VPS CIN

Victorian Public Sector Continuous Improvement Network

Victorian Public Sector Continuous Improvement Network SenseMaker Project

February 2008 - September 2009

Key Findings

> The VPSCIN are performing at or above the performance levels expected in the area of Continuous Improvement. However, they are also perceived by some as a significant challenge to the "Status Quo". This is creating a situation where the link between the introduction / provision of innovative, challenging and new concepts and their application in the workplace is being fractured. This linkage is critical to the success of the VPSCIN in the public sector and is an area that needs significant effort focused on, to better understanding the reasons behind why it is being broken and what interventions can be made to ensure a strong transition to application in the workplace

- A "weak signal" is coming out of the data – many senior managers are not engaging with the VPSCIN - creating angst with staff wishing to do things differently and wanting to work in a less "controlled" environment

- Employment level of staff attending VPSCIN events are primarily VPS Grade 5 & 6, the non-attendance of higher levels impacts the ability to influence senior management

- Support from senior staff is limited in departments

- Blog take-up and usage is very high - it is acknowledged as a high value add by participants

- Networking is seen to be a key benefit of participation in VPSCIN, allowing for great cross department and public sector interaction and engagement

Key Findings

- Stakeholder groups that participants were most able to impact through VPSCIN involvement were Personal (37.8%), Team / Work unit (24.9%), Cross Department relationships (15.7%)
- Stakeholder groups that participants were least able to impact were External to VPS (64.4%) and cross department relationships (18.1%)
- Participants were most able to influence Other Team members (47.1%) and Peers (22.7%) through participation in VPSCIN
- Network members expressed that the most important outcomes they wanted from VPSCIN involvement were Challenging Thinking (22.4%), Education (17.7%), Tools, techniques and frameworks (17.3%)
- Network members expressed that the second most important outcomes they wanted from VPSCIN involvement were Innovation (20.7%), Knowledge Sharing (15.9%) and Networking (14.8%)
- The most significant barrier to implementing new initiatives was Attitude of Senior Management followed by Resource Allocation
- Experiences mainly told to Explain, Educate, Encourage, Compliment or Inform - minimal no. of experiences were told to Complain
- Participants primarily told experiences with a Positive or Very Positive frame

Demographics

- Gender: 2/3 female, 1/3 male
- 67% > 35 years old
- 62% Grade 5/6
- 61% in public service for more than 5 years
- 56% been to 4 events or more
- Majority of participants from Melbourne CBD / Metro

Caveats

Note: In this report you will find *observations* of patterns in the data and *interpretations / ideas* related to them. The interpretations are meant to *stimulate thought and discussion* related to the research objective.

The observations, interpretations, and ideas are not meant as answers or claims of any sort. Observations are focused on patterns only, while some may contradict other earlier observations or interpretations - this is deliberate; its purpose is to assist groups in acknowledging the complexity, contradictions, and diversity about interpretative patterns related to stories in new ways.

Background

Objectives	This project set out to determine public sector employee perspectives on the value the Continuous Improvement Network provides in Victoria.
Target demographic	Narrative capture was focused upon public sector employees in Victoria at all levels. The capture instrument was promoted in departmental newsletters, at VPSCIN events and on the VPSCIN blog site
Narrative capture	Over the period February 2008 - May 2009, 858 Narrative fragments were collected from Victorian Public Sector employees using the Cognitive Edge Pte Ltd platform - SenseMaker^{TM}

The process

Signifier definition

- Designed by VPSCIN

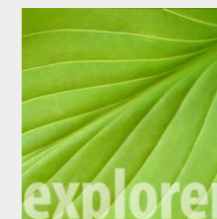- Key issues: Balance the formal with informal inputs; tolerating ambiguity to allow for emergence

Fragment collection

- From VPSCIN members

- Key issues: Promotion to create awareness, incentives for participation

Sensemaking

- Analysis provided by CE

- Key issues: Bridging skill and insight gap

SenseMaker™ Suite

Advantages of a narrative-based approach to gathering inputs from participants

Cognitive Edge Approach	Traditional Survey Methods
Numbers come with context of stories, the latter which can be accessed directly when needed	Numbers that do not inform of the context
Seeks narratives (experiences) from people, as humans convey complex knowledge through stories	Seeks opinions of people
Use of indirect prompting questions to elicit answers that tend to be more honest and revealing	Use of direct questions which people usually expect
Understanding the world as it currently is, knowing we lack complete data	Groupthink occurs when a traditional decision space is dominated by powerful individuals and their agendas
Cognitive Edge methods and tools ascertain patterns in these stories to obtain insights - visualisations in SenseMaker™ present alternative and diverse points of view	Reliance on traditional statistical analysis which "drowns out" weak signals until they become significant, at which point it may be difficult and expensive to intervene

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Terms that are used in this report

|		
Narrative-based approach Collecting data in the form of narratives, as human tend to convey complex knowledge through their experiences (narratives)	**Sensemaking** Making sufficient sense of the world through the collected narratives, so that we can act effectively in it	**SenseMaker™ software** Analytical and interrogation suite of tools making extensive use of visualisations, allowing complex patterns and exceptions to be discovered
Signifiers Represent a semi-structured approach to tagging where additional layers of meaning added to the original fragment. The meaning is not necessarily contained in the content of the fragment, but in the context created by the signifier	**Prompting questions** A deliberately ambiguous question designed to elicit experiences from people	**Filter** A measurement of a factor/value that is a feature of one's narrative
Multi-choice questions Questions that cover a range of demographic details about the respondent, as well as details about narratives	**Fragments** An experience captured in or experienced as a narrative, a document, an anecdote, a video, digital recording or even an image	**Correlations** The strength of the relationships between two filters

Participants are mainly from the Melbourne CBD or Metro areas
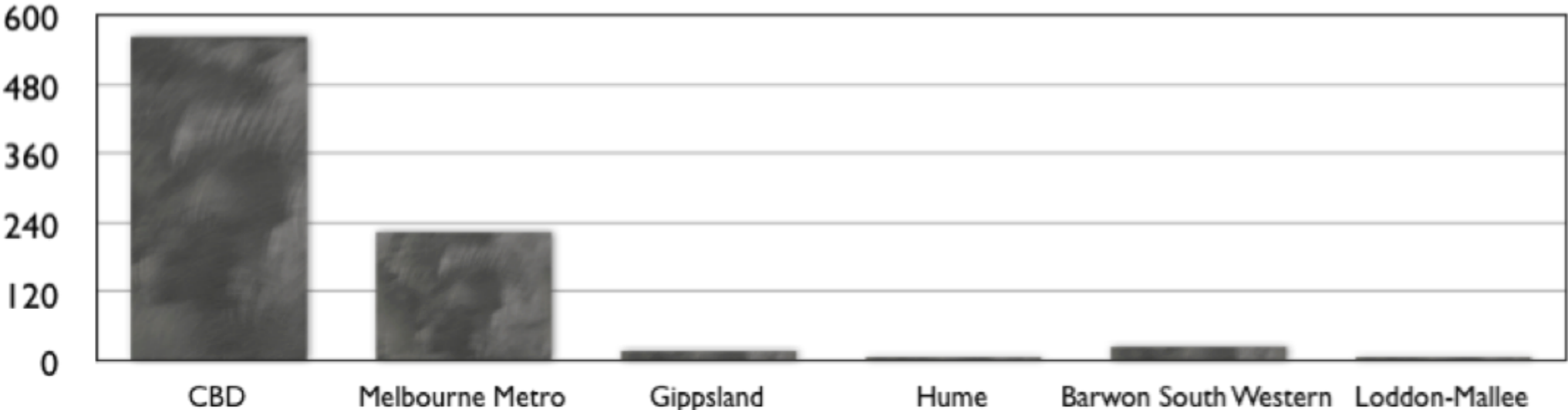
Gender
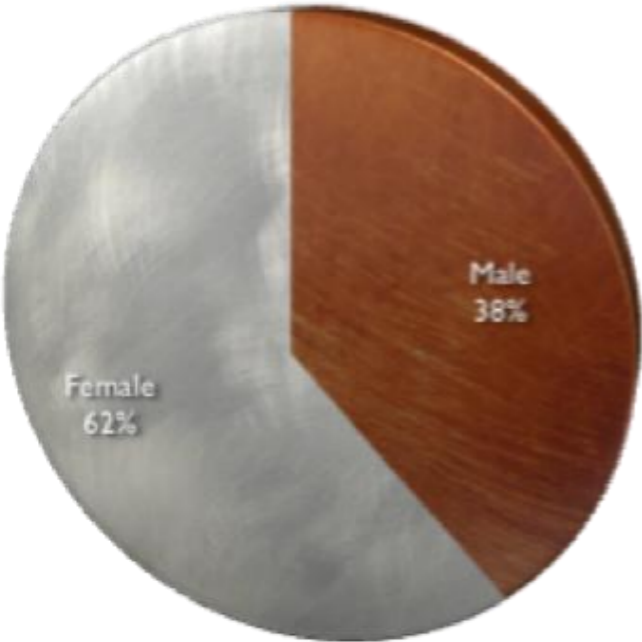
- Female 62%
- Male 38%

Almost two-thirds of participants were female

Age

- 18 - 25 7%
- 26 - 35 25%
- 36 - 45 35%
- 46 - 54 32%
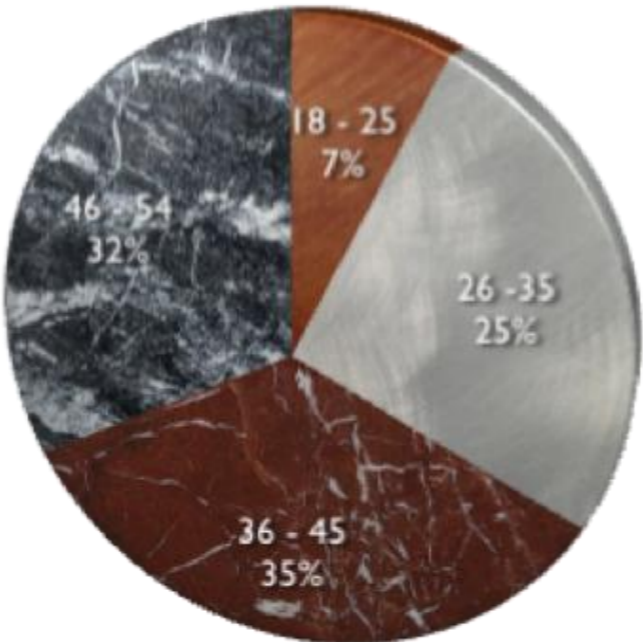
67% of participants were older than 34 years

Employment Grade

- Grade 2 3%
- Grade 4 19%
- Exec Officer 4%
- Grade 3 12%
- Grade 5 37%
- Grade 6 25%
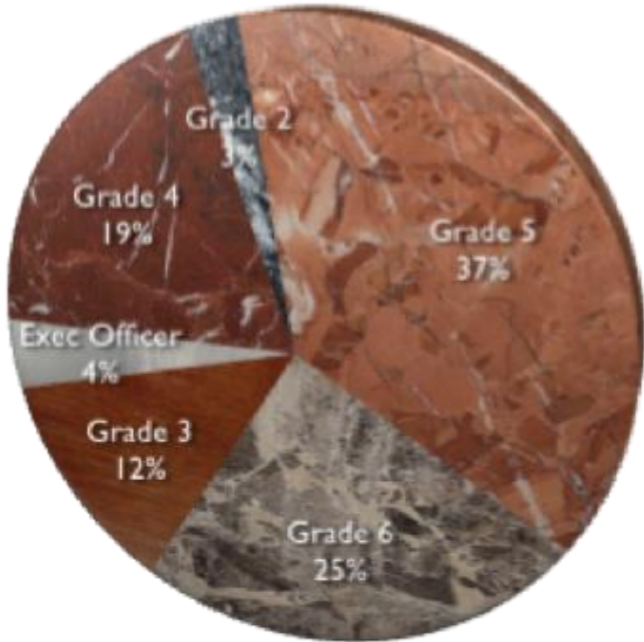
63% of participants were Grade 5 or 6

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Length of Service

- 5 - 10 yrs 22%
- 2 - 5 yrs 26%
- < 2 yrs 14%
- > 20 yrs 14%
- 10 - 20 yrs 25%
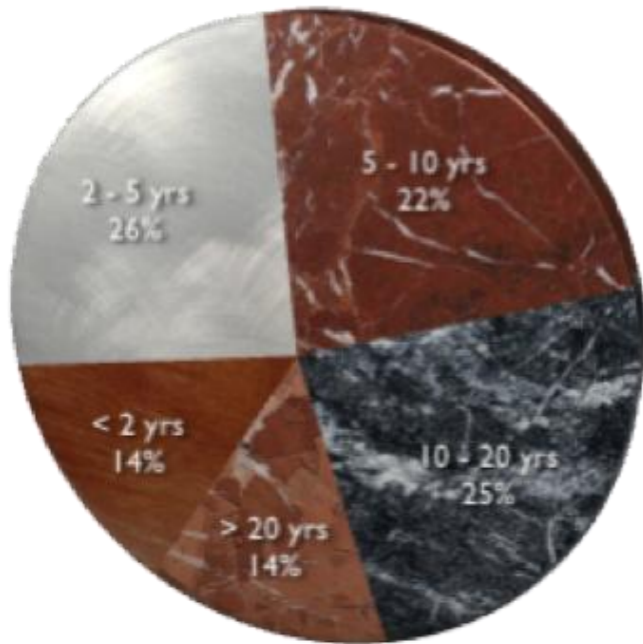
37% of participants have been in the Public Service for 10 or more years

Events attended

- 1 - 3 35%
- 4 - 6 30%
- None 8%
- > 10 15%
- 7 - 10 11%
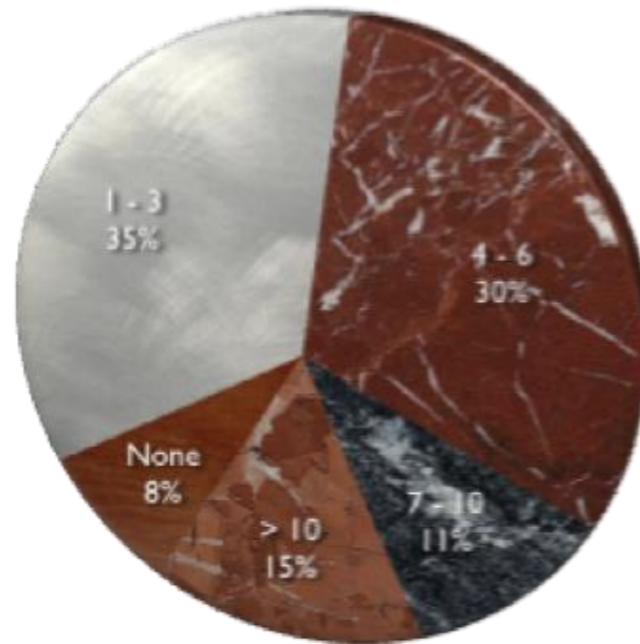
56% of participants have attended 4 or more VPSCIN events

Work type

- HR 15%
- Management 18%
- OD/ People & Culture 12%
- Customer Service 2%
- Admin 8%
- Professional 10%
- IT 10%
- Policy 12%
- Projects 13%
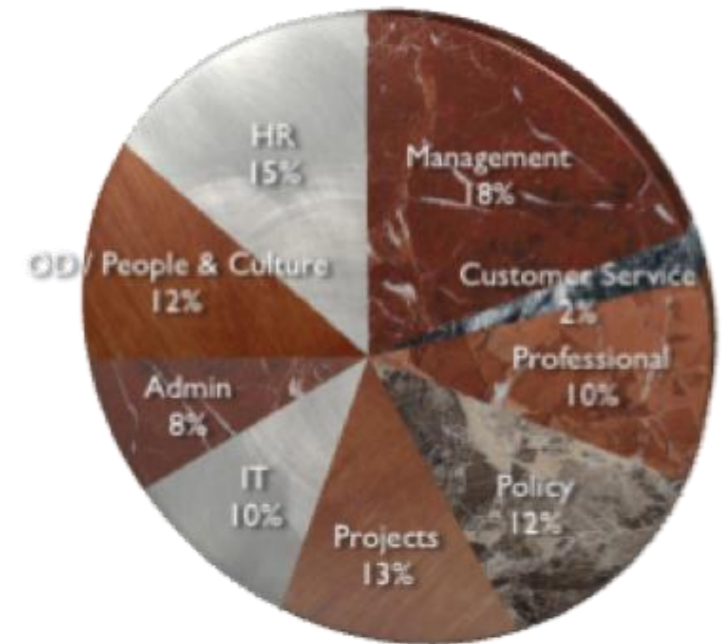
Frequency of access to electronic VPSCIN information

No. of responses (y-axis: 0, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500)

Categories: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Never
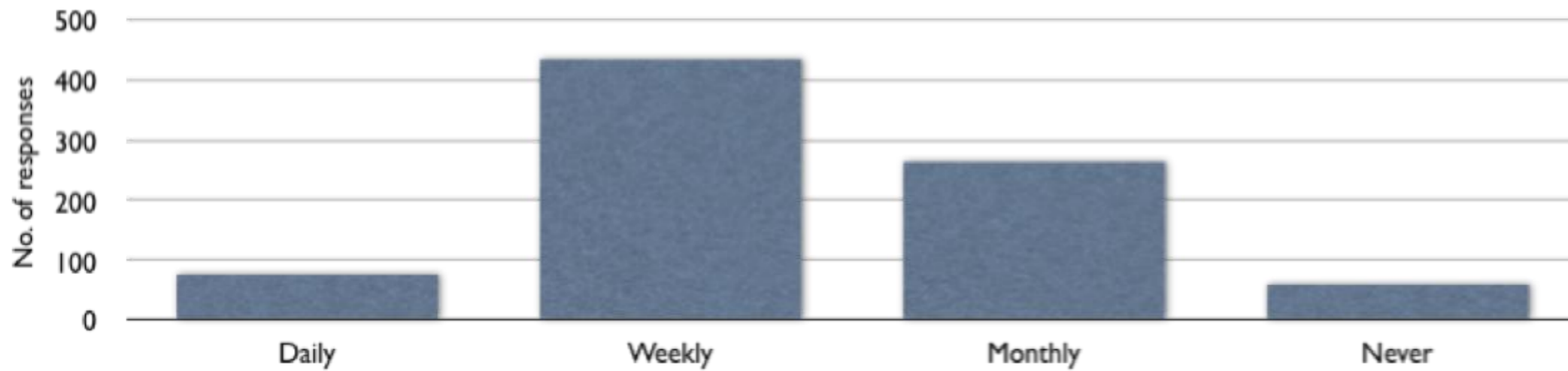
83.6% of participants access the VPSCIN blog either weekly or monthly

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Intent

n =

No. of Responses

200
160
120
80
40
0

Educate | Compliment | Complain | Explain | Encourage | Inform | Inspire | Influence | Criticise | Entertain
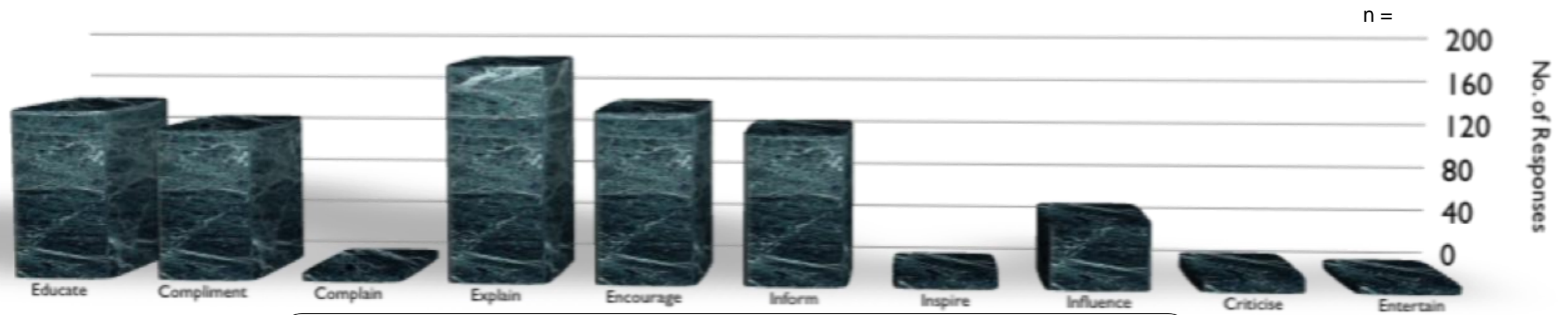
Participants told their experiences primarily to Explain, Educate, Encourage, Compliment or Inform

Feeling

n =

No. of Responses

400
320
240
160
80
0

Strongly Negative | Negative | Neutral | Positive | Strongly Positive
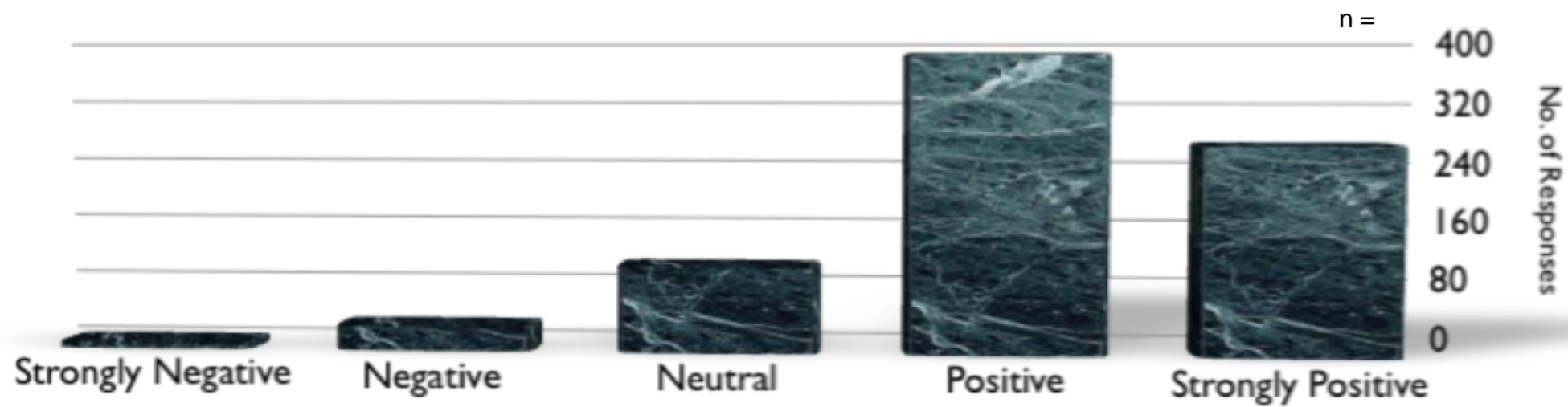
Participants told their experiences primarily in a positive or Very Positive frame

Stakeholder Group Impact

Most impacted   Least impacted
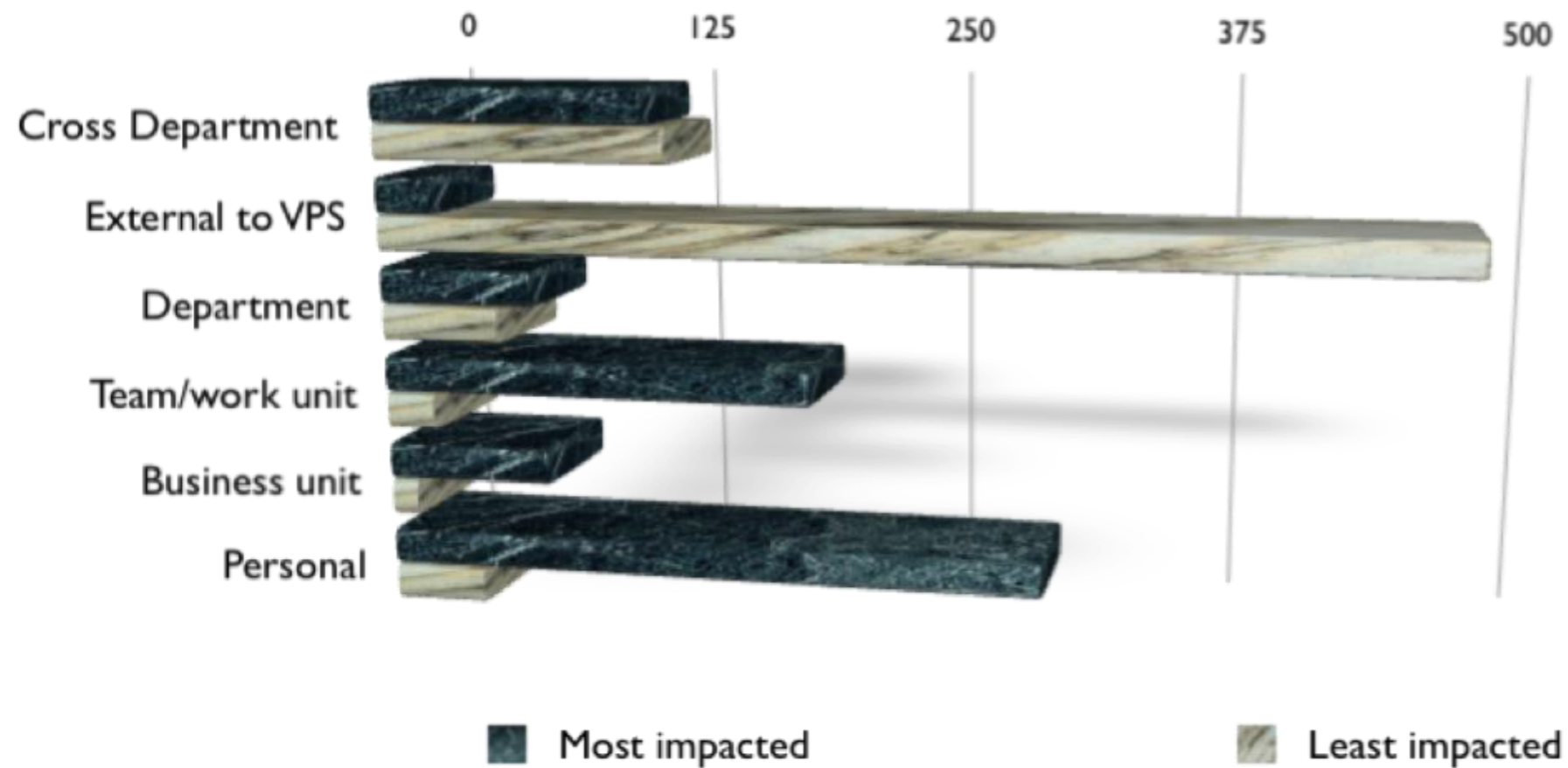
- The stakeholder groups that were most impacted by participant experiences were: Personal (37.8%), Team / work unit (24.9%) and Cross-department (15.7%)

- The stakeholder groups impacted least by participant experiences were: External to VPS (64.4%) and Cross - Department (18.1%)

Who have you been able to influence as a result of what you have learnt
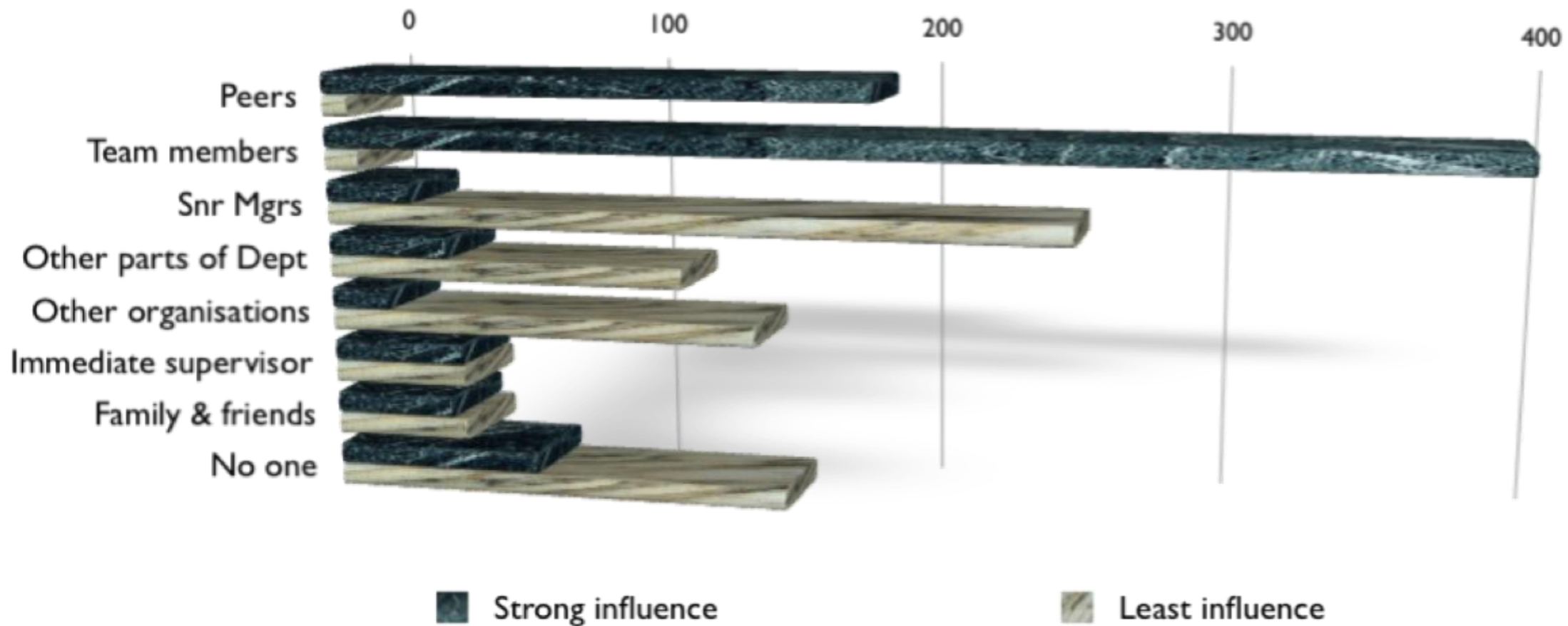
• The groups that participants were most able to influence as a result of what they had learnt were: Team members (47.1%) and Peers(22.7%)

• The The groups that participants were least able to influence as a result of what they had learnt were:
Senior Managers (37.7%) and Other Organisations(18.6%)

Outcomes of being a network member

Legend: Most Important · Second Most Important · Least important
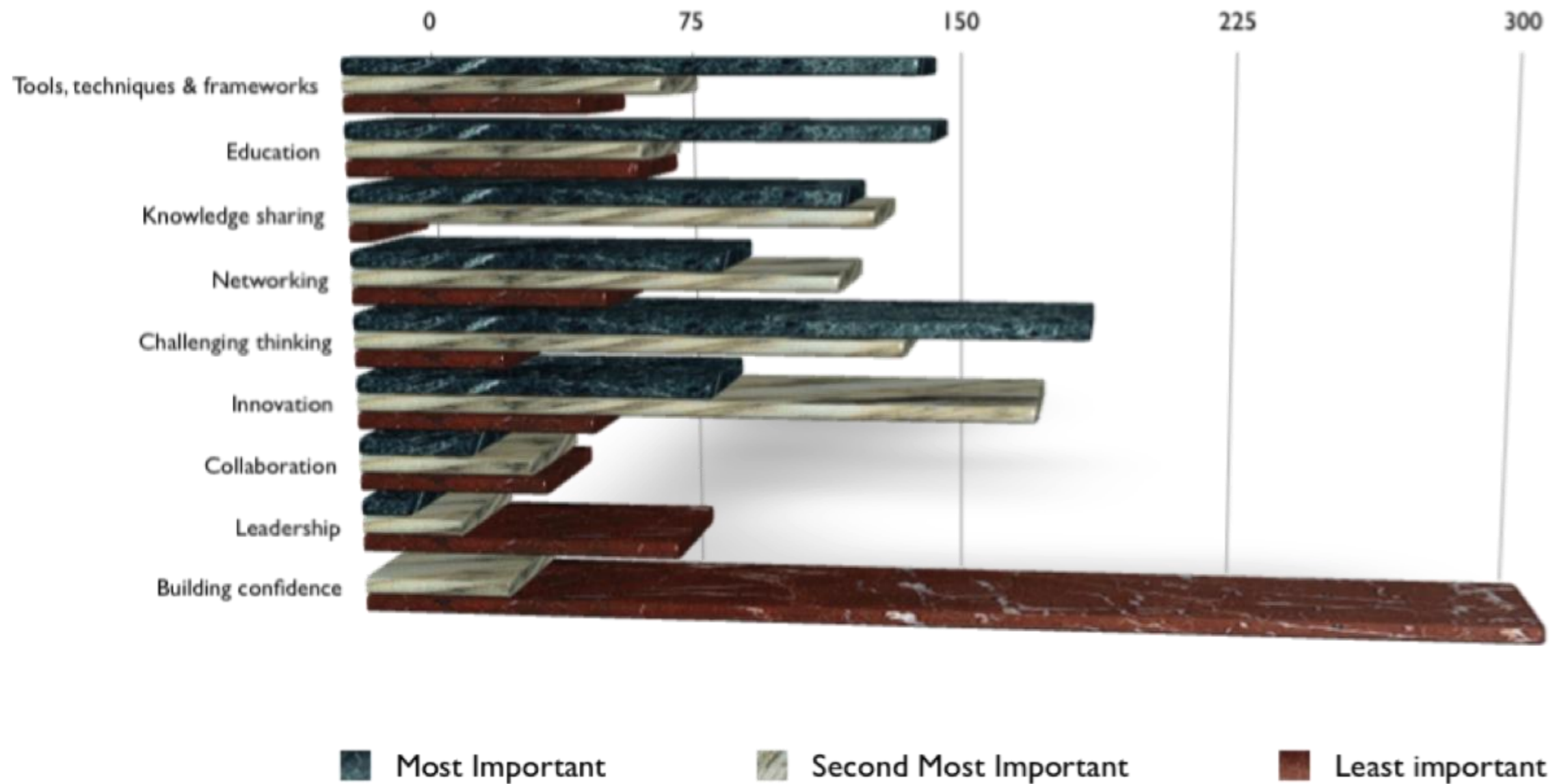
- The primary outcomes that participants wanted from being a member of the network were: Challenging Thinking(22.4%), Education (17.7%), Tools, Techniques & Frameworks (17.3%)

- The secondary outcomes that participants wanted from being a member of the network were: Innovation (20.7%), Knowledge Sharing (15.9%) and Networking (14.8%

Most Significant barrier to implementing new initiatives
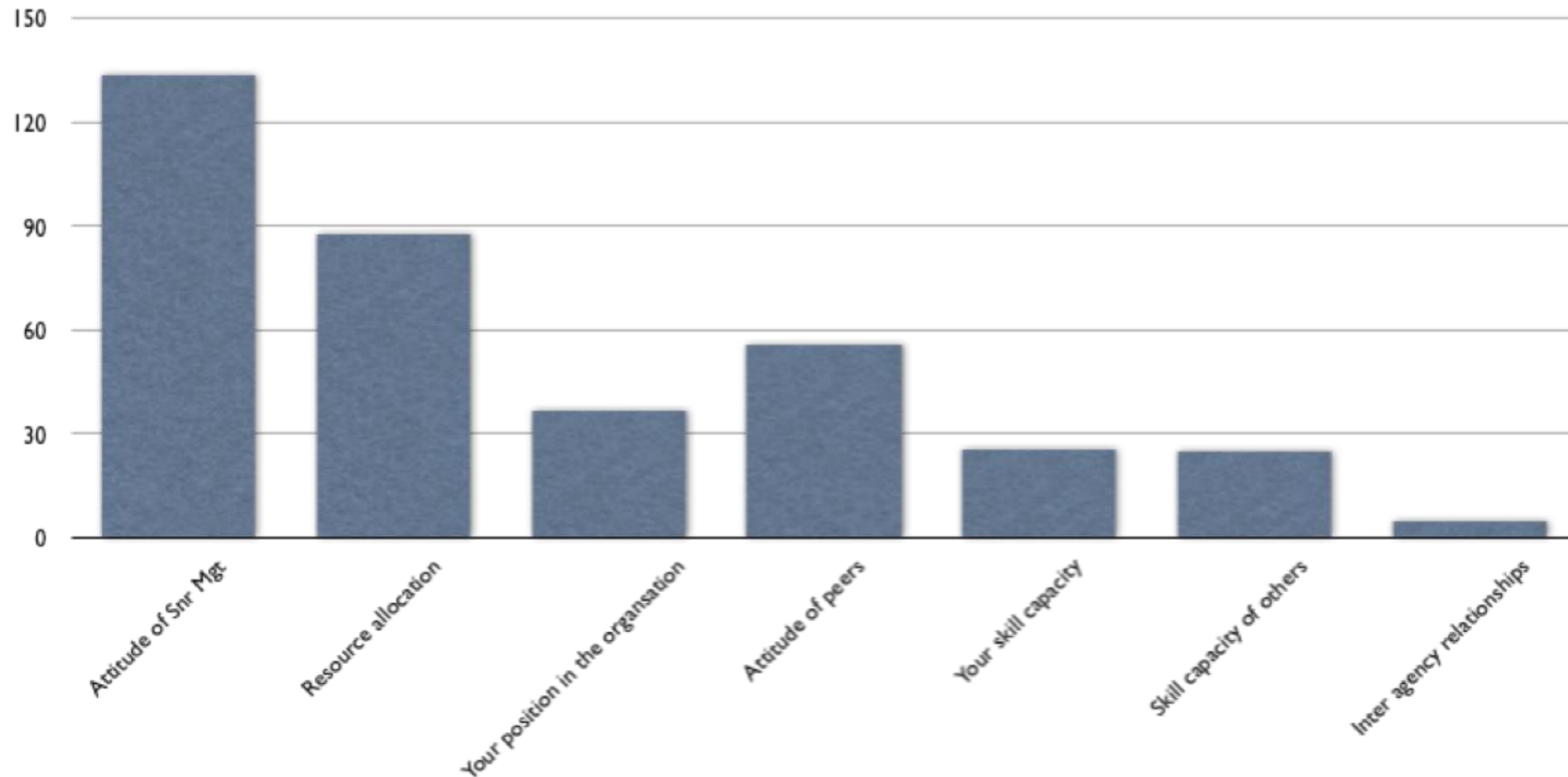
•The most significant barriers to implementing new initiatives were:

1. Attitude of Senior Management

2. Resource Allocation

Polarities

Polarities			
Leadership	Nonexistent	⟷	Unnecessarily interfering
Attitude	Simply going through the motions	⟷	Frustrated & powerless
Motivation	Preserving the status quo	⟷	pushing change at any price
Perception	lack understanding of business realities	⟷	are blindsided by business imperatives
Relevance	Not relevant to their own organisation	⟷	too difficult to replicate
Personal accountability	That's not my job	⟷	obsessive zealotry

Guidelines for reading polarities

Polarities are designed to have a negative statement on each end of the scale - this is deliberate.

On one end, you will find a negative statement relating to an absence of the issue being considered.

At the other end you will find a negative statement relating to an excess of the issue being considered

The mid point of the scale indicates that the example relates to the issue, but neither of the negative elements were present

If the experience provided does not contain the issue being considered, then the respondent would select "Does not Apply"

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Polarity Distributions

Relevance

Personal Accountability

Perceptio n

Leadership

Dominant Attitude

Primary Motivation

Polarity Distributions

- Six polarities were used to discover more about the areas of:

- Relevance
- Personal Accountability
- Perception
- Leadership
- Dominant Attitude
- Primary Motivation

- The mid point of the polarities (marked by the red opaque zone) is the ideal state between the opposing opposites. It is against this ideal state that we can start to see patterns emerging across and between the six distributions. The Red vertical line in each distribution indicates the Mean for the distribution. It is important to focus on those distributions where the mean falls outside of the "Ideal".

- All polarities displayed means inside the "Ideal" zone. This shows that participants felt that the VPSCIN is performing at or above expectations in its delivery of Continuous Improvement programs

- Two key aspects of the analysis stand out in this regard and provide interesting insights that require further investigation:
(a) Most Significant barrier to implementing new initiatives is the "Attitude of Senior Management"
(b) Challenging Thinking & new tools techniques & frameworks were the most valued outcomes of being a network member

Important notes when reviewing this section of the report

- We have designated "purple" zones for each of the individual filters.
  - According to the theory underpinning opposing negative filter design, an ideal outcome is an average result of 50, ie midway between the two extremes of 0 and 100
  - As such, purple zones are designated as the "target zone"
- The adoption of 50 as an ideal average result hinges on two assumptions:
  - The two negative extremes are equally undesirable
  - The project team has adequately communicated the undesirability of both extremes in their filter design
- While the second assumption is likely to hold true, it would be necessary to consider the assumption in greater depth. VPSCIN may identify a target average result as leaning to one extreme of the other
- In setting targets, it would also be important to consider distribution. A narrow distribution around the average is more ideal than a broader distribution
- Narrative fragments have been left in their original form (no cleaning up of grammar mistakes)

Polarity Distributions

Relevance:
Not relevant to organisation - too difficult to replicate

Participants believe that VPSCIN is relevant and of value to the Public Sector

515

Personal Accountability:
Not my job - obsessive zealotry

Participants believe that VPSCIN allows them to make a difference through new and innovative concepts

516

Perception:
Lack understanding of business reality - blindsided by business imperatives

Participants believe that VPSCIN understands the business of the Public Sector and delivers CI programs that meet needs

477

Leadership:
Non existent - Unnecessarily interfering

Participants believe that VPSCIN provides appropriate leadership around Continuous Improvement initiatives that can be implemented in the workplace

524

Dominant Attitude:
Going through the motions - Frustrated & powerless

Participants believe that VPSCIN is providing them with concepts and tools that allow them to have a positive impact in their workplace

509

Motivation:
Preserving status quo - pushing change at any price

Participants believe that VPSCIN is a catalyst to motivate departments to try new concepts that will add value to the business

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Narrative capture provided by participants has confirmed that the the VPSCIN operating in the "Ideal" zone across the six capability areas.

Each capability area will be analysed in more detail in the following slides.

It is suggested that an ongoing continuous capture program be considered to monitor any movements of the mean from the ideal zone

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Relevance

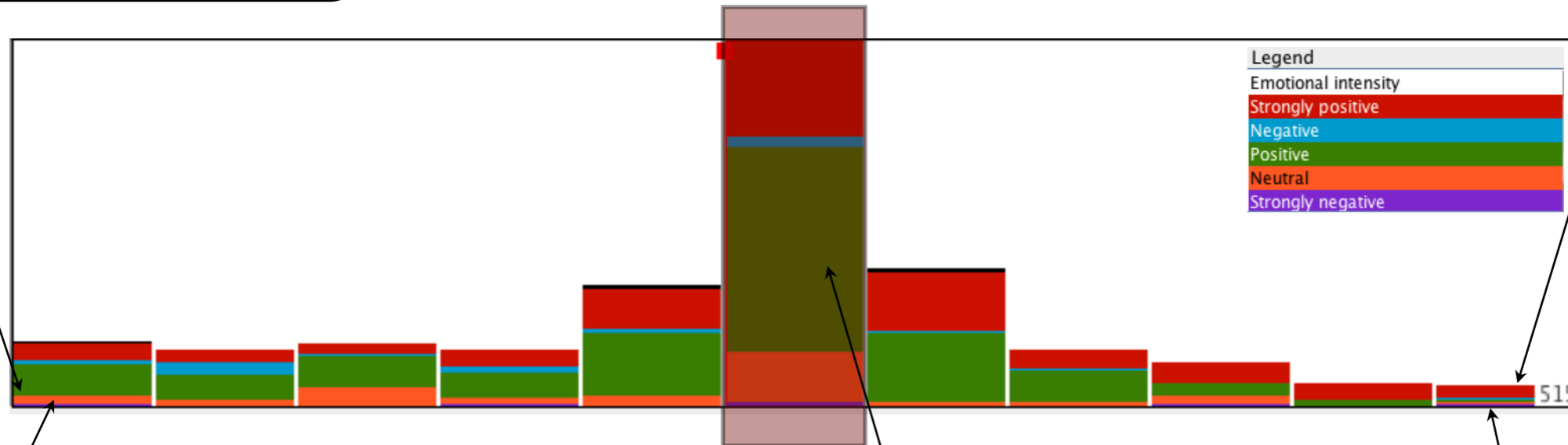**Some managers do not attend and learn with staff.**

We have used the Cynefin framework which we learnt about through the CIN and Dave Snowden and applied it successfully to our planning process.

The primary thing that prevents uptake is risk adverse managers who do not bother to attend these learning sessions and are therefore threatened when staff come back with new and contemporary concepts that they do not understand. Their response is usually limit the application of the new ideas and to default to old ways of doing things that no longer work as well.

Attendes learn, non attendees do not.

We have learnt some interesting practices around lean thinking but it is difficult to get buy in from people in my area that did not attend the sessions and see the value. Will however try to implement some aspect to demonstrate the potential.

Participants believe that VPSCIN is relevant and of value to the Public Sector

Not relevant too their organisation

Too difficult to replicate

Legend
Emotional intensity
Strongly positive
Negative
Positive
Neutral
Strongly negative

515

Conservative management holds us back.

The thing that prevents uptake of lessons learned is managers who do not attend sessions and therefore do not understand the value of what their staff bring back into the workplace. We have far too many managers who are dinosaurs in their thinking and believe that the ways we have always done things are good enough. Many of them are very threatened of things that are new and they don't know much (or anything) about.

Great networking and learning opportunity.

I started thinking through the list of benefits for me from the program ran on Sept 12. At this event I,
A)caught up with a key person I needed to talk to and arranged for them to be involved in an important project review process,
B)I lined up a person i wanted to be on a recruiting panel,
C) got a chance to talk to a senior manager about the work we had produced, found out how useful they had found it and what they were doing with it.
D)I learnt heaps from the guest presenter,
E) gained some key insights from a senior manager that i may be working for in the future,
F) meet up with people I had met during a scenario planning process and maintained the relationships,
G) caught up with members of other professional networks I am involved with,
H) had a discussion which helped me seed and stimulate thinking on emerging issues with some senior colleagues,
I) learnt more about the chalenges facing one of our depoartments as I walked back to work with another colleague, and J) I learnt so much from the presentation of Edward de Bono.

Not a bad effort from one CIN event.

Improvement Knowledge is now accessible with vpscin.org

Very useful with a decent scan of the site its quite interesting how much knowledge has built up in there in a relatively short period of time. without this blog this know how would simply not exist, or be dispersed across govt inside firewalls where no-one will ever see it or access it.

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Relevance

Data indicates:

• This polarity looks at the relevance of experiences gained from participating in the VPSCIN on a distribution from "Not Relevant" to "Unable to replicate"

• It is clear that most experiences are centred around the ideal - that the VPSCIN provides forums and opportunities relevant to Public Sector members

• The majority of experiences were told with a "positive" or "strongly positive frame" across the entire distribution

• Experiences that more related to "no relevance to the organisation" reflected a theme of difficulty in getting managers to be willing to listen and accept new concepts rather than VPSCIN not being a relevant forum

• Experiences that were indexed as being "too difficult to replicate" related more to the difficulty in getting others who have not been exposed to VPSCIN to see the value of the new concepts and ideas that have utility across the greater public sector

• Experiences around the ideal were overwhelmingly positive about the relevance of VPSCIN in the public sector - at both the individual and department level. A large base of the narrative consistently referred to VPSCIN as an enabler to learning, networking and exposure to new ways of thinking

• A significant number of the experiences referred to the VPSCIN blog an an invaluable source of ideas and material with direct application in the workplace, that should be utilised as a model across the public sector.

Key themes:

• Applying knowledge in an argumentative environment
• VPSCIN as an enabler for networking, learning & growing
• Provision of new ideas
• Broadening the mind
• Highly useful blog - showcase for the Public Sector
• Direct application in the workplace

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Relevance*

Personal Accountability

Using CIN knowledge

We are about to run a full day team building/learning workshop with three different methodologies we have picked up directly from the CIN. Six hats, org zoo and workplace humour. It has been our association with the CIN and the learnings from it that has brought this about. Those who are serious about doing things better will find ways to uptake the ideas the cin puts in front of us.

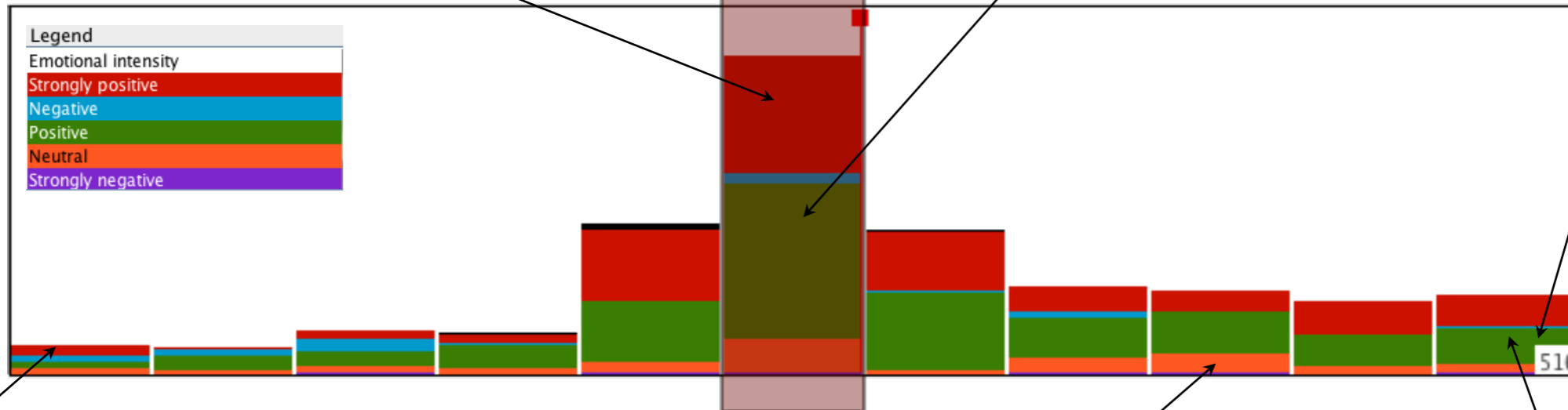**Consulting with colleagues in other depts.**

I have now consulted colleagues I've met at CIN functions in different depts on two separate projects i've worked on and received valuable advice in each instance.

Non bureaucratic in approach.

The blog is very interesting in that it puts things online that I sometimes would not expect to be put online. For example bureaucracy in govt is often described and ridiculed. I enjoy this as it is honest and does not contain the sanitized messages that tend to come from corporate communications people.

Participants believe that VPSCIN allows them to make a difference through new and innovative concepts

Legend

Emotional intensity
- Strongly positive
- Negative
- Positive
- Neutral
- Strongly negative

Not my job

Obsessive Zealotry

516

A good idea does not necessarily mean benefits

CIN provides great access to highly experienced speakers, many of whom would not otherwise be accessible to me. This has enabled me to come to be more aware of new ideas and concepts which I can use to inmprove my performance.

Nothing prevents me from implementing these ideas for myself, however, when trying to bring others to join my efforst it can be difficult to influence them as ther eis a strong resistance to change.

Regarded as a luxury rather than a necessary tool

On numerous occasions, as soon as I show someone the site (internal or external to VPS) they start to share the same excitement about what is happening in the VPS. We are quite progressive and leading the way - a pity it is not a resource that is "used" by the Departments in a more systematic way.

It is regarded more as a developmental opportunity for individuals (go and do that event in your lunchtime), rather than a necessary tool for improving the way everyone goes about their business.

More managers should support this.

I would strongly encourage any other public servant to attend vpscin events. I believe that this should also be supported by managers to ensure that team members can work together on ideas and innovative approaches introduced by the network. At the moment I know many who would like to atend but are not allowed by managers saying it is not part of core business or some other equally ridiculous excuse.

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Personal Accountability

Data indicates:

• This distribution looks at the extent to which Personal Accountability from "Not my job" to "Obsessive Zealotry" is present in participant experiences

• The mean for this distribution is slightly skewed towards "Obsessive Zealotry" bordering on the Ideal zone. However most participants felt that the VPSCIN did allow them to make a difference through new and innovative concepts

• The majority of experiences were told with a Highly positive or positive frame across the entire distribution. A small number of negative experiences are present, but predominantly skewed towards "Not my Job"

• Overall, there are more experiences indexed towards high "Obsessive Zealotry" than "Not my job. Experiences to the right of the mean exhibit narratives that reflect a frustration with the entrenched nature of the ways things are done and a reluctance to try new ideas and concepts that have come from participation in VPSCIN. Many experiences reveal a willingness to embrace new ideas in their departments, but find it very hard to convince managers of the value in doing so.

• Participants that indexed experiences with a proclivity towards "Not my Job" did so, largely not because they did not want to embrace ideas and concepts provided by VPSCIN, but rather it was too hard to so in the bureaucracy of their departments, and the effort required outweighed the individual value.

Key themes:

• Networking opportunities
• Unique perspective and ways of thinking
• Bureaucratic ways of thinking
• Personal development/growth
• Thinking outside the square
• VPSCIN network - puts public sector in a good light
• Application of learning
• Essential blog

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Personal Accountability*

* Whilst not a formal part of the evaluation - the word map demonstrates some interesting perspectives of what were key elements of participants experiences

Perception

Highlights are glaring deficiencies.

I would discourage colleagues attending because these events show us the potential of how things could be and then you have to go back into our staid and hierarcical departments and have to face how the vps does things as if we were still in the 70's and 80's - which is a real let down. I'd save my colleagues the pain ! (Otherwise the workshops are good value.)
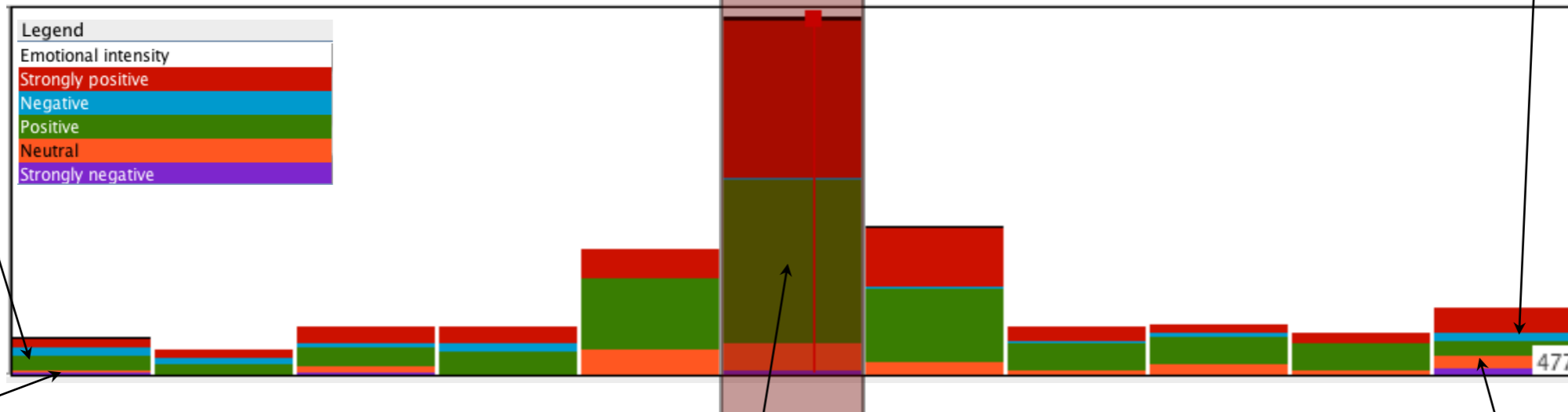
Participants believe that VPSCIN understands the business of the Public Sector and delivers CI programs that meet needs

Conservative management holds us back.

The thing that prevents uptake of lessons learned is managers who do not attend sessions and therefore do not understand the value of what their staff bring back into the workplace. We have far too many managers who are dinosaurs in their thinking and believe that the ways we have always done things are good enough. Many of them are very threatened of things that are new and they don't know much (or anything) about.

Lack understanding of business realities

Legend
Emotional intensity
Strongly positive
Negative
Positive
Neutral
Strongly negative

Blindsided by business imperatives

477

Regarded as a luxury rather than a necessary tool

On numerous occasions, as soon as I show someone the site (internal or external to VPS) they start to share the same excitement about what is happening in the VPS. We are quite progressive and leading the way - a pity it is not a resource that is "used" by the Departments in a more systematic way.

It is regarded more as a developmental opportunity for individuals (go and do that event in your lunchtime), rather than a necessary tool for improving the way everyone goes about their business.

Flatlining myths

CIN has provided me with confirmation that innovation does exist in the public service. There is a urban myth that innovation doesn't exist in the public service - VPSCIN takes the life out of that myth. The exploration of such topics as archetypes in the public sector, six hats thinking, mind mapping, well being, concentration.....where does it end, VPSCIN certainly thinks outside of the square.

Managers are thrratened by innovation.

We went to a recent CIN innovation conference where a whole range of speakers and ideas were put on display - unfortunately, despite the low cost our manager didn't see the need for others to attend, saying we do not need to innovate because we are doing well now. This type of managerial style is a huge barrier to getting more involved in vpscin initiatives as we cannot even get out of the workplace to attend.

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Perception

Data indicates:

- This distribution looks at the extent to which participants perceive VPSCIN to meet the Continuous Improvement needs of the public sector from " lacking understanding of business realities" to " blindsided by business imperatives"

- The mean for this distribution is in the middle of the ideal zone, showing that participants do perceive that VPSCIN does understand the business of the Public Sector, providing Continuous Improvement programs that assist in delivering better business outcomes to the Public Sector

- The majority of experiences were told in a Very Positive or Positive frame. A small number of negative expereinces are present, but most are skewed towards "lack of understanding business realities"

- A key underlying trend present is that participants whilst valuing the role of VPSCIN, are hamstrung in being able to apply new thinking and learning in their jobs. This is manifested in examples showing that "influential" others believe VPSCIN participation as nothing more than a personal development opportunity, a challenge to "traditional" ways of working, and managers being threatened by new concepts that they cannot control.

Key themes:

- Networking & learning opportunities
- Innovation
- Valuable blog
- Personal improvement
- Application of knowledge
- Intellectual challenge
- Application in the business
- Cross-sector opportunities

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Perception*

* Whilst not a formal part of the evaluation - the word map demonstrates some interesting perspectives of what were key elements of participants experiences

Leadership

Closed minded management

My apprceciation of organisational dynamics has certainly increased and my openess to thinking differently. Within team meetings I have attempted to influence broader debate by using the six hats thinking which I beleive has added value.

Beyond this it is difficult to bring about a great deal of uptake as our managers are so tunnel visioned and think in a such a risk adverse and short term manner - nothing new is considered as anything but a distraction or threat.
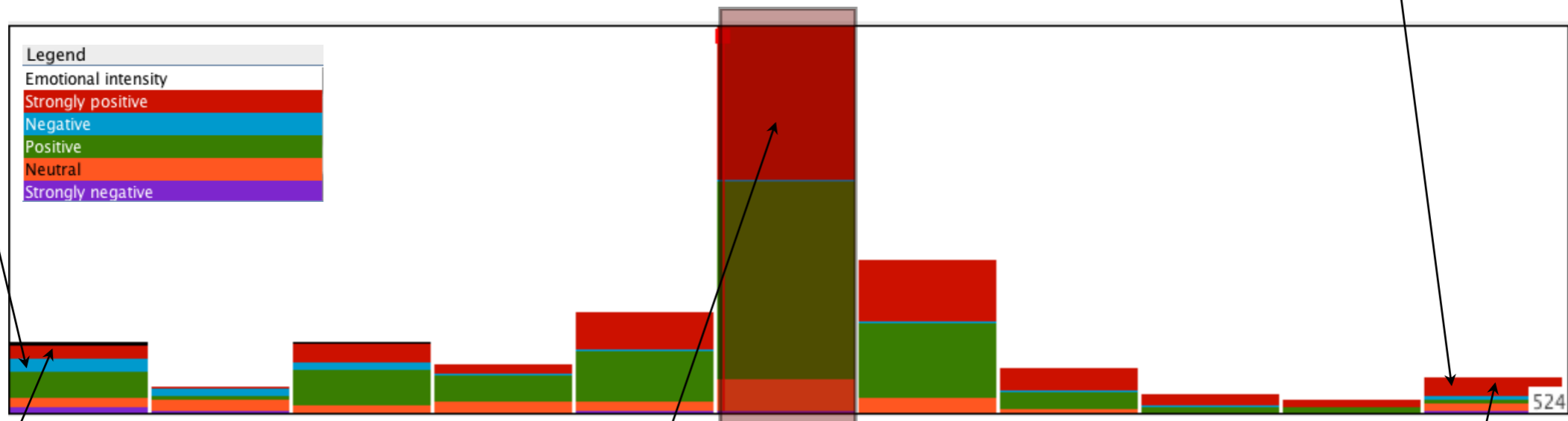
Participants believe that VPSCIN provides appropriate leadership around Continuous Improvement initiatives that can be implemented in the workplace

Support of your boss needed.

As long as your boss supports you they are very good value. If they don't (like a previous one didn't) they can be very frustrating as you get to hear of many new and novel approaches and you are not allowed to try any out because of the fear of doing something differently.

Thankfully my current boss is not so bad and supports me in my attempts to improve.

Non existent

Legend
Emotional intensity
Strongly positive
Negative
Positive
Neutral
Strongly negative

Unnecessarily interfering

524

It has helped our change management

I have used the techniques learnt at these sessions back in the workplace and have had great responses to dealing with difficult problems. An example was a change management situation which carried a lot of emotional conflict and resulting loss of focus from staff unhappy about the Change. The techniques picked up helped to deal with this situation very well.

VPSCIN Building Sustainable and Innovative People

I have attended a number of CIN events. All of them offered useful tools and / or challenged me to think differently, supporting a more positive attitude back in the workplace. However, I must say it is also frustrating when these potentially useful methods are not accepted by colleagues due to their reluctance to try something unfamiliar to them. I do wish more colleagues in the VPS utilise the opportunities offered by the VPSCIN. We can then work more productively and creatively.

Many executive officers do recognise the reputation of the VPSCIN and often agrees to the utilisation of facilitators or contractors if they were used by the VPSCIN.

The CIN also provides general support in learning and innovation. It provides facilities such as Wiki/blogs, communication facilitation in organising communities of practice, manages the VPSCIN website where useful information and tools can be accessed. It also encourages members to use our brains with exercises such as the Mental Floss. I have fun participating and have managed to win a few prizes that are again useful tools that provided great reference materials for day to day work. By the way, some of the books are autographed. I have offered them to colleagues where applicable.

It doesn't stop at just work tools, CIN also encourages us to improve ourselves - health and wellbeing. We need these to be able to work effectively.

Conservative, change adverse senior public servants

I will be using the stakeholder management templates we learnt about in the Stakeholder Circle workshop. They provide a structured way of considering and communicating with stakeholders that we do not have access to now. Normally uptake of this type of thing is due to conservative senior public servants who have quite a genuine fear of change. They did not get to where they are by doing any od this stuff.

emergingoptions

Leadership

Data indicates:

• This distribution looks at the extent to which the VPSCIN is providing appropriate leadership around Continuous Improvement in the Public Sector, from "Non existent" to "Unnecessarily Interfering"

• The mean of the distribution is in the Ideal zone and confirms that participants believe that VPSCIN is demonstrating an appropriate level of leadership around Continuous Improvement

• Most experiences were told in a Very Positive or Positive frame. A small number of experiences were negative in nature, but skewed towards "non existent" leadership

• When participants indexed leadership towards the extremes of "non existent" to "unnecessarily interfering", it is interesting to note that the experiences related were not saying that VPSCIN exhibited these behaviours, but rather their management were doing so to the detriment of participants being able to implement new and innovative concepts

Key themes:

• Networking & learning
• Ideas, inspiration and challenge
• Cross-agency dialogue
• Holistic view of government
• Collaboration
• Application in the workplace
•Conservative Public Sector
• Utility of knowledge

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Leadership*

* Whilst not a formal part of the evaluation - the word map demonstrates some interesting perspectives of what were key elements of participants experiences

Dominant Attitude

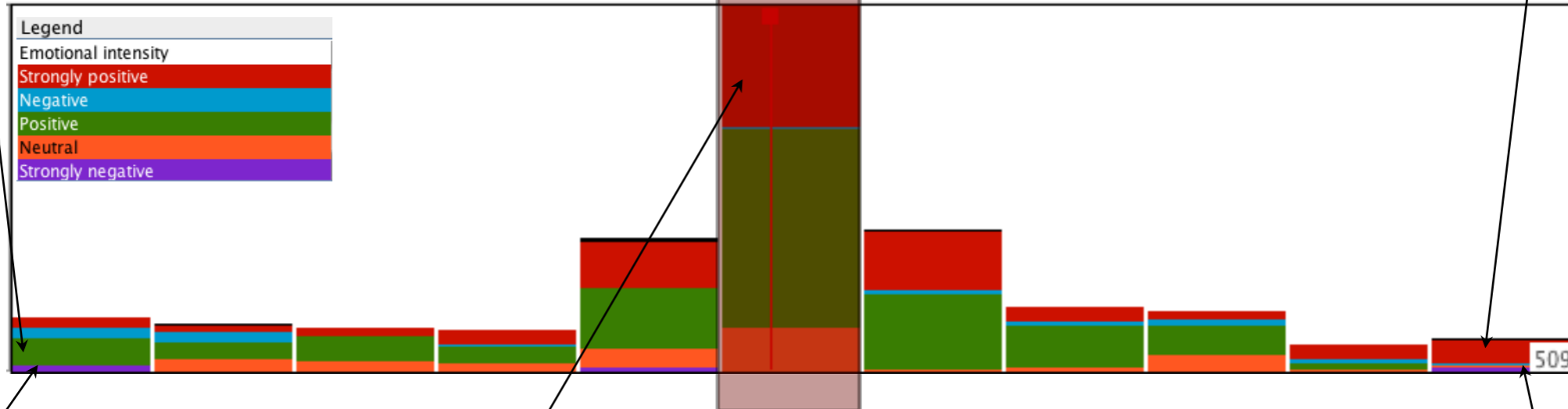**tunnel visioned managers.**

We have been reluctant to try and get some of this stuff up as we know we would not get the support from managers in our organisation. tghis is not a reflection on the value of the processes, but rather our conservative management.

gain the wisdom to know when you can make difference

I found the varied exposure to personal development issues such as emotional intelligence, work-life balance and lean thinking to be valuable in making me a more resilent person in dealing with the difficult and fustrating circumstances of working in the public service at the bottom of the food chain. Although I cant really chnage the workplace from the bottom up I can be more accepting and less fustrated about the why the pucblic service is often so dysfunctinal and not too take this too personally

Participants believe that VPSCIN is providing them with concepts and tools that allow them to have a positive impact in their workplace

Legend
Emotional intensity
Strongly positive
Negative
Positive
Neutral
Strongly negative

Going through the motions

Frustrated & powerless

509

The CIN is invaluable

I first became aware of the VPS CIN in late 2005 after transferring from the department of Justice to take up a Change Agent role with Victoria Police. I can't remember how I first became aware of the CIN, but I can certainly recall my excitement, enthusiasm and relief when I attended my first seminar.
• Excitement at the possibility of working across other departments on issues that are common to all.
• Enthusiasm at the range of ideas, information and tools available and
• Relief at meeting other like minded, dedicated and inspirational public servants.

Since then I have become an ardent supporter of the network and its activities. I find the articles, competitions, seminars and workshops invaluable in helping everyone to be the best they can be. It provides opportunities to meet people from across the entire spectrum of the public sector. To discuss issues and barriers affecting our performance and explore concepts and tools designed to make life/work healthier and more enjoyable. Most importantly for me, the CIN allows me to critically reflect on my interpersonal style and impact. To grow as a person, continually learn and increase my capacity to be 'present' in every moment.

Risk adverse vps beauracrats.

The main impediment to uptake is senior people in each dept who are typical conservative public servants lacking in any creativity or leadership. Alot of th stuff presented can be very threatening to these types, who got to where they are now through building red-tape and stepping on heads. Imagine a business unit or dept head sponsoring a lateral thinking session to try to get to the heart of some of our intractible problems !! It won't happen, they are too structured and risk adverse (even when there is no risk,) anything different is pereceived as a risk.

Regarded as a luxury rather than a necessary tool

On numerous occasions, as soon as I show someone the site (internal or external to VPS) they start to share the same excitement about what is happening in the VPS. We are quite progressive and leading the way - a pity it is not a resource that is "used" by the Departments in a more systematic way.
It is regarded more as a developmental opportunity for individuals (go and do that event in your lunchtime), rather than a necessary tool for improving the way everyone goes about their business.

Dominant Attitude

Data indicates:

• This distribution looks at the Dominant Attitude of participants to the impact that VPSCIN has in the Public Service from "going through with the motions" to "frustrated and powerless"

• The distribution shows a central mean within the the Ideal zone. This means that participants believe the the VPSCIN is providing the Public Sector with concepts and tools that allow them to have a positive impact in their workplace

• The majority of experiences were Very positive or Positive in outlook

• The responses have a slight skew towards "going through the motions" with experiences towards this extreme displaying an underlying theme of "conservative bureaucrats and managers being impediments to trying new and innovative concepts. This is creating an environment where it is easier to just go through the motions and give lip service to trying new and different approaches

Key themes:

• Inspiration
• Diversity in offering
• Innovation & collaboration
• Cross departmental learning
• Networking opportunities
• Whole of government
• Different perspectives

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Dominant Attitude*

Primary Motivation
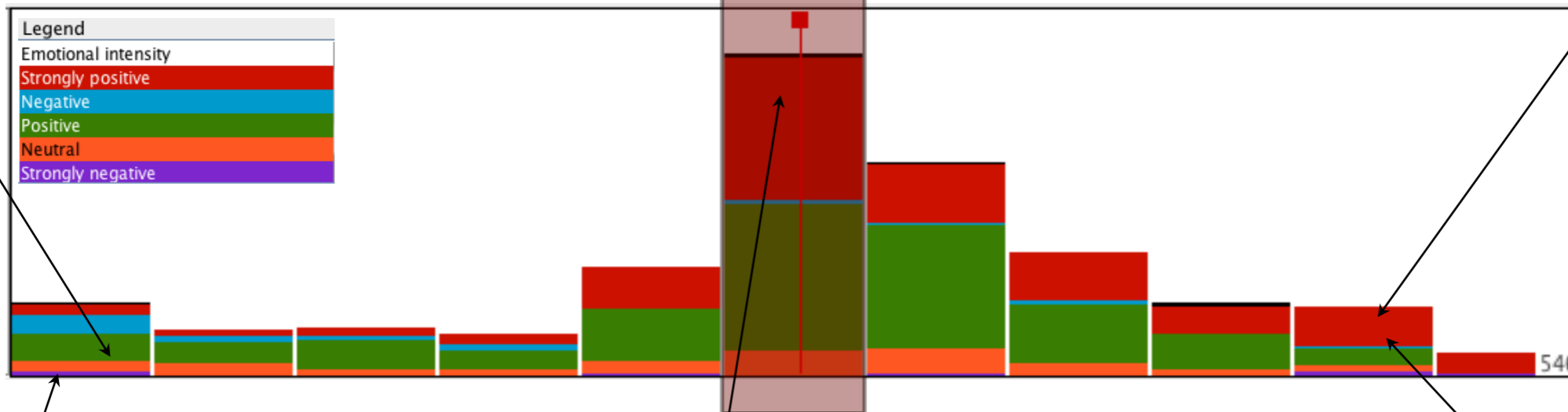
Sceptics unwilling to change, or even try.

We have applied some of the lean principles to look a couple of processes to streamline them. To date the principal saving has been the element of time. Some have been reluctant to uptake the new elements of the process as they prefer to do things the way they have always done so - this is very frustrating. It is these people that provide a negative view of the typical public servant.

Participants believe that VPSCIN is a catalyst to motivate departments to try new concepts that will add value to the business

the journey of unlearning

i would express my situation and circumstances in the context of a journey and life experiences at the time of joining CIN and what has developed since my involvement.
I would share the benefits of networking with other practitioners,listening to best practice speakers, and explain how CIN has contributed to me challenging my views on learning.

Preserving the status quo

Legend
Emotional intensity
Strongly positive
Negative
Positive
Neutral
Strongly negative

Pushing change at any price

546

Current managers are NOT leaders.

Although it is not possible to influence our managers who do not attend cin events and who like to preseve the status quo, there has a been a positive impact on my thinking and the way I do things. Hopefully people like myself will replace them before too long and provide the vps with greater proactivity and responsiveness.

Leading, Thinking, learning and Innovation.

Attendance can be like a breath of fresh air that takes you out of the often stifling public sector environment where everything is micro-managed and new thinking and ideas are absolutely discouraged. The main reason I think there is for attending is that many of the sessions and ideas put forward by the vpscin in recent years have now gone on to become emerging and increasingly accepted practice. This is a really strong indicator that the network is on track and in touch with future trends in thinking, learning and innovation - something our department's L&D people are not.

A Place to Inspire.......

Being with other public servants and having your role and skills validated is a very powerful experience. So often the role of the public sector is diminished or denigrated as the commercial world takes all the credit for the good times and none of the responsibility for the bad. The public sector plays a critical role in doing the things that the private sector wont touch and we do it in the face of increasing community scrutiny and complex politial environments.   The CIN provides a place to explore, regenerate, connect and belong. A place to inspire us all to face the many challenges of our changing world.
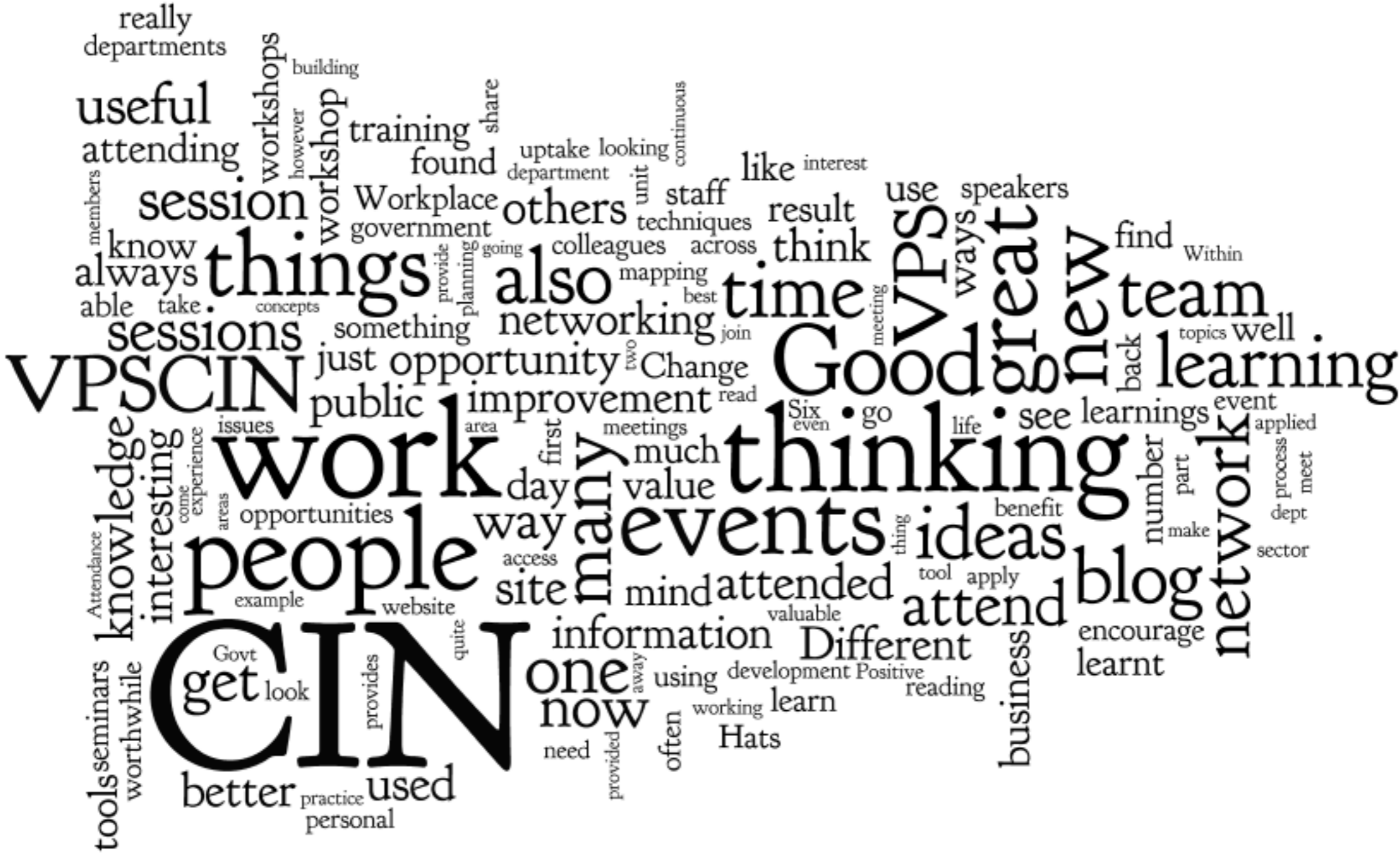
Primary Motivation

Data indicates:

• This distribution looks at the extent to which participants believe the VPSCIN are a catalyst to motivate departments to try new concepts that add value to the business from "Preserving the Status Quo" to "Pushing change at any price"

• The mean of the distribution is in the Ideal zone, showing that participants believe that VPSCIN has got the balance right

• It is interesting to note that there are more experiences on the right hand side of the distribution (pushing change at any cost) skewed more to the centre, showing a significant desire for change, but not at any price.

• There are also a significant number of experiences skewed towards the extreme of "preserving the status quo" on the left hand side with a number of these being negative in nature. This points to participants being more negative about maintaining the status quo

Key themes:

• Innovation
• Improved processes
• Right tools for the job
• Work and personal benefits
• Learning & growing
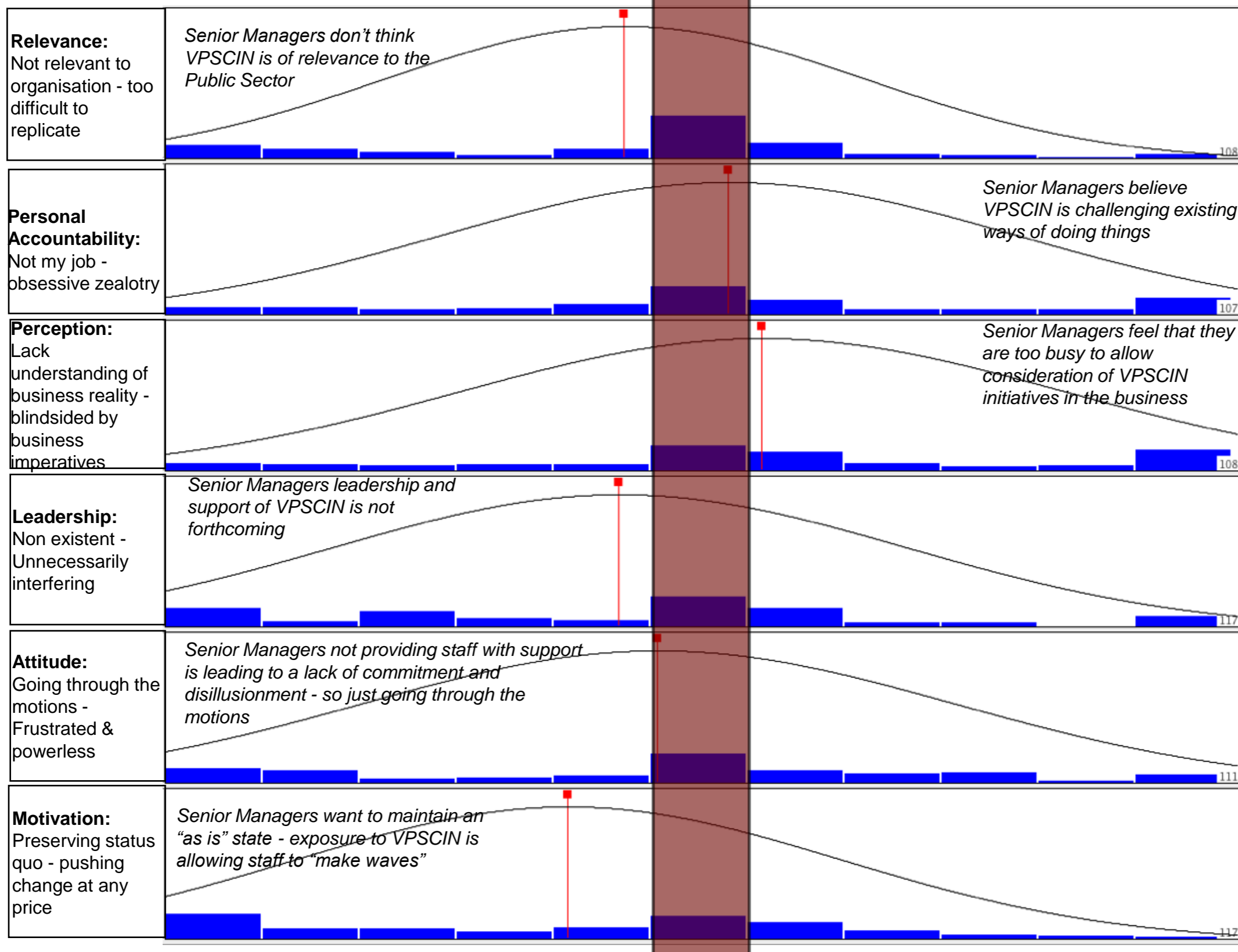• Contemporary not bureaucratic
• Supportive environment
• Networking

Words that occurred most frequently in experiences indexed to Primary Motivation*

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Most Significant Barrier
Attitude of Senior Management

Most Significant Barrier - Attitude of Senior Management

Relevance: Not relevant to organisation - too difficult to replicate

Senior Managers don't think VPSCIN is of relevance to the Public Sector

108

Personal Accountability: Not my job - obsessive zealotry

Senior Managers believe VPSCIN is challenging existing ways of doing things

107

Perception: Lack understanding of business reality - blindsided by business imperatives

Senior Managers feel that they are too busy to allow consideration of VPSCIN initiatives in the business

108

Leadership: Non existent - Unnecessarily interfering

Senior Managers leadership and support of VPSCIN is not forthcoming

117

Attitude: Going through the motions - Frustrated & powerless

Senior Managers not providing staff with support is leading to a lack of commitment and disillusionment - so just going through the motions

111

Motivation: Preserving status quo - pushing change at any price

Senior Managers want to maintain an "as is" state - exposure to VPSCIN is allowing staff to "make waves"
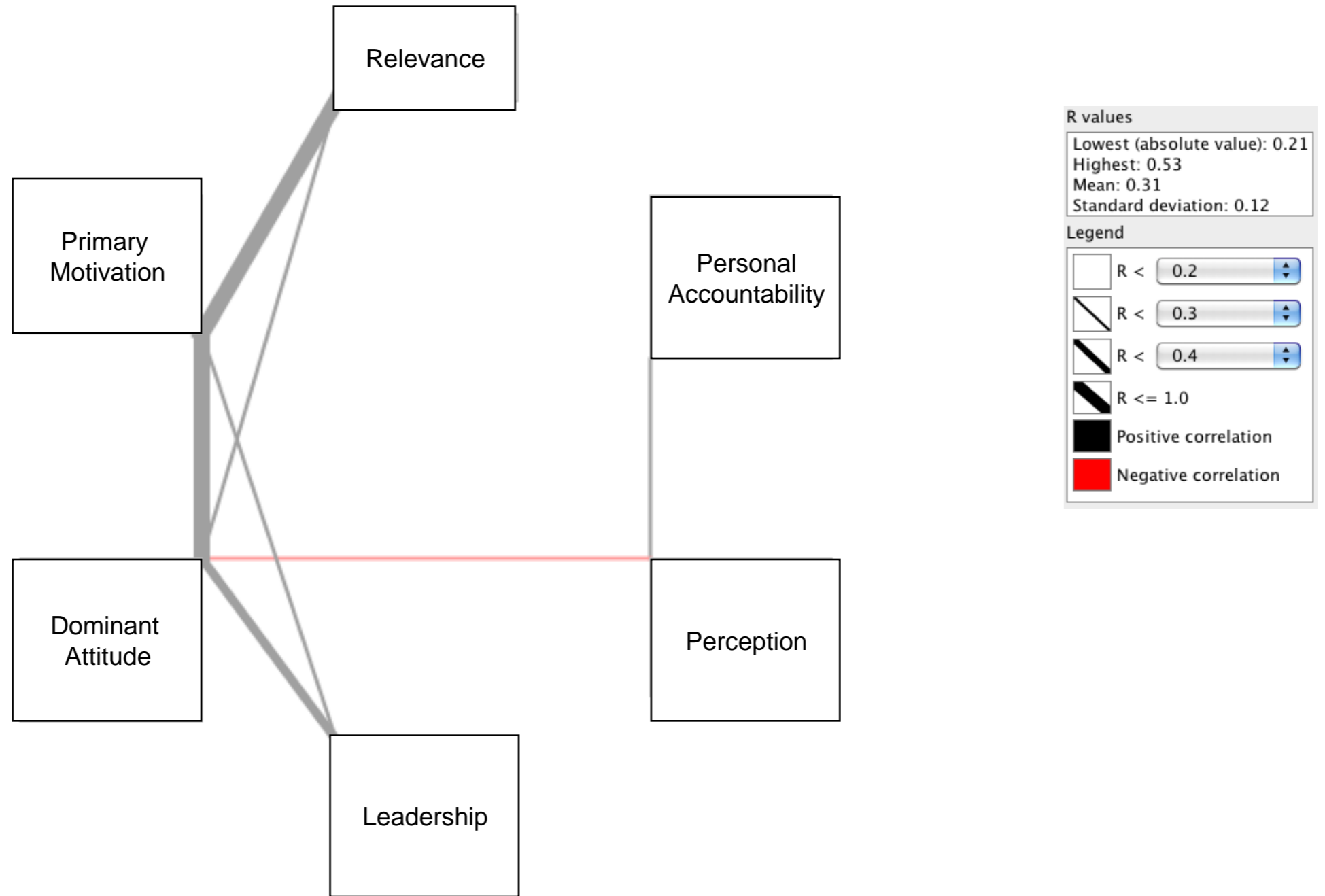
117

When looking at the Attitude of Senior Management as the most significant barrier, we see that the mean shifts outside the Ideal zone for 4 of the 6 filters.

These variations from the mean provide pointers to where further investigation is required to ascertain what kinds of interventions might be most appropriate to shift the mean back into the Ideal zone

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Most Significant Barrier - Attitude of Senior Management

Relevance

Primary Motivation

Personal Accountability

Dominant Attitude

Perception

Leadership

R values

Lowest (absolute value): 0.21
Highest: 0.53
Mean: 0.31
Standard deviation: 0.12

Legend

R < 0.2	
R < 0.3	
R < 0.4	
R <= 1.0	
Positive correlation	
Negative correlation	

A visual correlation map of the Most Significant Barriers - Attitude of Senior Management was constructed. The correlation map above shows that there is a significant relationship existing between "Relevance" - "Primary Motivation" - Dominant Attitude" and a weaker correlation between "Dominant Attitude" - "Leadership". In effect, these relationships are significant factors in driving Senior Management attitudes towards the VPSCIN. Further investigation of these relationships is recommended

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Barriers - Attitude of Senior Management
"Real People - Real Comments"

Useful Skills

I explained at a team meeting how I have applied my learnings from recent Rapid Reading course provided by CIN and that I have been able to use this when reading lengthy legal documents.

While some peers also said they enjoyed the course; it seemed that there was a lack of support or enthusiasm from senior staff towards such courses.

More thinking to maximise influence

The application of knowledge from these forums needs some collective thought because individuals have little opportunity to influence departmental agendas.

More managers should support this.

I would strongly encourage any other public servant to attend vpscin events. I believe that this should also be supported by managers to ensure that team members can work together on ideas and innovative approaches introduced by the network. At the moment I know many who would like to atend but are not allowed by managers saying it is not part of core business or some other equally ridiculous excuse.

Narrative Fragments

gain the wisdom to know when you can make difference

I found the varied exposure to personal development issues such as emotional intelligence, work-life balance and lean thinking to be valuable in making me a more resilent person in dealing with the difficult and fustrating circumstances of working in the public service at the bottom of the food chain. Although I cant really chnage the workplace from the bottom up I can be more accepting and less fustrated about the why the pucblic service is often so dysfunctinal and not too take this too personally

Useful events.

I've only attended two this year due to work commitments but have found them both useful. The 1st was edward de Bono which was excellent and described how to think differently and more productively. The 2nd was the Commissioner of the SRO who spoke about Org Self Esteem which was also very useful - although the concepts he spoke about are only useful if senior leaders buy in (and I cant see ours doing that.) I'm hopeful of attending more sessions from here on in.

Barriers - Attitude of Senior Management
"Real People - Real Comments"

Narrative Fragments

Max's learning

The goal-posts of government keep changing. Biggest challenge is keeping your project relevant to changing political situations, prsonalities, priorities of government and senior managers

Risk adverse, conservative & tunnel visioned senior public servants !

The blog as beneficial (and very useful)as it is does not have the support of the most senior managers. They, along with the corporate comms functions see the new social media and web 2.0 as a threat to their status quo, and as taking away the element of control.

Our minds are expanded.

We have not directly applied process improvement methods, however our minds are certainly more open and flexible with the learnings we have gathered at these events. We are about to have some of the debono tools trained into our area as a result and we expect that these will improve what we do even more. The uptake can be difficult as not all attendees who get the benfit of the learning at cin events have the influence over senior people to get them to uptake it back at work.

Lost Opportunities

In all honesty, I don't think there is management interest in what I do at CIN. They don't oppose attendance and would see it as personal rather than organisational development. Occasionally, I am asked what occurred.

Managers are thrratened by innovation.

We went to a recent CIN innovation conference where a whole range of speakers and ideas were put on display - unfortunately, despite the low cost our manager didn't see the need for others to attend, saying we do not need to innovate because we are doing well now. This type of managerial style is a huge barrier to getting more involved in vpscin initiatives as we cannot even get out of the workplace to attend.

Closed minded management

My apprceciation of organisational dynamics has certainly increased and my openess to thinking differently. Within team meetings I have attempted to influence broader debate by using the six hats thinking which I beleive has added value.
Beyond this it is difficult to bring about a great deal of uptake as our managers are so tunnel visioned and think in a such a risk adverse and short term manner - nothing new is considered as anything but a distraction or threat.

Barriers - Attitude of Senior Management
"Real People - Real Comments"

Narrative Fragments

tunnel visioned managers.

We have been reluctant to try and get some of this stuff up as we know we would not get the support from managers in our organisation. tghis is not a reflection on the value of the processes, but rather our conservative management.

Highlights are glaring deficiencies.

I would discourage colleagues attending because these events show us the potential of how things could be and then you have to go back into our staid and hierarcical departments and have to face how the vps does things as if we were still in the 70's and 80's - which is a real let down. I'd save my colleagues the pain ! (Otherwise the workshops are good value.)

Current managers are NOT leaders.

Although it is not possible to influence our managers who do not attend cin events and who like to preseve the status quo, there has a been a positive impact on my thinking and the way I do things. Hopefully people like myself will replace them before too long and provide the vps with greater proactivity and responsiveness.

Conservative, change adverse senior public servants

I will be using the stakeholder management templates we learnt about in the Stakeholder Circle workshop. They provide a structured way of considering and communicating with stakeholders that we do not have access to now. Normally uptake of this type of thing is due to conservative senior public servants who have quite a genuine fear of change. They did not get to where they are by doing any od this stuff.

risk in their own shadows.

We've learnt that you can still be innovative and do different things even if we are beauracrats. The only prevention to uptake is the upper levels of the public service who see risk in their own shadows.

Attendance should be compulsory.

VPSCIN sessions are a great opportunity to spend time with people who want to make a difference. Those who know of the network and don't attend do not generally practice continuous improvement or think they do not need to improve. these tend to be jumped up public servants with a massively overinflated opinion of their own importance.

To know there are so many new and better ways of doing things and options open to us makes a mockery of the way we go about many things as we always have. Attendance at a certain number of vpscin events per year should be compulsory and a part of people's personal development plans.

Support of your boss needed.

As long as your boss supports you they are very good value. If they don't (like a previous one didn't) they can be very frustrating as you get to hear of many new and novel approaches and you are not allowed to try any out because of the fear of doing something differently.

Thankfully my current boss is not so bad and supports me in my attempts to improve.

Filter comparison:
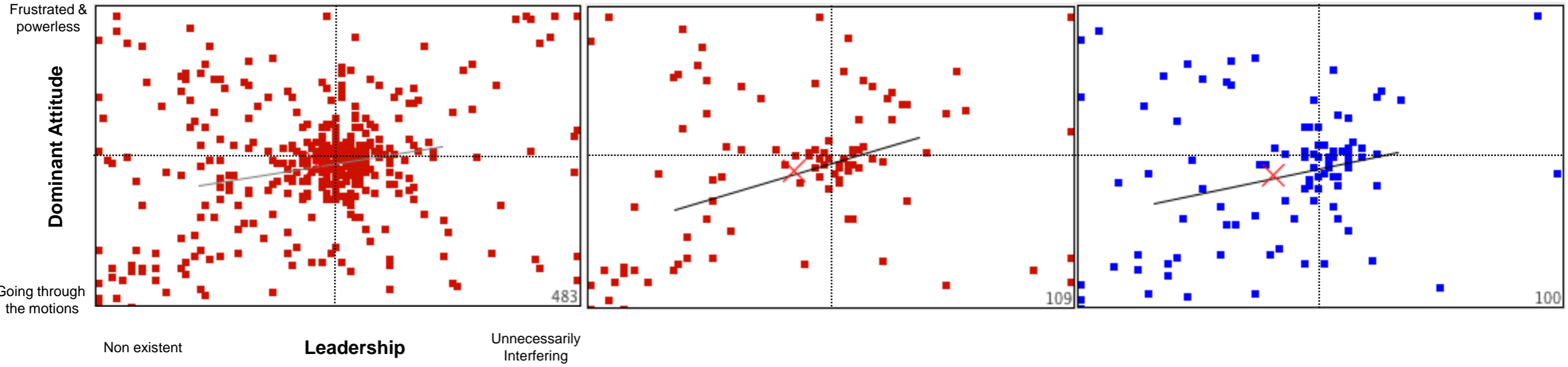## Are there any relationships?

Leadership vs Dominant Attitude

As people become more frustrated and powerless, leadership becomes more unnecessarily interfering

All responses

Frustrated & powerless

Dominant Attitude

Going through the motions

483

Non existent   **Leadership**   Unnecessarily Interfering

Barrier: Attitude of Senior Management

109

Able to influence: Peers

100

Most significant encouragement: Attitude of Peers

Frustrated & powerless

Dominant Attitude

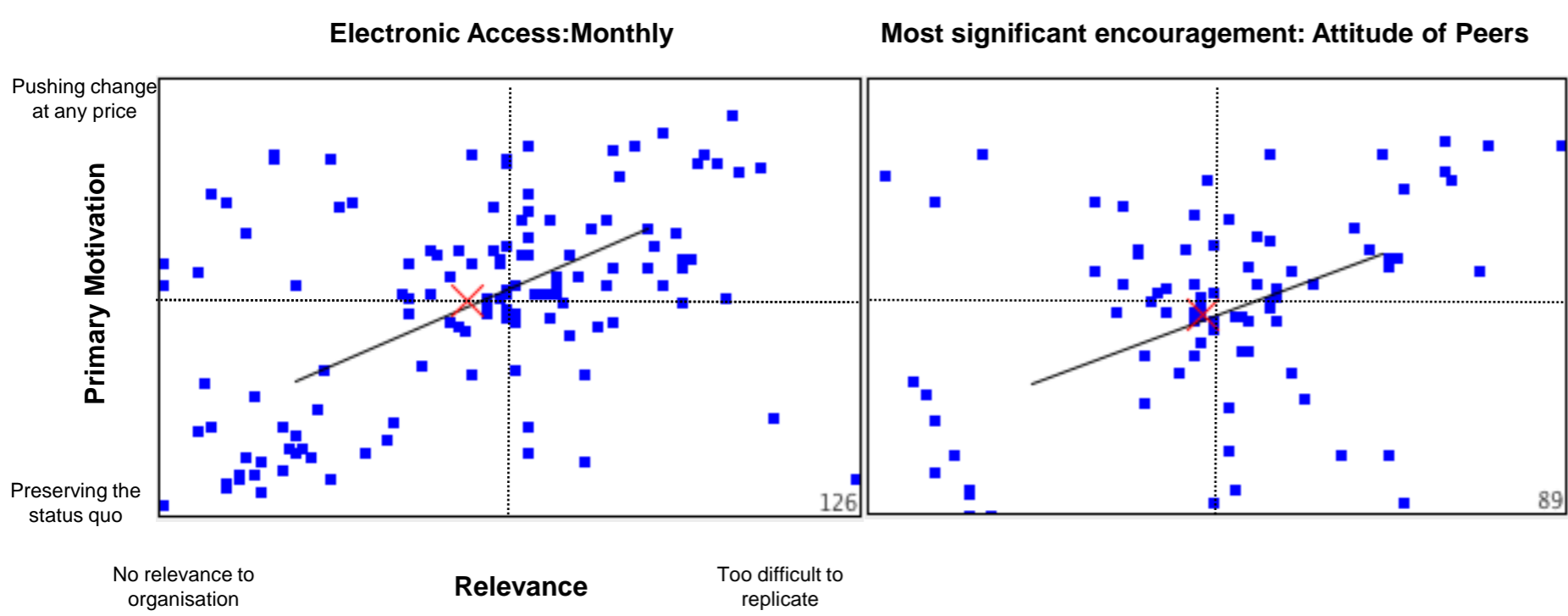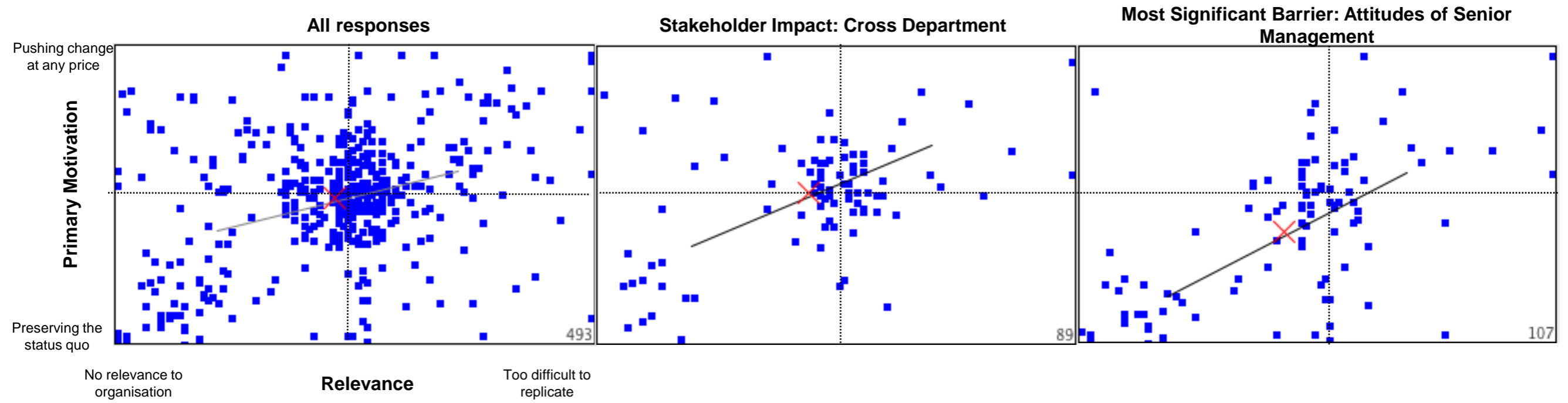Going through the motions

91

Non existent   **Leadership**   Unnecessarily Interfering
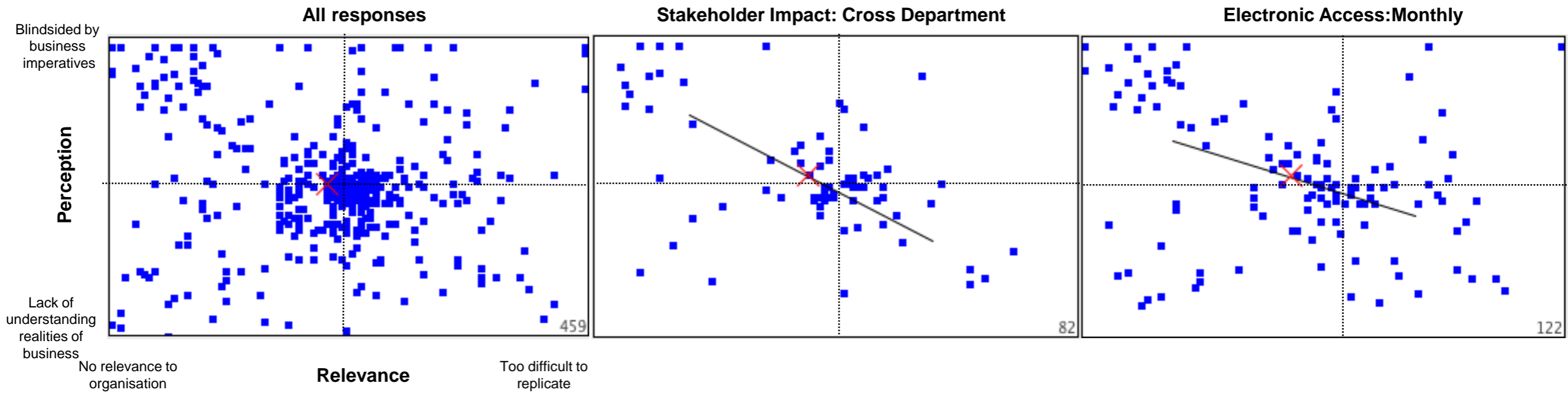
emergingoptions
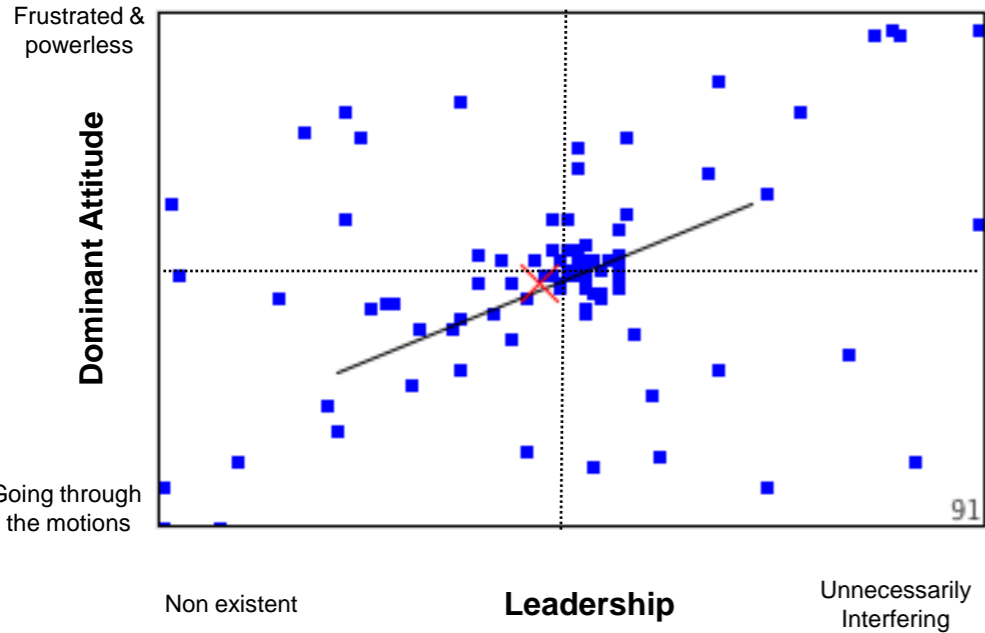
Relevance vs Primary Motivation

As people push change at any price, relevance is lost to the point where ideas become so fragmented, they cannot be replicated

All responses

Stakeholder Impact: Cross Department

Most Significant Barrier: Attitudes of Senior Management

Pushing change at any price

Primary Motivation

Preserving the status quo

No relevance to organisation

Relevance

Too difficult to replicate

493

89

107

Electronic Access:Monthly

Most significant encouragement: Attitude of Peers

Pushing change at any price

Primary Motivation

Preserving the status quo

No relevance to organisation

Relevance

Too difficult to replicate

126

89

emergingoptions
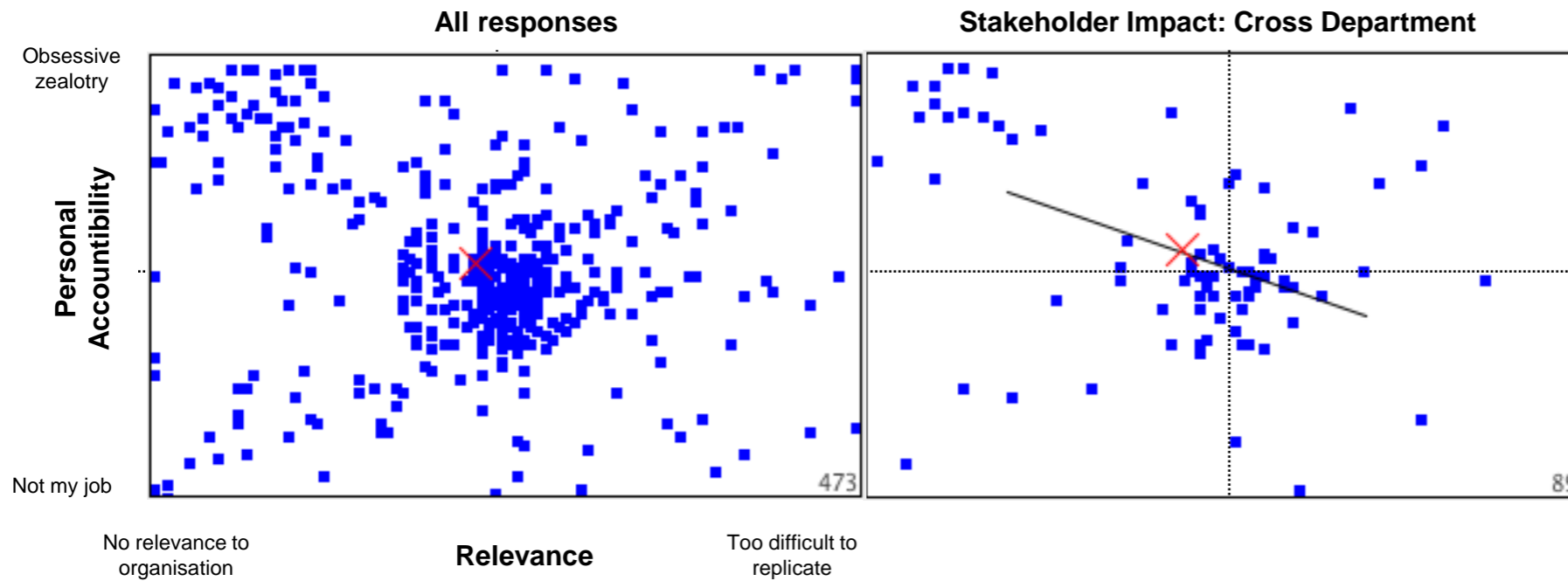
Relevance vs Perception

As people become blindsided by business imperatives, their ability to grasp the relevance of ideas is lost to the point where ideas become so fragmented, they cannot be replicated
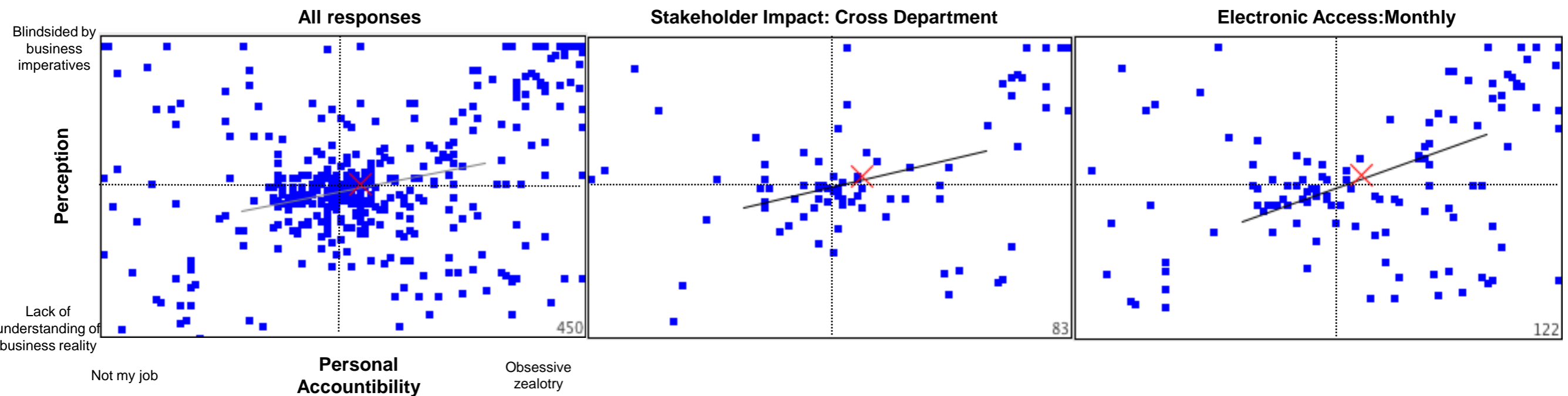
Relevance vs Personal Accountability

As people become obsessed with individual accountability, relevance is lost to the point where ideas become so fragmented, they cannot be replicated

All responses

Stakeholder Impact: Cross Department

Obsessive zealotry

Personal Accountibility

Not my job

473

89

No relevance to organisation

Relevance

Too difficult to replicate

Personal Accountability vs Perception

As people become blindsided by business imperatives, they increasingly obsess about the accountability of the individual

All responses

Stakeholder Impact: Cross Department

Electronic Access:Monthly

Blindsided by business imperatives

Perception

Lack of understanding of business reality

450

83

122

Not my job

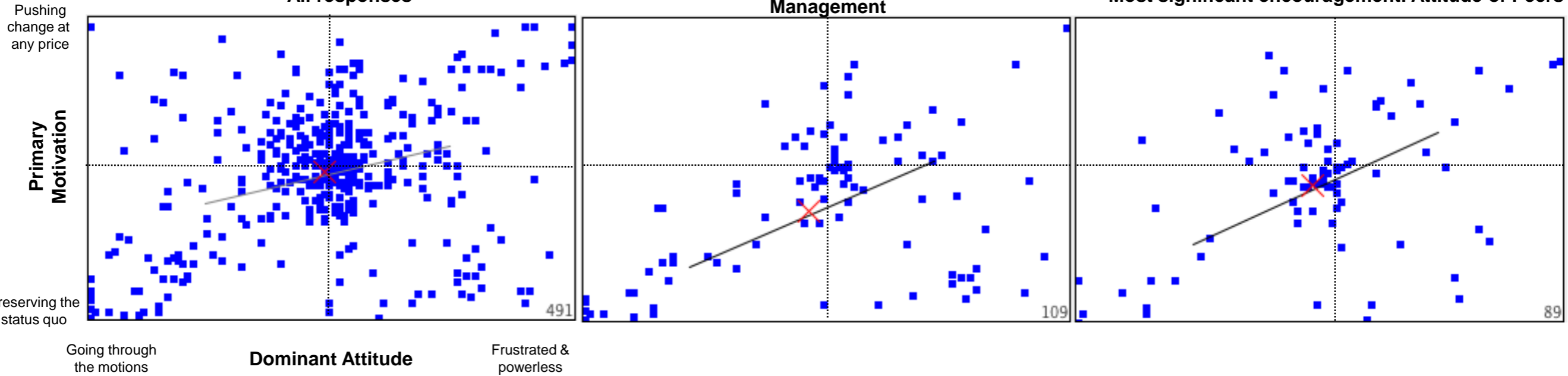**Personal Accountibility**

Obsessive zealotry

Dominant Attitude vs Primary Motivation

The more people push change at any price, the more frustrated powerless they become

All responses

Most Significant Barrier: Attitudes of Senior Management

Most significant encouragement: Attitude of Peers

Pushing change at any price

Primary Motivation

Preserving the status quo

Going through the motions

Dominant Attitude

Frustrated & powerless

491   109   89

Perception vs Primary Motivation

The more people are blindsided by business imperatives, the more they will move to preserve the status quo

All responses

Electronic Access:Monthly

Pushing change at any price

Primary Motivation

Preserving the status quo

Lack of understanding business realities

Perception

Blindsided by business imperatives

469   121

emergingoptions