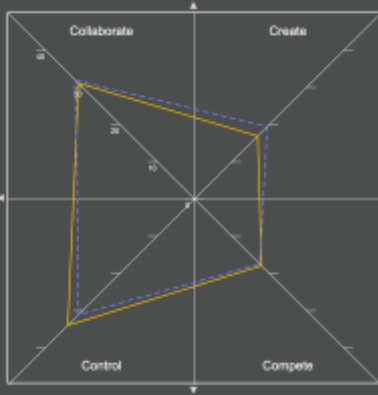


**WCS**



**Image Management**



## Departmental Analysis

- UK Invoice appear to feel that the current culture is where they would like it to be, therefore they need to be considered as any cultural change is brought in. Reducing control, which the Leadership very much want to see, and others would also like, to a degree, may make this department uncomfortable.

- Image Management are quite similar and the results suggest they are relatively comfortable with the current culture, but would still like slightly less control and greater creativity.

- The IT Department and WCS are very similar to each other, with the strongest move being the clear preference for less competition and greater collaboration. This came out in the interviews to a degree, with a sense that things are being 'done to them', and there is a constant move to keep moving on to new and innovative projects, with little time to plan, complete and review existing work.

- It is interesting that the majority of the departments feel that control is not too far off where it needs to be, but this is very much at odds with the Executive view. The interview notes reveal a more complex picture of control, where there were nuanced views on people understanding the need for it and appreciating it in many ways, but also feel that it is too much in other contexts. From the interviews, we could probably rename control as 'The <COMPANY> Way'!
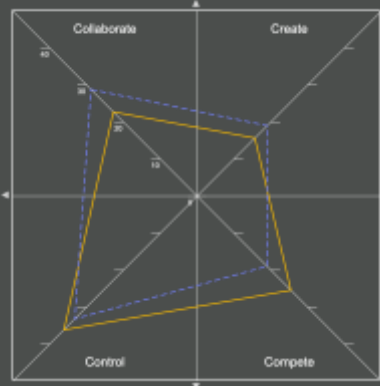
**■ Current**   **■ Preferred**

**Under 5 Years**
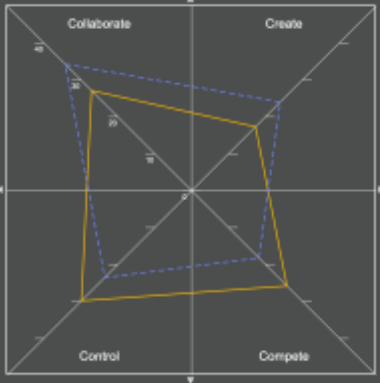


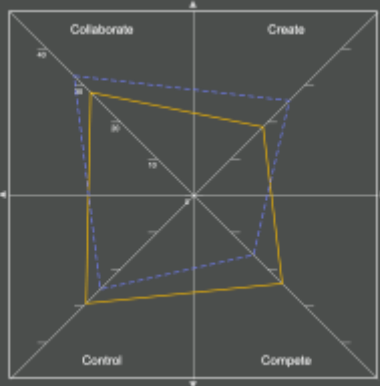**5 – 12 Years**



**Over 12 Years**



## Observations

- The results show that those in the 5-12 year bracket have a very different view of control within the organisation compared to those either side of them. What is surprising compared to others, is that they see this as an important part of the current culture and not something that they want to see radically change. It may be that this cohort has been in the business sufficiently long to see that it has already changed and are happy with those changes, but not long enough to be sufficiently frustrated that they feel constrained by it. Any cultural adjustments will need to be sensitive to what this group feel they are keen to maintain about the status quo.

- One possibility is that these are new (or aspiring) line managers that have newfound control and do not want to relinquish it.

- It is clear that newer additions to the business want to see the greatest degree of a more collaborative working environment, which is potentially in line with generational shifts in attitudes towards working styles.

- Those over 12 years are keen to see greater levels of creativity/flexibility. This often comes with greater seniority – people are comfortable in their roles and ready for greater flexibility in how they achieve the objectives.

# Leadership Style Results

## The Underpinning Model

**Directive:** A common score is 23, scores above 28 are considered high, and scores below 18 are considered low.

**23.86**
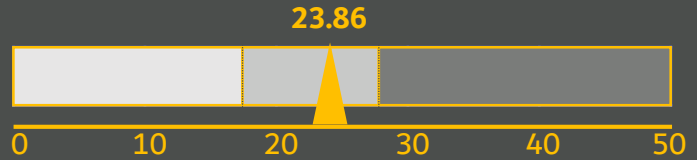
Your **Directive style** is scored at the same level for most businesses, indicating that the team don't sense there is a noticeable 'do this' culture of leadership, but this is at odds with the Control being the predominant culture. The results from the interviews reveal a more nuanced picture of this – the culture comparatively much less directive than it was, but there are still clearly pockets of very directive leaders and behaviours.

**Supportive:** A common score is 28, scores above 33 are considered high, and scores below 23 are considered low.

**23.76**
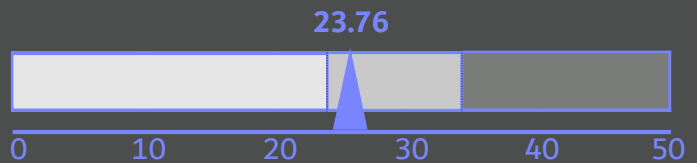
Your **Supportive style** of leadership has the lowest score of all four leadership types and is below average for most organisations. This suggests that some team members may feel that there is little sense of a 'safety net'. This may make them feel exposed and worried about critique. It also implies that the team feel a lack of focus on them as individuals – or measures that would help them deliver to their very best. The low level of supportive leadership style may lead to individuals worried about the reaction to any poor results – which in turn could cause some people to avoid making decisions, or to be risk averse.

**Participative:** A common score is 21, scores above 26 are considered high, and scores below 16 are considered low.

**19.75**
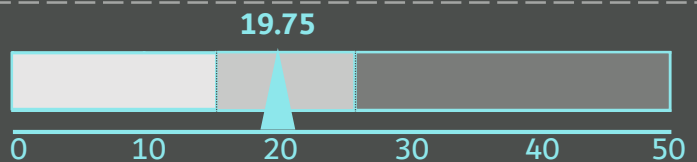
Your **Participative style** of leadership score, is also slightly below the average for most businesses, implying that although the leadership clearly do seek colleagues opinions, individuals don't always feel that their views are important, or are taken into account.

**Achievement-oriented:** A common score is 19, scores above 24 are considered high, and scores below 14 are considered low.
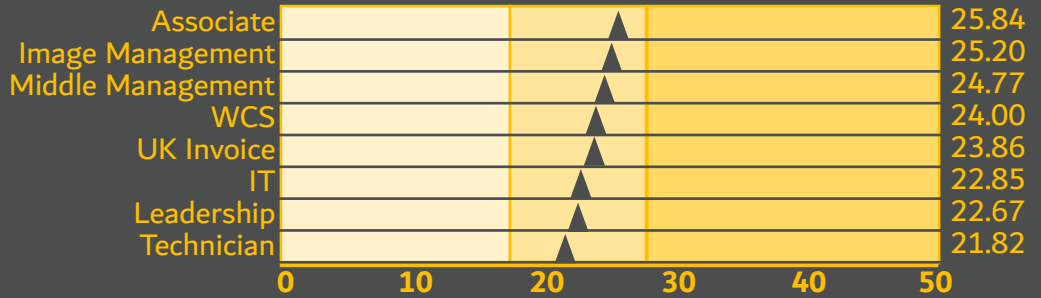
**22.46**
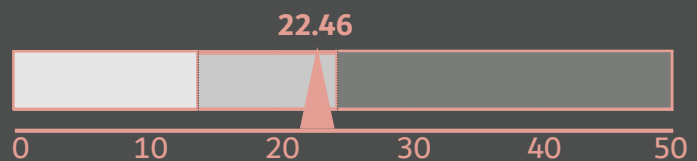
Your results show that your organisation has **Achievement Leadership** as its predominant characteristic. Teams are expected to make decisions / are accountable for their results and targets, with high expectations on their performance and a strong sense of competition.

# Comparing Leadership Style Results

**Directive:** *A common score is 23, scores above 28 are considered high, and scores below 18 are considered low.*

| | Score |
|---|---|
| Associate | 25.84 |
| Image Management | 25.20 |
| Middle Management | 24.77 |
| WCS | 24.00 |
| UK Invoice | 23.86 |
| IT | 22.85 |
| Leadership | 22.67 |
| Technician | 21.82 |

**Supportive:** *A common score is 28, scores above 33 are considered high, and scores below 23 are considered low.*

| | Score |
|---|---|
| Leadership | 27 |
| Associate | 23.84 |
| Middle Management | 23.62 |
| Technician | 22.96 |
| IT | 22.88 |
| WCS | 21.25 |
| Image Management | 21.10 |
| UK Invoice | 17.75 |

**Participative:** *A common score is 21, scores above 26 are considered high, and scores below 16 are considered low.*

| | Score |
|---|---|
| Associate | 23.84 |
| Leadership | 23.00 |
| WCS | 21.25 |
| Image Management | 21.10 |
| Middle Management | 19 92 |
| UK Invoice | 19.75 |
| IT | 18.33 |
| Technician | 18.00 |

**Achievement-oriented:** *A common score is 19, scores above 24 are considered high, and scores below 14 are considered low.*

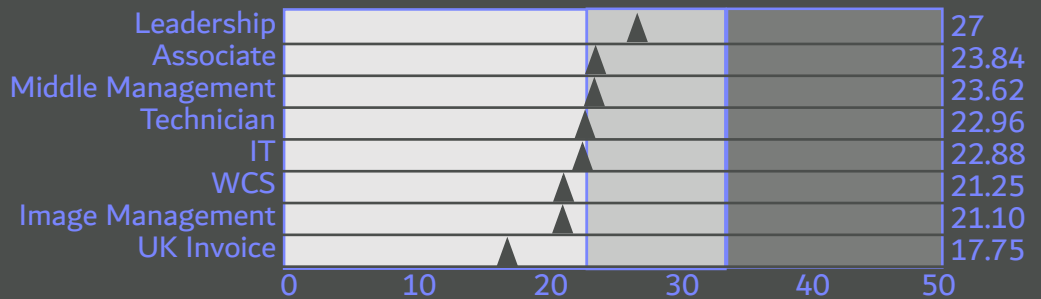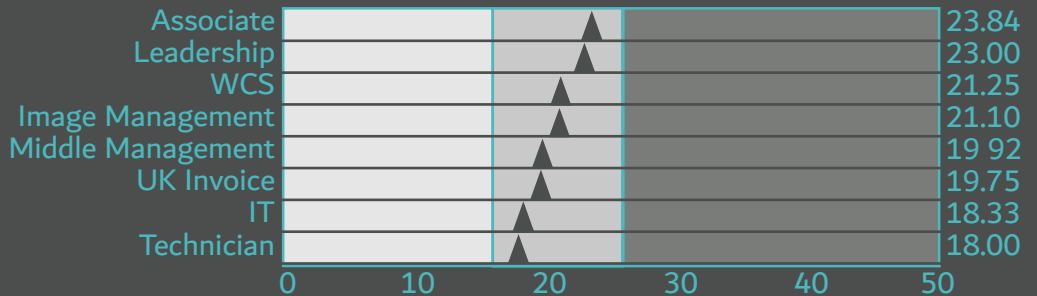| | Score |
|---|---|
| Leadership | 25.00 |
| Middle Management | 23.15 |
| IT | 22.62 |
| UK Invoice | 22.46 |
| Technician | 22.22 |
| Image Management | 21.80 |
| Associate | 21.68 |
| WCS | 20.23 |

# Comparing Leadership Style Results

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| | Score |
|---|---|
| Image Management | 25.20 |
| WCS | 24.00 |
| UK Invoice | 23.86 |
| IT | 22.85 |

Axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50

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| | Score |
|---|---|
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Axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50

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| | Score |
|---|---|
| WCS | 21.25 |
| Image Management | 21.10 |
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Axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50

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| | Score |
|---|---|
| IT | 22.62 |
| UK Invoice | 22.46 |
| Image Management | 21.80 |
| WCS | 20.23 |

Axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50

# Comparing Leadership Style Results

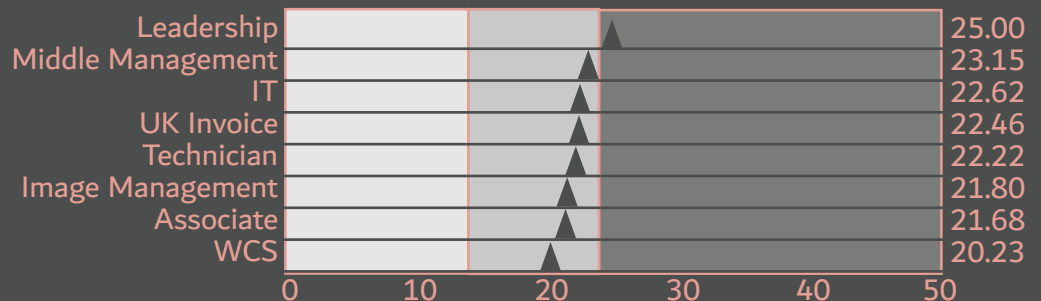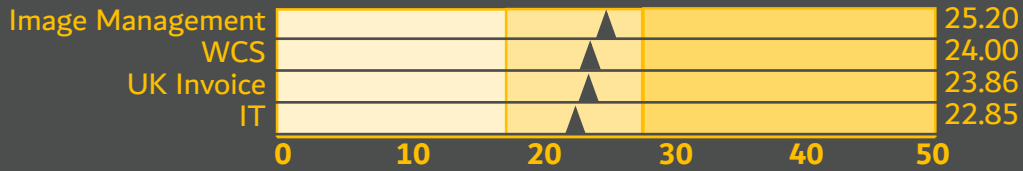**Directive:** *A common score is 23, scores above 28 are considered high, and scores below 18 are considered low.*

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|---|---|
| Associate | 25.84 |
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| Leadership | 22.67 |

0  10  20  30  40  50

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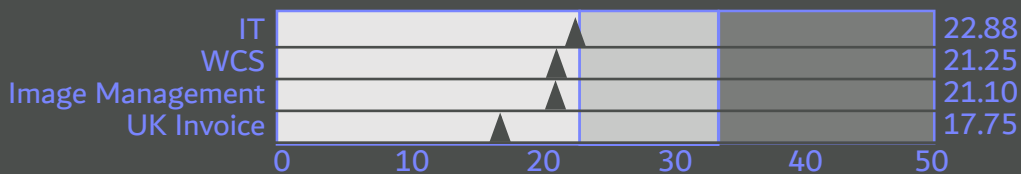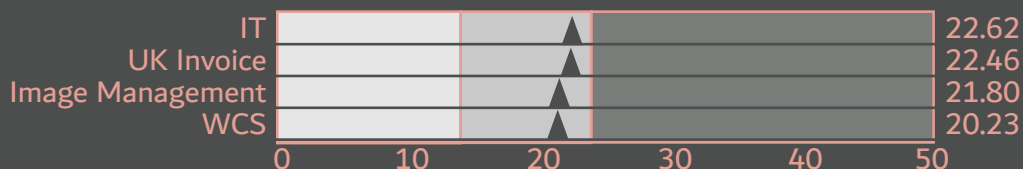
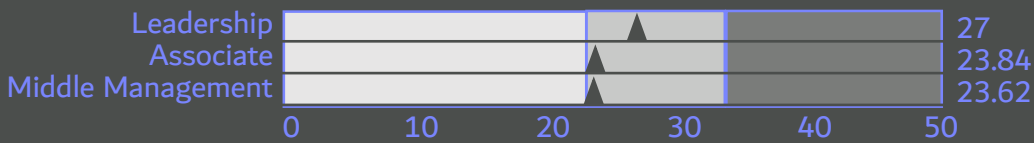| | |
|---|---|
| Leadership | 25.00 |
| Middle Management | 23.15 |
| Associate | 21.68 |

0  10  20  30  40  50

# Overview and Recommendations

## Overview

There is a great deal of positive feeling towards the organisation and the current culture of <COMPANY>.  The noticeable shift in culture since 2019 and moves towards more employee-centric initiatives (such as showers, workshops etc) have been well received and are much appreciated.

There are, however, some more fundamental changes regarding how employees experience support, collaboration and control within the organisation.  These are potentially frustrating efforts to create a more empowered culture where people feel able to take more initiative and greater ownership of decisions.  This is exacerbated by a lack of clarity around the boundaries people are operating within.

There is a sense that change is very much top-down, and uncertainty during change is not always well communicated. The '<COMPANY> Way' processes are understood as necessary, but are also frustrating peoples' attempts to make change, leading to frustration and a 'why bother' approach, with each process having its own champion that doesn't want to see it change – almost a sense of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)!  This is hampered by a very mixed experience of leadership within the organisation, some of which is very forward-leaning but inexperienced, and some of which is still very much in the 'old', very directive style.

## Recommendations:

1. Clearer communication around change – this is also an excellent opportunity to workshop some more collaborative approaches to change, getting teams more involved in change from a 'bottom up' perspective.

2. Collaboration.  Take time to pause during planning to get input from wider stakeholder pools and people at all levels of seniority involvement.

3. Operational and tactical planning.  This also helps with collaboration and communication.  Ensure that people understand the Strategic plan, but give them latitude to work within it – 'Freedom in a Framework' and 'Intent' would be useful here and should be included in any leadership training.

4. Leadership Training.  A package of training, tailored for line managers at different levels, would help embed the behaviours required for the cultural change you desire.  It would also be beneficial to link this to...

5. A clear pathway for career progression.

## Empowerment and Decision-Making

People are generally clear that the intention is for them to be more empowered and able to make decisions at the lowest possible level.  This is not, however, always reflected in peoples' lived experience.  There are a number of factors behind this, many of which are interlinked:

- Lack of clear **boundaries** – people do not understand what the parameters are of what they can and cannot make decisions on, and get frustrated when they think they can, but then get told it needs 'sign off'.

- **Processes** – perpetuating legacy and other processes that continue to stipulate getting authority from above, and which constrain decision making.

- **Fear of failure** – Much of this seems to stem from a real positive – people care deeply about the organisation and its customers, and very much want to get things 'right', much of their fear is self-imposed pressure.  However, some line managers are concerned that things will reflect badly on them, whilst also not wanting to relinquish control, and on the flip side, people want to get 'top cover' so that if it goes wrong it wasn't solely on their shoulders.  This is interesting as people said there was not a blame culture, yet the fear of failing or letting people down remains very ingrained.

## Communication, Change and Collaboration

**Communication**.  People are generally very happy with the regular meetings, both in terms of format and frequency.  However, there is an issue around how some things get communicated when the final result is announced, as opposed to being briefed *as they are developing*.  There is a subtle perception of secrecy, which exacerbates the very hierarchical structures in place and is likely to be contributing to peoples' sense that they are not empowered and trusted.  It means they feel excluded from the change process – hence the clear desire towards greater collaboration – see below...

**Change**.  This was seen as a particular issue relating to how the current structural changes are being made.  People understand that things are changing, and that there is a need for it, but they feel it is something that is being done behind closed doors and whispers.  In addition to this, people feel that sometimes change is happening too quickly, without a clear idea of how it fits within the overall picture.

**Collaboration**.  Both the change and communication issues raised provide an excellent opportunity to address the cultural increase in collaboration that people would like to see.  Bringing whole teams in to explore and overcome challenges in the operationalisation of the strategic changes, would be an excellent way to increase transparency and make people feel more included and empowered in the decision-making processes.

## Processes and Audit

*The <COMPANY> Way!*

There are conflicting views around the level of control that people want to see and what is and isn't meant by it.  Processes and audit are understood to be necessary and desirable components given the highly regulated industry.  However, there is a sense that despite what people are told about being able/empowered to change things, the processes can tend to block their ability to make changes happen.

It seems that on occasion, even though people all agree something should change, it usually reaches a point where it gets to a person/department who own  particular part of the process, and which they feel strongly about, and gets stymied.  This leads to a great deal of frustration and a sense of 'why bother'.  Earlier  and wider stakeholder engagement may be useful in overcoming this,  but requires those stakeholders to be sufficiently engaged by their senior leadership in why the 'can do' attitude to making it happen is required.

Fear of failing in the audits also plays a big part in peoples' reluctance to see change.  Whilst this doesn't appear to be driven top-down, the pressure people feel around it is clear – potentially driven by how much people really *care* about getting it 'right'.  Moreover, the attempt to avoid a blame culture may lead to a lack of robust investigation into the root cause.  People are also wary of 'knee-jerk' reactions to audit failings which may sometimes lead to changes that are not best thought-out.

## Other points of note

- Line management.
    - Leaders are not always consistent in displaying behaviours that fit with the desired organisational values.  There is not a clear sense of what 'good' looks like.
    - Some line managers are very junior and are receiving very inconsistent informal 'coaching' from the superiors, most likely as these people have not had training in how to embed this.  It was also raised that potentially people (especially new line managers) still feel they do not want to go to those above them for support as they do not want to be seen as 'weak', or unable to do their job.
    - As with many organisations, line managers' time  is still spent very much on the 'day job', without time specifically carved out for managing and developing their people.

- Progression.  People feel unclear on the pathway for career and pay progression, and that this is currently very much individual-led and inconsistently applied.  This is a big part of explaining the sense of **internal competition** between people.  It is probably also part of the contradictions in the view of the 'Supportive' style of leadership.  Yes - they feel supported if they need time off, can do professional development and they get nice employee perks, but No – they feel they are doing their jobs with sporadic leadership support and little clear career/pay/leadership development support.

## Get in touch

For more information on how we
can help, call us on
0203 290 9576
Or email
contact@quirksolutions.co.uk

Quirk

Find out more