



Success. Mapped.



Improving employee *engagement* at Nadrasca

Key insights, high-performance strategies,
and proven results to elevate employee engagement

Context

Nadrasca is a disability support organisation in the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Nadrasca support more than 300 people to achieve their personal and professional goals through a diverse range of support services including accommodation, day programs and activities, school leaver employment support, supported employment and support coordination.

In 2024, Nadrasca has seen significant improvement in its measures of employee experience, using Insync's validated Alignment & Engagement Survey. Nadrasca's employee engagement improved by 6% and employee alignment improved by 5%, with a general upward trend of results across the board. Nadrasca now sits just outside the top quartile of Insync's not-for-profit benchmark for engagement.

This improvement has taken a focused and concerted effort by the leaders at Nadrasca, and the improvement journey is ongoing. Sophie Owen, Senior Principal at Insync, chatted to Mark Jackson, GM of People & Culture, to unpack the improvement efforts and explore how they've influenced significant change in just 12 months.

The work plan

Organisational culture is the set of values and norms that guide the actions and behaviours of employees. Culture can be deliberate or organic and can either drive or hinder the success of the organisation. In 2023, there was a renewed focus on addressing the organisational culture at Nadrasca, to better support the vision, long-term direction and goals of the organisation. A six-month work plan to address some of the cultural inhibitors was agreed.

“Be kind”

A momentous part of this work plan was a behavioural pillar; “Be kind”. There was a sense of the need to stop, take a moment and commit to showing people a level of empathy for their lived experience of Nadrasca's culture.

***“We needed to pause. Let them [employees] have a breath.
Show them that we care. Demonstrate that we care.
And not just pile more on.”***

“Be kind” was introduced as a guiding principle for a shift in organisational thinking and a lens through which to see all forthcoming change efforts. It was all about creating space, building trust and fostering partnership between leaders and frontline workers. The sentiment of this guiding principle set the tone for how Nadrasca worked on systematically and deliberately shifting the culture of the organisation over the next 12 months.

A baseline measure

Another goal outlined in the six-month work plan was to run a survey and set a baseline measure of employee experience. The results of this baseline survey provided an accurate reflection of what leaders new anecdotally about the culture of the organisation. There was work to do to better energise employees around an inspiring vision. There was opportunity for senior leaders to be more visible in communicating this vision and creating a dialogue around how every employee would contribute to helping achieve this.

Employees were seeking a greater sense of care and recognition for their efforts and sought support with more streamlined and efficient processes. Across the board, there was opportunity to raise the bar for performance expectations, to truly create a culture of responsibility and accountability.

Taking action

With an objective, baseline measure of employee experience, Nadrasca leadership knew it was pivotal to respond to the voice of their employees. They took the time to debrief the executive and senior leadership teams on the results and key messages for the whole organisation, as well as distilling the key messages and unique insights for each of its four divisional leaders. A communication was sent by the CEO to all employees to summarise the insights, including an understanding of what the organisation was doing well and where improvement was needed. The main purpose of this communication was to deliver the message “we’ve heard you”.

Following communication to employees, there was agreement amongst the Executive and Senior Leadership teams about the priority areas for improvement. As most of the areas highlighted in the survey were not new, the results really worked to confirm plans that were already in the works, and reiterated the importance of pushing forward, with focus, clarity and commitment.

Five of the main initiatives that we have seen significantly shift the employee experience results in 2024 include:



1. Energising employees around Nadrasca’s vision and strategic plan



2. Re-design of organisational structure to unlock leadership capability



3. Greater care for, and recognition of, employees



4. Building trust to support a more adaptive and continuous improvement mindset



5. Truly putting participants at the centre of decision making

Mark took us through the practical steps on how these areas have been addressed in response to employee feedback.



1. Energising employees around Nadrasca's Vision and strategic plan

Indicator: Nadrasca's Vision/Purpose motivates me – +12%

Nadrasca's Vision, Purpose and Values were not considered to be fit-for-purpose. This had been raised via the P&C Committee and the results of the survey also confirmed the need for a refresh. The aim of the refresh was for the Vision, Purpose and Values to be more contemporary and more reflective of the organisation that Nadrasca aspires to be. Employees and other stakeholders were involved in the re-design process via focus groups and interviews, so that they could contribute their views on what the organisation stands for and how it is unique. The content of the Vision, Purpose and Values has been finalised, and will be rolled out later this year.

A lot of work was also done on communicating the strategic plan. The CEO, Glenn Hodgkin, and other senior leaders undertook a roadshow, covering every work site and endeavouring to get in front of every staff member. Sessions were also run with participants, families and other carers.

The strategic plan was a central focus at the all-staff conference, presenting a shared view of the future.

There has also been a greater focus on recruiting based on alignment to the organisation's Vision and direction – *"this is our strategy, we want you to be part of it"*. This has ensured that new starters, particularly those in team leader and manager roles, are onboard. With greater clarity on the direction of the organisation, and with the evolution of the Vision, Purpose and Values, there has been some natural staff attrition. There is a general sense that this is healthy, and it will ensure greater alignment of employees into the future.



2. Re-design of organisational structure to unlock leadership capability

Indicator: I understand how Nadrasca expects to achieve its goals, +7%

Nadrasca undertook a restructuring at the senior leadership level to ensure organisational design and roles were consistent with what they were aiming to achieve. At the same time, there were significant changes in the way that people reported into the Executive Team, including clear responsibilities for direct reports. These changes simultaneously provided greater clarity, trust and empowerment for the divisions to act, particularly on operational matters.

Nadrasca have also changed their philosophy about how the organisation works, ensuring that people have the tools to be able to do their best work. This included centralising business support functions such as people & culture, training & development, finance and administration support, to enable business leaders and divisional leaders to get out there and do what they need to do in the best interest of the business and of participants.

This change in structure and thinking has also helped to break down barriers, with the opportunity for unlocking greater collaboration across the organisation.

Nadrasca's executives and senior leaders also recently undertook a six-month leadership development program "Discovery in Action".



3. Greater care for, and recognition of, employees

Indicator: Nadrasca cares about me, +14%

Indicator: Nadrasca recognises the achievements of its people, +17%

Reward and recognition were seen as an important piece of how Nadrasca shows care for its employees. It was often shared there was more opportunity to better recognise people, better recognise good work and reward people appropriately for their efforts. In response to this feedback, a concerted effort was made to engage employees on what reward and recognition looks and feels like. There were discussions and brainstorming sessions, which fed into the formal P&C Committee.

The P&C Committee then put together a policy/procedure outlining what reward & recognition looks like at Nadrasca. This included really practical actions that would show care and recognition for employees, including morning teas, to recognise individuals, celebrate special days and introduce new people to the organisation.

“We’ve made a concerted effort to do things consistently. We’re not perfect at it, but it’s really starting to help.”

Another aspect that played a key role in improving employee sense of care and recognition, was reaching mutual agreement on an enterprise agreement, which affected one particular cohort of employees. Reaching agreement included Nadrasca conceding on some points of the agreement that were clearly important to staff. The response to conceding on some points that had previously been contentious sent a clear message to affected employees; ‘we’ve heard you, we trust you, we care’. Engagement of the affected team increased by 16% in the 12-month period.

Other improvement initiatives were aimed at revamping the organisation-wide employee induction processes, using the Employment Hero system for shout-outs/ announcements and regularly reminding employees about the organisation’s Employee Assistance Program, have all played a role in this area too.



4. Building trust to support a more adaptive and continuous improvement mindset

Indicator: Nadrasca continuously innovates its products and services, +15%

Indicator: My team has a continuous improvement mindset, +14%

There is a sense that employees' greater level of resilience and openness to change comes from more confidence and trust in senior leadership. Over the last 12 months, communications have become much more open and transparent, with greater discussion about the future and the path that the organisation is on.

There has been a focus on admitting when things have gone wrong, or not as expected, creating an authentic sense that those in leadership positions are not perfect, and things won't always go as planned. More open communications, and more confidence and trust in leadership, has helped to reassure people that the future is not so scary, and that's it's ok to try new things.

Through this process, business leaders have been given greater licence to think differently and trial different ways of doing things. This has helped to break down barriers to innovation by removing any concerns with the consequences of failure and helping teams to embrace a growth mindset..



5. Truly putting participants at the centre of decision making

Indicator: Our customer needs are at the forefront in decision making, +10%

Nadrasca completed a big project called 'Project My Say'. The main aim of the project was to gather a greater understanding of the wants and needs of service participants.

The project included gathered insights via focus groups with participants and carers, which were facilitated by participant volunteers. Some fascinating insights were captured via this process, and these are continually referred to as part of decision making. The project was such a success that it will be run again this year and has become an annual commitment.

The outcomes of 'Project My Say' will help to feed into an initiative called 'My Plan', which fosters greater collaboration between Nadrasca and its participants to agree how they will work together to achieve participants personal goals. The formalisation of this process is the next stage of this initiative.

Insights captured via the focus group discussions with participants have also been shared more broadly with Nadrasca employees via the roadshows and other internal channels.

Ongoing success

Winning the hearts and minds of employees, and maintaining that overtime, takes consistent and ongoing focus.

Nadrasca has taken a big step forward in that journey over the last 12 months. Improvement is ongoing, and if anything, this year's survey results have cultivated an even greater urge to continue the upward trajectory.

The leadership team is aligned and feeling energised about the future and its possibilities and, as Mark put it "if you trust in the process, you'll get the results".

About Insync

Insync is a leading provider of employee engagement solutions dedicated to helping organisations unlock their full potential through actionable insights and tailored strategies. With a focus on fostering a culture of continuous improvement, we leverage our validated Alignment & Engagement Surveys to measure employee experiences, align organisational goals, and drive meaningful change.

Our expert team collaborates closely with clients to interpret survey results and implement high-impact initiatives that enhance engagement, motivation, and performance. At Insync, we believe that engaged employees are key to achieving organisational success, and we are committed to supporting our clients on their journey towards creating thriving workplace cultures.

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