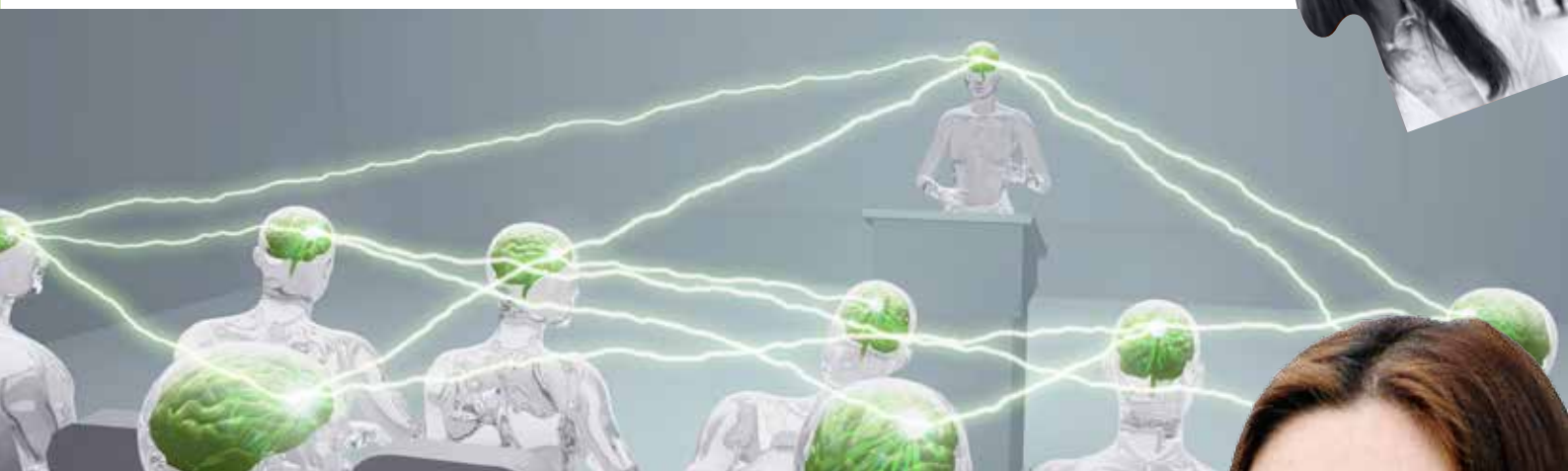




The impacts

Organisational communication behaviour:
The missing piece.



“In most organisations, the thing we talk about least is how we talk to each other.”

- Leanne Drew-McKain

Class Act Conduct is an interactive online workforce communication program. Created by Coach Pty Ltd, **Class Act** helps staff focus on and optimise their communication behaviour as a way of raising workforce wellbeing, productivity and performance.

Class Act skills staff to communicate professionally, positively and productively; avoid and resolve conflicts—and shrink negative communication behaviours in teams that have a direct and costly impact on business performance.



Negative communication behaviours include, for example, eye-rolling; mockery; sneering; withholding participation; habitual critical responses to comments and suggestions; removing warmth, emotion or responsiveness from facial expressions...

The research

IN THE BUSINESS SECTOR

Managers spend 37% of their day dealing with dysfunctional and unproductive behaviours.

More than 91% of employees spend a large portion of their day frustrated by their co-worker's dysfunctional behaviour and regularly think about quitting their jobs.

Roxanne Emmerich, 2014

In a study of 60 business teams, we found that the most successful teams are those in which individuals are the most positive when communicating with one another.

High-performing teams traded a ratio of 5-to-1 positive-to-negative communication signals. Once that ratio drops below 3-to-1, so does team performance.

We coded behaviours as negative if the person speaking showed disapproval, sarcasm or cynicism. A negative person would convey disapproval or sarcasm either through words or facial expressions, where a positive person would show support, encouragement, and appreciation to their team-mates ... Even where they disagreed on a point, they would do so expressing courtesy.

Losoda, 2009

Higher positivity ratios are predictive of flourishing mental health and other beneficial outcomes.

Fredrickson, 2013

The neuroscience

Negative communication signals impede brain function.

Within around one-eightieth of a second, a threat signal in communication—say a condescending look or a negative retort—will travel from the amygdala in the limbic brain to the pre-frontal cortex: Shrinking our oxygen and glucose supply, slowing our processing and response times, making us feel foggier, more uncertain, less confident.

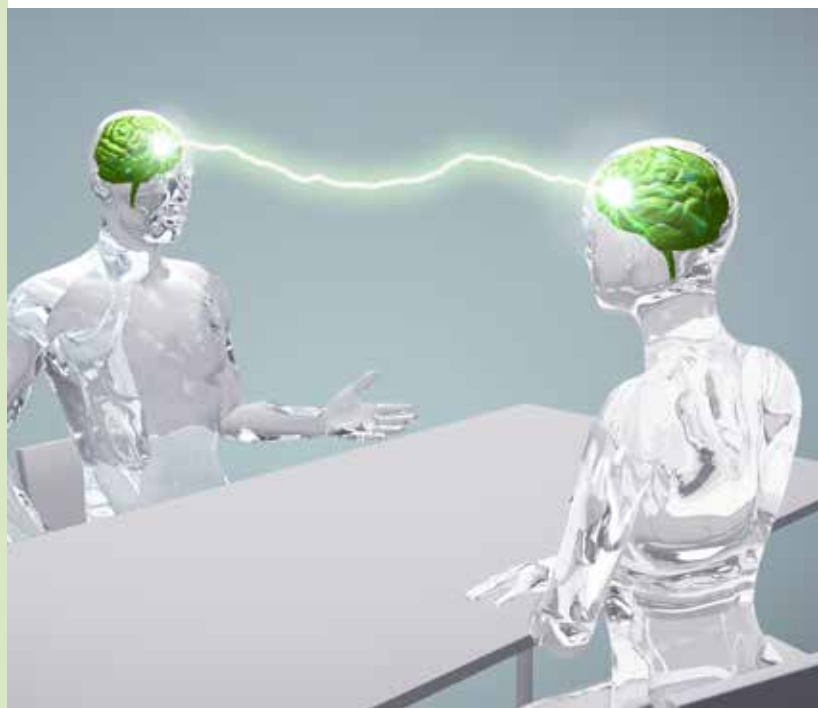
Repeated negative communication behaviours are the enemy of good decision-making, ideas-sharing, creativity, problem-solving, listening and reasoning—all processes needed for business to flourish.

“It’s not uncommon for managers to feel like they’re putting out spot-fires between their people all of the time.”

Coach client

However, when team members exchange positive communication signals—and feel free from threat—their higher order executive functions thrive—maximising short-term memory, motivation, creative thought, learning, planning, information processing and strategic thinking.

At Coach we recognise that productivity and business results—as well as staff wellbeing, complaints, attendance and retention—are directly proportional to the social safety created by positive and safe communication practices in the workplace.



Class Act impacts

The results of Class Act Conduct participant surveys indicate a significant reduction in the practice and impact of negative communication behaviours in the workplace and an overall increase in both positive behaviour and team performance.

Almost all respondents surveyed indicate that they made positive changes to their communication behaviours after participating.

Did you make a positive change after participating?

Asked 'Have behaviour changes in the team had a positive impact on your own performance?' **100% of these respondents said 'yes'**.

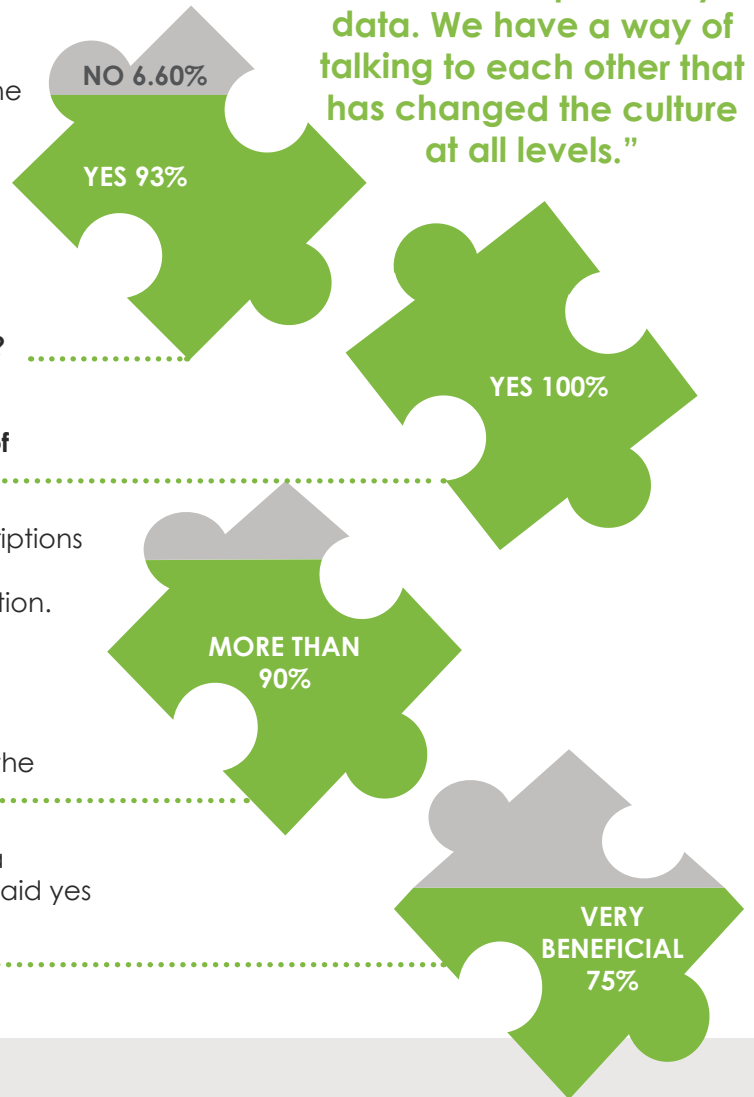
94% of participants say they found Class Act's descriptions of negative communication behaviours helpful in producing change one-to-two years after participation.

75% describe that change as 'Very beneficial'.

More than **90%** of all participant comments in Class Act show a high level of positive engagement with the content.

Asked, 'Have behaviour changes in the team had a positive impact on the team's performance?' **75%** said yes

75% describe those changes as very beneficial.



“This kind of change can never be captured by data. We have a way of talking to each other that has changed the culture at all levels.”

CASE STUDY

Coach case-studied one organisational client to track change over a 16-month period. In this case staff participated only in the 1.5 hr Class Act online program (without any face-to-face facilitation or additional support from Coach).

In 16 months, participation in Class Act's online program alone reduced bad manner in the workplace from 60% to 15%.

Within the same period, participation in Class Act online reduced staff experience of conversational bullying from 60% to 20%. Even more subtle instances of discourteous communication reduced from 60% to 25%

TESTIMONIAL

I had no idea how powerful **Class Act Conduct** would be when we rolled it out here last year. We engaged Coach to deliver a coaching program which included their 360 feedback survey for leaders, coach the coach sessions, and Class Act online. To be honest I thought that Class Act was just going to be a nice bonus. In actual fact it is one of the most important things we've ever done for our staff. I believe we've always had a good team and a good culture here. But, even so, we needed Class Act.

It strengthened our communication practice with each other and with our clients, committees, external stakeholders ... It enabled us to shrink counterproductive

communication that inevitably turns up in the staff room, meeting room, car park etc ... It gave us the means to make a commitment to best communication practice as a team, and the practical skills to live that commitment amidst our pressures.

We are now continuing to bring that commitment to life in our meetings and staff discussions, and in every setting of our business. The result is that all of our staff get to turn up to meetings, interviews, discussions – indeed every conversation and every email – free to bring their best ideas, solutions, problems and insights: Knowing that they will be welcomed, heard, valued and comfortable at all times.

Have you been or are you being affected by bad manner at work?

AT PARTICIPATION 60%

15% 16 MONTHS LATER

Do you have a conversational bully in your midst?

AT PARTICIPATION 60%

20% 16 MONTHS LATER

Do you have someone in your midst who does not demonstrate professional courtesy to you?

AT PARTICIPATION 60%

25% 16 MONTHS LATER

The research

IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In Education, incidences of negative behaviours have been rising steadily since the annual [principal wellbeing] survey first began seven years ago.

When I talk to principals, they tell me they often wake up in the middle of the night thinking about ... reliving a difficult conversation they had or thinking about a difficult conversation they have to have with a student, parent or teacher the next day.

More than one third of principals experience bullying at work.

Riley, 2018

More than 95% of staff in schools have experienced some form of workplace bullying. Bullying behaviour is largely invisible in the school workplace—except to the target—because it is so typical of the behaviour encountered there. In many cases the bullies are quite unaware of the fact their behaviour is seen as bullying.

For example, many school and system leaders did not consider the most commonly experienced forms of bullying as such.

Bullying behaviour needs to be named and shamed if it is to be eliminated from the workplace.

Prevention is better than a cure and schools need to be developing a bully-free culture. Educating school leaders, working to a framework

Duncan, 2015

CASE STUDY

Coach case studied another organisational client to track change over a 3-year period. In this case, again, staff participated only in the 1.5 hr Class Act online program (without any face-to-face facilitation or additional support from Coach).

Staff morale

The levels of staff morale at the time **Class Act Conduct** was commissioned was around 35% (which is very low). For like school organisations the mean is around 77% and the state mean is 82%. The level of staff morale in 2017 data is 94.9% which is considered very high, and well ahead of state mean.

Self-reported bullying rates

Three years after participation in Class Act, the rate of staff self-reported bullying is only 15%—dramatically lower than most other schools, and lower than the average rate of reported bullying in Australia which is currently 60%. Three years after participation, the organisation still cited a reduction in bullying of 35%—and only 1.8% of staff said they observed a poor level of professional courtesy.

TESTIMONIAL

You want productive and effective relationships. You want everyone to feel there's a vehicle for our conversations. Class Act gives you that vehicle. For me the most important thing is the culture. How am I going at work? ... How do I feel going to work? With Class Act, coming from the place we were at when we first rolled it out, the staff morale has done a complete 180.

What's the impact on our day-to-day work? I would have walked past at least half a dozen meetings this year where people have mentioned the words Class Act. At the mere mention of that word everyone has an understanding of what it means to be a professional in a workspace. It immediately modifies the meetings and everyone gets on with it. It's a two-word re-direct that immediately gets a meeting back on track.

It's been incredibly powerful at not taking power away from anyone but empowering everyone to have reasons why relationships work in a workplace.

People don't walk around trying to point score. It's much more about saying holistically that phrase 'Class Act'. We've all been through the same process so when I'm saying it to someone else I'm reigniting our shared sense of the standards we've all accepted here.

The thing for me that's phenomenal about Class Act: I've been to a lot of professional development and it's very onerous and time-consuming. That's what took me most by surprise. When Leanne said Class Act will take you an hour to 90 minutes I said, 'What am I going to do in an hour that will make a difference next week let alone next year?' But it's something that will continue to grow, it embeds itself, it became part of the values of the way we operate together.

I have never met another type of PD that delivers on-going results two years later that you can measure.

Staff morale

35% AT PARTICIPATION

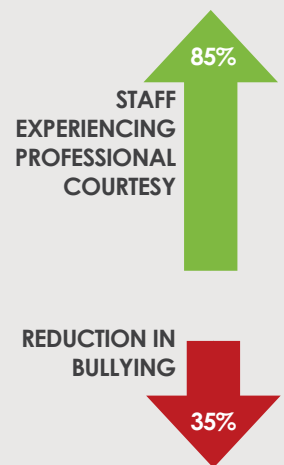
95% 3 YEARS LATER

Self-reported bullying

15% SELF REPORTED BULLYING IN ORGANISATION

60% SELF REPORTED BULLYING NATIONALLY

ut current figs



The research

IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Rudeness is routinely experienced by hospital-based medical teams. Individuals exposed to mildly rude behaviour perform poorly on cognitive tasks, exhibit reduced creativity and flexibility, and are less helpful and prosocial ... Rudeness has adverse consequences on diagnostic and procedural performance of members of the NICU medical teams.

We conclude from these findings that greater attention should be paid to day-to-day social interaction as a critical risk factor for ... adverse events caused by the team delivering health care, and that in taking steps to enhance patient safety, policy makers should begin to consider the role played by the subtle and seemingly benign verbal aggression to which medical professionals are subjected on a routine basis.

Riskin et al, 2015

Communication failures account for the overwhelming majority (more than 70% in one study) of unanticipated adverse events in patients. Of those 75% of the patients died.

Effective teamwork and communication can help prevent these inevitable mistakes from becoming consequential, and harming patients and providers—[in particular] creating a common language and an environment that feels 'safe' to team members so they will speak up when they have safety concerns.

Embedding standardised tools and behaviours such as ... critical language can greatly enhance safety.

Leonard, Graham & Bonacum, 2004

Class Act results

Data from Class Act participation reveals important facts about workplace communication behaviour in Australia.

Class Act data tells us that the most prevalent negative communication behaviours in the workplace are:


- Being persistently negative **(80%)**
- Talking negatively about you or others in your or their absence **(65%)**
- Making patronising, condescending, sarcastic or derisive comments **(65%)**
- Commonly adopting negative body language or critical facial expressions towards you or others **(53%)**
- Interrupting you or others in discussions **(51%)**
- Dominating conversations and making it difficult for you or others to speak **(49%)**
- Adopting a consistently negative position in meetings and discussions **(48%)**
- Ignoring your comments, requests or business processes **(38%)**
- Implying criticisms or making statements with innuendo to insult or persuade **(36%)**
- Commonly speaking to you in a cold or critical tone **(35%)**

Overall, 60% of program participants say they are currently being affected by the bad manner of others at work.

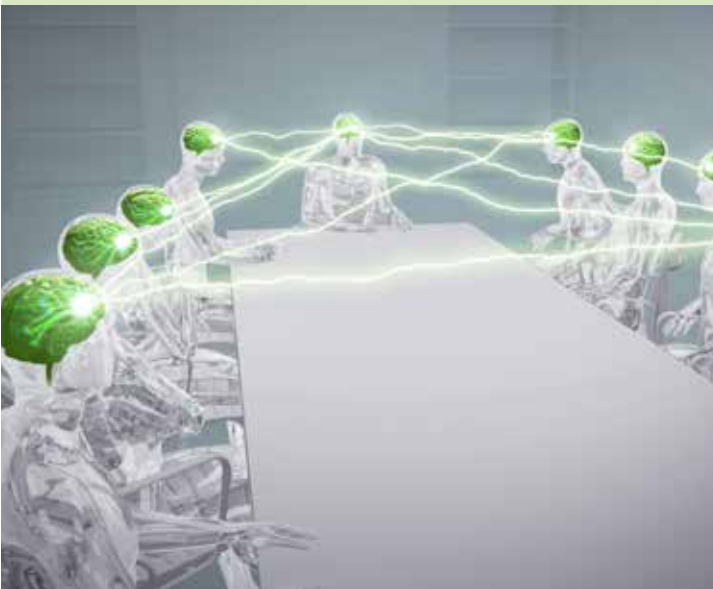
This data is consistent with the latest Australian research into workplace bullying, which indicates that 60% of staff will experience bullying. (*Gordon and Magee, 2014*).

The majority of Class Act respondents rate the stress these behaviours cause them at between 3 and 5—on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. The highest response rate (at 35%) was 4.

Workplace bullying costs Australian organisations between \$6 and \$36 billion every year (*The Productivity Commission*).



"Wow ... This should be mandatory viewing in every workplace."



Who we are

Coach Pty Ltd is a high-calibre communication coaching agency working with large and small organisations in the public and private sectors throughout Australia and internationally.

With a unique focus on helping organisations grow flourishing communication cultures, we bring to our clients our distinctive coaching approaches and models, workforce-wide culture solutions, and a suite of practical, highly tailored 360 feedback tools for leaders and educators—all developed on the fundamental premise we hold dear—the great communicators always own the game.

Our clients include government departments, private sector companies, not-for-profits, universities, training institutes, secondary schools, health services, group training organisations and first-responder organisations.



“Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this amazing program.”



“It is safe to say that, by every measure, our workplace now is very different to the one of 18 months ago.”

“The quality of your workforce’s communication transactions is determining your organisation’s results every day.”

- Leanne Drew-McKain

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