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Signs that **capacity** is limited

One of the three constraints for any change is the capacity of the organisation to create and adopt new behaviours and processes.

After decades of productivity and efficiency programs, organisational capacity is at an all-time low. *This is a strategic choice, one that has consequences for all involved.*

In this **changeX**change paper we look at the *outward* and *visible* signs that capacity is limited, including a diagnostic tool to help you assess your own environment.

We offer a range of tactics and suggestions on how to measure and improve both team and individual capacity, and how to navigate the tough conversations that are needed to prioritise efforts and the available capacity.

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Confusion over clarity
Lack of a clear vision, confusion, frequent conflict and misunderstandings, low levels of engagement and involvement

Lack of Direction
Low level of leadership support or conviction, poor alignment between leaders.

Survival Mode
Everything is a crisis, long hours with low efficiency, poor or slow decision making. Micromanaging, with low toleration for risk

Worn Out
High stress levels, Increased sickness, negative attitude, out of character behaviour, quiet quitting, apathy and low morale

Poor Behaviours
Blame, defensiveness and accusations are common. There is an active rumour mill and silos that create barriers

Performance suffers
Growth stagnates, commitments and deadlines are missed

Lean operating
Inadequate resources, and training. High turnover rates. Late, or low mobilisation to projects

Fix the **cause,** not the **effect**

If you want to solve capacity, start with cause: the choices you are making as an organisation.

Capacity issues are self-inflicted.

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Capacity Assessment

How to Use
Use this assessment in many different ways

1. As a **checklist**, to sanity check whether you are seeing these outcomes

2. As a **survey** or with a **focus group** to understand the current sentiment

Best Practice
Always answer **individually**, and **anonymously** to avoid group think.

If you ask others to contribute, remember to **feedback** the results.

Reading the results
Any statements with high frequencies should be investigated further. Capacity may not be the only cause.

If there are many, use a cause / effect assessment to identify the root causes and focus on these.

	Observable behaviour	never	rarely	sometimes	often	always	theme
1.	Leaders are absent or do the bare minimum to support changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Conviction
2.	There is confusion about the rationale and vision for changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Vision
3.	Leaders rarely model new behaviours or take an active role in leading change.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Role Model
4.	Employees feel disengaged and poorly informed about changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Informed
5.	There is little opportunity to contribute or give feedback about changes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Feedback
6.	Teams operate in silos. Collaboration is low and conflict is common.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Collaborate
7.	Teams are defensive with a fear of being blamed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Defensive
8.	Energy is low. Teams are fatigued with high levels of apathy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Fatigue
9.	Teams are quick to resist and can be aggressive.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Resistance
10.	Resources are missing or late to mobilise.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Resources
11.	Teams are unwilling or unable to attend training.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Capability
12.	Turnover rates are high and retention is low.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Retention
13.	Performance and growth are stagnant or worsening.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Performance
14.	Errors, duplication and rework are common.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Inefficiencies
15.	Deadlines and commitments are often missed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Deadlines
16.	There are high levels of sickness and absence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Sickness
17.	Morale is low. It feels that change is done to the teams.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Morale
18.	Teams have little say in what they do or how. Micromanaging is common.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Agency
19.	Decision making is slow and often held up by bureaucracy.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Decisions
20.	There is a constant sense of urgency and crisis are common.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Crisis
21.	Teams are disengaged and do the bare minimum.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Apathy

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Advice for **Managing Capacity**

Proactively measure and **manage** your capacity

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STRATEGY Determine the strategic direction	ASSESS Assess the impact of the strategy	DESIGN Design the initiative and its implementation	RECRUIT Build advocacy, create space for success	IMPLEMENT Execute the strategy
▪ Know your why	▪ Invest ahead in building trusted relationships with your stakeholders	▪ Chunk the strategy into smaller sprints	▪ Create a positive environment that energises	▪ Communicate with clarity and empathy
▪ Build a compelling vision of the future	▪ Assess current and likely demands on capacity	▪ Design to minimise capacity impact.	▪ Build leadership conviction	▪ Measure real time capacity and wellbeing levels, proactively manage the load
▪ Create strategies which take your current culture and capacity into account	▪ Evaluate historical successes and failures, understand and learn from them	▪ Be clear on what will stay the same, to provide stability	▪ PMO accept accountability for capacity demands	▪ Hold leaders, teams and the PMO accountable
▪ Design alternative realities and visions depending on capacity available	▪ Involve stakeholders to understand their perspective and open communication flows	▪ Put in place the rituals, accountability, measures and governance for open discussions and decisions	▪ Recruit mentors and advocates for the change, create passion	▪ Beware drama, and crisis, use a sense of urgency sparingly
▪ Ensure the strategy is aligned with your organisational goals	▪ Assess levels of openness and honesty. Role model the levels needed	▪ Practice capacity (and crisis) scenarios	▪ Be clear on priorities	▪ Regularly assess competing priorities, external impacts and shifts in strategy and. Course correct.
▪ Factor capacity into your choices	▪ Create capacity, identify and stop non essential work	▪ Design feedback mechanisms to provide actionable insights	▪ Give autonomy to leaders, with clear outcomes	▪ Celebrate successes, sharing stories
▪ Set capacity as a factor for accelerating (available) or slowing (not available) your strategic execution		▪ Normalise capacity conversations	▪ Empower teams to use their judgement in how they implement	

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Navigating **Tough** Conversations

Many organisations are very aware that their organisational capacity is very limited,

So why do we allow this situation to continue?

Often it is the fear of having a tough conversation with your Stakeholders.

We looked at why we avoid the tough conversations to hold up the mirror and suggest tactics which you can use.

Tough conversations often generate an emotional rather than a rational response, use empathy and listen to understand their perceptions.

- **Build Strong Relationships**
  Invest in building deep trusted relationships with key stakeholders and leaders before you attempt a tough conversation.

- **Open Honest Communication**
  Encourage, and role model an environment where open, honest communication is valued. Create safe spaces where others feel comfortable voicing their concerns.

- **Create Collaboration**
  Reduce confrontation and silos. Create shared solutions that involve stakeholders in your creative and decision-making processes.

- **Connect the dots**
  Help stakeholders see the implications of capacity on the delivery (or not) of your organisational goals.

- **Use data tactically**
  Frame arguments with clear, objective data to encourage evidence-based decisions. Show the tangible benefits and risks of addressing capacity.

- **Prioritize, Make it Easy**
  Focus on the most critical issues. Avoid overwhelming stakeholders with too many problems at once.

- **Listen Actively**
  Understand the perspectives and concerns of others. Acknowledge different viewpoints and ensure others feel heard.

- **Manage Expectations**
  No surprises. Proactively manage stakeholder expectations, help them understand the limitations and challenges that capacity is causing.

- **Be an Advocate**
  Lead by example; proactively promote a human-first approach, ensuring your people have an environment which drives success

- **Use your influencers**
  Work with those who have influence to enable conversations which are hard to have..

- **Learn from your Experiences**
  Reflect on your current practices, learn from the past and be open to improvements.

- **Resistance is not futile**
  Understand the root cause of resistance and conflict, proactively address them. Be supportive and reassure to reduce fears and uncertainties.

- **Be Adaptable**
  Internal and External dynamics are constantly changing, be prepared to adapt your approach and e flexible in finding solution.

- **Role Clarity**
  Ensure roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear.

- **Good Governance**
  Create the rituals and governance that encourage the tough conversations.

Pay now, or pay later

Don't delay, the longer you leave it before, the greater the risk of shock and surprise and the harder it is.

Track leading indicators, and create awareness early.

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Building **Capacity**

Instead of dealing with the effect of low capacity, start out right.

Simple tactics can quickly transform the energy that you, or your team have.

Predictable rituals and routines ground us, they take up less cognitive load, use these proactively.
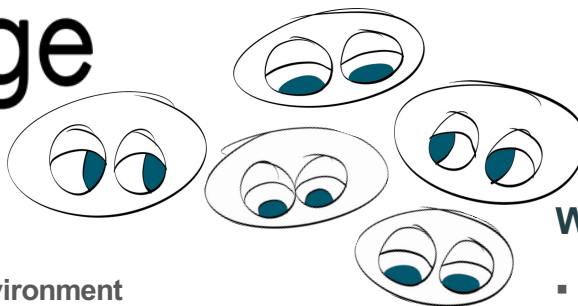
Be empathetic. Assume positive intent. When we are stressed, or feel under threat we are not at our best.

Hybrid Working

Create s distinction between work and home.

Put your work away in a cupboard, or take a walk to 'close out' your day

Take time for exercise, go for a walk, a run, a bike ride. Do a quick stretch or some yoga

With a TEAM

- **Create the environment**
  Set up your physical space to include quiet spaces, collaborative spaces, good lighting, plants to relax, mindfulness breaks, healthy snacks

- **Connect to collaborate**
  Create structured breaks and social interactions; team lunch, 'Fika' breaks (a Scandinavian tradition of sharing coffee and cake), energizing activities. Be creative.

- **Get energy moving**
  Include routines that have movement, from stand-up check-ins to walking meetings, especially outside in the fresh air. Gamify work, and create joy and laughter

- **Automate for efficiency**
  Use technology to manage repetitive tasks and provide actionable insights. Turn off unnecessary notifications. Touch a task once and reduce task switching

- **Daily Rituals**
  Use rituals to ground the team, these create comfort and reduce surprises. Ensure everyone feels heard.

- **Leaders who inspire**
  Encourage leaders to be open, authentic, visible and personable. Be available for your teams.

- **Be prepared to listen**
  Create opportunities for two-way conversations; worry boards, surveys, coffee chats, project walls, regular collaboration, problem solving and brainstorming.

With OTHERS

- **Use Empathy**
  Acknowledge their situation and validate their feelings. Show that you care about their perspective, and are there to support them through this change

- **Right time and setting**
  Choose the time and place carefully; when feeling less overwhelmed, and a neutral, private setting. A walk can help. Avoid public confrontations or feeling like a threat.

- **Communicate with care**
  Use non-confrontational and soft language; 'I' instead of 'you'. Keep your message simple and to the point to avoid overwhelm. Focus on your observations. Respect their autonomy.

- **Offer Support**
  Beware focusing on problems. How can you help?; adjust deadlines, reduce workload, ground with stability

- **Small Steps**
  Suggest manageable small steps, to build confidence and feel doable. Celebrate the wins to maintain momentum

- **Be a role model**
  Lead by example, manage your own work-life balance and boundaries.

- **Keep the door open**
  If they are not ready, let them know you are available when they are. Time is a great healer, use it proactively