



Our EI Tree® presents an overview of the ideal outcomes organisations dream of but rarely achieve due to a lack of authentic commitment.

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The tree shows how we should all work as one in our organisations, regardless of industry. The fruit comes in different shapes, types, and colours and represents the diversity of our people from other cultures, backgrounds, beliefs, and personalities. Our hierarchical position or title should not dictate how we behave. Personal and organisational values should drive our behaviour. After all, when we employ someone, do we not explain to them that they will be expected to adhere to and live our organisation’s values? Do you do that?



We should be proud to demonstrate our values daily and protect them from those who do not adhere to them. After all, our organisational culture depends on every one of us doing precisely that. Our leaders and managers have a responsibility and are accountable for this.

The EI Tree works similarly to how a tree grows. It transports our colleagues’ personal brands, behaviours, values, and personalities around our organisation. An organisation has people in different departments, divisions and teams, and each person impacts how others feel about working in their environment by how they treat one another.

They will either pass on goodness through an almost invisible fuel, the ingredients of which include inspiration, consideration, collaboration, support, caring, positivity, and more (see our EI tree above). The consistency of all those ingredients is what builds trust.

Top tip: Add your organisational values to ALL job descriptions. You are employing them to perform a job and live your organisational values.

However, colleagues can also damage our culture through adverse behaviours, such as not demonstrating genuine care, empathy, consideration, or support, not to mention dishonesty. All of these create distrust and resentment and erode an organisation’s positive culture! Not to mention the real possibility of accidentally creating conscious or unconscious saboteurs.



Let’s look at a real tree and then compare it to the EI Tree model. We’ll look at them side by side and get a feeling of why we saw the connection of a tree to an organisation. But, most importantly, why does it work when it is nurtured and allowed to flourish?

How a tree works:

The table below illustrates how a tree functions and the analogy between it and our people. The parts of a tree that most of us would quickly recognise include the roots, trunk, twigs, branches, leaves, bark, flowers, fruits, seeds, and perhaps a lesser-known part is the phloem. We’ll see what phloem does, as it occasionally surprises some people with how it nourishes the whole tree. I’d clearly forgotten this from my school days.

Parts of a Tree	Their Purpose	People and Their Purpose
Roots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect nutrients and water Anchor the tree 	These people feed and nurture the organisation and they also support it in times of need.
Trunk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually a single “stem,” but can be multi-stemmed Main functions are the transport of materials and structural support. 	People are the backbone of our organisation. They may be focused on their aspect of the business, but they transport drive, inspiration, motivation and positivity around our whole organisation.
Twigs and branches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support structures for leaves, flowers and fruits. 	These can be the people who work across the teams and other areas.
Bark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main function is to protect the living tissue called cambium from damage. 	You can look at this as the organisational culture and values protecting all of our people.
Branches and leaves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is where photosynthesis and production of hormones and other chemicals occurs. 	In reality what drives an organisational culture is its people. How they describe the culture, the organisation and working there to others, showing how they truly feel about working there (good or bad).



<p>Flowers, fruits and seeds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the site of reproduction • all trees have seeds, most are inside of the fruit. 	<p>People are the foundation of growth and innovation, but only if they believe they have the freedom to speak out (through psychological safety), to challenge and to offer their thoughts openly.</p> <p>This freedom can only be initiated by ensuring Emotional Security from the organisation, and therefore a feeling of Emotional Safety by its people (ES²).</p>
<p>Phloem</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phloem transports new materials (from photosynthesis) from the crown (upper part of the tree), all the way to the roots. 	<p>You'll notice that above there is no mention of hierarchical roles such as leader or manager as we believe that anyone can lead and manage the culture of an organisation.</p> <p>ALL the people do this every day, with their message of how they feel. It's delivered around the organisation by word of mouth, actions and inactions.</p>

How The EI Tree Works:

The image of our EI Tree illustrates the ideal end of one of our Leadership, Management, and Organisational Culture programmes. Our Phoenix Effect aspects of our programmes aim to identify what is not working about an organisation's current culture and address the root cause of each issue. The programme then burns down the old and builds up the new.



This programme can only work when **everyone unites to make it succeed. It is all the people who make it work, not just the organisation's leaders and managers.**

The image illustrates how all parts of the tree are interconnected, but please note the small arrows flowing up and down the tree. These show how the tree is an elaborate series of transport routes that carry what it needs to survive, grow, and become stronger. This is exactly how an organisation's work environment and culture work, through positive and negative behaviours. So, if you want to improve your culture, poor behaviour must not be tolerated by anyone. Hold **everyone** to account, and do not allow anyone to let it go unchecked.

People believe that trees obtain all their nourishment from their roots, but the sugars and nutrients produced through photosynthesis are also transported down to and through the roots. A tree is a collaborative and interdependent living organism, just like a high-performing team. While an organisation may have various departments and divisions and may be spread across various countries, it is a living organism.





It should work in an interactive, collaborative, and interdependent manner. That's what we mean when we say an organisation should behave like a "Team of Teams."

As each part of the tree needs to contribute, every person in the organisation is responsible and accountable for the organisation's culture through their behaviour and by holding others to account. Addressing poor behaviour is not only the job of a leader or manager; it is the responsibility of every colleague.

Regardless of position or title, each person is responsible for adhering to and evidencing the organisational values. Every person, consciously or unconsciously, affects the organisation's culture by expressing how they feel at work, about their colleagues, and how they perceive their treatment, as well as whether they feel they can speak out safely or not. These ingredients make or break organisational culture.

Small talk, positivity, enjoyment, moaning, and complaining affect us all. Sadly, people often do nothing about the more negative aspects of their working lives because they may feel they can't do anything about these issues. They believe that no one listens, or they are afraid to speak out due to the possible consequences. If you know this sounds like your organisation, I suggest implementing psychological safety, which is just one part of our Moccasin Approach® and embedding it throughout your organisation quickly.

In summary, we believe all organisations should be like our EI Tree®. We must utilise all the nutrients we can to grow and deepen our roots, keeping them strong. That will keep us standing against the worst of storms, grow our branches and leaves, and provide us with the ingredients to develop a strong culture and keep us all safe.

Our culture is shaped by our values and the underlying behaviours that support them. If we find people who are not adhering to those values, then unless we can help them change and improve, we must weed them out and cut them away just as the tree drops its waste in its dead leaves. Consequences must be employed!

I want to use a quote from an attendee on one of our recent leadership and management programmes, who said:

"This programme has challenged every one of us in different ways, and I am grateful it did. I believe that every one of us has reconsidered and adapted our approach to managing and leading others, and as a result, has embraced a whole new way of thinking about how we impact and develop our organisation's culture. This has been an awakening experience, and we will be engaging the LAPD next year for our Senior Leadership Team. Thank you all."

"If you stop trying to please others and just do the right thing, with authenticity, transparency and integrity, you will win the hearts and minds of those around you organically."

~ Mac Macdonald ~