



Trailblazing with  
 CorbettPrice



Series 2 - Embracing organisational change

## Trailblazing with CorbettPrice Podcast – Series 2, Episode 1

### Transcription

**INTRO:** Welcome to Trailblazing with CorbettPrice, where we present new and fresh perspectives that challenge how you approach change to solve some of the biggest challenges faced by business and government leaders today. Here's our host, Andy Corbett, to introduce our second series on embracing organisational change.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Hello, everyone. Andy Corbett here, Managing Director of CorbettPrice. And I just wanted to welcome you to series two of our Trailblazing with CorbettPrice podcast. Our second series will discuss how organisational leaders can approach, manage and embrace uncomfortable but necessary change. We have a stellar lineup of Trailblazers to help us navigate these discussions over the next five weeks, so recapping briefly on series one about organisational health and the seven dimensions of wellness. We spoke with leading experts in their fields across each of these dimensions with the themes of agility, resilience, adaptiveness, reframing and purpose resonating our conversations.

And as we dived deeper into these conversations, the underlying current for improving an organisation's overall wellness was the need for change. Change in how we lead and empower others to create a positive workforce culture change in how we view and adopt new technologies. Change in how we frame and structure resources to realise efficiencies and boost productivity.

So what are the leading uncomfortable changes that organisational leaders must embrace? Well, across the next five weeks, we will be tackling five significant transformational changes that organisations must embrace to succeed now and into the future. They are:

- Shifting mindsets and leading to empower employees

- Adopting new technologies responsibly
- Optimising service delivery for customers
- Realising diversity, equity and inclusion aspirations, and finally,
- Playing the new talent game attracting, retaining and reducing employee attrition.

Today, in our first episode, we'll discuss ways organisations can overcome the mindset hurdle and embrace a new type of leadership to engage and empower their workforce. It's well documented and present in our work for our clients at CorbettPrice that one of the makes or breaks in implementing a successful transformation project is overcoming the cultural roadblock and that's both at an individual and an institutional level.

[In an article written for the McKinsey Quarterly](#), research showed that leaders who focused on mindsets were four times more likely to rate their change programs as successful compared to those who didn't address mindsets. Series one of our podcasts uncovered key attributes leaders must have today to face continuing uncertainty. These included creating a clear purpose and staying true to it, a belonging strategy, and a shift to empowering teams. So how can today's leaders change how they engage, empower and include their workforce in strategic decisions for their organisation?

Here to help me discuss this today is Steve Brady. Steve is the Managing Director of TAFE, New South Wales (NSW). He has more than 20 years of experience in executive leadership within the private and public sectors and across a diverse range of New South Wales government agencies. This includes NSW Treasury, Department of Premier and Cabinet Revenue, NSW, and NSW Department of Customer Service. Steve's committed to driving innovation in the public sector through a focus on customer and community, working with industry to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, enhancing the economic contribution of agencies, and delivering strong financial stewardship.

In his current role, Steve is responsible for ensuring TAFE NSW is the leading provider of vocational training supporting the evolving needs of industry and learners in a rapidly changing economy. Steve, thank you very much for coming on the podcast today.

**STEVE BRADY:** Thanks, Andy. Thanks for inviting me along.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Absolute pleasure. So, look, Steve, I think it's fair to say you've had an exceptional career, and I say that we'd probably need far more than our brief chat today to cover off everything. But I think we should really begin the conversation on your current role, and that being Managing Director of TAFE NSW. And so the first area I'd like to dive into is customer focus. And I think it's really clear from [TAFE NSW's strategic plan](#) that a strong commitment of the organisation is around meeting the evolving needs of your customers. And so my first question is, can you provide some examples of what those evolving needs are?

**STEVE BRADY:** Thanks, Andy. I think the first point to really start is who are other customers? Because unless you've worked that out, then it's very hard to understand what their needs are and therefore how you should focus your efforts in trying to address them. So for us, we very much think about this as being the role we play in meeting the skills needs of the state. And so we think about our customers as being the industries whose needs, skills needs we're trying to satisfy, and then secondly, the learners who we're taking on that journey of growth. So industry and learners are our

two key customer groups, but we also reflect that we're an important part of local communities and so we sort of take that third lens as well.

So, in terms of evolving needs, industry is going through enormous change at the moment. The impact of technology in all of its various forms. The global economy has become so interconnected that things change much more rapidly than did even ten or 15 years ago. And so if we are here to meet their skills needs, then we need to be in tune to what's happening in their environment, what that impact is on them and therefore how do we need to adapt so that when we are training people and they're completing their courses, they're actually job ready, and they're stepping into industry fully formed, able to contribute from day one and meeting the needs of the industry. So, really critical part of it, I guess one example of that would be at the moment where there's a lot of talk around the green energy transition and the impact that that's going to have right across the economy.

And so when we think of it, we think about it in terms of the transition in generation. There's the impact on distribution and then there's the usage and how that impacts right across in making that transition. There's an enormous impact on businesses, whether they're the transmission organisations or whether they're in business in the heavy end of industry, whether that's in ammonia and aluminium smelting, which we know of big energy uses, or whether it's things as simple as in automotive vehicles and the transition there.

So, some of the numbers that are being quoted for just the need for additional electricians to manage that transition of the distribution. Thousands and thousands of additional electricians in a situation where we're already struggling to meet the demands of a booming construction sector. So that's one example. The welding industry will tell you they need 7,000 additional welders to meet the demands of building the infrastructure needed for wind turbines, for solar farms, et cetera, to meet those demands. But at the usage end, it's things like how do you transition an existing workforce of automotive mechanics so that they understand the dangers and the safe practices in managing high voltage vehicles? So we've partnered with Volvo, Australia to develop some micro skills that help mechanics to understand how to safely service these sorts of vehicles. And so we're working with them in terms of the rollout of electric buses and the transition of heavy vehicles to electrification.

So that's just one small example of where we're seeing those changes flowing through the industry and therefore the skills need to adapt and change. And as Australia's largest training provider, we need to be there with them.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Absolutely. And you touched on the mechanism there for really identifying and navigating how to then meet those needs through the form of partnerships. What other mechanisms and strategies do you use to really, truly understand what those needs are and therefore be able to then adapt to meet those needs accordingly?

**STEVE BRADY:** I think it's threefold, Andy. So we are taking approach where we're trying to gather as much data as we can about what's happening in the economy and community. Taking ABS data, the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research taking all their data, whatever data we can get to get that macro picture of what's happening and where demands are shifting across the state. But

we're also trying to engage with local communities. So we've done profiles of industrial activity across ten regions in New South Wales to give us more of a bottom up view of what's happening. So taking into account things like where's the inland rail line running, what's that happening impact is that having in terms of logistics, what's it driving in terms of local industrial activity, what's happening in the care sector as the aging of the population and how's that impacting in different parts of the state, taking all those sort of local factors and then stepping into some local business and community engagement.

So we get the sort of data driving a top down view and then getting that local engagement driving a bottom up view that then gives us a much better understanding of what do we need to deliver aware to meet those needs. We then do a lot of just direct industry engagement. So we have industry reference groups, we've got industry innovation specialists whose job it is to work with industry constantly to understand what's driving and shaping their needs. And the last part of that is in some of these big shifts, like I mentioned renewable energy change, there's what's happening in the care sector as the aging of the population, as we've got the Royal Commissions into Disability and Aged Care. We know the big changes that are happening in early childhood education. All those factors are driving a big demand shift in the care sector.

And so there's two examples of really big structural changes that are occurring. And so we're developing individual strategies around those big shifts that then help us to take a slightly longer view of what's happening and therefore build the supply capability to address those. And with those different strategies that you mentioned around the top down, which is the data, and then the bottom up, which is engaging with local communities, direct industry engagement and so forth.

**ANDY CORBETT:** What have the main challenges been in trying to gather the necessary insights together to make informed decisions on where the demand is or how the customer needs are evolving?

**STEVE BRADY:** I think part of it is just getting sufficient granularity. So most of the statistics stop at a fairly macro level. That's where that local community engagement is so important to really be able to hone in and say, what do we actually need? Where? And making sure that we can talk to industry associations, we can talk to the unions about really getting that insight from individual businesses about what's occurring and then being able to sort of bring that together. So really important to get the macro overlay from the stats, but then really driving into that and saying, well, what are the actual skills that flow out of that and where are they needed?

**ANDY CORBETT:** Good. And I think, again, just on this idea of customer focus, the strategy that you've got in place at TAFE, it's very clear that it's very customer-centric and that's excellent. And it's really clear that you really wanted to meet the needs of the industry customers and learners as well. So you've got that customer perspective and then you've got that more sort of sort of internal perspective now. How do you then align your workforce and your operations to support those needs, and how have the workforce responded to those changes?

**STEVE BRADY:** Probably still a work in progress, Andy to be honest, these things take time. I've mentioned we've got some industry innovation specialists whose full time role it is to work with industry and bring those insights back to us to then adapt our training packages to help our teachers

to understand our teachers are experts out of industry who have then moved into teaching to share their knowledge with the next generation.

So how do we help our teachers to stay current as well as things shift? So we had a great example this week where a bunch of our plumbing teachers have gone out into some of the major players in the plumbing sector and spent time with them in their innovation spaces to just make sure that we are there right with them. And then we're able to pass that on to the apprentices, and the next round of trainees that are coming through. One of the really critical things we've done is also tried to align our experts across the state. So historically we would have been set up in individual institutes where each institute had plumbers, hairdressers, carpenters, the full range of training delivery that we have at TAFE and they would have managed within that sort of geographical area. Whereas what we're trying to say is actually we want to leverage the best skills in plumbing right across the state and we want those best skills to then be helping to lift the standard and be able to actually engage more meaningfully with industry strategic level.

So we've actually had what we're calling skills excellence networks where we're getting together those leaders across our different disciplines to work together to provide a much better engagement with industry and then get that innovation flowing through our teaching practice.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Thank you. That's great. And like you say, these things definitely do take time. I know that from experience, it's not an easy thing to change and evolve in that way. So that's great to hear some great examples of what you are doing in that space. And just on that idea of change, we had an episode in our previous series which was focused on organisational health. It was actually [episode two](#). And in that we interviewed Scott Johnston from Revenue NSW on Agility and Resilience. And Scott spoke of how much of the public sector's work is complex and that change can be either slow or it can be fast. Just from your personal experience, whether it's TAFE or from previous organisations, could you just shed some light on how you managed to keep a positive outlook and also stay adaptable in the face of change?

**STEVE BRADY:** Yeah. Thanks Andy. Of course, I know Scott quite well and his views are spot on. Things can change very rapidly or you can be trying to shift large, complex organisations that take resilience time and just committed effort to move them. So to me, there's a few things that are really important about being able to sustain the change effort.

One is obviously to have a clear strategy and vision that speaks to the purpose of the organisation that then people can understand. In our space, our staff are incredibly passionate about vocational education and what that means for changing people's lives. So for me it was pretty simple. You identify your customers and you say, well, if it's not making it better for the student, then why are we doing it? And so that sort of alignment to people's real purpose and the calling that they have easier in a purpose led organisation like ours, perhaps, but then making sure our plans are ambitious, but deliverable.

So if you try to do everything at once, you achieve nothing. So making sure you can break things down and you can have wins, then you can celebrate the wins, and you want some small quick wins that you can continue to deliver, that allow people to celebrate and see the change. And that then helps to build the momentum and the buy in from people. So I think, you know, and that those

celebrations just help to restore your energy levels. And really importantly for me, getting out on campus and seeing the students and talking to the teachers about what's happening and those things are you can get caught up in a whole lot of really difficult conversations that start to drain your energy. But going out and speaking to the customers, speaking to the teachers who are so passionate about what they do, really helps to restore the energy levels. And so it's those sort of celebrations of the wins that you have along the way, staying connected to your customers and the purpose really helps.

The point about agility is really important. It's difficult in large, complex organisations to be agile, but that goes back to having that clarity of purpose, having empowered teams, and then making sure you got the data so you can make informed decisions, so you're empowering people with the right direction, the right tools to do the job. And for us, we're just refreshing our strategic plan. We set up a three-year plan. We do quarterly reviews of progress and we do a full annual refresh because no plan provides first contact with the enemy. And in this case, the enemy is the bureaucracy and all the things that get in the way. And so that ability to keep the plan real and relevant so that it continues to focus our effort and drive our attention.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Absolutely. And from a personal perspective, because I can imagine actually trying to manage the change itself could be quite stressful. Do you have any personal strategies that you have that might help others sort of maintain a positive mindset in times of change?

**STEVE BRADY:** I have two things. One is change. It's just a natural power of any sort of leadership role because the environment we're in is changing rapidly as we sort of started the conversation. So it's part of our role to lead change because it's not a choice, it's a fact of, of being in a role where you're trying to steward an organisation, it's inevitable. So then it's about embracing that change and making sure that you have a focus on the outcomes and the better state you're trying to lead people towards. And that's really rewarding. I find it something that's incredibly rewarding. It's hard.

So then taking the time to make sure that you are celebrating those wins, but having the balance in your life. So you've got to be able to put it down. Spend times with family and friends, look after your physical health. So I go sailing and when you're out on a yacht and you're competing against other boats, you can't be thinking about work. So just having that ability to put aside the work for a while, let yourself refresh and then come back at it.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Yeah, I bet that's a great way of doing it. And I'd like to try and take on sailing at some point in my life, so well, but getting some tips from you onto how to do that, but yeah, that's great. I think in terms of the actual strategic plan, again, I guess you've got a number of really strong success outcomes. And I guess one of those is the boundaryless learning networks established with your partners. So the question is, can you share with the audience some best practices you've found in successfully collaborating with partners to both co design and co deliver training solutions?

**STEVE BRADY:** I'll give you two examples, Andy. One is the work we've actually been doing with the Department of Customer Service around, and particularly the Building Commissioner. So the Building Commissioner, as you be aware, has got a huge challenge in trying to improve the standard of particularly residential high rise buildings. So we've been doing work with them to develop small, bite-sized training modules that helps them promote how the regulation impacts the sector. So

rather than sending out a long, tedious policy document, people in that industry can now come on and do some really small bite-sized pieces of interactive learning that we've developed with the Building Commissioner that enables them to quickly get up to speed with what's being asked of them. So a huge cultural shift in terms of how regulators engage with their customers. I know regulators struggle with the idea of customer, but perhaps with their industries. So that's one example.

The other one would really be at the forefront of where educational delivery is going. And that's our institution, Advanced Technology Digital, which we've established at Meadowbank. And that's a partnership between digital industry, in particular our foundation partner Microsoft but also TAFE NSW with Macquarie University and the University of Technology, Sydney. And it's a very different model where the higher education and the vocational training have come together and partnered with industry. And when I say partnered with industry, Microsoft has had its sleeves rolled up with us designing content and delivery mechanisms.

So we've rolled out a whole bunch of micro skills and micro credentials. This calendar year, we've already trained over 20,000 people in new skills around data, cybersecurity, cloud, and that's been a hugely successful partnership. We're taking a very different approach where we've sat down and looked at what are the types of jobs we're talking about. So let's take cybersecurity, what does that job entail, what are the things you need to know? And then actually design the learning around the job. So it becomes very applied for people who are in their careers. They're thinking they need to deepen their skills in an area like cybersecurity. They can quickly grab some bite-sized pieces to raise their awareness or to really start to build deeper skills by building on component type learning.

So it's been quite an innovative program, one where we've put aside some of the hard barriers that tend to exist between vocational education and universities and actually had the universities and ourselves working hand in glove with the industry partners. So it's been a fantastic model and one which is being looked at very closely, not only nationally, but internationally.

**ANDY CORBETT:** Oh, wow. That's great. Excellent. Well, look, Steve, unfortunately, we're actually nearing the end of the podcast and we could talk about we could have this conversation, I think, all day, to be honest. It's great to hear everything and all your insights that you've provided. But before we wrap up, do you have any final thoughts or reflections on what we've talked about today?

**STEVE BRADY:** Just Andy, I guess the one thing I would say is having that laser focus on your customers and making sure that that flows through everything you do. So we try to ensure that every decision we're making is making it better for our students. And if there's an internal dispute over how something should happen, that should be the lens we take to trying to resolve that dispute. Any large organisation needs sort of be broken up into parts so that it's manageable. And often those sort of internal structures can get in the way of outcomes. But if you can bring that customer focus back to things, then it often cuts through some of the sort of internal bureaucracy and power structures. So I think that's really the big thing that's been supporting us at TAFE NSW, in moving from some historical issues that have stood in the way of the organisation, some outside influences that have sort of clouded the issues. As soon as you get focused on who we here to

support and what are the outcomes we're looking for, then the rest of it sort of tends to fall into line, not say it's easy, but it does provide a lot more clarity.

**ANDY CORBETT:** That focus point is so true for all organisations, isn't it? Just to really provide that clarity so they've got something to work towards. So yeah, that's great. Thanks, Steve. Well, look, it's been an absolute pleasure having you on the show today. We really appreciate the time you've taken out of your busy schedule. And as always, your perspectives on how organisations can embrace change has been extremely insightful as well. So I'm sure all of our listeners have gained a lot from it. I know I certainly have. And I just want to thank you once again for coming on the podcast.

**STEVE BRADY:** Thanks for the invitation, Andy. Great to catch up.

**ANDY CORBETT:** We hope you enjoyed listening to Steve Brady today and found his insights and approaches valuable. The full transcripts of this episode is available to download from our website, which is [www.corbettprice.com.au/podcast](http://www.corbettprice.com.au/podcast) . That's [www.corbettprice.com.au/podcast](http://www.corbettprice.com.au/podcast). Please tune in next week as we talk with the prolific global public sector expert Pia Andrews on the second transformational change of adopting new technologies responsibly. Thanks for listening. Goodbye.