

# Preface

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The banana tree flourishes in a tropical climate with rich, fertile soil. Here, the tree is most productive and the bananas are of the highest quality. The tree does not flourish however, in rocky soil and cold climates. We can use a greenhouse and fertilizer to modify such hostile environments, but the tree will never fruit as strongly as in the right environment. Moreover, these modifications need more time, money and effort to produce bananas that cost more and may not be as prolific.

Similarly, asset management must have the right environment to flourish; the right leadership, behaviour and culture. Fortunately, we have abundant potential to develop and change leadership, culture and behaviour so that asset management will produce the desired outcomes.

This book is called *Living Asset Management*. This tree metaphor was chosen because it illustrates, at an axiomatic level, that leadership, culture, emotions and behaviours are vital.

Asset management is an evolving discipline that is dynamic and complex; involves life cycle considerations and relationships among various disciplines. Physical assets and management systems are visible and tangible like the trunk and branches of a tree. Leadership, emotions, culture and behaviours are invisible and intangible. Yet, they are essential to an organisation. Just as a tree is not merely a collection of trunks, branches and leaves, neither is an organisation merely a collection of assets and their plans and processes. Without the right leadership, culture and behaviours, an organisation cannot produce its desired outcomes, just as without the right soil, nutrients, environment, and gardeners, a tree cannot produce its fruit.

Asset management must have the right environment – leadership, workplace culture and behaviour – to produce the organisation's desired outcomes.

Each tree has its roots (foundations including technology, organisational design, learning, communication, reward system, relationships, processes), trunk and branches (visible systems of people, assets, leadership and management), and leaves (such as environment, reliability, safety, quality, finance), that produce fruits (desired outcomes). The soil must support the tree, nourish the seeds to become roots, from which grows the trunk. From the trunk grows branches, leaves and ultimately fruit.

Within this process, sometimes the roots, soil and seed are taken for granted, as they are invisible to the untrained eye, just like 'culture' is invisible to the untrained eye, and is easily overlooked. In this organisation as a tree metaphor, the soil and the environment in which the tree grows represent the culture, the seeds represent shared beliefs (strategic objectives) and the gardener represents the leadership of the organisation.

It is imperative that all these elements function together if the desired outcome is to be achieved. What affects the environment or the gardeners actions, affects the soil,

which in turn affects the roots, the trunk and ultimately the fruit. The same is true for an organisation. Whatever influences culture or the actions of leadership, affects the principles of the organisation; the assets; areas such as safety, finance, operations and maintenance and ultimately the desired outcomes of the organisation. To achieve the desired outcome – or grow the best fruit possible – it is imperative that all these elements work in unison, using the shared beliefs of the organisation – or the seeds of the tree – as a base.

In the beginning, the seeds are very susceptible to the environment they have been planted in. The gardener determines where to plant the tree and creates the environment in which the trees will grow. Eventually, the tree will be self-sustaining, with much less work required by the gardener: the nutrients required will be mostly provided by the environment. Similarly, new organisational beliefs are highly influenced by the culture of the organisation. Leadership influences culture, and hence the growth and prosperity of these beliefs through all facets of the organisation, making them shared beliefs. Eventually, the culture will be self-sustaining, with much less direction required from leaders.

A tree can represent an organisation or asset in its entirety. A tree can also represent one system in an organisation, or a 'tree' in an 'orchard'. The same principle applies: in order for the orchard to prosper and produce its crop, it is absolutely necessary that each tree is integrated into a single system – the same is true of the organisation. It is the gardener's role to make sure that the integration between trees is sufficient to produce the proper interaction for the orchard to mature; just like it is the role of leadership to make sure that the integration and interface between systems is sufficient to produce the organisation's desired outcomes.

This is why no single leader can shape the culture of an organisation or be responsible for it. By its nature, culture is a collective creation, with the participation, mediation and interaction of both leaders and those being led, and the context within which they operate. The role of the leader is metaphorically the same as the gardener: take care of good habits, attitudes, behaviours, rites and rituals that create the nutrients the soil needs to grow trees that produce a good quality crop.

Good fruit comes with time. Too much pressure and little care at the wrong time can damage or destroy the produce. In order to acquire excellent outcomes, timing, continuous improvement and the quality of the interaction and care are of utmost importance. The aim of this book is to describe the important relationship between the soft and intangible side (culture, leadership, behaviour) of an asset management organisation, with the hard and tangible side (systems, processes, structures, physical assets). It will identify and discuss this relationship which enables an organisation to mature and achieve desired outcomes. This book is by no means prescriptive. Every organisation is different, and different leadership and culture styles will work for some and not others. This book does not provide theoretical discourse, but the experience of practical people who think a lot about the subject.

This book aims to help the reader understand how all these elements interact and impact

an organisation, and the outcomes it is seeking to achieve. It further aims to provide the information and options for designing organisational culture and leadership to suit the organisation along different points of the asset management journey.