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Te Kāhui Mātai Hinengaro ā te Wāhi Mahi

Institute of Organisational Psychology
Symposium

Auckland University of Technology
Level 7, WF Building
[42 Wakefield Street](#)

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Abstracts

Amplifying Employee Voice: Advancing Organisational Psychology Through Scalable Analysis of Spoken Feedback

Peter Carswell

Organisational psychology has long recognised the importance of employee voice, but the challenge has been to capture it in ways that are both authentic and scalable. Recent advances in speech recognition and natural language processing (NLP) provide an opportunity to address this gap. Capturing spoken rather than written responses enables researchers and practitioners to access not only the semantic content of feedback but also the paralinguistic features that convey emotion, intent, and engagement. These richer data can be systematically analysed to identify patterns at scale, while still retaining access to the original voice for interpretive depth. Privacy-preserving techniques such as voice modulation offer additional safeguards, making this approach viable in organisational contexts. This paper examines the potential of voice-based feedback (and demonstrates a new platform) as a methodological advance in employee engagement research and practice. We argue that integrating authentic vocal expression with thematic analysis advances organisational psychology by bridging qualitative and quantitative paradigms, while offering HR practitioners a more valid and actionable basis for improving retention, culture, and organisational wellbeing.

[Slides](#)

Assuring Readiness for Real-World Risky Work

Frank O'Connor

This workshop invites participants to actively explore how organisations can move beyond theory to assure readiness for risky work in real-world settings. Traditional approaches focus on reducing harm after the fact, but evidence shows that preparedness is both achievable and far less costly than rehabilitation. How can we keep people and workgroups ready for risky work—because hoping for the best isn't a strategy.

Participants will work with examples of individual and workgroup risks—severe fatigue, bullying, indecision, and confusion—and practice noticing and assessing them in their own contexts. At the same time, they will identify protective factors—meaning, growth, fairness, connection, and choice—that strengthen readiness across teams and organisations. Discussions and exercises will highlight how these factors support safe performance, and where gaps erode the capacity of workgroups to deliver what is needed in the days and weeks ahead.

Through group tasks and scenario exercises, attendees will practise weighing options, brainstorming mitigation actions, and prioritising efforts where they can have the most impact—recognising both what can be influenced and what lies beyond immediate control. They will also see how effectiveness and safety can be assessed and reported in practice,

linking mental, physical, and social dimensions. By the end of the workshop, participants will be equipped to apply evidence-informed actions at individual, team, and organisational levels to reduce harm and strengthen readiness for risky work.

Slides

A Tale of Two Surveys: Two Different Approaches to Exploring the STEM Career Landscape in New Zealand

Michael K Edmonds

STEM careers play a vital role in New Zealand's economic, environmental and social development, yet the STEM career landscape is not well studied or understood. This presentation will describe two approaches designed to better understand the STEM career landscape in New Zealand. The first approach used a comprehensive survey to explore the demographics, opinions, beliefs and experiences of New Zealand scientists and technologists. A second, more focused, approach used social media to "survey" the career trajectories of chemistry PhD graduates in the first ten years following graduation to answer questions about the type of roles they took up and whether they remained in New Zealand or travelled overseas. This presentation will discuss the data derived from the two studies and compare the two different methodologies.

The surveys provide an opportunity to better understand the STEM career landscape in New Zealand, providing information that can inform government STEM policies, enhance public understanding of STEM related careers, provide a voice for the STEM community, and inform initiatives to enhance recruitment, support and retention of the STEM workforce.

BeLongEng Project – a longitudinal study of engineers in Australia and New Zealand

Rosie Hixon

Neurodiversity is increasingly recognised as a critical dimension of workplace inclusion yet remains underexplored in many professions — including engineering. The 2022 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey revealed a significant knowledge gap and lack of proactive support for neurodiversity, with 32.1% of self-identified neurodivergent employees reporting negative career impacts (Tolooei, 2022). Respondents felt their organisations were ill-equipped to support a neurodiverse workforce, something Praslova (2024) describes as a systemic design failure in modern workplaces. Despite estimates that 15–20% of the population is neurodivergent (Diversity Works, 2022), only 3–5% of engineering students identify as autistic or ADHD (Chrysochoou et al., 2022), suggesting underrepresentation and underreporting. Neurodivergent individuals bring strengths such as systems thinking, pattern recognition, and problem-solving — all highly relevant to engineering practice (Chrysochoou et al., 2022). However, little is known about their experiences in the engineering workforce, especially in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This talk introduces the BeLongEng Project – a longitudinal study of engineers in Australia and New Zealand- and new neurodiversity-focused questions added in 2025. Drawing on Wave 3 data, the presentation will provide a demographic snapshot of neurodivergent engineers,

explore differences in industry belonging, wellbeing, psychological safety, and perceived support between neurodivergent and neurotypical participants, and summarise the support needs expressed by the neurodivergent engineering community.

Delivery of Critical Incident Mental Health Support for NZ Army Firefighters

Shania McIntosh

This presentation explores the experiences of New Zealand Army firefighters with the NZDF Critical Incident Mental Health Support (CIMHS) process. Using qualitative focus groups with personnel from Waiouru and Linton who had completed the process at least twice in the past two years, thematic analysis identified key themes in their experiences. Findings indicate that while the CIMHS process is generally effective in supporting wellbeing and identifying mental health concerns, there are opportunities to enhance its relevance and impact for firefighters. Themes highlighted the need for timely and meaningful engagement, role-specific training, clear communication, balance between operational demands and individual wellbeing, strong leadership, culturally responsive options, and peer support. Recommendations arising from this research aim to inform the Directorate of Psychology in refining the CIMHS process to better support personnel exposed to frequent critical incidents.

Does Organisational Psychology need an Entrepreneurship Psychology?

Christin Tan

Entrepreneurship, while celebrated for innovation and autonomy, presents a more complex reality fraught with psychological strain, emotional volatility, and health risks. The positivity bias within entrepreneurship discourse and education often valorises traits like resilience and grit, thereby obscuring psychological demands such as burnout, anxiety, and isolation. This creates an information asymmetry, leaving aspiring entrepreneurs unprepared for the emotional and structural burdens they may face. Entrepreneurial activities differ significantly from conventional employment, lacking boundaries between work and personal life, requiring constant emotional labour, and unfolding in highly uncertain, resource-constrained environments, thus posing biopsychosocial risks beyond financial ones.

The psychological experience of entrepreneurship is dualistic, encompassing autonomy and purpose alongside anxiety and fear of failure. This challenges simplistic, binary models of mental health, suggesting a dynamic continuum of positive and negative states. OP, focused on motivation and thriving, and clinical research, on dysfunction, are fragmented. Entrepreneurship provides a context to integrate these perspectives, demanding frameworks that capture both emotional highs and psychosocial hazards. The unique pressures impact performance, decision-making, and venture survival, often lacking institutional support. An emerging entrepreneurship psychology could address this gap, enhancing entrepreneurial theory and its practical relevance for OP.

Employees with Chronic Fatigue: What It Looks Like, and How I/O Practitioners Can Help

Liz Wagenvoort

This workshop aims to equip IO practitioners with a greater understanding of why and how chronic fatigue impacts employees, and how we can work together to grow inclusivity and accessibility within the workplace.

Chronic fatigue is a symptom which is often misunderstood or minimised. It frequently impacts employees who manage a long-term health condition, with flow-on effects to the wider organisation.

Using case studies, IO practitioners will learn more about the presentation and impacts of chronic fatigue in the workplace, and how we can transform job design and workspace to better accommodate employees.

Key learning objectives:

- Understand the different ways in which chronic fatigue shows up in the workplace.
- Learn reasons why an employee may opt not to disclose their health information/condition.
- Discover evidence-based strategies for supporting employees who need to manage their energy consumption.
- Getting buy-in from direct/line managers of employees managing chronic fatigue.

Benefits of attending this workshop:

- Increase level of practical knowledge around what to do when an employee discloses a health condition involving chronic fatigue.
- Help organisations to develop inclusive and equitable workplaces even in the absence of disclosure of conditions such as chronic fatigue.

[Slides](#)

Enhancing Operational Effectiveness through Psychological Flexibility: Applying Third Wave Behavioural Science in the Military Context

Ryan Hissong

Operational environments require personnel to sustain performance, lead adaptively, and make sound decisions under stress. Psychological flexibility—the capacity to remain present, open, and values-driven in challenging conditions—is increasingly recognised as essential to performance, recovery, and mission success.

This presentation outlines a training program for military personnel and leaders that applies Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT) principles to strengthen resilience, reduce the impact of trauma exposure, and embed adaptive thinking into leadership and decision-making.

Through experiential exercises and systems-level applications, the training demonstrates how psychological flexibility can be cultivated at individual, team, and organisational levels to enhance operational effectiveness in complex and uncertain environments.

History and Evolution of NZDF Psychology & Case Study Discussion of the NZDF Psychological Support to Deployment Programme

Alana Stone

As a capability effect, the NZDF Psychology Directorate works to enable operational effectiveness, enhance performance and improve psychological readiness of individuals, teams and leaders. This presentation showcases the evolution of NZDF Psychology from its origins in the 1940s through to present day as a Tri-Service NZDF Psychology Directorate and features a case study overview of a core programme of work- the Psychological Support to Deployment Programme.

How NZ Army Recruits perceive, interpret and apply resilience training during Initial Recruit Training

Robbie Capizzi

This presentation explores the lived experiences of New Zealand Army Recruits with recollection, application and usefulness of resiliency training mental skills taught during Initial Basic Training. Using a qualitative approach, this research explored the experiences of NZ Army recruits with the training provided on recruit course. Research findings will be used to enhance future resilience and mental skills training delivery in the training context and identify ways in which this type of training is more impactful.

In-depth skill development in executive coaching: a practical deliberate practice conceptual framework

Dr Iain McCormick

Executive coaching is a highly skilled practice that requires development beyond initial training. Yet most professional development in the area does not focus on in-depth skill development but on the 'new shiny thing'. Deliberate practice is a systematic evidence-based process designed to offer much more than traditional training methods. In the coaching context deliberate practice involves: setting measurable improvement goals, focused effort, repetitive practice at a micro-skills level, actionable feedback and systematic skill development. The paper reports on a small group format for using deliberate practice with coaches that includes: skill selection, goal setting, maintaining the coaching alliance, micro skills identification and practice, requesting actionable feedback, reflection and refinement and performance tracking. Initial findings suggest that coaches find this approach highly engaging, deeply relevant to their practice, demanding and challenging but rewarding. The presented conceptual framework will assist coaches to understand how they can maximise the impact of their professional development, it will also assist trainers and educators on an approach that shows promise in enhancing in-depth skill development. At a profession level it may have the impact of reduce time and cost input while enhancing output. "

[Slides](#)

Inside NZDF Assessment and Selection

Stafford Kimber

This presentation provides an overview of the range of specialised trades and occupation groups that NZDF Psychologists carry out assessment and selection processes for, as well as showcasing recent selection research insights and how they have shaped modifications to practice and processes in the Defence selection context.

Is psychological safety a one-size-fits-all? Diverse perspectives on workplace psychological safety.

Hansini Gunasekara

Since the seminal works of Kahn (1990) and Edmondson (1999), psychological safety has attracted significant attention from both researchers and practitioners. This is unsurprising, as psychological safety is a cornerstone of the workplace experience, underpinning engagement, wellbeing, and performance across individual, team, and organisational levels. Despite this, much of our current knowledge and practice remains one-size-fits-all and largely Eurocentric. As workplace diversity grows, especially in super-diverse Tāmaki Makaurau, it is crucial to consider how employees from different backgrounds perceive and experience psychological safety. Understanding these differences allows organisations and their leaders to foster inclusive psychological safety, enabling all employees to speak up, participate, express creative ideas, challenge the status quo, and reach their full potential. This workshop offers research-driven, practical insights, drawing on the speaker's latest work and contemporary scholarship. Through an interactive session, participants will examine the ethno-cultural dimensions of psychological safety and identify ways to strengthen it in diverse workplace contexts. The workshop equips leaders and practitioners to move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and build workplaces across Aotearoa—and beyond—that enable psychological safety inclusion for all.

MFAT's Approach to Leader Development: The journey so far

Maurice Jennings and Richard Tremain

Leadership capability is critical to the success of any organisation, particularly in complex and dynamic environments like foreign affairs. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), we are evolving our approach to leadership development with a particular focus on supporting leadership transitions and nurturing talent across the organisation.

This presentation shares MFAT's journey to date- highlighting the principles guiding our work, the challenges we've encountered, and the early insights we're gathering. Our approach is grounded in the belief that leadership is not just a set of competencies but a collective, context-sensitive practice that requires intentional support, especially during moments of transition.

We will explore how MFAT is designing interventions to better prepare leaders stepping into new roles, and how we are identifying and developing talent with an eye toward future organisational needs. This is a work in progress, and we invite dialogue with others on similar

journeys. By sharing our experience, we hope to contribute to a broader conversation about building sustainable leadership capability.

No Silver Bullets: Designing Leadership Frameworks that Fit the Context

Lydia Edwards and Joel Majer

Leadership frameworks are a powerful way to align culture, capability, and strategy. Yet their design and implementation are rarely simple. This session shares lessons from two large New Zealand organisations: a major private-sector gentailer and a large government department. Both developed bespoke leadership frameworks, led by their Heads of Organisational Development, who are practising organisational psychologists.

We will explore the similarities and differences across the two journeys, showing how shared evidence-based principles were adapted to each context and what lessons emerged. The session highlights that leadership frameworks add real value when done well, and that success depends on clear principles, flexibility, and meeting the organisation where it is so the framework connects with strategy and culture.

Attendees will gain a rare, side-by-side view of private and public sector approaches, and practical insights into how organisational psychologists build bespoke, strategically aligned leadership frameworks, rather than relying on off-the-shelf or generic models. Attendees will also see how frameworks translate into system elements such as custom 360s, targeted talent assessments, and leadership programmes.

Practical team development approaches for non-team coaches

Helen Zink

In organisations, people work collaboratively in groups and teams- very little work is a solo effort. Ten years ago, Amy Edmondson popularised the term “teaming”, saying that organisations thrive or fail based on how well small groups within them work collectively. While a one-on-one coaching approach has become common place, and can be very effective, the focus is on one person- not the groups and teams people actually work in every day. Team coaching has gained global popularity as a practical and effective way to bring “teaming”, collective learning, and high performing teamwork, to life. Take notice! Just as one-to-one coaching moved from the sole domain of professional external coaches to internal coaches, leaders, Human Resources professionals, and change agents over time- so too will team coaching.

This highly interactive workshop will benefit leaders, facilitators, Human Resources professionals, change agents and one-to-one coaches looking to gain understanding and build confidence in applying team coaching approaches. Learning points throughout the workshop will be illustrated using current theory and research in the area, best practice and examples from real case studies.

[Slides](#)

[10 Top Tips](#)

Psychosocial risk management – from talking to doing

Amanda Wallis and Erika Clarry

Organisations across Aotearoa are increasingly aware of psychosocial risks, yet many remain stuck in the space of “so, what do we do now...?”. With almost one in three New Zealand workers experiencing work-related mental health or wellbeing issues in the last year according to WorkSafe data, psychosocial risk management is too important to ignore. The team at Umbrella have been providing support bridging this gap for several years now, working with organisations big and small across Aotearoa New Zealand. This has included running nationwide psychosocial risk masterclass sessions, facilitating organisational workshops, conducting Psychosocial Risk Assessments and engaging in strategic consulting.

In this short, applied session, we will share our practical, evidence-informed approach to psychosocial risk management grounded in the psychosocial hierarchy of controls model and the principle of focusing on changing the work, not the worker. Drawing on insights from our work with diverse organisations, we will unpack common tensions and lessons learned in practice, including the reliance on ad-hoc initiatives over strategy, balancing limited resources with outcomes, and the misconception that psychosocial risk management must be costly, time-consuming, or complex.

[Slides](#)

Reimagining Conversations: Organisational Psychology in the Age of AI

Dan Henning Langerud and Kevin Gudmundsson

Conversations sit at the heart of organisational psychology. They reveal trust, uncover risks, and build performance, yet their value often dissipates once the meeting ends. Insights fade, patterns remain unseen, and early signs of strain are lost.

This interactive session explores how artificial intelligence can make those conversations visible again. Participants will take part in short one-to-one dialogues, capture notes, and watch as HeyPenny’s AI agent translates them into psychosocial insights within seconds. Results are mapped against a validated framework of risk and protective factors, offering a live demonstration of how individual experiences can scale into collective organisational awareness.

We will also outline the next stage of this work, a longitudinal validation study conducted with Victoria University of Wellington in 2026. The research will examine how changes in psychosocial factors relate to engagement, performance, and wellbeing over time. Developed in collaboration with industry partners, the project aims to bridge academic rigour and practical application across organisational settings.

For organisational psychologists and practitioners, this session bridges innovation with evidence. It highlights a future where AI strengthens rather than replaces human connection, and where data from real conversations can advance both practice and science.

Strategic Thinking: What is Psychology's Contribution?

Nina Field

Strategic thinking is well-known to be a critical skill in the business world, yet there are many and varied ways of understanding and teaching it. It is widely taught in business schools, and written of in management literature, but usually without a human lens. Psychology offers a contribution that, when combined with management and business perspectives, allows us to come at the topic with a whole-person approach. Strategic thinking has cognitive, emotional, social and practical elements. Considering both the skill that needs to be learnt and practiced and the real life human that sits behind it allows us to design more effective ways of teaching, practicing and developing this skill.

The Art of Switching Off: Psychological Detachment for Peak Performance

Api Taiapa

Drawing on experiences of RNZAF Flying Squadrons, this presentation will share insights from a mental skills training package on psychological detachment that has had benefit for aircrew who have frequent high intensity taskings where maximising recovery and respite are crucial for peak performance.

The career motives and activities of older professionals

Stewart Forsyth

Older workers represent a growing proportion of the New Zealand workforce. They are taking advantage of the opportunity provided by greater physical and psychological capability at older age. For employers, smaller proportions of skilled younger workers mean that hiring and retaining more senior employees is increasingly important.

The aim of this ongoing study is to gain a greater understanding of how career motives and activities evolve and are enacted by older professionals. A sample of older New Zealand professionals reflect on jobs they held that are representative of the beginning and middle of their career, and also their present work. They rate the relevance of 13 variables the literature has indicated are relevant to career success.

From preliminary data, trends in factors such as proactivity, career planning, networking, active learning, career satisfaction and employability are summarised over these individuals' careers.

There are potential implications for how such professionals can plan and manage their work lives. Similarly there are lessons for organisations that want to make the most of this workforce.

[Slides](#)

Tracking psychosocial risk in a busy transformation: Mitigating risk and optimising wellbeing

Megan Jenkins

Current organisations compete with each other to deliver solutions more quickly to optimise customer experience, grow market share and utilise new digital and cloud-based platforms. Many organisations still rely on legacy systems which are static, siloed, and often manual. The shift to cloud-based, digital platforms enables real-time data and analysis, scalability, enhanced user experience and interoperability with modern tools, making digital transformation essential.

Achieving transformative change requires a multi-year roadmap to build viable platforms for business operations. Teams are divided into multi-disciplinary agile delivery squads to deliver incremental value to the business and its customers, working over many months to deliver specific releases in a highly pressured, time-bound environment. Amidst this, New Zealand health and safety legislation requires employers to manage mental health risks and address psychosocial hazards like excessive workloads. This project implemented a proactive, data-driven approach to monitoring and enhancing team wellbeing, intending to reduce psychosocial risks in delivery teams that are part of a busy transformation. A wellbeing pulse was regularly administered using the Job Demands-Resources model to determine how supported teams felt. This recognised the sometimes-unavoidable pressure that exists in delivery teams, especially as the “go live” date gets closer and acknowledged the importance of mitigants such as sense of support.

[Slides](#)

Scientist-Practitioner in Practice: Developing a Psychosocial Risk Approach for Organisational Readiness.

Courtenay Brawley

This presentation shares a case study of developing a psychosocial risk framework within a government organisation, highlighting the importance of contextual sensitivity.

Initially guided by evidence-based practice, the approach was grounded in psychological theory, empirical research, and structured risk management principles. However, early implementation challenges revealed a mismatch between the framework’s complexity and the organisation’s level of readiness.

In response, the approach evolved, shifting from a prescriptive model to a more iterative, capability-building framework that better aligned with the organisation’s context. This experience underscored the need to balance evidence-based thinking with practical application, and to apply the scientist-practitioner model to meet the organisation where it is.

The presentation reflects on key learnings from this journey, offering insights into how practitioners can apply evidence-based methods in a way that is responsive to organisational readiness, without compromising integrity or impact.

What happens when HS professionals take on psychosocial risk management?

Haris Butt

Health and Safety (HS) professionals commonly work with the construction, transport, and manufacturing sectors, helping to ensure legal compliance and improve the physical safety of the workforce. But what happens when HS professionals take on psychosocial risk management?

Psychosocial risk management is often misunderstood as a pathway to enhancing wellbeing or enabling employees to flourish (Tecco et al., 2023). Unfortunately, the wellbeing promotion approach often falls flat (Nguyen et al., 2025). Ensuring organisations meet their legal duty to manage psychosocial hazards and create a baseline of safety is essential, but it requires something more.

HS professionals bring a compliance-driven, risk management perspective that treats psychosocial risks as catalysts and byproducts of work environments. In sectors where workers face dangerous machinery, tight production schedules, and hazardous conditions, psychosocial risks such as fatigue, role conflict, or poor communication can increase the likelihood of serious physical incidents. By approaching psychosocial hazards as creating organisational risks, HS professionals are uniquely equipped to identify how work systems contribute to both physical and psychological harm, and to design controls that protect workers on both fronts.

This presentation will illustrate these ideas through practice-based examples. Expect to learn how routine tasks like cleaning tankers can generate psychosocial hazards, and why intervention found in seemingly benign places, like smoko rooms, can reveal deeper systemic risks.

Why do people join and why do they stay? A practitioners guide to EVP.

Crispin Garden-Webster

An EVP articulates of your employer brand, and answers the questions; “why do people join and why do they stay?” Your employer brand is your reputation; your EVP is the narrative and example. By default, your organisation already has an EVP. It lives in the impressions, media profile, hearsay and candidate experience of your current, former and future employees. The opportunity lies in how we can craft, optimise and highlight your EVP to attract and retain the people who will achieve your vision. This brief discusses how to define your EVP and what it means for talent acquisition and retention. Your EVP helps you compete for talent by deepening the understanding of employees’ choices and what they seek to gain in return for the work they do. Equipped with that knowledge, you can create an EVP that communicates value around the four (4) factors of material offerings, growth & development, culture & community and meaning & purpose.

[Slides](#)