The view from the back row - a strategy for growing self directed innovative teams

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• Does it feel like your day is spent solving all your team’s problems?
• How often do you wonder “Couldn’t they have worked this out for themselves?”

Encouraging staff to take real ownership of issues and be proactive about how they approach their work can be an uphill battle for managers especially when we can see the potential for our teams to be more engaged but can’t seem to make it happen. We find ourselves asking, “why aren’t my team more innovative?” without asking “how do I make it possible for them to innovate?”

The University of Auckland is tackling these concerns through the introduction of Service Essentials; a strategy which supports managers to plan, innovate, monitor performance and workflow and initiate improvements within an empowering framework of on-going conversations with those who have the best understanding of the job – their staff.

Using a Visual Display Board (VDB) aligned with the University's Leadership Framework, teams engage in quick 'stand-up' meetings that encourage solutions focused conversations where they are able to own the planning of their work and test ideas for improvement and innovation.

The impact of Service Essentials for the Student, Academic Services and Engagement team in the Faculty of Science has been profound with our VDB providing a space for ideas, questions, play, measurement, planning, testing and celebrating.

During this presentation participants will learn about innovative, solutions focused approaches taken by staff to
• suggest, test and implement process improvements
• challenge existing models and investigate best practice
• take control in workflow planning and measurement of key deliverables
• talk about, build and celebrate the work culture they value
• share ideas and drive projects that validate the relationship between what they do and the university's strategic objectives
• self-identify training needs and share expertise

Participants will be asked to consider the applicability of this model to their workplace, to reflect on their own practice as leaders and the extent to which this facilitates or hinders innovative thinking and performance by their teams.

Finally, thoughts will be shared on how, by using the principles of Service Essentials and the VDB, “the view from the back row” can afford a different perspective on the way we lead our teams, providing a framework that supports the achievement of objectives, the enablement of people, the planning and organisation of work and improvement and innovation to support greater effectiveness.