

Exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work

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Abstract

This research takes an iterative multiple case study approach and seeks new insight from common language in the workplace – specifically exploring what we mean when we say that we're at our best in work. Being at your best is a common term in the workplace but one that is not reflected in the academic literature. Given that it is commonly used, perhaps there is a common or shared meaning. Exploring that shared meaning could help identify how to get more from individuals and support the development of positive workplaces. There are three strands to this research thesis.

Firstly, the notion of being at one's best is introduced. The literature review identifies an overlap in the concepts of work performance, engagement and commitment. These three concepts are complex and have challenges of definition and measurement. It is suggested that being at one's best can be understood as involving high performance, engagement and commitment and will involve factors that are consistent to each of the three concepts. The overlap of the concepts is demonstrated in the pilot studies undertaken in three retail stores: the highest performing store; the store with the highest staff engagement survey results; and the store with the longest serving (committed) staff. Interviews, wordlists and questionnaires were interrogated and consistent themes across the 3 contexts formed a tentative framework of positive subjective states and positive behavioural patterns.

Secondly, this thesis explores the possibility of a shared meaning of being at one's best – extending the research to wider organisations. Further case studies are undertaken involving a total of 154 individuals in: a highly engaged hotel team; a high performing executive search team; the top performing shop managers in one company; and a study of individuals with at least five years' service and intending to stay in their jobs. The common experiences of these individuals form the refined framework that describes being at one's best in terms of: Positive subjective states (feelings); Positive behavioural patterns; and values. Individuals were feeling positive about themselves, their job, and their colleagues. They also showed positive behaviours related to achieving, supporting, and interacting. The connection between an individual's values and their work was also highlighted as playing a role in being at one's.

The third and final strand of the research is the opportunity to reflect on techniques used to explore shared meaning. There is little consistency in the literature regarding how to explore shared meaning. The iterative approach of this research allowed for reflection on: interviews, questionnaires, word lists, focus groups and mental model activities as potential techniques for exploring shared meaning. The reflections provide insight regarding each technique and lead to the suggestion that focus groups are used earlier in the process of exploring shared meaning in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The aim of this thesis

Using methodologies based on the notion of 'shared meaning' the aim of this research study is to explore what it means to be at one's best at work. The purpose of this report is to document the journey of this study based upon the social constructionist premise that experiences and how they are described create our reality. In summary it has involved three stages: a critical literature review to locate existing knowledge and inform the design of the investigation; a group of pilot case studies exploring the experiences of highly engaged, high performing and retained/committed individuals in one context which led to the development of a tentative framework describing the consistencies of their experiences and personal interpretations; and finally the extension of the exploration to individuals in broader contexts in order to highlight widespread consistencies and context specific elements that allowed the framework to be refined. In that way, this research aims to clarify our shared meaning in the form of a framework describing being at one's best at work. The process or journey also provides the opportunity to reflect on the methods that can be used to explore shared meaning in the workplace.

The rationale for this exploration of being at one's best at work is discussed in the remainder of this **Chapter one: Introduction**. The word best and the notion of people being at their best are common terms in the workplace but they are not reflected in the academic literature. As an antonym of the word 'worst', best naturally points this research to a positive psychology direction. There has been an explosion of positive psychology research over recent years and with that has come many criticisms. This research provides an opportunity to learn from both the successes and the critiques of positive psychology. The chapter goes on to note how little consistency there is in the literature regarding how to investigate shared meanings so this study provides the opportunity to reflect on the usefulness of a range of techniques to explore shared meaning. Finally the chapter concludes with a discussion of how to get the best from people at work in a new and challenging post-recession context.

The literature relating to factors that may contribute to being at one's best at work is extensive and ranges from constructs such as potential, happiness, engagement, optimism and flow. **Chapter two: The Critical Literature Review** uses Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2010) definition of positive psychology to organise the literature: reviewing it in terms of positive subjective states; positive behavioural patterns and learning

from positive institutions. This review draws on the fields of organisational psychology, human resource management and management science and demonstrates that performance, engagement and commitment literature have significant overlap and all have problems of definition and measurement. The chapter ends with an illustration of the potential location within the literature of being at one's best at work – that being in the overlap of the broad concepts of engagement, performance and commitment. It also highlights the factors common to those three concepts. It makes two propositions, the first suggests there will be consistencies in the experiences of individuals in highly engaged, high performing and highly committed contexts. This would provide support for being at one's best residing in the overlap of the concepts. The second proposition suggests that those common experiences will relate to the factors in the literature that are common to those three concepts.

That potential location of 'best' in the literature (being in the overlap of the three concepts) informed the choice of pilot case studies within one context. **Chapter three: The Research Design** provides the basis for the structure of the research, situating the research within the social constructionist paradigm and focussing the method choice based on meaning exploration (as opposed to measurement). Whilst shared meaning is often referred to in the literature, techniques used to identify those shared meanings are varied. Using the discourse of employees may prove to be a more appropriate way of collecting data and gaining understanding. The chapter concludes with: a summary of the methods used by existing researchers to explore shared meaning; an outline of the methods used in this investigation; and an overview of the iterative process taken in the research.

Chapter four: The Pilot Case Studies moves on to the story of the research in the first context – three stores within one organisation: a store with highest staff survey results (engaged), another performing at 237% above expectation (performing) and another with the longest serving staff (committed). The findings from interviews, questionnaires and word lists are brought together into a tentative framework to describe being at one's best at work. The framework is composed of positive states about the job, about oneself and about colleagues alongside achieving, supporting and interacting positive behavioural patterns. The framework draws on the consistent themes that appear across the three stores and also highlights the potential role of a values connection involved in being at one's best. The chapter concludes with the reflexive learning gained from this stage of the research in order to inform the next stage or iteration.

Applying an iterative approach to this research has helped to examine the merit of an array of techniques to explore the discourses and a range of individual experiences and contexts.

Chapter five: The Iterative Case Studies outlines the journey and iterative process, providing the context and results of four case studies: with a team of highly engaged hotel employees; a high performing executive search team; the top 50 shop managers in a betting company; and 10 highly committed individuals who have been in their jobs for 5+ years and intend to stay. Each case study concludes with the reflexive learning gained and the further questions to explore in the next.

Chapter six: Conclusions pulls together the findings from all the case studies to make conclusions relating to the two research aims: the exploration of the shared meaning of being at one's best; and how shared meaning can be explored. It produces a refined framework to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best in work. This refined framework is developed by: identifying dominant themes common to all the contexts across all the case studies; and reviewing the content of the themes to ensure the titles are appropriate. There are three elements to the refined framework: positive subjective states about oneself, the job and colleagues; positive behavioural patterns relating to achieving, supporting and interacting; and the role of a values connection is also highlighted and suggested to facilitate the positive subjective states and behavioural patterns. This chapter also highlights the potential implications of this shared meaning for: work structure, people management practices; personal development; learning and development interventions; and recruitment and succession planning. Moving on, the chapter also draws together the reflections on the techniques used to explore shared meaning. It highlights the key learning points and suggests a more appropriate order of investigation for future research.

With clarity around the shared meaning of being at one's best at work in the shape of a refined framework, **Chapter seven: The Discussion** moves on to critique the research. It highlights the limitations of the research including the recognition that most of the participants were in customer facing roles which may have impacted upon the conclusions and the constraints of theme analysis in developing a definition. It concludes by highlighting possibilities for future research including exploring the link between the positive subjective states and behavioural patterns in the framework and the potential to measure the themes and being at one's best in work.

1.2 Why explore being at one's best at work?

The inspiration for this investigation came from the experiences of the researcher as an occupational psychology consultant. The word 'best' crops up in conversations within the workplace regularly: "when are you at your best?" is a question often asked or clients may say they "want to get the best from their teams". These are questions and statements that people easily understand and anecdotally there appears to be some consistency in the responses - containing elements relating to feelings experienced (or the positive subjective states, in positive psychology terms) and in the descriptions of what people are doing (or positive behavioural patterns). The ease of understanding the term and the apparent consistency in how people explain what they mean by being at their best generated the idea that there might be a 'shared meaning' or an unexpressed consensus.

This section outlines why understanding being at one's best at work could be helpful, firstly in terms of it being a common term in the workplace but a term that does not commonly appear in the academic literature. Secondly, this section notes how this investigation provides an opportunity to learn from the positive psychology movement. Thirdly, the process of the research is also likely to provide an opportunity to reflect on the techniques researchers use to explore shared meaning. Finally, the current workplace context has experienced constant change and challenges over recent years so exploring when one is their best at work needs to be grounded in the context and could help prioritise ways to support individuals in facing change and meeting those challenges.

1.2.1 Common language in the workplace

"By making what is natural to us – what we usually take for granted – new and strange, we can begin consciously to think about all the knowledge, assumptions and inferences we bring to any communication. And sometimes we will even see aspects of our taken-for-granted cultural knowledge and assumptions that we want to question..." Gee (2011 p.8)

The intention of this research is to explore a piece of the 'taken for granted' language we use in the workplace so that we can understand it more fully and use that understanding to question and challenge our practice. This section highlights that while 'being at one's best'

might be a common phrase in the workplace, it has not been explored or echoed in the academic literature.

Having observed the common use of the phrase 'at your best' in relation to work, a simple search on Amazon for books relating to 'get the best from people' supports the observation, revealing 6,457 books available. Typing into google "getting the best from people at work" also supports the observation revealing over 1 billion results, with articles on the first page alone written by practitioners advising about "Getting the best from people in the workplace" (Landes 2006) and "Managing yourself: Bringing out the Best in Your People" (Wiseman and McKeown 2010). Being at one's best or getting the best from people is clearly part of the common rhetoric.

In contrast, the academic literature uses the word best far less frequently. A literature search using Scopus relating to "best at work" revealed zero matches and of the 218 possible abstracts containing those words none related to the subject. A broader search using Athens for the phrase 'best from people' revealed 629 references and five references in the title: four books and one research paper as noted below in table 1.

Table 1: Academic references with 'best from people' in the title

Book	Cadman, E. (1996). <i>Using Appraisals to get the Best from People</i> (Vol. 31). Select Knowledge Limited.
Book	Finney, M. I. (2012). <i>The truth about getting the best from people</i> . FT Press.
Book	Grant, A. M., & Greene, J. (2003). <i>Solution-focused coaching: A manager's guide to getting the best from people</i> . London: Momentum Press
Book	Lockett, J. (1992). <i>Effective Performance Management: A strategic guide to getting the best from people</i> . Kogan Page.
Journal	Owen, A. V. (1995). Management for Doctors: Getting the best from people. <i>BMJ</i> , 310(6980), 650-652.

All these titles reference 'best from people' descriptively, rather than exploring the phrase. They are also guides (referencing relevant literature) rather than unique academic research. Finney (2012) suggests that "*best does not mean the same thing to everyone*" (p30). She suggests that what is important is a shared understanding of what 'best' means – she talks about the fit between employee and manager expectations (this echoes the person-organisation fit literature and the psychological contract literature all discussed more fully in

chapter 2). Yet she is specifically talking about best performance – a specific element of being at one's best in work. The inference from all of these titles indicates being at one's best at work is likely to involve great performance yet the lack of clarity coupled with the limited number of references suggests that the academic literature does not appear to be reflecting the common language used in the workplace. This research therefore represents an opportunity to explore the common language in a structured, academic and rigorous way in order to provide a clear and refined definition. This clearer understanding will enable more confident design of learning and development interventions and could provide insight for personal development agendas.

In some respects, using the common language as a starting point for the research could be considered as turning the traditional academic approach (theory to practice) on its head by taking practice to develop theory. Whilst this may challenge some epistemological stances, which are discussed further in chapter three, it is possible that this research could be seen as a response to the criticisms of Daft and Lewin (1990) in the editorial essay for inaugural publication of the Journal of Organization Science where they challenge organisation researchers to '*break out of the normal science straightjacket*' (p1).

By exploring what is meant when people are at their best at work, this current research provides an opportunity to access that common language of the workplace and integrate it with the academic understanding that organisational psychology, management science and other related disciplines provide.

1.2.2 Learning from positive psychology

This current research is exploring a positive experience in the workplace – when one is at their best at work. This section examines positive psychology from the point of view of how it can inform the current research through looking at the principles of the positive psychology movement and the criticisms that have been made.

The positive psychology movement was launched by Martin Seligman's 1998 presidential address of the American Psychological Association where he sought to outline a new direction and orientation for psychologists. He challenged psychologists to increase

research on well-being and areas of human strength. Sheldon and King (2001) described positive psychology as:

“an attempt to urge psychologists to adopt a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potentials, motives and capacities” (p.216)

As the word 'best' is a direct antonym of 'worst', the title of this research, exploring what it means to be at one's best at work fits with the appreciative perspective called for by Sheldon and King (2001). Seligman and Csikszentmihayli (2000) outline three broad areas of human experience that reflect a positive perspective which provide further clarity on how an appreciative perspective can be taken in this current research: by looking at positive subjective states such as happiness, joy and satisfaction; positive human traits or behavioural patterns; and the development, creation and maintenance of positive institutions. In order to understand where being at one's best at work might be located in the existing literature the critical literature review in the next chapter will explore research relating to these broad areas of human experience outlined by Seligman and Csikszentmihayli (2000).

Despite the growth of positive psychology since the launch in 1998, Luthans (2002) reflected that still the wealth of organisational behaviour research was focussed on the negative (e.g. burnout, stress, resistance to change). He introduced the term 'Positive Organisational Behaviour' (POB) and defined it as:

“the study and application of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace.” (p.59)

Exploring a shared meaning of what it means to be at one's best certainly has a positive focus, as opposed to understanding why people are not performing to expectations as many HR or management theories and practises encourage. Luthans' (2002) definition of POBs and the focus on identifying and measuring psychological capacities brings a challenge to this exploration of the meaning of being at one's best at work. Not only is the challenge to identify it but subsequently it will need to be measured in some way. This research therefore needs to produce something that might be measurable and therefore investigated further. What is interesting is that Luthans (2002) links the psychological capacities to performance improvement. This means, investigating POBs such as being at one's best at work, is likely to have a link to performance. Luthans also emphasises that POBs are states and therefore can be developed. This current research therefore has potential implications for those interested in employee development. Understanding in greater depth what we mean when

we say that we are at our best at work could help in identifying employee development priorities.

As a relatively new approach in psychology and sometimes making very powerful claims, criticism is to be expected and welcomed. Criticisms of a new approach provide guidance for ongoing research. Some of the criticism might be due to what Kashdan and Steger (2011) suggest is the desire to bring positive psychology to the people as quickly as possible which in turn could erode the scientific rigour and standards of the discipline. This means that whilst the application of positive psychology is a key driver, delivering interventions without the rigour of adequate research could lead to a reduction in scientific trust. This is perhaps evident in Miller's (2008) critique:

“the new science of positive psychology is founded on a whole series of fallacious arguments; these involve circular reasoning, tautology, failure to clearly define or properly apply terms, the identification of causal relations where none exist, and unjustified generalisation. Instead of demonstrating that positive attitudes explain achievement, success, well-being and happiness, positive psychology merely associates mental health with a particular personality type: a cheerful, outgoing, goal-driven, status-seeking extravert.” (p.591)

This criticism provides some guidance for the current research. There is a challenge here for the current research to provide definition – the literature review in chapter two and the framework developed in chapters four and five aim to meet that challenge. Another challenge is that this research needs to be cautious when generalising – the refined framework in chapter six aims to clarify the scope and limitations of the conclusion. Finally, the critique highlights the need to involve a range of personalities and individuals before making conclusions and the research design in chapter three gives insight around the structure of the research and range of individuals involved. By taking heed of the criticisms as well as the guidance provided by positive psychology, this research hopes to extend the understanding of the value of a positive approach.

Some of the strongest criticisms of positive psychology come from the field of health psychology. Ehrenreich (2009) takes an unequivocal anti-positive psychology position, saying that positive thinking ‘undermined America’, arguing that the promotion of positive thinking actually encourages the blaming of a victim of illness (if you are ill, you have brought it on yourself as you are not thinking positively enough). She also criticised Seligman personally, suggesting that he had used positive psychology as a way of making money at

the expense of scientific rigour. This is another reminder that adequate research needs to be completed before claims made and applications undertaken. Whilst there may be some credence to Ehrenreich's critique in some contexts, suggesting that the whole of positive psychology is simply 'positive thinking' is a clear misinterpretation of the approach. For this current research, the question is positively focussed and some positive psychology techniques utilised however in the light of such vociferous criticism, any conclusions or claims made following this current research need to be cautious.

Also in the field of health psychology, Coyne and Tennen (2010) examined the role of positive factors such as a 'fighting spirit' in extending the life of persons with cancer and the effects of interventions cultivating positive psychological states. They found very little evidence to support the claims and concluded:

"we urge positive psychologists to rededicate themselves to a positive psychology based on scientific evidence rather than wishful thinking" (p16)

This is another call for this current research to root itself in the current academic knowledge and ensure the process is rigorous. Aspinwall and Tedeschi (2010) disputed some of Coyne and Tennen's (2010) conclusions and indeed the dispute continues between both sets of authors. Aspinwall and Tedeschi (2010) suggest that there is evidence indicating optimism is related to positive health outcomes for major diseases. They suggest that it is premature to abandon efforts to utilise positive psychology in health related research saying:

"well validated measures of positive phenomena should become routinely incorporated into a broader array of health psychology studies to provide a rigorous test of their role in human health and adaptation to disease." (p4)

This balanced view highlights what other positive psychologists have called for – integration of positive psychology with general psychology and the utilisation of new and rigorous research methods (e.g. Compton and Hoffman 2013). To clarify, this current research takes the perspective that positive psychology simply represents a call to rebalance the focus of psychologists. In that way, it is 'not instead of', it is 'as well as' considering the negative states and behaviours. As Rathunde (2001) recognised, a positive perspective is not a new approach – seminal psychologists such as James (1958), Dewey (1934) and Maslow (1954) have all produced theories of positive mental health. Researchers such as Woolfolk (2002) have suggested that it is necessary for people to experience both positive and negative emotions in order to lead a full life rather than eliminate the latter. Others suggest the interpretation of emotions as either 'positive' or 'negative' may alter based on the context

(e.g. Wong 2011). This means that for the current research, a positive psychology perspective will not eliminate consideration of negative. It will involve exploring when people are at their best at work will involve understanding individuals' interpretation of their emotions or context.

This current research provides the opportunity to use a positive psychology perspective that is grounded in existing psychological knowledge. This acknowledges the concerns that some positive psychologists have applied their thinking without rigour in research and recognises the latest thinking in positive psychology. By taking a positive perspective for this research, it may provide insight for future positive psychology research methods, in particular around exploring shared meaning.

1.2.3 Understanding how to explore 'shared meaning'

'Shared meaning' is referenced in research relating to observations or descriptions of when there appears to be consensus, even when that consensus is not expressed (e.g. Querubin 2011). How to explore shared meaning specifically has surprisingly fewer references in the literature and there is little consistency in terms of how that exploration is done. This current research therefore provides the opportunity to use a range of research techniques to explore shared meaning and comment on their utility. This section highlights the gap or lack of consistency in existing literature relating to the techniques and methods used to explore shared meaning by psychologists in an organisational setting as well as broader contexts. This will provide the starting point for consideration of techniques that could be used within the current research (which are discussed in depth in chapter three).

Shared meaning is mentioned by a number of researchers within the business and organisation context. For example, Ferris, King, Judge, Kacmar, Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1991) described shared meaning in the workplace as:

"providing the context or background for organizational politics" (p135).

Their research focussed on how the manipulation of shared meaning impacts on HR decisions and practices, political behaviour, individual actions and the value-behaviour assumptions that people make. This is an example of an observation or description, what their research does not make clear is how we identify or explore shared meaning.

The lack of clarity around how to explore specific shared meaning is evident when reviewing recent publications. Whilst nearly 200,000 articles reference shared meaning in their text however an Athens search of recent publications (2005-2015) identified 46 articles that included reference to shared meaning in their title. These articles came from the fields of: anthropology (e.g. Peace 2013) biblical studies (e.g. King 2010); business (e.g. Wines 2011); child development (e.g. Larkin & Kaplan 2010); Education (e.g. Herp 2014); Health (e.g. Ledderer 2011); IT (e.g. Arvaja 2012); linguistics (e.g. Nai-xing 2007); Philosophy (e.g. Rauti 2010); and sociology (e.g. Low 2013). Research relating to shared meaning is therefore common across disciplines and research fields. Of these articles just five were investigating specific shared meanings and utilised a range of techniques, mostly within case study contexts: Peace (2013) investigated shared meaning in public gestures in the outback using observation and interpretation; Van Vuuren & Crous (2005) explored the creation of a shared meaning of ethics in an organisation, using appreciative inquiry techniques; Xing, Toh & Sages (2014) explored a shared meaning of the word 'old' and what is understood by 'aging' using interviews and questionnaires; Lofdahl (2005) used observation of video tapes of play situations to investigate children's shared meanings; and Nai-xing (2007) used corpus linguistics involving a range of qualitative interpretation and quantitative analysis to explore English and Chinese delexicalised verbs.

A term analogous with shared meaning is that of a 'shared or team mental models'. Other researchers taking a cognitive approach might also call these 'shared schemas' (e.g. Lau, Klibourne & Woodman 2003). Relating this to a work context, Stout et al (1999) looked at the relationship between shared mental models and coordinated performance. They found that, *"increasing the shared mental models among team members... resulted in improved coordinated team performance."* (p61)

Mental models are *"personal, internal representations of external reality that people use to interact with the world around them"* (Jones, Ross, Lynam, Perez & Leitch 2011 p46). For twenty years researchers have investigated the importance of collective cognitions as central drivers of team performance (DeChurch & Mesmer-Magmus 2010). These authors conducted a meta-analysis of 231 correlations from 65 studies of team cognitions and found that there is a cognitive foundation which has a strong positive relationship to team behaviour, motivation and performance. Mental models could therefore be pertinent to this current research looking at the shared understanding of being at one's best at work. Finding consistency in the techniques used to elicit mental models however is also challenging.

Jones et al (2011) note a number of techniques used to identify mental models including: conceptual content cognitive mapping (3CM) involving asking participants to identify concepts they consider important to a domain then asking them to visually organise them (e.g. Austin 1994); fuzzy cognitive mapping where participants are asked to define important variables, write them on cards then arrange the cards to reflect their understanding of the given issue (e.g. Ozesmi & Ozesmi 2004); text reviews and interviews analysing the verbal structure and symbolic factors that make up a mental model (Carley and Palmquist 1992); consensus analysis looking at the overlap in individuals' mental models involving open ended interviews, free task listing, statement ranking and forced choice questions (Strauss & Quinn 1997); and transect walk method involving content analysis of interviews to develop a 'causal network diagram' (e.g. Walker 1997). Jones et al (2011) conclude that realising the potential value of the concept of mental models *"relies on developing and testing adequate tools and techniques to elicit these internal representations of the world effectively."* (p46)

The purpose of eliciting mental models include: exploring similarities and differences; integrating different perspectives; creating a collective representation; supporting social learning; identifying and overcoming knowledge limitations and misconceptions; and developing more socially robust knowledge to support negotiations (Jones et al 2011). These are aligned with the potential of eliciting the shared meaning of being at one's best. Literature relating to team mental models focus on what is known by the team (Mohammed, Klimoski & Rentsch 2000). This approach is limited by what Argyris & Schon (1974) termed 'Theories of Action' and the observation that our espoused theory (what we say) is often inconsistent with our theory in use (what we do). This research takes a slightly different perspective, looking to explore the positive subjective states (feelings and emotions) and the positive behaviour patterns in relation to being at one's best at work. Whilst some of the mental model elicitation techniques could be helpful in this exploration they are aiming to elicit different factors, beyond simply what is known by the individuals.

Whilst recent literature points to interpretive and qualitative methods such as observation and interviews, the cognitive mental model elicitation techniques might also add to the insight for this current research. The overall lack of consistency of approaches and methods highlights the opportunity this research presents – to reflect on the techniques applied in providing useful research data for exploring shared meaning, specifically in relation to being at one's best at work. The research design chapter will review and identify the techniques used to explore shared meaning in this current research. The next section of this chapter considers the context of the shared meaning of being at one's best and the potential implications of the post-recession era, increased use of technology and globalisation.

1.2.4 Insights for the current workplace context

This research started in 2010 soon after the economic downturn that had started in 2007 was acknowledged as a recession and the research has finished as the UK is recognised to be coming out of the recession and growth is being seen in some sectors. The current workplace context is therefore one characterised by change and challenge. Some commentators talk about the 'new normal' and 'doing more with less' (e.g. Taylor 2013). This current research therefore needs to acknowledge and be embedded in the current workplace context. Whilst there is a myriad of challenges faced by organisations, this section discusses three of the post-recession workplace challenges faced by organisations. Firstly, the explosion of research and practise focussing on employee well-being and how this fits with the current research's exploration of being at one's best at work. The second and third challenges, a changing workforce and greater virtual working, also highlight a need to think about the workforce differently – as individuals with differing needs, values, motivations and expectations – so that knowledge can be retained in organisations and people are also retained, at their best.

The recession saw 2.7 million people made redundant in the UK (Office of National Statistics 2008-2012) and this has had an impact on general well-being. Clark and Oswald's (1996) review of historical recession trends identified that in the region of 20% of the decline in happiness that people experience is due to the fall in income but the remaining 80% of that decline is due to other things. They also noted that reduced life satisfaction was experienced even when people return to work. The effects of the recession on well-being appear to outlive the recession itself making the focus of this research.

Well-being has been linked to job satisfaction (Cropanzo & Wright 1999); performance (Boehm & Lyubomrsky 2008). Winseman, Clifton & Liesveld (2008) demonstrated that low scorers in 'life satisfaction' have reduced productivity equivalent to 15 days per year. Of course the direction of this relationship is not demonstrated – it could be that those who are doing a good job also feel happier in it. Being at one's best in work may contribute to that life satisfaction and therefore contribute to well-being and productivity.

The Department of Business Innovation and Skills' think tank 2009 report described the recession as:

“a frame-breaking event’ and one which presents both threats and opportunities for UK businesses” (p48)

Getting the best from the people resources is now more than ever an important factor for businesses. This research is therefore pertinent for business owners and those working with businesses as understanding when people are at their best could help to ensure maximum effectiveness without eroding the well-being of the workforce.

The global economic environment continues to evolve through and beyond the recession. Social developments such as continued globalisation, technological innovation and growing global competition place pressure on companies and emphasise their need to maintain their competitive advantage (Burke and Ng 2006). Castell (2010) suggests that 'the world has entered a new phase of development' given the speed and extent to which trade, investments and migration between countries has increased. The internationalisation of markets has led to an adaptation of the workforce in terms of increased flexibility and greater diversity in the labour market (Kalleberg 2009). Whilst globalisation has many far reaching implications for organisations, this increased diversity alongside a demand for flexibility in the workforce signal a significant challenge to organisations wanted to get the best from the workforce.

Along with the challenges from the recession 'to do more with less', globalisation has led to a greater focus on flexible workforces and non-standard working arrangements (DeLange, Gesthuizen and Wolbers 2012). Whilst flexible working does provide the opportunity for a greater range of individuals to participate in the labour market (Zijl, Van den Berg & Heyma 2004), it can also create a higher level of insecurity (Scherer 2005). Insecurity in turn has been linked to a range of organisational challenges including workplace bullying (Glambek, Matthiesen, Hetland & Einarsen 2014), impaired well-being (Bernhard-Oettel, Rigotti, Clinton & deJorg 2013) and a range of health and safety issues (Landsbergis, Grzywacz & LaMontagne 2014). This means that organisations need to ensure the flexible working arrangements not only meet the organisation requirements but also manage the associated insecurity and attend to the individuals, their motivations and their relationships.

Relationships in the workplace are increasingly changing. The diversity in the labour market means that the current workforce is now part of an international business environment where:

"people in organisations are challenged to communicate more effectively interpersonally, interculturally and in groups... ignoring the implications of workforce diversity can affect productivity and performance"

(Okoro and Washington 2012 p57-8)

Diversity in the workplace not only highlights the difficulties and complexities involved in intercultural communication (Durant & Shepherd 2009) but also the importance of relationships in the workplace that show sensitivity to individuals. Sadri, Golnaz & Tran (2002) noted that improving superior-subordinate communication prompted workplaces to manage diversity through managing personal growth and mentoring new employees. Whilst personal growth and relationships at work might not represent a new challenge for organisations, the increased diversity in the workplace associated with globalisation does make them increasingly important.

Communication and relationships within the workplace now appear to be more important than ever. This research could contribute to the facilitation of improved relationships and communication by identifying ways to explore shared meaning and by clarifying what we mean when we say we are at our best in work.

Another challenge to communication in an increasingly globalised workplace context is that of virtual teams. These have three common attributes: interdependent tasks and share responsibility for their outcomes; be geographically dispersed; and rely on technology for communication (Cohen & Gibson, 2003). Hand in hand with globalisation and diversity in the workplace is the increased use of technology. Again, this happened before and during the recession but with the increased focus on efficiency and doing more for less (Taylor 2013), along with the rising cost of fuel and office space costs, the use of technology and virtual teams is becoming increasingly popular (Bullock & Klein 2011). Berry (2011) suggests that companies not willing to use virtual teams could miss opportunities in today's increasingly competitive and quickly changing global economic environment. This change in working practice brings greater flexibility to organisations where people as well as technology are assembled and disassembled according to the shifting needs of specific projects (Huemann 2010). Other benefits include the ability to select the most qualified individuals for a virtual team project without concern for location, to respond more quickly to increased competition, and to offer employees increased flexibility (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). The conundrum of how to keep people at their best whilst working in virtual teams becomes a challenge for organisations in the current context.

To prepare to be effective virtual team members, Gould, Augar & Farmer (2006) suggest that individuals need to develop virtual teamwork skills including: communicating effectively, working with team members to solve problems, negotiating with colleagues, resolving conflicts, and collaborating with people from other cultures. Verberg, Bosch-Sijtsema &

Vartiainen (2013) highlight the increased communication challenges presented by virtually teams:

“The role of technologies as an enabler is essential for dispersed organizations and global project teams. Their members must communicate, coordinate, and build relationships largely – and in case of fully dispersed settings exclusively – via information and communication technologies (ICT)”
(p67)

Developing appropriate communication strategies, differences in time, location, culture, or a combination of these factors provide some substantial challenges for globally dispersed teams (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999). Furthermore, *“advances in technology mean that workers receive continuous feedback, and new, more accurate measures of performance affect everything from promotions and salaries to how people are valued and market themselves to prospective employers”* (Hines & Carbone 2007 p8). With communication identified as a key factor to address in relation to a changing workforce, the challenges of doing this virtually is evident. A greater understanding of when we are at our best at work could inform better communication between individuals and help organisations to prioritise appropriate development interventions for individuals, be they working in a face to face or virtual environment.

This section has considered how the current workplace is one characterised by change and challenge. The recession's negative impact on well-being is still around which in turn has challenges for productivity. Increased globalisation and changing work practices (such as the use of virtual teams) mean that there are more demands on the workforce to be flexible, communicate effectively and build strong relationships. Having noted that the recession was a frame-breaking event for business, perhaps understanding when people are at their best will provide an opportunity to start working with the workforce differently, structuring work and enabling relationships effectively.

This chapter has been about providing a rationale for the research. It also provides some helpful guidance for the next chapters, the critical literature review and the research design. Having seen in section 1.2.1 that being at one's best is in the common rhetoric in organisations but not yet reflected in the academic research, the research design needs to be solid and grounded in psychological theory in order to ensure this current research adds to the academic understanding of being at one's best in work. Section 1.2.2 highlighted how

this current research provides an opportunity to learn from the positive psychology movement. The critical literature review therefore needs to discuss positive psychological states, positive behavioural patterns and positive institutions and the research design in chapter three needs to be rigorous in order to attend to some of the strong criticisms of positive psychology. Understanding shared meaning as discussed in section 1.2.3 highlighted the need for the research design to provide opportunity to reflect on the techniques used to explore shared meaning. That section also noted the link to other relevant literature (e.g. performance, psychological contract, person organisation fit) that the next chapter needs to attend to. The final section of this chapter, 1.2.4 noted how the research design needs to be embedded in diverse work contexts to ensure applicability of any findings. This section also highlighted the need to consider factors relating to great performance, retention of people (at their best) in organisations alongside the motivation and values that individuals hold – the literature relating to these elements are included in the critical literature review.

Chapter 2: Critical Literature Review

This chapter explores the current literature related to being at one's best in work. Chapter 1 highlighted that whilst the word best is commonly used in the workplace there is little reference or definition within the academic literature. As being at one's best is not currently a well-defined academic concept, exploring current knowledge in relation to being at one's best in work requires a little more thought and structure.

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the word 'best' in three ways: "the most excellent or desirable type or quality"; "the most enjoyable"; and "the most appropriate, advantageous or well advised". It also highlights the word as a superlative of both 'good' and 'well'. These definitions point to behavioural or outcome elements of the word best (excellent, appropriate, advantageous, good) alongside emotional elements (enjoyable, desirable, well). Chapter 1 also highlighted the opportunity this research presents to build on the positive psychology literature. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) definition of positive psychology echoes the OED definition of 'best' and provides a helpful starting point for reviewing the literature, in terms of positive subjective states (emotions); positive behavioural patterns (outcome) and learning from positive workplaces. These will form the broad headings for this critical literature review; however a number of challenges are associated with doing that

The first challenge has already been mentioned in chapter 1. A number of researchers (e.g. Compton & Hoffman 2013; Brown & Holt 2011) have highlighted the need to integrate consideration of negative emotions into a positive approach. The consideration of subjective positive states in this chapter will also include research that has considered this integration of the negative emotions such as Shmotkin's (2005) model of subjective well-being based on terror management theory and Wong's (2011) existential positive psychology which draws on Chinese yin-yang theory.

The second challenge is the scope of positive subjective states or emotions that could be considered. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) highlight that subjective experiences can relate to the past (e.g. well-being, contentment) the future (e.g. hope, optimism) and the present (e.g. happiness, flow). This provides a helpful arrangement for the review but the scope remains broad. The words used in existing literature that relate to emotions include: affect (e.g. Ashkansay & Humphrey 2011); mood (Albrecht & Su 2012); meta moods (e.g. Mayer & Gaschke 1988) and emotion laden judgements (e.g. Briner 1997). Briner's (1999) definition of emotions highlights them as a response, linking them to events: "*rapidly*

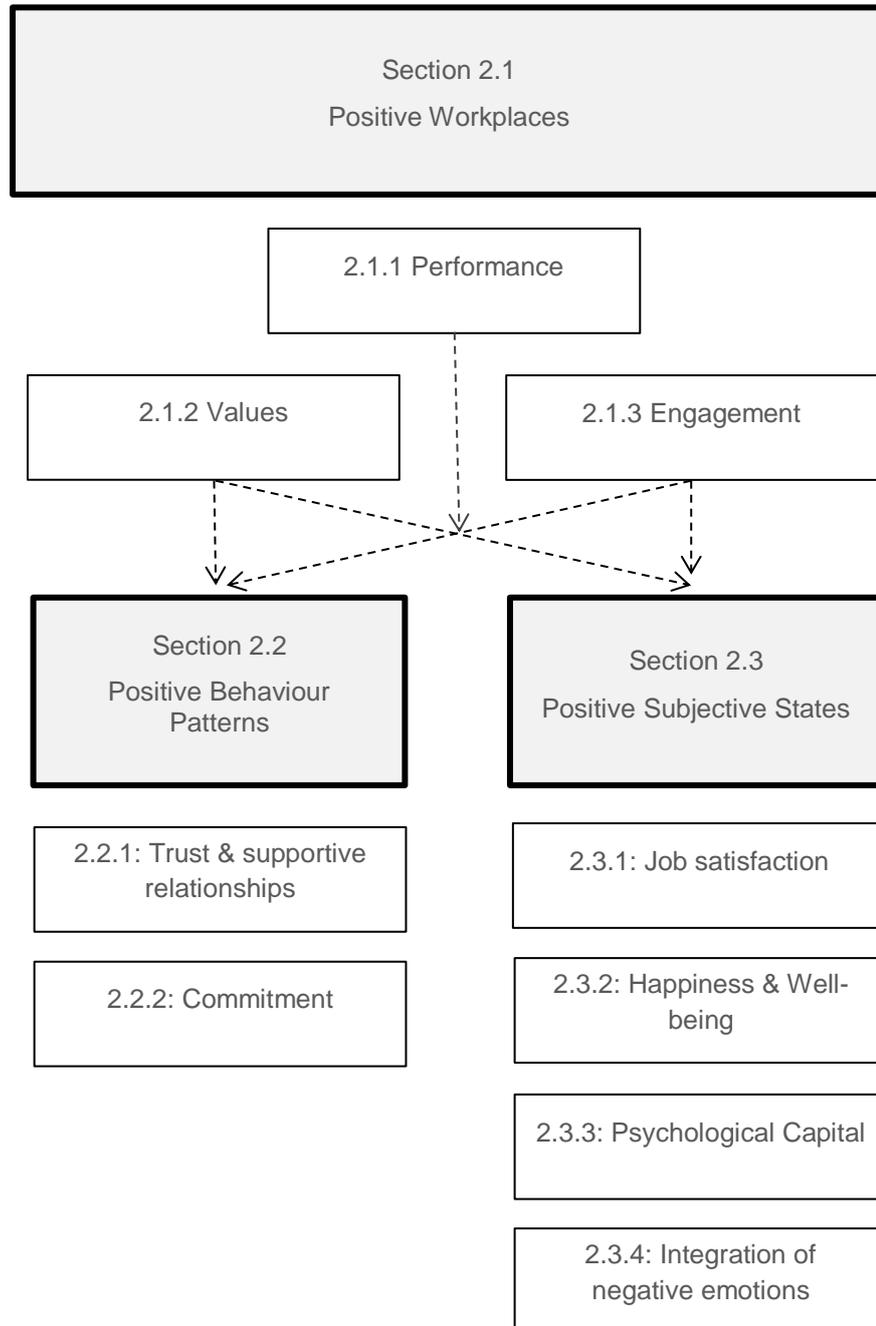
changing, strong in intensity and always in response to specific events" (p 326). Therefore the consideration of the circumstances that are associated with positive subjective states is essential.

Linked to the challenge of scope is that of the relationship between emotions and behaviour. Parkinson (1995) reviewed definitions of emotions and concluded that they contain all or some of the following components: cognitive; internal reaction; overt behaviour; facial expression; and goal structure. Briner (1999) suggests that the components of emotion particularly relevant to the workplace are overt behaviours, facial expressions and goal structures highlighting the clear link with behaviour. This review will highlight the impact of subjective states on behavioural patterns and vice versa.

The fourth challenge is the relationship between all three factors - positive workplaces and the behavioural patterns and subjective states of the individuals within those workplaces. The impact of behaviour on organisational outcomes is very often the focus of the research (e.g. Bakker & Demerouti's 2010 model of engagement).

This review will start with an examination of existing literature to clarify what constitutes positive workplaces and use that to structure the remainder of the chapter. Figure 1 over the page highlights the sections of this review. Performance is discussed as all articles relating to positive workplaces emphasise high performance as an aspect. Values and Engagement are also included in first section as they are described as both behaviours and subjective states. Moving on to the review of behavioural patterns, the importance of trust and supportive relationships are discussed alongside commitment and organisational commitment behaviours. Positive subjective states are covered in the next section and include discussion around a number of topics: job satisfaction; happiness and wellbeing; psychological capital; and the integration of negative emotions. Whilst this structure is helpful in organising the literature, what becomes consistently clear is the lack of consistent definition of the constructs involved and the overlap that exists between the sections. This chapter concludes with the suggestion that being at one's best resides in the overlap of a number of concepts, mainly engagement, performance and commitment. It also highlights the factors that are common to all three concepts. This leads to the research propositions that there will be consistencies in the experiences of individuals in highly engaged, high performing and highly committed contexts and that the consistencies will reflect the factors highlighted as common to all three concepts.

Figure 1: Visual map representing literature review structure



2.1 Positive workplaces

Rather than referring to specific factors, 'positive workplaces' is a phrase used in existing research to describe an overall experience of employees. Using the logic that the title of the publication reveals its focus, a Scopus database search for article titles with 'positive workplace' (2005-2015) revealed just five with the exact phrase in the title. Broadening the search, using Athens highlighted 23 peer-reviewed titles (2005-2015). Table 2 over the page summarises the content of those 23 references. 20 of the articles referenced specific behaviours related to positive workplaces, in particular: the role of trust and supportive relationships (e.g. Stapleton 2013; Madsen & Mabokela 2013); and organisational commitment behaviours (e.g. Mauseth 2008). These are discussed in section 2.2. 16 of the references discussed specific subjective states in relation to positive workplaces, in particular: job satisfaction (e.g. Bellini et al 2015; Buxton et al 2009; Frempong et al 2013); happiness (e.g. Ramlall et al 2014); and psychological capital factors (e.g. Work 2009; Sergent & Laws-Chapman 2012). These are discussed in section 2.3.

This section reviews literature relating to performance, values and engagement. These three topics do not fall neatly into either a behavioural pattern or subjective state category but were specifically mentioned in the 23 articles as related to positive workplaces. 15 of the articles specifically referenced high performance as a factor associated with positive workplaces. These articles also noted both behavioural patterns and subjective states. Values were noted in five of the articles in terms of driving behaviour and emotions. Engagement can be understood in both state and behavioural terms (Farndale 2010). It was specifically mentioned in four of the articles as involved in positive workplaces.

This section brings some clarity to understanding positive workplaces in terms of a high performing context where individuals are doing well and working towards their potential. The caveat here however is that performance requires context specific measures of success for both organisations and individuals. Positive workplaces also appear to be characterised by the workforce's positive perceptions involving a perceived connection between individual values and organisation values and high state and behavioural engagement. What becomes clear is the reliance on behavioural patterns and subjective states in creating a positive workplace.

Table 2: References with 'positive workplaces' (2005-2015) in their title

Authors	Performance	Values	Engagement	Specific Behaviours	Subjective States
Appelbaum, Iaconi & Matousek (2007)				Y	
Bellini, Fornara & Bonaiuto (2015)			Y	Y	Y
Buxton, Quintiliani, Yang, Ebbeling, Stoddard, Pereira & Sorensen (2009)				Y	Y
Darbyshire (2010)				Y	Y
Davis & Cable (2006)	Y	Y	Y		Y
Frempong, Ahenkora & Asamoah (2013)	Y			Y	
Fuller, Simmering, Marler, Cox, Bennett & Ceramic (2011)	Y			Y	Y
Horan (2011)				Y	
Jennings & Tvruzka (2012)	Y			Y	Y
Lambert & Hogan (2009)	Y			Y	Y
Laton (2006)	Y	Y			
Madsen & Mabokela (2013)	Y			Y	
Mauseth (2008)	Y	Y		Y	Y
O'Connor & Jackson (2005)	Y			Y	
Ramlall, Al-Kahtani & Damanhour (2014)	Y		Y	Y	Y
Ray (2010)				Y	Y
Ruth, Crawford, Wysocki & Kepner (2010)	Y			Y	Y
Sergeant & Laws-Chapman (2012)	Y	Y			Y
Simmering, Fuller, Marler, Cox & Bennett (2013)	Y			Y	Y
Singh & Srivastava (2013)				Y	Y
Stapleton (2013)	Y			Y	
Tillott (2013)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Work (2009)			Y	Y	Y

2.1.1 Performance in positive workplaces

With the purpose or outcomes of positive workplaces often involving exceptional performance (e.g. Stapleton 2013), this section explores literature relating to organisation performance and individual performance. The discussion illustrates the dependence upon positive behavioural patterns and positive subjective states to achieve great performance. One area of the performance literature dominated by Gallup researchers highlights the importance for overall performance of individuals working to their strengths, which also links to engagement and commitment. This discussion also highlights the challenges involved in defining and measuring performance and moves on to consider the high potential literature. This section concludes with an overview of the factors that the research suggests impact upon performance in the workplace and a summary of the associated positive behavioural patterns and subjective states.

Organisation performance

Whilst a straightforward analysis of an organisation's profit and loss may suffice as an overview of organisational performance, the identification of an accurate and valid measure of performance is a challenge (Katz & Kahn 1966). Murphy, Trailer & Hill (1996), went as far as to conclude that,

"... the lack of construct validity for what we call performance is so clear that we as a field should consider discontinuing the use of the term in research"
(p21)

This has significant implications for any researcher looking to demonstrate a link between performance and any other factor – if the performance measure is unreliable then the potential to demonstrate such a link is limited. This assertion is however somewhat extreme and it is unrealistic to expect organisations to stop looking for ways to evaluate how they are doing. Singh, Darwish, Costa & Anderson's (2012) review of the organisational performance literature highlighted the interplay of internal (e.g. leadership, policies, structure, strategies) and external factors (e.g. demand, market structure, competitive conditions, economic conditions). They noted that most models considered a range of internal factors but there is a need for greater integration of the external factors. This adds significant complexity when trying to understanding great performance but does highlight the role of the wider context in delivering great performance.

Although more focused on the internal aspects, Srivastava (2008) also noted the impact of the context. He found that those who perceive their work environment as adequate or favourable also scored higher in measures of job satisfaction, performance and perceived organisational effectiveness. These results suggest that the perceived workplace environment has a psycho-social impact in terms of behaviour and subjective states. Whilst other researchers have found similar results (e.g. Kirwan, Matthews & Scott 2013) the criteria and measurement of the workplace environment is not consistent. Despite that inconsistency, what this does indicate is that the perception of the workplace (by the workforce) is important – the psycho-social impact of that perception is likely to impact upon organisational performance.

An alternative view of workplace performance within the literature is the notion of effectiveness yet this also has its challenges in definition. Pathak & Singh's (2013) review of approaches to the assessment of organisational effectiveness cites 17 different interpretations and models of effectiveness. They concluded that the multitude of models with their own espoused criteria of effectiveness need to be systematically compared and integrated with one another. Whether that is practically possible remains to be seen.

One of the more recent models of organisation effectiveness highlights a range of people, policy and system factors: direction; delegation; accountability; control; efficiency; coordination; adaptation; and social systems (Kondalkar 2009). How each of these is measured effectively is dependent upon the organisation. In terms of measurement, this means that one indicator is unlikely to be sufficient – certainly one measure (or set of measures) does not fit all organisations. This highlights the need to consider the context and is likely to involve some review of the goals and values of the organisation. Kanter (1980) suggests that, "*effectiveness appears to be less a scientific than a political concept*" (p33).

With perception or interpretation being the emphasis, as opposed to a scientific measure, there are implications for the involvement of multiple stakeholders to set performance standards. Each of the stakeholders will have their own interests to pursue and this in turn could skew the measures. The consideration of stakeholder involvement is echoed by Kaplan and Norton (1996) who established the practice of designing performance indicators around the various stakeholders at the individual level as a means to improving performance. This is known as the balanced scorecard and encompasses a diverse set of measures including financial performance, customer relations, internal processes and learning and growth activities.

This balanced scorecard approach involves identifying the 3-4 major stakeholder groups (usually including shareholders, employees, and customers), and then developing objective indicators of performance with regard to each group (e.g., ROI, turnover, and market share, respectively). This approach adds some clarity in measuring performance in an organisation and provides specific measures on which to base any conclusions. The process however is subject to the challenges associated with human judgment and relationships. Lipe and Salterio (2000) examined how overall judgements were made when using the balanced scorecard. They found that overall evaluations of a business unit's performance were weighted towards the measures that they had in common with other units. This suggests then that whilst the balance scorecard approach is intended to allow for and encourage unique measures of success, human judgement processes may mean that in practice a balance scorecard is simply a paper exercise and does not represent real performance evaluation.

Organisational performance remains problematic in terms of both definition and measurement. What it has highlighted is that whether one is talking about pure performance against targets or the broader concept of effectiveness the role that individuals within the organisation play cannot be ignored – their perceptions and judgements impact upon their efforts to deliver (Srivastava 2008). Looking more closely at the nature and measurement of individual performance and how this adds value to an organisation may add to our understanding of positive workplaces.

Individual performance

In an attempt to clarify the link between value creation in the workplace and the individuals in that workplace, Pryce-Jones (2010) refers to 'real value' as a measure of success where: financial capital is dependent upon human capital (an individual's skills, talents, education, experience and knowledge) which is dependent upon social capital (relationships, connections, belonging to a community and the interactions that follow) and that is dependent upon psychological capital (the mental resources that are drawn on). With this conceptualisation, added value or performance improvement starts with maximising the psychological capital. Psychological capital will be discussed in more detail when considering positive states however this does suggest a link between performance and behavioural patterns with internal states of mind. The social capital element will also be discussed in a later subjective state section (Supportive relationships & trust). This

performance section of the discussion therefore focusses on the financial capital and human capital of Pryce-Jones' (2010) conceptualisation of value.

Traditional approaches to individual performance are fraught with difficulties of definition and clarity. Rotundo and Sackett's (2002) conclusion might be a point of concern when looking to the literature for insight about individual performance. They noted,

“partially overlapping constructs now proliferate within the performance literature. There is currently no theoretical framework for differentiating and integrating the various constructs that describe individual performance and its link to effectiveness”. (p66)

The challenge of definition appears to extend to individual performance as well as organisation performance. Despite the difficulties, organisations continue to look for ways to effectively manage and measure performance. Gallup researchers have shown a statistical relationship with engagement and productivity, profitability, employee retention, safety, and customer satisfaction (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002). This demonstrates a strong link between the concepts of performance, engagement and retention. Gallup's research of 1.4 million people across the globe and in a wide range of industries showed that the single strongest predictor of high performance was whether people had the opportunity to work to their strengths every day and top performing managers emphasised individual strengths versus seniority in making personnel decisions (Clifton & Harter 2003). Gallup researchers also show those organisations at the top of the Gallup Engagement Index (and so providing opportunities to work to strengths) show a 16% increase in profitability and an 18% increase in productivity (Harter, Schmidt, Killham & Agrawal 2009). This would indicate that identification of strengths and aligning work demands with the strengths of individuals is likely to have the greatest impact on performance. What remains important is the clarification of the performance requirements so that appropriate strengths can be identified and measured. How those performance requirements are conceptualised are likely to have an impact on the performance evaluation as well as the culture thus having potential psycho-social impacts on the workers. Whilst the strengths based research provides a helpful way to structure work, the conceptualisation and subsequent measurement of great performance remains a challenge.

Following the publication of Boyatzis' (1982) book “The Competent Manager”, highlighting the difference between tasks and outcomes when measuring individual performance, competency frameworks have become a commonplace conceptualisation of performance requirements in organisations (Miller, Rankin & Neathy 2001). Woodruffe (2007) concludes

that competencies are dimensions of behaviour related to superior performance in the job. So a competency framework as a whole might describe the performance expectations of the organisation and each competency that is selected in relation to a particular role provides the prioritised performance descriptions for the job. Boyatzis (1982) defines a competency as:

“underlying characteristics of a person in that it may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of ones’ self image or social role or knowledge” (p.13)

In this conceptualisation both outcomes (what is achieved) and behaviours (how it is achieved) are important to individual performance. The ‘how’ element of competencies might contribute to the workplace environment noted as important for the overall organisation performance.

As a theoretical concept, competency frameworks appear useful for understanding and measuring individual and indeed overall performance. For many commentators, the idea that effective performance can be easily distilled into just a few competencies is problematic (e.g. Townley 1994). Certainly, the job analysis processes such as observation (Mirabile 1997) and critical incident technique (New 1996) used to develop a competency framework means they are based on what good performers have done in the past rather than what the future requires. Given the changing context that organisations find themselves in (Taylor 2013), individual performance measures need to be more flexible. Griffin, Neal and Parker (2007) note that, the meaning of work performance in the field of organisational behaviour has changed of the last 40 years – shifting from a focus on jobs and their associated tasks to a broader understanding of work roles within the changing organisational context. As such measures of performance using approaches such as competency frameworks are therefore limited as they prescribe performance from a set point in time rather than within a changing context.

Understanding the organisation context is complex and led Schuler and Jackson (1995) to conclude that it is difficult to explain how organisational context shapes and constrains the behaviours that are valued in organizations and subsequently measured in individual performance. Whilst not completely defining the context, levels of uncertainty are consistently referenced amongst researchers (e.g. Agberjule 2005). Uncertainty in an organisational context shapes the extent to which valued work behaviours can be formalized rather than left to emerge through adaptive and proactive behaviour of those at work (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). Roles and expectations evolve as uncertainty increases, therefore greater flexibility is required. The levels of uncertainty therefore require a distinction between formalised roles, with a clear job description and emergent roles.

Understanding how the individual is responding to the emerging requirements provides an additional level of clarity. Griffen et al (2007) provide one way to understand and measure both elements by identifying three different sub-dimensions of work role performance:

- Proficiency – the extent to which an individual meets role requirements that can be formalised.
- Adaptivity – describes the extent to which an individual adapts to changes in work roles.
- Proactivity – describes the extent to which the individual takes self-directed action to anticipate or initiate change in the work system or work roles.

They recommend that these three sub-dimensions are considered at an individual level, team membership level and organisation member level as outlined in table 3 below (from Griffen et al, 2007 p.330).

Table 3: Performance in high change contexts: interdependence of context and performance.

Individual Work Role Behaviours	PROFICIENCY Fulfils the prescribed role requirements	ADAPTIVITY Copes with, responds to and supports change	PROACTIVITY Initiates change, is self-starting & future directed
Individual Task Behaviours Contribution to individual effectiveness	Individual Task Proficiency e.g. ensures core tasks are completed properly	Individual Task Adaptivity e.g. adjusts to new equipment/procedures	Individual Task Proactivity e.g. initiates better ways of doing core tasks
Team Member Behaviours Contribution to team effectiveness	Team Member Proficiency e.g. coordinates work with team members	Team Member Adaptivity e.g. responds constructively to team changes	Team Member Proactivity e.g. develops new methods to help the team perform better
Organisation Member Behaviours Contribution to organisation effectiveness	Organisation Member Proficiency e.g. talks about the organisation positively	Organisation Member Adaptivity e.g. copes with changes in organisation operation	Organisation Member Proactivity e.g. suggests how to improve overall efficiency

This conceptualisation of individual performance allows for flexibility within a changing organisational context whilst maintaining a focus on productivity and effectiveness. Furthermore it allows both qualitative and quantitative measures to provide a more complete picture of how an individual is performing. It highlights the behavioural patterns required for

great performance and also alludes to some mind-set or subjective states. For example, adaptivity is about an individual's response to change.

Conceptualising and measuring performance in the workplace is clearly not a straight forward process and its accuracy may be limited by the context and by change. In relating this to when we are at our best in work, simply reviewing the output or performance whilst of obvious relevance is therefore problematic. Consideration of what is termed in the literature as individual potential therefore might be useful. The work of Jessica Pryce-Jones (2010) uses the terms 'happiness' and 'achieving potential' interchangeably. She highlights the link to performance in her description of happiness at work as: "*a mindset which allows you to maximise performance and achieve your potential.*" (p4). Achieving potential or working towards it may have positive implications and contribute to being at one's best in work.

Individual potential

Potential is rarely used purely in relation to current work performance but is used to suggest an individual has the appropriate qualities to contribute more broadly and perform at a higher level (Slan-Jerusalem & Hausdorf 2006). Potential is concerned with possibilities for the future rather than focusing purely on current performance. Rogers & Smith (2007) suggest that in practice however, professions view potential as an inherent capability. The literature around potential lacks a clear and consistent definition of potential. Despite this lack of definition, organisations are clearly bought into the idea and value represented by identifying and developing high potential individuals (Meyers, Woerkom & Dries 2013).

More erudite organisations have developed multiple categories of potential and 'talent pools' of individuals. The purpose of the talent identification may well actually drive the definition for organisations therefore defining 'potential for what?' is likely to be important (Dowell 2010). Silzer and Church's (2009) survey of 20 large corporations reporting to have a high potential programme found they were using a range of definitions of potential with a future focus (the potential for what) however they defined that different ways: by role, level, breadth, record of achievement, and strategic position/area. This focus on identifying potential and talent pools becomes important for succession planning and for the prioritisation of personal development for employees. It may well have implications for the perceived workplace context – what is perceived as important, what is valued and recognised. This in turn may incur a psycho-social response from employees noted earlier (Srivastava 2008). There is however some difficulty in accurately identifying potential (Lewis & Heckman 2006) and caution must therefore be taken when seeking to 'label' individuals as high potential or not. Silzer & Church (2010) go as far as to say there is an ethical concern

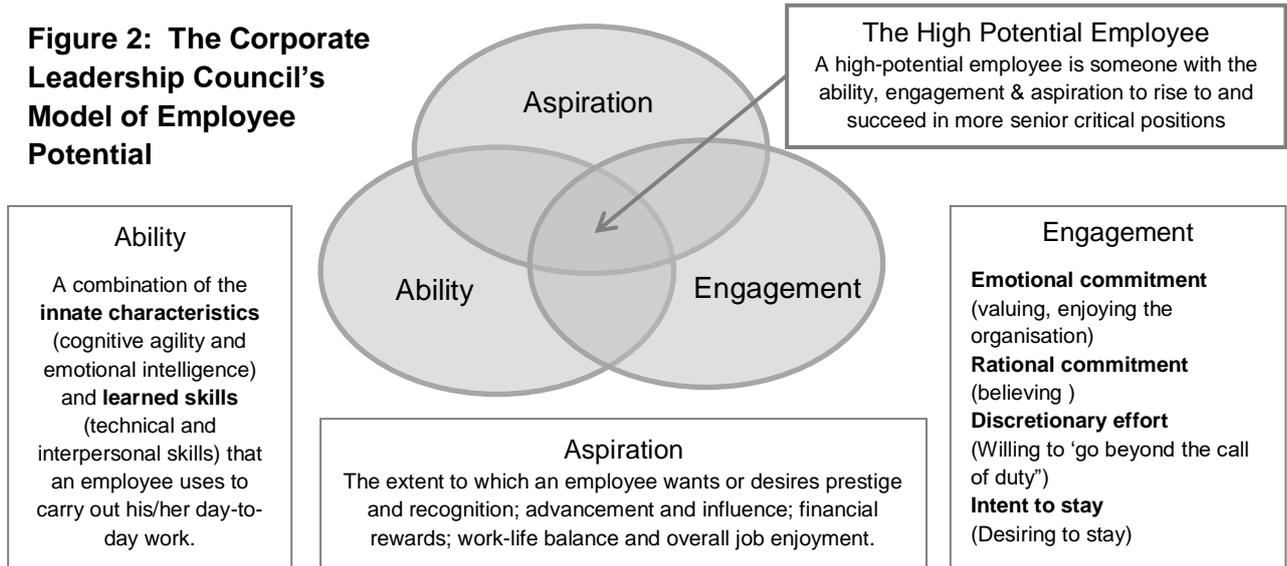
in doing so as labelling individuals may cause distress to those who are not identified as high potential. How potential is viewed, conceptualised and communicated could have either a positive or negative psycho-social impact however understanding the application of potential and talent management initiatives in the workplace could help in understanding positive workplaces.

Popular amongst practitioners is YSC Consultancy's view (based on research by Rowe 2007) that potential is made up of three key characteristics: Judgement (the ability to make appropriate and timely judgements); Drive (the desire to make a difference and willingness to create opportunities); and Influence (leveraging insight and understanding to have an impact). A common theme when assessing these factors is the individual's orientation to learn from their experiences. A consistent element in models attempting to understand potential is that of learning potential or learning agility (e.g. Lombardo and Eichinger 2000). Learning potential, is defined by Feuerstein, Rand, Jensen, Kaniel and Tzurielal (1987) as "the modifiability of unobservable structures that have not as yet become actual or exist in possibility". This is perhaps more palatable and less contentious than a broad measure of potential. An organisation encouraging a learning environment is seen as important in the context of organisational development (Garside 1998) and therefore linked to positive organisations.

There have been a number of researchers who have attempted to review all the literature and practices relating to potential. The Corporate Leadership Council's (CLC 2005) High Potential Employee Management Research initiative aimed to "*address the difficult challenge of how to identify and develop high-potential talent*" (p.viii). Silzer & Church's (2009) review led them to propose an integrated model.

One of key findings from the CLC (2005) initiative was that a high potential employee is someone with the ability, engagement and aspiration to rise and succeed in more senior, more critical positions. They produced a model of Employee Potential based on these elements, illustrated over the page in figure 1 over the page. What is interesting about the CLC model is that it incorporates both behavioural patterns (e.g. interpersonal skills, discretionary effort) and subjective states (e.g. aspiration, emotional commitment). Whichever conceptualisation of potential is adhered to, the measurement of it remains a difficult task and furthermore, what the individual will have potential for is not always clear.

Figure 2: The Corporate Leadership Council's Model of Employee Potential



Silzer and Church's (2009) review of 11 commonly used models acknowledged that the CLC model was the most widely referenced however they proposed an integrated model of potential with three over-arching dimensions: foundational; growth and career and detailed in table 4 below:

Table 4: Silzer and Church's (2009) Integrated Model of Potential

Foundational Dimensions Consistent and stable, unlikely to develop or change	Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual or strategic thinking • Cognitive abilities • Dealing with complexity
	Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal skills, sociability • Dominance • Emotional stability, resilience
Growth Dimensions Facilitate or hinder growth and development in other areas	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability • Learning orientation • Open to feedback
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive, energy, achievement orientation • Career ambition • Risk taking, results orientation
Career Dimensions Early indicators of later career skills	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership capabilities, managing people • Developing others • Influencing, challenging status quo, change management
	Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance record – career relevant • Career experiences
	Knowledge, values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical/functional skills and knowledge • Cultural fit – career relevant values and norms

Other models that this integrated model is based upon, have fewer dimensions and are less complex and perhaps therefore easier to apply in the workplace. Whilst Silzer and Church (2009) recommend further research and investigations, they also highlight that already there are standardised methods of measuring the foundation dimensions and suggest:

“Once a person shows potential in both the foundational and learning dimensions, then an organisation can provide them with career path specific development experiences.” (p.405)

This indicates some utility for the integrated model and highlights the impact of the workplace. The challenge comes around the career dimensions where the leadership, performance and knowledge, values elements may vary depending on the career stage or the professional context. It is also interesting though not particularly clear why the researchers team knowledge and values together (as an element of the career dimensions). Cultural fit in terms of career relevant values and norms are more challenging to measure though a part of the Development Dimensions Rogers and Smith (2007) refer to in their conceptualisation of potential and in Silzer and Church's (2009) survey 20% of respondents refer to cultural fit in their identification of high potential within their organisations. The role of values in establishing this cultural fit could be worth further investigation in understanding the impact of the workplace on individuals being at their best – and discussed in the next section.

This overview of literature relating to performance has demonstrated is that great **performance is impacted by**: How it is measured (Murphy et al 1996; Pathak & Singh 2013; Kaplan & Norton 1996); The interplay of internal structures (leadership, policies etc) and external factors (market conditions etc) (Singh et al 2012); Employee perceptions of the workplace (Kirwan et al 2013); Engagement of the workforce (Gallup 2005); And the mind-set of individuals within the workplace (Pryce-Jones 2010). Whilst great performance itself could be seen as a positive behavioural pattern, **other behaviours associated** with it are: Clear direction; delegation; accountability; control; efficiency; coordination; adaptation; and social systems (Kondalkar 2009); Competence (Boyatzis 1982); Proficiency, Adaptivity, Proactivity (Griffen et al 2007); Individuals working with their strengths (Clifton & Harter 2003); Individuals working towards their potential (Slan-Jerusalem & Hausdorf 2006); And high levels of judgement, drive and influence demonstrated (Rowe 2007). **Positive subjective states related to great performance** include: Happiness (Pryce-Jones 2010); Job satisfaction (Srivastava 2008); And engagement and aspiration (CLC 2005).

2.1.2 The role of values in positive workplaces

With five of the 26 articles in the last ten years using 'positive workplace' in the title highlighting the role of values (e.g. Laton 2006) and their reference in the individual potential literature (e.g. Silzer & Church 2010), being at one's best in work may involve some sort of perceived connection with one's values and the work context. Burke (2000) associates the alignment of organisational and individual values with improved subjective states (e.g. job satisfaction) and behavioural patterns or outcomes (e.g. productivity and profitability) thus contributing to a positive workplace. As with the concepts of performance and potential, there are a range of conceptualisations of values. This section first considers individual values, followed by the role of organisational values and highlights the need for a perceived connection between the two in helping to create a positive workplace. It concludes with an overview of the factors that the research suggests impact upon a perceived connection between individual and organisational values and a summary of the associated positive behavioural patterns and subjective states.

Williams (1968) suggests that values are what individuals use to assess behaviours, individuals and events. In that way they can be understood as a lens individuals use to interpret their world or in relation to this current research, to interpret the workplace. Schwartz (1992) added a more dynamic interpretation, asserting that values are desirable, trans-situational goals which have varying importance to individuals and he suggested that there are five features common to all values:

- Beliefs – involving emotion and not necessarily objective
- Motivational – relating to the individual's desirable goals
- Abstract goals – they transcend specific actions and situations
- Guide the selection of actions, policies, people and events – they act like standards
- Ordered by importance, relative to one another – this distinguishes them from norms and attitudes where there may be multiple of equal importance.

The motivational and action orientation of values highlights the role they are likely to play in terms of the psycho-social impact – influencing both personal subjective state (e.g. desire) and behavioural patterns demonstrated (e.g. selection of actions) and therefore may impact on individuals being at their best in work. Schwartz (1992) put forward ten broad values that he categorised by describing the motivational goal:

1. Self-Direction: independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring
2. Stimulation: excitement, novelty and challenge in life
3. Hedonism: pleasure and sensuous gratification
4. Achievement: personal success through demonstrating competence
5. Power: social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources
6. Security: safety, harmony and stability of society, relationships and self
7. Conformity: restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others
8. Tradition: respect, commitment and acceptance of customers, culture or religion
9. Benevolence: preserving and enhancing the welfare of those of one's own group
10. Universalism: understanding, appreciation, tolerance and the welfare protection of all

Given this conceptualisation of values as motivational, they may not always be conscious to individuals. This makes measuring values more challenging. Verplanken and Holland (2002) argue values affect behavioural patterns once triggered by the context – for example, in the workplace a promotion may trigger achievement values or a restructure and redundancy experience may trigger security values. Schwartz and Bardi (1997) also note the role of context which may raise the importance attributed to a particular value or may block the pursuit of a particular value. For example, in a workplace that encourages autonomy, the importance of self-direction may be increased and conformity decreased (Kohn and Schooler 1983). The impact of the context may not be quite so obvious however as Inglehart (1997) found those who suffer hardship may attribute higher importance to security and power than those living in comfort and safety. This provides support for the motivational aspect of values in that they provide a trigger for desires or aspirations but whether the resulting subjective states and behavioural patterns are positive or negative is not so consistent. .

One of the earliest researchers looking into values was Milton Rokeach (1968) who considered there to be two types of values: Terminal values or desired end states and Instrumental values referring to the desired way those terminal values are achieved. He described values as “*the most distinctive property or defining characteristic of a social institution*” (Rokeach 1979 p51). His conceptualisation of values to organisations would suggest that there are terminal values or desired end-states of the organisation. In most organisations this will involve productivity and profitability. The instrumental values will refer to the desired way that those ultimate values will be achieved (e.g. treating people with respect). He did point out that a value could be either or both terminal and/or instrumental (e.g. ethically produced).

With Rokeach's conceptualisation of values, both what is achieved and how it is achieved in the working context are important. This is reflected in O'Reilly & Chatman's (1996) assertion

that values are a major component of organisational culture (O'Reilly & Chatman 1996). Latan (2006) suggests that it is the perception of the culture and values that is important. He suggests that when these in agreement with our personal values, *“we feel a sense of belonging, comfort, balance and project a positive attitude which leads to a positive work ethic or behaviour”* (p7).

The values of an organisation are often outlined in terms of a statement of aspiration – how the company should be perceived. Swales and Rogers (1995) propose that

“corporate statements of vision, mission and values aim to create, sustain and project corporate culture, they are a component for “tying the workforce to that culture and ethos” (p.228)

Certainly the CIPD highlighted organisational culture & values as a source of competitive advantage:

“Successful organisations are characterised by strong values and a strong guiding vision that communicates what behaviour is appropriate and what is not. If these values are widely shared across the organisation and are reflected in the everyday actions of employees at all levels, both individually and collectively, then there is a strong culture.” (CIPD 2013 p.2)

As a statement of aspiration, values may become more of a marketing tool however. Where broad aspirations are not always accompanied by clear behavioural expectations, or as Rokeach termed them, instrumental values it becomes difficult to understand what working in the organisation will require of individuals. This is where the delineation becomes blurred. Instrumental values for the individual provide a clear code of conduct. Whilst an individual may be comfortable and committed to the broad aspirations or organisational values, if the practices within that organisation are not aligned to those values then the individual is likely to become frustrated on an instrumental value level.

Conceptualising values in a slighted different way, Wiener (1988) highlighted two types of organisational values – functional and elitist. Functional values are those made explicit to individuals to guide what they do in terms of goals and functions and how they perform in terms of behaviour. These might be communicated through competency frameworks or the corporate statements mentioned earlier. Elitist values, are concerned with status, superiority and the importance of the organisation. Some organisations may state a value as “The Customer is Number One” (functional) the same organisation may also have a value statement of “We are number one” (elitist). With functionally stated values it is unclear what

the overall desired end-state is and with elitist stated values it is unclear how that can be achieved. This puts the employee in a rather confusing position and this lack of clarity. That lack of clarity is likely to have implications for the workplace. Finegan (2000) for example, found that it is the perceptions of an organisation's values that are more likely to result in enhanced commitment.

Murphy & Mackenzie Davey (2006) examined the impact by reviewing a set of official corporate values in terms of how they were demonstrated in practice and perceived by individuals within the organisation. They found that the official corporate values had no significance or relevance for the individuals and were generally regarded as 'cosmetic' as they were not demonstrated in the actual culture or hierarchy and control. They also proposed that congruence with personal values, instrumentality, cynicism, embeddedness and tolerance for ambiguity influenced how individuals made sense of official organisational values and judged their importance. Interestingly high levels of congruence between individual and organisational values appeared to reduce their significance – perhaps they were seen as obvious or the strength of the congruence actually meant those values became accepted norms rather than important expectations. Therefore a perceived connection between an individual's and organisation's values may not fully explain positive workplaces and may only tell part of the story of being at one's best in work.

Conversely, Collins and Porras (1996) argue that successful organisations require *"1% vision and 99% alignment of the members' values"*. How this can be achieved is not clear and this requirement for alignment would suggest that values cannot therefore be imposed on individuals. Willmott (1993) suggest that instead of alignment or identification with organisational values, there may be selective, calculated compliance by employees who are willing to 'realise' the values of the corporation insofar as they calculate that material or symbolic advantage derived from it. This would require some level of consciousness on the part of the individuals which may well be possible however as noted earlier, it is not always the case.

Another way that a values connection could be understood is in terms of a person-environment fit (e.g. Holland 1985). With this perspective, values can be understood as preferences of an individual and as preferred behaviours communicated in the culture of the organisation. In a longitudinal study O'Reilly, Chatman and Cardwell (1991) highlighted the importance of understanding the fit between individuals' preferences and organisational cultures. They suggest that person-organisation fit predicts job satisfaction and organisational commitment a year after fit was measured and also predicts actual turnover

after two years. This perspective highlights the interaction of values with personal subjective states (e.g. job satisfaction) and behavioural patterns (e.g. organisational commitment).

Hyde and Williamson (2000) argue that the existence of shared values has five functions:

- 1) Facilitating self-selection among potential employees
- 2) Offering competitive advantage in a tight recruitment market
- 3) Mobilising employee commitment
- 4) Offering a basis for the alignment of empowered staff members
- 5) Guiding the organisation's response to crises.

They note Posner, Kouzes and Schmidt's (1985) findings that shared values are associated with feelings (or subjective states) of personal success, commitment, self-confidence and awareness alongside ethical behaviour. Meglino and Ravlin (1998) also found alignment between individual and organisational values positively correlates with commitment, satisfaction and involvement.

One way to evaluate the role a values connection might play in a positive workplace is to explore how that connection can be established and the consequences of doing so. Byng, Cairns & Duchan (2002) explored evidence that speech-language pathologists experienced dissatisfaction with their roles and they argue that one source of dissatisfaction may be in a mismatch between personal and organisational values. In their discussions with therapists in the UK and Australia, they suggest a number of ways of circumventing the barriers to the implementation of personal and professional values, including:

- Engaging in open discussion with colleagues about values.
- Having a wider perspective on the issues facing the clients we are working with.
- Changing the terminology and language we use to be more accessible and less reliant on 'in-speak,' so that we have to explain ourselves fully and more clearly.
- Introducing a wider frame of reference in our education to include a bigger component on, for example, sociology or disability studies.
- Educating other healthcare providers and service users about the breadth of our role.

Whilst these recommendations are specific to the speech-language pathologists, it suggests that there are ways to improve the relationship between individual and organisation values which provides some validation for the concept. The complexities involved in aligning organisational practices, organisational values and strategy are highlighted by Chorn (1991) where he sets out a strategic alignment model consisting of 4 types of alignment:

- Performance – where the focus is on a need for action results

- Administration – where the focus is on a need for control and order
- Development – where the focus is on a need for creativity and change
- Intimacy – where the focus is on a need for integration and cohesion

This provides a useful conceptualisation but lacks some clarity on how the alignment can be achieved and whether one type of alignment is acceptable. He does note that '*businesses simultaneously create and respond to their competitive situations*' (p.24) therefore whilst strategic alignment is an ideal state, it is also dynamic in nature and therefore 'somewhat elusive' (p.23). This dynamic view of a positive or aligned workplace provides some challenge to understanding when we are at our best in work. If the positive workplace is dynamic or elusive so too might being at one's best.

There are a number of terms in the literature that appear to relate to the importance of aligning individuals and organisations – Value 'alignment' or 'congruence' are terms often linked to improved satisfaction and productivity (Burke, 2000); 'Person-environment fit' has been linked to job satisfaction and indeed turnover (O'Reilly et al 1991); 'Shared values' have been linked to elements of engagement (Hyde & Williamson, 2000); and 'mismatched' values have been linked to dissatisfaction (Byng et al, 2002) . To achieve real and tangible alignment or congruence is practically impossible, given that some values are often unconscious or unstated (by either the individual or organisation). A perfect 'fit' can also be difficult to establish and 'shared values' lacks clarity in terms of how much needs to be shared in order to be considered 'shared values'. A matching of values, again, is difficult to establish as it suggests an exact match. A term not currently used but perhaps more helpful to consider is that of a connection. A connection allows for congruence in some areas, variance in others but always some form of compatibility. It also allows for weak connections (eg when an organisation's value connects with the individual's terminal values though its processes do not connect with their instrumental values) similar to a mobile phone signal that may allow for a call to be connected but the clarity of the call is poor. This means that where a weak connection between values occurs remedial action can quickly be taken.

Research suggests that a values connection impacts upon the workplace culture (O'Reilly et al 1991) due to its impact on the subjective states and behavioural patterns of workers (Posner et al 1985). This has implications for how an organisation develops its values, placing importance on ensuring they are based on core business principles that can be clearly and consistently demonstrated as it is the perception of the workplace that has the greatest effect (Finegan 2000).

This overview of literature relating to values demonstrates the complex nature and interplay between organisation and individual values. A values connection is a dynamic state (Chorn 1991) where individuals and organisations respond to the context they are operating in. Such a **perceived values connection is likely to be impacted by**: Restructures in the form of promotion or redundancy may trigger certain values (Verplanken & Holland 2002); The work context may alter the relative importance of a value for an individual (Kohn & Schooler 1983); The terminal (goals) and instrumental (communicated required behaviours) values of the organisation (Rokeach 1979); And perception of organisation's values by the workforce (Finegan 2000). The **associated positive behaviours** related to a perceived values connection include: Positive work ethic behaviour (Latan 2006); Compliance with corporate vision and values (Willmott 1993); Organisational commitment (Chatman & Cardwell 1991); Candidate self-selection & competitive advantages in the recruitment of personnel (Hyde & Williamson 2000); Ethical behaviour (Posner et al 1985); And open discussions about values (Byng et al 2002). This review has also highlighted some specific **positive subjective states** associated with such a connection: A sense of belonging, comfort, balance, positive attitude (Latan 2006); Job satisfaction (Chatman & Cardwell 1991); And feelings of personal success. Self-confidence, self-awareness (Posner et al 1985).

2.1.3 Engagement in positive workplaces

One way that perception of the workplace is often measured or understood is by considering the engagement of workers. This is another field within the research literature that was highlighted in five of the articles in the last ten years focussing on positive workplaces (e.g. Tilott 2013). It is a field of research where it could be both a positive state and a positive behavioural pattern (Farndale 2011). Recent researchers highlight the link between engagement and performance as well as other positive behavioural states such as satisfaction and commitment behaviours (MacLeod & Clarke 2009; Gallup 2005). This section will review the literature relating to complete engagement or flow and moves on to review workplace engagement literature more specifically – highlighting the overlap of behavioural patterns and subjective states to deliver engagement in a positive workplace. It concludes with an overview of the factors that the research suggests impact upon engagement and a summary of the associated positive behavioural patterns and subjective states.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's prolific work around the concept of Flow focusses on complete engagement where individuals have greater awareness and are more in touch with their emotions.

"Life means to experience – through doing, feeling and thinking"

Csikszentmihalyi (1997 p.8)

This definition of life provides more support for considering being at our best in terms of what we do (behavioural patterns) and what we feel (internal or positive states). Using the Experience Sampling Method where a pager signals a command to participants to answer questions in a book they carry with them, Csikszentmihalyi found flow was reported when individuals were doing their favourite activity. The activities varied but there was consistency in having clear goals, immediate feedback and skills that were balanced to action opportunities. When these conditions are in place, flow is experienced:

"Flow – a state of concentration so focussed that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity"

Csikszentmihalyi (2014 p227)

Csikszentmihalyi's work has clear implications for the workplace in terms of providing an environment that encourages the conditions of Flow but it is also a state of mind – one that can be encouraged but where implications lie for the individual. Csikszentmihalyi (2014)

links flow to happiness as well as other psychological concepts such as resilience (discussed later as a part of psychological capital) saying:

“Happiness depends on inner harmony. The individuals, who have inner harmony lead vigorous lives, are open to a variety of experiences, keep on learning until the day they die and have strong ties and commitments to other people to the environment in which they live. They enjoy whatever they do, even if tedious or difficult; they are hardly ever bored and they can take in stride anything that comes their way.” (p.228)

This notion of vigour is also reflected in employee engagement literature. Maslach et al (2001) refers to engagement as high energy levels, involvement and professional efficacy and the opposite of burnout. With this definition, engagement involves elements of wellbeing, characterised by high levels of activity and identification or *“a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption”* (Schaufeli et al 2002 p.72). Leiter and Bakker (2010) also note that engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastically involved in their work. They conclude that *“the energy and focus inherent in work engagement allow employees to bring their full potential to a job”* (p.3). Macey & Schneider (2008) also note the energy levels, suggesting three components of engagement: 1) trait, such as personality or other personal attributes of the individual 2) psychological state, characterised by feelings of energy and 3) behavioural, relating to the actions and performance of the individuals. The potential literature discussed earlier also highlighted engagement as an essential part of fulfilling potential (CLC 2005). The corporate leadership council's definition of engagement involves emotional and rational commitment, intent to stay and discretionary efforts. This link to commitment is echoed by a number of researchers and their conceptualisation of engagement (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday 2004; Wellins & Concelman 2004; Kahn 1990). Yet the multiple conceptualisations mean that it is not clear whether engagement is an attitude or behaviour, an individual or group level phenomenon or indeed whether it is a distinct construct (Little & Little 2006). With those significant questions, measurement of engagement in the workplace then becomes more challenging.

Gallup researchers have simplified the measurement of engagement to their Q12 Gallup Engagement Index. Their research highlights engagement as the key to success in the workplace (e.g. Buckingham & Coffman 1999). As noted earlier, Clifton & Harter's (2003) reference to the need for individuals to utilise their strengths which also reflects Csikszentmihalyi's (1997) conditions for Flow that include 'skills that are balanced to action opportunities'. Lucey, Bateman & Hines (2005) interpret the Gallup Engagement Index as a

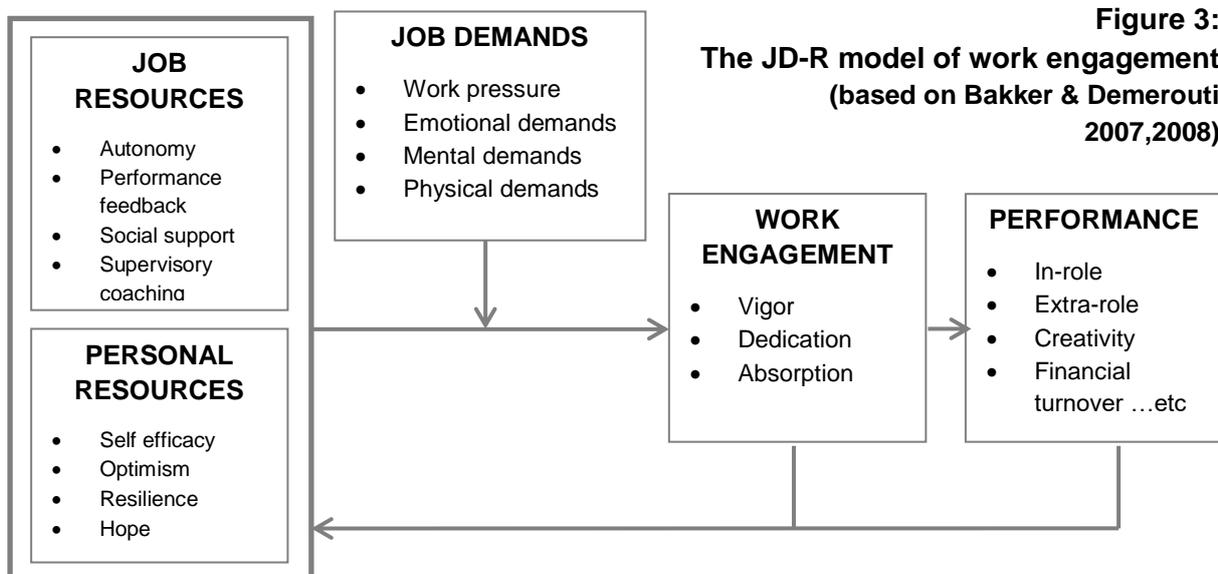
measure of “*how each individual employee connects with your company and how each individual connects with your customers*” (p12). This highlights a behavioural element to engagement. DDI (2005) suggest it is “*the extent to which people value, enjoy and believe in what they do*” (p1). This highlights a subjective state element to engagement. Other researchers highlight its link to commitment and discretionary effort (Flemming, Coffman and Harter 2005; Wellins & Concelman 2004). Harter et al (2009) reviewed over 8.5 thousand organisations using the Gallup Q12 to measure engagement and highlighted a range of impacts that organisations showing high levels of engagement: increased productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and reduced turnover, safety incidents, shrinkage, absenteeism and quality (defects) measures. This demonstrates a link between engagement (according to the Q12) and performance and commitment. Providing additional support and introducing the notion of happiness, Field and Buitendach (2011) concluded that happiness and work engagement have predictive value for affective organisational commitment.

Wollard & Shuck's (2011) review of 265 papers relating to engagement identified 42 antecedents to engagement, grouping them by application at the individual and organisational level. The individual antecedents included the role of a meaningful work and workplace environment (e.g. Rich et al 2010); the perception of emotionally, culturally and physically safe environments (e.g. May 2004); work-life balance (e.g. Singh 2010); connection of work to the organisation's goals (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes 2002) corporate citizenship behaviours (Galvis & Piderit 2009) and other behavioural patterns including vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Maslach 1993). They also noted work around individual antecedents focussed more around subjective states such as proactive personality, conscientiousness (e.g. Macey & Schneider 2008), curiosity (Reio & Callahan 2004), optimism, self-efficacy and coping style (Rothmann & Storm 2003). These behavioural patterns and subjective states will be discussed in further sections of this chapter however, Wollard & Shuck's (2011) review does add to the mounting evidence that positive workplaces require positive subjective states and positive behavioural patterns.

The organisational antecedents of Wollard & Shuck's (2011) review “*revolve around basic employee/human needs*” (p435). They highlight the role of the manager, leaders and organisational policies & practices in meeting those needs. The role of the manager becomes important in terms of: their self-efficacy (Arakawa & Greenberg 2007); their ability to create a supportive environment (Kroth & Keeler 2009); and to executive the organisation vision on a local level (Bezujen, Berg, Dam & Thierry 2009); and a non-defensive manager approach (Shuck, Rocco & Albornoz 2011). They also highlight that supportive and positive workplace climates are achieved through: role clarity, ability to contribute to the

organisation's success, recognition, self-expression and appropriate levels of job challenge & control (Brown & Leigh 1996; Dollard & Bakker 2010). They suggest that the leadership team have a responsibility to focus on engagement as it acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy but there is also a conceptual link between leader behaviour and engagement (Shuck & Herd 2011). The types of organisational policies and practices the authors cite as important for developing engagement include: hygiene factors such as fair pay, reasonable working conditions, security & trust (Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen 2008); opportunities for learning (Czarnowsky 2008); and talent management systems (Hughes & Rog 2008).

Kahn (1990) reported three conditions which are critical in influencing people's engagement: 1) Meaningfulness, the sense of return on investment of effort, 2) Safety, being able to work without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or career and 3) Availability, possessing the physical, emotional and psychological resources necessary for the work. More recent research breaks availability down into two dimensions: personal resource (Rothbard, 2001); and job resource availability (Mauno, Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen 2007). Bakker and Demerouti (2007) take this further and present a motivational process of the job demands-resources (JD-R) model which assumes job resources have a motivational potential and lead to high work engagement and performance (outlined in figure 2 below). This model presents work engagement as a psychological state which includes a behavioural-energetic (vigour), an emotional (dedication) and a cognitive (absorption) component.



This model provides some clarity around the interaction of the individual in the work context. Whilst it provides some flexibility in how performance is measured it lacks measurable

specificity and therefore the link between engagement and work performance must be viewed with some prudence. Bakker and Demerouti's focus on personal resources adds a helpful dimension to understanding engagement and in turn when people are at their best in work. Personal resources highlight the role of subjective states which are discussed later in this review.

Farndale's (2011) recent study, funded by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), provides some indication of what work engagement means in practice for individuals and organisations and highlights the differences between state and behavioural engagement. He identifies four different domains of engagement, the factors which drive them and the output in terms of either a positive environment or productivity, illustrated in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Representation of Farndale (2011) engagement domains

	State Engagement	Behavioural Engagement
Job Engagement	1) Employees with a high level of <i>job state engagement</i> are passionate and enthusiastic about their job and but don't necessarily work hard	2) Employees with a high level of <i>job behavioural engagement</i> are motivated to develop themselves and take the initiative but don't necessarily feel loyal to their company
Organisational Engagement	3) Employees who exhibit <i>organization state engagement</i> love their company and make great brand ambassadors but as above, this won't automatically lead to high productivity	4) Employees showing <i>organization behavioural engagement</i> are proactive in highlighting problems and suggesting improvements in their company but again don't necessarily hold that company in high esteem or feel loyalty towards it.
	Positive Environment	Productivity

Whilst this work is reductionist in its nature and simplifies a complex issue into four simple dimensions, what is interesting is that it draws a distinction between an individual's psychological state, or perception of their job and organisation and what they actually do (behavioural pattern). From an organisation perspective, behavioural engagement may have more attraction as it is directly related to increased productivity and commitment. For individuals, state engagement creates a more pleasant environment to work in. Farndale (2011) highlights the importance of recognising the type of engagement that is desired and

measured will impact on what actions can be taken to enhance it. What is interesting is that Farndale (2011) also notes state engagement does not necessarily lead to high productivity (ie behavioural engagement). This model would therefore suggest that there are other mitigating factors which will ensure all four engagement domains to be high – these may involve both individual and organisational characteristics including (though not exclusively) the values held.

The notion of workplace engagement emphasises the importance of employee perceptions in a positive workplace. With so many conceptualisations of engagement it appears to be falling foul of the same challenges in the performance literature – defining or measuring it consistently can be problematic. Although Gallup asserts that its Engagement Index provides a clear and accurate measure, it is the purpose for the measurement and context in which the measurement is taking place that is important (Farndale 2011). This discussion has however drawn attention to the complex nature of the relationship between employees, their work, the organisation, managers and the broader workplace context. Engagement does appear to involve a range of positive subjective states and behavioural patterns (Wollard & Shuck 2011) and consideration of these in the subsequent sections will help to bring some clarity to when people are at their best.

This overview of literature has noted a range of **influences on engagement**, including: The presence of clear goals, immediate feedback and skills balanced to action opportunities (Csikzentmihalyi 2014); The perception of the organisation and its values (Robinson et al 2004); The occurrence of meaningful work offered (Rich et al 2010); Manager self-efficacy and ability (Arakawa & Greenberg 2007); Supportive work environment (Dollard & Bakker 2010); Leader behaviour (Shuck 2011); And job resources, personal resources and job demands (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). The **positive behavioural patterns associated with engagement** include: Great performance & commitment behaviours (MacLeod & Clark 2009); Absolute absorption in an activity (Csikzentmihalyi 2014); Working to strengths (Clifton & Harter 2003); Working in collaboration to improve performance (Robinson et al 2004); High energy levels, involvement and professional efficacy (Maslach et al 2001); Citizenship behaviours (Galvis & Piderit 2009); Self-development & proactive (Farndale 2011); And extra role performance (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). The **positive subjective states associated with engagement** include: Job satisfaction (MacLeod & Clark 2009); Happiness (Field and Buitendach 2011); Conscientiousness (Macey & Schneider 2008); Curiosity (Reio & Callahan 2004); Passionate and enthusiastic (Farndale 2011); Vigor, Dedication, Absorption (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

2.1.4 Implications for being at one's best at work

This review of three of the factors appearing in positive workplace literature has been intended to provide some insight regarding being at one's best in work. It has highlighted behavioural patterns and subjective states featured in the literature. Table 6 over the page summarises these in advance of moving on to review literature relating to the specific behavioural patterns and subjective states that featured in the positive workplace literature. .

The performance and engagement literature appear to have clear behavioural similarities around: competence in terms of meeting and exceeding expectations (Slan-Jerusalim & Hausdorf 2006; MacLeod & Clark 2009); citizenship behaviours (Kondalkar 2009; Galvis & Piderit 2009); and extra role efforts (Griffen et al 2007; Bakker & Demerouti 2007). The values literature has highlighted an additional behavioural link to commitment (Chatman & Cardwell 1991) that is also echoed in the high potential (CLC 2005) and performance literature (Bakker & Demerouti 2007) so it may be a precursor to commitment which is discussed further in section 1.3.2. In terms of subjective states, all three areas of the literature link to job satisfaction (Srivastava 2008; Chatman & Cardwell 1991; MacLeod & Clark 2009) and once again, the performance and engagement literature overlap with the link to aspiration as a key element of potential (CLC 2005) and psychological capital as a key requirement for engagement and potential (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

The overlap in the performance and engagement literature suggests that being at one's best in work may involve elements of both. There is overlap also in the literature around values connection, particularly as a precursor to commitment behaviours which are discussed further in section 1.3.2.

Table 6: Behavioural patterns and subjective states in the positive workplace literature relating to: performance, values & engagement

	What it being at your best might look like (Behavioural Patterns)	What being at your best might feel like (Subjective States)
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear direction; delegation; accountability; control; efficiency; coordination; adaptation; and social systems (Kondalkar 2009). • Competence (Boyatzis 1982) • Proficiency, Adaptivity, Proactivity (Griffen et al 2007) • Individuals working towards their potential (Slan-Jerusalim & Hausdorf 2006) • High levels of judgement, drive and influence demonstrated (Rowe 2007) • Individuals working to their strengths (Buckingham & Coffman 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness (Field & Buitendach 2011) • Job satisfaction (Srivastava 2008) • Engagement and aspiration (CLC 2005)
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive work ethic behaviour (Latan 2006) • Compliance with corporate vision and values (Willmott 1993) • Organisational commitment (Chatman & Cardwell 1991) • Candidate self-selection & competitive advantages in the recruitment of personnel (Hyde & Williamson 2000) • Ethical behaviour (Posner et al 1985) • Open discussions about values (Byng et al 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sense of belonging, comfort, balance, positive attitude (Latan 2006) • Job satisfaction (Chatman & Cardwell 1991) • Feelings of personal success. Self-confidence, self-awareness (Posner et al 1985)
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great performance & commitment behaviours (MacLeod & Clark 2009) • Absolute absorption in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi 2014) • Working in collaboration to improve performance (Robinson et al 2004) • High energy levels, involvement and professional efficacy (Maslach et al 2001) • Citizenship behaviours (Galvis & Piderit 2009) • Self-development & proactive (Farndale 2011) • Extra role performance (Bakker & Demerouti 2007) • Individuals working to their strengths (Clifton & Harter 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction (MacLeod & Clark 2009) • Happiness (Pryce-Jones 2010) • Conscientiousness (Macey & Schneider 2008) • Curiosity (Reio & Callahan 2004) • Passionate and enthusiastic (Farndale 2011) • Dedication, Absorption (Bakker & Demerouti 2007) • Flow (Csikszentmihalyi 2007)

2.2 Positive behavioural patterns

The structure of this section is aligned to the key positive behavioural pattern themes found in the articles (2005-2015) with a focus on or title referencing positive workplaces. Table 7 below identifies the articles grouped by their reference to trust and supportive relationships and the demonstration of commitment behaviours. 16 of the 23 articles referenced trust and supportive relationships as involved in a positive workplace (e.g. Stapleton 2013; Madsen & Mabokela 2013); and 6 of the 23 referenced organisational commitment and organisational commitment behaviours (OCBs) (e.g. Mauseth 2008).

Table 7: Positive workplace references (2005-2015) relating to 'trust & supportive relationships' and commitment

Trust & supportive relationships	Applebaum et al (2007) Bellini et al (2015) Buxton et al (2009) Darbyshire (2010) Frempong et al (2013) Horan (2011) Jennings & Tvaruzka (2012) Madsen & Mabokela (2013)	Mauseth (2008) Ramlall et al (2014) Ray (2010) Ruth et al (2010) Singh & Srivastava (2013) Stapleton (2013) Tillott (2013) Work (2009)
Commitment	Frempong et al (2013) Lambert & Hogan (2009) Mauseth (2008) O'Connor & Jackson (2005) Ramlall et al (2014) Singh & Srivastava (2013)	

This section highlights the interplay between positive behavioural patterns and positive subjective states by first discussing how the act of building trust leads to supportive relationships that in turn impacts on a range of performance, communication and discretionary behaviours seen the workplace. These discretionary behaviours are also linked to the notion of commitment which is also discussed noting it as both a behavioural and subjective concept

2.2.1 Trust & supportive relationships

The role of supportive relationships is highlighted in the recently published CIPD 2015 Employee Outlook Survey which noted that 55% of employees would prefer to work in an organisation that has a strong family feel, where leaders are viewed as mentors and parents, but in fact the majority work in organisations that are formalised, structured places where they are governed by procedures. The CIPD concludes:

“This is a stark message to organisations that are trying to create a culture where people can be the best they can and to create an organisation that attracts and keeps people in a world where there is low unemployment and a ‘war for talent’.” (p.20)

The positive workplace literature highlighted trust (e.g. Singh & Strivastava 2013) and supportive relationships (e.g. Ralmall et al 2014) as key components of that culture where people can be the best they can. This review considers the demonstration of trust in the workplace as a behavioural pattern which includes the development of supportive relationships. It first notes some definitions of trust and uses two reviews of the trust literature (Dirks & Ferrin 2001; Searle, Den Hartog, Weibel, Gillespie, Six, Hatzakis & Skinner 2011) alongside the positive workplace literature to note the links between trust and other behavioural patterns and subjective states. These reviews also highlight the psycho-social impact of work as a part of a wider social system.

Wahl (2006) suggests that to have trust in a workplace, there must be: credibility; respect; fairness; pride and camaraderie. This camaraderie highlights the relational aspect of trust. Jennings & Tvaruzka (2012) also note the relational aspects of work that impact on the positive workplace. Their research highlighted the role of humour and fun amongst teams as promoting productivity, creativity, motivation and satisfaction. Another conceptualisation of trust is provided by Lyman (2003) who suggests there are just three characteristics of workplace trust: firstly the ability to perceive others (in particular managers) as credible; secondly is the experience of respect through support provided and inclusion of ideas and in decision making; and thirdly a sense that one will be treated fairly by others. She links trust to success, citing three case studies that *“illustrate how credibility, respect and fairness in the workplace can develop trust and make the differences between success and failure”*.

Other researchers have also noted these factors as important in the workplace. Supporting evidence for the role that a manager's credibility plays in the workplace comes from

Frempong, et al (2013) who conclude that the perception of the managerial role includes demonstrable managerial actions and competencies that enhance employee performance and positive workplace experience. The emphasis on supportive managers generating trust in positive workplaces was also echoed by Ruth et al (2010). This would suggest that management competence and support are essential behaviour required in positive workplaces. Lambert & Hogan (2009) also found that respectful and supportive relationships reduced job stress and increased job satisfaction and commitment.

Building trust is an essential component of creating a supportive environment (Stapleton 2013). Dirks & Ferrin's (2001) review of the trust literature led them to conclude:

“there is empirical support for the idea that trust has important benefits for organisations. However, researchers should hesitate to assume that these benefits are always transmitted in a singular or straightforward manner or even the effects of trust and the mechanisms through which it operates are the same regardless of the organisational context” (p.462)

Whilst trust in itself could be considered a subjective state, Dirks & Ferrin's (2001) review of the trust literature highlights a number of functions trust in terms of behavioural patterns: Better communication (e.g. De Dreu, Giebels & Van de Vliert 1998); Increased organisational citizenship behaviour (e.g. Robinson 1998); Improved negotiations (e.g. Schurr & Ozanne 1985); Reduced conflict (e.g. Porter & Lily 1996); Greater employee effort (e.g. Dirks 1999); Improved employee performance (e.g. Earley 1996); Improved team performance (e.g. Davis, Schoorman, Mayer & Tan 2000); Greater satisfaction (e.g. Ward 1997); Greater compliance with decisions (Kim & Mauborgne 1993).

Searle et al (2011) conducted a more recent review of the evidence generated around the role of trust in the workplace. They also link trust to performance and organisational effectiveness (e.g. Kramer and Tyler 1996) and to commitment, discretionary effort and staying longer with organisations (Dirks and Ferrin 2001). They suggest there is a clear link between high involvement work practices and trust: knowledge-sharing, open communication and employee participation (Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener 2002); job security (Carnevale and Wechsler 1992); integrated performance management processes (Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe 2004); and training and development (Tzafrir 2005). The other link they make to trust is with that of perceived organisational justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector 2001). They concluded that high involvement work practices and procedural justice in the workplace lead to perceived organisational trustworthiness and trust in the employer.

Searle et al's (2011) conclusions highlight the important role of HRM practices in providing a context where trust and supportive relationships can be demonstrated. The relationship between the perception of the organisation and other factors is highlighted by Mauseth (2008) who suggests that perceived organisation support has a strong significant relationship with commitment, job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviours. MacLeod (2011) includes trust in the components of engagement, another common theme in the positive workplace literature: "*Task, Trust and Tend – clear tasking, trusting people to get on with and tending them, making sure they remain available.*" Hope-Hailey, Searler and Dietz's (2012) research highlights trust as a critical component for building engagement and commented that there is a marked lack of trust in organisations. They found that the greatest improvements are seen when leaders trust their teams, admit mistakes and apologise. Applebaum et al (2007) highlight the need for organisations to create a fair work environment with socio-cultural support and access to information. These conclusions also signal how individuals in the workplace are a part of a wider system that influences their experience at work and therefore may also influence being at their best in work.

The influence of the wider system or context and the links with behavioural patterns and subjective states in a positive workplace is echoed by Horan (2011) who suggests it is the relational aspects that impact on positive workplace particularly in terms of navigating the organisational politics. Stapleton (2013) suggests inclusive leadership plays a role and Buxton et al (2009) note the role of supervisor support that was noted by Lyman (2003) and Ruth et al (2011) earlier. Jennings & Tvaruzka (2012) recommend humour and fun are injected into the workplace as they found these promote productivity, creativity, motivation and satisfaction. The complexities and interplay between trust, behaviour and subjective states is also illustrated by Bellini et al (2015) who found a multivariate positive relationship between restorativeness (a sense of renewed health and spirit), social support, work engagement and job satisfaction.

This review has highlighted a number of **influences on the development of trust and supportive relationships** in the workplace: HRM practices (Searle et al 2011); Leadership style (Stapleton 2013); Manager relationships (Buxton et al 2009); A fair environment and socio-cultural support (Applebaum et al 2007); Integrated performance management processes (Den Hartog, Boselie & Paauwe 2004); And training and development (Tzafrir 2005). The **associated behavioural patterns** include: Productivity and creativity (Jennings & Tvaruzka 2012); Work engagement (MacLeod 2011); Commitment and organisational

citizenship behaviours (Mauseth 2008); Better communication (e.g. De Dreu, Giebels & Van de Vliert 1998); Improved negotiations (e.g. Schurr & Ozanne 1985); Reduced conflict (e.g. Porter & Lily 1996); Greater employee effort (e.g. Dirks 1999); Improved team performance (e.g. Davis, Schoorman, Mayer & Tan 2000); Knowledge-sharing, open communication and employee participation (Korsgaard, Brodt and Whitener 2002); And greater compliance with decisions (Kim & Mauborgne 1993). With trust and supportive relationships in the workplace, individuals are likely to experience a number of **subjective states**: Greater satisfaction (e.g. Ward 1997); fun (Jennings & Tvaruzka 2012); Camaraderie (Wahl 2006); Restorativeness (Bellini et al 2015); job security (Carnevale and Wechsler 1992); And a sense of justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector 2001).

Whilst trust and supportive relationships were the most common behavioural patterns noted in the positive workplace literature, this review has highlighted its associations with a range of influences, other behaviours and subjective states. Commitment was also key theme in the positive workplace literature and indeed noted as linked to trust and supportive relationships. This is discussed in the next section.

2.2.2 Organisational commitment

Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) defined organisational commitment as:

“the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement with a particular organisation” (p.27)

Commitment has already been referenced in this chapter as a value (Schwartz 1998) and as a result of aligned values (Finegan 2000). This review has also seen its association with supportive relationships (Lambert & Hogan 2009), positive workplaces generally (Mauseth 2008), high potential (CLC 2008) and as a key component of engagement and retention (MacLeod & Clarke 2009). This section extends consideration of organisational commitment in terms of the behaviours associated with it – starting with an exploration of conceptualisations of commitment followed by a review of the evidence of organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) – in order to gain greater clarity around the positive behavioural patterns that may be evident in positive workplaces.

Mowday et al (1979) explore commitment in terms of it involving: a strong belief and acceptance of the organisation's goals; a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation; and a strong desire to maintain membership of the organisation. Using words such as belief, willingness and desire, Mowday et al are inferring commitment to be more a subjective state that is likely to have behavioural consequences (such as exerting effort). Later studies do in fact demonstrate a link with other behaviours such as retention (e.g. O'Reilly 1991).

Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993) advocate a multi-dimensional view of organisational commitment that is a little more specific but still only infers behaviour. They suggest that commitment can be seen on three levels: 1) affective commitment, concerned with the extent to which the individual identifies with the organisation 2) Continuance commitment, concerned with the individual's need to continue working for the organisation and 3) Normative commitment, concerned with the extent to which societal norms encourage individuals to commit to an organisation. With this multi-dimensional view, there is an interaction between an individual's perception and the demonstration of the organisation's expectations (e.g. through acquired remuneration and benefits). There would also appear to be an interaction between the individual and social perceptions around the worth of commitment that has an effect on the retention of individuals. This draws on Becker's (1960) view of motivation in the context of what he terms 'side bets' – peripheral factors

relating to the organisation, accrued over time (rewards and benefits such as pension rights or seniority). These, Becker suggests make it harder to leave an organisation.

These views of commitment naturally link to retention, keeping people within the organisation. Commitment appears to be more than the demonstration or behaviour, it is also the subjective state, beliefs and desires. Therefore understanding commitment potentially provides some insight into how organisations can keep people, at their best.

The crossover of commitment and motivation needs to be acknowledged. Commitment theorists have focussed more on explaining employee retention whereas motivation theorists have focussed more on prediction. Similar to the engagement literature (e.g. Wellins & Concelman 2004), both motivation and commitment have been described as an energy or force: Pinder (1998) describes motivation as a '*set of energizing forces*'; and Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) describes commitment as a '*force that binds and individual to a course of action*'. The connection and similarity of the two academic concepts is clear and another illustration of how the literature within this field overlaps. Meyer, Becker and Vandenberghe (2004) propose an integrated framework in which commitment is presented as one of several energising forces for motivated behaviour. This is based upon Locke's (1997) model of work motivation process and Meyer and Herscovitch's (2001) model of workplace commitments includes a new term 'goal regulation' to facilitate the merger of the two theories. Goal regulation is derived from self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985) and regulatory forces theory (Higgins 1997) and acknowledges that motivated behaviour can be accompanied by different mind-sets that have particular implications for the explanation and prediction of discretionary work behaviour. This integrated conceptualisation of the two concepts introduces some new terms in relation to being at one's best in work: The commitment / motivation energy force is related to positive behaviour patterns; Mind-sets as they appear to have an influence on the outcome (behaviour); and goals and their achievement are impacted by the energy force and mindsets.

As a concept, commitment would clearly appear to be relevant when thinking about when people are at their best in work however its demonstration as behaviour is of most interest for this part of the review. O'Driscoll & Randall (1999) point out the difference between organisational commitment and job involvement – commitment to the work. They conclude that organisational commitment denotes an employee's attachment to an organisation and appears to be more related to factors such as absence or turnover. Job involvement on the other hand, relates more to the engagement with work and they suggest that it is involvement that has the greater association with performance prediction. Their conclusions also highlight the roles that relationships and a supportive environment play, linking

perceived organisation support with both job involvement and organisational commitment. Baruch & Cohen (2007) highlight a third factor to consider beyond commitment to the job and commitment to the organisation – that being an individual's professional identity and commitment, linking that to the changing workplace context discussed in chapter 1:

“In our new age of boundaryless organisations and boundaryless careers, the role of the organisation as identity creator and the major recipient of commitment would appear to be less prominent than it was in the past!”

(p.241)

The professional identity may well help to explain the retention of staff in challenging jobs such as the medical profession, police or armed forces. It is developed over the course of time and is influenced by a range of factors and various forms of assistance that individuals receive in their careers (Dobrow and Higgins 2005). George (2009) suggests that, *“for professional workers their key commitment and identification could be increasingly with their profession rather than with their employing organisation”* (p42). Chartman (1991) also highlights the role that a connection between organisational and professional goals and values plays in terms of retention which links back to the discussion around values connections in section 1.2.1.

The notion of commitment is clearly very broad, encompassing beliefs, values and motivation which are assumed to be driving behaviour in relation to an individual's work, organisation and profession. Organ (1988) provided a little more definition around the behaviours associated with commitment and defined organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs) as *“discretionary behaviours that ..promote the effective functioning of the organisation”* (p4). Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bachrach (2000) suggest that OCBs can be understood as having seven different dimensions: 1) Helping behaviour 2) Sportsmanship 3) Organisational loyalty 4) Organisational Compliance 5) Individual initiative 6) Civic virtue and 7) Self-development. They concluded that job attitudes, task variables and leader behaviour are most strongly related to OCBs (over other antecedents they reviewed). They suggest that OCBs account for substantially more variance in performance evaluations than objective performance measures as they influence managerial judgements and decisions. They also found empirical support for the idea that OCBs, in particular helping behaviours, are related to objective performance measures.

Faishol's (2015) recent study echoes the conclusions of Podsakoff et al (2000) and illustrates the link between OCBs and commitment. Through questionnaire analysis, he found that both OCB and organisational commitment have a positive and significant impact

on job satisfaction and on job performance. He also concluded that it is motivation that moderates the effects on performance rather than job satisfaction. Other recent research from Goodarzi & Taji (2015) concludes that organisational support and justice affects OCBs linking back to the trust and supporting relationships discussion in the previous section. OCBs would appear to be related to commitment (Faishol 2015), performance and engagement (Podsakoff et al 2000).

Based upon this review of the literature in this section, commitment again highlights a seemingly inextricable link between positive **behavioural patterns** and subjective states. The behavioural patterns associated with commitment include: Improved work performance (Faishol 2015); Discretionary, extra effort in work (Mowday et al 1999); Reduced absence & turnover in the workplace (O'Driscoll & Randall 1999); And Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (Organ 1988): helping behaviour; sportsmanship; organisational loyalty; organisational compliance, individual initiative; civic virtue; and self-development. The **subjective states** associated with commitment seen in this review include: Job satisfaction (Faishol 2015); And motivation (Meyer et al 2004). The **influences on commitment** noted in this review include: Professional identity (Baruch & Cohen 2007); Perceived organisational support (Goodarzi & Taji 2015); Perceived justice and trust (Goodarzi & Taji 2015); A connection with personal values.

2.2.3 Implications for being at one's best

Trust and supportive relationships and commitment were identified as common themes in the positive workplace literature. This review has been intended to provide some insight regarding being at one's best in work. It has highlighted behavioural patterns and subjective states featured in the literature. Table 8 over the page summarises these in advance of moving on to review literature relating to the specific behavioural patterns and subjective states that featured in the positive workplace literature.

High performance and productivity are associated with both trust (Jennings & Tvaruzka 2012) and commitment (Faishol 2015). Commitment behaviours are associated with Engagement (Organ 1988) and trust is featured as a key component of engagement (Macleaod 2011). As with the performance, values and engagement literature review, job satisfaction is again a consistent subjective state experienced when there are supportive relationships built in the workplace and when individuals are committed to their work (Ward 1997; Faishol 2015). This will be reviewed in section 1.3.3. Another common theme is that of the role of values in the positive workplace. They have been connected to commitment and citizenship behaviours are also similar to those seen in the engagement and performance literature (e.g. Bakker & Demerouti 2007; CLC 2005). There is now growing clarity regarding the overlap of these concepts.

Table 8: Behavioural patterns and subjective states found in relation to the positive workplace literature: trust/supportive relationships and commitment

	What it being at your best might look like (Behavioural Patterns)	What being at your best might feel like (Subjective States)
Supportive relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity and creativity (Jennings & Tvaruzka 2012) • Work engagement (Macleod 2011) • Better communication (e.g. De Dreu, et al 1998) • Improved negotiations (Schurr & Ozanne 1985) • Reduced Conflict (Porter & Lily 1996) • Greater employee effort (e.g. Dirks 1999) • Knowledge sharing, open communication and employee participation (Korsgaard et al 2002) • Improved team performance (e.g. Davis et al 2000) • Greater compliance with decisions (Kim & Mauborgne 1993). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater satisfaction (e.g. Ward 1997) • Fun (Jennings & Tvaruzka 2012) • Camaraderie (Wahl 2006) • Security (Carnevale & Wechsler 1992) • Justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector 2001)
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved work performance (Faishol 2015) • Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (Organ 1988): helping behaviour; sportsmanship; organisational loyalty; organisational compliance, individual initiative; civic virtue; and self-development. • Discretionary, extra effort in work (Mowday et al 1999) • Reduced absence & turnover in the workplace (O'Driscoll & Randall 1999) • Individuals working to their strengths (Buckingham & Coffman 1999) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job satisfaction (Faishol 2015) • Motivation (Meyer et al 2004)

2.3 Positive subjective states

The structure of this section is aligned to the key positive behavioural pattern themes found in the articles (2005-2015) with a focus on or title referencing positive workplaces. Table 9 below identifies the articles grouped by their reference to trust and supportive relationships and the demonstration of commitment behaviours. 7 of the 23 articles job satisfaction as involved in a positive workplace (e.g. Darbyshire 2010; Ray 2010); 3 of the 23 referenced happiness and well-being (e.g. Ruth et al 2014); And 5 referenced psychological capital (e.g. Work 2009).

Table 9: Positive workplace references (2005-2015) relating to job satisfaction, happiness and well-being and psychological capital

Job satisfaction	Psychological Capital	Happiness & Well-being
Bellini et al (2015) Buxton et al (2009) Darbyshire (2010) Jennings & Tvruzka (2012) Lambert & Hogan (2009) Mauseth (2008) Ray (2010)	Davis & Cable (2008) Ramlall et al (2014) Ruth et al (2014) Simmering et al (2013) Work (2009)	Ramlall et al (2014) Ruth et al (2014) Sergeant & Laws-Chapman (2012)

This section starts with a review of the literature relating to job satisfaction and builds on the links, already established, to performance (Srivatava 2008), engagement (MacLeod & Clark 2009), values connections (Chatman & Cardwell 1991), supportive relationship (Ward 1997) and commitment (Faishol 2015). The next part of this section reviews the literature regarding psychological capital (self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, hope) that has already been referenced in the engagement literature (Bakker & Demerouti 2007)). Moving the happiness literature is discussed, again building on the established links to performance (Field & Buitendach 2011) and engagement (Pryce-Jones 2010). Chapter 1 also noted that the positive psychology movement has been challenged to integrate positive and negative emotions into its theories (e.g. Compton & Hoffman 2013). Whilst the review of the positive subjective states will acknowledge negative emotions, this review highlights theories which purposefully integrate them (e.g. Wong 2011) and highlights the essential role that mind-set plays in a positive workplace (Dweck 2009). This section ends with a summary of the influences on the subjective states discussed, the links to the behavioural patterns and noting the overlap with the engagement, performance and commitment literature.

2.3.1 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction as a concept has been around for a number of years and there have been changing perceptions of its usefulness. For example, Roznowski & Hulin (1992) asserted that job satisfaction is *"treated by some researchers as an old shoe, one that is unfashionable and unworthy of continued research"* (p124) yet still Weiss & Cropanzo (1996) refer to the relationship between job satisfaction and performance as the 'holy grail' of organisational research. This review will show that whilst it is a term commonly used, its broad definition coupled with the limited reliability of performance measures makes it difficult to draw specific conclusions. As a term it has infiltrated our rhetoric in the workplace and by being specific about its definition, one can draw more helpful conclusions – as Weiss (2002) puts it *"there isn't a single [job satisfaction] cup, there are (at least) three cups that have been morphed together to produce a hybrid that does not exist"* (p184). In terms of adding to our understanding of being at one's best in work, exploration of the different concepts involved in job satisfaction does provide some useful insight. This overview of the related research will start with considering the definitions of job satisfaction and show that they are attempting to describe both an attitude and an affect. By reviewing the meta-analyses evidence (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky 1985 and Judge, Bono, Thoresen & Patton 2001) the changing perceptions of the role of job satisfaction will be highlighted. This overview will then move on to show the specific research that highlights links to commitment and retention (e.g. Rue & Byes 2003), performance (e.g. Keaveney & Nelson 1993; Brown et al 1993) and engagement (e.g. Harter et al 2002) – providing more evidence to suggest that these three concepts are key in understanding when one is at their best in work.

Cranny, Smith and Stone (1992) suggest that there is a consensus in the definition of job satisfaction in that it is *"an affective reaction to one's job, resulting in the incumbent's comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired"* (p1). Whereas the psychological capital research (e.g. Rousseau 1998) speaks of unspoken expectations compared with actual outcomes, this would appear to be more conscious. This consensus is reflective of Vroom (1964) who defines job satisfaction as affective orientations on the part of individuals towards work roles that they are doing. Locke (1969) also described job satisfaction as a *"pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's job values"* (p137) and later broadened his definition *"...to a result of an appraisal one's job or job experiences"* (Locke 1976 p1300). So there appears to be both an affective or emotional element to job satisfaction as well as an appraisal element. Other researchers suggest it is in fact an attitude (Brief 1998; Mullins 2005). As an attitude however it is not necessarily an affective reaction. The Minnesota Satisfaction

Questionnaire (1967;1977) cites 19 different aspects of satisfaction, including factors such as supervision, co-workers, values and working conditions. Whilst a consensus is initially apparent in the definitions of job satisfaction, it has been investigated from a variety of viewpoints: as an emotion experienced by job incumbents (e.g. Vroom 1964); as an appraisal of their experiences in work (e.g. Locke 1977); and as an attitude (e.g. Brief 1998).

Weiss (2002) argues that standard treatments of job satisfaction have obscured the differences of three constructs: evaluative judgments about jobs, affective experiences at work and beliefs about jobs. He shows that separating out these constructs can produce better criterion predictions than job satisfaction by itself. As a single concept, job satisfaction is apparently too broad or as Weiss (2002) says, *"does not exist"*.

Iaffaldano & Muchinsky's (1985) published quite a damning meta-analysis of job satisfaction and performance research concluding that there is only a very weak relationship but that it

"does not approximate the degree to which this relation has been espoused in theories of organisational design.... It is an illusory correlation, a perceived relation between two variables that we logically or intuitively think should interrelate but in fact do not". (p.270)

They suggested that one explanation for the variation in the reported correlations between satisfaction and performance might be due to "contamination and deficiency" of the measures of satisfaction and performance used. As noted earlier, there is a challenge in getting an accurate measure of performance generally (Murphy et al 1996; Rotundo and Sackett's 2002) and the breadth of definitions and measures of job satisfaction are equally troublesome (Weiss 2002).

More recently, Judge, Bono, Thoresen & Patton (2001) conducted a job satisfaction-job performance relationship meta-analysis of 312 samples with a combined N of 54,417. The mean correlation between job satisfaction and job performance was estimated to be 0.30. This suggests a moderate to weak relationship but higher than the 0.14 correlation reported by Iaffaldano & Muchinsky's (1985). Judge et al (2001) endorsed continued investigations into the link. They provided a suggested integrated model where there is a two way relationship between job satisfaction and performance and a number of moderators including success, self-efficacy, personality, intentions, mood, rewards, and job characteristics. Some of these moderators (e.g. self-efficacy, job characteristics) are directly related to factors involved in the job-demand-resources model of engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2007), thus highlighted the question of whether engagement and satisfaction are referring to the same thing. Weisald & Downey (2009) also found engagement and satisfaction to be highly

related. Alarcon & Lyons (2011) however used structured equation modelling and hierarchical regression on archival engagement and job satisfaction data sets and concluded that the two are separate constructs.

Despite the differing definitions and concerning evidence for job satisfaction as a concept in itself, its prevalence in the rhetoric within organisations and the inexhaustible research curiosity involving job satisfaction, the potential to give insight into when people are at their best remains. Looking more specifically at the individual research and building on the links established to commitment and retention, performance and engagement will help to bring out the potential relevant insights for this review.

Rue & Byes (2003) suggest that the key determinants of job satisfaction or dissatisfaction include the manager's concern for people, job design & conditions, social relationships, perceptions of internal and external opportunities, levels of aspiration and need for achievement. Their conclusion is that this impacts on commitment to the organisation. Their determinants of job satisfaction also highlight links already noted: to the relationships built in the workplace (e.g. Ward 1997), the aspiration element links to the CLC (2005) and Silzer and Church's (2009) conceptualisation of potential and the broader workplace context.

More specifically related to retention and commitment, Ellenbecker (2004) concludes that,

“job satisfaction has emerged as the strongest predictor of intent to stay and on job retention” (p.305)

For the professional worker, autonomy appears to be a key antecedent of job satisfaction (Ellenbecker 2004; Tremblay et al. 2006). This feature links directly to the structure of the work and management of it. The management style incorporated in organisations therefore would be one way in which autonomy can be afforded to individuals within an organisation. Tremblay et al (2006) emphasise the importance of a participatory style of management for the retention of nurses which again links to the link with supportive relationships in positive workplaces. Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe (2003) highlight that the organisation and managers within it are seen as sources of employee support, commitment and job satisfaction. They note that managers tend to be more closely linked to intrinsically satisfying job characteristics and the organisation linked to extrinsically satisfying job conditions. This distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors provides some interesting food for thought. It suggests there needs to be some sort of balance between them and links both the organisation and job itself to overall satisfaction. As noted in earlier sections, the perception of what the organisation stands for and provides the

individual appears to be as important as the work that they do and how it motivates them individually.

Jasper (2007) found that nurse managers' most common reason for leaving their job was based on their relationship with the head of department and relationships with co-workers were often quoted as the source of stress. Another motivating feature of job satisfaction and retention are opportunities for personal and professional development. Horowitz, Teng Heng & Quazi (2003) noted the resignation of what they term knowledge workers is related to issues connected to their career. Stichler (2005) notes, high-levels of retention tend to be coupled with a culture of continued learning in an organisation. This culture could be seen as demonstrating what the organisation values most (not just in word but also in deed). Whilst the research around the retention of professional workers suggests there is a complex range of interacting factors involved, the themes of autonomy and personal and professional growth would suggest that these values held by an individual interacting with and aligning with the organisation that directly impact on an individual staying in their job and on job satisfaction. When looking at the link between job satisfaction and commitment, the additional links to supportive relationships and a connection of values appears to have some relevance for understanding when people stay at their best in work.

The job satisfaction-performance meta-analyses already discussed highlight a complex view of the relationship between the two. It has been an area of interest to employers as some researchers have linked it positively to productivity (Arnold & Fiedman 1982) and negatively with absenteeism, poor performance and staff turnover (Dahlke 1996, Gifford et al 2002). Dissatisfied staff have been seen to avoid work responsibilities through absenteeism, deliberately avoiding activities they do not like in their routine work programme, taking shortcuts or making themselves unavailable when certain actions are required (Grieshaber, Parker and Deering 1995). As noted earlier, the definition of job satisfaction and the measures of performance that are applied are key to whether a link is demonstrated. As a correlation, the cause and effect question comes into play - there is considerable debate whether satisfaction leads to performance or performance leads to satisfaction (Luthans, 1998).

Judge et al's (2002) review identified seven differing models in the literature relating to the job satisfaction-performance relationship. With such a vast array of models conceptualising the link between job satisfaction and performance it is understandable that the meta-analyses show just a moderate to weak relationship. They noted two studies that stipulated a unidirectional causal effect of job satisfaction on performance (Keaveney & Nelson 1993; Shore & Martin 1989). The opposite, a unidirectional causal effect of performance on job

satisfaction was actually more common in their review, citing 4 studies with a significant causal effect (Brown, Cron, & Leigh, 1993; Darden, Hampton, & Howell, 1989; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998; Stumpf & Hartman, 1984) but a further six studies who had investigated it but did not found such a link. A reciprocal relationship was investigated by four studies in their review – two finding a reciprocal relationship (Sheridan and Slocum 1975; Wanous 1974) and two not finding one (Bagozzi, 1980; Siegel & Bowen, 1971). A fourth model highlighting a spurious affect was also noted. The fourth model suggests a third variable mediates the relationship, such compensation or reward (e.g. Cherrington, Reitz, & Scott, 1971); job complexity or characteristics (e.g. Baird 1976) and self-esteem (e.g. Korman 1970). Most studies that include both job satisfaction and job performance in The final group of studies in their review argue that that positive attitudes link to performance. They suggest this could explain why job satisfaction fails to predict job performance - because existing job satisfaction measures reflect more cognitive evaluation than affective tone (Brief & Roberson. 1989; Organ & Near. 1985).

This recommendation to reconceptualise job satisfaction and performance in terms of their link and measures echoes Weiss' (2002) argument to see satisfaction as three constructs: evaluative judgments about jobs, affective experiences at work and beliefs about jobs.

As noted earlier, recent researchers highlight the link between engagement and performance as well as other positive factors such as satisfaction and commitment behaviours (MacLeod & Clarke 2009). The reality is that very often satisfaction and engagement have often been used interchangeably – for example Harter et al (2002) talk of employee satisfaction-engagement. They found overall satisfaction and employee engagement showed generalizability across the companies in their study showing correlations with customer satisfaction–loyalty, profitability, productivity, employee turnover, and safety outcomes. Measuring both satisfaction and engagement, they found very similar results for each at a business unit level adding more support to the suggestion that satisfaction and engagement are similar constructs. Christian, Garza & Slaughter (2011) suggest that engagement goes beyond mere job satisfaction in that it adds 19% unique variance in task performance and 21% unique variance in contextual performance. Rothman (2008) also keeps them separate, proposing a four-factorial model of work-related wellbeing involving: job satisfaction (indicating pleasure vs. displeasure), occupational stress (indicating anxiety vs. comfort), burnout (indicating fatigue vs. vigour), and engagement (indicating enthusiasm vs. depression).

Schaufeli, Taris & Van Rhenen (2008) conceptualise engagement slightly differently, identifying it as involving vigor, dedication and absorption with those being the balance point

between burnout and workaholism. Schaufeli & Salanova (2007) highlight a 'contagious' element of engagement suggesting a psycho-social role played by engagement. They also conclude that it is increased by job autonomy, social support leadership and justice – all of which have been noted as linking to job satisfaction earlier in this review. They introduce a relationship to personal resources or psychological capital which is discussed in the next section.

The challenges involved in defining and measuring job satisfaction have led to a call for a reconceptualization of it (e.g. Weiss 2002). Its proposed links to commitment, performance and engagement go some way in understanding why that is required by highlighting the overlapping nature of these fields of research. The case for being at one's best in work residing somewhere in that overlap is growing stronger.

Based upon this review of the literature in this section, job satisfaction research again highlights a seemingly inextricable link between positive behavioural patterns and subjective states. The **behavioural patterns associated with job satisfaction** include: Appraisal of desired work outcomes vs actual outcomes (Cranny et al 1992); Commitment to the organisation (Rue & Byes 2003); High productivity (Arnold & Fledman 1982); And high engagement (Harter et al 2002). The **subjective states** associated with job satisfaction seen in this review include: Pleasure (Locke 1969); Positive affect (Weiss 2002); And intention to stay in the job (Ellenbecker 2004). The **influences** on job satisfaction noted in this review include: Evaluative judgments about the job, affective experiences at work and beliefs about the job (Weiss 2002); Manager concern for people, job design & conditions, social relationships, perceptions of internal and external opportunities, levels of aspiration and need for achievement (Rue & Byes 2003); Participatory style of management (Tremblay et al 2006); Relationship with manager (Jasper 2007); Learning culture in organisation (Stichler 2005) And self-efficacy as a mediator between job performance & job satisfaction (Judge et al 2002).

2.3.2 Psychological capital

Personal resources or psychological capital were highlighted already in this review as an antecedent of work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). They are defined as Self Efficacy, Hope, Optimism, and Resilience (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio 2007). Pryce-Jones (2010) links psychological capital with the happiness literature concluding that maximising psychological capital is a way to improve happiness as well as facilitate an improvement in work engagement. The positive workplace literature has also highlighted the role of psychological capital. Davis & Cable (2008) link it to performance and generating competitive advantage; Ramlall et al (2014), Ruth et al (2014) and Simmering et al (2013) all highlight the role of self-efficacy in developing positive workplace behaviours; and Work (2009) suggests that a positive workplace requires the development of psychological capital in the workforce. This section provides an overview of the literature relating to each of the four concepts highlighting links to other areas discussed, in particular performance and commitment.

Based on the extensive work of Bandura (1997) **Self-Efficacy** can be understood as one's belief in one's own ability to succeed. Bandura suggests that there are four sources of self-efficacy: Mastery Experiences – dealing with tasks or challenges successfully; Social Modelling – witnessing others successfully dealing with tasks and challenges; Social Persuasion – where others encourage a belief tasks and challenges can be dealt with successfully; and psychological responses – emotional reactions to situations effecting the belief that tasks and challenges can be dealt with successfully. The mastery element in particular links very clearly to some of the happiness conceptualisations (Ryff 1995; Deci & Ryan 1985).

Bandura's original contention was that self-efficacy is task dependent. The extension of this task-specific self-efficacy to a more generalised self-efficacy (or situation independent self-efficacy) as indicated in Bakker and Demerouti's engagement model, has become an issue of contention among researchers. One of the most critical issues is related to its measurement. Lee and Bobko (1994) point out that this issue is critical because the measurement of self-efficacy can impact conclusions about its relationships with other variables. In response to those criticisms, Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash & Kern (2006) examined the reliability of responses to the items, of three General Self Efficacy (GSE) measures using item response theory. Contrary to the criticisms, the responses to the items on all three measures of GSE demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties, especially at

lower levels of GSE. Furthermore, evidence suggests that GSE and task-specific self-efficacy are positively correlated (e.g., Sherer et al., 1982). Some authors have argued that GSE moderates the impact of the environment (e.g., negative feedback) and on individual's task specific self-efficacy (Eden 1988, 2001). Perhaps therefore, GSE could be considered a disposition and task specific self-efficacy contextual dependent.

Randhawa (2004) concludes that self-efficacy positive correlation with work performance and engagement. Lunenburg (2011) concluded that "*self-efficacy influences the tasks employees choose to learn and the goals they set for themselves*". Both of these studies indicate therefore that self-efficacy has a contribution to the actual output of individuals and not simply their engagement. The wider role of self-efficacy, has also been highlighted in terms of a combination of organisational commitment and self-efficacy playing a significant role in training fulfilment (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas & Cannon-Bowers 1991).

Whilst optimism involves expecting a positive outcome, **hope** focuses on the pragmatic execution of reaching goals linking it performance literature and to the goal pursuit or active participation theories of happiness (Cantor & Sanderson 1999). Individuals high in hope are likely to find a route to achieve their tasks and goals and adapt their route as changes and challenges occur. Luthans, Youssef and Avolio (2007) refer to two components of hope: 1) will-power (motivation) and 2) way-power (capacity to determine alternative methods to reach a goal). This is quite different to the lay-man's understanding of hope which is more a subjective state of expectation or desire and does not have the specificity of Luthans et al's definition (2007).

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) note that without hope, the will to accept challenges is not present and the way to overcome those challenges will not be found. Peterson and Byron (2007) found that hopeful sales employees, mortgage brokers and management executives had higher job performances. Ozag (2006) found a statistically significant relationship between merger survivors' trust, hope and continuance commitment concluding that hope can enhance merger survivors' sense that they could cope. He does however note the overlapping nature of the three constructs and their measurement. The hope factor of psychological capital would appear to be involved in work engagement, happiness, performance and commitment.

Optimism describes a general disposition to expect the best in all things and is not necessarily linked to ability. It is perhaps more linked to the mindset elements of the happiness literature. Seligman's (1998) work considering the explanatory style of individuals found that those high in optimism tend to attribute success to personal factors and failures to external or uncontrollable factors. Whilst optimism and self-efficacy are distinct, a positive approach is likely to increase efficacy beliefs be them task specific or general. Avey, Wernsing and Luthans (2008) pointed out that optimism is an individual-level attribute – it will not necessarily transfer to an organisational level or team level. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) suggest that an optimistic explanatory style may lower the adverse impact of stressors and make them feel more understandable. Seligman and Schulman's (1986) conclusions went further, to suggest that an optimistic explanatory style correlates with and predicts successful performance. McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2002) also suggested that frustration and optimism *“fully mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance”*. Luthans, Lebsack & Lebsack (2008) extend the link between optimism beyond performance to include a relationship with supervisors' ratings of commitment. Once again, the personal resource (in this instance, Optimism) is demonstrating a contribution to the output or performance of individuals, their commitment as well as their engagement.

Luthans (2002) described **resilience** as:

“a positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure or even positive change, progress and increase responsibility” (p.702)

Whilst the behaviour related to resilience could be persistence, resilience is a wider capacity including a personal or emotional level. Baker et al (2005) suggest that it produces a buffering effect whereby engagement is maintained despite burnout-inducing job demands. Krush, Krishnakumar, Agnihotri and Trainor (2012) demonstrated the link between resiliency and the performance of sales staff, finding a positive correlation with their adaptive selling behaviour. Resilience has also been linked to commitment (Langvardt 2007) and the retention of teachers (Tait 2007). Resilience would appear to have some influence on performance, commitment and engagement.

Sweetman and Luthans (2010) recognise that the factors of psychological capital are interrelated and propose:

“they build upon each other in order to create an upward spiral of resources which can lead to employee engagement. This upward spiral may subsequently broaden and individual’s mindset” (p.62)

That may provide some insight as to how all four interact with each other. It remains that all four of the psychological capital factors have been strongly linked to the engagement literature (eg Bakker & Demerouti 2007) and the subsequent impact on performance demonstrated by Youssef and Luthans (2007) who tested the impact that hope, resilience and optimism have on desired work performance and concluded the three characteristics contribute unique variances when associated with job performance. The fourth characteristic of psychological capital has also been shown to link to performance (e.g. Randhawa 2004). The impact on commitment of each of the psychological capital elements has also been demonstrated (Tannenbaum et al 1991; Ozag 2006; Luthans et al 2008; and Langvardt 2007). The psychological capital literature adds to the evidence for the overlap of the three concepts and the potential for these to be involved in being at one's best in work.

Based upon this review of the literature in this section, psychological capital research again highlights a seemingly inextricable link between positive behavioural patterns and subjective states. The **behavioural patterns associated with psychological capital** include: Engagement (Randhawa 2004); Choices in learning and goals set (Lunenbunrg 2011); Commitment behaviours (Tannenbaum et al 1991); Determining alternative methods to get to a goal (Luthans et al 2007); Accepting challenges (Mslach et al 2001); Continuance commitment (Ozag 2006); Bounce back from adversity (Luthans 2002); And adaptation (Krush et al 2012). The **subjective states** associated with psychological capital seen in this review include: Happiness (Cantor & Sanderson 1999); Belief in one's own ability to succeed (Bandura 1997); Motivated (Luthans et al 2007); Trust (Ozag 2006); Expecting the best (Seligman 1998); And lower adverse impact of stress (Bakker & Demerouti 2007). The **influences** on psychological capital noted in this review include: Mastery experiences, social models, social persuasion (Bandura 1997); And a combination effect of self-efficacy, hope, optimism & resilience (Sweetman & Luthans 2010).

2.4.3 Happiness & Well-being

This section will look at a number of conceptualisations of happiness and establishes some consistency in their definitions in that they are referring to the importance of: positive relationships (e.g. Kahneman et al 1999); personal growth and increased competence to deal with life (e.g. Ryan & Deci 2001); and our mindset or the way that we interpret our circumstances (e.g. Frisch 2006). These factors have been touched on elsewhere in this review, once again highlighting the overlap in the research fields discussed. Moving on to discuss the workplace implications specifically, the involvement of happiness in performance (e.g. Cropanzo & Wright 1999), engagement (e.g. Cantor & Sanderson 1999) and commitment (e.g. Oswald et al 2009) is demonstrated. Researchers conclude that this state of mind (happiness) also appears to be expressed in behavioural patterns such as greater creativity and ideas generation (Fredrickson & Branigan 2005) and greater learning (Goetz, Goetz & Robinson 2007).

In the positive workplace literature, Ruth et al (2014) use the definition of a positive workplace as one where employees are happy and motivated. Ramlall et al (2014) also refers to the positive workplace as where work is a source of happiness to individuals. Seargent & Laws-Chapman (2012) suggest that a positive workplace attends to the emotional and physical well-being of addressing values, needs and strengths of the individuals. Happiness would appear to be an important factor to consider when understanding positive work places.

Compton and Hoffman (2013) group definitions of happiness into two broad categories: one dimensional theories and multi-dimensional theories all of which highlight links already discussed in relation to positive workplaces, behavioural patterns and subjective states. One dimensional theories include hedonic perspectives which many recognise in their purest form do not deliver enduring happiness or personal growth (eg Ricard 2007). A more socially responsible approach where pleasure is acknowledged as driving force yet requiring social relationships (eg Kahneman, Diener & Schwartz 1999) highlights a link to the importance of relationships seen in earlier sections. Another one dimensional approach would include eudaimonic perspectives where well-being and happiness are derived from fulfilling one's potential (e.g. Ryan & Deci 2001), again echoing the discussions around the importance of defining and working towards potential (e.g. Pryce-Jones 2010) discussed earlier. Engagement perspectives focus on activity for example, Cantor & Sanderson (1999) associated happiness and well-being with goal pursuit or active participation. This approach highlights links to behavioural patterns also discussed earlier.

More complex, multi-dimensional theories of happiness and well-being include Deci & Ryan (1985) self-determination theory which has been mentioned earlier in terms of its role in facilitating the merger of commitment and motivation (Meyer et al 2004). This theory advocates that there are three basic needs humans need to satisfy in order to be happy: competence or mastery of experiences in life, relatedness and the need for mutually supportive relationships and autonomy, the need to make independent decisions. These three needs have also already been highlighted in relation to positive workplaces (Ellenbecker 2004; Schurr & Ozane 1985). Authentic happiness and well-being theory involves cultivation of three broad life domains: the pleasant life, the good life of engagement and the meaningful life (Seligman 2002). Although Seligman (2011) himself recognised that the initial focus was more on positive mood and needed to be more about flourishing he advocates positive relationships and positive accomplishments as key elements of flourishing. Other models show similar themes for example Ryff's (1995) model of well-being consists of six factors: self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relationships, autonomy, purpose in life and environmental mastery. Coan (1974) referred to modes of fulfilment or the focus of an individual in terms of: efficiency, creativity, inner harmony, relatedness and self-transcendence (spiritual fulfilment). Frisch (2006) built quality of life therapy based on what he called CASIO model of assessment: the objective life circumstances (C); attitude or interpretation of life (A); personal standards or goals (S); the importance we attribute to an area of life (I); and the level of focus on other areas of satisfaction (O).

Fisher (2010) suggests that a comprehensive measure of individual-level happiness might include work engagement, job satisfaction and affective organisational commitment. She suggests that happiness in work related constructs can be understood on three levels: a transient level (e.g. state engagement); a person level (e.g. job satisfaction, flourishing); and a unit level (e.g. morale, team engagement). She concludes that happiness can be understood as an *'umbrella concept that includes a large number of constructs'* (p403).

Happiness and well-being clearly have a number of conceptualisations however there are consistent themes in terms of: the relationships we have (Ryff 1995; Seligman 2011; Deci & Ryan 1985); our personal growth and increased competence to deal with life (Ryan & Deci 2001; Coan 1974); and our interpretation of our circumstances (Coan 1974; Frisch 2006). Relationships and performance, competence and potential have already been highlighted specifically in this current literature review. The interpretation of our circumstances has also been touched on in Meyer et al's (2004) integrated framework of commitment highlighting the role of an individual's mindset. This could link to Dweck's (2009) notion of the growth mindset that helps to develop talent and learning. A positive approach or mindset facilitates

relationships at work and performance in the job (Seligman 2011). The role that attitudes or a mindset plays was also highlighted by Harrison, Newman & Roth (2006) who present an Attitude-Engagement Model where overall job attitude (composed of job satisfaction and organisational commitment) predict effectiveness, performance, lateness, absenteeism and turnover. Pryce-Jones (2010) also defines happiness as a mindset allowing you to achieve your potential – thus overtly linking happiness to performance and potential.

Using a range of focus groups, interviews and questionnaires Pryce-Jones and her colleagues developed the 5Cs of achieving potential (her definition of happiness at work) as: Contribution; Conviction; Culture; Commitment; and Confidence. She also identified Pride, Trust and Recognition as three further important attributes that connect to the 5Cs. This links to the other multi-dimensional theories in particular the focus on personal growth and the interpretation of circumstances however the culture element could be loosely linked to the positive relationships elements of the other theories also and highlights the wider system or context involved in individual happiness.

Other researchers report a number of consequences of happiness at work: faster promotions (Boehm & Lyubomirsky 2008); superior supervisor reviews (Cropanzano & Wright 1999); creating more supportive relationships (Iverson, Olekalns & Erwin 1998); greater creativity and ideas generation (Fredrickson & Branigan 2005); more effective goal achievement (Sheldon & Houser-Marko 2001); greater learning (Goetz, Goetz & Robinson 2007). Oswald, Proto & Sgroi (2009) suggest employees that are happy stay with their employers for longer, are more likely to contribute beyond the requirements of their job and help out colleagues, have fewer sick days and are more punctual.

This review of the happiness literature, similar to job satisfaction has highlighted a difficulty in finding one definition yet there is some consistency in the myriad of definitions that exist. If happiness is a part of being at one's best in work, the research once again highlights the link between positive subjective states and behavioural patterns. It also adds to the argument that being at one's best might be in the overlap of themes such as commitment (e.g. Oswald et al 2009 highlight the link between happiness and retention), performance (e.g. Cropanzano & Wright 1999 noting the improved performance associated with happiness) and engagement (e.g. Pryce-Jones' 2010 model of happiness involving the extent to which one is engaged).

Based upon this review of the literature in this section, happiness and well-being research again highlights a seemingly inextricable link between positive behavioural patterns and subjective states. The **behavioural patterns** associated with happiness and well-being includes: Fulfilment of potential (Ryan & Deci 2001); Active participation and goal pursuit (Cantor & Sanderson 1999); Development of competence, mutually supportive relationships and autonomy (Deci & Ryan 1985); Self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relationships, autonomy, and environmental mastery (Ryff 1995); Efficiency, creativity and relatedness (Coan 1974); Contribution, Commitment (Pryce-Jones 2010); Superior supervisor reviews (Cropanzo & Wright 1999); Supportive relationships (Iverson et al 1998); Ideas generation (Fredrickson & Branigan 2005); Learning (Goetz et al 2007); And discretionary effort (Oswald et al 2009). The **subjective states** associated with happiness & well being seen in this review include: Pleasure – pleasant life, good life, flourishing (Seligman 2011); Sense of personal growth (Ricard 2007); Sense of purpose (Ryff 1985); Inner harmony (Coan 1974); Self-transcendence (Coan 1974); Conviction, Confidence (Pryce-Jones 2010). The **influences** on happiness & well-being noted in this review include: Positive social relationships (Kahneman et al 1999); Culture (Pryce-Jones 2010); Objectives, attitudes, personal standards, importance attributed, level of focus elsewhere (Frisch 2006); And mindset (Harrison et al 2006).

The overlap between happiness, performance, engagement and commitment has been specifically highlighted by Fisher (2010) and adds to the growing view that the three concepts are inter-related. The next section reflects on the theories of well-being that attempt to integrate positive and negative emotions.

2.3.4 Integration of positive and negative emotions

This final section of the positive subjective states involved in positive workplaces addresses the challenge noted in the positive psychology literature – to start integrating positive and negative emotions in the considerations of happiness and well-being in particular. Whilst Laura King (2011) highlighted that there has been much research that affirms the role of positive emotions in a wide range of positive life outcomes, many researchers in positive psychology suggest that happiness ought not to be the sole goal for the good life (e.g. Seligman 2011, Diener 2008). Perhaps then, being at one's best at work could also involve positive and negative experiences or emotions. Drawing on the work of researchers such as Steger (2009) and Kashdan and McKnight (2009), they suggest that meaning in life and purpose in life are perhaps better endeavours which may not always involve purely positive emotions. Certainly, Compton and Hoffman (2013) suggest positive psychology needs both positive and negative emotions (p285). Whilst other parts of this review have acknowledged some negative emotions (e.g. dissatisfaction) this section is intended to provide greater balance to the review of subjective states by noting theories of well-being that integrate both positive and negative emotions – first discussing Shmotkin's (2005) model of subjective well-being based on terror management theory and moving on to Wong's (2011) existential positive psychology which draws on Chinese yin-yang theory. These will highlight the happiness and well-being literature need not be seen as purely positive and the integration of negative emotions is not only important but also natural and the role of an individual's mindset, values and personal purpose are likely to be critical. Being at one's best in work therefore may not be simply a positive state but certainly a positive mindset.

Terror management theory is rooted in psychotherapy focussing on how people defend and enhance self-esteem and postulates that our behaviour can be driven by our awareness of threats that exist to self-esteem and indeed to our lives in general (e.g. Pyszczynski, Greenberg & Solomon 1999). Traditionally it has been used to demonstrate maladaptive implications and mental health problems (e.g. Horney 1937). Shmotkin's (2005) took some of the principles of terror management theory and applied this to well-being. He proposes that there are three modules that build well-being: self-awareness of our well-being; presentation to others of our well-being; and the evaluation of our well-being. He suggests that many different definitions of happiness and well-being can be developed based on the way in which people define their place in those three dimensions. In that way, Shmotkin's (2005) model suggests happiness and well-being needs to be considered more as an existential concept, in that it has a personal meaning rather than an objective one.

This integration approach certainly places happiness and well-being literature firmly in the subjective states category. It has some similarity to Coan's (1974) theory where combining different elements of focus defines an individual's happiness. The self-awareness element links partly to Ryff's (1995) self-acceptance criteria for happiness. The evaluation element is also reflective of Frisch's (2006) quality of life therapy starting with an understanding of our own interpretation of circumstances and the standards that we have. The presentation of our well-being to others is perhaps a fresher element – although positive relationships have been identified as important to happiness the choice involved in how we present our well-being to others is a different approach. It is likely to be influenced on some of the elements of psychological capital and subsequently an individual's mindset (Sweetman & Luthans 2010). This in turn links back to the happiness and performance literature (Pryce-Jones 2006; Dweck 2009) and indeed the job satisfaction discussions (Meyer et al 2004).

Another theory which highlights the role of an individual's mindset is that of Wong (2011). He talks of a 'meaning mindset' as opposed to a 'happiness mindset'. He applied the Chinese yin-yang symbol to emotions – where both positive and negative are intertwined and influencing each other. He suggested that an individual's search for meaning in life is influenced by their motivations, worldviews, purposes and assumptions about a good life. This filter or evaluation element links to Shmotkin's (2005) dimension of happiness. The motivations, world views and purposes are likely to be influenced by an individual's values (Williams 1968). Other researchers have also suggested that meaning in life is a more appropriate alternative to the search for happiness in order to establish human well-being (e.g. Steger 2009), or on a micro level it is purpose in life that catalyses our sense of meaning (Kashdan & McKnight 2009). This might help explain why people choose negative experiences over pleasurable ones.

The integration of both positive and negative emotions when conceptualising an individual's well-being provides some useful food for thought. There appears to be a move to developing principles of happiness and well-being rather than objective definitions. Purely focussing on a search for positive emotion or experiences is unlikely to bring personal growth (Wong 2011). What this overview of the theories that do attempt to integrate both positive and negative emotions has highlighted is the role that mindset has and in turn the link to performance (Dweck 2009). It has also highlighted the role that an individual's values plays in being around the individual's evaluation of their happiness (Shmotkins 2005).

Based upon this review of the literature in this section, integrated theories of well-being again highlight a seemingly inextricable link between positive behavioural patterns and subjective states. The **behavioural patterns associated with integrated theories of well-being** include: Choosing negative as well as positive experiences (Kashdan & McKnight 2009); and better learning & performance (Dweck 2009). The **subjective states** associated with integrated theories of well-being seen in this review include: Happiness & a sense of well-being (Compton and Hoffman 2013); Self-acceptance (Shmotkin 2005 – Ryff 1995); Sense of meaning (Steger 2009); And a sense of purpose (Kashdan & McKnight 2009). The **influences** on integrated theories of well-being noted in this review include: Awareness of threats (Pyszczynski et al 1999); Self-awareness, presentation of well-being to others, evaluation of well-being (Shmotkin 2005); Mindset (Wong 2011– Dweck 2009); Psychological capital (Sweetman & Luthans 2010).

2.3.5 Implications for being at one's best in work

Job satisfaction, psychological capital and happiness were identified as common themes in the positive workplace literature. This review has been intended to provide some insight regarding being at one's best in work. It has highlighted behavioural patterns and subjective states featured in the literature. Table 10 below and over the page summarises these in advance of moving on to review literature relating to the specific behavioural patterns and subjective states that featured in the positive workplace literature. The next section draws on these implications for being at one's best in work and the implications from the review of positive behavioural patterns and common factors in positive workplaces in previous sections to highlight the common links between all these concepts and engagement, performance and commitment.

Table 10: Behavioural patterns and subjective states found in relation to the positive workplace literature: job satisfaction, happiness, psychological capital and integrated theories

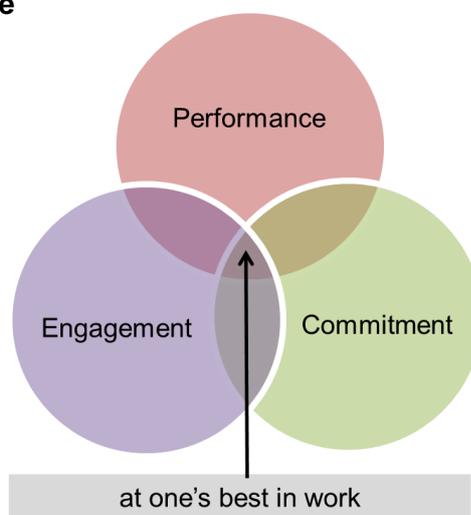
	What it being at your best might look like (Behavioural Patterns)	What being at your best might feel like (Subjective States)
Job satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal of desired work outcomes vs actual outcomes (Cranny et al 1992) • Commitment to the organisation (Rue & Byes 2003) • High productivity (Arnold & Fledman 1982) • High engagement (Harter et al 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure (Locke 1969) • Positive affect (Weiss 2002) • Intention to stay in the job (Ellenbecker 2004)
Psychological capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement (Randhawa 2004) • Choices in learning and goals set (Lunenburg 2011) • Commitment behaviours (Tannenbaum et al 1991) • Determining alternative methods to get to a goal (Luthans et al 2007) • Accepting challenges (Mslach et al 2001) • Continuance commitment (Ozag 2006) • Bounce back from adversity (Luthans 2002) • Adaptation (Krush et al 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness (Cantor & Sanderson 1999) • Belief in one's own ability to succeed (Bandura 1997) • Motivated (Luthans et al 2007) • Trust (Ozag 2006) • Expecting the best (Seligman 1998) • Lower adverse impact of stress (Bakker & Demerouti 2007)

... /cont	What it being at your best might look like (Behavioural Patterns)	What being at your best might feel like (Subjective States)
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilment of potential (Ryan & Deci 2001) • Active participation and goal pursuit (Cantor & Sanderson 1999) • Development of competence, mutually supportive relationships and autonomy (Deci & Ryan 1985) • Self-acceptance, personal growth, positive relationships, autonomy, and environmental mastery (Ryff 1995) • Efficiency, creativity and relatedness (Coan 1974) • Contribution, Commitment (Pryce-Jones 2010) • Superior supervisor reviews (Cropanzo & Wright 1999) • Supportive relationships (Iverson et al 1998) • Ideas generation (Fredrickson & Branigan 2005) • Learning (Goetz et al 2007) • Discretionary effort (Oswald et al 2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pleasure – pleasant life, good life, flourishing (Seligman 2011) • Sense of personal growth (Ricard 2007) • Sense of purpose (Ryff 1985) • Inner harmony (Coan 1974) • Self-transcendence (Coan 1974) • Conviction, Confidence (Pryce-Jones 2010) • Transient emotion (Fisher 2010)
Integration theories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing negative as well as positive experiences (Kashdan & McKnight 2009) • Better learning & performance (Dweck 2009) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness & a sense of well-being (Compton and Hoffman 2013) • Self-acceptance (Shmotkin 2005 – Ryff 1995) • Sense of meaning (Steger 2009) • Sense of purpose (Kashdan & McKnight 2009)

2.5 The proposed location of the meaning of being at one's best in work in existing literature

As highlighted at the very start, the inextricable link between positive subjective states and positive behavioural patterns has been illustrated throughout this review. Each section has provided a summary of both states and behaviours that are seemingly involved within each concept. As Smith & Louis (2008) conclude, "*in-groups interactively influence decisions, not only by what they say but also by what they do*" (p647). Applying this conclusion to the workplace, this highlights the influence of the workplace context and the colleagues in it on attitudes and behaviours. This makes the need for any exploration of being at one's best to identify associated subjective states and behavioural patterns.

Figure 4: The proposed location of the meaning of being at one's best in work, within the existing literature



This review has also highlighted a number of overlapping fields of research, mainly the performance literature, engagement literature and commitment literature. Each field of research is characterised by difficulty in terms of definition and measurement. In the performance literature that difficulty has been highlighted by researchers such as Murphy et al (1999) and Rotuntundo & Sackett (2002) but the links are clear to the engagement literature (e.g. CLC 2005) and commitment literature (e.g. Srivastava 2008). In terms of the engagement literature, the definition difficulty is highlighted by the numerous definitions (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Maslach et al 2001; Robinson et al 2004). Whilst the Gallup Engagement Index is a widespread measure and researchers have consistently linked it to performance measures (e.g. Gallup 2005) and commitment implications (e.g. MacLeod &

Clark 2009), the range of measures and conceptualisations remains vast (see Wollard & Shuck's 2011 review). The commitment literature again appears to be multi-dimensional (Meyer et al 1993) and involving a number of different forms such as organisational commitment and job involvement (e.g. O'Driscoll & Randall 1999) as well as professional commitment (e.g. Baruch & Cohen 2007). The demonstration of commitment comes in the form of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (Organ 1988) which in turn are linked to engagement (e.g. Mowday et al 1999) and performance (e.g. Podsakoff et al 2000).

Given this significant overlap in the three fields of research and their inherent instability as distinct concepts, perhaps being at one's best could be described as residing within the overlap. There are also a number of subjective states and behavioural patterns that have been shown to be common to all three fields of research and highlighted in Table 7 below.

Table 11: Key factors in the overlap in the fields of performance, engagement & commitment

	Performance	Engagement	Commitment
Efficiency & Productivity	Kondalker (2009)	Maslach et al (2011)	Arnold & Feldman (1982)
Proactivity	Griffen et al (2007)	Farndale (2011)	Podsakoff et al (2000)
Self-development – potential	Rowe (2007)	Csikszentmihalyi (2010)	Oswald et al 2009
Trust & Supportive Relationships	Earley (1996)	Dirks (1999)	Kim & Morgborgne (1993)
Working to strengths	Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina (2002)	Buckingham & Coffman (1999)	Harter et al (2005)
Values connection	Latan (2006)	Latan (2006)	Chartman & Cardwell (1991)
Job satisfaction	Srivastana (2008)	MacLeod & Clark (2009)	Faishol (2015)
Happiness	Ryan & Deci (1985:2001)	Pryce-Jones (2010)	Pryce-Jones (2010)
Psychological capital	Luthans et al (2007)	Randhawa (2004)	Tannenbaum et al (1991)
Positive mindset	Dweck (2009)	Harrison et al (2006)	Wong (2011)

These subjective states and behavioural patterns that have demonstrated a consistent connection to all three fields include: Efficiency and productivity were terms highlighted in the performance literature (Kondalker 2009) but also as outcomes of engagement (e.g. Maslach et al 2011) and commitment (e.g. Arnold & Feldman 1982); Proactivity was highlighted in the performance literature (Griffen et al 2007) and also an outcome of engagement (Farndale 2011) and commitment (e.g. Podsakoff et al 2000); Building supportive relationships in the workplace has been highlighted as an antecedent of great performance (e.g. Early 1996),

engagement (Dirks 1999) and commitment (e.g. Kim & Morgbogne 1993); Working to strengths as a key component of engagement (Buckingham & Coffman 1999), resulting in great performance (Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina 2002) and commitment (e.g. Harter et al 2006); A values connection has been illustrated as important for engagement and subsequent positive work ethic (Latan 2006) and also as vital for organisational commitment (Chartman & Cardwell 1991); Job satisfaction, despite its troublesome definition has been related to job performane (e.g. Srivastana), engagement (MacLeod & Clark) and commitment (e.g. Faishol 2015); Happiness has also been related to great job performane (Ryan & Deci 1985;2001), engagement and commitment (Pryce-Jones 2010); psychological capital has been shown to be essential for engagement (e.g. Randhawa 2004) and therefore great performance (e.g. Luthans et al 2007) and commitment (e.g. Tannenbaum et al 1991); and finally a positive mindset has also been linked to performance (e.g. Dweck 2009), engagement (e.g. Frisch 2006) and commitment (e.g. Wong 2011).

In exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work is therefore likely to reveal elements of productivity, proactivity, self-development, trust & supportive relationships, working to strengths, job satisfaction, happiness, psychological capital and a positive mindset.

There are two propositions that can be made in relation to exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work:

- 1. There will be consistency in the description of the workplace experiences, in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states, for those in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts.**
- 2. A signal of the consistency will be if the behavioural patterns and subjective states identified in those contexts reflect the key factors in the overlap in the literature relating to performance engagement and commitment (as noted in table 11).**

The next chapter outlines the research design used to explore these propositions. It considers the theoretical foundations, the implications of an interpretive perspective, the methodological approach, the methods used and describes the iterative approach applied to this research. Each case study in chapters four and five then provide the detailed description of the context, process of investigation and findings.

CHAPTER 3: Research Design

This chapter starts by discussing the **theoretical foundations** of the research design. It considers the ontology or nature of reality and aligns the research to the relativist perspective. It notes the need to both explore and measure what is found and suggests a pluralist pragmatism that has evolved in other disciplines (such as philosophy or metaphysics) might be appropriate. It also considers epistemology or the nature of knowledge and notes the three broad possibilities of the objectivist, constructionist and subjectivist views (Crotty 1998). It aligns the research to a social constructionist view that knowledge is constructed through the interaction between people.

Moving on to explore this **interpretive perspective** it highlights the guidance that researchers need to: take a critical stance; recognise the cultural and historical specificity of the research; and note the social processes involved (Burr 1995). It acknowledges symbolic interaction, the view that behaviour is not defined by the environment but each individual has different experiences and symbolic reference points they use to make sense of the world. It also notes the hermeneutic approach and the need to reflect on the data produced in the research at various levels – as a whole and down to the specific words used. It then points to the phenomenological approach and the need for a reflexive attitude to consider perceptions and intentions. Central to this approach is the notion that one cannot understand the objective (being at one's best in work) without understanding the subject (the participants involved). It uses the insights from symbolic interaction, hermeneutics and a phenomenological approach as guiding principles for this research.

The chapter moves on to discuss the **methodology**. It notes that a relativist, social constructionist approach will involve more qualitative methods that need to be evaluated appropriately. It takes Remenyi's (2013) evaluation criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity as the basis of evaluation of the methodology. A qualitative approach also requires reflexivity and the role of the research is also discussed, concluding that there needs to be critical reflection points throughout the research and providing an outline of what these need to involve.

Building on the initial overview of potential **methods** to explore shared meaning in chapter one, it then discusses the role of observation, interviews, questionnaires and mental models as techniques to explore shared meaning. It provides key evaluation questions around

credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity to be applied in the reflections on each technique.

Moving on, is an outline of the **iterative approach** to the research design. Justification for this approach comes from Tracy (2012) who suggests it allows both etic and emic interpretations and it uses Kerssens-van Dongelen's (2001) guidance for the iterative research, multi case study design. This approach allows for both the iterative exploration of the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and the reflection on techniques used to explore shared meaning – the two goals of this research project. This section outlines the research plan to start with a case study that reflects the three core concepts that the literature review in chapter two suggested might be involved in being at one's best. For this research, three department stores in the same organisation were selected: the highest performing store, the store with the highest staff engagement survey results and the store with the longest serving committed staff. After this case study a critical reflection point allows for credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity to be evaluated in advance of moving on to the next case study. Before moving on, an overview of the whole iterative process is provided: from pilot studies, through four case study iterations to produce a refined framework of being at one's best in work.

The section finishes by outlining the **principles of analysis and presentation** of the research. It provides an outline of the consistent content structure to be applied to chapters four and five as they describe the research in detail.

3.1. Theoretical foundations

“Methodology is determined not by the research model but rather by the principles of research entailed in a paradigm” (Sarantakos 1998 p34)

Philosophical debates relating to social and psychological research demand consideration of ontological and epistemological perspectives in order to articulate the principles of the design and provide a clear rationale for the research approach. This section aims to provide clarity regarding the theoretical foundations of this research project.

Hood (2006) acknowledges that most researchers will not fit neatly into the categories of any given typology. Debate, however, by its nature very often causes a polarisation of opinion – forcing participants to take a view one way or another. Perhaps it could be more helpful to view polar viewpoints as the extremes of a continuum or even take a combined approach. The ontological and epistemological debates are not immune from this polarisation effect however moderated viewpoints are surfacing and continue the debates in the social and psychological research arena.

Ontological perspectives, referring to the nature of reality, are likely to dramatically affect the research design. Taking a positivist view would focus on uncovering reality, assuming it is pre-existing and made up of identifiable cause and effect relationships (Crotty 1998). As a result the research design would most likely demand measurement and quantifiable representations of what is uncovered as reality. A positivist perspective lends itself to quantitative methods and analysis. In contrast, the relativist view suggests that existence is relative to experiences and frames of reference and reality is therefore not pre-existing but a *‘product of people engaging with one another’* (King and Horrocks 2011 p9). A relativist research design is likely to require exploration of those social interactions and engagements and lends itself to more qualitative methods and analysis.

Perhaps it is more helpful to take an ontological pluralist perspective assuming there are different ways of being an object: things exist in different ways. Philosopher Quine (1980) notes:

“We look to bound variables in connection with ontology not in order to know what there is, but in order to know what a given remark or doctrine, ours or someone else’s, says there is; and this much is quite properly a problem involving language. But what there is, is another question.” (p.15)

Certainly in other fields, such as philosophy and metaphysics, the notion of ontological pluralism is debated widely (McDaniel 2009; Turner 2010). As Ryan (2006) puts it:

"The idea that reality - the sum total of what exists - may include other worlds than the world that we experience every day ranks near the very top of the topics that fascinate the human mind." (p.643)

Finding meaning in social interactions may well be more appropriate to qualitative endeavours seeking to understand the relative context of those meanings, however quantifying that meaning could also add some clarity. This pluralist approach is perhaps more relevant to this research. Exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work is an example of a relativist ontological stance and as such demands a qualitative approach. However even the word 'best' has a nod to measurement and a positivist perspective. As a superlative of good, 'best' is the highest degree, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Being wedded to a pure relativist viewpoint could also limit the value of future research or the applicability of any findings. The identification or even the measurement of factors that might impact on whether one is at their best may be a resulting question from the research. This would be erring towards measurement and a positivist stance. Whilst this research is aligned to a relativist perspective, pluralist pragmatism allows for a sustainable ontological stance.

Alongside the ontological stance, research questions are,

"...grounded in an epistemological position. Implicit in the formulation of a question is an assumption about what the data can tell us."

(Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2012 p47)

Epistemological perspectives relate to the nature of knowledge and how we know what we know. Crotty (1998) outlines three broad epistemological perspectives: objectivist; constructionist; and subjectivist. According to Crotty, the objectivist views meaning as existing independent of our consciousness and thus needs to be uncovered. It is closely aligned with the positivist ontology, seeking to discover what already exists. The constructionist takes the view that there is no objective truth. Meaning, for the constructionist, comes into existence in and out of the interaction with the world so as such, meaning is constructed. The subjectivist views meaning as imposed on the object by the subject. So without the person the object has no meaning.

The intention of this research is to explore what it means to be at one's best in work has an implicit assumption that there is a shared meaning to explore. In one sense this could be

seen as an objectivist stance, uncovering that meaning. It is the shared element of that meaning that most likely places this research in the constructionist domain and the exploration is intended to understand how that has been developed and constructed.

There are two terms within the literature relating to constructionism – social constructionist and constructivist. These are not always differentiated in the literature however Robson (2011) provides a helpful differentiation of the two, stating,

“social construction indicates a view that social properties are constructed through interactions between people, rather than having a separate existence... social constructivist usually indicates a focus on the individual rather than the group and is concerned with how individuals construct and make sense of their world.” (p.24)

This research explores both elements – understanding individual's constructions, identifying similarities and differences within social contexts in order to understand the social construction and shared understanding of being at one's best in work.

Madill, Jordan and Shirley (2000) simplified the epistemological stances amongst qualitative researchers into three broad frameworks: Realism; Contextual Constructionism and Radical Constructionism.

The realist stance, according to Madill et al (2000), is distinguished by three main epistemologies: naïve, scientific and critical realism. Naïve realism focusses on the discovery of truth or uncovering knowledge; Scientific realism adds that scientific method can create accurate models or true representations of the world; and Critical realism takes the view that there are inherent subjectivity in the production of knowledge. Triangulation is the dominant methodological approach for the realist – referring to the use of multiple researchers and methods to assess the consistency of findings. The implication is that convergence of findings provides accuracy and objectivity. Madill et al (2000) describe this as *“a form of soft positivism which assumes that research is essentially a process of revealing or discovering pre-existing phenomena and the relationship between them”* (p4).

Contextual constructionists take the position that all knowledge is local, provisional and situation dependent (Jaeger and Rosnow 1998). This perspective would therefore lead to differing results according to the context in which the data was collected and analysed. Triangulation is also relevant to the contextual constructionist however it is focused on comparing accounts to generate a more complete picture rather than looking for

convergence. Tinsley (1992) suggests that a particular strength of this use of triangulation is the possibility of retaining novel perspectives which may have been otherwise discounted.

Radical constructionists distrust the notion that language represents reality and suggests that understanding and acting are not consecutive processes but "circularly conjoined" (Mariyani-Squire 1999). The focus for a radical constructionist is to demonstrate the internal coherence of the analysis often shown by exploring counter evidence or deviant cases within the information collected.

This research would appear to fit within the contextual constructionist framework. As noted above, Jaeger and Rosnow (1988) indicate that contextualism is the position that all knowledge is local, provisional and situation dependent. With that in mind, this research is likely to require a thorough analysis of the context to allow accounts to be grounded in the social, organisational practices, policies and structures. Using multiple case studies could provide helpful triangulation and whilst consistencies (or convergence) will be identified so too the inconsistencies or differences within each case will be important to describe in order to retain the novel perspectives and acquire a more complete understanding of what it means to be at one's best in work.

3.2 An interpretive perspective

“Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of [one’s] engagement with the realities in [one’s] world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (Crotty, 1998. Pg.8)

This section focusses on the implications of taking an interpretive perspective, drawing on the guidance for approaching research in this way. It moves on to discuss symbolic interaction, hermeneutics and phenomenological investigation and uses these insights as guiding principles for this research.

Taking this interpretive perspective therefore deems that the purpose of research is to interpret and understand individuals’ reasons for social action, the way they construct their lives and the meanings they attach to them. It is not so much the observable social actions but rather the subjective meaning given to those actions. In that way, *“reality is not out there but in the minds of people”* (Sarantakos 1998 p36) – it is internally experienced, socially constructed through interaction and interpreted through the actions based on the definitions people attach to it.

The research focus, exploring a shared meaning of being at one’s best in work, lends itself to this interpretive perspective. The process of the research is likely to need to focus on understanding individuals’ experiences and what meaning they attach to them. This perspective brings with it certain principles or recommendations for ensuring the research remains robust.

Burr (1995) identifies four factors that are common amongst social constructionists and these form the basis of this research design:

A critical stance is assumed to knowledge

- This research involves critical reflection points to include: a critique of the methods used to explore shared meaning and to allow for improvements to be made at subsequent stages; and the identification of supporting and opposing evidence from existing literature for results and conclusions.

Historical and cultural specificity

- The context will be clearly outlined for each of the stages of the research. Where appropriate, the results needs to link to the context to clarify any novel aspects of the findings. The intention of the research is to deliver a framework of being at one's best with categories and description. This will help to make conclusions more specific.

Knowledge is sustained by social processes

- There are two ways in which social processes are demonstrated in this research. Firstly, interviews (the principle data collection method) are in themselves a social process. Secondly, observations of the social processes within the context of the data collection provide additional reflexivity for the researcher and the critical reflection points.

Knowledge and social action go together

- An essential element of this research is to demonstrate the application of the findings. This will be considered in the final discussion chapter but a discussion regarding the results from each of the context will also allow for specific applications to be made in that context.

These four guidance points become the overarching principles for the research design. The interpretive perspective also involves more specific principles in relation to symbolic interaction, hermeneutics and phenomenological investigation. These are discussed next in order to highlight further principles to apply to this research design.

3.2.1 Symbolic interaction

Symbolic interactionism is an interpretative perspective with its roots in social psychology. It takes the view that behaviour is not defined by the environment but rather by reflective, socially understood meaning of both the internal and external incentives that are currently presented (Meltzer et al, 1975). This research assumes that positive behavioural patterns related to high performance, high engagement and high commitment are therefore symbolic interactions representing being at one's best in work. As a result, exploration of individuals within each of these contexts could assist in clarifying any shared meaning of 'best' there might be.

Meanings are likely to be revised on the basis of experience, including the definition of 'self' and who we are. Gray (2004) gives the example, that

“if someone is promoted from supervisor to manager their perception of themselves and the company may change, which in turn leads to changes in the meaning of objects, and thereby to changes in behaviour” (p.21)

With that in mind, this research needs to ensure that there is a range of participants with varying experiences. Furthermore, enquiring into a variety of the participants' experiences (initial impressions, daily experiences, progress and changing experiences) is likely to help to gain a fuller picture. Blumer (1969) set out three basic premises of the symbolic interaction perspective, which this research design will adhere to:

- Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things
 - This research seeks to understand the meanings attributed by individuals to their experiences at work. Simply asking them when they are at their best is not enough, exploring their interpretations, actions and explanations is necessary.
- The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society
 - This research therefore needs to be interactive – the use of conversations (interviews) will form the basis of the investigations.
- These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters
 - This research therefore recognises the interpretation of data as a process. Structuring the research into stages with the aforementioned critical reflection points will allow for improvement or modification of the interpretations and conclusions.

3.2.2 Phenomenological investigation

"It is the task of phenomenology... to make us conscious of what the world was like before we learned to see it" (Marton 1986 p.40)

Phenomenology might therefore be useful in considering or exploring shared meaning. It has its roots in the work of a number of philosophers (for example, Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre). Central to the phenomenological approach is the relationship between perceiver (subject) and the perceived (object) – one cannot understand the object without understanding the subject. Husserl (1927) focused on what is experienced in the consciousness of the individual. He advocated a *phenomenological attitude* – more reflexive and focused on the perception and intentions rather than the object of the attention itself. Taking this approach therefore could bring a deeper understanding of the object and the observer. Applying Husserl's broad philosophical approach to psychology is not always directly clear. His focus was more on understanding self rather than interpreting others and the role of the unconscious is not always clear. Heidegger (1962) sees phenomenology as a philosophy, saying: *"Only as phenomenology is ontology possible"* (p60). He therefore argued the only way to really understand existence and meaning is to take a phenomenological hermeneutic approach. Sartre's (1948) infamous phrase, *"existence comes before essence"* (p26) highlights the importance of the developmental aspect of humans. He asserted that the self is not a pre-existing unity to be discovered but is a developing project. In that respect, things that are absent are as important as things that are present. This notion of development and change applied to research encourages the investigator to consider the wider context and to review what is present and what is absent.

Exploring perceptions and individuals' understandings or interpretations of their experiences is central to this research. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) represents a 'focus on the particular' (Smith et al 2012 p37). They provide seven broad stages a researcher needs to follow which will be applied in this research:

1. Reading and re-reading to help the researcher to become fully immersed in the data
2. Initial noting of key words and sentences in each interview
3. Developing emergent themes across the interviews
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes
5. Moving to the next case
6. Looking for patterns across cases
7. Taking it deeper: levels of interpretation

3.2.3 Hermeneutics

In their research, Chan, Walker and Gleaves (2015) justify the use of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as it represents *“the optimal way to investigate a complex phenomenon that is difficult to capture given its fragmentary and ‘taken for granted’ nature.”* (p98). This justification applies to this research project – being at one's best could be understood as fragmentary as it is suggested it resides in the overlap of the performance, engagement and commitment concepts. It could also be described as ‘taken for granted’ as it has been established as such a common term in the workplace (see chapter one).

Crotty (1998) describes interpretivism as *“the way of hermeneutics”* (p87). Hermeneutics hails from biblical interpretation traditions but are now a broader approach to interpretivism. Language is central to the hermeneutic approach, seeing its function as transmitting information and meaning, thus shaping experiences. The emphasis is more than simply interpreting the semantic structures of language but also encompasses the intentions, relationships and the context of the communicators. This broader interpretation can often deliver a deeper understanding of the communication, even more so than the person speaking. Hermeneutics provides us with, *“a focus on how the understanding is achieved rather than what is understood”* (Robson 2011 p151).

Hermeneutics could provide this research with an approach for investigations – understanding the expressions through language alongside the wider context (intentions, relationships and contexts). The notion of the hermeneutic circle could therefore be pertinent to this research: *“to understand any given part, you look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts”* (Smith et al 2012 p28). Applying this to the analysis of interviews demands the examination of words used, sentences used and overall messages of the texts.

The key principles from hermeneutics applied to this research design are:

- Understanding comes through language and conversation (Gadamer (1997) – so interviews and conversations need to be central in this research.
- Themes, sub-themes that emerge need to come from the key words and concepts (Van Manen 1990). The analysis needs to consider the words that are used by participants.
- The hermeneutic circle requires a researcher to look at the whole and the parts (Smith et al 2012). The analysis therefore also needs to look at the overall message from the conversation as well as the specific words used.

3.3 Methodology

“Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals create social experience and how it acquires meaning, whereas quantitative research focuses on causal relationships between identified variables”.

(Lincoln & Denzin 2003, p.13)

Qualitative research methods therefore appear to fit well with the intention of this research and reflective of Marshall and Rossman's (1999) assertion that the nature of the research problem determines the most appropriate approach – qualitative research approaches are particularly appropriate when a study seeks to understand phenomena or systems which are not well known, to delve into complexities and processes or to seek a deeper understanding of a participant's lived experience. As the notion of being at one's best is not well known and this research seeks a deeper understanding of what that means in a work context, qualitative methods do indeed appear appropriate. This section starts with a summary of **how the research reflections will be structured (section 3.3.1)**.

Robson (2011) notes that multiple case studies provide the opportunity for analytic or 'theoretical generalisation'. Given that this research seeks to explore a new concept, the multiple case study approach will be helpful as it provides opportunity for analysis in different contexts. Section 3.3.2 outlines the **methods/techniques** that will be used in the case studies, prioritising qualitative methods and highlighting the questions that will be posed in order to evaluate each technique as a tool to explore shared meaning. Section 3.3.3 summarises how the case studies will be grouped or adapted, based on Kerssens-van Drongelen's (2001) **iterative approach to theory building** which provides a helpful structure for the multiple case studies. This section finishes with a summary of the case studies and a rationale for how they will be presented in subsequent chapters 4 and 5.

3.3.1 Reflexivity

Traditionally, research is evaluated based on its objectivity, reliability and validity. Morse (1999) argues that: *“Science is concerned with rigour, and by definition, good rigorous research must be reliable and valid. If qualitative research is unreliable and invalid, then it must not be science”.* (p717)

Applying the principles of objectivity, reliability and validity to a qualitative case study can often prove challenging. In his controversial book, *Fairwell to Reason*, Feyerabend (1987) argues that quantitative research is often presented in a non-positivist form and equally qualitative research understood or evaluated in a positivistic way which then blurs the boundaries between the positivist and relativist viewpoints and the subsequent choice of methods.

“Quality criteria utilised in quantitative psychology are appropriate to the evaluation of qualitative analysis only to the extent that it is conducted within the naïve or scientific realist framework” (Madill et al 2000 p.1)

This research is situated in a relativist, social constructionist approach therefore alternative criteria for evaluations are necessary. This is backed up by Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) who argue that qualitative research does not claim to be objective, as all research is carried out from a particular ‘standpoint’ by researchers who bring their own subjective values and meanings into their work. Repeating an investigation does not mean the same results will be obtained so reliability could be seen as poor. Furthermore, validity in a case study is limited to its context.

Remenyi (2013) provides a useful alternative approach for evaluation that this research will use throughout. He suggests that rather than applying quantitative standards to qualitative methods, similar but more appropriate terms are applied and it is these that have formed the basis of the structure of the research reflection and evaluation, as outlined in table 4 below.

Table 12: Quantitative and qualitative researcher standards (Remenyi 2013)

Quantitative research evaluation	Qualitative research evaluation
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability / Authenticity

Demonstrating credibility

King and Horrocks (2011) suggest this *“refers to the extent to which the researcher’s interpretation is endorsed by those with whom the research was conducted”* (p160). The findings and conclusions from each context need to be shared with the individuals and organisations and the credibility achieved by checking the results make sense and the additional insights it gives them.

Demonstrating transferability

Transferability relates to the way in which conclusions drawn in one setting can transfer to another. The structure of the research is intended to draw together the findings and identify both consistencies (elements that are transferable from one context to another) and differences (elements that are specific to the context). This approach allows for a transparent demonstration of which findings are transferable and which are more context bound.

Demonstrating dependability

Dependability is about ensuring the process is robust. Murphy et al (1998) suggest that researchers need to demonstrate they have '*taken into account the inherent instability of the phenomenon they are studying*' (p170). Taking a staged approach with critical reflection points will help to demonstrate the dependability. A part of the critical reflection process includes the identification any instability in the research process that can be reduced or eliminated at subsequent stages.

Demonstrating authenticity

Authenticity refers how to the evidence presented backs up the conclusions. King and Horrocks (2011) call this 'confirmability' and recommend that researchers '*present sufficient detail of the process of their data collection and analysis so that a reader can see how they might reasonably have reached the conclusions they did*' (p.161). Each stage in these investigations needs to 'tell a story' and the data analysis presented in a variety of ways.

3.3.1.1 Acknowledging the role of the researcher

Yin (2009) suggests that case study investigators need to develop 'desired skills' in that they must: ask good questions; be a good listener; be adaptive and flexible; have a firm grasp of the issues being studied and be unbiased by preconceived notions. The researcher is also an Occupational Psychology Consultant. Some may suggest that there is a conflict of interest in the researcher having two roles. In this case it is unavoidable as the consultancy company is supporting the researcher and has been set up by the researcher. The role as a consultant has enabled the researcher to develop the skills outlined by Yin (2009) to an expert level. In addition, it is from the experiences as a consultant that the research question evolved. As a consultant the researcher has access to a range of real life case studies and

has developed strong relationships within each context that allows for a more meaningful interpretation of what is going on. Two things will help to safeguard the investigation: a continual check on the academic rigour of the investigation; and results, interpretations and outcomes will be discussed with peers and supervisors.

This research demands interaction between the researcher and the context and as Gubrium and Hostein (2003) suggest, the researcher is shaping and managing how the interaction unfolds and it is unavoidable there will be an element of co-construction of the meaning behind the interviewee's responses. It is the reflexive awareness of the researcher that will ensure interviewee's responses are not misrepresented. Marshall (1986) suggests that adding reflexive accounts allow *"readers to judge the content in the context of the perspectives by which it was shaped"*. (p.15)

Critical Reflection Points therefore need to take place throughout and after each case study analysis. In this way, the critical reflection points allow the researcher to identify learning and any appropriate changes to the procedures for subsequent case studies in wider contexts. The critical reflection points will involve a review of:

- credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity of the findings
- Impact of the researcher on the findings
- What data or information is present as well as what is not present
- A comparison with the findings in existing literature.

3.3.2 Research techniques

This investigation, exploring a currently undefined topic, 'being at one's best in work' and the notion that we have a shared meaning has a number of potential research techniques that could be employed. Section 1.2.3 highlighted observation (Peace 2013), interviews (Van Vuuren & Cous 2005), questionnaires (Xing et al 2014), word lists and mental models (Strauss & Quinn 1997) as methods used to investigate shared meaning specifically.

Table 13 found over the page provides a summary of methods used, their associated evaluation questions and the case studies that they were employed in.

The subsequent sections 3.3.2.1-3.3.2.5 provide a rationale and discussion about each of the methods and a brief description of the procedures followed. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the detailed case study descriptions including how the methods were used.

Table 12: Summary of methods used, their associated evaluation questions and the relevant case studies

METHOD	Reflection questions for evaluation		Relevant Case Studies
INTERVIEWS – with six core questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about how you came to be here • What attracted you to the role? • What were your first impressions? • What do you enjoy doing? • What would you like to do more of? • What is a great day for you? 	Credibility	How are the individuals' words integrated into conclusions?	PILOT & ALL case studies
	Transferability	How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors?	
	Dependability	How has instability been managed in the process of interviewing?	
	Authenticity	What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews?	
WORDLISTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VALUES LIST - participants are asked to highlight the words that are 'important to them' and tick which are 'supported by their work'. • ACTIVITIES LIST where participants are asked to identify the frequency and importance 	Credibility	How are the individuals' words integrated into conclusions?	PILOT & Case Studies 2-4
	Transferability	How has the word list helped to identify transferable factors?	
	Dependability	How has instability been managed in the process and administration?	
	Authenticity	What other evidence supports or contradicts the wordlists?	
QUESTIONNAIRE with questions based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive subjective states including Psychological capital • Positive behavioural patterns • Values based on Schwarz's (2009) 10 motivation values. 	Credibility	How do the outcomes reflect the participants' views/experiences?	PILOT & Case Studies 1-2
	Transferability	How has the questionnaire helped to identify transferrable factors?	
	Dependability	How has instability been managed in the process and administration?	
	Authenticity	What other evidence supports or contradicts the questionnaire?	
MENTAL MODEL REPRESENTATIONS where participants are asked to create a representation of what it means to be at their best in work	Credibility	How satisfied are the individuals that the representation is accurate?	PILOT & Case Study 4
	Transferability	How does it helped to identify transferable factors?	
	Dependability	How has instability been managed in the process and administration?	
	Authenticity	What other evidence supports or contradicts the representations?	

3.3.2.1 Observation

"Observation of live situations is an important source of qualitative data."

Remenyi (2013 p.47)

Observation has already been noted as a method employed to explore shared meaning (e.g. Peace 2013) so quite possibly an appropriate tool to use in this investigation. Sarantakos (1998) highlights different forms of observation: naïve and scientific observation (the extent to which it is systematically planned and executed); participant and non-participant observation (the extent to which the researcher is part of the environment); and structured and unstructured observation (the extent to which the process of observation is formalised and organised). These delineations are helpful in terms of reviewing methodological options however the lines are very blurred between the different options. For example, Mammersley & Atkinson (1983) conclude that: *"...all social research can be seen to have participant observation; it involves participating in the social world, in whatever role and reflecting on the products of that participation."* (p16)

Symons & Cassell (1999) highlight the importance of individual researcher experiences and suggest that in fact there is a more dynamic way to conceptualise observation, as a form of ethnography. This positions observation as an act of sense making by the researcher as they focus upon the interactions within the context they are investigating, and that *"central to good ethnographic accounts is a recognition of the reflexivity of the researcher."* (Watson 1993 p3). This research will not, therefore, use structured observation but will provide a description of the researcher experiences and structured reflections. The purpose of observation in this investigation is to contextualise the findings and forms a part of the reflexivity of the research process. In that way it is remaining authentic to the interpretive and social constructionist perspectives (Lincoln and Guba (2013). In order to achieve that the researcher is acknowledged as a participant in the context and the structure of the observations may vary between contexts but provide: a description of the context and key points that the researcher identified as a result of being a part of the context.

As the purpose of observation in this investigation is to contextualise the findings and forms a part of the reflexivity of the research process. This research will not, therefore, use structured observation but will provide a description of the researcher experiences and structured critical reflection points in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

3.3.2.2 Interviews

“Undoubtedly, interviewing is the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative research” King & Horrocks (2011 p.1)

It is a technique that has been used in recent explorations of shared meaning (Van Vuuren & Cous 2005) and to establish shared mental models (Strauss & Quinn 1997). Certainly most participants will understand what is involved when asked to participate in an interview (King 2004).

Whilst Yin (2009) recognises the strengths of the interview as a data collection method, he also notes some potential weaknesses that need to be addressed when conducting interviews in research. The strengths of interviews, he suggests are that they can focus directly on the required topics and provide insights, perceived causal inferences and explanations. With those strengths in mind, it would appear an appropriate technique for exploring when one is at their best in work. The weaknesses of the interview he notes are: establishing a clear framework to ensure clear wording of the questions; training interviewers so they are familiar with the questions and probing techniques; positioning the interview with participants to ensure they are comfortable with the aims of the research and the confidentiality of their answers.

In order to address the potential weaknesses highlighted by Yin (2009), this research uses consistent questions for each of the interviews. These will form the framework for a semi structured interview that allows for further probing questions based on the flow of the interview. This is akin to King and Horrocks's (2011) recommendation that,

“flexibility is a key requirement of qualitative interviewing. The interviewer must be able to respond to issues that emerge in the course of the interview in order to explore the perspective of the participant on the topics under investigation” (p35).

The questions are purposefully broad, aiming to understand individuals' experiences and how they represent them in their own minds. As a result of the review of existing research, it was hoped but not presumed that the interviews would elicit both positive states and positive behavioural patterns. In order to ensure that the participants' experiences are drawn out in their own words, the questions do not include specific reference to 'best' nor feelings and behaviours.

In response to the concern that interviewers need to be trained, for the pilot study the researcher has developed the interview questions and structure so is familiar with the content. The researcher is also a skilled recruitment and development interviewer, having been involved in area of occupational psychology for over ten years, so is familiar with structured probing techniques. The training of interviewers for subsequent iterative case studies is a priority and covered where appropriate in the descriptions of those case studies in further chapters. With respect to positioning the research, this was done verbally and forms part of the training of interviewers. It is also done more formally in the information sheet, consent form and debrief sheets designed to ensure participants fully understand what their involvement is (see appendix I for copies of these).

A note about focus group interviews

The term focus group interview has been used to explore employee thoughts and experiences and is advocated by researchers such as Basch (1987) as a technique for improving theory and practise. He was focused on health education however as tool for eliciting thoughts and experiences, it is likely to be of some use in exploring being at one's best in work. They may help in exploring shared meaning by way of gaining spontaneous expressions and indeed in understanding the context of any shared meaning by way of eliciting specific examples that illustrate that.

Focus groups as a research technique does not come without it's challenges. A number of researchers (e.g. Grønkjær, Curtis, de Crespigny, & Delmar 2011) have warned of issues of group conformity and the impact of the characteristics of the group, yet still note.

Researchers can use group interviews as a more efficient use of resources and as a means of adding valuable insight to the interpretation of a social or behavioural event... the group interview has great potential for social research." (p175)

Alert to the challenges associated with this technique, a focus group approach is not applied in the pilot study. It remained an option for future case study iterations in this investigation if the context and specific focus required as a result of the previous iterations demands. Group interviews were only used in case study three.

Interview Procedure:

Interviews are used in the pilot and in all case studies. All interviews were all conducted in a private area, usually in the participant's workplace (see individual case studies for any variances). The researcher was responsible for all the interviews, either conducting them herself or training others to do so in post-pilot case studies 1 and 2 (separate ethics approval was gained – Protocol Numbers: LMS/PG/UK/00068 and LMS/PG/UH/00225 respectively).

Full details of the participants, their context and how they were recruited for each case study can be found in the detailed case study descriptions (pilot studies in chapter 4 and further case studies in chapter 5).

The interviews all followed the same structure:

- Introduction:
- Interviewer introduced
 - Purpose of interview shared
 - Information sheet provided and informed consent sheet discussed.
- Core questions:
- Tell me about how you came to be here
 - What attracted you to the role?
 - What were your first impressions?
 - What do you enjoy doing?
 - What would you like to do more of?
 - What is a great day for you?
- Close:
- Any further comments to add?
 - Debrief document provided

Reflection structure – after utilising interviews :

A part of this current investigation is to reflect upon the value of differing techniques bring when exploring shared meaning. The critical reflection after the pilot will need to evaluate the use of interviews in terms of:

- Credibility – How are the individuals' words integrated into the conclusions?
- Transferability – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors?
- Dependability – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed?
- Authenticity – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews?

3.3.2.3 Word lists

Task listing and statement ranking have been used when researching mental models (Strauss & Quinn 1997). In their review of qualitative techniques available for career counsellors, McMahon & Patton (2002) highlight their use for exploring values:

“card sorts are possibly the most common form of qualitative assessment available. Most card sorts focus on a particular topic, for example occupations, work values, or motivation. The process of the card sort may elicit life themes, values, beliefs and attitudes.” (p62)

Cognitive psychological approaches to investigating word meaning also include grouping word tasks (e.g. Vandenberghe, Price, Wise, Josephs and Frackowiak 1996). This adds some justification for the use of word lists or card sorts as a part of the research.

Values list procedure:

- Participants were provided a sheet with 135 words on it (see appendix II)
- They were asked to highlight which words were important to them
- They were then asked to tick which of those words were supported by their work

A values list was used in all studies apart from case study 1. In the pilot studies this was simply used as a conversation starter in the interview. Upon reflection it did provide very useful data and the list was standardised and linked to Schwartz's (2009) ten motivational values (see the post pilot study descriptions in chapter 5). Other list activities were used in case study 3 (chapter 5). These were where participants were asked to list their activities then rate the frequency of each activity and the importance of the activities.

Reflection structure – after utilising word lists:

A part of this current investigation is to reflect upon the value of differing techniques bring when exploring shared meaning. The critical reflection after the pilot will need to evaluate the use of interviews in terms of:

- Credibility – How are the individuals' words integrated into the conclusions?
- Transferability – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors?
- Dependability – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed?
- Authenticity – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews?

3.3.2.4 Questionnaires

Questionnaires have already been noted in recent research exploring specific shared meaning (e.g. Xing et al 2014) and for the exploration of shared mental models (e.g. Strauss & Quinn 1997). The use of the questionnaire in the pilot investigation is intended to serve as a secondary tool and provide the triangulation to compare accounts, gain novel perspectives and a fuller picture of the case study, thus following the principles of the contextual constructionist approach. A copy of the questionnaire used in the pilot can be found in appendix III.

There is however a number of potential limiting effects the use of a questionnaire may encounter. Podsakoff et al (2003) highlight a number of biases within the design and delivery of questionnaires. Their review of the literature suggests that,

“common method variance is often a problem and researchers need to do whatever they can to control it” (p.900).

They note a range of method variances, including: rater effects, item characteristic effects, item context effects and measurement context effects. The construction of the questionnaire used in this research aimed to minimise many of these effects.

Minimising rater effects: Where items require a rating, a clear description of what each rating means is provided. A four point likert scale is used in order to limit any central tendency that raters may have and a social desirability measure is also included so as to establish their approach to completing the questionnaires. Clear instructions for completing the questionnaire are also provided at the very start.

Minimising item effects: Where possible, items from existing questionnaires where reliability and validity have been established are used to ensure that the items provide consistent responses. An internal reliability check also forms a part of the questionnaire analysis. Furthermore, in order to limit the potential for acquiescence, both positively and negatively phrased items are used and a range of styles (ratings and selections) of question employed.

Minimising item context effects: Throughout the questionnaire, individuals are reminded to consider the items in relation to the work context. All respondents are asked to complete the questionnaire electronically to ensure consistency of completion experience and minimise any social pressure. They are also reminded that the questionnaire is confidential and

anonymous at the start and close. All respondents are provided a debriefing that outlines what the research is particularly looking at.

Minimising measurement effects: The items have clear measurement criteria (see minimising rater effects). The plans for the analysis of the questionnaire results are identified upfront at the start of the case study (in chapter 4). This should limit the potential of seeing unrelated factors as related.

Questionnaire structure: The questionnaire includes three core elements – subjective states at work, behavioural patterns at work and values. A number of existing questionnaires were reviewed in terms of their content and reliability. Items with high reliability and good content validity were chosen.

Questionnaire procedure:

The questionnaire was delivered via survey monkey. A full list of the questions can be found in appendix III. In the pilot study all staff were asked to complete the questionnaire voluntarily and it was also sent to a volunteer sample of 101 people in work to create a comparison group. Full details can be found in chapter 4. In post pilot case studies only the first section of questions were used.

The questionnaire has five sections with questions relating to:

1. Positive subjective states based on Luthans & Youseff 2007 psychological capital – self efficacy, resilience, hope, optimism and feeling skilled. The example question below relates to self-efficacy.

*** 16. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues**

Disagree	Disagree - most of the time	Agree - most of the time	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Positive behavioural patterns based on Griffen et al's (2007) model of performance involving proficiency additivity and proactivity on individual, team and organisational levels. The example question below relates to adaptability at a team level.

*** 23. I enjoy working with people outside of my immediate team**

Disagree	Disagree - most of the time	Agree - most of the time	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Individual values based on Schwartz's 2009 ESS Human Values statements. Participants were asked to pick statements that applied to them, each statement related to one of the 10 motivational values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism. For example:

**68. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column**

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
Independence is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like surprises and am always looking for new things to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Perception of organisation values where participants were asked to rate statements based on Schwartz's 2009 ESS Human Values statements, applied to their organisation.

***78. In my organisation....**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Our safety is paramount and there are plenty of safeguards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are very strict rules and regulations to follow in my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. Perception of organisation values via the manager where participants were asked to rate statements based on Schwartz's 2009 ESS Human Values statements, applied to their manager. For example:

***85. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Actively encourages us to participate in community activities (Corporate Social Responsibility)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is very loyal to the team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reflection structure – after utilising a questionnaire:

A part of this current investigation is to reflect upon the value of differing techniques bring when exploring shared meaning. The critical reflection after the pilot will need to evaluate the use of questionnaires in terms of:

- Credibility – How well does it reflect the participants' views/experience?
- Transferability – How has the questionnaire helped to identify transferable factors?
- Dependability – How has instability been managed in the questionnaire?
- Authenticity – What other evidence supports or contradicts the questionnaire results?

3.3.2.5 Mental model representations

According to Doyle & Ford (1999), a mental model is:

“a relatively enduring and accessible, but limited, internal conceptual representation of an external system.” (p.411)

In relation to this current investigation, a mental model representation may well help in understanding a shared meaning of being at one's best in work but as noted in Doyle & Ford's definition there are some inherent limitations not least in the development of any representation and discussion. Whilst not forming part of the methods used in the initial pilot, it remained a technique to consider in future case study iterations.

Authors use many different methods to explicitly represent the content of mental models, ranging from mathematical and logical descriptions, syllogisms and conceptual networks (Stevens & Gentner 1983) to diagrammatically representing belief networks and semantic webs (Novak & Gowin 1984).

Wood et al (2012) review three types of mental model representations that could be applied: Decision-analysis-based approach; Concept maps; and Semantic web. Similar to Eden et al (1979) they also concluded that:

“the preferred method to select for a particular diagramming effort depends largely on the context in which the proposed analysis will be conducted, and the resources and expertise available for the analysis.” (p13).

The first approach, decision-analysis-based approach, is less relevant in this exploration as there are no specific decisions being explored. They highlighted that a concept map provides less information on how statements or categories may influence one another and a fairly high degree of statistical expertise (such as multi-dimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis) is required to build the concept map. The third approach is perhaps more suitable for this current exploration as it is indeed more qualitative. The semantic web method was originally developed by Novak (1984) to detect changes in children's understanding of science concepts and compare the results of different pedagogies. Interviews are used to produce a map with a set of noun concepts represented as nodes in a network. Directional arrows with relationship verbs show relatedness between nodes.

Wood et al (2012) highlight a number of strengths of the semantic web method for representing a mental model, in particular its simplicity, the demonstration of how concepts

relate to each other, the high face validity given that it is constructed by participants, little technical knowledge is required for interpretation. They do also highlight some cautionary limitations associated with this representation in terms of the potential inconsistencies of the individuals' mental models as they are developed arbitrarily and rendering them unreliable.

Mental model representations activity procedures:

This activity was only employed in the final case study (see chapter 5).

- Participants were given: a large sheet of paper; coloured pens; plain strips of card; printed strips with the themes identified in previous case studies.
- Participants were asked to create a representation of when they were at their best in work. They were told it could take any form and they could use as many or as few of the strips of paper with themes on them as they wanted.
- They were then asked to talk the researcher through their representation
- A photograph of the representation was then taken (see appendix V).

Reflection structure – after utilising mental model representations activity:

Despite the potential limitations of mental model representations, they may still provide some helpful insight into any shared understanding of being at one's best in work. A part of this current investigation is to reflect upon the value of differing techniques bring when exploring shared meaning. When used in future case study iterations, the critical reflection after the pilot will need to evaluate the use of mental model representations in terms of:

- Credibility – How satisfied are the individuals that the representation is accurate?
- Transferability – How does it helped to identify transferable factors?
- Dependability – How has instability been managed in the development of these representations?
- Authenticity – What other evidence supports or contradicts the representations?

3.3.3 Iterative research structure

The previous section identified the rationale for using interviews, word lists, questionnaires and mental model representations when exploring shared meaning. This section identifies how they can be applied for this research.

An iterative research approach combines the emic or inductive approach to research with the etic or deductive approach. The literature review in chapter two has led to a starting point or proposition that being at one's best resides in the overlap of performance, engagement and commitment (section 2.5 p.90). In that way, it could be described as etic. The research however will look for emerging themes from the data, making it a more emic style of analysis. Tracy (2013) suggests that an iterative methodological approach allows for both emic and etic approaches to be accommodated as:

“it alternates between emic, or emerging readings of the data and etic use of existing models, explanations and theories.” (p184).

As noted at the start of this chapter, this research involves a number of case studies and the structured reflections will help to inform each subsequent case study. Methods or techniques used to explore shared meaning are not always consistent as part of this investigation is to reflect on how useful a range of techniques might be.

Given that part of the research is exploring a new concept or theory. Kerssens-van Drongelen's (2009) iterative theory building approach is a useful 3 stage structure for this research and a helpful way to organise the multiple case studies.

Table 13 (on page 121) provides an overview of all the studies in this research, the methods used in each case study and the resulting reflection questions. Each subsequent case study is intended to build on the previous by responding to some or all of the reflection questions of the previous studies.

Stage 1: A research question based on existing theory

In this research, the question starts with whether there is indeed an overlap of engagement, commitment and performance. The literature review has indicated there might be an overlap (see 3.5.1 for details of specific overlapping elements). As a result of the literature review, it is suggested that it is in that overlap that being at one's best as a concept or notion might reside theoretically.

Stage 2: A pilot study

In this research, three studies in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed retail stores (outlined in detail in chapter four). These studies employed the use of interviews, wordlists and questionnaires to explore the shared experiences of the retail staff in these three contexts (see section 3.5.2 for details of the methods used). The themes identified from these studies are described as a tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work. These were derived from the common experiences of individuals in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts (i.e. what has been theorised at stage 1).

Following the pilot study, some reflection was undertaken in terms of the conclusions and the methods used. These took the form of reflection in terms of transferability, credibility, dependability and authenticity (Remenyi 2010). These reflections led to a number of questions following the pilot and the subsequent case studies aimed to respond to these.

Stage 3: A reflexive multiple case study approach which leads to an adaptation of the research agenda

In this research, the four subsequent case studies (detailed in chapter five) explore wider contexts to see if there are similar common experiences and whether it could be said there is a shared meaning. Each case study is reflected upon in terms of: the themes from the tentative framework that were apparent; and the methods used for exploring the shared meaning. The questions resulting from the case study reflections help to inform the structure of the next study. In that way the each case study builds on the previous.

At the end of the final case study iteration, there appears to be consistency of themes identified in all case studies and little added by further case studies, thus indicating theoretical saturation (Miles and Huberman 1994). In order to confirm this theoretical saturation, some additional analysis, looking at all the case studies as a whole, is identified through the reflection process.

The analysis of all the case studies involved a review of the content of all the themes across all the case studies to: identify dominant themes within similar context categories (performing, engaged, committed); check the theme titles are still relevant given the broader contexts of the case study iterations; and to consider the role of values when consider all case studies together. The additional analysis is outlined in chapter 6 in order to provide a basis for the conclusions and the Refined Framework describing being at one's best in work (see page 302).

Table 13: Overview of iterative process and methods used based on Kerssens-van Drongelen (2001) stages of iterative theory building

1 RESEARCH QUESTION BASED ON EXISTING THEORY			
Is there an overlap in the concepts of performance, engagement and commitment? Could this be where being at one's best is located in the literature? (See 3.5.1 for specific propositions)			
2	PILOT STUDY CONTEXT	METHODS USED	RESULTING REFLECTION QUESTIONS
	Three stores in one retail organisation: Performing 237% of target; Engaged, top in staff survey; and Committed, with longest serving staff	Interviews Wordlist Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the framework transferable to other contexts? Is the values connection seen in this pilot study simply a product of this values driven organisation Would a shortened questionnaire provide more helpful triangulation data Was the researcher over influenced by the enjoyable experience in the stores? <p>OUTCOME: Consistency of themes identified in these performing engaged and committed contexts - Tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work (see page 170)</p>
3	ITERATIVE STUDIES	METHODS USED	RESULTING REFLECTION QUESTIONS
	1. Highly engaged Hotel Team with the highest staff survey results in the boutique hotel chain	Interviews conducted by a different researcher Shortened questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tentative framework themes appeared here, what about other contexts? Will higher levels of psychological capital also be seen in a different context? Could the wordlist activity be more helpful in establishing any values connection? Might coding negative themes add to the authenticity of the conclusions?
	2. High performing Exec Search Team with the greatest growth in income over the last two years in the company.	Interviews conducted by a different researcher: Shortened questionnaire Wordlist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tentative framework themes also appeared here, what about other contexts? Will a group interview (focus group) provide greater insight for shared meaning? Could other structured activity lists and observations be helpful?
	3. High performing Store Managers, based on profit, turnover and regional manager ratings	Focus Group Interviews Word lists Activity lists Store visit observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tentative framework themes also appeared here, what about committed contexts? How could triangulating individual data rather than group data help? What impact will there be from having a standardised approach to linking evidence from the activities to the tentative framework themes? How useful for data gathering will a mental model style activity be? How helpful would it be to ask individuals directly when they believe they are at their best?
	4. Committed Individuals all intending to stay in their jobs and with at least five years' service	Interviews Incl mental model activity Word list activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tentative framework would appear to be transferable but the theme titles now need to be reviewed based on the content from all the case studies Individual triangulation identified a link between contentment and values connection Mental model activity useful in establishing the transferability and authenticity of themes Asking directly about being at their best did not appear to bring any new information <p>OUTCOME: A confident framework to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best in work (see page 300); Recommendations for future shared meaning research (see page 318)</p>

3.4 Principles of analysis & presentation of the research

Sarantakos's (1998) guidance for research design has four elements: sampling procedures; data collection; data analysis; and reporting of results (p102-103). The sampling has been noted as individuals within high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts (see sections 3.5.1 and 3.5.2). The data collection methods have been outlined in section 3.4 and an overall iterative structure to the data collection described in section 3.5.3. This section attends to the final two elements of the research design – the data analysis and presentation or reporting of the findings. This forms the basis of the structure for chapters four and five describing the pilot case studies and subsequent case study iterations.

3.6.1 Principles of the analysis

Yin's (2009) four principles of high quality analysis provide the basis for the analysis in this investigation: Attending to all the evidence; addressing all major rival interpretations; addressing the most significant aspect of the study; using own, prior expert knowledge.

The first principle is addressed by ensuring evidence gained from observation, interviews and questionnaires are presented separately and in combination, to demonstrate the overall conclusions. This is reflecting the hermeneutic circle mentioned earlier – to understand the whole, one needs to look at the parts and to understand the parts one looks at the whole.

The second principle is addressed by ensuring anomalies and counter evidence are highlighted. Explanations are sought for these from the other evidence or wider literature however it is anticipated that these highlight the context specific factors in each case study. In this way, the research is also reflecting Tinsley's (1992) suggestion that the triangulation of evidence will provide a complete picture and also retain novel interpretations.

The third principle is addressed by highlighting the strongest themes and most consistent themes in each context. The critical reflection points after each case study evaluate the themes and techniques used to explore shared meaning in terms of: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

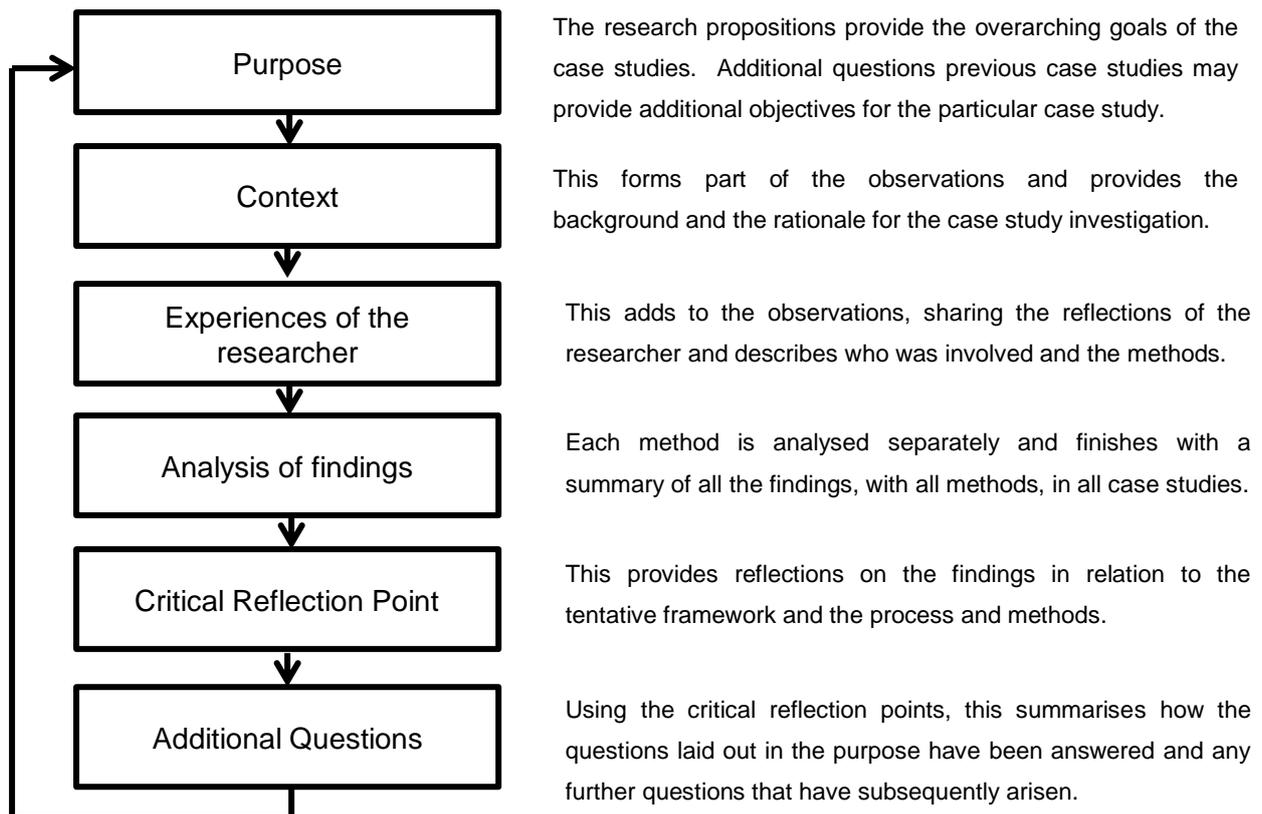
The fourth principle is addressed by integrating the knowledge gained through observation as this is important for bringing meaning to the conclusions and rooting them in the context of the case study. Identifying where the conclusions are reflected in the wider literature is also a key way to demonstrate high quality analysis.

3.6.2 Presenting the research

Yin (2009) also recommends that “a replication logic should be applied [to the analysis techniques used] if a study involves multiple cases” (p162). The core interview questions remain consistent across all the case studies and the analysis and presentations of findings will also remain consistent.

Presenting the case studies in chapters four and five is intended to tell the story of the context, investigations and interpretations of data. Each case study will follow the same structure: clarifying the purpose of the research, a description of the context, explanation of the process including reflections of the experiences of the research, the findings from the methods used in the investigation and the critical reflection points relating to the conclusions and the techniques used to explore shared meaning. The end of each case study will consider how the findings have provided insight in relation to the propositions and additional questions that have arisen following the case study's findings. Figure 6 below outlines the structure that each case study will follow and the key questions each section will aim to answer.

Figure 5: The structure for presenting the case studies in chapters four and five



CHAPTER 4: Pilot studies

This chapter tells you the story of the pilot study – exploring the experiences of staff in three different contexts within the same retail company: the highest performing store, the highest engaged store and the store with the longest serving staff. This chapter's structure aims to meet Yin's (2009) recommendations for high quality analysis by: clarifying the purpose, describing the context, outlining the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews and pulling those together to deliver insights for being at one's best in work.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the two propositions made following the critical literature review: There will be consistency in the description of the workplace experiences for those in these high performing, highly engaged and highly committed and a signal of the consistency will be that the behavioural patterns and subjective states reflect the factors in the overlap in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment. A secondary purpose for this study is to provide reflection on the techniques used to explore the shared experiences and shared meaning.

The context is a national department store chain where a new format store had been launched three years previously. Three of these new stores had unexpected results: the newest store was 237% above target (performing); another store had been top of the staff survey results for two years running (engaged); and one store had the longest serving staff despite multiple challenges (committed).

The experiences of the researcher were overwhelmingly positive – all the staff she met were extremely professional, very kind and spoke positively about the organisation. In total 43 individuals were involved taking part in the interviews with word lists and questionnaires. These were conducted at each store over a number of days.

Findings from the questionnaire showed these individuals reported: Significantly higher levels of psychological capital; Feelings of optimism and being skilled predicted behavioural patterns; The values of tradition and benevolence were significantly higher; and there was a significant connection between individual values and perceived organisation values of hedonism, tradition, benevolence and universalism.

Interviews were analysed for themes, first manually and then using Nvivo software. The number of themes were reduced down to 18 – nine subjective states and nine behavioural patterns all using the words of participants. Each of the themes appeared in each of the

case study contexts. The most common being: *I have passion pride; I am confident that I am contributing; I take ownership for delivery; I develop and inspire others; and I develop myself.* The most common words used in the interviews were: customers; challenged; and work. The findings of the interviews are presented firstly as an overview of all participants then broken down by each context.

As a part of the interviews a word list activity was used. Initially it was intended to be a conversation starter but it became obvious that it was a data gather tool. Individuals were asked to select the words that were important to them personally and then tick which of those were also supported by their work. In these stores and average of 98% of the words selected were also ticked as supported by their work. The findings from the word lists are presented with the interview.

The critical reflection point at the end of the case study provided opportunity to reflect on the findings. It brings the interview themes together into a tentative framework to describe the common experiences of these individuals in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed stores. The framework involves positive subjective states about the job, about themselves and about colleagues alongside achieving, supporting and interacting positive behavioural patterns. The reflection also highlights the triangulation of the questionnaire and word list activity evidence and how the themes relate to the existing literature. In that way the two propositions are supported by this case study investigation.

The critical reflection point moves on to consider the techniques used in this investigation noting that the interviews provided credible and authentic evidence; the questionnaire was lengthy and not completed by all participants and produced different values evidence to the word list activity. Some suggestions for a shortened questionnaire and a more structured word list activity are recommended.

Further questions to explore following these pilot studies are highlighted: is the framework transferrable to other contexts?; Is the values connection seen in the word list activity simply a product of this values driven organisation?; would a shortened questionnaire provide more helpful triangulation data; How can observations be more structured?; and did the overwhelmingly positive experience of the researcher impact on the conclusions?

4.1 The purpose of this case study

This case study is both explorative and experimental (Van Aken 1994). It is exploring the notion of being at one's best in work and the start of an iterative process experimenting with techniques to clarify a shared meaning of being at one's best. It is rooted in a relativist ontology – that reality of being at one's best is a product of the context – and a constructionist epistemology – that the shared meaning of being at one's best is a result of the interaction between people within the context. The experimental element of the case study, means that the techniques used (interviews and questionnaires) need to be evaluated in terms of how helpful they are in exploring shared meaning. **The evaluation of techniques will be considered at the end of the pilot in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity** (Remenyi 2013).

Based on the review of literature relating to positive workplaces, positive behavioural patterns and positive subjective states (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000) there appears to be an inextricable link between the three and significant overlap in the performance, engagement and commitment literature (see chapter 2). It is proposed that in this overlap that 'being at one's best' can be found. Therefore the first proposition is:

There will be consistency in the description of the workplace experiences, in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states, for those in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts.

This case study considers three stores in one company – the first is 237% above target (high performing); the second has had the highest staff survey results for two years (highly engaged); and the third has the longest serving staff (highly committed). This case study explores the experiences of staff in these three contexts and aims to understand the consistencies and discrepancies in the participants' descriptions of their workplace experiences. The second proposition relates to the content of the consistency that is anticipated and again is based the literature review:

A signal of the consistency will be if the behavioural patterns and subjective states identified in those contexts reflect the key factors in the overlap in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment.

The key factors identified in the overlap of the literature were noted in Table 7 of Chapter 2 as: efficiency & productivity; proactivity; self-development; trust & supportive relationships; working to strengths; a values connection; job satisfaction; happiness; psychological capital; and a positive mind-set. If a consistency is identified, one might expect these to be reflected.

4.2 The context

The organisation is a national department store chain. Founded on the principles of partnership – all staff share in the profits. It can be considered a positive workplace in terms of profits as at the time of the research it was one of only a very few retail organisations declaring significant profits. It has also been recently voted as the best retailer to work for. This is quite a unique context and the nature of that partnership may play a role in the subjective states and behavioural patterns of the individuals.

The organisation was approached to take part in the research exploring when we are at our best in work after the researcher attended a conference where they shared research findings around the role of trust in the workplace. Agreement was made with the HR Director however her challenge was to make the research useful to them and the researcher met with various HR personnel. The new format stores HR Manager highlighted a number of stores that had significantly out-performed expectations and he was interested to know why. The new format stores had a flatter hierarchy and a different product offering (no fashion). Three stores were selected:

1. The newest new format store had opened four months previously and was performing at 237% above sales targets. This was beyond all the forecasts which were usually accurate.
2. The first store still had a large number of staff who had been there since opening despite experiencing significant challenges – 4 managers in 3 years, failures in the store design (which had been learned from for subsequent new format stores) and changeable performance levels. Yet staff remained committed and were in fact the longest serving staff in the new format stores. The performance of this store had also recently seen a marked improvement.
3. The third store had received the highest staff survey results for two consecutive years. They had a manager who also managed another store and experienced low foot fall as they were in a new trading estate.

These three stores represented for the researcher high performance, high commitment and high engagement. For the organisation, they were keen to understand if there was anything more they could learn from these stores.

4.3 Experiences of the researcher in the three stores

Having been introduced by the new format stores HR Manager by email the researcher contacted the branch managers of each store and worked with them to find a way to complete interviews and questionnaires that would be straightforward and demand as little time off the shop floor for staff as possible. All the managers were keen to be a part of the research and interested in the findings. All felt the questionnaire should be offered to everyone voluntarily and involvement in the interviews should be completely voluntary (though time off the shop floor was endorsed by the manager). Only the 'high commitment store' manager requested to meet in person in advance.

The conversations with the managers of each store provided some context and each shared their approach to managing the team, with a slightly different focus. The high performing store was the newest and the manager there shared how she was currently managing more than she would normally as she was setting out new processes and ensuring everyone knew what they were doing. The high commitment store had moved within the last 3 months to this store and was focussed on engaging the team through upskilling with support. He felt that they needed stability but to be inspired again. The highly engaged store was the quietest in terms of footfall as it was in a new business park. The manager here shared that he had focussed on developing the team aspect so that they would be well prepared when the footfall increased. The management teams in all stores talked about ensuring they were 'on message' when they were out of the management meetings – happy to discuss and debate issues but committed to sharing one message with the teams.

In both 'high performing' and 'high commitment' stores, the managers approached individuals at all levels to be involved in the interview. In the 'highly engaged' store the manager delegated the arranging of interviews to a colleague. The researcher thought that maybe this was an example of empowering the staff. This differing approach did mean that there were differing numbers from each context involved in the research:

- In the 'high performing' store: 17 were involved in the interviews and 8 completed the questionnaires.
- In the 'high commitment' store: 7 were involved in the interviews and 4 completed the questionnaires.
- In the 'highly engaged' store: 19 were involved in the interviews and 10 completed the questionnaires.

The researcher spent three days in the 'high performing' store, a day and a half in the 'high commitment' store and two days in the 'highly engaged' store. There were consistencies in the experiences within the stores: team meetings at the start of the day were observed; staff notice boards with celebrations of success and requests for involvement in store forums were also observed. There were also differences in terms of how much the manager spoke in the team meetings (the manager in the 'highly engaged' store spoke the least) and in terms of the number of staff notices (the newest or 'high performing' store had the fewest).

Spending a few days within the stores also allowed the researcher to interact with staff and observe their interactions with customers and each other. Without doubt, the interactions with store managers, department managers and shop workers were all extremely upbeat, professional and polite. The people could all be described as pleasant to be around, caring and decent. Most participants were intrigued by the research goal. Some of the interviews were short (15 minutes) but still the participants shared a passion and delight in their work. They spoke with enthusiasm and excitement about opportunities they had in their work.

The participants were from a range of backgrounds. Many were new to the company. Those who had moved from elsewhere in the company tended to be ones who were looking to further their career and the flatter hierarchy provided them with opportunity to gain extra responsibility they would not get in traditional stores. Some had purposefully chosen to take a step down in their career having experienced some distress in more senior roles elsewhere – all of these individuals were passionate about the company and the support given to them.

One stand out anomaly was one individual who spoke in a monotone fashion and seemed dismissive about the company. Interestingly when the researcher returned to the store to share findings, he had not passed his probation and left the company.

What surprised the researcher was the limited reference in the interviews to the partnership model. Generally it was only store managers and one or two department managers who spoke of this. Where other members of staff talked about the partnership context they used it to demonstrate that they believed the organisation cared for their well-being. The newest, 'high performing' store had not been open long enough to receive a partnership bonus although team members included people who had worked for the organisation in other stores so had experienced it. Whether this was a result of it just being taken as granted or if it in fact had limited effect on the experiences was not clear. There were however a number of symbols of the partnership approach throughout the store: in the staff room there were signs up for podiatrist visits to the store for staff to take advantage of; there were internal sales campaign posters; on all the staff notice boards there were notices about the forthcoming

staff forum, asking for ideas and views; and in the highly engaged store had a fortune cookie theme for announcing the last bonus and remnants of this were in the staff room.

Positioning the research helped to start the conversations with participants positively. The researcher highlighted that their context was unusual and that they had been selected for this reason to see if there was any learning that could be garnered from their experiences.

The word list activity within the interview had initially been intended to be a discussion starting point. Participants engaged in the activity and whilst it was indeed a point of discussion, it proved to be a positive experience for most of the participants as they visually saw how their work supported their values. One manager asked the researcher, "What are you doing to my staff in there? They are skipping out of these interviews!" This could also be a practical example of how an appreciative focus to the interviews becomes a positive experience for participants.

These experiences provided the context for the researcher and inevitably influenced the interpretation of results. The results of the questionnaire, the interview themes, including the values list findings are explained in some detail in the coming sections. What became clear was that the questionnaire whilst providing a wealth of data was limited by the number of participants from the case study context completing it. The researcher could have made more attempts whilst in the stores to get participants to complete the questionnaire in order to raise the numbers. Also feedback from those who completed it was that it took quite a while to complete. The interviews however provided a great deal of depth in the information they provided and the values lists actually provided more data than anticipated.

4.4 Findings from the questionnaire

In total there were just 21 participants fully completed questionnaires. Given the small number, the results have not been separated by store but used to get a sense of the whole picture. The questionnaire had questions relating to:

- Positive subjective states (based on Luthans & Youseff 2007 psychological capital questionnaire and additional elements relating to agility and feeling skilled)

Example question: Rate the statements: Agree/ Slightly agree / Slightly disagree / Disagree

I feel confident contributing to discussions

- Positive behavioural patterns (based on Griffen et al's model of performance in changing environments)

Example question: Rate the statements: Agree/ Slightly agree / Slightly disagree / Disagree

I enjoy working with people outside of my immediate team

- Individual values (based on Schwartz's 2009 ESS Human Values statements)

Example question: tick the statements that apply to you

Independence is important to me / I want an exciting life / I seek every chance I can to have fun / I want people to admire me / I want to have lots of money and expensive things / I think people should follow rules at all times.

- Perception of organisation values

Example question: Rate the statements: False / False most of the time / True most of the time / True

In my organisation innovation is applauded

- Perception of organisation values via the manager

Example question: Rate the statements: False / False most of the time / True most of the time / True

My manager is good at addressing the poor behaviour of others

An example of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix III

In order to gain a comparison of results, the questionnaire was also sent to 101 other working people. These were obtained by sending the link to personal contacts who also passed on to others they knew. In that way it was a self-selecting sample of working people. This sample can be described as:

Gender: 42% male and 57% female
Age: 58% aged over 40 years old
Status: 73% employed; 18% self-employed; 8% Directors and 1% 'other'
Tenure: 28% were in their job less than 1 yr; 11% 1-2 yrs; 24% 2-5 yrs & 16% 10+ yrs
Size: 22% worked in an organisation with less than 5 employees; 33% in SMEs (up to 250 employees) and 46% in large organisations (over 250)

The following sections provide some detail regarding the findings from each section of the questionnaire. In summary:

- The case study group showed significantly higher levels of positive subjective states but no significant difference was found in the levels of positive behavioural patterns. More specifically, the case study group showed significantly higher levels of Self Efficacy than the comparison group.
- Feelings of optimism and feeling skilled together predicted responses to the questions relating to behavioural patterns.
- The value of Tradition was significantly more common for individuals in the case study group than the comparison group.
- The perceived organisation value of Benevolence for the case study group was significantly more common than in the comparison group.
- In the case study group significant relationships were found between individual values and perceived organisation values of: hedonism (perceived via the manager only); power (perceived through the organisation only); tradition (perceived through both the organisation and the manager); benevolence (perceived via the manager only) and universalism (perceived through both the organisation and the manager).

4.4.1 Questions relating to positive subjective states

These questions were primarily using the statements from Luthans & Yousseff's (2007) psychological capital questionnaire with additional elements relating to agility and feeling skilled. There were 36 questions in total, relating to individuals' feelings of self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, hope, agility and skill (6 questions for each). Ratings were 1-4 so the maximum total rating for each set of questions was 24. Table 13 on the next page provides a comparison of the mean, standard deviation and cronbach alpha reliability of responses. Alphas stated in bold are acceptable based on Hair et al (1998) assertion that alphas ≥ 0.6 is acceptable for exploratory scales.

Table 14: Analysis of positive subjective state questionnaire results

Positive Subjective States	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=22)		
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)
TOTAL	110.47	11.63	0.88	117.86	9.76	0.89
Self-Efficacy	17.17	8.39	0.75	20.45	2.93	0.80
Optimism	18.95	2.49	0.69	19.23	1.54	0.17
Resilience	20.28	1.95	0.56	20.77	3.42	0.48
Hope	19.88	2.36	0.70	19.59	2.50	0.81
Agility	18.04	1.57	0.18	18.32	1.59	0.47
Skilled	16.15	7.81	0.48	19.5	1.99	0.45

Reliability of question scales

The reliability of the scale for total positive subjective states at work showed good internal consistency in both the comparison group ($\alpha = 0.88$) and the case study group ($\alpha = 0.89$). Four of the individual scales showed good reliability in the comparison group: Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = 0.75$); Optimism ($\alpha = 0.69$); Resilience ($\alpha = 0.56$); and Hope ($\alpha = 0.70$). Only two of the individual scales showed good reliability in the case study group which is likely to be a result of the small sample size: Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = 0.80$); and Hope ($\alpha = 0.81$).

Differences between the two groups

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the results between the comparison group and case study group. There were three significant differences:

- There was a significant difference in the total positive states ratings for case study group ($\mu = 117.86$, $sd=9.76$) and the comparison group ($\mu = 110.47$, $sd=11.63$) conditions ($t=3.104$ $p<0.05$).
- There was a significant difference in the self-efficacy ratings for the case study group ($\mu = 20.45$, $sd=2.93$) and comparison group ($\mu = 17.17$, $sd=8.39$) conditions ($t=3.146$ $p<0.05$).
- There was a significant difference in the feeling skilled ratings for the case study group ($\mu = 19.5$, $sd=1.99$) and comparison group ($\mu = 16.15$, $sd=7.81$) conditions ($t=3.784$ $p<0.05$).

4.4.2 Questions relating to positive behavioural patterns

These questions were constructed Griffen et al's (2007) model of performance in a changing environment with additional questions relating to behaving passionately/enthusiastically. There were 24 questions in total, relating to individuals behaviour around proficiency, adaptivity, proactivity and passion (6 questions for each). Ratings were 1-4 so the maximum total rating for each set of questions was 24. Table 14 on the next page provides a comparison of the mean, standard deviation and cronbach alpha reliability of responses. Alphas stated in bold are acceptable based on Hair et al (1998) assertion that alphas ≥ 0.6 is acceptable for exploratory scales.

Table 15: Analysis of positive behavioural patterns questionnaire results

Positive Behavioural Patterns	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=22)		
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)
TOTAL	78.89	9.35	0.84	80.18	7.42	0.88
Proficient	20.59	2.08	0.55	20.86	1.86	0.60
Adaptive	19.53	2.31	0.52	19.64	2.19	0.58
Proactive	18.9	2.24	0.53	19.09	2.09	0.63
Passionate	19.87	3.23	0.79	20.59	2.48	0.76

Reliability of question scales

The reliability of the scale for total positive behavioural patterns showed good internal consistency in both the comparison group ($\alpha = 0.84$) and the case study group ($\alpha = 0.88$). The internal consistency of the case study responses was more promising than in the comparison group: Proficient ($\alpha = 0.60$); Adaptive ($\alpha = 0.58$); Proactive ($\alpha = 0.63$); Passionate ($\alpha = 0.76$). In the comparison group only two of the individual scales showed promising reliability: Proficient ($\alpha = 0.55$); and Passionate ($\alpha = 0.79$).

There were no significant differences between the means of the two groups.

4.4.3 Positive subjective states & behavioural patterns

Multiple regression analysis was conducted on all responses to investigate which elements of the positive subjective states may predict positive behavioural patterns. A significant model emerged only for the comparison group data only ($F_{6,94}=14.728$, $p<0.0005$. Adjusted R square = 0.452). Significant variables are shown below:

Table 16: Comparison group significant predictors of positive behavioural patterns

Predictor:	Beta	P
Optimism	0.256	0.009
Skilled	0.260	0.006

4.4.4 Questions relating to Individual values

For these questions, individuals were asked to select which statements applied to them and which were important to them (rating 0 if not selected 1 if selected and 2 if also important). Statements were related to Schwartz (2009) values questionnaire. The number of items relating to each of the values was 4 apart from benevolence which was 3, conformity which was 5 and universalism which was 6. Table 16 below provides a comparison of the mean, standard deviation and cronbach alpha reliability of responses.

Table 17: Analysis of items relating to individual values

Values	Comparison Group (n=101)				Case Study Group (n=22)			
	Mean(μ) scale	SD	Mean(μ) per item	Alpha (α)	Mean(μ) scale	SD	Mean(μ) per item	Alpha (α)
Self-Direction	3.50	2.01	0.88	0.70	3.14	1.86	0.79	0.60
Stimulation	3.13	2.11	0.78	0.76	3.41	2.18	0.85	0.75
Hedonism	2.74	1.75	0.69	0.64	2.77	1.83	0.69	0.68
Achievement	3.32	2.2	0.83	0.76	3.18	2.11	0.80	0.74
Power	1.76	1.42	0.44	0.49	2.00	1.86	0.50	0.65
Security	2.43	1.73	0.61	0.46	2.63	1.59	0.66	0.28
Conformity	2.03	1.91	0.41	0.65	2.91	2.16	0.58	0.67
Tradition	1.79	1.50	0.44	0.57	2.73	2.03	0.68	0.70
Benevolence	2.6	1.64	0.87	0.64	2.41	1.37	0.80	0.35
Universalism	4.6	2.57	0.77	0.72	5.18	3.05	0.86	0.84

Reliability of items

Eight of the scales for the chosen individual values showed good internal consistency (according to Hair et al 1998) in the comparison group only: Benevolence ($\alpha = 0.64$); in the case study group only, Power ($\alpha = 0.65$); and in both groups: Self Direction ($\alpha = 0.70$), Stimulation ($\alpha = 0.76$), Hedonism ($\alpha = 0.64$), Achievement ($\alpha = 0.76$), Conformity ($\alpha = 0.65$), Tradition ($\alpha = 0.57$), and Universalism ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Differences between the two groups

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the results between the comparison group and case study group. There was one significant difference:

- There was a significant difference in the Tradition value ratings for case study group ($\mu = 2.73$, $sd = 2.03$) and the comparison group ($\mu = 1.79$, $sd = 1.50$) conditions ($t = 2.053$ $p < 0.05$).

4.4.4 Questions relating to perceived organisation values

For these items, individuals were asked to rate statements (0=false; 1=false most of the time; 2=true most of the time; 3=true). Statements were related to Schwartz (2009) values questionnaire but reworded with 'in my organisation...' or 'my manager...'. There were two items for each of the 10 values. Table 17 over the page provides a comparison of the mean, standard deviation and Cronbach alpha reliability of responses to statements starting with 'in my organisation...'. Table 18 on the page following provides a comparison of the mean and standard deviation and Cronbach alpha reliability of responses to statements starting with 'my manager...'

Table 18: Analysis of items relating to perceived organisation values

Values	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=22)		
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)
Self-Direction	5.74	1.87	0.74	5.55	2.02	0.83
Stimulation	5.9	2.01	0.80	5.77	2.16	0.90
Hedonism	5.7	1.98	0.73	5.86	2.21	0.84
Achievement	5.25	2.13	0.78	5.5	2.18	0.77
Power	4.45	1.61	0.02	4.27	1.75	0.33
Security	6.37	1.99	0.78	6.64	2.3	0.97
Conformity	5.38	1.84	0.67	5.64	2.06	0.86
Tradition	5.09	1.85	0.56	5.73	2.14	0.86
Benevolence	4.29	1.91	0.44	5.23	2.00	0.75
Universalism	5.54	2.15	0.80	5.95	2.32	0.92

Reliability of items

Eight of the scales for the perceived organisation values showed good internal consistency (according to Hair et al 1998) in both the comparison group and the case study group: Self Direction ($\alpha=0.74, 0.83$); Stimulation ($\alpha=0.80, 0.9$); Hedonism ($\alpha=0.73, 0.84$); Achievement ($\alpha=0.78, 0.77$); Security ($\alpha=0.78, 0.97$); Conformity ($\alpha=0.67, 0.86$); Tradition ($\alpha=0.56, 0.86$); and Universalism ($\alpha=0.80,0.92$). In addition, in the case study group Benevolence was found to have good internal consistency ($\alpha=0.75$);

Differences between the perceived organisation and individual values

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the results between the comparison group and case study group. There was one significant difference:

- There was a significant difference in the perceived organisation value of Benevolence ratings for case study group ($\mu=5.23$, $sd=2.0$) and the comparison group ($\mu =4.03$, $sd=1.811$) conditions ($t=2.592$ $p<0.05$).

Table 19: Analysis of items relating to perceived organisation values via manager

Values	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=22)		
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)
Self-Direction	6.23	2.15	0.84	5.82	2.40	0.79
Stimulation	5.86	2.04	0.74	5.64	2.15	0.73
Hedonism	5.80	2.09	0.82	5.82	2.17	0.80
Achievement	6.07	2.22	0.78	5.77	2.31	0.63
Power	6.1	2.21	0.89	6.18	2.38	0.88
Security	6.36	2.16	0.86	6.27	2.72	0.82
Conformity	5.74	2.10	0.76	5.64	2.06	0.87
Tradition	6.05	2.14	0.80	6.09	2.25	0.86
Benevolence	6.35	2.18	0.86	6.27	2.31	0.85
Universalism	4.94	2.14	0.70	5.27	2.03	0.70

Reliability of items

All the scales for scales relating to the perceived organisation values based on their experience of their manager showed good internal consistency (according to Hair et al 1998) in both the comparison group and the case study group: Self Direction ($\alpha=0.84$, 0.79); Stimulation ($\alpha=0.74$, 0.73); Hedonism ($\alpha=0.82$, 0.80); Achievement ($\alpha=0.78$, 0.63); Power ($\alpha=0.89$, 0.88); Security ($\alpha=0.86$, 0.82); Conformity ($\alpha=0.76$, 0.87); Tradition ($\alpha=0.80$, 0.86); Benevolence ($\alpha=0.86$, 0.85); and Universalism ($\alpha=0.70$,0.72).

There were no significant differences between the comparison group and case study group.

4.4.5 Relationship between individual & organisation values

The relationship between individual values ratings and organisational values perceived through the organisation and manager was investigated using Pearson product-movement correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Table 19 shows all the correlations for all the values.

Table 20: The correlations between individual values and perceived values via organisation and manager for the comparison group and case study group

Individual Values:	Comparison Group		Case Study Group	
	Perceived Org	Perceived Mgr	Perceived Org	Perceived Mgr
Self-Direction	0.359**	0.277**	0.157	0.187
Stimulation	0.29**	0.275**	0.396	0.41
Hedonism	0.254**	0.256**	0.405	0.433*
Achievement	0.279**	0.196*	0.239	0.303
Power	0.397**	0.166	0.546*	0.306
Security	0.192	0.237*	0.280	0.210
Conformity	0.242*	0.122	0.239	0.303
Tradition	0.452**	0.297**	0.475*	0.55**
Benevolence	0.229*	0.227*	0.26	0.46*
Universalism	0.439**	0.302**	0.661**	0.438*

** = $p < 0.01$ * = $p < 0.05$

For Self-Direction, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.36$ $n=101$ $p < 0.01$) in the comparison group. There was a small significant relationship between the individual

and organisation values perceived through the manager ($r=0.28$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) in the comparison group. There were no significant relationships found in the case study group.

For Stimulation, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through both the organisation ($r=0.29$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.28$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) in the comparison group only. There were no significant relationships found in the case study group.

For Hedonism, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through both the organisation ($r=0.25$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.26$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) in the comparison group. In the case study group there was also a moderate significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the manager ($r=0.433$ $n=21$ $p<0.01$).

For Achievement, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.28$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.20$ $n=101$ $p<0.05$) in the comparison group only. There were no significant relationships found in the case study group for this value.

For Power, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation in the comparison group ($r=0.40$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$). In the case study group, a strong significant relationship was found between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.55$ $n=21$ $p<0.05$).

For Security, there was a weak positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the manager in the comparison group ($r=0.237$ $n=101$ $p<0.05$). There were no significant relationships found in the case study group for this value.

For Conformity, there was a weak positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation in the comparison group ($r=0.242$ $n=101$ $p<0.05$). There were no significant relationships found in the case study group for this value.

For Tradition, there was a moderate positive significant relationship between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.45$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.30$ $n=101$ $p<0.05$) in the comparison group. In the case study group a moderate positive significant relationship was found between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.48$ $n=21$ $p<0.01$). A strong

significant relationship was found between individual and organisation values perceived through the manager ($r=0.55$ $n=21$ $p<0.01$).

For Benevolence, there was a weak positive significant relationship found between individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.23$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.23$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) in the comparison group. In the case study group, there was a moderate positive relationship found between individual values and perceived manager values ($r=0.46$ $n=21$ $p<0.05$).

For Universalism, there was a moderate positive significant relationship found between individual values and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.44$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) and through the manager ($r=0.30$ $n=101$ $p<0.01$) in the comparison group. In the case study group, a strong positive significant relationship was found between the individual and organisation values perceived through the organisation ($r=0.67$ $n=21$ $p<0.01$). A moderate positive significant relationship was found between the individual and organisation values perceived through the manager ($r=0.44$ $n=21$ $p<0.05$).

4.5 Findings from interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of all staff levels within each store, 43 in total:

- 3 store managers, 13 department & section managers, 27 sales floor staff
- 46% were male and 54% female

There were six core questions asked of each interviewee:

- Tell me about how you came to work here
- What attracted you to the role?
- What were your first impressions?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What is a great day for you?

The interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 90 minutes. This was due to the availability of the member of staff and how talkative they were.

Each interview was transcribed. The analysis of the interview data followed the first four parts of Smith et al (2012) guidance of interpretative phenomenological analysis:

1. Reading and re-reading to help the researcher become fully immersed in the data.
2. Initial noting of key words and sentences in each interview
Summary statements for each participant's response to each of the core questions and any subsequent questions were noted.
3. Developing emergent themes across the interviews
Codes were allocated to clarify broad themes around individual's descriptions of their subjective states and behavioural patterns
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes
At this point, it was recognised the volume of the data was too high to interrogate effectively. The interview transcripts were transferred into Nvivo software and coded again. This had the additional benefit of re-immersing the researcher in the data.

The following pages provide detail of the themes in the interviews firstly identified manually, moving from 43 themes to 20. This is followed by the subsequent interrogation of themes using Nvivo software which showed 18 distinct themes (i.e. no word similarities found between them) which are relating to both positive subjective states as well as positive

behavioural patterns. The most common theme found in all stores was "I have passion and pride" and the most common word used in the interviews was "customers". The word list also provided some interesting and consistent results. The most common word selected as 'important to me' was "Teamwork" (88% of participants selected this). On average, the correlation between words selected as important to me and as supported in my work was high and significant ($r=0.95$ $p<0.01$). When the word list was mapped to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values, the four dominant values in all stores were: Achievement, Security, Hedonism and Conformity. The similarities and differences between the three stores are also highlighted.

4.5.1 Themes identified manually

Both inductive and deductive approaches were used to identify themes. Expressed subjective states and described behavioural patterns provided the basis of the themes. Specific themes under each of those titles were then identified. Initially 26 subjective states and 17 behavioural patterns were noted. These were rationalised down to 11 subjective states and 9 behavioural patterns based on: the similarity of the statements coded and regularity of coding. The tables 20 below and Table 21 on the following page show the final themes used and the corresponding originally noted themes.

Table 21: Subjective state themes and corresponding originally noted themes

Theme	Corresponding original themes
I love my job	I want to work I want to make it fun I love what I do
I am confident that I'm contributing	I am confident / it comes easily I am contributing / helping
I am challenged	I am challenged I feel stretched
I've bonded with the team	There is a family feeling We have a share experience We feel like a team
I am respected and appreciated	I am fairly treated I am trusted and respected I feel appreciated
I have passion and pride	Passionate about the company Loyalty and pride at work
I am empowered and growing	Empowered and supported I am learning I know what is expected
I'm inspired by my manager	My manager is awesome I learn from my manager
I feel positive	Positive I feel great
I'm doing something different / unique	I like doing something different / new / unique
I aspire to do more	I want variety I aspire to do more I want to develop

Table 22: Behavioural pattern themes and corresponding originally noted themes

Theme	Corresponding original themes
I take ownership for delivery	I take ownership for delivery I tick things off my list of things to do I solve problems
I am focussed on the commercial / sales	I'm focussed on commercial I am focussed on selling
I develop & inspire others	I inspire others I trust others to deliver I develop others
I am sociable with colleagues	I am sociable with colleagues I treat my colleagues right
I am sociable with customers	I am sociable with customers I chat with customers to get to know them
I work as a team & support others	I work with my colleagues as a team We support each other
I develop myself	I develop myself and my knowledge I have become specialised
I get things done properly	I do my work enthusiastically I do my best for the customer I am always prepared I get things done properly I follow the rules
I am flexible	I am flexible I change from activity to activity easily

These final themes were then reviewed on a number of levels:

- Frequency of occurrence – per person: recognising the interviews were different lengths and some participants were more talkative than others, the number of people mentioning these themes were counted. This was to ensure that one person's views were not unduly emphasised.
- Frequency of reference – overall: the regularity of a theme's appearance would provide an overall impression of the interviewer's experience as it reflected the repeated themes.

- Context - role specific: the themes were reviewed to identify any differences between the roles. There were none that only related to one role in the stores. Store managers were particularly 'feeling positive', 'challenged' and 'proud'. Store and department managers were particularly focussed on developing themselves and others and it was these people who most regularly referenced being inspired by their manager.
- Context – question asked: the themes were also interrogated to identify any differences in their occurrence in responses to the questions asked. Again themes were represented in responses to all the questions. The question asking to describe a great day was particularly helpful for providing a range of themes in the responses.
- Anomalies: the interviews were reviewed to identify where any unusual or different themes occurred. There was one person who's comments were quite different to others. He is the person identified earlier and who later left the company. Other anomalies were honest comments relating to their attraction to the role or first impressions. These comments were far out-weighted in the remainder of the interview.

Appendix IV provides these details for each of the manually identified themes along with example phrases used by the interviewees and the breakdown as above. All the themes were referenced by a minimum of 12 participants (29%).

The most common subjective states coded manually were:

I'm confident that I'm contributing to success

e.g. "There is a sense of fulfilment in what I do here"

e.g. "I now know so much more and I am good at selling the cards"

e.g. "I know that I can do it"

I've bonded with the team

e.g. "We have bonded here"

e.g. "We are all one family"

e.g. "We're all in it together - even if you're down, someone will pick you up"

I feel positive

e.g. "We are a happy bunch – there are not many people who are negative"

e.g. "I just feel really positive at the end of the day"

e.g. "The future is an opportunity – there will be more foot-fall"

The most common behaviour patterns coded manually were:

I take ownership

e.g. "I love ticking things off my list"

e.g. "I like seeing it through until the end"

e.g. "A great day for me is when I've sorted out a problem no one else could"

I'm sociable with my colleagues

e.g. "We all get on well and chat as we work"

e.g. "I really like spending time with these people"

e.g. "I walk the floor and chat with the partners"

The volume of interviews and themes made it difficult to ensure consistency and accuracy of coding so software was sought to manage the data. Using Nvivo software, the interviews were coded again, using the 10 subjective state themes and 9 behavioural pattern themes. The processes of recoding allowed the researcher to double check the consistency and ensure phrases and words were allocated appropriately. This produced some differences in the coding, outlined in the next section, and allowed for a more thorough interrogation of the data.

4.5.2 Theme interrogation with Nvivo

Initially the theme interrogation was conducted manually. Interview transcripts were imported into Nvivo software and coded again, using the software. This allowed for a more systematic coding of statements within the interviews which meant changes for three themes in particular. Firstly as all the subjective states were positive, only the statements that directly reflected the words "I feel positive" were coded as such in Nvivo which meant fewer codes. Secondly, the theme "I am doing something unique", was amalgamated into a number of other codes as the rationale for their statements were related to other themes e.g. I feel challenged. Where it was a statement without any rationale or clarity was so rare that it was not deemed a separate theme. Thirdly, the theme 'I love my job' was also amalgamated into other themes most notably 'I have passion and pride'. This meant that there were now 9 positive subjective state themes and 9 positive behavioural pattern themes.

Using Nvivo software also allowed for a deeper analysis in terms of:

- Word similarity – to identify whether themes were distinct
- Tree Maps – to represent the regularity of occurrence and reference of the themes and quickly identify the dominant themes of conversations in each context
- Simultaneous occurrence of themes – using cluster diagrams and significant correlations to identify which themes were related to each other i.e. when one distinct theme was spoken about in an interview, showing the other themes that were also talked about.

The following pages describe the findings in detail, firstly in all stores combined. Here, the most common subjective state was: 'I have passion and pride'. The most common behavioural pattern was: 'I take ownership for delivery'. There were no significant relationships based on word clusters suggesting the themes were independent of each other and no significant relationships based on coding clusters. A word cloud also highlights the most common words used, the top being 'customers'. From the word list, there was a strong relationship seen between words selected as 'important to me' and 'supported by my work'. More than half of the words selected as 'important to me' related to: Achievement, Security, Hedonism and Conformity.

Moving on to the analysis of the highly committed store, the most common subjective state was: 'I have passion and pride'. The most common behavioural pattern was: 'I develop and inspire others'. There were four significant coding clusters in the themes. In the word list all

the participants selected "fun" as 'important to me' and they all felt that was supported in their work also. The same four value themes in the words selected were seen as in the whole group.

For the highly engaged store, the most common subjective state was again, "I have passion and pride". The most common behavioural pattern was: "I take ownership for delivery". There were no significant coding relationships. From the word list, again "Fun" was the most common word selected (by 90% of this group) and all felt that it was supported by their work. The same four value themes in the words selected were seen as in the whole group.

In the high performance store, the most common subjective state was: "I am confident that I am contributing". The most common behavioural pattern was: "I develop and inspire others". Again, here there were no significant coding relationships. In the word list, "Teamwork" was the most common word selected (by 88% of participants) and all felt it was supported by their work. In this store, the four key value themes related to: Achievement, Security, Stimulation and Conformity.

4.5.2.1 All stores combined: Nvivo interrogation of themes

Table 23 below provides a breakdown of the number of coding references for each theme and the number of interviews where those codes appeared. Even the least common theme was referenced in 23% of the interviews indicating a clear commonality of themes. Figure 6 over the page provides a Tree Map representing the themes based on the number of references and the number of interviews. There were no significant relationships found when themes were clustered by word similarity or when clustered by coding similarity. Figure 7 shows a word cloud produced by Nvivo of the top 100 terms used in all interviews.

Table 23: All stores' themes compared in all interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
State	I have passion & pride	54	30
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	43	27
State	I am confident I'm contributing	43	23
Behaviour	I develop & inspire others	35	14
Behaviour	I develop myself	31	21
Behaviour	I work as a team	26	19
State	I am empowered & growing	22	15
State	I am challenged	19	13
Behaviour	I am focussed on commercials	17	12
State	I am inspired by my manager	16	13
State	I'm respected and appreciated	16	14
State	I've bonded with the team	16	11
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	13	11
Behaviour	I'm flexible	13	13
State	I aspire to do more	31	9
Behaviour	I get things done properly	11	9
Behaviour	I spend time with customers	11	11
State	I feel positive	10	9

The word lists were initially intended to be a conversation starter around the subject of values during the interviews. Participants were asked to choose which of the 132 words were important to them and later in the interview they were asked which of the ones they had chosen were supported by their work. Data was collected from all 43 interview participants. The full data relating to the words selected and the words identified as supported by work, for each store can be found in Appendix IV.

Table 24 shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common being Teamwork – selected by 88% of participants and all of them saying it was also supported in their work.

Table 24: All stores: most common words selected as important to me

Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Teamwork	88	100
Trust	81	100
Communication	76	100
Fun	76	97
Fairness	74	97
Respect for others	71	100
Accomplishment/success	67	96
Challenge	67	96

The list had been gathered from a range of online word lists relating to values. Post hoc, these words were mapped to Schwartz's (2008) 10 motivational values by the researcher and two peers (in order to gain a broader consensus). The words mapped to Shwartz's (2008) 10 motivational values can be found in Appendix X.

Table 25 over the page provides an overview of the 10 values in terms of the frequency that words were selected by the 43 participants and the correlation observed between selected words and those also selected as supported by their work. As each group contained a different number of mapped words, the total selected words are represented by a proportional figure (calculated by: number of words in selection / total words x total selected). Figure 8 illustrates the spread of the selections. More than half of the words selected related to: Achievement, Security, Hedonism and Conformity. As noted earlier, Achievement also featured in the top four values found in the questionnaire ($\mu=3.18$).

Table 25: All stores: Values selections

Value	No Words	Total Selected SELF	Total Selected SUPPORTED	Proportion Selected	Correlation
Achievement	15	244	232	27.73	0.98
Benevolence	13	171	145	16.84	0.95
Conformity	14	187	170	19.83	0.93
Hedonism	15	192	166	21.82	0.92
Power	12	121	105	11.00	0.98
Security	14	246	230	26.09	0.98
Self-Direction	12	138	129	12.55	0.98
Stimulation	14	179	160	18.98	0.89
Tradition	11	139	129	11.58	0.95
Universalism	12	161	155	14.64	0.98

Figure 8: All stores: Values selections



4.5.2.2 High performing store: Nvivo interrogation of themes

Table 26 below provides a breakdown of the number of coding references for each theme and the number of interviews where those codes appeared. Figure 9 provides a Tree Map produced by Nvivo representing the themes based on the number of references and the number of interviews. There were no significant relationships found when themes were clustered by coding similarity.

Table 26: Themes compared in high performing store interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
State	I'm confident I'm contributing	23	9
Behaviour	I develop and inspire others	15	4
State	I have passion and pride	15	10
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	12	10
Behaviour	I develop myself	11	7
Behaviour	I'm focussed on commercials	9	5
State	I am inspired by my manager	8	6
State	I am challenged	7	6
Behaviour	I work as a team	6	5
State	I am empowered & growing	6	4
Behaviour	I'm flexible	5	5
State	I'm respected & appreciated	5	4
Behaviour	I get things done properly	3	2
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	3	3
State	I feel positive	3	3
State	I aspire to do more	3	3
Behaviour	I spend time with customers	2	2
State	I've bonded with the team	2	2

Figure 9: High performing store Tree Map of themes in interviews

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



This Tree Map highlights that the conversations in the high performing store were dominated by the themes:

- **I am confident that I am contributing**
 - with statements such as: *“My department is my department – I make decisions locally that contribute to communal success”*
- **I have passion and pride**
 - with statements such as: *“I fell in love with the theatre of it all – the move from a shop to a destination. The culture is really lived”*
- **I take ownership for delivery**
 - with statements such as: *“I’m accountable for everything”*
- **I develop my self**
 - with statements such as: *“I wanted something different – I wanted to develop myself”*
- **I develop and inspire others**
 - with statements such as: *“My favourite part is developing the team”.*

Data from the word lists were collected from the 19 interview participants. Table 27 shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common word being Teamwork – selected by 88% of participants and all of them also saying it was supported in their work.

Table 27: High Performing Store: most common words selected as important to me

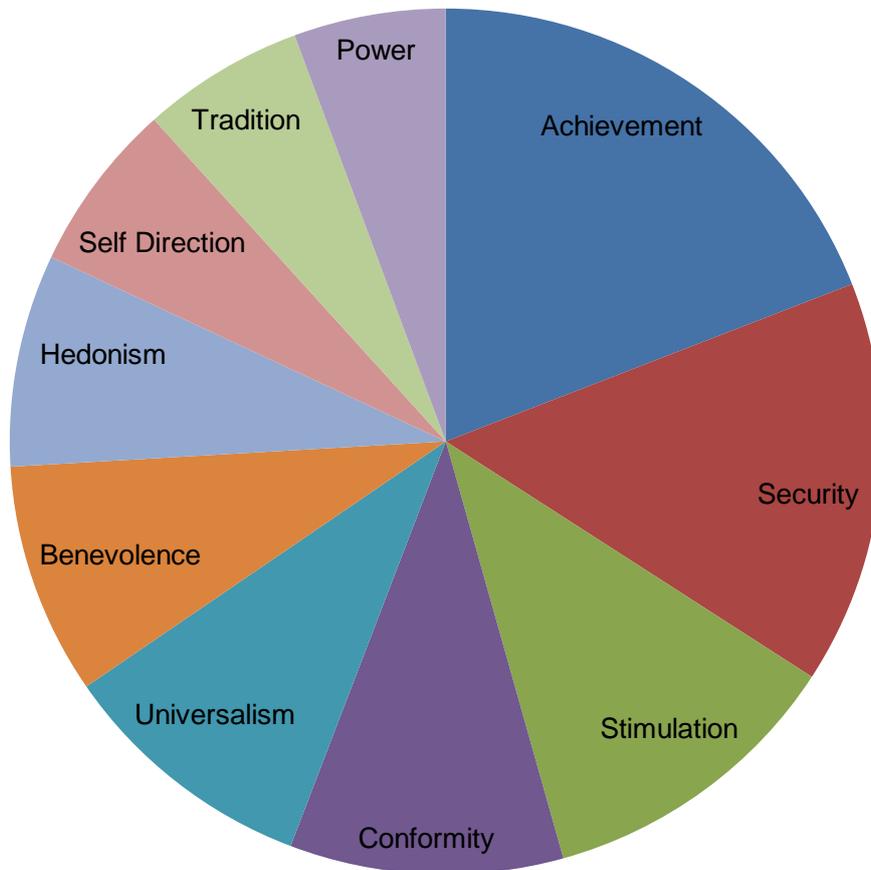
Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Teamwork	88	100
Trust	77	100
Accomplishment	65	100
Fairness	65	91
Communication	59	100
Respect for Others	53	100

Table 28 over the page provides an overview of Schwartz's (2008) 10 values in terms of the frequency that words were selected by the 19 participants and the correlation observed between selected words and those also selected as supported by their work. As each grouping contained a different number of mapped words, the total selected words are represented by a proportional figure (calculated by: number of words in selection / total words x total selected). Although there were a greater range of selections, in this store there was greater consistency observed in terms of which of the selections were also seen as supported by their work. All correlations were significant $p < 0.01$ and ranged from 0.92 – 1. Two of the values saw a correlation of 1: Achievement and Universalism. All the words selected in relation to these values were also selected as supported by their work. For Figure 10 also over the page illustrates the spread of the selections. This store also saw a slightly different mix in terms of the most common values. More than half of the words selected related to: Achievement, Security, Stimulation and Conformity. For this mostly recently opened store, Hedonism was replaced by Stimulation in the top four.

Table 28: High Performing Store: Values selections

Value	No Words	Total Selected SELF	Total Selected SUPPORTED	Proportion Selected	Correlation
Achievement	15	65	64	7.39	1
Benevolence	13	34	31	3.35	0.98
Conformity	14	37	36	3.92	0.99
Hedonism	15	27	25	3.07	0.96
Power	12	24	23	2.18	0.92
Security	14	55	54	5.83	0.99
Self Direction	12	27	26	2.45	0.97
Stimulation	14	42	40	4.45	0.98
Tradition	11	28	27	2.33	0.99
Universalism	12	41	41	3.73	1

Figure 10: High Performing: Values selections



4.5.2.3 Highly committed store: Nvivo interrogation of themes

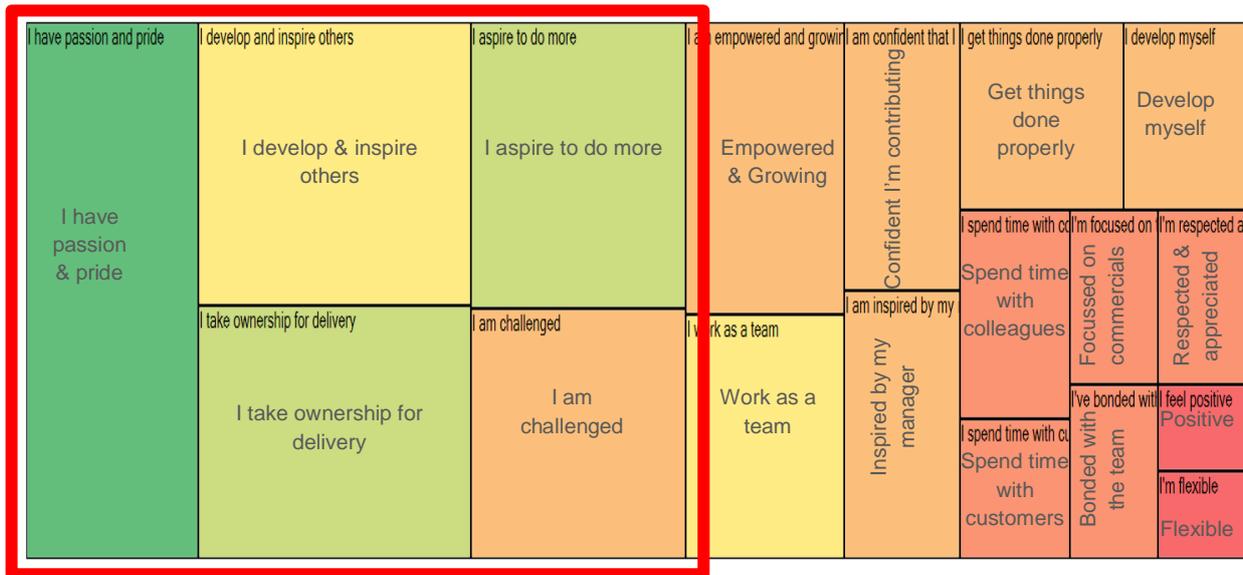
Table 29 below provides a breakdown of the number of coding references for each theme and the number of interviews where those codes appeared. Figure 11 provides a Tree Map produced by Nvivo representing the themes based on the number of references and the number of interviews. There were four significant relationships found when themes were clustered by coding similarity, suggesting when theme A was coded in an interview, theme B was also commonly coded. Table 30 provides the coefficient relationships for the clustered or related themes.

Table 29: Themes compared in highly committed store interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
State	I have passion & pride	12	7
Behaviour	I develop & inspire others	10	4
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	9	5
State	I aspire to do more	8	5
State	I am challenged	7	3
State	I am empowered & growing	6	3
Behaviour	I work as a team	5	4
Behaviour	I get things done properly	4	3
State	I am inspired by my manager	4	3
State	I am confident I'm contributing	4	3
Behaviour	I develop myself	3	3
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	3	2
Behaviour	I am focussed on commercials	2	2
Behaviour	I spend time with customers	2	2
State	I'm respected & appreciated	2	2
State	I've bonded with the team	2	2
Behaviour	I'm flexible	1	1
State	I feel positive	1	1

Figure 11: Highly committed store Tree Map of themes in interviews

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



This Tree Map highlights that the conversations in the highly engaged store were dominated by the themes:

- **I have passion and pride**
 - with statements such as: *“People want to work here and feel lucky to be here”*
- **I develop and inspire others**
 - with statements such as: *“I have now developed a team with confidence”*
- **I take ownership for delivery**
 - with statements such as: *“I like being held accountable for things and holding others to account – we need to be honest”*
- **I aspire to do more**
 - with statements such as: *“I have put myself on the ‘aspiring to be’ list and starting to take on more in my role”*
- **I am challenged**
 - with statements such as: *“Everything you do has a massive impact on the business”*

Table 30: Themes clustered by coding similarity – significant relationships

Theme A	Theme B	Jaccard's coefficient
Behaviour: I develop & inspire others	State: I am empowered & growing	0.75
Behaviour: I work as a team	Behaviour: I get things done properly	0.75
State: I have passion and pride	State: I aspire to do more	0.71
Behaviour: I take ownership for delivery	State: I have passion & pride	0.71

These significant relationships highlight the common links in the conversations in the highly committed store. When individuals talked about developing and inspiring others they were also talking about how they felt they were empowered themselves and growing. When they were talking about working as a team, they were also focussed on doing things properly. When talking about their passion and pride in their work, they often highlighted that they wanted to do more or develop their career and they also talked about taking ownership for problems and issues.

Data from the word lists were collected from the 7 interview participants. Table 31 shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common word being fun – selected by all participants and all also saying it was supported in their work.

Table 31: Highly Committed Store: most common words selected as important to me

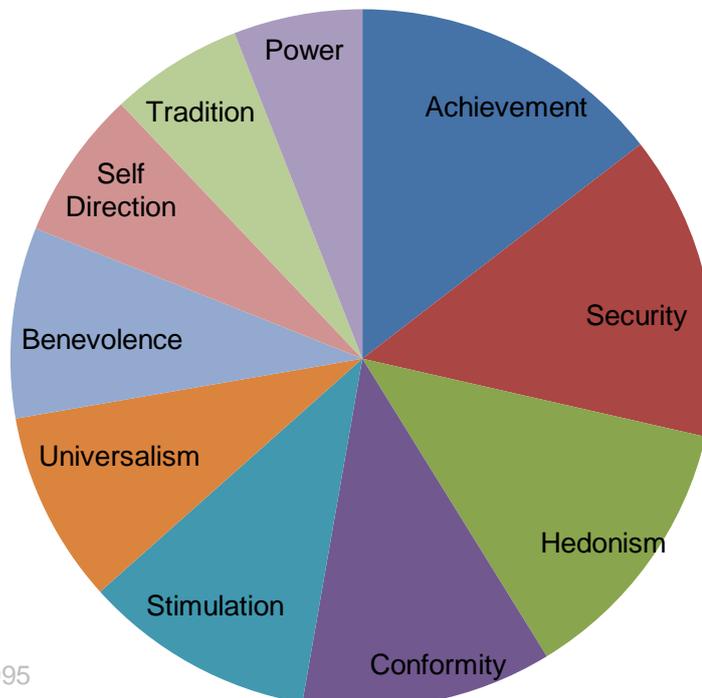
Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Fun	100	100
Challenge	86	100
Cleanliness	86	67
Commitment	86	100
Communication	86	100
Creativity	86	100
Customer Satisfaction	86	83
Friendship	86	100
Happiness	86	100
Quality of Work	86	100
Teamwork	86	100
Trust	86	100
Well-Being	86	83

Table 32 provides an overview of Schwartz's (2008) 10 values in terms of the frequency that words were selected by the 7 participants and the correlation observed between selected words and those also selected as supported by their work. As each grouping contained a different number of mapped words, the total selected words are represented by a proportional figure (calculated by: number of words in selection / total words x total selected). There were four values which showed a correlation of 1 – all the words selected in relation to these values were also selected as supported by their work. Figure 12 also over the page illustrates the spread of the selections. More than half of the words selected related to: Achievement, Security, Hedonism and Conformity which is consistent with the top values in All Stores.

Table 32: Highly Committed Store: Values selections

Value	No Words	Total Selected SELF	Total Selected SUPPORTED	Proportion Selected	Correlation
Achievement	15	47	47	5.34	1
Benevolence	13	33	26	3.25	0.98
Conformity	14	40	33	4.24	0.84
Hedonism	15	41	35	4.66	0.81
Power	12	24	22	2.18	1
Security	14	49	41	5.20	0.92
Self-Direction	12	28	27	2.55	1
Stimulation	14	37	34	3.92	0.91
Tradition	11	27	26	2.25	0.99
Universalism	12	36	34	3.27	1

Figure 12: Highly Committed: Values selections



4.5.2.4 Highly engaged store: Nvivo interrogation of themes

Table 33 below provides a breakdown of the number of coding references for each theme and the number of interviews where those codes appeared. Figure 13 provides a Tree Map produced by Nvivo representing the themes based on the number of references and the number of interviews. There were no significant relationships found when themes were clustered by coding similarity.

Table 33: Themes compared in highly engaged store interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
State	I have passion and pride	27	13
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	22	12
Behaviour	I develop myself	17	11
State	I am confident I'm contributing	16	11
Behaviour	I work as a team	15	10
State	I've bonded with the team	12	7
Behaviour	I develop and inspire others	10	6
State	I am empowered and growing	10	8
State	I'm respected & appreciated	9	8
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	7	6
Behaviour	I spend time with customers	7	7
Behaviour	I'm flexible	7	7
Behaviour	I'm focussed on commercials	6	5
State	I feel positive	6	5
State	I'm challenged	5	4
Behaviour	I get things done properly	4	4
State	I am inspired by my manager	4	4
State	I aspire to do more	2	1

Figure 13: Highly engaged store Tree Map of themes in interviews

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



This Tree Map highlights that the conversations in the highly engaged store were dominated by the themes:

- **I have passion and pride**
 - with statements such as: *“I love it – it is a pleasure to come to work”*
- **I take ownership for delivery**
 - with statements such as: *“I really like problem solving and getting to the bottom of an issue”*
- **I develop myself**
 - with statements such as: *“I now specialise in glass. I know so much more and enjoy it”*
- **I am confident that I'm contributing**
 - with statements such as: *“I am a good champion – I've won a bottle of champagne for it yesterday”*
- **I work as a team**
 - with statements such as: *“We support each other”*
- **I feel bonded with the team**
 - with statements such as: *“We all started at the same time and we all have that in common”*

Data from the word lists were collected from the 19 interview participants. Table 34 shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common word being fun – selected by 90% of participants and all of them also saying it was supported in their work.

Table 34: Highly Engaged Store: most common words selected as important to me

Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Fun	90	100
Communication	84	100
Fairness	84	100
Respect for Others	84	100
Teamwork	84	100
Trust	79	100
Happiness	79	100
Hardwork	79	100
Enjoyment	79	93

Table 35 over the page provides an overview of Schwartz's (2008) 10 values in terms of the frequency that words were selected by the 19 participants and the correlation observed between selected words and those also selected as supported by their work. As each grouping contained a different number of mapped words, the total selected words are represented by a proportional figure (calculated by: number of words in selection / total words x total selected). All correlations were significant $p < 0.01$ and ranged from 0.83 – 0.98. The highest correlations were for Security and Self Direction (both 0.98) Figure 14 also over the page illustrates the spread of the selections. More than half of the words selected related to: Achievement, Security, Hedonism and Conformity which is consistent with the top values in All Stores and the highly committed store results.

Table 35: Highly Engaged Store: Values selections

Value	No Words	Total Selected SELF	Total Selected SUPPORTED	Proportion Selected	Correlation
Achievement	15	132	121	15.00	0.96
Benevolence	13	104	88	10.24	0.92
Conformity	14	110	101	11.67	0.91
Hedonism	15	124	106	14.09	0.88
Power	12	73	60	6.64	0.9
Security	14	142	135	15.06	0.98
Self Direction	12	83	76	7.55	0.98
Stimulation	14	100	86	10.61	0.83
Tradition	11	84	76	7.00	0.93
Universalism	12	84	80	7.64	0.97

Figure 14: Highly Engaged: Values selections



4.6 Insights for being at one's best in work

This section considers what the findings suggest in terms of understanding being at one's best in work. It starts by considering the first proposition made at the start of the case study and concludes that there is clear consistency in the descriptions of workplace experiences in the three contexts. It first groups the core interview themes according to what they were referring to in order to provide a clearer and more straightforward description. It recognises the specific consistencies in the dominant interview themes and word list findings in all three stores. It then notes where the key elements from the questionnaire data and interview themes that appear to support each other. Moving on, it highlights the nuances in the data that are pertinent to individual stores and concludes with an illustration of how the interview themes are supported by the other data collection tools as well as the wider literature thus producing a tentative framework of being at one's best in work.. This tentative framework illustrates the response to the second proposition made at the start of the case study – that the performance, engagement and commitment literature commonalities will also be evident in the consistent descriptions.

Proposition 1: There will be consistency in the description of the workplace experiences, in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states, for those in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts.

All the interview themes were represented in all three stores and even the least common was referenced in 23% of the interviews suggesting that the themes together represent the common experiences of the participants in these three contexts and thus insightful for understanding being at one's best in work. Grouping the 9 subjective states and 9 behavioural patterns into sub themes could add further clarity and simplicity when describing being at one's best. Initially the theme coding similarities were considered but as significant clusters were only found in the highly committed store context and involved a combination of subjective states and behavioural patterns, the themes were grouped based on what they were referring to: feelings or positive subjective states about the job, about myself and about my colleagues; and achieving, supporting and interacting behavioural patterns. The first two groupings in both the subjective states and behavioural patterns represent most of the references. In the table on the next page, the grouped themes are shown with the percentage of the coding references that are represented within the groupings. These groupings are purely for ease of reference and simplicity of description. It is the detailed themes relating to subjective states and behavioural patterns that provide the description of the shared experiences of work in these contexts.

Table 36: Grouping subjective states and behavioural patterns

Positive subjective states		Positive behavioural patterns	
about the job 24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have passion & pride • I feel challenged • I aspire to do more 	Achieving 24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take ownership for delivery • I develop myself • I am focussed on the commercial • I get things done properly
about myself 21%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm confident that I'm contributing • I'm empowered & growing • I'm respected & appreciated • I feel positive 	Supporting 17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I develop & inspire others • I work as a team • I'm flexible
about my colleagues 7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm inspired by my manager • I've bonded with the team 	Interacting 6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend time with colleagues • I spend time with customers

Whilst the data from all stores showed the amalgamation of the interviews and word list findings, a comparison of the stores separately also showed some consistencies:

- The dominant themes in the interviews in all three stores included: 'I have passion and pride' and 'I take ownership for delivery'
- There was a focus on development with either 'I develop and inspire others' or 'I develop myself' in the dominant themes for each store.
- Achievement, Security and Conformity were all values that related to over half of the words selected as 'important to me' in all three stores suggesting some cohesion in the values of individuals within these contexts
- There was a statistically significantly high correlation between words selected as 'important to me' and those identified as 'supported in my work' in all three stores suggesting a strong connection between individual values and organisation values.

The data from the questionnaire also went some way to support the findings from the interview.

- The dominant interview themes of 'I am confident I am contributing' and 'I take ownership for delivery' found in the interviews in all stores were also reflected in the questionnaire – the case study group showed significantly higher levels of self-efficacy ($\mu=20.45$, $sd=2.93$) and feeling skilled ($\mu=19.5$, $sd=1.99$) than the comparison group ($\mu=20.45$, $sd=2.93$).

- The positive significant relationships between individual and organisation values observed in the case study's questionnaire results for Hedonism ($r=0.43$ $p<0.05$), Power ($r=0.55$ $p<0.05$), Tradition ($r=0.55$ $p<0.05$), Benevolence ($r=0.46$ $p<0.05$) and Universalism ($r=0.66$ $p<0.01$) were also seen in the word list activity (although the relationship observed in the word list activity was higher).
- Achievement was in the top 3 most common individual values identified in the questionnaire. It was also in the top 2 most common values that related to words selected as 'important to me' in each of the three stores.

The differences between the three stores illustrate the nuances between the contexts and are interesting to note at this point with a view to reflecting on them further when other case studies are undertaken in order to see if they are also reflective of the experiences in similar contexts but different organisations.

High performing store nuances: Unlike the others, the theme 'I am confident that I am contributing' was the most common theme across the interviews (in the other stores it was 'I have passion and pride'). Perhaps this reflects the focus on performance noted in the observations about the context or perhaps there had just been less time to have developed the passion and pride that was seen elsewhere. Interestingly however, Teamwork and Trust were the most common word list selections and Stimulation replaced Hedonism as the most common of the values in the word list selection.

Highly committed store nuances: Here, the unique dominant interview themes included 'I aspire to do more' and 'I am challenged'. Perhaps this reflects the more challenging experiences in this store, being the first of the new format stores to open. It also reflects the observation that the manager was focussed on reengaging and challenging this experienced team after a period of instability. Interestingly in this store, the theme 'I am confident that I am contributing' was not one of the dominant themes, unlike the other two stores. Perhaps this reflects the changing circumstances of the branch and the multiple managers they had experienced. Fun and challenge were the most common word list selections here. This was the only store where there were significant clusters in the interview themes. As this was the store which supplied the fewest interviews, it will be interesting to see if these clusters are repeated in other contexts.

Highly engaged store nuances: Here, the unique dominant interview themes included 'I work as a team' and 'I feel bonded with the team'. Perhaps this reflects the observation that the manager was focussed on developing the team whilst the foot-fall in the store was less

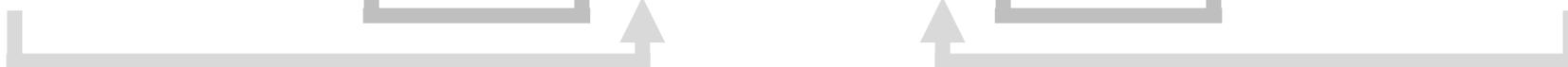
than expected. Fun and communication were the top two words chosen in the word list activity again reflecting a team focus. This was the only store where the largest of all values represented in the word list selections was Security.

Proposition 2: A signal of the consistency will be if the behavioural patterns and subjective states identified in those contexts reflect the key factors in the overlap in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment.

Figure 15 over the page illustrates how the interview themes, questionnaire and word list findings support each other and how the wider literature review is also represented within these findings. This illustration is the starting point or tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work, based on this pilot case study. Further reflection on how the findings link to the existing literature can be found in the next section, the critical reflection point.

Figure 15: Integrating the pilot study evidence with the wider literature: tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work

Connection to the literature review	Supported by other evidence	INTERVIEW THEMES		Supported by other evidence	Connection to the literature review
		Subjective States	Behavioural Patterns		
<p>Job satisfaction (Srivastana 2008; MacLeod & Clark 2009; Faishol 2015)</p> <p>Positive mindset (Srivastana 2008; MacLeod & Clark 2009; Faishol 2015)</p>	<p>Wordlist: Significantly high correlation between individual and organisation values</p> <p>Challenged selected as important by over 60% of participants</p>	<p>ABOUT THE JOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passion & Pride - Challenged - Aspire to do more 	<p>ACHIEVING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taking ownership - Developing self - Commercial focus - Getting things done properly 	<p>Wordlist: Achievement was a dominant theme in each store</p> <p>Accomplishment selected as important by over 60% of participants</p>	<p>Efficiency & productivity (Kondalkar 2009; Maslach et al 2011; Arnold & Feldman 1982)</p> <p>Proactivity (Griffen et al 2007; Farndale 2011; Podsakoff et al 2000)</p> <p>Self-development (Rowe 2007; Csikzentmihalyi 2010; Oswald et al 2009)</p>
<p>Working to strengths (Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina 2002; Buckingham & Coffman 1999; Harter et al 2005)</p> <p>Psychological capital (Luthans et al 2007; Randhawa 2004; Tannenbaum et al 1991)</p>	<p>Questionnaire: Feeling skilled & optimism predict performance scores</p> <p>Significantly higher Self-Efficacy ratings</p>	<p>ABOUT MYSELF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confident that I'm contributing - Empowered & growing - Respected & appreciated - Positive 	<p>SUPPORTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing & inspiring others - Teamwork - Flexible 	<p>Word list: Teamwork and Trust were selected as important by over 80% of participants</p>	<p>Trust & Supportive relationships (Earley 1996; Dirks 1999; Kim & Morgbournne 1993)</p>
<p>Trust & Supportive relationships (Earley 1996; Dirks 1999; Kim & Morgbournne 1993)</p>	<p>Questionnaire: Moderate correlation for value of Hedonism and perception of same org. value via manager</p>	<p>ABOUT COLLEAGUES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspired by manager - Bonded with team 	<p>INTERACTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With Colleagues - With Customers 	<p>Word list: Communication and Fun selected as important by over 70% of participants</p>	<p>Trust & Supportive relationships (Earley 1996; Dirks 1999; Kim & Morgbournne 1993)</p> <p>Happiness (Ryan & Deci 2001; Pryce-Jones 2010)</p>



4.7 Critical reflection point

This section reflects on the process of investigation and on the findings. It is structured according to the recommendations laid out in chapter three: first in terms of the qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework, concluding there is strong credibility and authenticity however further iterative case studies are required to gain greater confidence in the framework in terms of transferability and dependability; Moving on, this section considers the impact of the researcher during the investigation and on the conclusions drawn, noting the value of using Nvivo software to manage the qualitative analysis and suggesting future iterations might consider separating the data collection and theme analysis to reduce the likelihood of researcher impressions influencing conclusions; It then reviews the findings in terms of what is present and what is absent noting the post hoc analysis of the word list to produce data as a potential limitation; It continues to consider how the existing literature supports the interview themes, highlighting how all the key factors identified in the overlap in the fields of performance, engagement and commitment are represented in the tentative framework; It moves on to reflect on the techniques used and how helpful they were in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work, highlighting the limitations of the questionnaire and the value of the interview; And finally this section identifies further questions to be considered in future iterative case studies.

4.7.1 Qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework

Chapter 3 highlighted the need to evaluate qualitative research appropriately (Madhill et al 2000; Remenyi 2013). This section uses Remenyi's (2013) recommendation to evaluate qualitative case studies in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

In order to gain some understanding of the credibility of the findings, the researcher shared the findings with the organisation. Their feedback was that the findings were not surprising, given what they knew of the branches but the nuances between the stores provided some interesting reflection. The themes forming the tentative framework are taken from the interviews so in that way maintain some credibility.

Grouping the themes may help to demonstrate some transferability but it remains to be seen whether the themes are found elsewhere. Further iterative case studies should help to establish that. It will be interesting to see if the nuances in the three conditions are mirrored elsewhere. One of the two themes under 'interacting', 'spending time with customers' is

unlikely to be seen in non-customer facing roles however it will be interesting to see if there are others that these roles spend time with (e.g. peers outside of the team).

The dependability of findings was limited by the varying numbers of participants in each context. However the standardised questions for all the interviews and the consistent process for the word list and questionnaire helped to counteract that.

The authenticity of findings is demonstrated by the interlinking nature of the findings from the questionnaire, word lists and interviews shown in figure 15. The core themes were also representative of the performance, engagement and commitment literature review providing another level of 'confirmability'. A more detailed discussion around these links can be found in section 4.7.4.

With some confidence, particularly in terms of credibility and authenticity, one could say that being at one's best at work involves positive feelings about the job, oneself and colleagues whilst also working in a way that is achieving, supporting and interacting. It remains to be seen if the tentative framework is relevant elsewhere (transferable) and the dependability of the framework requires greater numbers of participants which again will be sought in the next iterative case studies.

4.7.2 Impact of the researcher on the findings?

Using Nvivo helped to provide a more systematic process of theme analysis, avoided the researcher imposing her own perceptions (for example identifying the strongest theme) and ensured that the themes were distinctly coded (i.e. no coding correlations). The entire case study was however 'participant observation' (Mammersley & Atkinson 1983). As the overall experience within the stores was positive, this is likely to have had some impact on the conclusions drawn and the themes identified. It would be interesting to see if the researcher would still see the themes where interviews were not conducted by the same person completing the analysis.

4.7.3 What data is present and what is not present?

The high consistency of the final themes suggests consistency in the description of the workplace experiences in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states for those in these three contexts. This provides some evidence for proposition 1 and a signal to continue with the iterative case studies as it gives some indication of a shared meaning of being at one's best in work. The appearance of the key factors from the overlap in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment (more detail provided in section 4.7.4) also provides some evidence for proposition 2. In that way, this pilot study has been helpful in developing the iterative approach to exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work.

Whilst a values connection was anticipated as part of proposition 2, the word list activity demonstrated a strong positive correlation between what individuals selected as important to them personally and what their work supported. This level of connection illustrated in the word list activity was considerably higher than anticipated (average $r=0.98$ $p<0.01$). The values connection was also evident in the questionnaire but to a smaller extent. There were some differences but one similarity in the most common individual values shown in the two techniques: Achievement was in the top three for both; in the word list activities the other two most common values were Security and Hedonism; in the questionnaire it was benevolence and universalism. This is likely to be due to the inherent instability of the techniques or indeed the structure of items relating to individual values in the questionnaire (selecting which statements were important to them and particularly important to them may not have been particularly clear). Further iterative case studies may highlight whether the connection was particular to the context or a more consistent finding.

Despite the range of data available via the questionnaire, only limited conclusions could be drawn and it was just the self-efficacy ratings and values connections that provided some triangulation for the findings with the interview themes (subjective states). The small numbers involved in taking the questionnaire limited any conclusions.

The word list activity provided most of the confirmation triangulation with the interviews and observation. This activity was intended to be a conversation starter but became a data collection tool. It is possible that the findings from the interview and word list activity could have been similar as they happened at the same time, part of the same conversation. Further iterative case studies need to use differing techniques to provide triangulation.

There were only a few anomalies found in the interviews. It will be interesting to see if there continue to be so few in other high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts.

Greater confidence in the tentative framework would come from finding similar themes in different contexts and through using different techniques.

4.7.4 Comparing the findings with existing literature

This reflection highlights the links to the commitment, performance and engagement literature as well as noting that all key elements from proposition two (the anticipated contents of a consistency based on the literature review) that are also reflected in the interview themes. This confirmation provides further evidence of the authenticity and credibility of the tentative framework. Perhaps most insightful from this reflection is the role that the connection between individual and organisation values is likely to play, particularly in relation to the positive subjective states.

The themes relating to **subjective states about the job** are reflected in existing literature. Mowday et al's (1979) commitment definition involving strong belief in the organisation goals and a willingness to exert effort as a result reflects both the 'passion and pride' and the 'aspire to do more' themes within this case study. Both the CLC (2005) and Silzer & Church's (2009) review of the high potential literature include aspiration (CLC) and career ambition (Silzer & Church) in their conceptualisations of high potential. These are particularly relevant to the 'aspire to do more' and 'challenged' interview themes. The engagement literature also reflect these themes. Farndale (2011) includes 'passionate and enthusiastic' in her definition of state engagement and Macey & Schneider (2008) highlighted proactive personality and conscientiousness as key antecedents of engagement. This first grouping of interview themes would appear to have support from the commitment, potential and engagement literature. As figure 17 highlights, these themes also relate to factors within the job satisfaction and positive mind-set literature – two of the key elements that were identified in proposition two as likely to appear in any consistent themes. In terms of job satisfaction, Weiss (2002) argued that perceptions or evaluations about the job and affective experiences at work were key parts of job satisfaction so the themes of 'passion

and pride' (evaluation) and feeling 'challenged' (experience) are likely to impact on job satisfaction. As Jasper (2007) also found that opportunities for personal and professional development were particularly related to job satisfaction and retention so providing support for the 'aspire to do more' interview theme. Dweck's (2009) notion of the growth mind-set helping to develop talent and Seligman & Schulman's (1986) assertion that an optimistic explanatory style predicts performance levels may also add to the evidence for these themes relating to positive subjective states. However, as Wernsing & Luthans (2008) point out, optimism on an individual level does not also transfer to an organisational level so the optimism or positive mind-set do not fully explain these themes relating to positive feelings about the job. Perhaps it is the values connection between the individuals and organisation seen in the word list and questionnaire that provides some insight into how this transfer happens. Collins & Porras (1996) have suggested that successful organisations require alignment of the members' values and Hyde & Williamson (2000) suggested that mobilising employee commitment is amongst the functions of shared values. The values connection may help to transfer the positive subjective states from an individual level to the job or organisation level.

The **positive subjective states about self** are also evidenced in existing literature. The motivational element of commitment (Meyer et al 2004) represents an internal aspect and in that way relates to the positive subjective states about self. Silzer and Church's (2009) integrated model of potential also provides some support by highlighting personality and cognitive factors in delivering high potential. The role of psychological capital (one of the elements within proposition two that were anticipated within the consistent themes) is also highlighted in the potential literature. Silzer and Church's 2009 foundation dimensions of potential focus on cognitive and personality factors including emotional stability. These may relate to the subjective states identified in the interviews. The engagement literature also highlights the role of personal resources, for example Bakker & Demerouti's 2008 job demands resources model. In particular, self-efficacy (Bandura 1997) is reflected in the theme 'I am confident that I'm contributing'. Optimism (Seligman 1998) and hope (Luthans et al 2007) may well play a role in the subjective state of 'positive'. Working to strengths, another of the proposition two elements, could also be seen to link to these themes. For example, feeling 'empowered and growing' could be related to the focus on strengths vs seniority in managerial decision making seen by Clifton & Harter (2003) in high performing teams. The themes of feeling 'empowered and growing' and 'respected and appreciated' are related to trust and supportive environments literature and to the happiness literature (two of those elements from proposition two).

MacLeod (2011) highlighted key components of engagement as 'clear tasking, trusting people to get on with and tend tending them' which point to empowerment reflected in the interview themes. Ricard (2007) noted prioritised personal growth as a key element of happiness. These themes relating to positive subjective states about self also highlight the role of developing self-awareness to facilitate these feelings and the growth mind-set (Dweck 2009) may also facilitate the positive and confident elements of the interview themes. The connection between individual values and organisation values has also been suggested to relate to the existing literature, relating to feelings of personal success, self-confidence and self-awareness (Posner et al 1985) – all of these feelings relate to the themes 'I am confident that I'm contributing' and 'I am empowered & growing'. Perhaps similar to the earlier suggestion that a values connection may help to transfer individual commitment to organisation commitment, they may also play a role in the positive subjective states about self.

The themes relating to **positive subjective states about colleagues**, although relating to fewer references within this case study, are also reflective of the existing literature. Feeling 'bonded with the team' again highlights the link to trust and supportive relationships which have been related to commitment (e.g. Robinson 1998) and to performance (e.g. Davis et al 2000). The theme 'inspired by my manager' shines a light on the role of the manager. This is also seen to some extent in the performance literature where the psycho-social impact of the work environment is acknowledged to influence the performance of teams (e.g. Kirwan et al 2013). The commitment and retention literature also notes the important influence of the manager in terms of retention (e.g. Jasper 2007). It is perhaps the perceived connection between individual values and organisation values where the role of the manager is most recognised (e.g. Byng et al 2002, Latan 2006).

The themes relating to **achieving as a positive behavioural pattern** are particularly reflected in the performance literature. For example, the 'commercial focus' and 'getting things done properly' are relevant to efficiency and productivity (e.g. Kondalker 2009). 'Taking ownership' has also been seen to be related to happiness – Cantor & Sanderson (1999) found a link between happiness and active participation and goal pursuit. 'Getting things done properly' is also reflective of Griffen et al's (2007) model of performance in changing environments which highlights the role of proficiency and proactivity. The focus on productivity is also seen as an outcome of engagement (e.g. Maslach et al 2011). The other theme within this grouping, 'developing self', has also been noted as a key element of

engagement (e.g. Farndale et al 2011), performance and high potential (e.g. Rowe 2007) and playing a role in commitment (Oswald et al 2009). 'Self-development' is also specifically one of the Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB) identified by Podsakoff et al (2000). The themes in this grouping are reflective of the performance, engagement and commitment literature and also link to some of the key elements anticipated to be a part of the consistent themes, based on the literature review. The role of a values connection is also potentially relevant here – Latan (2006) suggested that a values connection helps to develop a positive work ethic and Posner et al (1985) suggested that values are linked to ethical behaviour – both the themes 'taking ownership' and 'getting things done properly' could also be seen as contributing to a positive work ethic and ethical behaviour.

The themes relating to **supporting as a positive behavioural pattern** are also related to existing literature. The engagement literature refers to working in collaboration that has in turn been identified as a factor that improves performance (Robinson et al 2004). The organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), helping behaviour, has been shown to be empirically related to performance (Podsakoff et al 2000) which could be reflective of elements of all three of the interview themes in this grouping. Within the happiness literature, a number of researchers have emphasised the role of mutually supportive relationships (e.g. Deci & Ryan 1986; Iverson et al 1998; Ryff 1995; Pryce-Jones 2010), again providing further evidence for these themes.

The themes relating to **interacting as a positive behavioural pattern** although representing fewer references in the interviews, are also related to existing literature. Civic virtue, one of the organisational citizenship behaviours (Podsakoff et al 2000) is likely to involve interacting with relevant community members. In a customer facing role this would be interacting with customers. The role of trust and supportive relationships has been highlighted as relevant to a number of interview themes already and is also relevant here. The interaction with colleagues is likely to help in developing the relationships within the teams. Certainly De Dreu et al (1998) noted better communication as a result of interaction and the development of supportive relationships. These themes relate to enjoying the act of spending time with colleagues and customers, without any agenda. This has not been greatly covered in the existing literature.

The table 37 below highlights how the key factors identified in the overlap in the fields of performance, engagement and commitment are represented within the themes of the tentative framework. Whilst all are represented by at least two of the interview themes, of particular note are the factors of trust and supportive relationships and happiness – these are representative of a number of the interview themes in this case study.

Table 37: Key factors in the overlap of performance, engagement & commitment seen in the tentative framework of being at one's best in work

Overlap factors	Interview themes
Efficiency & Productivity	<i>ACHIEVING: Commercial focus</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Getting things done properly</i>
Proactivity	<i>ACHIEVING: Taking ownership</i> <i>JOB: Aspire to do more</i>
Self-development – potential	<i>JOB: Challenged</i> <i>MYSELF: Empowered & growing</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Developing self</i>
Trust & Supportive Relationships	<i>SUPPORTING: Developing & inspiring others</i> <i>SUPPORTING: Team work</i> <i>SUPPORTING: Flexible</i> <i>INTERACTING: with colleagues</i> <i>COLLEAGUES: Bonded with the team</i> <i>COLLEAGUES: Inspired by manager</i> <i>MYSELF: Respected & appreciated</i>
Working to strengths	<i>MYSELF: Confident I'm contributing</i> <i>MYSELF: Inspired by my manager</i> <i>MYSELF: Respected & appreciated</i>
Job satisfaction	<i>JOB: Passion & pride</i> <i>MYSELF: Respected & appreciated</i>
Happiness	<i>ACHIEVING: Taking ownership</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Developing self</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Commercial focus</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Teamwork</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Time with customers</i> <i>SUPPORTING: Developing & inspiring others</i>
Psychological capital	<i>MYSELF: Confident that I'm contributing</i> <i>MYSELF: Positive</i> <i>JOB: Challenged</i>
Positive mind-set	<i>JOB: Passion & Pride</i> <i>MYSELF: Positive</i> <i>MYSELF: Confident that I'm contributing</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Taking ownership</i>
Shared values	<i>JOB: Passion & pride</i> <i>MYSELF: Empowered & growing</i> <i>COLLEAGUES: bonded with the team</i> <i>ACHIEVING: Developing self</i> <i>SUPPORTING: Teamwork</i>

4.7.5 Reflection on the techniques used

This section uses the questions highlighted in section 3.4.1-3.4.4 for evaluating techniques used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work. The techniques used in this pilot study, observation, interviews, word lists and questionnaires, are discussed below.

Observation was an inextricable and essential part of case study research, as noted earlier it could be considered participant observation – without which the reflection and sense checking of conclusions could not be established. The observation provided the context and helped with some of the interpretation, particularly around the nuances of findings in each store. The evaluation in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity and the specific questions in section 3.4.1 are discussed below. Overall, observation is an essential and integral part of the research. Some work to improve its structure could help develop greater confidence in the dependability of it as a tool.

CREDIBILITY – are observations and conclusions consistent with those in the context? Yes - the conclusions could be seen to elaborate observations described in the context section. For example, the flatter hierarchy of the new format stores were seen to attract ambitious individuals and 'aspire to do more' was an interview theme. Also, the requests for input at the staff forum could be seen as an example of the theme 'I am respected and appreciated'.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has observation helped to identify transferable factors? Observation in its essence is about the specifics of the situation, so less about transfer. The reflection with observation, allowed the researcher to make sense of some of the themes and to combine the original themes into meaningful and manageable themes, therefore aiding the transferability.

DEPENDABILITY – in the process of observation, how has instability been managed? Traditionally, instability is managed through structured observation (Sarantatos 1998). In this case study the observation was not structured but focussed on being able to tell the story of the case study. Perhaps a more structured observation could help manage the instability better.

AUTHENTICITY – what other evidence supports or contradicts the observations? Where the individuals were 'skipping out of the interview room' (the feedback from one of the managers) this could be understood as evidence of the shared values found in the word lists (and questionnaire). The observations did note the differing approaches taken by the managers in receiving the researcher in the store but how the findings complement or contradict that is not clear.

Interviews produced a wealth of data and provided the basis of the themes identified in this case study. Section 3.4.2 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of interviews in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall, interviews would appear to be essential in developing the credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity when exploring shared meaning as they allow the researcher to gather specific words and phrases from within the context.

CREDIBILITY – How are the individuals' words integrated in the conclusions? The interview theme titles were based on the words from the interviews themselves which provides some clear credibility. Where original themes were identified and combined, an attempt to combine the wording was also made. For example, 'I am trusted and respected' and 'I feel appreciated' were combined with 'I am fairly treated' to produce the theme: 'I am respected and appreciated'.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors? The themes identified in the interviews provide the basis of the tentative framework so in that way they have the potential for transferability. The groupings were not a result of the Nvivo analysis but rather a result of the post reflection and an attempt to add some clarity/simplicity to the themes. It would be interesting to see if there are some statistically clustered themes once further iterative case studies are completed.

DEPENDABILITY – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed? The appreciative structure for the interviews provided some management of instability – using six core questions. The further probing is dependent upon the skill of the interviewer, as highlighted by Yin (2009). In this case as the interviewer was experienced, the stability is likely to have been managed better than an in experienced interviewer. Transposing interviews helped to ensure the participants' words were captured for data analysis.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews? As noted by table 20, both the questionnaire results and the word list analysis provided some support for the interview themes. The level of referencing in each context, the nuances between the stores, was not so clearly supported or explained by the other techniques however there were no clear contradictions.

The word lists were intended to be a conversation starter but ended being a data collection tool. The same evaluation questions as for the interview set out in Section 3.4.2 can be used for understanding their value when exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Overall, the word lists provided far more data than anticipated and the structure and standardisation of them provided some confidence around its dependability. Its credibility, transferability and authenticity is established only when considered in conjunction with other tools.

CREDIBILITY – How are the individuals' words integrated into the conclusions? The word lists were provided to individuals and they were asked to select first which were important to them and second which of those selected were supported by their work. In that way the word lists do not integrate their own words however the fact that they could select as many as they wanted allowed them to freely choose which were relevant to them.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the word list helped to identify transferable factors? The word lists have provided support for the interview themes. The consistency of the connection between the individuals' selection helped to provide additional insight around their potential role in facilitating from individual to organisational commitment however perhaps the consistency elevated their role. Further iterative case studies may help to understand the influence of connected values.

DEPENDABILITY – In the word list process, how has instability been managed? The consistency of the word list and the instructions provided helped to manage the potential instability. The post hoc allocation of the words to Schwartz's (2009) ten values although agreed by three peers the words were not all directly related and may have limited the results and subsequent conclusions.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the word list findings? Correlations between individual and organisational values were also seen in the questionnaire however the relationship was much weaker via the questionnaire. This suggests that the overall conclusions may well be appropriate, specific representation of the strength of the relationship need to be tempered.

The questionnaire was lengthy and only completed by 21 participants in the case study group. Section 3.4.3 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of the questionnaire in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall the questionnaire was too lengthy and the gathering of volunteers to complete it was more difficult than anticipated. Whilst it did provide some triangulation simpler tools such as the word list may actually be a more useful approach to exploring shared meaning.

CREDIBILITY – how well does it reflect the participants' views/experience? The questions were based on factors from the literature review rather than on words from participants. In that way the findings are not fully representative of the participants' experiences but they do provide some insight, particularly when compared with the broader comparison group. With only a small number of case study participants, the conclusions have to be limited. The length of the questionnaire was seen as a barrier to gathering participants.

TRANSFERABILITY – how has the questionnaire helped to identify transferable factors? The small number of statistically significant differences between the case study and comparison group limited the identification of transferable factors.

DEPENDABILITY – how has instability been managed in the questionnaire? The range of question styles helped to manage the potential response biases and the reliability of the responses broadly met Hair et al's (1998) recommendation for exploratory scales. Feedback from participants was that it was lengthy so their concentration and commitment to answering accurately may have been limited.

AUTHENTICITY – what other evidence supports or contradicts the questionnaire findings? The values connection seen in the questionnaire was also demonstrated in the word list however the strength of that connection was weaker in the questionnaire. The significant difference between the positive subjective states of the case study group and comparison group also provided some support for the positive subjective state themes from the interview.

4.8 Additional questions or propositions

This pilot has been helpful in first identifying consistent themes in the experiences of individuals within high performing, highly engaged and highly committed retail stores Proposition 1) indicating the potential shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Those themes reflected the key factors in the overlap of the existing literature relating (proposition 2). These have been pulled together into a tentative framework in figure 15. It remains to be seen whether similar results are found in further case studies.

The other intention of this pilot was to reflect upon the techniques that can be used to explore shared meaning. Observation has been acknowledged as an essential element of any case study research however greater structure could help develop more dependability in the findings using this technique. Interviews provided great detail and the basis of the tentative framework to describe the shared experiences or shared meaning of individuals within these contexts. As the interviews are context bound, only further case studies will assist in developing the transferability of findings. The word lists were helpful in gathering further data however their analysis was post hoc and unplanned so further case studies using this technique will need to ensure the analysis is well planned and the words linked to the literature. The questionnaire, although providing a potential broad range of data, was limited by its length and the need for higher volumes to draw more confident conclusions.

The future case study iterations therefore need to consider the following questions:

- Is the framework transferable to other contexts?
- Is the values connection seen in this pilot study simply a product of this values driven organisation?
- Would a shortened questionnaire provide more helpful triangulation data?
- How can observations be more structured?

Chapter 5: Iterative Case Studies

This chapter tells the story of the four post pilot iterative case studies involving 111 further participants. These show the tentative framework themes appearing in every context and some indication that values being supported by work play a role in these contexts also.

Section 5.1 describes the context, experiences, findings and implications from a case study with a highly engaged hotel team. They were identified as highly engaged as they received the highest customer ratings in the hotel chain. 18 participants took part in the research involving interviews and a shortened version of the questionnaire. Interviews were coded using the themes from the tentative framework identified in the pilot studies. All the themes were evident in these interviews suggesting some transferability of the tentative framework to other contexts. Similar to the pilot studies, higher levels of self-efficacy were also noted in responses to the questionnaire. However individuals did not appear to perceive a connection between their personal values and their work, based on their questionnaire responses). Reflections on the context and the limited resources available might help to explain this disconnection. The critical reflection point following this case study highlighted number of questions that needed further exploration, including: coding negative themes to add authenticity to conclusions; and queries regarding the use of the questionnaire.

Section 5.2 describes the context, experience, findings and implications from a case study with a high performing executive search team. They were identified as high performing as they had seen the greatest growth in income over the last two years and moved from the 8th to the 3rd most successful team in the company. 11 participants took part in the research involving interviews and a word list activity. The interviews were coded using the themes from the tentative framework. All the themes were evident in these interviews once again suggesting some transferability of the tentative framework to other contexts. The questionnaire highlighted higher levels of self-efficacy although also showed lower levels of Hope. The word list activity was more structured and aligned to Schwartz's 10 values and showed three of the strongest values were also significantly correlated with perceptions that they were supported by their work (Benevolence, Self-Direction and Achievement). The other two strongest values were not significantly correlated. The critical reflection point following this case study highlighted a number of questions that needed further exploration, including: the idea that a shared interview or focus group be more helpful in exploring shared meaning; and how a more structure observations might help in making conclusions.

Section 5.3 describes the context, experience, findings and implications from a case study involving the highest performing shop managers in a betting shop chain. The top 50 managers were identified based on their store's performance and area manager's ratings. These 50 plus 22 of their team members and area managers took part in the research which involved: focus group interviews; word list activities; competency card sort and task list activity. The interviews were coded using the tentative framework and once again all themes were present. It was noteworthy that there were markedly more behavioural pattern themes than subjective state themes which may have been due to the group nature of these interviews. The values word list activity highlighted strong significant relationships between words selected as important to individuals and those identified as supported by their work. The competency card sort and task list activities also provided some triangulation and supporting evidence for the dominant themes identified in the interviews. The critical reflection point following the case study highlighted a number of questions to explore further, including: the need to gain more evidence from those in a committed context; the need to get specific feedback from participants regarding the tentative framework; and the possibility of using a mental model activity to explore shared meaning.

Section 5.4 describes the context, experience, findings and implications from the final case study involving 10 participants in a range of roles, all of whom had been in their job for more than five years and intended to stay. This case study involved a mental model representation activity, interviews and a word list activity. The interviews were again coded using the tentative framework themes and all were present. They were all present in the mental model activity also. The word list activity highlighted four of Schwartz's (2009) values as common to these individuals, two of which (Achievement and Security) showed strong significant correlations with perceptions that they were supported by their work. It was interesting to note that those who identified themselves as less content in their work showed a lower values connection.

After four post pilot case study iterations, the tentative framework themes had all appeared in every case study. All except for two had also been dominant themes in one of the case studies. This indicated some theoretical saturation and the end of the case study investigations. The final critical reflection point suggested that further analysis should be undertaken before considering the tentative framework confident. Firstly further analysis to identify common themes in the performance, engagement and commitment contexts. Secondly, further analysis is suggested to investigate if the titles of the themes represent the content of all the case studies, not just the pilot studies. This analysis is undertaken in the next chapter – conclusions.

5.1 Case Study Iteration 1: Highly Engaged Hotel Team

This first post-pilot case study was intended to establish whether the themes from the tentative framework could be transferred to a different context. This section provides the purpose, context and outline of the research within a highly engaged boutique hotel team.

For this case study, interviews (18 in total) and a shortened questionnaire (11 in total) were used to explore the shared experiences within this team. The interviews were coded using the tentative framework themes and all were present, though to differing degrees. The questionnaire highlighted similar findings to the pilot studies in terms of significantly higher levels of psychological capital and self-efficacy. It also highlighted a disconnection between individual values and perceived organisational values via the manager, as opposed to a connection seen in the pilot studies.

This case study does demonstrate some transferability of the tentative framework but highlights the need for more case study iterations to establish whether the themes are evident in wider contexts. The disconnection of values highlights further questions in terms of the most helpful technique to explore values and indeed whether a connection of values is part of being at one's best in work.

The final part of this section provides some reflection on the tentative framework and the techniques used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. It highlights additional questions to explore in the future case study iterations in order to establish greater confidence in the tentative framework and more insight regarding techniques to explore shared meaning.

5.1.1 The purpose of this case study

This case study explores whether the themes identified in the pilot studies, the tentative framework, are applicable in another context, outside of that organisation. The case study explores the shared experiences of a highly engaged hotel team. The literature has suggested that being at one's best may reside in the overlap of engagement, commitment and performance. Any consistencies in the experiences of the individuals in this highly engaged team are therefore likely to provide some insight into being at one's best in work. If those consistencies reflect some or all of the themes in the tentative framework then there is further confidence in that framework describing a shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Understanding the inconsistencies or differing results to those of the pilot studies may also provide insight about the context and being at one's best in work.

This case study iteration is part of wider research agenda which is also reviewing the methods used to investigate shared meaning. In this case study, interviews and questionnaires are used and will be reviewed in terms of the value that they add to exploring sharing meaning. This evaluation will be considered in terms of Remenyi's (2013) guidelines for qualitative evaluation: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

This case study also explores two of the additional questions identified at the end of the pilot:

- Can the researcher's impact be reduced by separating the interviewing and theme analysis?
- Could a simpler questionnaire be as helpful or indeed more helpful?

The following section provides greater clarity in terms of the context of this case study and the experiences of the researcher. Moving on, subsequent sections provide the details of the findings and the post case study critical reflection point brings out the insights for being at one's best and learning points for future case study iterations.

5.1.2 The context

This case study opportunity arose as a part of a student's MSc research, Jeremy Hall. He conducted the interviews and included the questions as a part of his research. He provided this researcher with the transcripts and interview recordings. This allowed the interview and the analysis to be separated thus attending to the post pilot question to reduce the researcher's impact.

The hotel is part of a small privately owned group of 8 hotels, aimed at the luxury family market, where children are welcomed and hospitality for the whole family is encouraged. There are seven key departments: front of house and reservations, food and beverage, kitchen, house-keeping, crèche, spa and maintenance. Each department has a head of department, a number of supervisors and general assistants.

The hotel group was asked to identify their best hotel team – this hotel was chosen as the customer feedback ratings were the highest of the 8 hotels (rated as 4.5/5 on TripAdvisor.com and awarded the Certificate of Excellence for 2013). Across the group, all teams were being challenged to increase profits and sales performance. Whilst this hotel had the lowest turnover of the group (approximately 30%) this was still running at more than 10% greater than the average for the hospitality and tourism industry in 2012 (People 1st 2012). The general manager of the hotel had been in place for 17 years however the hotel had also been taken over two years previously in 2010 and incorporated into the group of 8 boutique hotels.

This case study loosely represents a highly engaged team – people who are dedicated to their work, as seen in the customer ratings about the hotel. It is also reflective of the reality that it is not always possible to clearly distinguish engagement, commitment and performance. Exploring whether the themes from the tentative framework are apparent in this context could provide further insight into being at one's best in work.

It may be that given the wider context, where there is 'room for improvement' in the performance and retention, a different perspective on being at one's best could be gained. The experiences of the researcher described in the next section highlights some of the challenges the team were facing which impacted on the research and potentially limiting some of the conclusions that can be made.

5.1.3 Experiences of the researcher

Having obtained agreement from the hotel group and the General Manager of the hotel, the interviewer met with 18 members of staff. The interviewing took place over 4 days. Heads of department also invited members of staff to complete the questionnaire via survey monkey. The interviews varied from 20 to 60 minutes in length depending on the availability and talkative nature of the individuals involved.

Having previously worked at the Hotel, the interviewer was familiar with the majority of the participants however he was surprised by the atmosphere surrounding the interviews, finding the participants were all very relaxed and forthcoming with responses. 14 were of English origin, three Polish and one Portuguese origin. All had an excellent command of the English language. Their length of service ranged from 2 years to 15 years.

The overall impression of the interviewer was that participants were all very dedicated to their work and spoke fondly of the hotel, particularly of the relaxed work environment and the beautiful location. They were all enthusiastic about providing excellent customer service which reflects the customer feedback ratings. The interviewer had experienced the same environment, having worked there. He also noted that the individuals were also keen to point out how the customer service could be improved and longed for more investment in the hotel in order to do that.

Simply receiving the interview transcripts to analyse was a different experience for the researcher however using the transcripts (as opposed to also conducting the interviews) allowed for a more detached analysis of the words that individuals used, without the influence of the overall experience. It became clear from the transcripts that the interviewer had often strayed into discussing aspects of the workplace that he knew about, based on his own experience (e.g. the need for greater investment). Where these were not a direct result of the standardised interview questions, these parts of the interview were not coded.

By way of sense checking the analysis, the researcher compared the interview analysis with that of the interviewer. For his own research, the interviewer had applied values themes to the statements in the interview and concluded there was evidence to suggest a connection between individual and organisation values of universalism and benevolence and suggested this might go some way to explaining the high customer service scores. He also noted some areas of disconnection between the employees and the organisation values suggesting these might explain the higher than average employee turnover.

5.1.3.1 Methods used

This case study iteration used interviews and questions.

The **interview** questions from the pilot studies were used:

- Tell me about how you came to work here
- What attracted you to the role?
- What were your first impressions?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What is a great day for you?

Interviews were conducted by the MSc student, transcribed and given to the researcher to analyse. The findings from the interviews can be found in section 5.1.3.

The **questionnaire** from the pilot was shortened slightly to contain only the questions relating to: psychological capital; personal values; organisational values perceived through the manager. Shortening the questionnaire was a result of the post pilot reflection that a lengthy questionnaire provided limited information and proved unattractive to complete.

The rationale for removing questions from the pilot questionnaire was based upon the fact that it was perceived as too long and cumbersome to complete during the pilot. Questions were removed based on the reliability noted in the comparison group. The positive behavioural pattern questions were removed as no significant differences had been established in the pilot case study and only 2 of the four scales had shown promising reliability in the comparison group (Cronbach alpha >0.6 based on Hair et al's 1998 recommendation). The agility and skilled questions were also removed from the positive subjective states as these had not shown promising reliability. This meant that only the psychological capital questions remained. All the 10 scales relating to organisational values perceived through the manager had shown promising reliability in the comparison group so these questions were kept. The broader scales relating to perceived organisational values were removed as not all had shown promising reliability and one in particular was very poor (Power scale questions alpha = 0.02).

The following page outlines the question structure of this shorter questionnaire and the findings from the questionnaire are outlined in section 5.1.4

The psychological capital items involved 6 questions based on Luthans & Yousseff's (2007) psychological capital questionnaire. For each scale (self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, hope and agility) participants were asked to rate the statements in terms of how much they applied to them personally. For example: **When I have a set back at work, I have trouble recovering from it or moving on**

Disagree	Disagree - most of the time	Agree - most of the time	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The personal values items involved asking participants to select statements that applied to them and which were important to them (rating 0 if not selected, 1 if selected and 2 if also important). The statements were based on Schwartz's (2009) values questionnaire. For example:

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
Independence is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like surprises and am always looking for new things to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to be rich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I avoid anything that might endanger my safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a good time is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People should follow the customs of their heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The organisational values perceived through the manager items asked participants to rate statements based on Schwartz (2009) values questionnaire reworded as 'my manager...' (1=false; 2=false most of the time; 3=true most of the time; 4=true). For example:

*** 86. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Micro-manages what I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often ignores people who disagree with them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tends to put me down when speaking to me or about me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stops me from getting involved in a range of activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often asks us to take short cuts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5.1.4 Findings from the interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of all staff levels in the hotel, 18 in total:

- The general manager, 7 heads of department, 5 supervisors, 5 general assistants
- 44% male 56% female

The transcribed interviews were coded based on the tentative framework themes, using Nvivo software. Table 37 shows the themes compared by the number of references to each theme and the number of interviews containing the theme. Whilst all the themes from the tentative framework were present, the least common themes were *I am challenged*, appearing in just one interview and *I develop and inspire others*, appearing in just two interviews.

Figure 16 shows a Tree Map to illustrate all the themes in all interviews in this hotel. This highlights the dominant themes as: *I spend time with customers*; *I take ownership for delivery*; *I spend time with colleagues*; *I have passion and pride*; *I am confident that I am contributing*; and *I'm focussed on the commercial*. Three of these dominant themes were also dominant themes in the pilot case studies: *I take ownership for delivery*, *I have passion and pride* and *I am confident that I am contributing*.

When reviewing the interviews at a word level, the most common word used was People. This appears at the centre of the Word Cloud that illustrates the top 100 words (5 letters or more) in figure 17.

The themes were also interrogated to identify any similarities in terms of wording and coding. There were no significant relationships found suggesting that the themes were distinct (no similarities in their wording) and there were no common links between the themes in this case study (no similarities in the coding).

Table 38: Themes compared in interviews at the highly engaged hotel

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	25	12
Behaviour	I spend time with customers	27	12
State	I have passion and pride	17	12
State	I'm confident that I'm contributing	15	10
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	18	9
Behaviour	I'm flexible	10	8
Behaviour	I get things done properly	10	7
Behaviour	I'm focussed on the commercial	15	7
State	I'm empowered and growing	9	7
State	I'm respected and appreciated	9	6
State	I've bonded with the team	9	6
Behaviour	I work as a team	8	5
State	I aspire to do more	4	4
Behaviour	I develop myself	3	3
State	I feel positive	4	3
State	I am inspired by my manager	6	3
Behaviour	I develop and inspire others	3	2
State	I am challenged	1	1

Figure 16: Tree Map of interview themes in highly engaged hotel team

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



5.1.5 Findings from the questionnaire

The questionnaire was completed by 11 members of staff in the hotel.

The questionnaire was grouped by psychological capital items, individual values items and organisational values perceived via the manager items. The analysis can be found on the following pages.

Table 39 shows the psychological capital items for this case study group compared with the comparison group from the pilot. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the results. There were two significant differences:

- There was a significant difference in the overall Psychological Capital ratings for the case study group ($\mu=81.36$ $SD=7.95$) and the comparison group ($\mu=76.28$ $SD=7.23$) conditions ($t=2.16$ $p<0.05$)
- There was a significant difference in the Self Efficacy ratings for the case study group ($\mu=21.45$ $SD=1.92$) and the comparison group ($\mu=17.17$ $SD=8.39$) conditions ($t=1.92$ $p<0.1$)

For these 11 individuals, the most common values were: Benevolence, Self-Direction, Universalism, Conformity and Stimulation as illustrated in Figure 18.

The relationship between individual values and organisational values perceived through the manager was investigated using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Table 40 shows all the correlations for all the values. There were two significant relationships:

- For Hedonism, there was a strong negative significant relationship ($r=-0.72$ $n=11$ $p<0.01$)
- For Universalism, there was a strong negative significant relationship ($r=-0.61$ $n=11$ $p<0.05$)

Table 39: Psychological capital items: hotel case study group compared with comparison group from pilot studies

Psychological Capital Scale	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=11)		t	p
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean (μ)	SD		
TOTAL	76.28	7.23	0.83	81.27	7.82	2.16	0.03
Self-Efficacy	17.17	8.39	0.75	21.45	1.92	1.68	0.09
Optimism	18.95	2.49	0.69	18.45	2.46	0.63	0.53
Resilience	20.28	1.95	0.56	21.27	1.62	1.62	0.11
Hope	19.88	2.36	0.70	20.09	3.18	0.27	0.79

Table 40: Analysis of items relating to individual values, perceived organisation values via the manager and their relationship: hotel case study group

Values	Individual Values		Perceived organisation values via manager		Relationship	
	Mean(μ) scale	SD	Mean(μ) scale	SD	r	p
Self-Direction	4	2.14	7.09	1.04	-0.49	0.13
Stimulation	3.36	2.29	5.18	1.40	-0.05	0.88
Hedonism	2.91	1.22	6.18	1.72	-0.72	0.01
Achievement	2.09	1.51	5	1.41	-0.06	0.88
Power	2.09	1.51	5.81	2.27	-0.43	0.19
Security	3.27	2.20	6.82	1.89	0.11	0.75
Conformity	3.55	2.07	5.18	1.99	-0.29	0.39
Tradition	3.09	1.97	6.54	1.44	0.33	0.32
Benevolence	4.36	2.38	6.82	1.44	0.02	0.96
Universalism	3.64	2.54	4.55	1.21	-0.61	0.05

Figure 18: Most common individual values: hotel case study group



5.1.6 Insights for being at one's best in work

Having seen great consistency in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states in the pilot studies, this case study intended to explore the transferability of the themes identified in the tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work. This section begins by considering evidence from this case study that provides support for the tentative framework. It highlights the six dominant themes of this case study as particularly supported by this case study, though all themes were evidenced. The higher psychological capital noted in the questionnaire and some of the common values held by individuals may also provide some support for the themes although they also raise further questions. Moving on, this section discusses the evidence from this case study that differs from the pilot studies and tentative framework, highlighting the least common themes and the negative relationships in the questionnaire noted between individual values and perceived organisational values via the manager. This section concludes with a summary table illustrating how the findings in this case study add to the understanding of being at one's best in work and the tentative framework.

In terms of evidence to support the tentative framework, all the themes were represented in the 18 interviews in this case study. In particular the dominant themes were: *I spend time with customers; I take ownership for delivery; I spend time with colleagues; I have passion and pride; I am confident that I am contributing; and I'm focussed on the commercials.* Three of these themes were also dominant themes in the pilot studies (*I take ownership for delivery; I have passion and pride; and I am confident that I am contributing*).

Similar to the pilot studies group, the questionnaire showed that the overall psychological capital ratings were significantly higher than the comparison group ($t=2.16$ $p<0.05$). The individual psychological capital scale of self-efficacy was also established as significantly higher in this case study than in the comparison group ($t=1.68$ $p<0.10$). These findings provide further support for the tentative framework, in particular the themes: *I am confident that I'm contributing* (self-efficacy) and *I feel positive* (overall psychological capital).

There were also similar values held in this case study group and the pilot studies. Both show Conformity and Stimulation in their top five values, based on the questionnaire results. Given that in the pilot studies identified different top values via the word list activity and via the questionnaire, caution should be applied before making any strong conclusions as the results could be due to the questionnaire structure. Interestingly the definition of Stimulation

as “excitement, novelty and challenge in life” (Schwartz 2009), might be linked to the themes, *I am challenged* and/or *I develop myself*. This theme was the least referenced theme in the conversations with participants in this case study was in fact *I am challenged*. Benevolence, another of the top individual values according to the questionnaire, may be linked to the themes, *I spend time with colleagues* and/or *I develop and inspire others*, as its definition refers to “preserving and enhancing the welfare of those of one’s own group” (Schwarz 2009). *Spending time with colleagues* was a dominant theme whereas *I develop and inspire others* was one of the least frequent themes. The values data from the questionnaire is therefore mixed – providing both support for the framework and interview themes and highlighting more questions around them.

Another area of mixed results comes when the themes are grouped according to their meaning. Table 41 below shows the percentage of references to the grouped themes in this case study (in bold) and in the pilot studies (in brackets).

Table 41: Grouping subjective states and behavioural patterns: hotel team

Positive subjective states		Positive behavioural patterns	
about the job 9% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have passion & pride • I feel challenged • I aspire to do more 	Achieving 22% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take ownership for delivery • I develop myself • I am focussed on the commercial • I get things done properly
about myself 15% (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m confident that I’m contributing • I’m empowered & growing • I’m respected & appreciated • I feel positive 	Supporting 9% (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I develop & inspire others • I work as a team • I’m flexible
about my colleagues 6% (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’m inspired by my manager • I’ve bonded with the team 	Interacting 18% (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend time with colleagues • I spend time with customers

Themes relating to positive states about the job represented only 9% of references whereas in the pilot studies this was 24%. Themes relating to positive states about the job represented 15% whereas in the pilot studies this was 21%. Themes relating to positive states about colleagues were similar (6% in this case study and 7% in the pilot studies). Themes relating achieving behaviour patterns were also similar (22% in this case study and 24% in the pilot studies). Themes relating to supporting behavioural patterns were just 9% in this case study but 17% in the pilot studies. And themes relating to interacting behavioural patterns were 18% in this case study and just 6% in the pilot studies. This could be simply due to individual differences or reflective of a very different context. It could also be down to the different probing and interview approach.

In terms of differing evidence, most notably, whilst in the pilot studies a connection between individual values and perceived organisation values was identified (via the questionnaire and word list activity), in this case study only a negative significant relationship was established for two of Schwartz's ten values: Hedonism and Universalism. This suggests that when an individual rated a statement as important to them personally, they tended to rate it as less visible in the organisation (manager behaviour). This disconnection does not appear to be reflected in the prevalence of the themes: *I spend time with colleagues* (one of the dominant themes) might be an example of behaviour related to Hedonism (pleasure) or indeed Universalism (appreciation of others). This may be reflective of the notion that rather than having a direct relationship with behaviour, values may have more of a mediating effect (Homer & Kahle 1988). The disconnection is however somewhat reflected in the interviewer's separate MSc analysis of the interviews where he suggested that there was some connection and some disconnection between the individual and organisation values. Specifically however, he identified a connection in terms of Universalism when analysing the interviews, which is opposite to the questionnaire findings. He concluded that the disconnection between individual and perceived organisation values may go some way to explaining the problems experienced at the hotel in terms of higher than average turnover of staff and lower than desired profits. This raises the question of the role of values in being at one's best in work. It might be that there is a facilitative, or mediating, role played – similar to Herzberg's hygiene factors, perhaps without a connection it becomes difficult to be at one's best or sustain it.

Whilst all the themes from the tentative framework were represented in the interviews in this case study, two of them in particular were poorly represented: *I am challenged* was only represented in one interview and *I develop and inspire others* was only represented in two interviews. Perhaps this is reflective of the contextual challenges in this case study – where participants highlighted the need for further investment in order to do their job more effectively. Further consideration of negative themes in future case studies might help to clarify contextual differences.

Table 42 on the following page summarises the supporting evidence for the tentative framework and where the evidence is differing. The tentative framework appears to be relevant in this case study as all the themes from the pilot studies appeared, though to differing degrees. The questions that have arisen from the results that are different to the pilot studies provide the basis of the critical reflection point in the next section where the framework and methods are evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remeny 2013).

Table 42: Comparison of Tentative Framework with findings from Hotel Case Study

Tentative Framework Theme	Hotel Case Study theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Questionnaire
I have passion and pride	Yes – dominant theme	
I feel challenged	Yes (only 1 interview)	Yes: Stimulation = top 5 value
I aspire to do more	Yes	
I am confident that I'm contributing	Yes – dominant theme	Yes: Higher psychological capital
I'm empowered and growing	Yes	Yes: Self-Direction = top 5 value
I'm respected and appreciated	Yes	
I feel positive	Yes	Yes: Higher psychological capital
I'm inspired by my manager	Yes	
I've bonded with the team	Yes	
I take ownership for delivery	Yes – dominant theme	
I develop myself	Yes	
I am focussed on the commercial	Yes – dominant theme	
I get things done properly	Yes	
I develop and inspire others	Yes (only 2 interviews)	Yes – benevolence = top 5 value
I work as a team	Yes	
I'm flexible	Yes	
I spend time with colleagues	Yes – dominant theme	Yes – benevolence = top 5 value No – neg corr Hedonism indiv & org value
I spend time with customers	Yes – dominant theme	No – neg corr Universalism indiv & org value

5.1.7 Critical reflection point

The previous section highlighted insights from this case study in terms of being at one's best in work and how the findings reflect the tentative framework found in the pilot studies. This section provides the opportunity to reflect on those findings in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remeny 2013) and shows both positive and negative factors in relation to all four areas of evaluation. This section also considers the impact of the researcher, noting the need to fully train interviewers and suggesting that they check the conclusions with the organisation in order to increase the credibility of the process. It concludes with reflections on the techniques and methods used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work – highlighting the value of interviews for data gathering and the need for careful question structuring in the questionnaire.

5.1.7.1 Qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework

As a part of the interviewer's MSc, he shared his findings and conclusions with the general manager at the hotel. The general manager found it helpful to consider where there might be a disconnection in terms of values and recognised some of the details that were drawn out. This provides some credibility in terms of the interview data however the analysis using the tentative framework was not shared as this was done some time after the original research. The credibility of the findings is therefore limited without this feedback. The disconnection of values noted by the interviewer was however also noted in the questionnaire which does add to the credibility.

The transferability of the tentative framework was the primary interest of this case study. As all the themes appeared in the interviews, this case study provides some evidence for the transferability of the framework. It remains just one additional context and more contexts should be explored. The distribution of the themes was however different from the pilot studies and two of the themes were poorly represented. Again, further case studies iterations will help to understand if the distribution of the themes are a feature of the framework or more descriptive of the varying contexts.

The dependability of the process was demonstrated in the standardised questions in the interview and questionnaire. The results were produced in a similar way to the pilot studies and were comparable, particularly in terms of the interview themes. The interviewer's straying from the purpose and the standardised interview questions may have had an impact

on the dependability, even though the responses to the additional (non-standard) questions were not coded.

The authenticity of the results is demonstrated by the consistency of the results with the pilot studies results. The disconnection of values observed in the questionnaire was also noted by the interviewer in his separate analysis of the interview responses. The questionnaire provided some links in terms of psychological capital however it also showed some differing results to the themes.

5.1.7.2 Impact of the researcher

As noted in chapter 3, Symons and Cassell (1999) note that the researcher is an inextricable part of case study research which means that reflexivity is an essential part of any evaluation or conclusions. This section considers the impact of the researcher on the conclusions in particular and touches on the impact on the process of investigation, however this latter part of the reflection continues in the evaluation of the methods used (in the next section).

A part of the pilot studies reflection identified the opportunity to separate the process of interviewing and the analysis in order to limit the impact of the researcher on any conclusions drawn. This case study's interviews were undertaken by a different individual to the analysis of the transcripts. Whilst the interviewer covered the standard questions in the interviews, it was also apparent that he strayed and used his own knowledge of the context. This meant that often there were leading questions such as, "so do you think there needs to be more staff?" The responses to these 'straying' questions were ignored for the analysis, they may however have impacted on the overall information that was gathered. This highlights the need to fully train the interviewers in the future. Ignoring the responses to leading questions may well have meant that there was important contextual evidence missed in the analysis and indeed may have altered the overall conclusions. Finding a way to capture negative or differing themes will be necessary for future case study iterations.

In terms of analysing the transcripts, not conducting the interviews meant that the researcher was influenced less by overall impressions and able to code the themes more objectively – based purely on the words used. Being able to listen to the recorded interviews aided in establishing the overall meaning of responses by providing a sense of the tone and emphasis on wording.

5.1.7.3 Reflections on the techniques used

This section reviews the interviews and questionnaires as tools to explore shared meaning – using credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity criteria outlined in section 3.4. Overall, interviews continue to be an authentic and dependable data capture tool and in this case coding using the tentative framework allowed demonstration of transferability (that was not established in the pilot studies). Despite applying existing themes (rather than pulling them out from the participants' words) credibility was also demonstrated by exploring the most common words (people) and comparing this with the dominant themes (including spending time with others). The few numbers involved in the questionnaire analysis limited the credibility and authenticity. The replication of higher psychological capital findings in the pilot studies provides some transferability evidence. Dependability however was limited by the different question structures exploring values and authenticity.

Similar to the pilot studies, the **interviews** produced a wealth of data. Section 3.4.2 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of interviews in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall, similar to the experience in the pilot case studies, interviews appear to be essential in developing all four aspects when exploring shared meaning as they allow the researcher to gather specific words and phrases from the context. Applying the tentative framework in the analysis of the interviews also helped to establish some transferability of that framework to a new context.

CREDIBILITY- How are the individuals' words integrated in the conclusions? As the themes from the pilot studies were transposed to this case study, the wording of the themes was not taken directly from the interviews. The word cloud showing the most common words in the interviews does however show a link – 'People' was the most common word and this relates to the two of the dominant themes that related to spending time with people – customers and colleagues. This provides further credibility for the interview, even with themes imposed on the data collected.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors? The majority of the themes from the pilot case studies (the tentative framework) were visible in the interviews. This demonstrates transferability of the tentative framework to an additional

context. Reviewing the distribution in future case study iterations will help to establish the importance of the distribution of themes. This could be done through interviews again.

DEPENDABILITY – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed? Similar to the pilot studies, the appreciative structure for the interviews provided some management of instability – using six core questions. The skill of the interviewer and probing without leading was more questionable in this context. The instability that may have been caused by this lack of skill was managed by removing the content and only focussing on the core questions for analysis.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews? The higher levels of psychological capital and the personal values identified in the questionnaire provided some support for the themes. The separate analysis conducted by the interviewer showed some consistency with the findings of the questionnaire in that there was a noted disconnection between individual values and perceived organisational values.

The **questionnaire** was shortened significantly by only using questions relating to scales that were shown to be reliable in the pilot studies. Shortening the questionnaire intended to make it more attractive to complete. In this study, only 11 individuals completed the questionnaire so once again the conclusions that can be drawn are limited. Section 3.4.3 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of the questionnaire in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall there were mixed conclusions regarding the questionnaire in all four elements of the evaluation.

CREDIBILITY – how well does it reflect the participants' views/experience? The criticism of the questionnaire from the pilot studies remain in that it does not use the words from the individuals to describe their experiences. In this case study however, the interviewer analysed the interviews separately in terms of values themes. The disconnection between the individuals' themes and those perceived as the organisation's was also evident to some extent in the questionnaire results – showing a negative correlation for hedonism and universalism values of individuals and perceived organisation values via the manager. In that way, there is some additional credibility for the use of the questionnaire.

TRANSFERABILITY – how has the questionnaire helped to identify transferable factors? The transferability is somewhat limited by the low numbers of participants involved in the questionnaire. Reducing its length was intended to improve the attractiveness of completing

the questionnaire but this does not appear to have been realised in this case study. Consistent with the findings in the pilot studies, the questionnaire results from this case study show overall significantly higher psychological capital, particularly self-efficacy. The questions relating to values and perceived organisation values via the manager showed very different results to those of the pilot studies. In that way, the results were less transferrable.

DEPENDABILITY – how has instability been managed in the questionnaire? Only questions relating to the scales that showed good reliability in the pilot studies were used in this questionnaire. In that way the dependability was strengthened. The differing question styles for identification of personal values and perceived organisational values via the manager may have helped to manage the potential response biases, as noted in the pilot studies however they may also have distorted the responses. Given the different results relating to values, perhaps conclusions relating to these questions are less dependable.

AUTHENTICITY – what other evidence supports or contradicts the questionnaire findings? As already noted, the values disconnection was also noted by the interviewer's separate analysis of the interviews. Using the tentative framework to code the interviews perhaps limited opportunity to note anomalies or negative themes and therefore potentially limited the authenticity of the conclusions.

By reviewing the insights from this case study's findings in relation to understanding the shared meaning of being at one's best in work alongside the questions raised by this critical reflection point, further questions are identified as necessary to attend to in the future iterative case studies. Attending to these questions will help to establish a clearer understanding of what we mean when we say we are at our best in work.

5.1.8 Additional questions or propositions

This case study has been helpful in establishing the transferability of the tentative framework themes from the pilot studies to a different context. It remains just one context and future iterative case studies need to show a similar transferability of the themes before one can more confidently say that the tentative framework describes the shared experiences and meaning behind being at one's best in work.

The other intention of the research was to reflect upon the techniques that can be used to explore shared meaning. The interviews and experiences of the interviewer in the hotel were an essential element of the case study – establishing the themes that were present. The questionnaire, demonstrated some triangulation in terms of the psychological capital however the continued low numbers of participants and the questions around the structure of the items relating to values render the questionnaire less helpful.

Table 43 below notes the questions after the pilot studies and the responses to those questions as a result of this case study.

Table 43: Post pilot studies questions and their responses following the hotel case study

Question:	Response following hotel case study:
Is the framework transferable to other contexts?	Yes – it would appear to be transferable to this context
Is the values connection seen in the pilot studies simply a product of this values driven organisation?	The values connection was not observed via the case study however there were significant negative relationships noted in this context.
Would a shortened questionnaire provide more helpful triangulation data?	There were triangulation opportunities from the questionnaire but there were still small numbers involved.
Could separating the interviewing and the analysis reduce the impact of the researcher on the conclusions drawn?	The process was straightforward and the results were still simple to analyse without the researcher undertaking the interviews. This did limit the interpretation of the findings based on overall impression.
How can observations be more structured?	Not attended to.

Based on the post pilot reflections and the post hotel case study reflections there remain some questions that need to be attended to in future case study iterations:

- Is there evidence to support the transferability of the tentative framework's themes to other contexts? This was an engaged team, what about high performing and committed contexts?
- How does the distribution of themes differ in different contexts?
- Will higher levels of psychological capital also be seen in a different context?
- Might the consistency of the word list activity be more helpful in establishing personal values and perceived organisation values?
- Will training the interviewer more effectively, assist in reducing the impact of the researcher?
- Could involving the interviewer after coding the interviews independently assist in establishing greater credibility?
- Might coding negative themes add to the authenticity of the conclusions?

The next case study iteration explored some of these questions.

5.2 Case Study Iteration 2: High Performing Exec Search Team

This was the second post pilot case study and was intended to establish whether the themes from the tentative framework could be transferred into a second context. This section provides the purpose, context and outline of the research within a high performing executive search team. The team was selected as it had seen the greatest growth in income over the last two years and had moved from the 8th to the 3rd most successful team in the company.

For this case study, interviews (11 in total), a psychological capital questionnaire (completed by 11 participants) and a word list activity (completed by 11 participants) were used to explore the shared experiences within this team. The interviews were coded using the tentative framework themes and all were present. The questionnaire highlighted significantly higher levels of Self-Efficacy, similar to the previous studies. It also noted significantly lower levels of Hope. The word list activity highlighted five of Schwartz's (2009) values as common in this team, three of which were also noted to be strongly correlated with perceptions that they are supported by their work (and two did not show a significant or strong relationships).

This case study does demonstrate transferability of the tentative framework to this context and findings more closely reflect those of the pilot studies in terms of the distribution of themes and a greater values connection.

The final part of this section provides some reflection on the tentative framework and the techniques used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. It highlights additional questions to explore in the future case study iterations in order to establish greater confidence in the tentative framework and more insight regarding techniques to explore shared meaning.

5.2.1 The purpose of this case study

This case study explores whether the themes identified in the tentative framework identified in the pilot studies are applicable in another context, outside of that organisation. From the previous case study with a highly engaged hotel team, the themes did appear transferable however the distribution of the themes was different. This case study explores the shared experiences of a high performing executive search team. The literature has suggested that being at one's best may reside in the overlap of engagement, commitment and performance. Any consistencies in the experiences of the individuals in this high performing team are therefore likely to provide some insight into being at one's best. If those consistencies reflect some or all of the themes in the tentative framework then there is further confidence in that framework describing a shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Understanding the inconsistencies or differing results to those of the pilot studies may also provide some insight about the context and being at one's best in work.

This case study iteration is also part of a wider research agenda which is reviewing the methods used to investigate shared meaning. In this case study, interviews, word lists and a shortened questionnaire are used and will be reviewed in terms of the value that they add to exploring shared meaning. This evaluation will be considered in terms of Remenyi's (2013) guidelines for qualitative evaluation: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

This case study also explores some of the additional questions identified following the critical evaluation of the previous case study iteration:

- How does the distribution of themes differ in different contexts?
- Might the word list activity be helpful in establishing personal values and perceived organisation values?
- Will training the interviewers more effectively, assist in reducing the impact of the researcher?
- Could involving the interviewer after coding the interviews independently assist in establishing credibility?
- Might coding negative themes add to the authenticity of the conclusions?

The following section provides greater clarity in terms of the context of this case study and the experiences of the researcher. Moving on, subsequent sections provide the details of the findings and the post case study critical reflection point brings out the insights for being at one's best and learning points for future case study iterations.

5.2.2 The context

This case study opportunity arose as a part of a student's MSc research, Noor Salih. She conducted the interviews and included the questions as part of her research and provided this researcher with the transcripts. This allowed the interview and the analysis to be separated.

The global executive search firm has offices across Europe, Asia/Pacific, Latin America, Middle East, Africa and North America. Practise areas include: Financial Services; Board Services; Industrial; and Human Resources. The team based in Dubai were selected for the research exploration as over the previous two years they had increased their revenues by 80%, the headcount by 60% and risen from 8th to 3rd in global ranking – making them a team to watch and to understand.

The MD of the Dubai branch had previously set up the firm under a different brand in 1999 and became part of the current global brand in 2006. The business had peaked in 2008 before the global crisis and from 2010 began building the team and client base again.

This case study loosely represents a high performing team – having seen significant growth in recent years. As with other case studies, it is also reflective of the reality that it is not always possible to clearly establish engagement, commitment and performance independently. Nevertheless, exploring whether the themes from the tentative framework are apparent in this context could provide further insight into being at one's best in work.

5.2.3 Experiences of the researcher

Learning from the hotel case study was applied in this research. The interviewer was more thoroughly trained by the researcher. She was taken through the purpose of the interview, common pitfalls and how to manage them and asked to do practise interviews with the researcher in order to demonstrate her learning.

Having obtained agreement from the MD of the Dubai branch in person, whilst he was in London the interviewer used Skype videos to interview his team members. She met with 11 of the team members for the interview and word list activities and asked them to complete the questionnaire via survey monkey. The interviews varied from 30 to 60 minutes in length depending on the availability and talkative nature of the individuals involved. These interview participants represented 69% of the entire team.

Having previously worked at the search firm, the interviewer was familiar with the majority of the participants, however was pleasantly surprised, that all but one were not only professional, but genuinely expressed interest in the research being conducted, asking further questions. All of the participants possessed an outstanding command of English language, except for one; the Finance Director.

The overall impression of the interviewer was that participants had a very positive attitude towards the organisation, in fact more than the role, it seemed evident that the organisation and people they met during their selection process was a significant factor in their decision to join the firm, with the majority of participants speaking fondly of this experience; "I felt comfortable during my interview and could see myself working with the team, and the location is great too, not many people get to work in the DIFC ". The interviewer felt that it was not surprising the firm and team is high performing as it prides itself in talent management after all it is a people's business and that is the organisations expertise.

From the researcher's perspective, simply receiving the interview transcripts to analyse was potentially a more challenging approach however using the transcripts allowed for a more detached analysis of the words that individuals used, without the influence of the overall experience. It was surprisingly easy to analyse the interviews and the tentative framework appeared to jump out of the words used. By way of sense checking the analysis, the researcher shared with the interviewer example phrases that had been coded to the themes and she felt they were appropriate.

5.2.3.4 Methods used

The case study iteration used interviews, word lists and a short questionnaire.

The **interview** questions from the pilot studies were used with all 11 participants:

- Tell me about how you came to work here
- What attracted you to the role?
- What were your first impressions?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What is a great day for you?

Interviews were conducted by the MSc student, transcribed and given to the researcher to analyse.

The **word list** from the pilot study was reworked to ensure the same number of words for each of Schwartz's (2009) 10 value groups were included. This meant that the total number of words to select from was reduced to 120. The reduction was achieved by gaining a consensus from three independent researchers. Only words that all three agreed were relevant remained on the list. This word list was used during the interview with all 11 participants.

The **questionnaire** from the pilot was shorted significantly to contain only the questions relating to the psychological capital. – 6 questions based on Luthans & Youseff's (2007) psychological capital questionnaire. For each scale (self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, hope and agility) participants were asked to rate the statements in terms of how much they applied to them personally. For example:

When I have a set back at work, I have trouble recovering from it or moving on

Disagree	Disagree - most of the time	Agree - most of the time	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This reduced questionnaire was used as the previous case study had highlighted concerns relating to the correlation of the responses to the values questions as individual values questions had a different question structure to perceived organisational values questions.

The following pages provide the findings from these three techniques in terms of how they relate to the tentative framework established in the pilot studies.

5.2.4 Findings from the interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of all staff levels in the Executive search team from the Director to the administrator. In total there were 12 interviews conducted (out of a possible 16 team members). One interview was discarded as the individual had a poor command of the English language and struggled to understand the questions posed. 27% were male and 73% were female.

The transcribed interviews were coded based on the tentative framework themes, using Nvivo software. Table 44 shows the themes compared by the number of references to each them and the number of interviews containing the theme. The least common themes (*I develop and inspire others plus I work as a team*) were still referenced by 27% of the group.

Figure 19 shows a Tree Map to illustrate all the themes in all the interviews in this team. This highlights the dominant themes as: *I take ownership for delivery; I am confident that I'm contributing; I am challenged; I spend time with clients-candidates; I aspire to do more; I develop myself; I'm flexible; and I have passion and pride*. Negative themes and anomalies were also noted. These did not make any difference to the dominant theme conclusions.

When reviewing the interviews at word level, the most common words used were: Think; People and Organisation. These appear at the centre of the Word Cloud that illustrates the top 100 words (5 letters or more) in figure 20.

The themes were also interrogated to identify any similarities in terms of wording and coding. There were no wording similarities suggesting that the themes were distinct. There were however a number of coding similarities indicating a range of co-existing themes in the interviews. These are outlined in table 47. Of particular note, when the theme *I take ownership for delivery* was coded in an interview, *I am confident that I'm contributing* also appeared every time (jaccard's coefficient = 1).

Table 44: Themes compared in high performing Executive Search Team interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
Behaviour	Take ownership for delivery	39	11
State	Confident I am contributing	38	11
Behaviour	Spend time with clients-candidate	27	10
State	Aspire to do more	22	10
State	I am challenged	30	9
State	Passion and pride	20	9
Behaviour	Get things done properly	18	9
State	Bonded with the team	13	9
Behaviour	Developing self & learning	21	8
Behaviour	Flexible	20	8
State	Empowered and growing	19	8
State	Respected and appreciated	17	8
State	Positive	19	7
Behaviour	Focussed on commercial	18	7
Behaviour	Spend time with colleagues	12	6
State	Inspired by my manager	6	4
Behaviour	Develop and inspire others	14	3
Behaviour	Teamwork	8	3

Figure 19: Tree Map of interview themes in high performing Executive Search Team
 Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



This Tree Map highlights that the conversations in these interviews were dominated by the following themes:

- **I take ownership for delivery**
 - *“I said to myself, I really want to get that, so I did the proposal, we had the discussion and several meetings... and we were selected”*
- **I am confident that I'm contributing**
 - *“I get to the end of the day and I feel that I've accomplished something”*
- **I am challenged**
 - *“I quite like being out of my depth... I find it exhilarating”*
- **I spend time with clients-candidates**
 - *“I really enjoy interacting with clients and candidates face to face”*
- **I aspire to do more**
 - *“I'd been in London for 4 years and wanted to work in a different part of the world, working in different industries”*
- **I develop myself**
 - *“I try to force myself to learn new things”*
- **I'm flexible**
 - *“I work most effectively when I have a lot to do and also when its varied and engaging”.*
- **I have passion and pride**
 - *“The organisation is a multinational company with a good reputation... that is what I wanted”. “You've got to be passionate about what you do”.*

In these interviews there were also some discussions around points of dissatisfaction or wanting change. These were referencing what the individuals would like to see more of.

Table 45: Themes of anomalies to the tentative framework

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded	Example statements
State	Want more of development	11	6	<i>"I would like some personal growth opportunities, whether it's training courses or new technology..."</i>
Behaviour	Want more of a balance/flexibility	9	6	<i>"I'd like to see more flexibility for employees because I think everyone can manage their own time and workload"</i>
Behaviour	Want more of doing things properly	9	5	<i>"It's good to have freedom but you know people need to be able to comply to some rules"</i>
Behaviour	Want more time with customers	7	5	<i>"I don't get to interact with clients and candidates enough"</i>
Behaviour	Want more respect and appreciation	8	4	<i>"I would like to see more incentives and benefits – it's important for the motivation"</i>
State	Want more challenge	4	3	<i>"I would like to do less data stuff because I feel I waste so much time doing that"</i>
Behaviour	Want more team working	3	3	<i>"I guess I would like to see more what I like to think of as team mentality"</i>

These do not change the themes that dominated the conversations however with up to 6 of the interviews referencing these they need highlighting as anomalies. It was interesting that these theme anomalies could easily be matched as 'wanting more of...' the tentative framework themes. Subtracting these negative theme references from the positive theme references does however slightly change the order of theme prevalence; in particular the behavioural pattern theme of Flexible drops down the list most as noted in table 40 on the following page.

Table 46: Subtracting negative theme references from positive theme references

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
Behaviour	Take ownership for delivery	39	11
State	Confident I am contributing	38	11
State	Aspire to do more	22	10
Behaviour	Spend time with clients-candidate	$27 - 7 = 20$	10
State	I am challenged	$30 - 4 = 26$	9
State	Passion and pride	20	9
State	Bonded with the team	13	9
Behaviour	Get things done properly	$18 - 9 = 9$	9
Behaviour	Developing self & learning	21	8
State	Respected and appreciated	17	8
Behaviour	Flexible	$20 - 9 = 11$	8
State	Empowered and growing	$19 - 8 = 11$	8
State	Positive	19	7
Behaviour	Focussed on commercial	18	7
Behaviour	Spend time with colleagues	12	6
State	Inspired by my manager	6	4
Behaviour	Teamwork	$8 - 3 = 5$	3
Behaviour	Develop and inspire others	$14 - 11 = 3$	3

Table 47: Themes clustered by coding similarity – significant relationships in Executive Search team interviews

Theme A	Theme B	Jaccard's coefficient
Behaviour: I take ownership for delivery	State: I am confident I am contributing	1
	State: I aspire to do more	0.91
	Behaviour: I spend time with clients	0.91
	State: I've bonded with the team	0.82
	Behaviour: I get things done properly	0.82
	State: I am challenged	0.82
	State: I have passion and pride	0.82
State: I'm confident I am contributing	State: I aspire to do more	0.91
	Behaviour: I spend time with clients	0.91
	State: I've bonded with the team	0.82
	Behaviour: I get things done properly	0.82
	State: I am challenged	0.82
	State: I have passion and pride	0.82
Behaviour: I develop myself & learn	State: I've bonded with the team	0.89
	State: I aspire to do more	0.80
Behaviour: I spend time with clients	State: I aspire to do more	0.82
State: I am challenged	Behaviour: I get things done properly	0.80
State: I have passion and pride	State: I've bonded with my colleagues	0.80
Behaviour: I spend time with clients	Behaviour: I'm flexible	0.80
	State: I am empowered & growing	0.80
State: I feel positive	State: I've bonded with my colleagues	0.78
Behaviour: I am flexible	State: I am empowered & growing	0.78

5.2.5 Findings from the word lists

Data from the word lists were collected from the 11 interview participants.

The word list differed slightly from the one used in the pilot – it was smoothed to ensure that there were equal numbers of words for each of Schwartz's (2009) motivational values. Table 48 below shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common words being accomplishment, success, compassion and charity – selected by 82% of participants (9 individuals) however only a maximum of 56% said these were also supported by their work. The pie chart in figure 21 over the page shows the most common values based on the groups according to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values. Here, Benevolence, Tradition, Self-Direction, Achievement and Conformity make up more than half of the words selected. The final table over the page shows the breakdown of Schwartz's 10 values based on: the number of words selected as important (maximum 132 = 12 words for 11 individuals); the number of words selected as supported by their work; and the correlation for each of the 10 values. Given that only positive correlations are likely (as individuals were only asked to select which of their selected words were also supported by their work) only strong significant correlations are considered helpful – Achievement ($r=0.93$ $p<0.05$), Benevolence ($r=0.79$ $p<0.05$), Self-Direction ($r=0.79$ $p<0.05$) and Universalism ($r=0.71$ $p<0.05$). Thus three out of the top 5 values were also strongly supported by their work.

Table 48: Executive Search Team: most common words selected as important to me

Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Accomplishment, Success	82%	56%
Compassion	82%	22%
Charity	82%	0%
Culture	73%	25%
Intelligence	73%	25%

Figure 21: Executive Search Team: Values Selection



Table 49: Executive Search Team: values list overview

Value	Total Selected SELF	Total selected SUPPORTED	Correlation
Achievement	43	31	0.93**
Benevolence	50	17	0.79**
Conformity	42	15	0.44
Hedonism	33	6	0.57*
Power	29	8	0.14
Security	34	14	0.63**
Self-Direction	46	21	0.79**
Stimulation	37	13	0.20
Tradition	48	13	0.39
Universalism	32	10	0.71**

* p<0.1 ** P<0.05

5.2.6 Findings from the questionnaire

The questionnaire was shortened, following the critical reflections after the pilot study. Only the questions relating to psychological capital were used, making the questionnaire much shorter to complete.

Table 50: Psychological capital questionnaire items: high performing executive search team case study group compared with comparison group from pilot

Psychological Capital Scale	Comparison Group (n=101)			Case Study Group (n=16)		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean (μ)	SD	Alpha (α)	Mean	SD		
TOTAL	76.28	7.23	0.83	77	6.29	0.38	0.71
Self-Efficacy	17.17	8.39	0.75	20.75	2.29	1.69	0.09
Optimism	18.95	2.49	0.69	18.87	2.83	0.12	0.90
Resilience	20.28	1.95	0.56	19.5	1.82	1.50	0.14
Hope	19.88	2.36	0.70	18.56	2.75	2.03	0.04

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the results between the comparison group from the pilot and this case study group. There was no significant difference between the comparison group from the pilot and this case study group in the Executive Search Firm. There were two significant differences on the individual scales:

- There was a significant difference in the Hope ratings for the case study group ($\mu=18.56$ $SD=2.75$) and the comparison group ($\mu=19.88$ $SD=2.39$) conditions ($t=2.03$ $p<0.05$)
- There was a significant difference in the Self Efficacy ratings for the case study group ($\mu=20.75$ $SD=2.29$) and the comparison group ($\mu=17.17$ $SD=8.39$) conditions ($t=1.69$ $p<0.1$)

5.2.7 Insights for being at one's best

This case study intended to explore the transferability of the themes identified in the tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work. This high performing executive search team follows the previous post pilot case study in the highly engaged hotel team which provided some support for the tentative framework's application in a different context. This current case study does the same. This section begins by considering evidence from this case study that provides support for the tentative framework. It highlights 8 dominant themes, six of which were also dominant themes in the pilot studies and hotel team case study. The distribution of themes was also similar to the pilot studies. Despite this case study also capturing negative behavioural patterns and subjective states, the dominant themes remained the same. Moving on this section highlights areas of the findings that are more mixed in their evidence. The values identified via the word list are reflective of some of the behavioural pattern themes although unlike the pilot studies, just three of the values identified as important were strongly related to being perceived as supported in work. The psychological capital questionnaire also highlighted higher levels of Self-Efficacy in this case study, similar to the pilot studies. It also noted significantly lower levels of Hope, different to the pilot studies. Overall, this case study provides further support for the tentative framework in a new context. This section ends with a summary table illustrating how the findings of this case study add to the understanding of being at one's best in work and the tentative framework.

In terms of evidence to support the tentative framework, all the themes were represented in the 11 interviews in this case study. In particular the dominant themes: *I take ownership for delivery; I am confident that I'm contributing; I am challenged; I develop myself; I have passion and pride; I spend time with clients-candidates; I'm flexible; and I aspire to do more;*. The first five were also dominant themes in the pilot studies and the sixth was a dominant theme in the first post pilot case study iteration with the hotel team. Three of the themes were dominant themes in both the pilot case studies and the hotel case study: *I have passion and pride; I am confident that I'm contributing; and I take ownership for delivery.* Furthermore, in this case study, even the least common theme *Teamwork* was still represented in 27% of the interviews, a similar level of representation to the pilot studies.

In this case study, anomalies or negative behavioural patterns and subjective states were also captured, following the previous case study reflection that these may have altered the conclusions. None of these were dominant themes. If the number of coding references for

the negative themes were subtracted from the positive themes (table 45) then only the behavioural pattern theme of *Flexible* is removed from the dominant theme list.

When the themes were grouped according to their meaning, there were also similarities with the pilot studies findings. Table 51 below shows the percentage of references to the grouped themes in this case study (in bold) and in the pilot studies (in brackets). The proportions of theme representations are similar although there are some small differences in the exact percentages. The positive subjective states 'about myself' are slightly more prevalent than those 'about the job' which was different.

Table 51: Grouping subjective states and behavioural patterns: executive search team

Positive subjective states		Positive behavioural patterns	
about the job 20% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have passion & pride • I feel challenged • I aspire to do more 	Achieving 27% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take ownership for delivery • I develop myself • I am focussed on the commercial • I get things done properly
about myself 26% (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm confident that I'm contributing • I'm empowered & growing • I'm respected & appreciated • I feel positive 	Supporting 12% (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I develop & inspire others • I work as a team • I'm flexible
about my colleagues 5% (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm inspired by my manager • I've bonded with the team 	Interacting 11% (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend time with colleagues • I spend time with customers

Other mixed evidence comes from the questionnaire. Similar to the pilot studies and the first iterative case study, Self-Efficacy was identified as significantly higher in this group when compared with the comparison group, highlighting the role of psychological capital. Another psychological capital scale, Hope was also identified as significantly lower than the comparison group which is different to the findings of the pilot studies and the first iterative case study. This may be reflective of the anomalies noted in the interview themes.

The word list data also showed strong significant positive relationships for words related to Benevolence, Self-direction and Achievement which were also three of the five most common themes identified as 'important to me' for this group. This connection in terms of personal values and values perceived as supported by their work or organisation is reflective of the connection seen in the pilot studies. It is however less consistent and not as strong. There were however two other themes identified as amongst the most common amongst these individuals – Tradition and Conformity – yet these were not seen as connected or supported by their work.

The interview analysis at word level also provides some mixed evidence – the word Think was the most common and this does not naturally fit with any one of the tentative framework's themes, although it might be an element of them all. The second most common word was People which might be reflective of the theme *I spend time with clients-candidates*.

More broadly, the multiple theme coding similarities (evidenced in figure 22 and table 41) indicate broadly consistent interviews – where individuals are talking about their experiences in similar ways. This could be evidence to support the notion of a framework to describe these experiences, as has been proposed following the pilot studies. These multiple similarities however were only seen in the committed store interviews in the pilot studies.

Table 52 over the page summarises the supporting evidence from the tentative framework and where the evidence is differing, including the evidence from the previous case study iteration with the hotel team. Once again, the tentative framework appears to be relevant in this case study as all the themes from the pilot studies appeared. Though there were differing individual theme representations there were also similar proportions evidenced in these interviews. The questions that have arisen from the results that are differing from the pilot studies provide the basis of the critical reflection point in the next section where the framework and methods are evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remenyi 2013).

Table 52: Comparison of Tentative Framework with findings from post pilot case study iterations.

Tentative Framework Theme	HOTEL CASE STUDY		EXECUTIVE SEARCH TEAM CASE STUDY		
	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Questionnaire	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Questionnaire	Evidence from the Word List
I have passion and pride	Yes		Yes		
I feel challenged	Yes	Stimulation = top 5	Yes		
I aspire to do more	Yes		Yes		Achievement = top 5 + strong corr indiv & org
I am confident that I'm contributing	Yes	Higher Self- Efficacy	Yes	Higher Self-Efficacy	Achievement = top 5 + strong corr indiv & org
I'm empowered and growing	Yes	Self-Direction = top 5	Yes		Self-Direction = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org
I'm respected and appreciated	Yes		Yes		
I feel positive	Yes	Higher psychological capital	Yes	Lower Hope	
I'm inspired by my manager	Yes		Yes		
I've bonded with the team	Yes		Yes		Tradition = Top 5 but no sig rel indiv & org
I take ownership for delivery	Yes	Self-Direction = top 5	Yes		Self-Direction = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org
I develop myself	Yes	Self-Direction = top 5	Yes		Self-Direction = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org
I am focussed on the commercial	Yes		Yes		
I get things done properly	Yes		Yes		
I develop and inspire others	Yes	Benevolence = top 5	Yes		Benevolence = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org
I work as a team	Yes		Yes		Conformity = top 5 but no sig rel indiv & org
I'm flexible	Yes		Yes		
I spend time with colleagues	Yes	Benevolence = top 5 Neg corr Hedonism indiv & org value	Yes		Benevolence = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org
I spend time with customers	Yes	Neg corr Universalism indiv & org value	Yes		

5.2.8 Critical reflection point

The previous section highlighted insights from this case study in terms of being at one's best in work and how the findings reflect the tentative framework found in the pilot studies and the hotel case study. This section provides the opportunity to reflect on those findings in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remeny's 2013 guidelines for qualitative research evaluation). This qualitative evaluation highlights clear strengths in terms of all four areas and some minor improvements that can be made for future iterations. Moving on, this section considers the impact of the researcher. It notes the impact of training the interviewer and the theme analysis discussions which in turn leads to a recommendation for a continued collaborative approach between interviewer and researcher in future case studies. It concludes with reflections on the techniques and methods used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work – highlighting once again the value of interviewing for data collection and noting the improvements to the word list activity in identifying values.

5.2.8.1 Qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework

As a part of the interviewer's MSc, she shared her findings and conclusions with the director of the team. He said the results reflected some of his observations and he found it helpful to understand the feelings of the team and in gaining insight regarding their values. This provides some credibility for the tentative framework. The word level analysis of the interviews had some loose links to the tentative framework (in terms of think being loosely related to some of the themes and people related to the spending time with clients-candidates). A more direct link between the most common words and the most common themes would have added greater credibility. Future case study iterations need to continue to share the findings with the organisation and review the link between the word level analysis and theme analysis.

The transferability of the tentative framework was the primary interest of this case study. As all the themes appeared in the interviews, this case study provides some evidence for the transferability of the framework to another context, adding to the previous case study iteration in the hotel. The distribution of the themes was also similar to the pilot studies. The continued appearance of the tentative framework themes in this case study provides support for exploring those themes in future case study iterations. Analysing the distribution of the

themes within different contexts will provide further opportunity to consider how the framework can be interpreted.

The dependability of the process was enhanced by capturing the negative behavioural patterns and subjective states. Even though these did not change the overall dominant themes it allowed for their capture. Whether it is necessary to capture these formally in future case study iterations is debateable. Noting anomalies is part of the process for qualitative analysis however only when they appear regularly is it likely to be necessary to capture formally and their frequency counted. Whether the anomalies are noted formally or not needs to be considered for each of the future iterative case studies.

The authenticity of the results is demonstrated by the consistency of the results with the pilot studies results and the additional findings from the word lists and questionnaire. This adds to the authenticity identified in both the pilot studies and the first post pilot case study iteration. Continued consistency of results with the tentative framework is sought from future iterative case studies.

5.2.8.2 Impact of the researcher

Taking the learning from the pilot studies reflection and the hotel case study reflection, this case study separated the process of interviewing and analysis, though with two improvements: the interviewer was trained by the researcher more thoroughly; and the interviewer provided feedback on the themes identified. Training the interviewer ensured there was less inappropriate leading in the questions and ensured consistency and greater dependability. The separated interviewing from analysis limited the impact on conclusions of the overall impression gained by being immersed in the organisation and the process of interviewing. Including the interviewer's perspective to 'sense check' the theme analysis allowed nuances to be picked up. It also meant that the interviewer was able to feedback to the organisation and to get their response – a way of improving the credibility.

Future case study iterations would benefit from a similarly collaborative approach in order to limit the impact of the researcher yet still appreciate the valuable insights being immersed in the organisation can give.

5.2.8.3 Reflections on the techniques used

This section reviews the interviews, questionnaire and word list activity as tools to explore shared meaning – using credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity criteria outlined in chapter 3. Overall interviews as seen as the most useful data gathering tool as it allows the capture of specific words and phrases. Training interviewers has been seen to improve the dependability of conclusions along with greater collaboration between the interviewer and researcher. The evaluation highlights the opportunity to use a shared interview or focus group as a way to explore shared meaning in future case study iterations. In terms of the questionnaire, previous studies had highlighted caution regarding the question structure. In this case study the questions were limited to standard questions. This in turn meant that there were limited insights gained so perhaps other tools may be more helpful in exploring shared meaning. Finally, the word list activity is evaluated and highlighted as a useful tool for triangulation.

Similar to the pilot studies and hotel case studies, the **interviews** produced a wealth of data. Section 3.5.2 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of interviews in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall, interviews continue to be essential in developing all four aspects when exploring shared meaning as they allow the researcher to gather specific words and phrases from the context. Given that the pilot studies and now two post-pilot case studies have established the value of the interview in gathering data, there is an opportunity to use a different format such as a focus group in future case studies and reflect on how they may add to the exploration of shared meaning.

CREDIBILITY – How are the individuals' words integrated in the conclusions? As with the hotel case study, the application of the tentative framework to the interviews meant that the wording of the themes was not taken directly from the interviews. The word cloud showing the most common words in the interviews did show a loose link to the themes in that Think (the most common word) and People (the second most common word) could be related to the interview themes. The fact that the feedback from the organisation was that the conclusions resonated with them does also add some further credibility.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors? All the themes from the tentative framework were visible in the interviews and there was also a similar distribution of the themes to that of the pilot studies demonstrates transferability of the

framework to this context. Using interviews clearly helps in identifying common themes. As this research is seeking to reflect on techniques to explore shared meaning, having seen the value of interviews in the pilot studies and two post pilot case studies perhaps there is an opportunity to explore shared meaning in a shared interview context such as a focus group.

DEPENDABILITY – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed? Similar to the pilot studies, the appreciative structure for the interviews provided some management of instability. The more thorough training of the interviewer, to avoid leading questions and keep focused on the structure added to the dependability. Continuing to train interviewers thorough is recommended for future case study iterations.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews? Similar to the pilot studies and hotel case studies, higher levels of self-efficacy were established via the questionnaire. This provides some support for the positive subjective states, in particular the theme *I am confident that I'm contributing*. The lower levels of hope established via the questionnaire initially could be seen as contradicting the interviews however once consideration of the more prevalent (though not dominant) negative themes noted, perhaps this lower level of hope could be related to these. The prominent values highlighted in the questionnaire could also be linked to the themes (e.g. Self-Direction value linking to the behavioural theme *I take ownership for delivery*).

The **questionnaire** was limited to the psychological capital questions and this time was collected by the interviewer. This ensured that all participants completed the questionnaire rather than asking them to complete it separately which previously had limited the numbers. Despite there being a high proportion of the team being involved in the research, the numbers were still small – just 11 completions. Section 3.5.3 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of the questionnaire in exploring shared meaning and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall whilst the questionnaire was sound and provided two clear insights in terms of significantly higher levels of self-efficacy and significantly lower levels of hope, there may be other techniques that provide a greater level of insight that might be more helpful in exploring shared meaning.

CREDIBILITY – How well does it reflect the participants' views/experience? As in previous case studies a questionnaire is limited as it does not use the words from the individuals to describe their experiences.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the questionnaire helped to identify transferable factors? This questionnaire was limited to the psychological capital questions. The two significantly different psychological capital levels provide support for two of the themes. Potentially other techniques could provide support for more themes.

DEPENDABILITY – How has instability been managed in the questionnaire? Using the standardised questions from Luthans and Yousseff's (2009) psychological capital questionnaire provides greater confidence in the dependability of any conclusions from this questionnaire.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the questionnaire findings? As noted already, the significantly higher levels of self-efficacy could support the positive subjective states themes, in particular *I am confident that I'm contributing*. The significantly lower level of Hope established in the questionnaire could provide a different perspective or explanation for the negative interview themes identified.

The **word list activity** was originally designed as a conversation starter in the pilot studies however the results were seen as useful and word lists were established as an additional technique. As such, there were not specific evaluation questions outlined in chapter three. The word list credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity can still be evaluated and highlights it as a valuable tool for triangulation with the interview.

CREDIBILITY – the word list activity allows individuals to choose which words were important to them. They were not limited in any way and could choose as few or as many that were relevant to them. In that way, the activity allows the word selections to be really personal for each and every individual, thus adding some credibility. They could not add other words that were not present, however so there is an element of reduced credibility in this activity.

TRANSFERABILITY – with a standardised word list linked to Schwartz's values there is the ability to compare the findings and link them to the themes. In that way, the word list can help to identify transferable themes.

DEPENDABILITY – the structured approach to producing this word list, using a consensus to agree the mapping of words to Schwartz's themes helped in managing potential instability. The varying number of word selections could be seen as adding to the instability however it does allow individuals to keep their selections to only those that are relevant.

AUTHENTICITY – table 46 highlights the interview themes that link to the common values themes identified in the word list activity. The strong significant correlations between words selected as both important and supported by their work also provides support to interview themes. Whilst not every outcome is supported by interview themes (such as the weaker correlations) this activity does provide some useful triangulation.

By reviewing the insights from this case study's findings in relation to understanding the shared meaning of being at one's best in work alongside the questions raised by this critical reflection point, further questions can be identified as necessary to attend to in the future case study iterations. Attending to these questions will help to establish a clear understanding of what we mean when we say we are at our best in work.

5.2.9 Additional questions or propositions

This case study is the second that has been helpful in establishing the transferability of the tentative framework themes from the pilot studies to a different context. The hotel case study showed some transferability to a highly engaged team and this executive search team case study showed some transferability to a high performing team. There remains contextual differences in terms of the dominant themes, individual values held and level of connection of those values with their work. Continued exploration with the framework in different contexts and using different methods will add further confidence in terms of being able to say that the tentative framework describes the shared experiences and meaning behind being at one's best in work.

The other intention of the research was to reflect upon the techniques that can be used to explore shared meaning. The interviews and experiences of the interviewer with the team were an essential element of the case study and establishing the themes that were present. The questionnaire though standardised produced minimal data for triangulation. The word list now more standardised provided more data for triangulation.

Table 53 over the page notes the questions after the previous hotel case study and the responses to those questions as a result of this current case study.

Table 53: Post hotel study questions and their responses following the executive search team study

Question:	Response following hotel case study:
Is the framework transferable to other contexts?	Yes – it would appear to be transferable to this context
How does the distribution of themes differ in different contexts?	In this context the distribution was similar to the pilot case studies and different to the hotel case study.
Will higher levels of psychological capital also be seen in a different context?	Higher Self-Efficacy in this context but lower Hope.
Might the consistency of the word list activity be more helpful in establishing personal values and perceived organisation values?	The standardised word list was quick to administer and highlighted the most common individual themes and those individuals felt were supported by their work.
Will training the interviewer more effectively, assist in reducing the impact of the researcher?	Yes – the interviewer was more focussed on the question structure which provided consistency with the previous case studies
Could involving the interviewer after coding the interviews independently assist in establishing greater credibility?	Yes – this more collaborative approach enabled the interviewer's valuable perspective to be included in the analysis without personal impressions taking over
Might coding negative themes add to the authenticity of the conclusions?	The negative coding did not change the dominant themes though it did provide further detail to the analysis of this context. The negative codes may be linked to the lower Hope levels seen in the questionnaire.

Based on the post pilot and iterative case study reflections there remain some questions that need to be attended to in the future case study iterations:

- Will the tentative framework be relevant in other contexts?
- Will a collaborative approach to interviewing and analysis continue to help in limiting the negative impact of the interviewer on conclusions?
- Will a shared interview or focus group provide greater insight for shared meaning?
- After the pilot studies, the idea of more structured observations was raised and this remains an opportunity in future case study iterations.

5.3 Case Study 3: High Performing Shop Managers

This was the third post-pilot case study and was intended to establish whether the themes from the tentative framework could be transferred to a different context. This section provides the purpose, context and outline of the research with the highest performing betting shop managers. 50 individuals were selected as the highest performing based on their store performance and their regional manager's rating of their performance in the job.

For this case study, focus group interviews (nine in total with eight participants in each including the 50 managers, their team members and their managers), a values word list activity, a competency card sort activity and a task list activity were used to explore the shared experiences of these individuals. The interviews were coded using the tentative framework themes and all were present. The values word list activity highlighted strong significant relationships between words selected as important to individuals and those identified as supported by their work. The prioritised competencies also reflected the tentative framework dominant themes, providing some triangulation evidence. The most common activities customer time, taking bets and team management also provided some support for the tentative framework themes. This case study therefore does demonstrate transferability of the tentative framework to this context.

The final part of this section provides some reflection on the tentative framework and the techniques used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. It highlights additional questions to explore in the future case study iterations – most notably the need for a highly committed context exploration and the opportunity to use a mental model type activity in the exploration.

5.3.1 The purpose of this case study

This case study explores whether the themes identified in the tentative framework are applicable in another context, outside of that organisation. From the previous case study iterations with a highly engaged hotel team and a high performing executive search team, the themes did appear transferable. This case study explores the shared experiences of high performing shop managers and their team members' perspectives on the shop managers. It formed part of a job analysis project. The literature has suggested that being at one's best may reside in the overlap of engagement, commitment and performance. Any consistencies in the experiences of these high performing shop managers are therefore likely to provide some insight into being at one's best. If those consistencies reflect some or all of the themes in the tentative framework then there is further confidence in that framework describing a shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Understanding the inconsistencies or differing results to those of the pilot studies may also provide some insight about the context and being at one's best in work.

This case study is also part of a wider research agenda which is reviewing the methods used to investigate shared meaning. In this case study, focus group interviews, word lists and card sort activities are used and will be reviewed in terms of the value that they add to exploring shared meaning. This evaluation will be considered in terms of Remenyi's (2013) guidelines for qualitative evaluation: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

This case study also explores some of the additional questions identified following the critical reflection on the previous case study iterations:

- Will the tentative framework be relevant in other contexts?
- Will a collaborative approach to interviewing and analysis continue to help in limiting the negative impact of the interviewer on conclusions?
- Will a shared interview or focus group provide greater insight for shared meaning?
- Will more structured observations provide greater triangulation evidence?

The following section provides greater clarity in terms of the context of this case study and the experiences of the researcher. Moving on, subsequent sections provide the details of the findings and the post case study critical reflection point brings out the insights for being at one's best and learning points for future case study iterations.

5.3.2 The context

This case study arose from a job analysis project the researcher was involved in through her work as a consultant. The company wanted to understand what makes a great betting shop manager. This betting shop firm has 365 shops across Britain and Ireland and was planning on significant growth over the coming years. Given the UK law limiting the number of fixed odds machines in one shop, this company had followed others in opening more than one shop in the same town in order to increase the number of machines available. As a result, some shop managers were responsible for more than one shop but always in the same area.

The Managing Director had had what he called an 'epiphany' - recognising that it was more than just taking bets and increasing the turnover of the shop and likely to be how they managed their staff that had a great impact. The remaining directors on the board were less supportive of a people manager aspect, one saying in a meeting "I can tell you one thing it is not – people management". Initially comparative studies were shared with the board of directors to show how similar contexts highlighted the role of people management (as well as technical expertise) in successful retail management. With the exception of the MD, the board were not convinced and wanted more data from their own specific context to convince them which led to this investigation as part of wider job analysis project. The company agreed to include the research questions in the job analysis project as a part of the project negotiations.

5.3.3 Experiences of the researcher

It was clear that head office departments were very numbers orientated and did not acknowledge people management as playing a key role in shop management. This led to a reduced emphasis on people management skill development. From a researcher's point of view the emphasis on performance was incredibly clear.

Identifying the top 50 managers

The process started by asking for the top 50 managers. After discussions the criteria for their identification was agreed to be the profit and turnover of the store alongside the regional manager's performance rating based on their existing job description. These 50 managers were asked to take part in the research – they were told they had been identified as the best managers and their input would be appreciated to help establish success criteria for future shop managers.

Store visits

At the same time, four different stores were visited in order to observe managers in different contexts: A busy high street shop, a city based shop, a small town shop and a large recently opened shop. This allowed for a greater understanding of the differing contexts that managers were operating in and the types of activities they were involved in. The different stores looked quite different – the newest one had the feel of a lounge bar and the high street shop was more standard in terms of its lay out, with blocked out windows and tables for customers to write out betting slips. The shops had differing customers – some were speedy visitors and others were there for long periods of the day. Most noticeably the city shop tended to have more speedy visitors utilising the touch screen technology. A task list was produced that could be used as a part of the focus groups in gathering activity data from the managers.

Focus group data gathering

Nine Focus groups that included the 50 shop managers, cashiers from those shops and their regional managers were organised in London and in Dublin. The researcher completed five focus groups and an experienced facilitator conducted the remaining four (having observed one and received a full briefing) – they captured the responses on flip charts as a part of the discussions so that all were happy with the wording and content. Individual activities were also completed: word list activity; task list activity; and competency card sort.

The experienced facilitation was necessary in this activity – even so some ran out of time. The initial reaction to being invited was one of distrust – some felt they were being used to help get rid of people and others found it difficult to understand the purpose. These initial objections needed to be overcome at the start and throughout the focus groups.

The flip chart and facilitator notes were transcribed into documents for analysis.

Data analysis

The data from the focus groups and accompanying activities was collated and analysed by the researcher. There were additional activities outside of the research case study that were also used in order to provide a thorough job analysis and recommendations for the organisation. All focus group themes were first coded according to the organisation's competency definitions so that evidence could be grouped for them in a meaningful way. Separately, the researcher also applied the tentative framework to the focus group.

5.3.3.1 Methods used

This case study iteration used focus group Interviews, values wordlists, competency card sorting activity and a task list activity (structured from the observations). The focus groups were a mix of the top store managers, their cashiers and their district managers. Each lasted 2.5 hours with 8 participants. They all followed a similar structure:

Introduction: they all started with an introduction regarding the business need to understand what great managers do and an overview of the job analysis project. All participants introduced themselves and their background to the company. This reflected the question from the standard interview: 'tell me about how you came to work here'

Great day stories: they were then asked to share stories about a great day – 'when you've gone home with a bit of a buzz'. These stories were explored in terms of the context, behaviour and feelings of those involved; This reflected the question from the standard interview: 'what is a great day for you?'

What do you do: they were then asked to complete the task lists (this was a post it activity where they placed the tasks into a grid based on frequency, importance and difficulty); This loosely reflected the questions from the standard interview: What do you enjoy doing? What would you like to do more of? The task lists of all 50 managers were used in this study.

How do you do it: they were then asked to complete the competency card sort, selecting which 8 competency behaviours were most important for the shop manager to demonstrate. Their selections one two levels – firstly on the impact they have and secondly on how difficult it is to train.

Why do you do it: they were asked what first attracted them to the job, what their first impressions were and what keeps them in the company? These questions were directly related to the same questions from the standard research interview. They were then asked to complete the values wordlist activity. This was the same standardised activity as the previous case study. Participants were asked to highlight which words were important to them and then tick which of those words were also supported by their work. The words were presented in alphabetical order but all had been previously mapped to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values. As the word list was at the end of the focus group, sometimes it was missed due to time considerations. In total 38 managers completed this activity.

In addition to the above activities, for the job analysis project personality questionnaire data and senior stakeholder visionary interviews were also obtained but not used in the analysis for this case study.

5.3.4 Findings from the focus group interviews

The focus groups were conducted with the 50 best store managers, some of their cashiers and their district managers. There were 72 participants in total across nine focus groups. 54% male and 46% female. The researcher conducted five of the focus groups and used an experienced facilitator to complete the remaining four groups. They were fully briefed on the content, attended one of the researcher's focus groups to understand the process and the types of questions. They were also briefed on what data to gather and how to capture it.

The transcribed flip charts and facilitator notes were coded based on the tentative framework themes, using Nvivo software. The consistency of the data capture meant that there were no differences in the style or level of detail between the researcher's focus groups and the additional facilitator's data. Table 54 shows the themes compared by the number of references to each of them and the number of focus groups containing the theme. The least common themes were only referenced once in one focus group, however it should be noted that this still involved 8 participants – so equivalent to 11% of the total group.

Figure 23 shows a Tree Map to illustrate all the themes in all the focus groups. This highlights the dominant themes as: *I develop and inspire others*; *I am focussed on the commercial*; *I spend time with customers*; *I take ownership for delivery*; *I have passion and pride*; and *I am confident that I'm contributing*. All of these dominant themes have been dominant in either the pilot case studies or in one of the other two post pilot case study iterations.

When reviewing the interviews at word level the most common word was: Customer. This appears at the centre of the Word Cloud that illustrates the top 100 words (5 letters or more) in figure 22.

The themes were also interrogated to identify any similarities in terms of wording and coding. There were no similarities found suggesting that the themes were distinct (no similarities in their wording) and there were no common links between the themes in this case study (no similarities in the coding).

Figure 23: Tree Map of interview themes in high performing shop managers

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



This Tree Map highlights that the conversations in these interviews were dominated by the following themes:

- **I develop and inspire others**
 - *“When you build the team, nobody’s 100% perfect – I’ve got 1 who loves sports, 1 who’s outgoing, 1 loves betting – they learn off each other ”*
- **I am focussed on the commercial**
 - *“It’s all about customer retention – 9 bookies in small area – got to build brand loyalty then get more money”.*
- **I spend time with customers**
 - *“I am polite with customers; listen to all their betting issues and general issues in their life. I almost become a friend to them.”*
- **I take ownership for delivery**
 - *“every day I solve an issue with either staff or customers I feel a sense of achievement”*
- **I have passion and pride**
 - *“I moved house to live closer to the job I got as a Deputy Manager. I am now a manager of my own shop. XYZ company have a fun, fair and friendly attitude towards staff.”*
- **I am confident that I’m contributing**
 - *“Cheltenham 2013- very very busy day with 13 shops in a close proximity, you know you are doing something right.*

5.3.5 Findings from the word lists

Data from the word lists were collected from 38 of the best managers.

The word list differed slightly from the one used in the pilot – but was the same as that used in the executive search team case study - smoothed to ensure that there were equal numbers of words for each of Schwartz's (2009) motivational values. Table 55 below shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common word being Trust – selected by 92% of participants and 80% of them saying it was also supported by their work. The pie chart in figure 24 over the page shows the most common values based on the groups according to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values. Here, Security, Achievement, Conformity, Hedonism and Benevolence make up more than half of the words selected. Table 56 also over the page shows the breakdown of Schwartz's 10 values based on: the number of words selected (maximum 456 = 12 words for 38 individuals); the number of words selected as supported by their work; and the correlation for each of the 10 values. Given that only positive correlations are likely (as individuals were only asked to select which of their selected words were also supported by their work) only strong significant correlations are considered helpful which were: Achievement ($r=0.88$ $p<0.01$), Benevolence ($r=0.77$ $p<0.01$); Conformity ($r=0.68$ $p<0.01$); Hedonism ($r=0.72$ $p<0.01$) Power ($r=0.89$ $p<0.01$); Security ($r=0.68$ $p<0.01$); Stimulation ($r=0.87$ $p<0.01$); and Tradition ($r=0.81$ $p<0.01$).

Table 55: Shop manager: most common words selected as important to me

Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Trust	92%	80%
Customer Satisfaction	89%	94%
Fairness	87%	91%
Fun	87%	82%
Integrity	87%	48%
Friendship	82%	71%

Figure 24: Shop manager: Values Selection



Table 56: Shop Managers: Values list overview

Value	Total Selected SELF	Total selected SUPPORTED	Correlation
Achievement	226	188	0.88**
Benevolence	201	132	0.77**
Conformity	206	141	0.68**
Hedonism	204	117	0.72**
Power	149	111	0.89**
Security	229	149	0.68**
Self-Direction	138	92	0.80**
Stimulation	150	102	0.87**
Tradition	147	79	0.81**
Universalism	167	127	0.58**

5.3.6 Findings from the competency card sort activity

Within the organisation 20 competencies were used to describe expectations of managers. These were presented on cards in the focus groups with descriptions of what 'skilled' looks like and what 'unskilled' is likely to look like. In pairs, they were asked to select 8 priority competencies. They were asked to rate the selected competencies in terms of importance and difficult to train (1= not very... to 5 = very...).

Table 57 below highlights the percentage of groups selecting the competency as important and the ratings. More than half the group selected: Customer Focus; Teamwork; Integrity & Trust; Planning & Time Management; Communicating with Impact; and Humour as priority competencies. Driving Results, the next most common priority competency (42% selecting it) was also rated as highly important (mean=4.45 sd=0.69).

Table 57: Competency card sort activity selections and ratings

Competency	% of group selecting as a priority	IMPORTANCE		DIFFICULTY TO TRAIN	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Customer Focus	96%	4.72	0.84	2.36	1.32
Teamwork	88%	4.48	0.95	2.30	1.50
Integrity & Trust	88%	4.09	1.28	3.65	1.69
Planning & Time Management	61%	3.94	1.34	2.13	1.09
Communicating with Impact	50%	4.00	0.74	3.25	1.29
Humour	50%	3.15	1.41	4.00	1.47
Driving Results	42%	4.45	0.69	3.36	1.12
Resilience	42%	3.18	1.54	3.36	1.50
Continuous Improvement	42%	2.63	1.50	1.45	0.82
Conflict Management	38%	3.10	1.79	3.40	1.26
Negotiation & Influencing	35%	4.11	1.36	3.33	1.66
Commercially Bright	35%	3.20	1.62	1.90	1.10
Innovation Management	31%	3.5	1.51	3.5	1.41
Analytical Thinking	27%	3.14	1.46	3.71	0.95
Courage	23%	4.43	0.79	3.14	0.69
Organisational Agility	23%	4.33	1.21	2.83	0.98
Learning on the Fly	12%	3.00	2.00	4.00	1.00
Creativity	8%	3.5	0.71	3.5	0.71
Dealing with Ambiguity	8%	2.5	2.12	3.5	0.71
Strategic Agility	4%	5	0	3	0

5.3.7 Findings from the task list activity

This activity within the focus group provided the opportunity to discuss what managers were doing on a daily basis. From the initial observations, the activity groups were identified. In the focus group interviews in groups of 3-4, they were asked to write out the activities they were doing on post it notes in relation to each of the groupings (these are the descriptions below the activity title in the table below). Then each group was asked to note the amount of time they spent doing that activity each week (hours per week), the importance they attributed to the activity (rating 1-5 where 1=not very important and 5=very important) and how difficult it was to learn/train to do that activity (rating 1-5 where 1= not very difficult and 5= very difficult). Table 58 on the next page shows all the activity groups and their frequency, importance and difficulty to learn ratings identified in the focus group activity.

Whilst there was variability in the ratings, the most common activities were Customer Time (mean=12.96 sd=11.77), Taking Bets (mean=10.13 sd=13.70) and Team Management (mean=5 sd=3.24). The most important activities were Technology Problems (mean=5.0 SD=0.00); Taking Bets (mean=4.86 sd 0.53); and Dealing with Complaints and Awkward Customers (mean=4.80 sd=0.63). The most difficult to learn were: Taking Bets (mean=4.00 sd=1.11), Team Management (mean=3.67 sd=0.91) and Cashing up/Banking (mean=2.94 sd=1.69).

The total average number of hours was 52.52 hours. This figure is significantly higher than the rostered 40 hour weeks. The variability of the hours is likely to have inflated this figure however it also illustrates the extra time and activity that was discussed in the focus group interviews – for example, managers coming in on their day off to cover busy periods.

Table 58: Activity lists for shop managers

Activities	FREQUENCY (hrs/wk)		IMPOTANCE (rate 1-5)		DIFFICULTY TO TRAIN (rate 1-5)	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
CUSTOMER TIME Talking to customers, explaining bets, prices, telling them about the best way to bet; individual chats with customers; entertaining customers; providing shop reports; customer relations; customer care and monitoring customer activity	12.96	11.77	4.53	0.83	2.69	1.35
TAKING BETS Paying out, taking bets, translating; check unpaid banking; checking unpaid bets; reviewing running up bets & winning bets	10.13	13.70	4.86	0.53	4.00	1.11
TEAM MANAGEMENT Training new staff; new cashier training; training all staff; developing staff skills	5	3.24	4.28	1.18	3.67	0.91
DAILY ADMIN Daily sheets; rosters; check emails; print coupons; daily sheets; weekly reports; check lists; budgets	3.74	3.35	3.87	1.23	2.68	1.19
COMPETITORS Build relationships with local businesses, monitor competitor activity – walk local area	3.5	2.42	3.71	0.95	1.86	0.69
SHOP PRESENTATION Opening shop, daily checks, shop tidies, presenting shop, papers docketts, pens, shop standards check; poster displays	3.225	2.00	4.12	1.24	1.79	0.93
CASH CONTROL Counting coins and cash, transactions; closing bets; hourly cash checks; cash checks during the day.	3.125	1.73	4.50	0.85	2.9	1.60
COMPLAINTS & AWKWARD CUSTOMERS Dealing with complaints; responding to bad manners; dealing with difficult customers' customer issues; manager's discretion	3	1.64	4.80	0.63	2.9	1.45
TECHNOLOGY PROBLEMS Dealing with technology problems; screens problems.	2.75	0.29	5.00	0.00	2.8	1.30
CHECKING MACHINES Ensuring paper is full & working properly; Empty machines; Machine issues; Machine count	2.75	3	4.2	1.40	2.2	1.32
CASHING UP & BANKING Keeping money as low as possible; banking and cash preparation; cashing up at the start of the day and the end of the day; cash management – cashiers; cash checks; cash transactions	2.31	1.51	4.06	1.24	2.94	1.69

5.3.8 Insights for being at one's best

This case study intended to explore the transferability of the themes identified in the tentative framework to describe being at one's best in work. It also presented an opportunity to use a focus group style interview and a number of additional activities to explore shared meaning. This high performing group of managers provided support for the tentative framework's application in a different context, as has the previous two post pilot case study iterations. This section begins by considering evidence from this case study that provides support for the tentative framework. It highlights the 6 dominant themes, all of which have been dominant themes in previous case studies. Furthermore, similar to the pilot case studies and executive search team case study, a strong relationship was established between the values identified as important to the individual and the perception that they are supported by their work. Moving on, this section highlights areas of the findings that were mixed in their evidence. There was just one values grouping that did not show the strong relationship between individual and perceived support in work. Also, the mix of the theme references differed from the pilot studies, focussing on the behavioural patterns. Overall, this case study provides further support for the tentative framework in a new context. This section ends with a summary table illustrating how the findings of this case study add to the understanding of being at one's best in work and the tentative framework to describe the shared experiences.

In terms of evidence to support the tentative framework, all the themes were once again represented in the group interviews, the least of which was only represented in one focus group with 8 participants (11% of all participants). The dominant themes in this case study were: *I develop and inspire others; I am focussed on the commercial; I spend time with customers; I take ownership for delivery; I have passion and pride; and I am confident that I'm contributing*. All of these were also dominant themes in the pilot case studies, hotel case study iteration and/or executive search team case study iteration. *I have passion and pride; I am confident that I'm contributing; and I take ownership for delivery* have all been dominant themes in all case studies.

Whilst the additional activities (a competency card sort and a task list post it activity) were distinct to this case study, they do provide additional triangulation evidence for the dominant themes. Table 59 at the end of this section highlights the supporting evidence for the

individual themes identified in this case study. For the competency card sort activity, the competencies selected as priorities by over 50% of the group provide some support for the themes: *I take ownership for delivery* (Planning & Time Management was a priority competency); *I get things done properly* (Integrity & Trust was a priority competency); *I spend time with others* (Humour was a priority competency); *I work as a team* (Teamwork was a priority competency); *I spend time with customers* (Customer Focus was a priority competency); and *I develop and inspire others* (Communicating with Impact was a priority competency). The top three activities from the task lists covered over 50% of the managers' time and these provide some support for the themes: *I spend time with customers* (Customer Time was the most common activity); *I take ownership for delivery* (Taking Bets was the second most common activity); and *I develop and inspire others* (Team Management was the third most common activity).

The consistently high correlation between words selected as "important to me" and "supported by my work" is also reflective of the findings of the pilot case studies and the executive search team case study. Providing some support for the notion that a connection between individual values and their work is prevalent in the experiences of those at their best. The type of values held by individuals also provides some triangulation support for the dominant values (shown in table 59). The type of values held by individuals (shown in the values selection pie chart in figure 26) does not however show any consistency with the other case studies suggesting that it is not the values held by individuals that are of relevance in describing the consistent experiences of these individuals, it is likely to be more about the perceived connection in their work. Whilst Universalism was not amongst the top 5 values for this group, it was the only value grouping that did not show a significantly high correlation between individuals selecting it as important to them and identifying it as supported by their work. This could be seen as differing evidence for the theme *I spend time with customers*. That is in contrast to the evidence from the competency card sort and task list activities.

This case study showed a differing combination of references when the interview themes were grouped according to the meaning. Table 58 on the next page shows the percentage of references to the grouped themes in this case study (in bold) and in the pilot studies (in brackets).

Table 59: Grouping subjective states and behavioural patterns

Positive subjective states		Positive behavioural patterns	
about the job 16% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have passion & pride • I feel challenged • I aspire to do more 	Achieving 35% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take ownership for delivery • I develop myself • I am focussed on the commercial • I get things done properly
about myself 12% (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm confident that I'm contributing • I'm empowered & growing • I'm respected & appreciated • I feel positive 	Supporting 24% (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I develop & inspire others • I work as a team • I'm flexible
about my colleagues 1% (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm inspired by my manager • I've bonded with the team 	Interacting 13% (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend time with colleagues • I spend time with customers

Themes relating to positive states about the job represented only 16% of references whereas in the pilot studies this was 24%. Themes relating to positive states about self, represented just 12% whereas in the pilot studies this was 21%. Themes relating to positive states about colleagues represented just 1% whereas in the pilot studies this was 7%. Themes relating to achieving behavioural patterns represented 35% whereas in the pilot studies this was 24% (although in both studies this grouping was the most common). Themes relating to supporting behavioural patterns represented 24% whereas in the pilot studies this was 17%. Themes relating to interacting behavioural patterns represented 13% whereas in the pilot studies this was 6%. There was clearly much more focus on the behavioural patterns in the themes that came from the focus groups. This might be reflective of using a group interview rather than individual interviews – feelings (or personal subjective states) are harder to access in a group setting.

Table 60 on the next page summarises the supporting evidence for the tentative framework and where the evidence differs, including the evidence from the previous post pilot case study iterations. Once again, the tentative framework appears to be relevant in this case study as all the themes from the pilot studies also appeared. Though there were differing individual theme representations. The questions that have arisen from these results provide the basis of the critical reflection point in the next section where the framework and methods are evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remenyi 2013).

Table 60: Comparison of Tentative Framework with findings from post pilot case study iterations.

Tentative Framework Theme	HOTEL TEAM CASE STUDY		EXECUTIVE SEARCH TEAM CASE STUDY			SHOP MANAGERS CASE STUDY			
	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from Q'naire	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from Q'naire	Evidence from the Word List	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Word List	Evidence from the Card Sort	Evidence from the Activity List
I have passion and pride	Yes		Yes			Yes			
I feel challenged	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes			
I aspire to do more	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	Achievement = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org		
I am confident that I'm contributing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Achievement = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org		
I'm empowered and growing	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			
I'm respected and appreciated	Yes		Yes			Yes	Security = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org		
I feel positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	No		Yes			
I'm inspired by my manager	Yes		Yes			Yes			
I've bonded with the team	Yes		Yes		Yes & No	Yes			
I take ownership for delivery	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Planning & Time Mgmt	Taking Bets
I develop myself	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			
I am focussed on the commercial	Yes		Yes			Yes			
I get things done properly	Yes		Yes			Yes		Integrity & Trust	
I develop and inspire others	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Benevolence = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org	Comm. w. Impact	Team Mgmt
I work as a team	Yes		Yes		Yes & No	Yes	Conformity = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org	Teamwork	
I'm flexible	Yes		Yes			Yes			
I spend time with colleagues	Yes	Yes & No	Yes		Yes	Yes	Hedonism = top 5+ strong corr indiv & org	Humour	
I spend time with customers	Yes	No	Yes			Yes	Universalism low corr indiv & org	Customer Focus	Customer Time

5.3.9 Critical reflection point

The previous section highlighted insights from this case study in terms of being at one's best in work and how the findings reflect the tentative framework found in the pilot studies and the post pilot case study iterations. This section provides the opportunity to reflect on those findings in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remeny's 2013 guidelines for qualitative research evaluation). This qualitative evaluation highlights clear strengths in terms of all four areas and therefore increases the confidence in the tentative framework to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best. It notes the limited involvement of highly committed individuals to date. This case study also used focus group interviews rather than individual interviews. Whilst this allowed significantly higher numbers of individuals to be involved, there were fewer personal subjective states identified in this case study suggesting that personal interviews or other ways to access those personal subjective states need to be considered in future case study iterations. It concludes with reflections on the techniques and methods used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work – noting that mental model activities are the only technique outlined in chapter three yet to be utilised in the case studies.

5.3.9.1 Qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework

In order to establish some credibility for the conclusions, the results were shared with the organisation as a part of the overall job analysis. Some results were shared with the board who had commissioned the research. Some of the results were provided in greater detail – for example breaking down the findings according to regions and highlighting the differences. Despite team management being previously not seen as important, they felt the research provided enough evidence for them to see that as vital now, alongside the other activities noted. Their endorsement of the research provides evidence for the credibility of the conclusions.

For all the case studies so far, the findings have been reported for the whole group and triangulated with whole group findings from secondary techniques. Furthermore, feedback has been obtained from senior management rather than those specifically involved in the data collection. It would be interesting to see if credibility is maintained or indeed enhanced,

when feedback is obtained from individual participants and individual data is triangulated alongside the whole group data analysis.

The transferability of the tentative framework was the primary interest of this case study. As all the themes appeared in the focus groups, this case study provides some evidence for the transferability of the framework to another context, adding to the previous two post pilot case study iterations. The distribution of the themes was not similar to other case studies. As noted in the previous section, this might be due to the focus group approach making it more difficult to gain an understanding of the personal subjective states involved.

The dependability of the process was enhanced by the researcher being alert to negative themes. These were so minimal that they were not formally captured. Generating the task list activities as a result of the observations allowed for a more structured approach to the investigations.

The authenticity of the results is demonstrated by the triangulating evidence from the different activities alongside the consistency of the results with the pilot studies and post pilot case study iterations. Taking the pilot case studies and post pilot case studies into consideration, there have been fewest representations of individuals who are classified as highly committed. In the pilot studies the highly committed store investigation was with the fewest number of participants and post pilot case studies have focussed on highly engaged and high performing contexts. The next iteration needs to focus on individuals who have demonstrated commitment and intend to stay in their job.

5.3.9.2 Impact of the researcher

Unlike the last two case studies, in this iteration the researcher was involved in the data capture as well as the analysis. As the framework appeared even when the researcher was separate to the data collection, in this case it was decided to remove that aspect from the design. This is Bazeley and Jackson (2013) question the value of reliability checks or data collection separation and acknowledge that "*each person approaching the data will do so with their own goals and perspective*" (p93). They highlight Marshall's (2002) guidelines for coding in order to maximise the accuracy and minimise any negative impact of the researcher. These guidelines include: allowing time for reflection on the impact of emotions; setting routines for coding; and limiting the time coding (Marshall 2002 p69). Although these guidelines were not conscious for the researcher before reflection between case study iterations, they have been adhered to throughout.

Acknowledging the researcher's impact still remains part of the critical reflection however. The design of the focus groups had a dual purpose – to gather data for the research and feed into the job analysis project. Perhaps this dual purpose limited the quality of the data gathered. Certainly when reflecting on the techniques used (in the next section) it is clear that there were far fewer personal subjective states identified. Whether this is due to the technique or the dual purpose is difficult to ascertain.

5.3.9.3 Reflections on the techniques used

The focus group interviews produced the wealth of data for this case study. In this case study iteration interviews were conducted in groups rather than individually. Section 3.5.2 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of interviews in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall, interviews continue to be essential in developing all four aspects when exploring shared meaning as they allow the researcher to gather specific words and phrases from the context. The focus group format however limited the accessing of positive subjective states for individuals. This could be seen to limit the transferability and dependability of the conclusions.

CREDIBILITY- How are the individuals' words integrated in the conclusions? As with the previous post pilot case study iterations, the application of the tentative framework to the interviews meant that the wording of the themes was not taken directly from the interviews. The word cloud (in figure 22) showing the most common words in the interviews did show a clear link to one of the dominant themes – customers was the most common word used and *I spend time with customers* was a dominant theme. The feedback from the focus group facilitators was that the conclusions were reflective of the conversations added to the credibility. The rationale for not asking participants directly 'when are you at your best' was that it assumes shared meaning. The questions in the interview are designed to explore their experiences. Given the consistency of responses in the case studies so far, it would be interesting to see if when asked the question directly whether responses also reflect the tentative framework themes.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors? All the themes from the tentative framework were visible in the interviews. The majority of themes identified were behavioural patterns rather than personal subjective states. This is likely to

be due to the group nature of focus groups, having less opportunity to identify personal states and feelings.

DEPENDABILITY – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed? The same structure for each of the focus groups was followed and using expert facilitators also ensured that the structure was adhered to.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews? Findings from the values lists, competency card sort activity and task list activity all provided some triangulation evidence for the themes (see table 55). Only the weaker correlation between words selected as important to the individual and identified as supported by work in relation to Universalism, provided differing evidence.

There were three **activities using word lists or cards** in this case study. All three were aiming to identify priorities in terms of personal values, competencies and tasks. The values word list activity was the same as in the previous case study. The competency card list activity used the organisations' wording of expectations. The task list activity used the observations as a starting point for the prioritisation of activities. Evaluating all three similar approaches below notes good credibility and dependability. The transferability could be improved by establishing a consistent approach for making links to the themes (e.g. which values link to which themes). Furthermore the repetition of this style of activity could limit the authenticity of the conclusions.

CREDIBILITY – in all three activities the individuals or pairs chose words to identify priorities relevant to them. Only in the competency card sort activity were they limited to identifying 8 priority competencies. There were no limitations in the other activities. Individual ratings were applied to the competency card sort and task list activities. These added to the personalised nature of findings. Whilst reporting average findings provides a useful overview of the group, the standard deviation noted for the ratings is also helpful in clarifying where there are particular variations.

TRANSFERABILITY – findings from the list and card activities were linked to the tentative framework's themes providing some evidence for the transferability of findings. It would be useful to have identified a consistent approach to this linking of findings.

DEPENDABILITY – the structured approach to each of the activities and the consensus approach when working in small groups for two of the activities helped to manage potential instability. As noted in previous case study reflections, the varying number of word

selections (particularly in the values word list activity) could be seen as adding to the instability however it does allow individuals to keep their selections to only those that are relevant. The task list activity was based upon the observations in stores which provided some dependability to observations, perhaps more so than to the activity itself.

AUTHENTICITY – table 55 highlighted the interview themes that link to the values of the word list, the priority competencies and the most common activities. The strong significant correlation between words selected as both important and supported by their work also reflects the findings in the pilot case studies. These activities together provide some useful triangulation. The three activities were quite similar in approach. Whilst they provided useful information for the job analysis project, the repetition of approach could perhaps limit the authenticity of the triangulation noted.

By reviewing the insights from this case study's findings in relation to understanding the shared meaning of being at one's best in work, alongside the questions raised by this critical reflection point, further questions can be identified as necessary to attend to in the future case study iterations. Attending to these questions will help to establish a clear understanding of what we mean when we say we are at our best in work.

5.3.10 Additional questions or propositions

This case study is the third that has been helpful in establishing the transferability of the tentative framework themes from the pilot studies to a different context. This case study was focussed on a group of high performing shop managers. As already noted in the reflections on the authenticity of conclusions, to date there have been fewer individuals who would be classified as predominately 'committed'. Continued exploration with the framework to more committed contexts would add further confidence in terms of being able to say that the tentative framework describes the shared experiences and meaning behind being at one's best in work.

The other intention of the research was to reflect upon the techniques that can be used to explore shared meaning. In this case study the interviews were in groups and there were three word/card sort activities. The focus group interviews provided a helpful way to gather evidence of positive behavioural patterns. The word/card sort activities provided some useful triangulation evidence though the critical reflection point highlighted that perhaps there

was an over reliance on these techniques to describe the shared experiences. The more structured observation that lead to the task list activity did however demonstrate the value that structured observation can bring to the exploration.

Table 61 notes the questions highlighted after the previous case studies and the response to those questions as a result of this current case study.

Table 61: Questions and their responses following the previous case studies

Question:	Response following hotel case study:
Will the tentative framework be relevant in other contexts?	Yes – it would appear to be transferable to this context
Will a collaborative approach to interviewing and analysis continue to help in limiting the negative impact of the interviewer on conclusions?	The collaborative approach was followed and no concerns regarding overall impressions impacting on conclusions were raised in reflections.
Will a shared interview or focus group provide greater insight for shared meaning?	The shared interviews allowed the involvement of the greatest number of participants out of all the case studies. They were limited in capturing positive subjective states.
Will more structured observations provide more useful comparative data?	The structured observations were turned into the task list activity which provided even more data for consideration

Based on the post pilot and iterative case study reflections there remain some questions that need to be attended to in the next case study iteration:

- Will the tentative framework be relevant to those in a committed context?
- What additional insight could be gained from triangulating the individual data, rather than simply looking at the group data triangulation?
- What impact will there be from having a more standard approach to linking evidence from the activities to the tentative framework themes?
- The only shared meaning exploration technique outlined in chapter three that has not been used in the case study iterations is any form of mental modelling. How useful will this technique be as a data gathering tool?
- All the interview questions to date have not asked participants to share when they believe they are at their best. Could this be a helpful question to add to the interviews?

5.4 Case Study Iteration 4: Committed Individuals

This was the fourth post pilot case study and was intended to establish whether the themes from the tentative framework could be transferred to a context where individuals showed commitment to their work and organisation. This section provides the purpose, context and outline of the research with individuals who had all been working for their organisation for more than five years and intended to stay there. The individuals' tenure in their organisations ranged from five years to 24 years and they came from a range of organisations, a range of job titles and levels.

For this case study there were 10 participants who each completed an interview, word list activity and mental model representation activity in order to explore their experiences. The interviews were coded using the tentative framework themes and all were present. The word list activity highlighted four of Schwartz's (2009) values a common in this team, two of which (Achievement and Security) showed strong significant correlations with perceptions that they were supported by their work. The mental model representation activity asked participants to represent when they are their best at work on a sheet of paper. The tentative framework themes all appeared in the representations and some participants added extra statements to add clarity to their representations.

This case study demonstrates the transferability of the tentative framework and findings reflect those of the pilot studies and other case study iterations. Given that the tentative framework has appeared transferable to high performing, highly engaged and now highly committed contexts, there is now an argument for theoretical saturation and greater confidence in the framework describing the shared meaning of being at one's best in work.

The final part of this section provides some reflection on the tentative framework and the techniques used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. It highlights the need to review the evidence for each of the themes to ensure the theme names accurately describe the content before establishing it as a refined framework.

5.4.1 The purpose of this case study

This case study explores whether the themes identified in the tentative framework identified in the pilot studies are applicable in another context, outside of that organisation. Given the appearance of the tentative framework themes in the post pilot case study iterations, there is already greater confidence in it as a description of the experiences of those in engaged and high performing work contexts. This case study represents the opportunity to explore the experiences of individuals committed to their work/organisation. The literature has suggested that being at one's best may reside in the overlap of engagement, commitment and performance. Any consistencies in the experiences of these highly committed individuals are therefore likely to provide some insight into being at one's best. If those consistencies reflect some or all of the themes in the tentative framework then there is further confidence in that framework describing a shared meaning of being at one's best in work. Understanding the inconsistencies or differing results to those of the pilot studies and other case study iterations may also provide some insight about the context and being at one's best in work.

This case study is also part of a wider research agenda which is reviewing the methods used to investigate shared meaning. In this case study, interviews, word lists and mental model representations are used and will be reviewed in terms of the value that they add to exploring shared meaning. This evaluation will be considered in terms of Remenyi's (2013) guidelines for qualitative evaluation: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity.

This case study also explores some of the additional questions identified following the critical reflection on the previous case study iterations:

- Will the tentative framework be relevant to those in a committed context?
- What additional insight could be gained from triangulating the individual data, rather than simply looking at the group data triangulation?
- What impact will there be from having a more standard approach to linking evidence from the activities to the tentative framework themes?
- How useful will mental model representations be as a data gathering tool?
- All the interview questions to date have not asked participants to share when they believe they are at their best. Could this be a helpful question to add to the interviews?

5.4.2 The context

In the pilot study, the committed context was one where there were the longest serving staff. Rather than focussing on an individual organisation, this case study's participants are those who have been with their organisation for 5 or more years and intend to stay. They cover a broad range of contexts. The process of interviewing these individuals has been over a number of weeks as volunteers made themselves known to the researcher. The first two interviews were with colleagues in the consulting organisation. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to ensure the data collection tools were appropriate and helpful. It was also an opportunity to share some of the findings from the research with colleagues. The researcher then asked her network to introduce her to people who would be willing to take part and met the criteria that they had been working for the same organisation for more than 5 years and intended to stay. Table 62 below identifies the participants:

Table 62: Highly committed participants

	Job title	Type of organisation	Tenure
1	Consultant	Management consultancy	8
2	Consultant	Management consultancy	5
3	TV News Producer	Media Agency	24
4	Chairman & CEO	Rare Disease Charity	6
5	Clinical Engineer	NHS	17
6	IT Manager	Publishing Company	19
7	Scientific officer	Civil Service	9
8	Administrator	Logistics firm	7
9	Parts specialist	Car manufacturer	6
10	Accounts manager	Architect	12

The participants were volunteers but were selected in the order above. Having checked the investigation process flowed smoothly with colleagues, the next three participants were those who were immediately available. It was clear that with these first five participants all were very happy in their job and challenged by it. The researcher reflected that sometimes people stay in their job knowing there are limitations or even when they are not fully satisfied so she selected the next two participants based on their introductions which highlighted they had been in their jobs for over five years but were not particularly happy. The reflections and discussions with these participants added depth to the analysis and it added some confidence that the researcher was not simply looking for cases that would support the tentative framework. The final three participants were chosen as they did not need a degree to do the job and were less senior in their organisation. The between cases reflection was intended to ensure that the sample covered a range of professions and working contexts.

5.4.3 Experiences of the researcher

The process of interviewing participants was fascinating, particularly given the varying contexts in which they worked. What surprised the researcher was that in seven out of the ten interviews, the first impressions of the company or job were not positive yet there was always something that the individuals identified as being attractive or hopeful. For example the clinical engineer initially thought that the department was old fashioned but saw possibilities for her to develop her career. Given that the negative initial experiences were all accompanied with something positive or hopeful, these were not coded as 'negative themes'.

Even though participants six and seven were specifically sought out as showing commitment but not necessarily content, others also showed indications of that. For example, it was noted that participant 9 was not very happy in his work but for him it was "*a matter of doing the job well and waiting to see if anything else comes along*". This highlights the challenge of defining commitment – individuals may show committed behaviours and feel committed to the work but still not be happy.

Participants nine and ten were a married couple. When the researcher shared their word list activity conclusions, showing which values were strongest and which were supported by their work, the response was: "*well that explains why he is so frustrated at work and I am happy*" (his values connection was much lower than his wife's). This conclusion, whilst not asked of every participant added to the researcher's thoughts about a facilitative role that values play in being at one's best.

It was a helpful exercise to talk with participants after the interviews and activities about what had been found in the previous case study iterations and gain their thoughts on the framework. It was surprising and somewhat gratifying to see so many of the framework themes appearing in the individuals' mental models, unprompted. This helped the researcher to gain confidence that despite the framework initiating from a retail context, the themes were relevant.

The feedback from the participants was that the process had provided interesting reflections for them and they found the themes helpful in evaluating their own performance and feelings about work. Even the two who were less happy in their work (participants 6 and 7) said that they found it helpful to think about their work from a different perspective. This reflection that the process was positive was similar to that observed in the pilot studies where the manager had observed people 'skipping out of their interviews'. This provides some

credence to the notion that the mode of enquiry can have a positive impact on the individuals involved.

Deciding to stop at 10 participants was a difficult decision. The rationale for doing so was based upon the breadth of experiences, roles and tenures of the participants. The purposeful inclusion of participants who were seemingly committed yet not particularly happy in their job was intended to meet the recommendation outlined by Becker (2012): "*ask yourself what the most fervent critic of your conclusion would say to prove that you were wrong and then ask yourself what you could do to forestall that criticism*" (p15.) The regularity of the tentative framework themes being selected for the participants' mental models suggested that further participants may simply provide more of the same data. Furthermore, all the themes had been used in the mental model representations by at least two participants. In that way the sample size was enough to reach 'saturation' (Strauss 1967).

More detail around the process followed by the researcher and the methods used can be found in the following section, followed by the findings from the activities.

5.4.3.2 Methods used

The case study iteration used interviews, word lists and a mental model style exercise.

The **interview** questions from the pilot studies were used with all 10 participants:

- Tell me about how you came to work here
- What attracted you to the role?
- What were your first impressions?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What is a great day for you?

An additional question was asked:

- When are you at your best? (What are you thinking/feeling? What are you doing?)

Interviews were conducted, transposed and analysed by the researcher.

The **word list** from the previous case study iterations was used. It contained 12 words for each of Schwartz's (2009) 10 value groups were included. This word list was used during the interview with all 10 participants. It was completed by participants and the researcher sent each person the summary of the findings by email. These summaries can be found in Appendix VI.

The **mental model exercise** involved giving participants an A1 piece of paper, pens, card strips with the tentative framework themes on them and blank card strips. They were asked to arrange the card strips (as many or few of the printed themes as they wished and they could write additional statements on the blank strips) on the A1 piece of paper to illustrate them at their best in work – in terms of what they are thinking/feeling and what they are doing. They could group or draw on the sheet and add what they wanted so long as they were happy that it illustrated them at their best. When completed, photographs were taken of their work. All 10 participants completed this exercise. This was always the final exercise completed and the researcher asked the individuals to talk through their mental model and explain any additional statements or words used. Photographs of the mental models can be found in Appendix V.

5.4.4 Findings from the interviews

A total of 10 interviews were conducted – each lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. 40% were male and 60% female.

The interviews were transcribed and coded based on the tentative framework themes, using Nvivo software. Table 63 shows themes compared by the number of references to each theme and the number of interviews containing each theme. The least common theme *I work as a team* was still referenced by 30% of the group.

Figure 25 shows a Tree Map to illustrate all the themes in all the interviews with highly committed individuals. This highlights the dominant themes as: *I take ownership for delivery*; *I am confident that I'm contributing*; *I aspire to do more*; *I have passion and pride*; and *I am challenged*. All of these themes have also been dominant themes in previous case studies.

When reviewing the interviews at word level, the most common word used was People. This appears at the centre of the Word cloud that illustrates the top 100 words (5 letters or more) in figure 26.

The themes were also interrogated to identify any similarities in terms of wording and coding. There were no wording similarities suggesting that the themes were distinct. There were however a number of coding similarities indicating a range of co-existing themes in the interviews. These are illustrated in figure 27 and outlined in the table 64. The most common co-existing themes were *I take ownership for delivery* and *I aspire to do more* (jaccard's coefficient = 0.9).

Table 63: Themes compared in highly committed individuals interviews

State / Behaviour	Node	Coding References	Items coded
Behaviour	I take ownership for delivery	31	10
State	I'm confident that I'm contributing	24	8
State	I aspire to do more	16	9
State	I have passion and pride	15	6
State	I am challenged	12	6
Behaviour	I spend time with 'customers'	12	4
Behaviour	I get things done properly	11	7
Behaviour	I am empowered and growing	11	7
State	I am respected and appreciated	11	7
Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	11	6
Behaviour	I am focussed on the commercial	10	5
Behaviour	I'm flexible	8	6
Behaviour	I develop and inspire others	8	5
Behaviour	I develop myself	6	5
State	I feel positive	6	4
State	I've bonded with the team	6	4
State	I am inspired by my manager	4	4
Behaviour	I work as a team	3	3

Figure 25: Tree Map of highly committed individuals' interview themes

Size of box represents the number of references and the colour the number of interviews (most – least interviews: green-yellow-red)



The themes were also interrogated for similarities in terms of words and coding. There were no significant word similarities suggesting they were distinct themes.

Table 64: Themes clustered by coding similarity – significant relationships in highly committed individuals interviews

Theme A	Theme B	Jaccard's coefficient
I take ownership for delivery	I aspire to do more	0.9
	I am challenged	0.8
	I am empowered and growing	0.7
	I'm respected & appreciated	0.7
	I'm confident I'm contributing	0.7
I'm respected & appreciated	I aspire to do more	0.8
I am confident I'm contributing	I am challenged	0.8
	I aspire to do more	0.7
	I get things done properly	0.7
I have passion and pride	I am challenged	0.7
I'm flexible	I spend time with colleagues	0.7

5.4.5 Findings from the word lists

Data from the word lists were collected from the 10 interview participants.

The word list was the same exercise used in the last two case study iterations with 12 words for each of Schwartz's (2009) motivational values. Table 65 below shows the most common words selected, the percentage of the group selecting it and the percentage of those who selected it as also supported by their work. The most common words being happiness and trust, selected by 90% of participants and 67% of these felt they were supported by their work. The pie chart in figure 27 over the page shows the most common values based on the groupings according to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values. Here, Achievement, Hedonism, Benevolence and Security accounted for more than half of the words selected. The final table over the page shows the breakdown of Schwartz's 10 values based on: the number of words selected as important (maximum 120 = 12 words for 10 individuals); the number of words also selected as supported by their work; and the correlation for each of the 10 values. Consistent with previous case study iterations, only strong significant correlations are considered helpful – Achievement ($r=0.95$ $p<0.05$); Security ($r=0.94$ $p<0.05$); Stimulation ($r=0.91$ $p<0.05$); Self-Direction ($r=0.72$ $p<0.05$); and Power ($r=0.74$ $p<0.05$). Thus half of the top four values were also strongly supported by their work.

Table 65: Highly committed individuals: most common words selected as important to me

Word picked as important to me	Percentage of group selecting this word	Percentage of those who chose it, matching it as supported by my work
Happiness	90%	67%
Trust	90%	67%
Friendship	80%	88%
Fun	80%	88%
Enjoyment	80%	75%

Figure 27: Highly committed individuals: Values Selection



Table 66: Highly committed individuals: values list overview

Value	Total Selected SELF	Total selected SUPPORTED	Correlation
Achievement	78	72	0.95**
Benevolence	53	25	0.34
Conformity	35	23	0.58*
Hedonism	56	28	0.63*
Power	20	12	0.74**
Security	48	30	0.94**
Self-Direction	44	26	0.72**
Stimulation	32	24	0.91**
Tradition	33	13	0.13
Universalism	46	22	0.55*

* p<0.1 ** P<0.05

5.4.6 Findings from the mental model exercise

The photographs of the mental model pictures representing each individual being at their best in work were uploaded to Nvivo and coded. The original photographs can be found in appendix V. All the tentative framework themes were utilised by at least two of the individuals creating their own representations of being at their best in work. Table 67 below shows the frequency of occurrence of each of the themes in the individual's representations. Half of the individuals added other words to their representations. These additions are shown in table 68. When the individuals explained their mental models with the researcher they voluntarily made links to the themes and these links are also noted in table 62 where applicable.

Table 67: Themes appearing in highly committed individuals mental model representations of being at their best in work

	Node	Items coded		Node	Items coded
State	I feel positive	9	Behaviour	I work as a team	6
Behaviour	I develop myself	8	State	I take ownership for delivery	5
Behaviour	I develop and inspire others	8	State	I've bonded with the team	5
State	I'm respected and appreciated	8	State	I aspire to do more	5
State	I am challenged	8	Behaviour	I spend time with colleagues	4
State	I have passion and pride	8	Behaviour	I spend time with 'customers'	4
Behaviour	I get things done properly	7	State	I am empowered and growing	4
Behaviour	I'm flexible	7	Behaviour	I'm focussed on commercial	2
State	I'm confident I'm contributing	7	State	I'm inspired by my manager	2

Table 68: Additional statements in highly committed individuals mental model representations of being at their best in work

Pp	Statement	Possible link to framework themes
1	People around me are inspiring	I'm inspired by my manager
	I can play or explore	
	I'm doing something creative	
2	I see a practical, tangible outcome	I get things done properly
	I can see I've made a difference	I'm confident that I'm contributing
6	I can see the difference my contribution makes	I'm confident that I'm contributing
7	My own family, husband and children	
8	Having a laugh	I spend time with colleagues
	I know what I am doing	I'm confident that I'm contributing
	Happy	

5.4.7 The individuals' stories

This section considers each individual's story in terms of the themes that were identified in the interviews, the themes used in the mental models and where their top values, according to the word list activity, link (or not) to the themes. This section starts with summarising the evidence from each participant in relation to the tentative framework. For each participant, multiple themes were evident in both mental model and interviews. For participants who had identified themselves as not content but committed (participants six, seven and nine), a low values connection was established in the word list activity. For other participants there was a moderate or high values connection. Next this section explains the rationale for mapping the word list values to the tentative framework themes. This provides a consistent structure for comparison however it remains a loose link as it is based on a face value rational judgement rather than based on any firm research. This section concludes with the visual presentation of the triangulating data from interview, mental model and word list evidence for each individual participant.

Participant one, the consultant in the researcher's firm had seven of the tentative framework themes evident in their interview and in their mental model. A further six themes were evident in the interview only, two in the mental model only and one additional theme relevant to the word list. In the word list activity 69% of words selected as important and also selected as supported by their work, suggesting a moderate values connection. Figure 28 illustrates these findings.

Participant two, another consultant in the researcher's firm had twelve of the tentative framework themes evident in their interview and in their mental model. A further two themes were evident in their mental model only, one theme in the interview only and one additional theme relevant to the word list. In the word list activity 84% of words selected as important and also selected as supported by their work, suggesting some values connection. Figure 29 illustrates these findings.

Participant three, a TV news producer had nine of the tentative framework themes evident in both their interview and in their mental model. A further two themes were evident in the interview only and four in the mental model only. In the word list activity 32% of words selected as important were also selected as supported by their work, suggesting a moderate values connection. Figure 30 illustrates these findings.

Participant four, a charity CEO had six themes evident in both interview and mental model. A further four themes were evident in the interview only and five themes in the mental model

exercise only. In the word list activity 51% of words selected as important were also selected as supported by their work, suggesting a moderate values connection. Figure 31 illustrates these findings.

Participant five, a clinical engineer had seven of the tentative framework themes evident in both their interview and in their mental model. A further eight themes were identified in the interview only, two in the mental model only and one relating to the word list activity only. In the word list activity 65% of words selected as important were also selected as supported by their work, suggesting a moderate values connection. Figure 32 illustrates these findings.

Participant six, the IT manager who had highlighted they were not content in their work had six themes evident in both the interview and mental model. A further four were evident in the interview only; four in the mental model only; and two relevant to the word list activity. In the word list activity 26% of words selected as important were also selected as supported by their work, suggesting a low values connection. Figure 33 illustrates these findings.

Participant seven, the scientific officer who had also highlighted they were not content had seven of the tentative framework themes evident in both their interview and in their mental model. A further five themes were evident in the mental model only and one further theme relevant to the word list activity. In the word list activity, the individual found it difficult to identify words that were supported by work as she felt that some related specifically to her research work (that her organisation had recently stopped paying for) and some related to work also. When considering both work and research 96% of the words selected as important were also selected as supported by work, suggesting a strong values connection. When the research work was removed from her responses, only 27% were connected, suggesting a low values connection.

Participant eight, the administrator had four of the tentative framework themes evident in both the interview and the mental model exercise. A further six themes were evident in the interview only, two further themes in the mental model only and one relevant to the word list activity. In the word list activity 70% of the words selected as important were also selected as supported by work, suggesting a high values connection.

Participant nine, the car parts specialist who also identified himself as not content in his work had five of the tentative framework themes evident in both the interview and mental model. A further seven themes were evident in the mental model only, three in the interview only and one relevant to the word list only. In the word list activity, 23% of words selected as important were also selected supported by work, suggesting a low values connection.

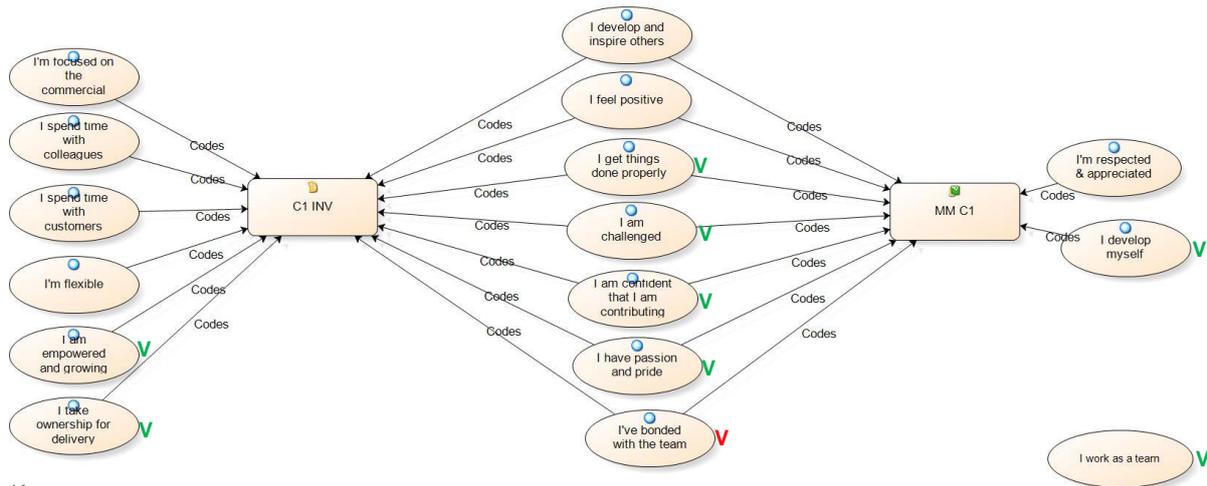
Participant ten, the accounts manager had four themes evident in the interview and mental model. A further seven were evident in the mental model exercise only and five in the interview only. In the word list activity, 68% of words selected as important were also selected as supported by work, suggesting a moderate values connection.

The link between the values word list activity and the individual themes is outlined in table 68 below. The rationale for these links is that values are said to relate to behaviour (e.g. Saige, Elizur & Koslowsky 1996) and behaviour relates to personal subjective states or feelings (e.g. Carmeli 2003). Therefore for the 2-3 values identified as an individual's top values are linked to positive behavioural patterns. Where these top values are also selected as supported by work, there is likely to be an accompanying feeling or positive subjective state. This approach allows the word list results to link to the themes in a standardised way.

Table 69: Proposed behavioural and subjective state themes linked to Schwartz's (2009) 10 motivational values.

Behavioural patterns expected to link to individuals' most common values	Achievement	Benevolence	Conformity	Hedonism	Power	Security	Self-Direction	Stimulation	Tradition	Universalism
I take ownership for delivery	Y				Y		Y			
I develop myself	Y						Y	Y		
I am focussed on the commercials					Y					
I get things done properly	Y									
I develop and inspire others		Y								
I work as a team		Y	Y			Y			Y	Y
I'm flexible			Y							
I spend time with colleagues		Y		Y						
I spend time with customers			Y							
Subjective states expected to link to individuals' most common values also supported by work										
I have passion and pride	Y									
I feel challenged							Y	Y		
I aspire to do more								Y		
I'm confident that I'm contributing	Y						Y			
I'm empowered and growing	Y						Y			
I'm respected and appreciated			Y		Y	Y				
I feel positive				Y						
I'm inspired by my manager										
I've bonded with the team		Y							Y	Y

Figure 28: Overview of committed individual 1 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

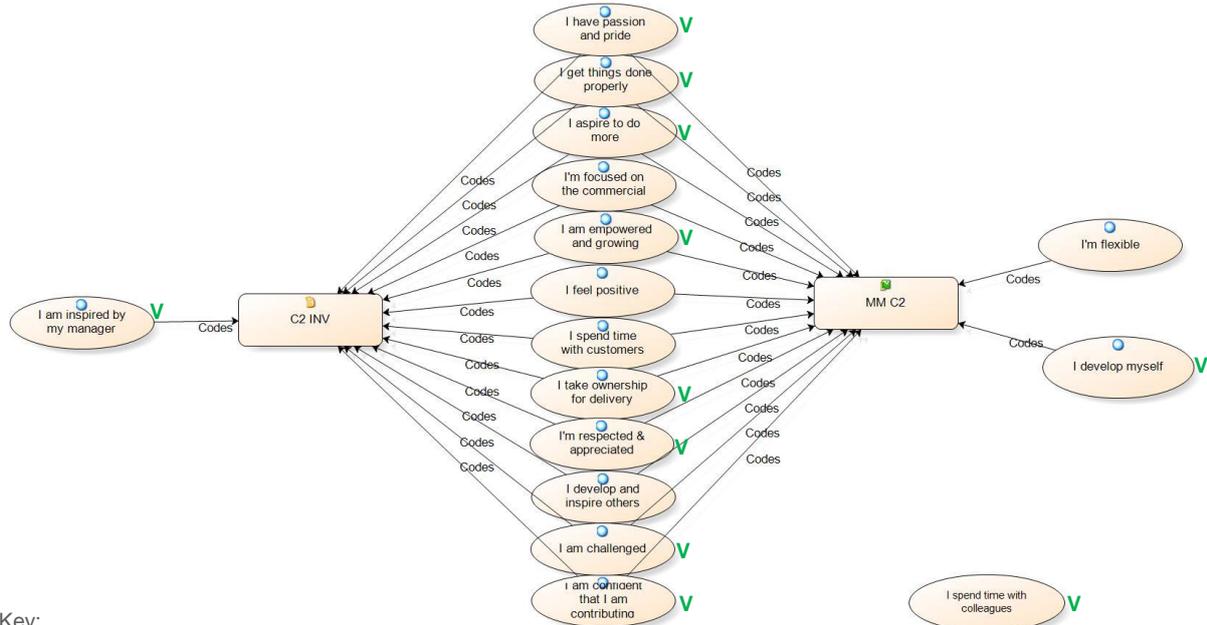
MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Achievement, Self-Direction and Universalism

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Achievement, Self-Direction

V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Universalism

Figure 29: Overview of committed individual 2 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

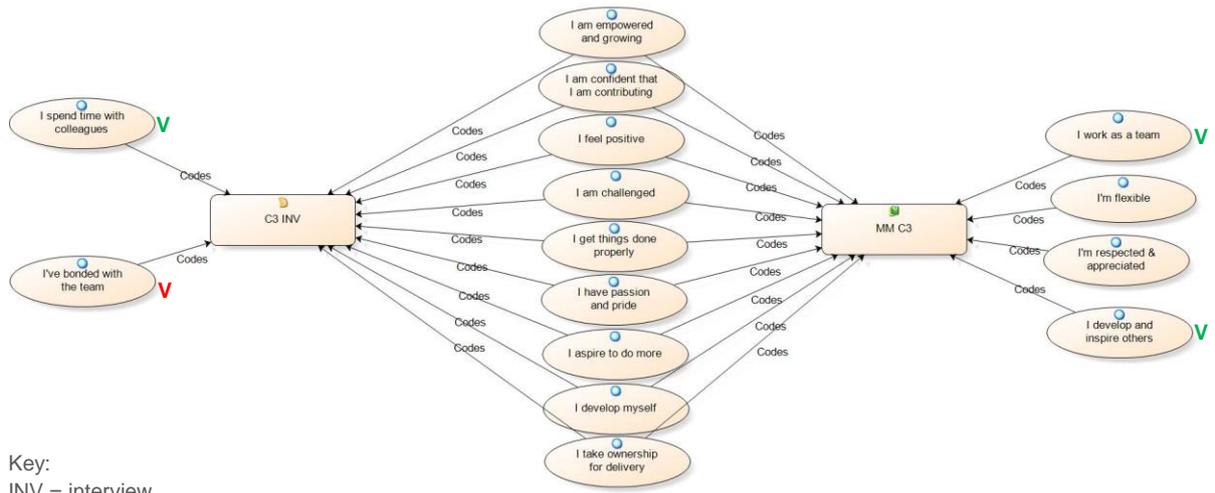
MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Achievement, Hedonism and Stimulation

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Achievement, Hedonism and Stimulation

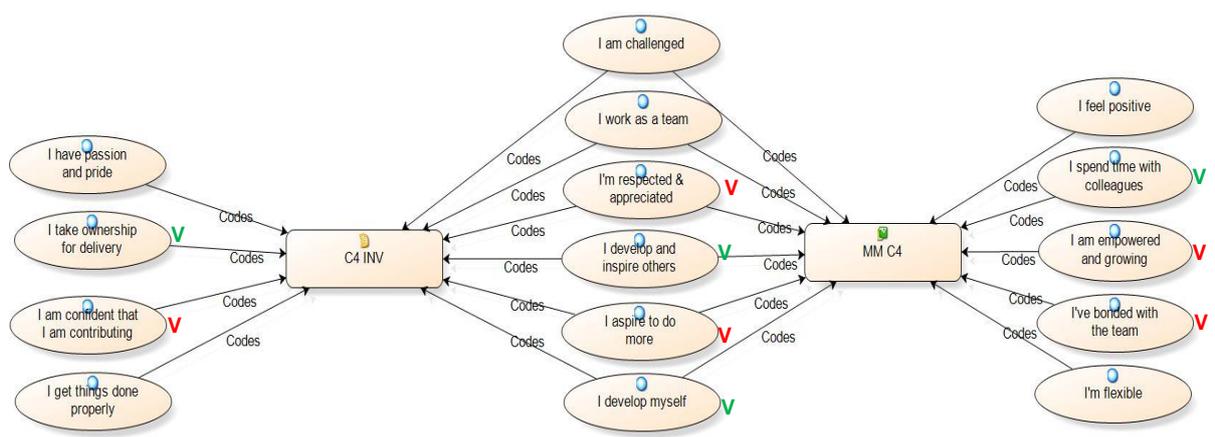
V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: N/A

Figure 30: Overview of committed individual 3 theme occurrence



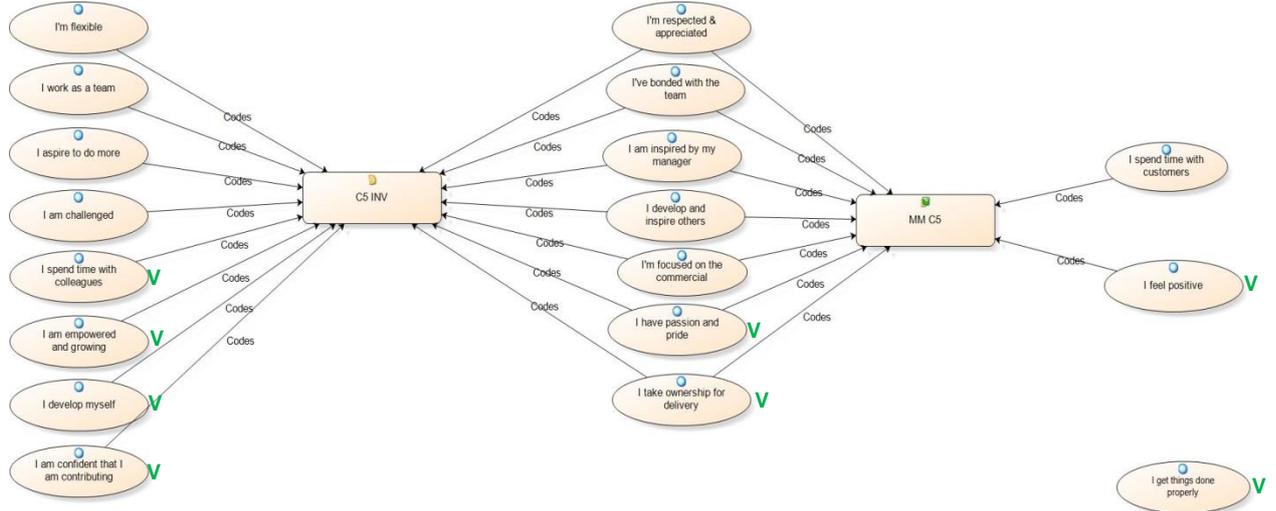
Key:
 INV = interview
 MM = mental model
 V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Benevolence and Universalism
 V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: N/A
 V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Benevolence and Universalism

Figure 31: Overview of committed individual 4 theme occurrence



Key:
 INV = interview
 MM = mental model
 V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Hedonism, Self-Direction and Universalism
 V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: N/A
 V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Hedonism, Self-Direction and Universalism

Figure 32: Overview of committed individual 5 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

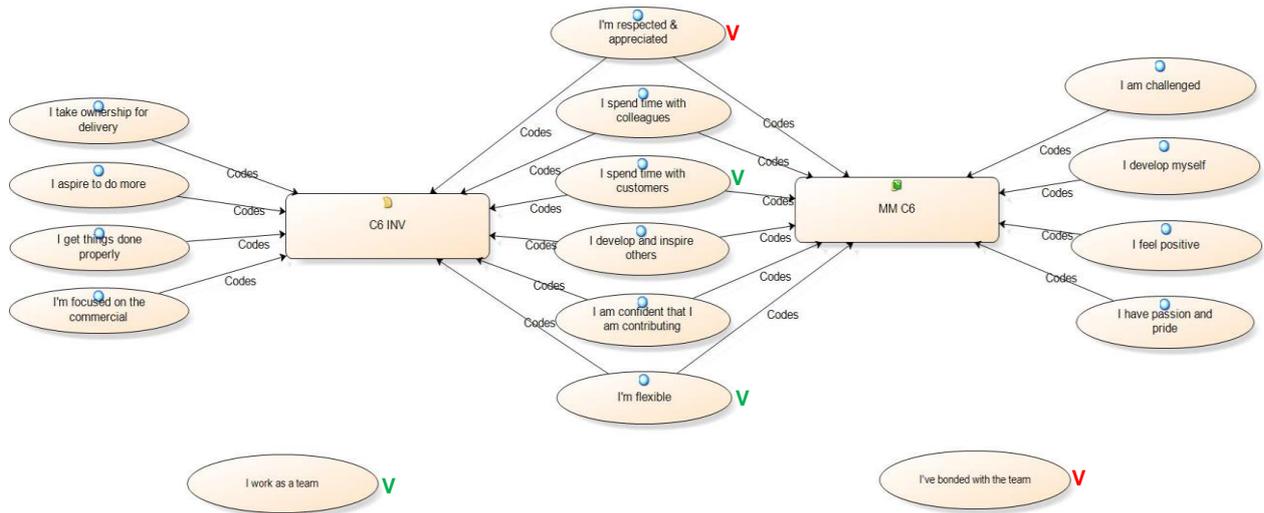
MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Achievement and Hedonism

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Achievement and Hedonism

V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: N/A

Figure 33: Overview of committed individual 6 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

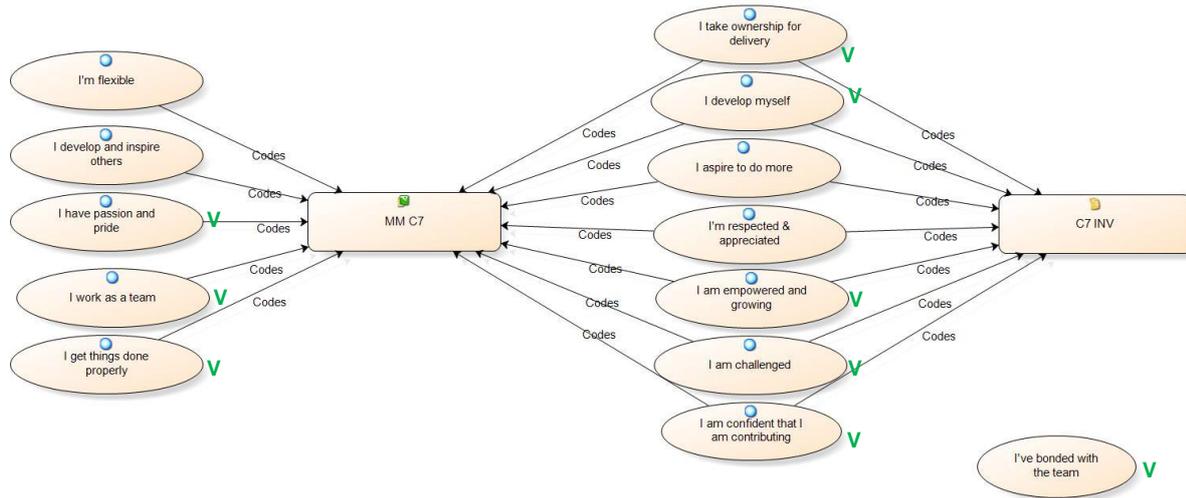
MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Conformity, Hedonism, Security and Tradition

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: N/A

V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Conformity, Hedonism, Security and Tradition

Figure 34: Overview of committed individual 7 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

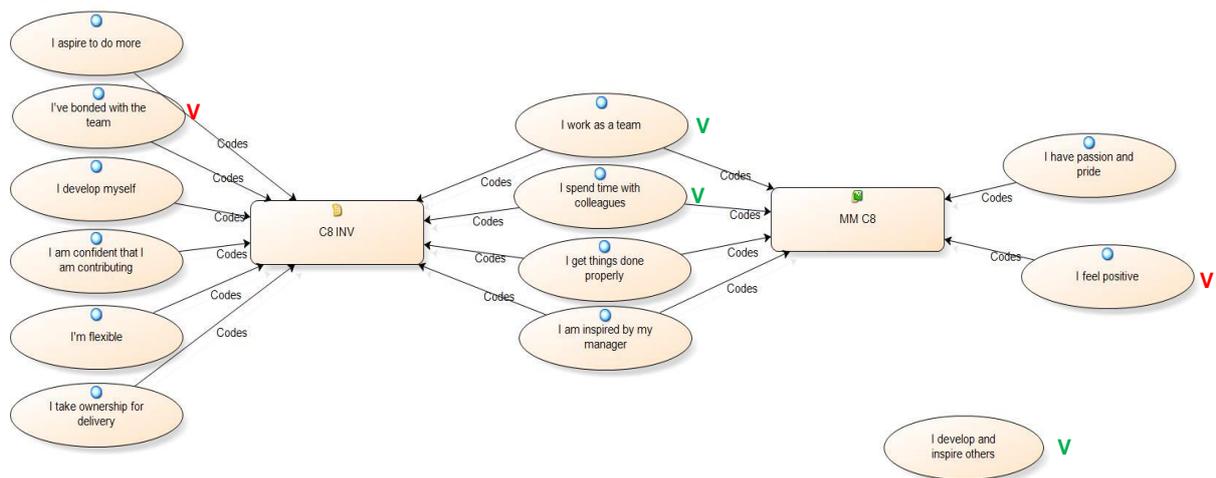
MM = mental model

✓ = behavioural pattern links to top values: Achievement, Self-Direction and Universalism

✓ = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Achievement, Self-Direction and Universalism

✗ = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: N/A

Figure 35: Overview of committed individual 8 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

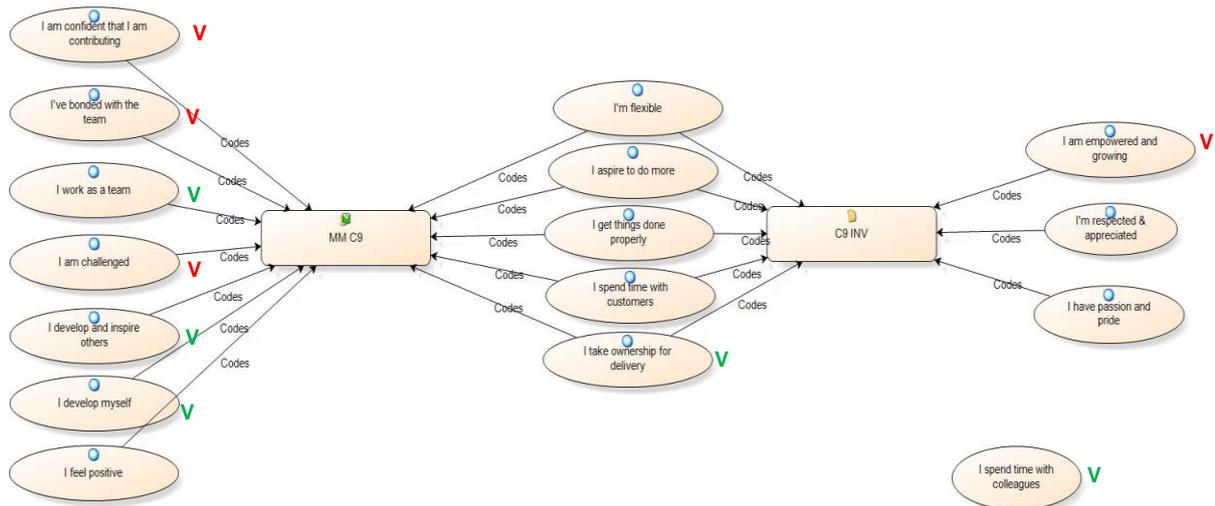
MM = mental model

✓ = behavioural pattern links to top values: Benevolence, Hedonism and Security

✓ = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Security

✗ = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Benevolence and Security

Figure 36: Overview of committed individual 9 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

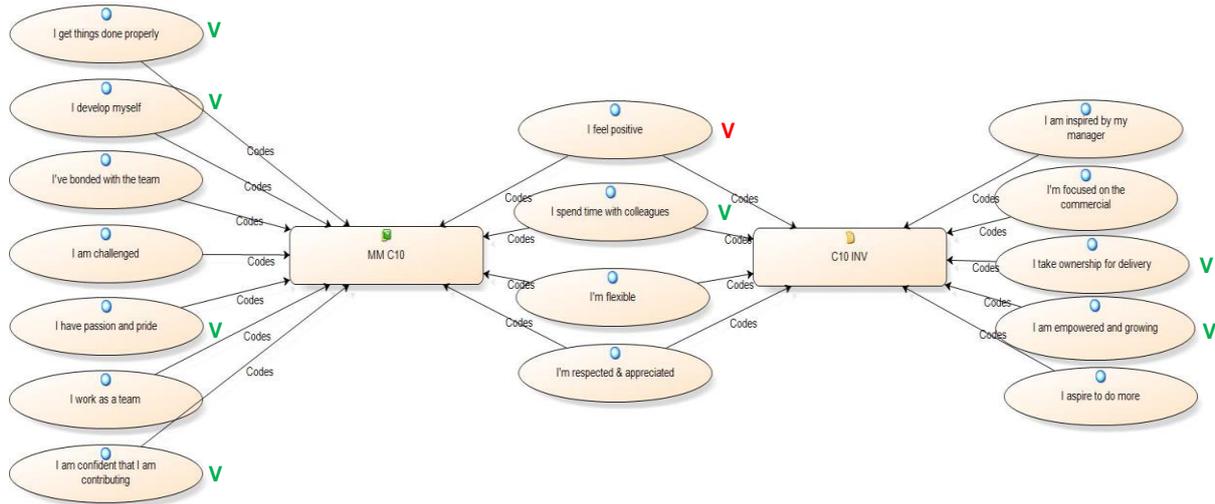
MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Benevolence and Self-Direction

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: N/A

V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Benevolence and Self-Direction

Figure 37: Overview of committed individual 10 theme occurrence



Key:

INV = interview

MM = mental model

V = behavioural pattern links to top values: Achievement and Hedonism

V = subjective state links to top values supported by work: Achievement

V = Subjective state linked to top value not supported by work: Hedonism

5.4.8 Insights for being at one's best

This case study intended to explore the transferability of the themes identified in the tentative framework and subsequent case study iterations to describe being at one's best in work. It also presented an opportunity to explore individual representations or mental models of being at one's best in work and gain feedback on the tentative framework from individual participants. This group of committed individuals represented a different context to the high performing and highly engaged previous case study iterations. This section begins by considering the evidence from this case study that provides support for the tentative framework. It highlights the five dominant themes that have also been dominant themes in previous case study iterations. Furthermore each of the tentative framework themes were used by participants in their personal mental model representations of being at one's best. Moving on, this section also considers the additional insights gained by being able to discuss the framework with participants and share the conclusions from their values word list exercise. In particular, participants who were less content in their work appear to see less connection between their personal values and their work. There was also some of the theme groupings not present in the evidence obtained from these less content individuals. This section ends with a summary table illustrating how the findings of this case study add to the understanding of being at one's best in work and the tentative framework to describe the shared experiences.

In terms of evidence to support the tentative framework, all the themes were once again represented in the interviews. The dominant themes in this case study were: *I take ownership for delivery; I am confident that I'm contributing; I aspire to do more; I have passion and pride; and I am challenged.* All of these were also dominant themes in at least one other of the previous case studies.

Throughout the case study iterations, the tentative framework has been developed as a result of the exploration of the shared experiences of individuals in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts. These shared experiences have been assumed to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best in work. The mental model activity directly represented being at one's best in work and individuals chose to use the tentative framework themes to do that.

Whilst the mental model activity was distinct to this case study, it provides some compelling triangulation evidence for all the themes. All the participants used themes from the tentative framework in their mental model representations. Figures 31-40 showing the individual participants' theme occurrences indicate that 79% of the themes that individuals chose to

include in their mental model representations were also evidenced in either the interview or related to the word list activity or both. This high level of triangulation support for the themes creates greater confidence in the tentative framework as a description of the shared experiences and shared meaning of being at one's best.

Participants included a total of 10 additional statements in their mental model representations – six of which the participants identified as linking to the tentative framework themes (see table 67). Of the remaining additional statements, one related to the influence of family ('husband, children'), one related to a positive subjective state ('Happy') and two related to specific work or behavioural patterns ('explore and play' and 'doing something creative'). The link to the positive subjective states and behavioural patterns does provide some support for the structure of the tentative framework. The link to the family is a reminder that work is part of a social system and being at one's best may be best in work may be best understood in terms of linking into the social system.

The word list activity provided some similar results to previous case studies. There were strong significant relationships between words selected as important and also selected as supported by work in relation to half of the 10 motivational values: Achievement; Security; Self-Direction; Stimulation; and Power. Other significant relationships were found for three other of the values (although not as strong). Just two of the values correlations did not show significant relationships. This, similar to other case study iterations, indicates a connection between individual values and work would appear to be common to the individuals in this case study.

The opportunity to explore how the individuals responded to their personal values word list conclusions provided some additional insight around the potential role that a values connection may play in being at one's best. As the participants who identified themselves as committed but not content in their work showed lower levels of values connection than others, it could be an indication of values connection facilitating contentment at work.

This case study showed some similarities and differences in terms of the combination of references when the interview themes are grouped according to their meaning. Table 69 shows the percentage of references to the grouped themes in this case study (in bold) and in the pilot case studies (in brackets). Themes relating to positive states about the job represented 21% of references, similar to the 24% in the pilot studies. Also similar were proportion of themes relating to positive states about self, representing 25% in this case study and 21% in the pilot studies. Themes relating to positive states about colleagues represented 5% in this case study and 7% in the pilot studies. The positive behavioural patterns showed greater differences between this case study and the pilot studies. There

were higher levels of references relating to achieving: 28% in this case study and 24% in the pilot studies. There were lower levels of references relating to supporting: 9% in this case study and 17% in the pilot studies. There were higher levels of references relating to interacting: 11% in this case study and 6% in the pilot studies.

Table 70: Grouping subjective states and behavioural patterns

Positive subjective states		Positive behavioural patterns	
about the job 21% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have passion & pride • I feel challenged • I aspire to do more 	Achieving 28% (24%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I take ownership for delivery • I develop myself • I am focussed on the commercial • I get things done properly
about myself 25% (21%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm confident that I'm contributing • I'm empowered & growing • I'm respected & appreciated • I feel positive 	Supporting 9% (17%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I develop & inspire others • I work as a team • I'm flexible
about my colleagues 5% (7%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm inspired by my manager • I've bonded with the team 	Interacting 11% (6%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spend time with colleagues • I spend time with customers

When considering each individual's theme occurrences in figures 31-40, each of the groupings is represented in eight of the 10 cases. Participant six did not show any themes relating to positive subjective states about colleagues and participant seven did not show any themes relating to interacting behavioural patterns. These two groupings have been less consistent in their representations in other case study iterations. Interestingly these two participants were those who identified themselves as less content in their work but still committed. The groupings appear to add some interesting insight to the exploration though limited conclusions can be made without further measurement.

Table 71 summarises the supporting evidence from the tentative framework and where the evidence is differing, including the evidence from the previous case study iterations. The mapping of the values data has been applied consistently to the previous case study iterations. Once again, the tentative framework appears to be relevant in this case study as all the themes from the pilot studies appeared. At this point, there is greater confidence in the tentative framework describing the shared meaning of being at one's best in work. The questions that have arisen from the results that are differing from the pilot studies provide the basis of the critical reflection point in the next section where the framework and methods are evaluated in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remenyi 2013).

Table 71: Comparison of Tentative Framework with findings from post pilot case study iterations

Tentative Framework Theme	HOTEL TEAM CASE STUDY		EXECUTIVE SEARCH TEAM CASE STUDY			SHOP MANAGERS CASE STUDY				COMMITTED INDIVIDUALS CASE STUDY		
	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from Q'naire	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from Q'naire	Evidence from the Word List	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Word List	Evidence from the Card Sort	Evidence from the Activity List	Interview theme? [Bold if dominant]	Evidence from the Word List	Evidence from the Mental Models
I have passion and pride	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I feel challenged	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
I aspire to do more	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
I am confident that I'm contributing	Yes	Yes & No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I'm empowered and growing	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I'm respected and appreciated	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	No	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I feel positive	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	No	Yes
I'm inspired by my manager	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
I've bonded with the team	Yes	No	Yes	n/a	Yes & No	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	No	Yes
I take ownership for delivery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
I develop myself	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I am focussed on the commercial	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
I get things done properly	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I develop and inspire others	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
I work as a team	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I'm flexible	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
I spend time with colleagues	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
I spend time with customers	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes

5.4.9 Critical reflection point

The previous section highlighted insights from this case study in terms of being at one's best in work and how the findings reflect the tentative framework found in the pilot studies and the hotel case study. This section provides the opportunity to reflect on those findings in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Remeny's 2013 guidelines for qualitative research evaluation). This qualitative evaluation highlights the increased confidence in the tentative framework given the positive feedback from participants (credibility); the reoccurrence of all the themes in this case study (transferability); the structure of this investigation (dependability); and the triangulation of the data obtained (authenticity).

It concludes with reflections on the techniques and methods used to explore the shared meaning of being at one's best in work – highlighting once again the value of interviewing for data collection and noting the improvements to the word list activity in identifying values.

5.4.9.1 Qualitative evaluation of the tentative framework

The credibility for the tentative framework is clear based on the feedback from the participants who all used the themes from the framework in their mental model representations. The themes were originally generated from the pilot studies interviews and the words used by participants there. With credible evidence from the pilot studies and now four case study iterations, the title of the themes could now be reviewed to ensure their wording is relevant to all.

The transferability of the tentative framework has been established in this broad group of committed individuals from a variety of organisations as all the themes were represented in interviews and word list activities. This is now the fourth post pilot case study iteration that has demonstrated the transferability of the themes, adding to the confidence that these describe the shared meaning of being at one's best in work.

The dependability of the process within this case study is based on the consistent approach taken and the consistent order of activities. The interviews provided the initial insight, based on a consistent questioning structure. The word list was completed as the next activity and feedback provided after all activities were complete. Finally, the mental model representation was completed where participants had the option to include the

statements/themes. No further detail on the structure was given until they had finished. This allowed for feedback to be gathered without influencing individuals' responses.

The authenticity of the results in this case study has been established via the complementary evidence (or triangulation) from the interview, word list and mental model on an individual basis and as a whole group. The evidence from this case study iteration also complements that in the pilot studies and subsequent case studies. Each of the tentative framework's themes have now appeared in every case study's interviews in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts. The themes have also all been supported by at least one other investigation method. As a result there is now greater confidence in it as a framework to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best in work (see table 70). The next chapter conducts some final overview analysis of the data from all case studies to present the refined framework.

5.4.9.2 Impact of the researcher

Following reflections from the last case study iteration with the high performing shop managers it was suggested that feedback from the participants might help to gain greater confidence in the framework and help in the evaluation of the impact of the researcher. The feedback from participants in this case study was overwhelmingly positive in relation to the tentative framework themes. They all used the themes in their mental model representations of being at their best. There was also affirming feedback in relation to the word list and how it represented what they valued and how they felt their work was supported.

The participants in this case study were known to the researcher (either directly or through her network). This may have had an impact on their responses or encouraged more socially desirable responses. The structure of the interviews and the opportunity to discuss the output from the activities was intended to limit this impact. There were negative comments, in particular regarding first impressions in their organisations, so that might be a signal that the researcher impact was indeed minimised.

In previous case study iterations, the output from the word lists had not been standardised which may have led to the researcher attributing the values to evidence already present in other activities such as the interview. Planning a standardised approach to linking the values to the themes in advance of compiling the word lists helped to ensure that did not happen.

5.4.9.3 Reflections on the techniques used

This section reviews the interviews, word list activity and mental model representation activity as tools to explore shared meaning – using credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity criteria outlined in chapter 3. Interviews continue to be useful in obtaining specific examples and participants' words and phrases. The mental model activity provided significant triangulation data as did the word list activity, though with some differences. As the tentative framework was applied to the interview analysis, the credibility was potentially lessened as the participants' words were not used to describe the themes. There is now an opportunity to review all the words from all the interviews across all the case studies to ensure that the themes are representative of the participants' words.

Once again, as with previous case study iterations, the **interviews** produced a wealth of data for this case study. Chapter 3 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of interviews in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall, interviews continue to be essential in developing all four aspects when exploring shared meaning as they allow the researcher to gather specific phrases and examples from the individual's context. The use of other activities to add different perspectives to the understanding was essential, particularly in ensuring the authenticity. The application of the tentative framework rather than generating themes from the words of the participants limited the potential credibility of the conclusions.

CREDIBILITY – How are the individuals' words integrated in the conclusions? As with previous case study iterations, the application of the tentative framework to the interviews meant that the wording of the themes was not taken directly from the interviews. Neither did the most common words in the word cloud clearly link to the themes. However when the interview themes are compared with the selected themes in the mental model representations there is significant overlap so there is greater confidence that the participants agree with the conclusions.

TRANSFERABILITY – How has the interview helped to identify transferable factors? All the themes from the tentative framework were visible in the interviews. The dominant themes have also been dominant themes in previous case study iterations.

DEPENDABILITY – In the process of interviewing, how has instability been managed? The same structure for the interviews as in previous interviews was used. The researcher

completed all the interviews allowing for consistency in the probing and application of the structure.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the interviews? Findings from the mental model representations provide considerable support for the interview themes. On an individual level, there was considerable overlap between the interview themes and the mental model themes. The word list data relating to values provided some support for the interview themes also.

The **word list** activity aimed to identify any connection between individuals' values and their work. The same analysis as in previous case study iterations identified the strongest values for individuals and those they saw as supported by their work. The standardised approach to linking these values to the tentative framework as outlined in table 68 provided a structured approach to triangulation of the data. Overall, there appears to be good levels of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity of this technique.

CREDIBILITY – the word list activity allows individuals to choose which words were important to them so in that way is presentative of their own words and adds some credibility.

TRANSFERABILITY – this is the third post pilot case study iteration where the word lists have been used with a standardised link to Schwartz's 10 motivational values. Similar results to previous case study findings were found in this case study as there appears to be some connection between individual values and work. In this case study there also appeared to be a greater connection between individual values and work where individuals were more content.

DEPENDABILITY – the structured approach to linking to Schwartz's 10 motivational values helped manage potential instability in the conclusions of the word list activity. Furthermore the structured approach to linking the findings to the tentative framework was also applied to this case study (and previous case studies post hoc).

AUTHENTICITY – table 65 illustrates how the interview themes and the mental model representations are largely supported by the wordlist findings. It also highlights some differences.

This case study was the first time that the mental **model representation** activity was used. Chapter 3 highlighted some key evaluation questions for reviewing the role of this technique in exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work and these are discussed below in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. Overall good levels of all factors were established.

CREDIBILITY – How satisfied are the individuals that the representation is accurate? After completing their mental model representations, individuals were asked to talk through how it represented them being at their best. All found it easy to complete and to explain and shared that they were satisfied it was a fair representation, demonstrating credibility.

TRANSFERABILITY – How does it help to identify transferable factors? The opportunity for individuals to use the tentative framework themes ensured there was opportunity to demonstrate the transferable themes from the framework. Talking through their representations, it was clear that individuals were able to apply their representations to their work broadly and not specifically to one situation.

DEPENDABILITY – How has instability been managed in the development of these representations? All participants were provided with the same equipment (one sheet of paper, two pens, the tentative framework themes and blank pieces of paper to write their own statements). This allowed for a consistent approach.

AUTHENTICITY – What other evidence supports or contradicts the representations? As noted already in table 66 all the themes were represented in the representations made by these 10 individuals. These were also evidenced in the interviews and some were evidenced by the word list activity analysis.

By reviewing the insights from this case study's findings in relation to understanding the shared meaning of being at one's best in work, alongside the questions raised by this critical reflection point, the additional questions raised in previous case studies can also be evaluated and further steps to establish a refined framework can be identified. These are outlined in the next section.

5.4.10 Additional questions or propositions

This case study is the fourth that has been helpful in establishing the transferability of the tentative framework themes from the pilot studies to a different context. There have now been case studies in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts that have all reflected the tentative framework. The consistency of the themes' occurrence across all case study iterations indicates some 'theoretical saturation' (Miles & Huberman 1994) and therefore potentially a good stopping point for this research. Before the framework can be established confidently however there needs to be a review of the themes' credibility – the words used by participants need to be reflected in the theme names. Furthermore, to confirm theoretical saturation, reflection on how the process has involved exploration, explanation and validation which traditionally characterises objective research (Van der Zwaan & Van Engelen 1994). The next chapter will provide a summary of the theme analysis across all case studies and a review of the process overall.

The other intention of the research was to reflect upon the techniques that can be used to explore shared meaning. As noted in the critical reflection point, the interviews continue to be essential in gaining specific views and experiences of the participants. The word list now standardised was also useful in gaining a different perspective on the individuals and the views of their work and indeed provided some further considerations regarding the role of values in being at one's best in work. This case study also provided the opportunity to use the mental model representation activity which provided a wealth of supporting data whilst each representation remained specific to the person. Feedback from the individuals added to the confidence in the techniques eliciting accurate conclusions regarding the individuals at work.

Table 72 over the page notes the questions after the previous shop managers study and the responses to those questions as a result of this current case study.

The next section draws together the findings from all the case studies to present a refined framework describing the shared meaning of being at one's best at work. It also draws on the critical reflection points to highlight a suggested process for investigating shared meaning.

Table 72: Post high performing shop managers study questions and their responses following the committed individuals study

Question:	Response following hotel case study:
Will the tentative framework be relevant to those in a committed context?	Yes – it would appear to be transferable to this context
What additional insight could be gained from triangulating the individual data, rather than simply looking at the group data triangulation?	This was particularly useful in understanding the role of values. Those who identified themselves as less content but still committed tended to have less connection between their personal values and their work. It also reinforced the overlap or triangulation of the evidence from the different techniques used.
What impact will there be from having a more standard approach to linking evidence from the activities to the tentative framework themes?	This attended to the dependability and transferability of the word list activity.
How useful will the Mental Model technique be as a data gathering tool?	This appears to have been very useful in establishing the transferability and authenticity of the tentative framework. Participants all used the themes to describe themselves as being at their best.
How helpful is asking participants to share when they believe they are at their best?	This additional question did not appear to bring new information out in the interviews however it did help with the structure of the investigation with the individuals – by asking the question in the interview they were already thinking about it when they moved on to the mental model activity.

With the apparent consistency of the findings across all case studies, there is now an opportunity to review the tentative framework and draw conclusions. The next chapter provides analysis of the theme occurrences across all case studies and the content of those themes in order to draw some conclusions about being at one's best in work. It also draws on all of the critical reflection points to consider the techniques used in the exploration of the shared meaning of being at one's best.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter pulls together the results and reflections from the pilot studies and the four case study iterations in order to draw conclusions and demonstrate the contribution to knowledge. It starts with establishing a refined framework to describe a shared meaning of being at one's best in work which is based upon the tentative framework developed from the pilot studies and an analysis of the findings from the subsequent case study iterations. Support for the assertion, that being at one's best might reside in the overlap of the concepts of high performance, high engagement and high commitment, is established by noting the consistent dominant themes in the case studies within similar context categories (performance, engagement and commitment). As there is both supporting and contradictory evidence for the themes from the values exploration, the role of values is potentially that of the facilitation of the subjective states and behavioural patterns in the framework, rather than of itself being a fundamental requirement of being at one's best. The relevance of the theme titles is then explored by reviewing the words and phrases from all the case studies and identifying how they link to existing literature. With some title amendments to the themes in the tentative framework, a refined framework is then established. This section moves on to illustrate the applications of the refined framework in terms of providing greater definition to the notion of positive workplaces and the application to work structure, people management practices, personal development, learning and development interventions and recruitment and succession planning.

The next part of this section reflects on the secondary purpose of this research in terms of the techniques used to explore shared meaning. It recognises that the findings have not produced a specific definition of a shared meaning but rather a framework of consistent themes. The critical reflections after each case study relating to the individual techniques used are grouped together to provide the reflection on the use of interviews, questionnaires, word lists and mental model representation as techniques to explore shared meaning. Throughout the research, interviews have provided a wealth of credible data. It suggests that questionnaires are perhaps less useful, given the experiences in this research and their focus on measurement rather than exploration. As focus groups provide access to a larger number of participants but may be limited in terms of gaining deeply personal perspectives, it suggests that these might be more useful at the start of the exploratory process. The need for additional triangulating data highlights the potential for other activities such as word lists, providing their analysis is structured consistently. The mental model representation activity provided some valuable confirmation of the framework and more complex analysis may add greater authenticity. This section finishes with providing an overview of the learning from this research in terms of shared learning exploration. It highlights the need to use multiple data collection tools, prioritising those that gather participants' own words and phrases and suggests an order for future shared meaning investigations.

6.1 A refined framework

This research used methodologies based on the notion of 'shared meaning' to explore what it means to be at one's best in work. The critical literature review identified significant overlap in the concepts of performance, engagement and commitment and suggested that being at one's best resides in that overlap. There were key factors in that overlap (see table 7 chapter 2): efficiency and productivity; proactivity; personal development; trust and supportive relationships; working to strengths; values connection; job satisfaction; happiness; and psychological capital. This led to two research propositions:

There will be consistency in the description of the workplace experiences in terms of behavioural patterns and subjective states for those in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts.

A signal of the consistency will be if the behavioural patterns and subjective states identified in those contexts reflect the key factors in the overlap in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment.

The pilot studies revealed 18 themes which were consistent across the experiences of 43 staff in one retail company: the highest performing store; the store with the highest staff engagement survey results; and the store with the longest serving staff. This provided a tentative framework as outlined in table 73 below. These themes were all reflective of the key factors in the overlap observed in the literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment (see figure 17 chapter 4). In addition to these themes, an extremely high connection between personal values and work was established for the participants in these stores.

Table 73: Tentative framework themes

Positive Subjective States		Positive Behavioural Patterns	
About the job	I have passion & pride I am challenged I aspire to do more	Achieving	I take ownership for delivery I develop myself I'm commercially focussed I get things done properly
About myself	I'm confident that I'm contributing I'm empowered & growing I'm respected & appreciated I feel positive	Supporting	I develop & inspire others I work as a team I'm flexible
About colleagues	I'm inspired by my manager I've bonded with the team	Interacting	I spend time with colleagues I spend time with 'customers'

With both research propositions seemingly confirmed in the pilot study, an iterative process of case studies in other high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts was undertaken (as outlined in figure 4 chapter 3). Four case studies involving 111 further participants and a range of methodological techniques exploring their experiences at work were undertaken. Across all the case studies every theme was present and supported by at least one other activity. With the exception of two of the themes (*I'm empowered and growing*; and *I'm inspired by my manager*) each of the themes were also identified as dominant in at least one case study. This level of consistency of occurrence signalled theoretical saturation (Miles & Huberman 1994) and greater confidence in the tentative framework describing what it means to be at one's best in work.

The role of a values connection was less obvious. The post pilot case study iterations did not show such a high levels of values connection. With the exception of the first post pilot case study with the highly engaged hotel team, a values connection was established between what individuals deem important personally and whether they see that supported in their work. The final post pilot case study highlighted a greater connection when individuals were content in their work which may indicate the role of a values connection in being at one's best at work – facilitating the level of contentment.

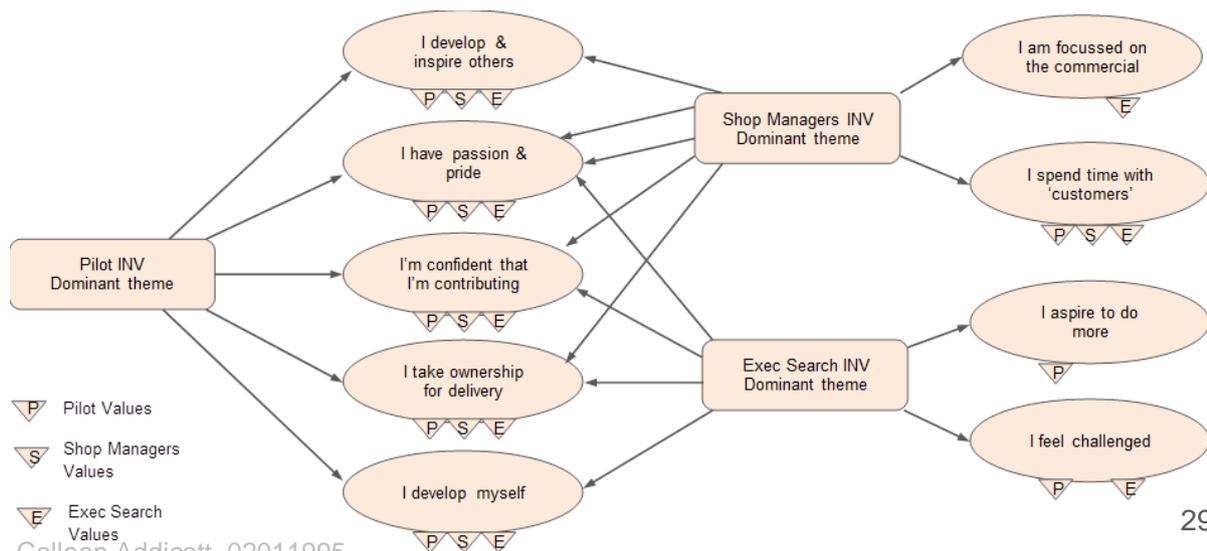
The critical reflection point at the end of the fourth post pilot case study highlighted two further considerations before regarding the tentative framework as confident. The first was to explore the similarities and differences between the high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts. Consistencies between the case studies in each of these context categories could demonstrate a link to the theoretical assumption that being at one's best lies in the overlap of the three contexts. The second recommendation following the final critical reflection point was to check that the theme titles are reflective of the content of all the case studies and not simply the pilot studies. The next two sections explore these recommendations further.

6.1.1 Context categories' similarities and differences

This section provides more detail around the similarities and differences between the three context categories: performance, engagement and commitment. At least half of the dominant themes were common across the case studies in each of the case study categories and most of the dominant themes were also supported by the values investigations. This level of consistency provides greater confidence in the tentative framework and the assumption that being at one's best in work can be found in the overlap of high performance, high engagement and high commitment. It also provides further support for the facilitative role that values may play in being at one's best. The differences in the dominant themes provide interesting descriptions of the differing context categories. The support provided by the values investigations also provides greater confidence that a values connection plays a role in being at one's best.

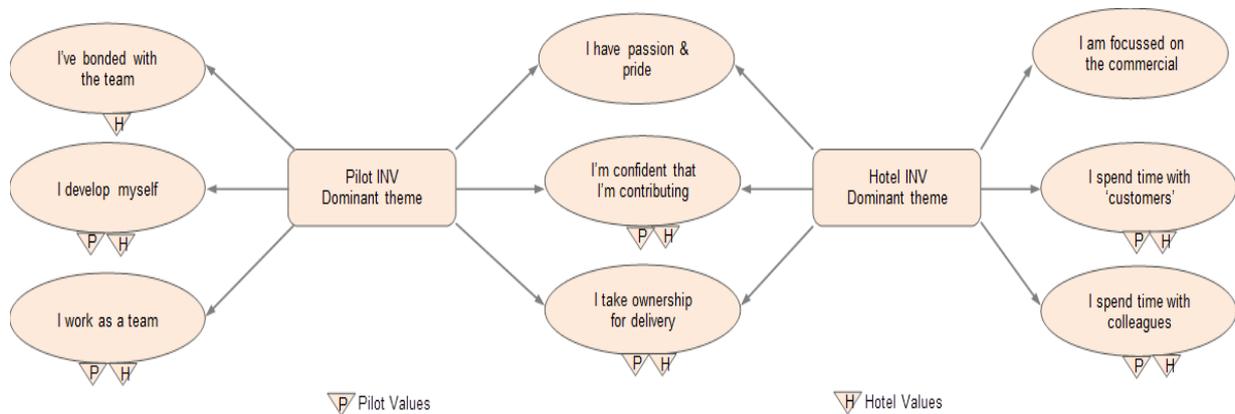
High performing contexts were explored in the pilot with the highest performing retail store and in the post pilot case studies with a high performing executive search team and high performing shop managers. Figure 38 below illustrates the dominant themes in these case studies and how the values investigations map onto these themes (in terms of the most common values of individuals and where a strong connection between these values and work were established). All five of the dominant themes in the high performing pilot study were also dominant in at least one of the other case studies and all were supported by the values exploration in each of the case studies. Each of the post pilot case studies also had two further themes which were supported by at least one of the case studies' values explorations.

Figure 38 High performing case studies' dominant themes



Highly engaged contexts were explored in the pilot with the staff in the store with the highest staff engagement survey results and in the hotel team with the highest customer ratings. Figure 39 below illustrates the dominant themes in these case studies and how the values investigations map onto these themes (in terms of the most common values of individuals and where a strong connection between these values and work were established). Half of the dominant themes in the highly engaged pilot study were also dominant in the hotel team case study. Two out of the three of these were also supported by the values investigations in both case studies. The hotel case study identified three further dominant themes, again two of which were supported by the values investigations in both case studies.

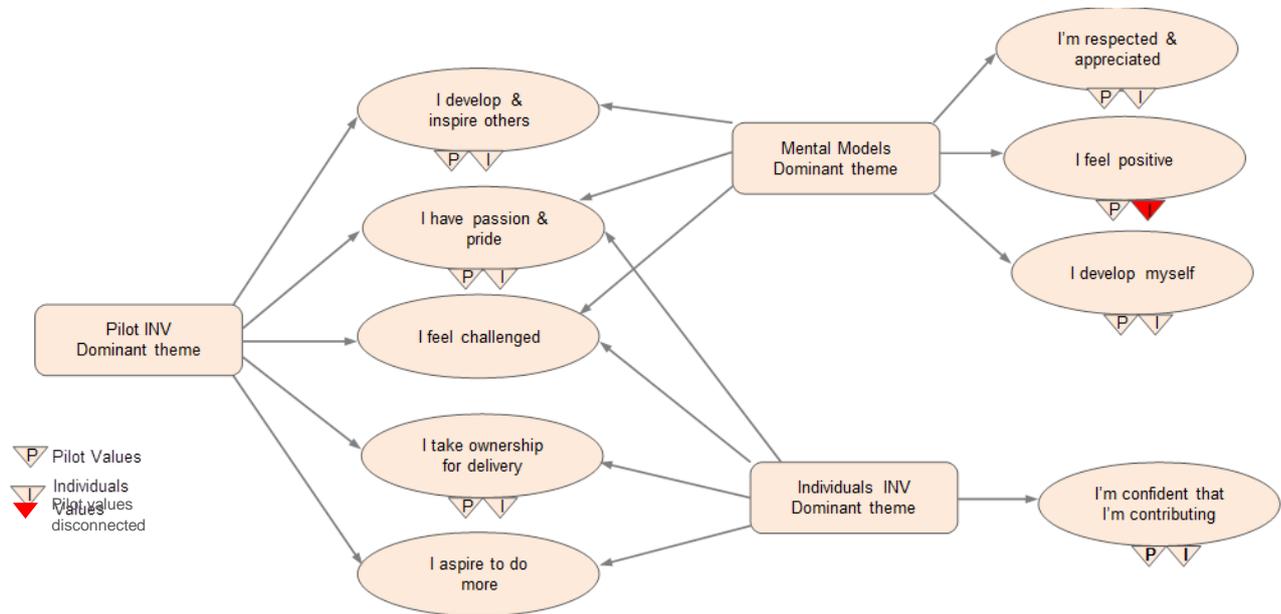
Figure 39: Highly engaged case studies' dominant themes



Highly committed contexts were explored in the pilot with the staff in the store with the longest serving team and in with individuals who had been with their organisation for more than 5 years and intended to stay. Figure 40 on the next page illustrates the dominant themes in these case studies and how the values investigations map onto these themes (in terms of the most common values of the individuals and where a strong connection between these values and work were established). All of the dominant themes in the highly committed pilot study were also dominant themes in the second post pilot case study – either in the mental model representations produced by participants or in their interview themes. Three of these common dominant themes were also supported by the values investigations

in both case studies. Four additional themes were also identified in the post pilot case study all of which were supported by the values investigations in both case studies. In the post pilot case study and lower connection in terms of the value hedonism would not support the theme *I feel positive* however.

Figure 40: Highly committed case studies' dominant themes



This section has explored the similarities and differences in the three context categories – performance, engagement and commitment. It has established common dominant themes in the case studies within each category. Given that there are consistent themes across all three categories and common dominant themes in the case studies within each category there is greater confidence in the assumption that being at one's best can be found in the overlap of performance, engagement and commitment and there is also greater confidence in the tentative framework describing the common experiences of being at one's best in work. The next section reviews each of the themes titles in terms of the content of the themes from each case study in order to ensure the themes are titled appropriately.

6.1.2 Appropriate theme titles

This section provides the review of the theme content generated from the case study iterations. This is in response to the reflection on the credibility of the framework which was developed from the words of the participants in the pilot studies and needs to reflect the words of all participants. Table 74 at the end of this section provides example statements from each case study that have been coded to each theme. These example statements are used to justify the theme name or the change of name where appropriate. This section provides a description of each theme, starting with the positive subjective states and moving on to the positive behavioural patterns. The theme descriptions also highlight the links to the existing literature, providing further support for their inclusion in the framework. The section closes with a summary of the refined framework.

The positive subjective states are the feelings experienced by participants when sharing their experiences at work and when they are at their best in work.

A feeling of **passion and pride** is about loving the job, being proud that you work for the company and enjoying the work. Both 'passion' and 'proud' were words used by participants in all case studies. This has links to the job satisfaction literature in terms of an associated positive affect (Cranny et al 1992). This theme is distinguished as a subjective state or affective response. As noted in the literature review, critics of the job satisfaction literature (e.g. Weiss 2002) have suggested that it obscures three constructs (judgment, affect and beliefs). Therefore while passion and pride may well be linked to job satisfaction, as a theme in this framework it is clearly distinguished as a positive affective response.

Feeling **challenged** is about work that stretches you, working under pressure with some adrenalin but also a sense of resilience. 'Challenged' was a word used in all the case studies. Feeling challenged could have a negative impact on individuals over a long period of time. The involvement of resilience in the face of challenge reflects the psychological capital research (Youssef and Luthans 2007). Bakker et al's (2005) suggestion that resilience has a buffering effect whereby engagement is maintained despite job demands might go some way to explain why challenged remains a key theme in this framework to describe being at one's best. It does however highlight the potential for burnout if the feelings of challenge out-weigh the resilience resources in the individuals. This was evident in the hotel case study where individuals were under pressure to perform but with limited resources and the theme only occurred once in the analysis of the interviews.

Feeling like you are **progressing** is about stepping up to the challenges, wanting to do more and seeing opportunities to make a change or progress. This was originally named, *I aspire to do more*. The word *aspire* was used as the pilot studies company had a promotion programme with that name but it was not used by participants in the other case studies. This notion of aspiration forms part of the Corporate Leadership Council's definition of high potential (aspiration, ability and engagement – CLC 2008) and indeed the growth dimensions of Silzer and Church's (2009) integrated model of potential where career ambition and achievement orientation are considered key factors in high potential.

Feeling **confident I'm making a difference** is about knowing what you are good at your job and having a personal confidence that you are achieving what is required. This was originally named, *I'm confident that I'm contributing*. The word 'contributing' did not feature in any of the case study iterations however 'achieving' and 'making a difference' were phrases used when participants were talking about what they were good at. This sense of purpose echoes elements of the happiness literature (e.g. Ryff 1985) alongside the self-efficacy element of psychological capital where there is a belief in one's own ability to succeed (Bandura 1997). This theme also echoes the 'drive' element of Rowe's (2007) conceptualisation of potential: the desire to make a difference and willingness to create opportunities. As this theme also involves knowing what you are good at, also links to the strengths research which indicates that greater success in work is experienced when an individual uses their strengths (e.g. Harter et al 2009).

Feeling like you are **trusted and growing** is about knowing you are listened to and trusted to make decisions coupled with a sense that you are learning and growing as a result. This was originally named *empowered and growing*. As the word 'trust' was used by participants more commonly it was incorporated into the title. Support for this theme in the wider literature comes from the identification of trust as a key factor in positive organisations (e.g. Stapleton 2013). A sense of growing is also seen in the potential literature and the happiness literature. For example Silzer & Church's (2009) integrated model of potential includes growth dimensions; and Ricard 2007 highlighted the sense of personal growth required for happiness.

Feeling **respected and appreciated** is about recognition for efforts and being valued for them. Both 'respect' and 'appreciation' were words used by participants in all case studies. The demonstration of respect has been highlighted as essential for building trust (Lyman 2003). A number of researchers have also highlighted the important role that managers play (e.g. Frempong et al 2013) and the need for demonstrable actions that enhance employee performance and the workplace experience.

Feeling **positive** is about a state of mind that allows you to be ready for action. 'Positive' was a word used by participants in all case studies. Whilst this theme was not a dominant theme in any one of the case studies it was selected by 90% of participants to be included in their mental model of being at one's best. All the subjective state themes are indeed positive however feeling positive would appear to be an independent theme. This reflects the psychological capital literature relating to optimism and a positive thinking style linking to enhanced performance and affect (e.g. Seligman 1998).

A sense that you have **good relationships** with colleagues is about enjoying who you work with and a comfortable friendly environment. This was previously called *bonded with the team*. 'Relationships' and 'enjoying' being with colleagues were more commonly coded to this theme, hence the name change. The critical literature review highlighted the role of supportive relationships in positive workplaces (e.g. Stapleton 2013). The happiness literature also noted a link to supportive relationships (Iverson et al 1998) highlighting the affective implications of relationships in the workplace.

Motivated by others is about respecting those around you, appreciating their input and using that to motivate yourself. This was previously named *inspired by my manager*. Although most of the comments coded in this theme related to senior people in the organisation, it was not always the manager. This theme also reflects the important role of supportive relationships in positive workplaces, already noted in the literature review (e.g. Stapleton 2013). This theme is also supported by the literature in terms of emphasising the role that others and in particular managers play in motivating staff (e.g. Fremong et al 2013).

The positive behavioural patterns are the actions and activities described by participants when sharing their experiences at work and when they are at their best.

Taking **responsibility for delivering** is about problem solving and getting the work done; being self-motivated and action focussed. This was originally named *ownership for delivery*. 'Responsible' and 'responsibility' were more common terms used by participants, hence the name change. This also related to elements of existing literature. For example, Cantor & Sanderson (1999) note the involvement of active participation in happiness; and Griffen et al's (2007) model of performance highlights the role of proactivity alongside, proficiency and adaptation in great performers. Accountability was also noted as one of the key factors related to organisation effectiveness (Kondalkar 2009).

Learning is about a focus on self-development and looking for opportunities to grow. This was originally named *develop self*. Participants more commonly used the word 'learning' in their responses, hence the name change. This is reflective of Carol Dweck's growth mind-set research, highlighting the benefits of a mind-set focussed on learning. The happiness literature also notes the value of learning and personal growth (e.g. Ricard 2007; Ryff 1995).

Commercially aware is about asking commercial questions and understanding the financial implications of actions. This was originally named *commercial focus* but the word 'focus' was not used by participants in the case study iterations, hence the name change. Financial growth may be the goal for many organisations however the existing literature highlights that it is dependent upon the appropriate skills of employees (e.g. Pryce-Jones 2010) and is influenced by a range of both internal and external factors (e.g. Singh et al 2012; Kondalkar 2009). This highlights the need to see being at one's best as impacting upon and being impacted by a range of factors.

Delivering quality is about doing things right, being organised and focussing on delivering to a high standard. This was previously named *get things done properly*. 'Standards' and 'quality' were more commonly used by all participants, hence the name change. In the performance literature, the focus is more on competence (e.g. Boyatzi 1989) and proficiency (e.g. Griffen et al 2007). This theme raises the bar higher and is perhaps more reflective of the conscientiousness element in the engagement literature (e.g. Macey & Schneider 2008).

Developing others is about managing people effectively, using their skills and giving others opportunities to learn. This was originally named *develop and inspire others*. 'Inspire' was not used by participants in the case study iterations hence its removal from the title. Whereas a sense of personal growth is reflective of the happiness literature (e.g. Ricard 2007) and the high potential literature (e.g. Silzer & Church 2009), this theme is more about being involved in creating opportunities for others to grow. This might not always be officially part of someone's role particularly for more junior people but the theme was evidenced across the case studies and from a range of individuals. It might be simply about showing a colleague what they need to do (see the hotel case study statement example in table 69) or about growing the skills and confidence of a team (see the executive search case study statement example in table 69). The existing literature highlights the need to create opportunities for staff to develop, particularly in relation to commitment and retention (e.g. Horowitz et al 2003). This theme expands into a general attitude that involves all individuals in creating an environment where personal growth is prioritised.

Team work and helping is about working together for the common good, applying strengths and helping others when needed. This was originally simply called *work as a team* however

the words 'support' and 'help' were also commonly used by participants in the case studies so included in the title. The existing literature is also reflected in this theme. Helping behaviour is the most common organisational citizenship behaviour (Organ 1988) and the role of effective team work in performance was highlighted in Griffen et al's (2007) model of performance.

Flexible is about multi-tasking and enjoying being flexible for the business needs. There were also some comments about the work being flexible for the individual. This was a word commonly used by participants in all case studies. The existing literature points to the need for adaptivity in organisations where change is a key feature (e.g. Griffen et al 2007). The element of work being flexible is also highlighted in the engagement literature where work-life balance is identified as an antecedent (Singh 2010).

Conversations with colleagues is about enjoying spending time with colleagues, having fun and enjoying their company. This was originally named *spend time with colleagues*. The coded phrases were more specific, focussing on talking to colleagues and having a 'bit of banter'.

Conversations with clients is about enjoying the interaction, getting to know and focussing on the needs of clients or those external to the business. This was originally named *spend time with customers*. References were to people outside the business, mostly customers or clients and more specifically about talking with them, hence the name change. Both these interaction themes are also reflected in the existing literature: in terms of performance (e.g. Griffen et al 2007 highlighted team member behaviour and interaction in their model); in the trust and supportive relationships literature where interaction and demonstration of trust is required (e.g. Lyman 2003). What these themes add is the motivation behind the interaction which is predominantly about enjoying work and having fun. There is also an element of the interaction themes which involves getting to know people, particularly customers, and that curiosity is perhaps a feature of the growth mind-set (Dweck 2009) and has been identified as an individual antecedent of engagement (Reio & Callahan 2004).

In summary therefore, common to all the case studies relating to high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts were positive feelings about the job, about oneself and about colleagues. Individuals in these case studies also described activities relating to achieving supporting and interacting. The individual themes are outlined in table 74 over the page and example statements in table 75. Each individual theme also has links to existing literature relating to performance, engagement and commitment.

The framework of behavioural patterns and subjective states now confidently describes being at one's best in work given that: the literature review indicated being at one's best is likely to be in the overlap of performance, engagement and commitment; there were similar dominant themes in the case studies within case studies in each of those categories; every theme was evident in the three pilot studies and the four subsequent case study iterations; and every theme has links to the existing literature. As noted earlier, this research also indicates that values are likely to facilitate the behavioural patterns and a perceived connection between personal values and work are likely to facilitate the positive subjective states.

This refined framework is outlined in table 74 below and the implications of the framework describing being at one's best in work are discussed in the next section.

Table 74: The refined framework describing being at one's best in work

POSITIVE BEHAVIOURAL PATTERNS		POSITIVE SUBJECTIVE STATES	
Achieving	Responsibility for delivering Learning Commercially aware Delivering quality	About the job	Passion and pride Challenged Progressing
Supporting	Developing others Team work and helping Flexible	About myself	Confident I'm making a difference Trusted and growing Respected and appreciated Positive
Interacting	Conversations with colleagues Conversations with clients	About colleagues	Good relationships Motivated by others
PERSONAL VALUES		SUPPORTED BY WORK	

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 1 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
Passion & Pride	<p>I've trained myself in wines – that's my passion</p> <p>I love the whole concept of what we do</p>	<p>I really enjoy it when I can talk about what we do passionately</p> <p>I knew they were in the top 10 search firms and that was it</p>	<p>The company has been fantastic to me</p> <p>Proud that we're non-conformist compared to the others on the high street</p>	<p>I was passionate about the opportunity to do something new</p> <p>I was enjoying going to work. And still do!</p>
Challenged	<p>It's different every day. The budgets are changing so you are always challenged</p>	<p>I quite like being in situations where it's not clear and we have to come up with an outcome on the spot, working under pressure</p> <p>I also enjoy the variety of roles, the challenging stuff kind of gets my mind going</p>	<p>It's a challenging job which I just love, every day is the same but different</p> <p>You need resilience because you deal with difficult customers</p>	<p>This is harder work than I thought, more than a challenge</p> <p>It's been frantic – a bit of adrenalin</p> <p>I like the challenge and risks – I enjoy them</p>
Progressing [I aspire to do more]	<p>It was a bigger role than what I was already on</p> <p>It was very much like this place is in the doldrums, we need to get it up. So that kind of inspired me.</p>	<p>I started as a researcher and it's a natural progression</p> <p>I would like to do more interview screening and to generally have more interviews</p>	<p>I plan to make my shop the best it can be</p> <p>I wanted to progress higher up the scale</p> <p>Eventually I would like to get involved in staff training</p>	<p>I've stepped up and doing the managing accounts and presenting them</p> <p>I had a deep feeling that I wanted to change things from mending things to creating new things</p> <p>I'd like a supervisory position – I do that when A is on holiday</p>

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 2 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
Confident that I'm [contributing] achieving	<p>It makes me feel confident in myself to know that they approach me if they need to ask things</p> <p>It was just about confidence in myself and knowing I've done it in my last job</p>	<p>You know the feeling of being a winner, an achiever, successful... generally doing a good job</p> <p>I think I'm good at multi-tasking and jumping between assignments</p>	<p>You know you are doing something right when the business grows weekly</p> <p>Every day I solve an issue with either staff or customers and I feel a sense of achievement</p>	<p>I'm feeling more confident – in meetings I am on it and can express myself</p> <p>I am actually making a difference and coming up with things that others haven't thought of</p>
Trusted [Empowered] & Growing	<p>Here people just seem to have more scope to make decisions for themselves and their opinion listened to</p> <p>My bosses are really proud that its finished and its one person with the qualification</p>	<p>There is more autonomy in terms of decision making, hiring, promoting, developing...</p> <p>In an environment where you have the enthusiasm to learn from them and grow</p>	<p>A good manager will leave you to it once they've taught you... I grew more</p> <p>When my manager trusts me I trust them back</p>	<p>I see it as me being able to grow and somehow that helps to make money!</p> <p>I am give a broad plan of something to do and trusted to do it</p>
Respected & Appreciated	<p>I've a good feeling because our manager is very nice... he knows everyone's name</p> <p>As a member of staff you are valued</p>	<p>I enjoy the respect I get by my seniors</p> <p>A great day is when I've delivered a project everyone is happy.... When you're also shown appreciation</p>	<p>I once came home from work really happy as I had received a set of mugs from a customer – he was told I got married... I thought it was a lovely gesture</p>	<p>They've been really complementary – praise from my team is even better</p> <p>I am appreciated for my skills – I wrote some things on how to improve things</p>
Positive	<p>I always have a positive outlook</p> <p>To be honest we are all pretty positive</p>	<p>I tend to feel valued and that is good for my state of mind at work</p>	<p>Happy, cheerful, positive attitude – don't have a face like thunder</p> <p>No matter what the situation, just be positive and get on</p>	<p>I feel healthy and ready for action</p> <p>I've checked my emails and ready to start</p>

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 3 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
<p>Good relationships [Bonded with the team]</p>	<p>I came back mainly because of the people, the friendliness</p> <p>People here are always trying to make me feel nice so I got comfortable really soon</p>	<p>I enjoy the group of people I work with, whether it's the research level, consultants or BD</p> <p>The close relationships are important for me to be a happy person</p> <p>I think there's a niceness to the people here</p>	<p>I have good relationships with other shop managers, we call on each other for help</p> <p>We're 'family guy' they're 'the simpsons'</p>	<p>I really like the people I am working with</p> <p>I get on with everybody</p>
<p>Motivated by others [Inspired by my manager]</p>	<p>I have a really good relationship with N and he gets what it is I'm trying to do so if he can help me further my knowledge he will</p> <p>He does have vast experience</p>	<p>My manager was my coach and mentor, an amazing guy who knew me very well actually</p> <p>He really motivates me in the sense that he's a gentleman and has a lot of respect</p> <p>It is really important for me to be able to respect the people I work for</p>	<p>The people, from the staff I work with to my area manager and the guys that we meet at head office are very friendly</p>	<p>The directors have worked up from the bottom</p> <p>What attracted me was the person I would be working with</p> <p>She started in my job and I wanted to be like her</p>

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 4 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
Responsibility [Ownership] for delivering	When I'm given a job, I never say I can't do it If I can do any good and achieve something then that makes me happy	I'm trying to make sure that we smooth over the problems and the cracks I'm responsible for developing my own business	Taking full responsibility for the shop and making it run If something needs doing, just get on and do it.	I can focus and get a lot of things done It's about problem solving, designing and delivering solutions for people
Learn [Develop myself]	I've just finished my level 3 qualification I'm still learning new things	I try to force myself to learn new things I'm learning and also working with people who are quite intelligent	It did take me a long time to learn about X and I am still learning I've learnt from nothing – taught myself	It was an opportunity to grow and learn from very clever people I do a lot more now... I've picked up more and more
Commercially [focus] aware	It's got to be full and guests enjoying the experience but at the same time you've got to know the budget is met I'm financially aware . I think I've got a good handle on commercial opportunities	I quite like to be in the entrepreneurial end of coming up with new things Last month it was one of the best months I've had in terms of billings . I have never billed as much	Teach cashiers to sell what's most profitable I've got my own spreadsheet to track the numbers and see how we're doing You won't get your margin right if you don't drive results	I'm able to stand back, ask the commercial questions It's the simple things that save the company money
Deliver quality [Get things done properly]	It's about attention to detail – I like things to be so, very much to be organised . You know personally I'm good at producing high standard food	It helps that I'm good at research so I can make sure that it happens the way it's supposed to Something else that I like is what I would say is the good quality approach to things	It's about doing things right – setting standards You need to have high shop standards – this is the stuff about being consistent with customers and what behaviour is ok or not	I like to know that I am getting it done right and there won't be problems to sort out later A great day for me is when everything flows – everything has gone right and gone out

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 5 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
Develop [& inspire] others	<p>I was showing him a lot of what we do at lunch and what we do at dinner</p> <p>When I was training I was given a lot of experiences...I was motivated then to be able to do that for other people – that's what keeps me going</p>	<p>It's about allowing people to fulfil their dreams, you know their career aspirations</p> <p>The important fundamental for me is that we manage human relationships in a positive way, in a coaching way, mentoring way</p>	<p>You've got to recognise staff skills and put them to use</p> <p>Make staff feel involved with the business, listen to staff ideas especially when they have great knowledge on topics</p>	<p>It's a feeling of service – my entire purpose at that moment is to help them</p> <p>Weirdly I think I am ready now to going back to be a manager and developing others</p>
Team work & helping	<p>I think the housekeeping help us a lot and we try and help the housekeeping</p> <p>You all kind of look after each other</p>	<p>It's about teamwork, respect and support</p> <p>I think the culture of supporting each other is important as a key for the greater good</p>	<p>It's not them and us – we're all batting for the same side we're all equals and we share what needs to be done</p> <p>I have to work as a part of the team to ensure our shop is the best it can be</p>	<p>He brings the vision and I bring the structure around the scientific mind</p> <p>I'd helped her sort that out</p>
Flexible	<p>I like the flexibility of my role</p> <p>I quite enjoy that and so that's sort of flexible for me</p>	<p>I enjoy the flexibility and leeway I'm given because of my various personality trait needs</p> <p>I'm better when the work doesn't get monotonous</p>	<p>You also need to be flexible – if they want a day off or to swap shifts, listen to why they want it</p> <p>Managers need to be able to multi-task and be doing something on the counter but also aware of what's going on on the shop floor</p>	<p>I basically had to do everything</p> <p>At a conference I could be pointing people in the direction of the next meeting, sorting out issues... helping other teams out</p>

Table 75: Example statements from post pilot case studies for each theme 6 of 6

Themes	Example statements from post pilot case studies			
	Hotel	Exec Search	Shop Managers	Committed Individuals
Conversations [Time] with colleagues	<p>I don't think there is a day that goes by where I've not spoken to at least two HODs</p> <p>Some of the staff you have a bit of banter with and that makes the day go by</p>	<p>There is a fair amount of fun and laughter</p> <p>We had a team do last week... this was the first time since I've moved to Dubai that I've been to a work do and enjoyed it</p>	<p>It's all the little conversations all the time so everyone's on the same page with what we're doing</p> <p>Talk to the team about the next big event coming up so they can start to learn</p>	<p>It's the people I work with – I look forward to seeing them each day</p> <p>What is wonderful is that I have a team and I am friends with them – it's really good to be with them</p>
Conversations [Time] with 'customers'	<p>I relate to the customers in some way</p> <p>It's really nice just to have contact with customers</p>	<p>I enjoy the execution bit where you start talking to individuals and where you get to know people</p> <p>I was attracted to the job as it would include client interfacing, client relationships</p>	<p>Good managers are sociable and spend 75-90% of their time on the shop floor on key days</p> <p>I've stayed because of the customers, I love working with the public</p>	<p>A great day... I will have had a few good conversations with clients</p> <p>I do enjoy servicing the customers</p>

6.2 Applications of the framework

The refined framework describing the shared meaning of being at one's best at work has a number of possible applications. Chapter 1 noted that shared meaning is referenced in existing literature when there appears to be a consensus even if it is not expressed (Querubin 2011). The refined framework, containing consistent themes across the pilot and subsequent four case studies aims to present a previously unexpressed consensus, or shared meaning of being at one's best in work.

As a consensus there are however some possible implications when considering the application of the refined framework, particularly in the context of a one to one interaction or intervention. There is likely to be some fine tuning required in order to understand the specific meaning of being at one's best, for each individual. It is possible that each individual places a different emphasis on the themes within the framework. The refined framework themes have no weighting, despite there being different levels of occurrence of each of the themes across the case studies (as outlined earlier in section 6.1.1). For some individuals there may have been extremely strong factors that became levelled out in the development of the framework. For example more introverted individuals may place less emphasis on the importance of interacting with others. The possible nuances were echoed in the final case study where individuals created their own mental model representations, using the themes (and their own words). Whilst there was consensus amongst the participants that the themes were describing their experience of being at one's best, each individual prioritised different themes in their selections for their individual representations.

The research design (chapter 3) highlighted both a constructionist and constructivist approach taken across the case studies of this investigation. In other words, seeking to understand individual's constructions (constructivist) as well as the social constructions, that happens through interaction and conversation (constructionist). Given that interviews were a consistent feature across the case studies, the refined framework might be described as a shared construction – developed through the conversations between the researcher and the participants. Lincoln and Guba (2013) assert that “*constructions... are open to continuous reconstruction, as reflection on new or accumulated experience or inputs and challenges from others lead to added meaning...*” (p49). Although of course constructions may not always be conscious, using the framework to structure personal reflections could help develop self-awareness through a process of reflection and indeed conversation with others.

The refined framework could also offer a structure for conversations in the workplace. Exploring each of the themes may provide an opportunity to talk about what being at their

best means for each individual. The insight could be very helpful for a coach, colleague or manager. McCauley, DeRue, Yost and Taylor (2014) review the critical role that conversations play in the workplace. One of their recommendations is to provide a “*simple structure that gives inexperienced managers confidence and helps them to do development conversations well.*” Given the possible nuances for individuals, perhaps the most effective use of the framework could be for structuring conversations in the workplace. Winter and Jackson (2004) suggest that four out of ten employees “*have an issue they wish to discuss with their manager but feel unable to do so*” (p2). This illustrates the need to support managers in the workplace in meeting the varying needs of individuals in the workplace. A number of studies in a range of industries have highlighted an important role that conversations play in developing a positive workplace (e.g. Fiore 2014 relating to education; Sergeant & Laws-Chapman 2012 in the nursing profession). The refined framework could therefore illustrate a contribution to positive workplaces by providing a simple structure for conversations.

The review of positive workplaces in chapter two identified a range of characteristics that are reflected in the framework's themes (as already noted in section 6.1.2's discussion of each theme). There was however no clear or consistent definition of a 'positive workplace' that could be found in the literature. The refined framework might also provide a structure for a possible definition of positive workplaces – one where people are at their best, experiencing positive subjective states and showing positive behavioural patterns.

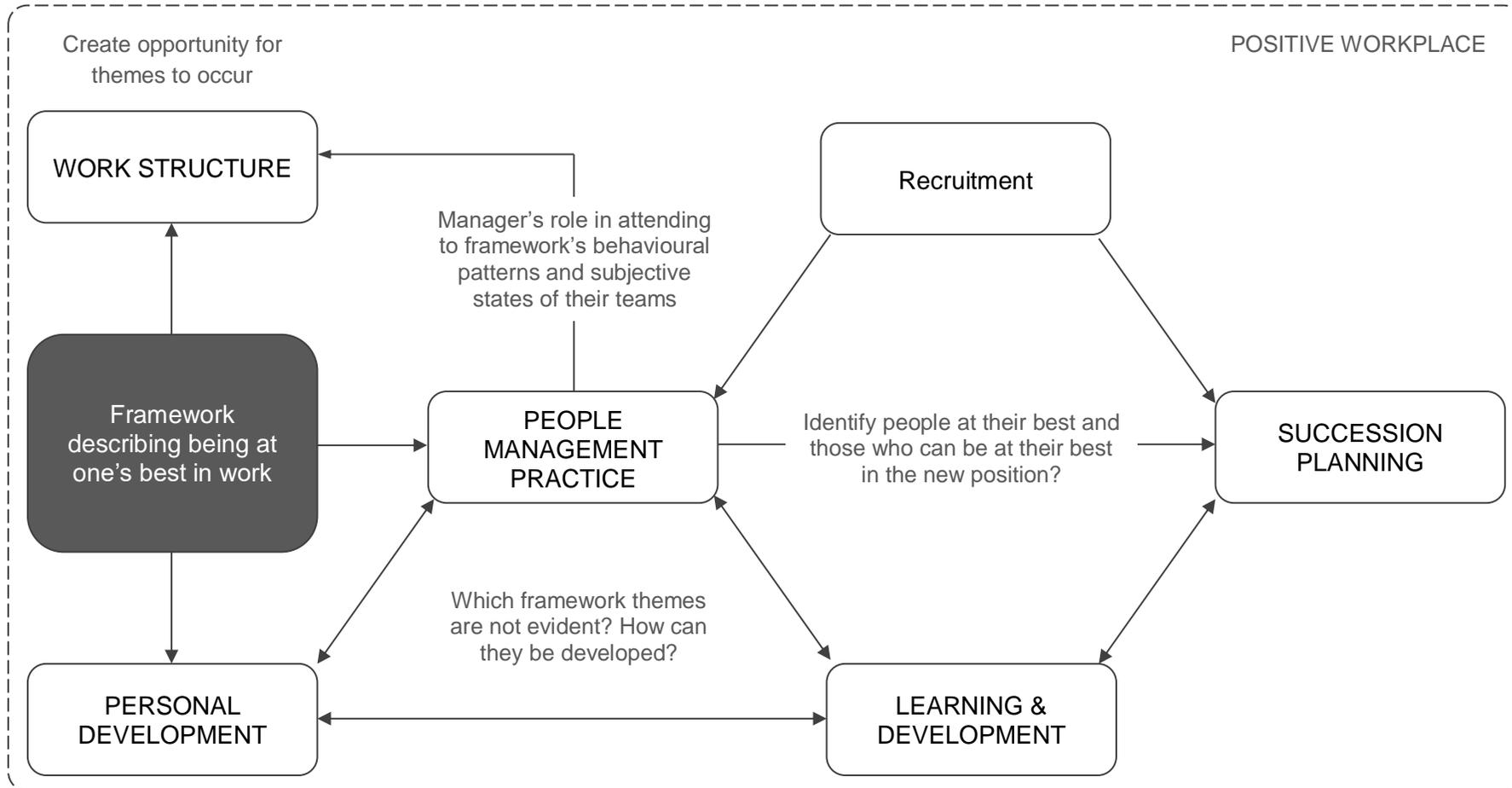
Whilst the refined framework provides a potentially useful structure for the content of the conversations in positive workplaces, wider research suggests that how those conversations are conducted is also important. Blanchard (2009) concludes that “*good leaders demonstrate a sincere interest in their people, making them feel valued, respected, and cared for*” (p2). This is perhaps further evidence for the importance of conversations but it would appear to be more than just having a conversation. The notion of sincerity or authenticity is echoed in more recent research amongst nurse managers. For example, Fallatah (2016) found managers who show authentic leadership are more likely to create supportive workplaces and improve job satisfaction amongst nurses. One of the components of the authentic leadership (Avioli 2007) is 'balanced processing' or how much the manager or leader solicits a range of opinions and viewpoints. The structure provided by the refined framework could support managers soliciting a range of information from the individuals in the team and therefore contribute to developing greater authenticity or sincerity. Of course, there are other components (self-awareness, transparency and ethical conduct) of authentic leadership which must also be demonstrated.

If managers are able to use the framework to structure sincere conversations and explore when their team members are at their best, their responses to their findings are also likely to need to flex according to the individual. There may be no action required; the act of the conversation may have had a positive effect. More likely, there may be changes to work structure required or personal development, learning or even career/succession planning and recruitment activities that could follow. This is perhaps further support for the idea that the skills of the manager are vital for successful organisations and positive workplaces.

Figure 41 over the page is intended to illustrate the potential implications of the refined framework. It highlights three initial impacts of understanding when one is at their best in work: people management practice; work structure; and personal development. These impacts may be as a result of a structured conversation on a one to one basis or in the analysis of the views of a number of individuals, based around the themes of the refined framework.

In terms of people management practice, the structure of conversations already discussed is one example. Furthermore there may be opportunity to elicit views via surveys or other staff engagement activities. The analysis or conversations may highlight a need for rearranging or structuring work so there are opportunities to demonstrate more of the positive behavioural patterns in the refined framework. The conversation or analysis might also highlight some areas of personal development for the individual – in that way the refined framework may help to prioritise development needs. In that way the refined framework has possible implications for individuals reflecting on what it means to be at their best as well as for organisations who want their employees to be at their best. Watson (2008) highlights many challenges involved in managing one's identity at work which will need to be respected when trying to apply the refined framework. The differing values of the workforce, ages and the existing stories and histories contained with the organisation are also likely to impact upon the individuals. A one-size-fits-all approach to interventions is therefore likely to have limited impact.

Figure 41: Theory-practice impact assessment of framework



6.2 Exploring shared meaning

The secondary focus of this research project was to reflect on the techniques used for exploring shared meaning. The outcome of the research has been to establish a consistent framework of themes shared by participants – it has not delivered a specific shared definition of being at one's best in work. In chapter 3, the reflection of methods used to investigate shared meaning was identified as representing an explorative approach (Van Aken 1994) where through reflection best practise can be extracted. The first reflection must be that it is necessary to be clear by what is meant by shared meaning and therefore what is actually being explored. This research project suggests that exploring shared meaning is about identifying consistent themes as opposed to a specific definition. This section draws on the critical reflection points after each case study where the methods used were considered in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity. It considers each of the methods used in terms of the four evaluation criteria and what has been learnt through the iterative process.

Interviews were chosen as a technique to explore shared meaning based on both epistemological and technical considerations (Bryman 1988). Chapter three argued that the exploration fitted well within the social constructionist epistemological paradigm where shared meaning is constructed through the interactions and words used within the context. Interviews therefore provided an opportunity to explore those words used. Practically, it was also a technique that participants would understand what is involved (King 2004) and a technique that had been used in recent explorations of shared meaning (e.g. Van Vuuren & Cous 2005).

The use of interviews in this investigation provided valuable words and phrases used by individuals in each of the different contexts. Their words and phrases were used to develop the framework themes which therefore helped to establish the credibility of the conclusions. Conducting the interviews in a variety of contexts and applying the tentative framework themes to the transcripts was helpful in demonstrating the transferability of the pilot study findings to broader contexts. Without the iterative process, it is difficult to demonstrate the transferability of interview conclusions. This research has demonstrated the importance of managing the instability of interviews through a clear structure and using competent interviewers. The simple structure from the pilot studies was applied in each case study however the effectiveness of that structure is dependent upon the skills of the interviewer.

As the first post pilot case study illustrated how a poorly trained interviewer can limit the value of the information gained. This is no surprise given that a host of other researchers have made similar recommendations (e.g. Yin 2009; Champion, Champion & Palmer 1998) but it was a clear lesson learnt in this research. Separating the interviewing and the analysis did not appear to affect the dependability of the conclusions – the first and second post pilot case studies did this but it did not appear to affect the conclusions drawn. Bazeley & Jackson (2013) question the value of doing this kind of reliability checks and suggest: “*what becomes important is that the coder records the way he or she is thinking about the data, keeps tracks of decisions made and builds a case supported by the data for the conclusions reached.*” (p93). This process of building a case is also likely to support the authenticity of the conclusions reached from the interviews. The reflections after each case study highlighted the value of additional techniques in providing support or indeed additional questions to consider. It is therefore essential that the interview is not used in isolation but rather a part of a varied data collection process.

Focus group interviews were used in the third post pilot case study. These had a practical advantage over the standard individual interview as they allowed for greater numbers of individuals to be involved in the case study investigations. Each focus group produced statements agreed by all participants so demonstrating credibility. The experience from this research however highlighted the limitations in terms of credibility of findings relating to personal subjective states. Perhaps the group experience limited the sharing of feelings and it was easier for people to share actions or behaviours. Transferability was perhaps stronger than individual interviews as the output gathered the views of a range of individuals yet these were still within the same organisational context. Similar to individual interviews, the dependability relied upon the skill of the experienced facilitators and the planned structure of the meetings. Authenticity was also perhaps stronger as other activities could be included in the focus groups, such as a competency card sort. This allowed for some triangulation of the findings however as with the individual interviews, the findings are most useful when considered in conjunction with other data collection techniques.

Questionnaires were used in this research in the pilot studies and the first two post pilot case study iterations. A questionnaire focuses on measurement and in that way is more aligned to the positivist perspective looking to uncover reality and measure identifiable case and effect relationships (Crotty 1998). This research, being explorative is more aligned to the relativist perspective where reality is understood as a product of people engaging with one

another (King & Horrocks 2011). Questionnaires are therefore potentially less useful in such an explorative setting, especially without open questions where the words of participants can be captured. They have however been used in recent research exploring specific shared meanings (e.g. Xing et al 2014 considered the shared meaning of aging) hence their inclusion in this research.

As the items within the questionnaires were constructed based on existing theories and not reliant on the words of the participants, the credibility of the conclusions is therefore limited. The items with rating measures did however allow the participants to share the strength of their agreement with statements, adding some credibility. In terms of transferability, high volumes of participants from a range of contexts would provide some hope of transferability of findings. In this research, there were low volumes which limited the transferability of conclusions. Even with low volumes reliability checks provided some dependability however the item structures would need to be improved for greater dependability. Another challenge with questionnaires is that they measure specific factors and as such provided triangulation possibilities for only a limited number of framework's themes. The questionnaires therefore only provided limited authenticity. Given that questionnaires focus on measurement rather than exploration, perhaps they would be best suited to a positivist research agenda or as a tool for validation of explorative conclusions (e.g. measuring the framework themes across large numbers).

Word lists were initially intended to be a tool for conversations in the interview but they became an independent data gathering tool through the iterative process. Similar to questionnaires they focus on measuring so could be considered more positivist than relativist. Word tasks have been used in the past to explore meaning (e.g. Vandenberghe et al 1996) so there was some justification in using the technique for this research.

In terms of credibility, individuals chose the words that they felt were relevant to themselves so whilst it was not their own words it was their own choices that provided the data. Transferability improved over the iterations of this case study as the words were mapped to theory (Schwartz's 2009 motivational values) and then mapped to the tentative framework. This helped the process of transferability but similar to other techniques multiple participants from varied contexts was necessary to establish transferability. In terms of dependability, consistent instructions and analysis helped to limit instability and in time it would be possible to complete reliability checks on the mappings. Authenticity of word lists can only be established in conjunction with other techniques rendering word lists supporting a data collection activity rather than a primary activity.

Mental model representations were utilised in this research as a potential tool for exploring shared meaning as they are “personal, internal representations of external reality that people use to interact with the world around them” (Jones et al 2011 p46). These authors also suggested that one of the purposes of using mental model analysis is to explore similarities and differences. As personal representations related to interactions they were aligned to the more relativist epistemological perspective of this research.

A simple mental model representation activity was used in the fourth post pilot case study iteration. Given that the output from this activity was entirely produced by participants, the mental model representations had clear credibility. The analysis of the similarities and differences between the mental models helped to establish links and potential transferability. The technique was used to understand if the tentative framework was relevant to the individuals (i.e. if they selected the tentative framework themes for inclusion in their representations). In that way it did show good transferability of findings but it was dependent on the previous case study iterations to have developed the framework first. The consistent instructions helped to manage instability of the process however the simplicity of the exercise (i.e. there was no cause and effect or statistical analysis of the output) means that the dependability may be limited. Similar to the other activities, the authenticity of the mental model representations was established by linking the findings to other data collection outputs. The mental model representations were not only reliant on the previous case studies producing the tentative framework they also needed other activities to provide authentic triangulation.

Table 76 on the next page provides a summary of the credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity evaluations of each of the exploratory techniques used in this research. . Given these reflections, interviews would appear essential for gathering specific words and phrases from individuals that can be analysed to help produce themes. The focus groups provided access to larger numbers of individuals but were limited in accessing their individual subjective states so perhaps these would be better utilised at the start of the exploratory process in order to gain a broad overview. Questionnaires are perhaps less useful, given the experiences in this research and their focus on measurement rather than exploration. The need for additional triangulating data highlights the potential for other activities such as word lists, providing their analysis is structured consistently. The mental model representation activity provided some valuable confirmation of the framework. More complex analysis may add greater authenticity.

Table 76: Summary of exploratory technique evaluations

Interviews	Credibility	When the transcripts are analysed for themes they are taking the words of participants which increases the credibility of the conclusions drawn.
	Transferability	The analysis of the interviews and reduction to themes will assist in establishing transferability. There needs to be multiple contexts explored using the interviews to establish transferability.
	Dependability	Structure for the interview is essential in managing some of the inherent instability of the process and competent, trained interviewers are required to ensure the structure is adhered to.
	Authenticity	The interview must be used in conjunction with other information and data in order to establish authenticity. Using observations will also assist in clarifying the conclusions made.
Questionnaires	Credibility	The words of a questionnaire are generally developed by the researcher and therefore not those of the participant, so limiting credibility. If the wording is developed from other participant activities (e.g. focus groups) then perhaps greater authenticity could be established.
	Transferability	Large volumes of participants are necessary to have greater confidence in the conclusions and will help to establish transferability.
	Dependability	Clear question structure is required to manage the potential instability of results. Reliability analysis of results helps to demonstrate dependability.
	Authenticity	Considering correlations between responses could help to establish authenticity however without other data and techniques that authenticity is limited.
Word lists	Credibility	There is some credibility in that participants can choose which words apply to them. Given the nature of the exercise though the words are provided so this limits the credibility.
	Transferability	Large volumes in different contexts will help to establish transferability. The structure of the analysis needs to be consistent and clearly mapped to potential conclusions.
	Dependability	Giving the same instructions to individuals will help in managing the potential instability. Looking at the consistency of choices for each grouping (reliability) could help to further establish the dependability
	Authenticity	The word lists are most valuable when used in conjunction with other information and data as this helps to establish authenticity.
Mental Models	Credibility	These are created by the individuals so have clear credibility.
	Transferability	These are individual representations so by themselves have limited transferability. The analysis is likely to help establish links between the mental models so help in the transferability of findings
	Dependability	Consistent instructions to individuals will help in managing the potential instability of findings. The mental models are however likely to change for individuals so may limit the dependability
	Authenticity	Asking participants to explain their mental models will help to provide other data to establish greater authenticity. Without other data and techniques the authenticity is limited.

6.2.1 Implications of shared meaning exploration

This research has explored shared meaning, something that has been identified as providing the context for organisational politics (Ferris et al 1991) but where there has been a variety of techniques used to explore shared meaning. This iterative investigation therefore sought to provide an opportunity to reflect on the techniques. The insight from the multiple case studies regarding the credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity of the techniques was shared at the end of each case study. This section draws together those reflections and the learning regarding investigating shared meaning. It highlights that as there has been valuable insight in this investigation that explores a term that is common in the workplace but not common in the academic literature. Starting with the literature search may be common to any academic research however when considering shared meaning this is likely to mean a very wide search, as experienced in this research. The literature search provided the structure for the investigations. The reflections throughout the research have highlighted: the need for multiple sources of data to demonstrate authenticity; the use of data collection techniques such as interviews that capture the words and phrases of participants to demonstrate greater credibility of any conclusions; the need to structure the techniques and analysis in order to demonstrate greater dependability; and finally notes the need to plan the order of the techniques to advance the potential transferability of any conclusions.

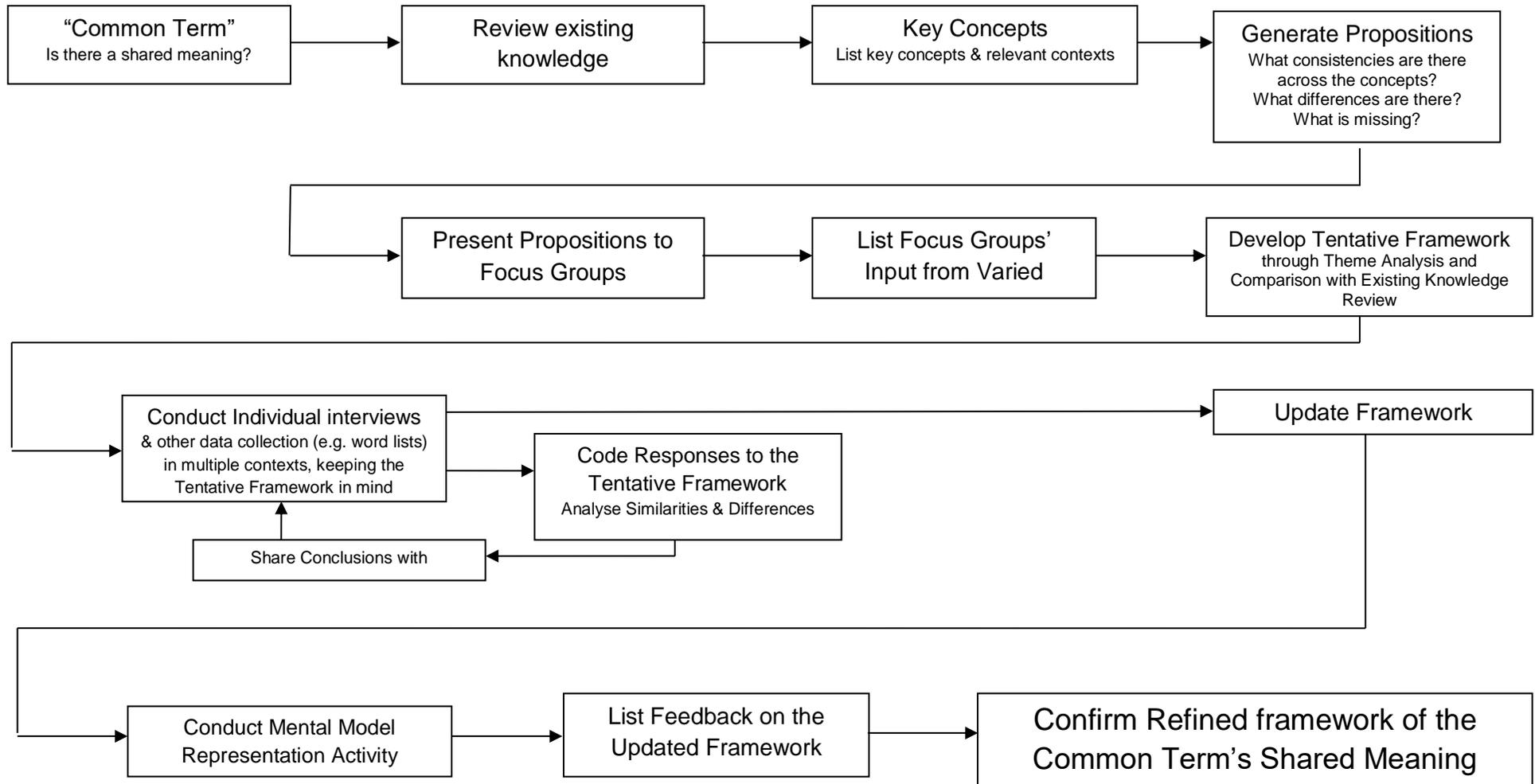
Throughout all the case study iterations, the authenticity of conclusions has been demonstrated through the triangulation of the evidence from a range of data collection techniques. Observations were paramount in being able to contextualise the evidence. However where conclusions were made in relation to the framework of themes generated in the interview the additional evidence from the other data collection tools were drawn on to provide the rationale for the conclusions. This highlights the need for multiple sources of data and is in line with existing qualitative research recommendations where triangulation of evidence is required.

Credibility in the case studies was established by gathering the words and phrases of the participants and identifying themes alongside the feedback from participants on the conclusions. Using participants' words to develop the framework demonstrated further credibility. Therefore techniques such as interviews that enable the capture of specific words and phrases are essential for any exploration of shared meaning.

The opportunity to reflect on the techniques used throughout the iterative process in this research identified a number of learning points in relation to the structure of the research. The use of focus groups in the third case study iteration highlighted how valuable they were in terms of being able to reach higher volumes of participants practically. It was however clear that it was a tool that was more difficult in identifying insights regarding subjective states. This is likely to be due to the group nature of the activity hindering the honesty and willingness to share personal feelings. Focus groups may however be useful in gaining a broader consensus at the start of an exploration. In this research the observation that there were some common responses to the question: what do you mean when you say you are at your best in work? A focus group would allow for the capture and analysis of the responses and a deeper discussion. In the fourth case study the individuals' data was also scrutinised and triangulated. This added a deeper level of analysis and greater confidence in the conclusions drawn. The mental model activity was particularly helpful in gaining feedback from participants on the proposed tentative framework and investigating how well it represents being at one's best in work. There could be some value in more complex analysis of the mental model representations to add to the insight. This acted as the start of the dialectic and scrutiny of the framework.

Figure 42 over the page illustrates a suggested process for investigating shared meaning, drawing on the learning from this research. This follows a similar structure to this current research and draws on the learning points from the experience in terms of the order of activities. Starting with the literature review in order to structure the investigation, moving on to a focus group where the words and phrases can be analysed to develop a tentative framework. This tentative framework needs further support and deeper investigation so individual interviews and other activities (e.g. word lists) can be used next. These can be analysed using the tentative framework and scrutinised on an individual basis as well as a broader group basis in order to update the tentative framework. A mental model representation activity then provides opportunity for feedback on that updated framework and further scrutiny allowing for final amendments and a refined framework to describe the shared meaning.

Figure 42: Suggested process for shared meaning investigations



Chapter 7: Limitations & learning points

Throughout this iterative research process the critical reflection points have allowed for limitations to be noted and improved upon in subsequent case studies. Each critical reflection point provided opportunity to identify learning points in terms of the credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity of both the conclusions drawn and the methods or techniques used in the investigation. In that way the limitations of each individual case study have been acknowledged.

This chapter starts by reflecting on the limitations recurring throughout the iterative process. It suggests that the highly structured reflections may have been a limitation in themselves and a more fluid evaluation could have been applied. It considers specific methodological limitations applicable to all case studies, noting that: most participants were in customer facing roles; there was no formal structure to the annotation of negative themes; the use of Nvivo to interrogate themes was only applied part way through the process; and finally noting the potential for a structured hermeneutic analysis in order to clarify if the framework of themes actually describes shared meaning as opposed to it being a result of the thematic analysis applied to the data.

Moving on this chapter critiques the conclusions. It first considers how the concepts have been explored; highlighting how the limitations of the word list activity used to explore a potential values connection between individuals and their work in turn limited the conclusions that could be drawn. It also notes that whilst a questionnaire was discounted as a tool for measuring rather than exploring, it could have been used to collect some qualitative data and comments from participants. It then questions the structure of the framework to describing what it means to be at one's best in work, highlighting that cognitions were not included and the specific links to the wider social system are not highlighted in the framework.

Finally this chapter makes some suggestions for future research: The need for more thoroughly investigate the role of values in being at one's best; investigating the possibility of measuring being at one's best in work; examining the potential link between the subjective state and behavioural pattern themes generally and specifically; the application of the framework in different settings and in roles at different levels in organisations; and the possibility of refining the framework based on feedback from people in work.

7.1 Limitations of the iterative process

Limitations were evident in each part of the critical reflection process in this investigation. Credibility throughout the process was reliant upon the access to and use of participants' own words and their feedback on the conclusions drawn. In two of the case studies (hotel and shop managers) feedback regarding the conclusions relating to the framework was not gained (as the original analysis was based on a different structure). In that way the overall credibility of the framework could be limited. Transferability has been reliant on consistency of results and the ease of application of findings to different contexts. The iterative process allowed learning points from previous case studies to be applied to subsequent case studies which meant the findings from each case study are not therefore directly comparable. Dependability in terms of the management of instability has required the standardisation of processes and structure to the analysis. The improvements to the standardisation of the techniques (for example the word list structure and analysis) rendered results from earlier iterations less dependable. Authenticity has been reliant on demonstrating the link to existing knowledge and the triangulation of the data. Whilst the triangulation of the data demonstrated a great deal of consistency in the results and inconsistencies were noted, there were few conclusions in relation to those inconsistencies. Incorporating the inconsistencies into the conclusions would have added greater authenticity.

It could be argued that reflecting on these factors individually has its own limitations as the factors are interlinked. For example without managing the instability of process (dependability) appropriately, the trustworthiness of conclusions (credibility) is likely to be limited; As the participants' own words are used in the conclusions (credibility) a conceptual leap is required in order to link to existing knowledge and demonstrate authenticity. Other approaches to evaluating qualitative research include Leech et al's (2010) validation framework. This allows for a more fluid review of a number of evaluation factors. Perhaps a less rigid structure to the critical evaluation points could have highlighted further learning points and added to the insights gained.

More specific criticisms relating to the design of the investigation are also relevant. There were limitations in the selection of participants. Most of the participants were all involved in customer facing roles. This may have caused some of the conclusions and themes to be distorted. In particular, the theme *I spend time with customers* might not be so relevant to everyone. The inclusion of participants from a broader range of roles in the final case study where the framework was validated to some extent counteracted that limitation. In order to be more confident that the framework describes being at one's best in work, in any context

however, it would have been better to have more participants from more varied organisations and roles.

The identification of negative themes throughout the case study iterations was reliant upon the researcher noting their occurrence as relevant. This was only done formally in one of the case studies (the executive search team) and the other case studies relied upon the researcher noting high levels of negative data in order to signal the formal collection of negative data. Had the collection of negative data been standardised throughout all the case studies and then discounted then there would be greater confidence in the conclusions drawn.

Another potential limitation of the overall investigation was that Nvivo software was only introduced part way through the investigation to manage the data. It was helpful as a tool to count and compare occurrences of the framework themes in the case study iterations. It was however a learning process for the researcher who by the end of the project was more proficient in its use. Had a more sophisticated understanding of the software been developed earlier, cases could have been set up differently to allow for even greater comparison and interrogation. This may have helped to identify further patterns or disconnections in the data.

With the exception of including other researcher's views on the mapping of words in the word list activity to Schwartz's (2009) ten values, throughout all the case studies it was the researcher who interpreted the results. This would appear to be an inherent issue with qualitative research evaluation (Messick 1995) as value judgments are required to assess the meaning of data or inferences from the data. Perhaps taking a more collaborative approach to the analysis could have led to more confidence in the conclusions.

The approach to the analysis also gave rise to potential criticism relating to what is involved in shared meaning. Given that the analysis was predominantly theme analysis in all the case studies, it is perhaps not surprising that a framework of themes was established to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best. The analysis could have taken a more structured hermeneutic approach which may have led to a more specific shared definition of being at one's best in work.

These limitations in the iterative process, the reflexive process and the approach to analysis all potentially restricted the confidence in the final conclusions. There are also a number of practical and theoretical limitations relating to the refined framework to describe the meaning of people at their best in work. These are discussed next.

7.2 Limitations relating to the conclusions

The iterative process leading to the conclusions has already allowed for reflection on the meaning of themes, the links to the existing literature and other potential explanations. This section explores the practical limitations of the conclusions, focussing on: the lack of clarity relating to the role of values in being at one's best in work; the lack of cause and effect demonstrated in the framework; and the need for caution when discounting a method of investigation such as the questionnaire. It also considers the theoretical or conceptual limitations of the process having focussed on three core context categories: high performance, high engagement and high commitment. These limitations all contribute to the recommendations which are discussed in the final section.

The investigation of the possibility of a values connection primarily utilised the word list activity in the case studies. The questions posed in this activity were simply: which words are important to you? And which words are supported by your work? Whether this by itself is enough to say whether or not there is a values connection between the individual and their work may be debatable. Some might define values as significantly more than simply being something that is important and whether a connection is identified by someone perceiving what they consider is important is also questionable. Furthermore, the way in which the values were mapped to the framework also has some limitations. The individuals' values (words highlighted as important to them) were link to the behavioural patterns. It is possible that behavioural patterns are influenced by other factors. Where a connection between what was identified as important to the individual and supported by their work was established, this was linked to the positive subjective states. Again, it is possible that other factors influence these other than the connection. There was also no way of interrogating the impact of the disconnecting values – it is possible that this has a negative impact on either subjective states or behavioural patterns. Whilst the word lists were informative, particularly once structured and standardised, the reliance on this technique to give insight regarding values is clearly a limitation of the investigation.

The nature of the investigation being explorative and the analysis focussed on establishing connections and triangulation of data meant there was no way to identify cause and effect in the investigation. This limited the potential conclusions that could be drawn and meant that there are more questions left for future investigations to answer. A more robust theoretical conclusion would involve demonstrating the directional relationships between themes and the impact that they have upon each other.

One way cause and effect relationships might have been established was through the use of questionnaires in the investigation. A greater focus on the questionnaire item structure and relating the items more directly to the framework may have helped to do that. The questionnaire was discounted as a tool that focusses on measurement rather than exploration. This recommendation needs to be made with some caution however as the items in the questionnaire could easily be used to capture qualitative comments that may not have been shared face to face in an interview setting.

The refined framework describing being at one's best in work was presented in terms positive subjective states and positive behavioural patterns. This was based on Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi's (2010) definition of positive psychology. Whilst that definition helped in terms of structuring the literature review and the initial analysis, it did mean that cognitions or thoughts were not specifically noted. Arguably, the themes relating to the positive subjective states were in fact cognitions or thoughts relating to feelings. They were all statements made by individuals in the interviews so had involved a cognitive process in their delivery. The lack of clarity of what this grouping of themes actually is (feelings or thoughts) could be deemed a limitation of the framework.

This research has also been limited to contexts where high performance, engagement or commitment has been demonstrated. The definitions of these three contexts is challenging conceptually (as noted in the critical literature review) but also practically. The hotel case study was an example where high engagement (demonstrated by the customer feedback ratings) was also coupled with a lower level of commitment (higher attrition). This research would have benefited from a consistent measure for each context category. Furthermore, broader contexts and levels of job might also have given rise to differing conclusions.

These criticisms in relation to the conclusions and indeed in relation to the research process discussed earlier all provide opportunities for improved future research. The next section uses these reflections and highlights the potential future research agenda relating to shared meaning and being at one's best in work.

7.3 Future research recommendations

This research has been fundamentally exploratory rather than definitive. In that way it has provided opportunity to investigate shared meaning without an agenda of measurement and the limitations of a specific definition. Having established a framework to describe the shared meaning of being at one's best it is now possible to advance the research agenda, include one of measurement and investigate the links and applications of the framework.

Whether the themes contained in the framework are measurable and indeed whether being at one's best is a measurable concept are worthy of future investigations. This then has implications for establishing being at one's best as a clear and distinct concept. How the themes are measured will need to be considered and the context of the measurements accounted for.

The nature of the relationship between the positive subjective states and the positive behavioural patterns in the framework has not been clarified. It could be that behaviours are dependent upon the feelings experienced in work or vice versa or indeed perhaps they are interdependent. Investigating the relationship between the two broad groupings in the framework is dependent upon identifying if and how the themes can be measured. The nature of the relationship could therefore be investigated. This would have helpful implications for the application of the framework, in particular giving greater focus on the priorities for development and management practice.

Having already noted the reliance on customer facing roles in this investigation, there is an opportunity to investigate the application of the framework to different settings and in roles at different levels in organisations. It would be interesting to see how the themes are relevant to non-customer facing roles and indeed if additional themes are relevant. The indications from the small sample in the final case study are that the framework is indeed relevant. That case study involved individuals from a range of roles, including non-customer facing roles. Furthermore, the participants in this research were also largely manager level or below. It would be interesting to see if the framework is also relevant for those in more senior positions.

Throughout the case study iterations, feedback on the conclusions has been sought and the final case study involved participants engaging with the tentative framework in order to evaluate its credibility. The feedback process could be extended further by gaining feedback from the workers, managers, senior managers and the wider HR community. As a

consultant, the researcher will share the findings to obtain this feedback. The feedback will serve as an opportunity to refine the framework and indeed test its potential utility.

Another way to investigate the utility is to design interventions based around the framework and explore their impact. If there is a positive impact on performance, engagement and retention then there is further evidence for the legitimacy of the framework describing when one is at their best in work.

The approach taken to exploring shared meaning in this investigation has highlighted the potential to identify core components of the shared meaning rather than a specific definition. This research approach could also be applied to more standard concepts in order to identify context specific nuances. This would allow a deeper understanding of what great performance, for example, might mean in a particular context. For example, in a customer facing context the customer experience may have high importance alongside the sales levels. In technical jobs the developing expertise of individuals might be as important as the output they produce.

Exploring the shared meaning of being at one's best in work has identified a framework of core components common to the experiences of individuals in high performing, highly engaged and highly committed contexts. Future research will help to establish if this common phrase in the workplace has become a distinct concept in itself.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Information, consent & debrief documents

Appendix II: Word list (original and structured lists)

Appendix III: Questionnaire

Appendix IV: Pilot studies: manual analysis of interviews

Appendix V: Mental Model Pictures

Appendix I: Information, consent & debrief documents

INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: Perceptions of work

Aim of the study

The aim of this investigation is to identify individual perceptions of work.

What is involved?

If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked one or more of the following tasks. You can choose how many tasks you are involved in.

- Completion of a questionnaire: There will be a number of multiple choice questions about you, the organisation where you work and your manager. There are also some optional free type questions. This is completed via survey monkey and full instructions will be given to you. It should take no longer than 30 minutes.
- A one to one interview: This involves you answering a number of questions about yourself, your work and your views of what is important to you and your organisation. It should take no longer than 45 minutes and can be completed on the telephone or face to face.

What are the risks in taking part?

There are no risks involved in this study.

What are the benefits of taking part?

By taking part you will help us to enhance our understanding of when people are at their best in work. Some people may also find the time useful to reflect upon what they find important and when they are operating at their best. You can also choose to have feedback on the output of the questionnaire. If you want this you will need to contact the researcher directly who will arrange a convenient time to provide this information (see contact details below).

Voluntary participation

The participation in this experiment is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without the need to justify your decision.

Confidentiality

Although participants will be required to sign a consent form the investigator will not keep a record of the names of the people who take part in this study. In that regard all data will be anonymous. If you have chosen to receive feedback and left your contact details, this will be kept until the feedback is provided and then deleted.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The data collected during this study will be used as part of a Psychology PhD study at the University of Hertfordshire. In the event that the results of the study are published, only group data will be presented to protect your identity.

Who has reviewed this study?

The project has been approved by the Psychology Ethics Committee at the University of Hertfordshire (protocol number).

Further Information

For further information about this research please contact Colleen Addicott (colleen@totem-consulting.com) or the supervisor Dr. Christeen George on 07711317033 or via c.george@herts.ac.uk

QUESTIONNAIRE DEBRIEF

This research is looking at the impact of values on people at work and how that influences on being at their best. You will note that the instructions were initially slightly less specific (saying, your perceptions of work). This was purposefully broad so as not to influence your responses.

How strongly do you feel your values are connected to your organisation?

(Free type)

Do you have any further questions about the research?

Would you like to receive feedback on the responses you have made?

Would you like to be informed as to the outcome of the research?

If yes, please get in touch directly with the researcher Colleen Addicott (contact details are below). You will need to quote your unique participant code: XXXXX (this is known only to you and will identify your responses).

Please note, all of the responses are held anonymously and any future publication of the results from the questionnaire will be in group form, to protect anonymity.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the questionnaire

Colleen Addicott

E: colleen@totem-consulting.com T: 07717202587

Supervisor

Dr Christeen George

E: C.george@herts.ac.uk

T: 07711317033

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Statement by Participant

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study.
- I understand what my involvement will entail and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information obtained will be confidential.
- I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
- Contact information has been provided should I wish to seek further information from the investigator at any time for purposes of clarification.

Participant's Name

Participant's
Signature Date

Statement by Investigator

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this participant without bias and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Investigator's Name

Investigator's
Signature Date

INTERVIEW DEBRIEF FORM

This interview has been focused on exploring your values and when you are at your best. We've also explored your perception of the organisation's values. The reason for this exploration is to see how values impact on being at your best. Understanding this better can be useful for individuals considering where to work and what aspects ensure they are at their best. For organisations, it means that changes can be made to support individuals be at their best in work.

Do you have any further questions?

If you would like to be informed about the outcome of the study, please contact the researcher, Colleen Addicott directly (contact details below).

Please note, all of the responses are held anonymously and any future publication of the results from the questionnaire will be in group form, to protect anonymity.

Thank you for participating in this study.

You may contact us in the future on:

Colleen Addicott
Colleen@totem-consulting.com
07717202587

PhD Supervisor
Dr Christeen George
C.george@herts.ac.uk
07711317033

Appendix II: Word list (original and structured lists)

ORIGINAL WORD LIST USED IN PILOT

Accomplishment, Success	Friendship	Privacy
Accountability	Fun	Progress
Accuracy	Generosity	Prosperity, Wealth
Adventure	Gentleness	Punctuality
All for one & one for all	Global view	Quality of work
Beauty	Goodwill	Regularity
Calm, quietude, peace	Goodness	Reliability
Challenge	Gratitude	Resourcefulness
Change	Hard work	Respect for others
Charity	Happiness	Responsiveness
Cleanliness, orderliness	Harmony	Results-oriented
Collaboration	Health	Rule of Law
Commitment	Honour	Safety
Communication	Human-centered	Satisfying others
Community	Improvement	Security
Competence	Independence	Self-giving
Competition	Individuality	Self-reliance
Concern for others	Inner peace, calm, quietude	Self-thinking
Connection	Innovation	Sensitivity
Content over form	Integrity	Service (to others, society)
Continuous improvement	Intelligence	Simplicity
Cooperation	Intensity	Skill
Coordination	Justice	Solving Problems
Creativity	Kindness	Speed
Customer satisfaction	Knowledge	Spirit, Spirituality in life
Decisiveness	Leadership	Stability
Determination	Love, Romance	Standardization
Delight of being, joy	Loyalty	Status
Democracy	Maximum utilization (of time, resources)	Strength
Discipline	Meaning	Succeed; A will to-
Discovery	Merit	Success, Achievement
Diversity	Money	Systemization
Dynamism	Oneness	Teamwork
Ease of Use	Openness	Timeliness
Efficiency	Other's point of view, inputs	Tolerance
Enjoyment	Patriotism	Tradition
Equality	Peace, Non-violence	Tranquility
Excellence	Perfection	Trust
Fairness	Personal Growth	Truth
Faith	Perseverance	Unity
Faithfulness	Pleasure	Variety
Family	Power	Well-being
Family feeling	Practicality	Wisdom
Flair	Preservation	
Freedom, Liberty		

WORD LIST USED IN SUBSEQUENT CASE STUDIES

Accomplishment, success	Customer' Satisfaction	Generosity	Money	Respect for others
Accountability	Decisiveness	Gentleness	Nature	Responsiveness
Accuracy	Defending	Goodwill	Novelty	Results
Adventure	Democracy	Gratitude	Oneness	Safety
Appreciation	Determination	Happiness	Openness	Satisfying others
Beauty	Discipline	Harmony	Patriotism	Security
Challenge	Discovery	Health	Peace, non-violence	Self-reliance
Change	Diversity	Honour	Perfection	Self-thinking
Charity	Dominance	Human-centered	Perseverance	Sensitivity
Choice	Dynamism	Humanity	Personal growth	Simplicity
Cleanness, orderliness	Easy use	Independence	Pleasure	Skill
Close relationships	Efficiency	Individuality	Power	Stability
Commitment	Enjoyment	Indulgence	Praise	Status
Community	Excellence	Innovation	Preservation	Strength
Compassion	Exploring	Integrity	Prestige	Supporting others
Competence	Fairness	Intelligence	Privacy	Tolerance
Competition	Faith	Intensity	Progress	Tradition
Constancy	Faithfulness	Justice	Prosperity, wealth	Tranquility
Continuous Improvement	Family	Kindness	Punctuality	Trust
Control	Family feeling	Knowledge	Regularity	Truth
Cooperation	Flair	Leadership	Reliability	Understanding
Creating	Freedom, liberty	Love-romance	Religion	Unity
Creativity	Friendship	Loyalty	Resourcefulness	Variety
Culture	Fun	Merit	Respect	Well-being

Words mapped to Schwartz's (2009) 10 values

ACHIEVEMENT	Accomplishment, Success	Knowledge	Results	Competence	Accuracy	Continuous Improvement	Excellence	Progress	Merit	Perfection	Skill	Praise
BENEVOLENCE	Supporting others	Close Relationships	Understanding	Compassion	Human-centred	Generosity	Gentleness	Goodwill	Humanity	Kindness	Charity	Gratitude
CONFORMITY	Integrity	Cleanness, orderliness	Reliability	Respect for others	Discipline	Honour	Privacy	Democracy	Justice	Regularity	Punctuality	Accountability
HEDONISM	Fun	Enjoyment	Happiness	Health	Well-being	Pleasure	Simplicity	Easy use	Oneness	Tranquility	Beauty	Indulgence
POWER	Efficiency	Leadership	Money	Prosperity, Wealth	Status	Strength	Control	Power	Prestige	Competition	Dominance	Intensity
SECURITY	Friendship	Trust	Stability	Loyalty	Cooperation	Security	Family feeling	Harmony	Satisfying others	Love, romance	Safety	Constancy
SELF-DIRECTION	Independence	Individuality	Resourcefulness	Exploring	Perseverance	Creating	Determination	Choice	Decisiveness	Freedom, liberty	Self-reliance	Self-thinking
STIMULATION	Personal Growth	Dynamism	Intelligence	Challenge	Adventure	Flair	Variety	Creativity	Innovation	Change	Discovery	Novelty
TRADITION	Commitment	Respect	Family	Culture	Peace, non-violence	Religion	Faithfulness	Tradition	Patriotism	Preservation	Faith	Community
UNIVERSALISM	Diversity	Openness	Tolerance	Appreciation	Responsiveness	Truth	Nature	Fairness	Sensitivity	Customer Satisfaction	Unity	Defending

Appendix III: Questionnaire

Perceptions of work

1. Introduction

The aim of this investigation is to identify individual perceptions of work. You should already have seen the information sheet – if you would like to be reminded of it please go to the link below to see it:
www.totem-consulting.com/information-sheet

This is the questionnaire element of the research - it should take 30 minutes to complete.
There are some multiple choice questions and some optional free type questions relating to your perceptions of your work, yourself, your manager and your organisation.

Please note that all of your responses are anonymous and the results will be confidential. If at any point you decide you would like to stop completing the questionnaire, you have the right to withdraw at any time.

You can receive feedback on the outcome of the questionnaire or the research by contacting the researcher directly (her contact details are below). At the end of the questionnaire, you will be asked to provide a personal identification passcode. This will be used to identify your responses so that feedback can be provided. The code will be stored with your responses and only known to you.

INSTRUCTIONS

For the multiple choice questions, simply click on the required response. At the bottom of each page, you can click on 'next' to see the next set of questions.
Please provide your initial response to the question rather than thinking about your response at length.
There are no right or wrong answers here - it is all about your personal perceptions.
For the free type questions, these are optional but simply type your responses in the spaces provided.

When you have completed all your questions a final page will be displayed with your unique participant code and a reminder of the researcher's contact details.

Many thanks for being willing to take part in the research

Colleen Addicott
T: 07717 202587 E: colleen@totem-consulting.com

By clicking on the next button, you will be confirming:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for this study.
- I understand what my involvement will entail and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information obtained will be confidential.
- I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
- Contact information has been provided should I wish to seek further information from the researcher at any time for purposes of clarification.

Perceptions of work

2. Demographic information

***1. Your gender is:**

Male

Female

***2. How old are you?**

18-30

31-40

41-50

51-60

60+

***3. Are you...?**

Employed

Self Employed

Director

Volunteer

Unemployed

Other (please specify)

***4. What is your profession?**

***5. In which industry is your organisation?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer Goods	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial	<input type="checkbox"/> Media
<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare	<input type="checkbox"/> Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Goods	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

Perceptions of work

*6. How big is the organisation you work in?

- Very small (0-5 people)
- Small (6-50 people)
- Medium (51-250 people)
- Large (251-1000 people)
- Very large (1001+ people)

*7. How long have you worked in your organisation?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10+ years

Perceptions of work

3. About you

You're now entering the questionnaire..... Please rate each statement as they apply to you

*** 8. I feel confident analysing a long term problem to find a solution**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 9. If something can go wrong for me work-wise, it will**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 10. My manager (or the person I work for) would rate me as...**

Below expectations A little improvement needed Meets expectations Exceeds expectations

*** 11. I usually manage difficulties one way or another at work**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 12. I can be on my own, so to speak, at work if I have to**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 13. If I should find myself 'in a jam' at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 14. I would recommend my organisation as a place to work**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 15. At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set myself**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 16. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 17. Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 18. People often praise the work that I do**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Perceptions of work

*** 19. I feel confident representing my work area in meetings with management**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 20. When things are uncertain for me at work I usually expect the best**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 21. At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my goals**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 22. I rarely make mistakes**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 23. I enjoy working with people outside of my immediate team**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

24. The demands from others at work are frustrating to me

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 25. I have good relationships with the people that I work with**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 26. When I have a set back at work, I have trouble recovering from it or moving on**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 27. My work does not really contribute to the organisation's profitability**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 28. I feel confident helping to set targets/goals in my work area**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 29. Reflecting over past experiences is a waste of time**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 30. I can get through difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Perceptions of work

31. I enjoy changes to my routines

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

32. The organisation I work for stops me from enjoying what I do

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

33. I have improved the efficiency of what I do since starting the job

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 34. I know how I can contribute to my organisation, despite any changes there may be**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

35. I often talk with my colleagues about how we can do things better

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

36. It can take me some time to get used to a new process at work

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

37. I often find better ways of doing things in my work

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 38. I get a buzz out of my job**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 39. I enjoy helping new team members understand what they need to do**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 40. I tend to hold back from speaking my mind when I get a new manager**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 41. It can take me some time to get going at the start of my working day**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 42. I enjoy working with the people in my team**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Perceptions of work

***43. I understand why the last restructure in my organisation was necessary**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

44. I tell people about how much I love working for my organisation

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***45. I need a lot of convincing before I will change how I do something**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

46. I have shared best practices with other team members

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***47. It is not my role to think about overall efficiency**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

48. My colleagues would say that I am passionate about what I do

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***49. I am able to do my job**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***50. I have a good level of technical knowledge**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***51. I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***52. In this job, things never work out the way I want them to**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***53. I have learnt from mistakes and changed the way I do things**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***54. I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Perceptions of work

*** 55. I tend to communicate in the same way with everybody**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 56. I approach this job as if 'every cloud has a silver lining'**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 57. There are lots of ways around any problem**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 58. When things go wrong I can usually identify why and make sure it doesn't happen again**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 59. I can usually get what I need from other people at work**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 60. I rarely find myself reflecting on what I have learnt from an experience**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 61. I feel confident contacting people outside the company (eg suppliers, customers) to discuss problems**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 62. I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 63. I have some learning to do in order to bring my skills up to an acceptable standard**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 64. I take stressful things at work in my stride**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

*** 65. I enjoy applying my expertise in new situations**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Perceptions of work

***66. I feel I can handle many things at a time in this job**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

***67. I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job**

Disagree Disagree - most of the time Agree - most of the time Agree

Don't worry - all the pages are not this long!

Perceptions of work

4. Your views

68. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
Independence is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like surprises and am always looking for new things to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to be rich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I avoid anything that might endanger my safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a good time is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People should follow the customs of their heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

69. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
I believe that people should do what they're told	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I strongly believe that people should care for nature	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to care for the well-being of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to show my abilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like to do things in my own original way	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like to 'spoil' myself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Perceptions of work

70. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
I think it is important to do lots of different things in life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to live in secure surroundings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want people to admire what I do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is very important to me to help the people around me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I often worry about what people think of me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

71. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
I think it is important that every person in the world be treated equally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe everyone should have equal opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Commitment is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to have a lot of money and expensive things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to make my own decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tradition is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Perceptions of work

72. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
I look for adventures and like to take risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to get respect from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to always behave properly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking after the environment is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to do things that give me pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being very successful is important to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

73. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.
If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
I try to follow the customs handed down by my religion or my family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hope people will recognise my achievements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want people to do what I say	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I seek every chance I can to have fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is important to me to always behave properly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Even when I disagree with others, I still want to understand them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Perceptions of work

74. Please tick any of the statements that apply to you.

If you feel that any of the statements are particularly true for you, also tick the (*) star column

	Apply to you?	* Particularly true for you?
It is important to me to listen to people who are different from me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want an exciting life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I hope for harmony in all that I do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to devote myself to people close to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like to be free and not depend on others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

75. Please complete the sentence:

My ultimate aim in life is to.....

76. Please complete the sentence:

What I value most is....

77. Please complete the sentence:

What frustrates me most is....

Perceptions of work

5. Your perception of your organisation

The next questions relate to your views about your organisation.

If you do not work for a company, consider organisation to mean your primary place of work.

Please rate each statement

*78. In my organisation....

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Our safety is paramount and there are plenty of safeguards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are very strict rules and regulations to follow in my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are encouraged to use our own initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work is based upon important traditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important that every person is treated equally	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*79. In my organisation....

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
It is impossible to make a decision without a lot of consultation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If people step out of line, it is ignored	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who have the loudest voice are generally the only ones listened to	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People are often ridiculed for what they have said or done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We all work to strict routines	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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***80. In my organisation....**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Laughing and joking is frowned upon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are often required to work long hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
You do not necessarily get ahead by being great at your job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The financial rewards do not reflect the abilities of individuals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Looking after the environment is not a priority	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***81. In my organisation....**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
People tend to use their position as a way to get what they want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is a social responsibility policy that encourages us to do community work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Innovation is applauded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We do a lot of fun team building activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is plenty of opportunity to share successes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

82. Please complete the sentence:
My organisation's ultimate goal is.....

83. Please complete the sentence:
What I like about my organisation is....

84. Please complete the sentence:
What frustrates me most about my organisation is....

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6. Your experience of your manager

The next questions relate to your views about your manager.
 If you do not have a manager, think about those who work closely with you and have an impact on the work that you do.
 Please rate each statement.

***85. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Actively encourages us to participate in community activities (Corporate Social Responsibility)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is very loyal to the team	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explains why it is important to do things in a certain way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is good at addressing the poor behaviours of others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is patient and helpful when I make mistakes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***86. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Micro-manages what I do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often ignores people who disagree with them	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tends to put me down when speaking to me or about me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stops me from getting involved in a range of activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often asks us to take short cuts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***87. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Only talks about work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does not seem to care about our well-being	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stops me from having much control over my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Has a volatile temperament	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Takes recognition for what I have done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceptions of work

***88. My manager...**

	False	False - most of the time	True - most of the time	True
Regularly consults with me and asks my opinion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encourages me to do work that is stretching	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allows the team to have a lot of fun	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regularly asks me to do something outside of my own job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allows me to get on with my work without interfering much	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceptions of work

7. Debrief

THANK YOU for completing the questionnaire

This research is looking at the impact of values on people at work and how that influences on being at their best. You will note that the instructions are less specific (saying, your perceptions of work). This was purposefully broad so as not to influence your responses.

89. How strongly do you feel your own values are connected to your organisation?

90. Do you have any further questions about the research?

91. Would you like to receive feedback on the responses you have made?

92. Would you like to be informed as to the outcome of the research?

93. If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please get in touch directly with the researcher Colleen Addicott (contact details are below). You will need to quote your unique participant identification code that is known only to you and will identify your responses. Please type your chosen code:

Please note, all of the responses are held anonymously and any future publication of the results from the questionnaire will be in group form, to protect anonymity.

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete the questionnaire

Colleen Addicott
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Supervisor
Dr Christeen George
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T: 07711317033

Appendix IV: Pilot studies: manual analysis of interviews

Table 1: Interview Themes: Expressed FEELINGS 1 OF 3

Theme	Partner Example phrases	Frequency of occurrence			Context differences		Anomalies?	Sub Themes		
		Reference	Per Person		Role	Questions				
F1.1: I'M CONFIDENT THAT I'M CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS	<p>"There is a sense of fulfilment in what I do here"</p> <p>"When I know I did my best"</p> <p>"I get satisfaction from working branch-wide"</p> <p>"I now know so much more and I am good at selling the partnership card"</p> <p>"I know I can do it"</p>	H	H	H	H	H	All	All	"I was pressured by my mum to apply for the job" (1 person only talking of attraction to role)	Feelings about the JOB
F3.1: BONEDED WITH TEAM	<p>"We have bonded here"</p> <p>"We are all one family"</p> <p>"Its just like a family – helping each out"</p> <p>"We were all in it together"</p> <p>"Even if you're down someone will pick you up"</p> <p>"I enjoy being with like-minded people"</p>	H	H	H	H	H	All	All	"Day to day I'm fixing other people's stuff ups" (1 person only referenced in other anomalies)	Feelings about my COLLEAGUES
F2.1: I FEEL POSITIVE	<p>"We are a happy bunch – there are not many people who are negative"</p> <p>"I just feel really positive at the end of the day"</p> <p>"The future is an opportunity – there will be more footfall"</p> <p>"If you make others feel like they are amazing they are more likely to be"</p>	H	H	H	H	H	All esp all BMs	All esp 'Great day' & 'First impressions'	"I was daunted" "I was dumped in stores" (2 people talking of their first day in store)	Feelings about ME
F1.2: I AM CHALLENGED	<p>"I get a challenge from resolving the customer issues"</p> <p>"I expect high standards for myself"</p> <p>"If I'm not challenged I don't enjoy it"</p>	M	M	H	H	H	All esp managers & all BMs	All esp 'Great day'	"I expected more modern systems" (1 person talking of first impressions)	Feelings about the JOB

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Table 1: Interview Themes: Expressed FEELINGS 2 OF 3

Theme	Partner Example phrases	Frequency of occurrence			Context differences		Anomalies?	Sub Themes		
		Reference	Per Person		Role	Questions				
F1.3: I HAVE PASSION & PRIDE	<p>"For me to move it had to be the right company with ethics and beliefs"</p> <p>"I'd heard it was the best company to work for and if I was going to stay in retail it had to be the best company"</p> <p>"This business really sits with my principles"</p> <p>"We're really crafting something special – a great shop"</p> <p>"It about having pride in where you are"</p>	H	H	H	M	M	All esp sales floor and BMs	All esp: 'What attracted you to the role' & 'First Impressions'		Feelings about the JOB
F2.2: I AM EMPOWERED & GROWING	<p>"They empower you here and it's up to you to empower yourself"</p> <p>"We all have different tasks – we are partners and the managers trust in you more"</p> <p>"At the start it was hard just being me – I don't have to hide behind a mask"</p> <p>"The more you know the more you can do"</p>	M	M	M	M	M	All esp managers	All esp: 'What do you enjoy most'	"It was very regimented" (1 person talking of first impression) "Our training was wishy washy" (1 person, referenced in I already)	Feelings about ME
F1.4: I LOVE MY JOB	<p>"I love coming to work"</p> <p>"It was really exciting"</p> <p>"I'm just so happy to be here"</p> <p>"I love it here – it is a pleasure to come to work"</p>	L		M	M	M	All esp sales floor	All esp 'Great day' & 'other'	"It was just a job – I'd been unemployed for 5 years" "I was on job seekers allowance and just wanted to get off it" (Both individuals already referenced in G & I)	Feelings about the JOB

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Table 1: Interview Themes: Expressed FEELINGS 3 OF 3

Theme	Partner Example phrases	Frequency of occurrence		Context differences		Anomalies?	Sub Themes
		Reference	Per Person	Role	Questions		
F1.5: I ASPIRE TO DO MORE	<p>"I wanted to take on more for my personal development"</p> <p>"I like to push myself"</p> <p>"I was drawn to the home format where people are coming through quickly"</p> <p>"I have been applying for DM positions"</p>	L	M M	All Branch Mangers & some managers	Attraction to the role		Feelings about the JOB
F3.2: I'M RESPECTED & APPRECIATED	<p>"I like to be praised for a job well done"</p> <p>"My daughter says I've changed – previously I was a battery chicken and now I am a free range chicken"</p> <p>"Over the last 18 years it's how I've been treated and I do the same"</p>	M M	L	All esp managers & sales floor	All		Feelings about my COLLEAGUES
F1.6: I'M DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT / UNIQUE	<p>"It was a fresh challenge with a lot of originals"</p> <p>"we love that we are doing something different"</p> <p>"No day is the same – I love that"</p> <p>"I wanted to do something different"</p>	M M	L	All	'Attracted to the role'		Feelings about the JOB
F3.3: I'M INSPIRED BY MY MANAGER	<p>"I can actually talk to my managers"</p> <p>"There really is no chink in the leadership team"</p> <p>"Out of the room we are all on message"</p> <p>"There are clear expectations from the leaders"</p>	L	L	Sales Floor & Managers	'Enjoy most'		Feelings about my COLLEAGUES

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Table 2: Interview Themes: Description of ACTIVITY 1 OF 2

Theme	Partner Example phrases	Frequency of occurrence			Context differences		Anomalies?	Sub Themes
		Reference	Per Person	Role	Questions			
A1.1: TAKE OWNERSHIP – to achieve & solve problems	<p>"I like having responsibility and to know that I have got something to do"</p> <p>"I like seeing it through until the end"</p> <p>"Its about creating a legacy"</p> <p>"I love ticking things off my list"</p> <p>"Great day for me is when I've sorted out a problem no one else could"</p>	H H H	H H H	All	All	A number of SMs refer to ticking off their list – no other group mentioned	ACHIEVE	
A3.1: SOCIABLE WITH COLLEAGUES	<p>"We are all getting on well and chatting as we work"</p> <p>"I really like spending time with these people"</p> <p>"I walk the floor and chat with the partners"</p>	H H H	H H H	All	All esp Enjoy most		INTERACT	
A2.3: SUPPORT & TEAM WORK	<p>"Nothing would get done without cooperation"</p> <p>"I came in early to help out – I wanted to be a part of it"</p> <p>"We all pull together to get things done"</p> <p>"Its a buzz when your colleagues does something new"</p>	M M	H H H	All	All		SUPPORT	
A3.2: SOCIABLE WITH CUSTOMERS – doing the right thing for them	<p>"I enjoy helping customers choose, engaging them in conversation and seeing the pictures on their phones"</p> <p>"I like it when the regular customer come back in"</p> <p>"I really enjoy it when a customer walks away and says thank you"</p>	M M	H H H	All esp sales floor	All esp Enjoy most / Great Day		INTERACT	

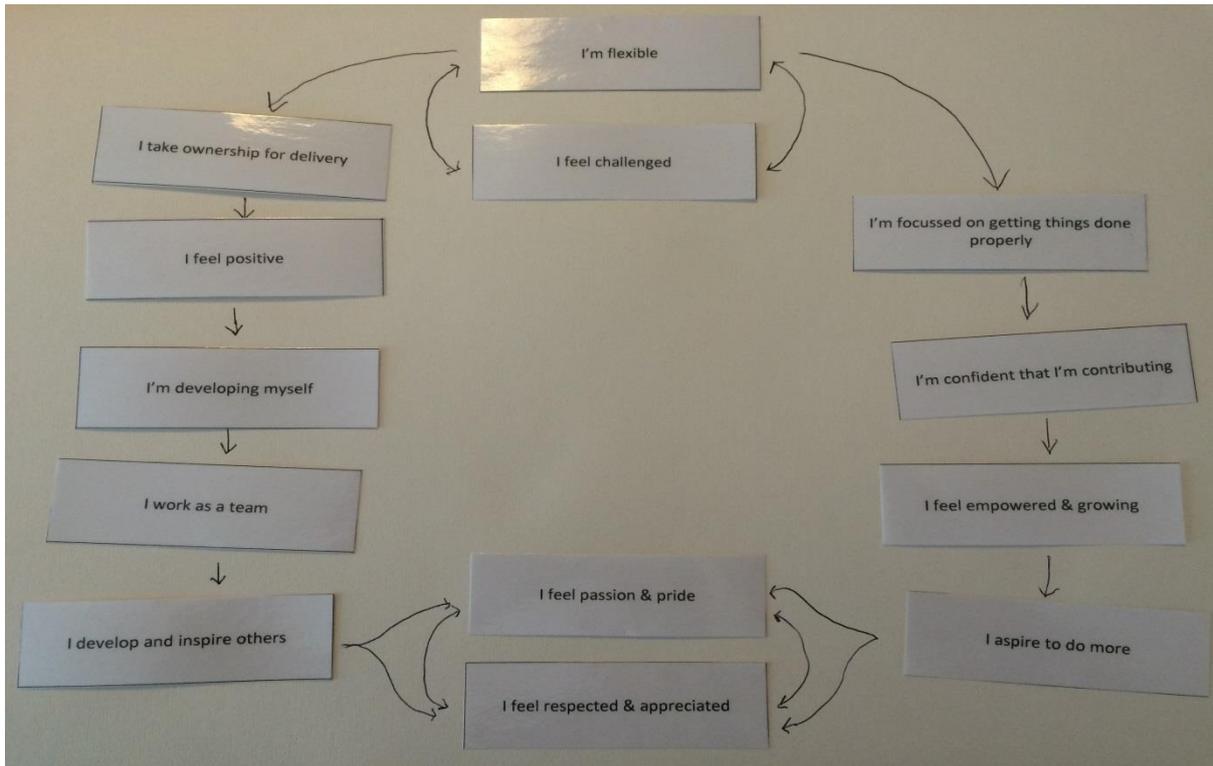
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Table 2: Interview Themes: Description of ACTIVITY 2 OF 2

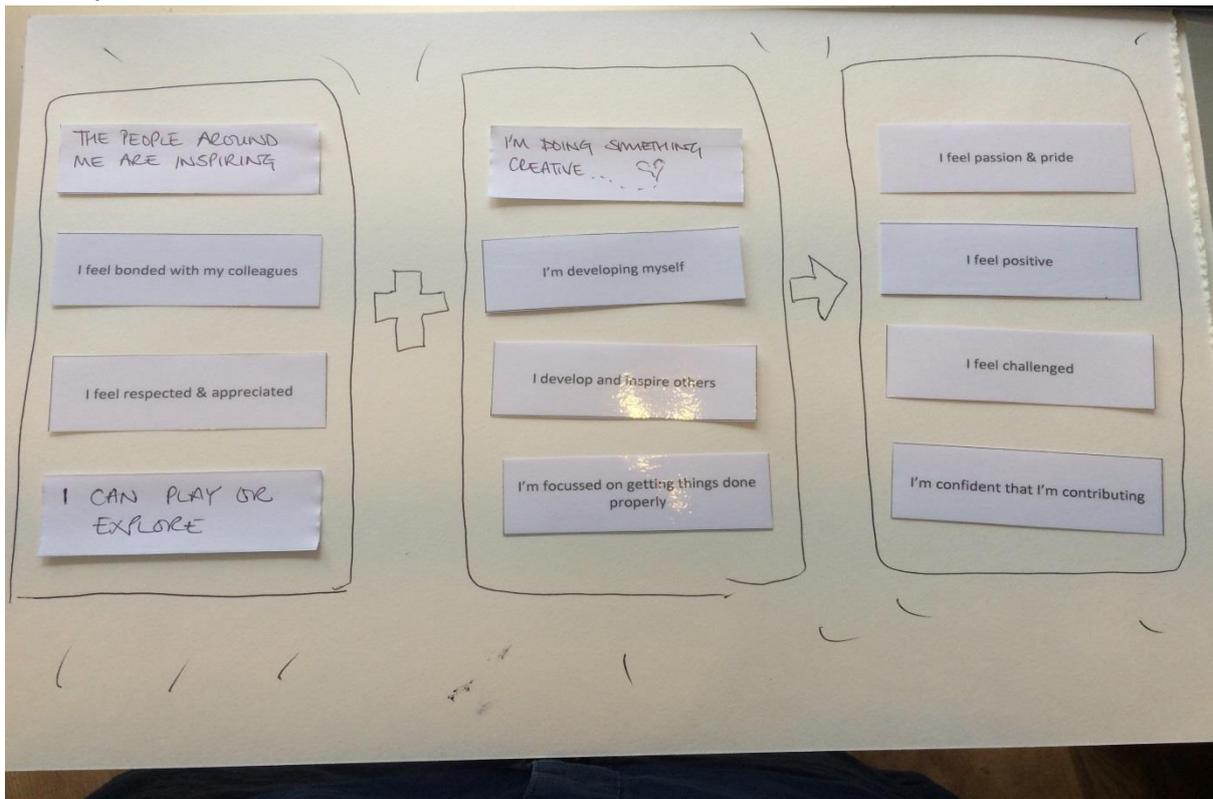
Theme	Partner Example phrases	Frequency of occurrence				Context differences		Anomalies?	Sub Themes	
		Reference	Per Person			Role	Questions			
A1.2: I DEVELOP MYSELF – my knowledge – my expertise	<p><i>"My goal is to learn something about everything – every department"</i></p> <p><i>"I have more confidence now I have gained more knowledge"</i></p> <p><i>"I now have specialised in IT products as a mini manager"</i></p>	H	H	H	M	M	All esp Sales floor & Managers	All		ACHIEVE
A2.1: DEVELOP & INSPIRE OTHERS (take a step back)	<p><i>"I do a lot of coaching with my team"</i></p> <p><i>"Its about doing that through others"</i></p> <p><i>"I've had to learn to trust other people – that is a complete 180 from last role"</i></p> <p><i>"I love turning around the underdog"</i></p>	H	H	H	M	M	All BMs & most Sales Floor	All	"We weren't fully prepared when we opened"	SUPPORT
A1.3: GETTING THINGS DONE PROPERLY & WELL	<p><i>"My job is to get stockroom in order"</i></p> <p><i>"I like getting things done the way I like them"</i></p> <p><i>"If it takes extra time I'll do it"</i></p> <p><i>"I am constantly thinking about how I can improve this or that"</i></p>	L			M	M	Mostly Sales floor & Managers	All		ACHIEVE
A2.2: FLEXIBLE – change from activity to activity easily	<p><i>"You really have to be comfortable multi-tasking so you have to adapt to what ever points"</i></p> <p><i>"I like being a floater going from job to job"</i></p>	L			M	M	All	All		SUPPORT
A1.4: FOCUSED ON THE COMMERCIAL	<p><i>"Everyone is so friendly but it is still business orientated"</i></p> <p><i>"Its nice when you can actually say I really sold that"</i></p> <p><i>"... getting on top of the figures"</i></p> <p><i>"It's a great feeling when you know that you have beaten audio"</i></p> <p><i>"Its about really driving the sales"</i></p> <p><i>"[the most rewarding aspect -] it has to be the commercial – I am competitive after all!"</i></p>	M	M		L		All BMs and mostly managers	All	"Its nice to work in an environment when you are thought of first – before the sales – if they do crack the whip it is done nicely"	ACHIEVE

Appendix V: Mental Model Pictures

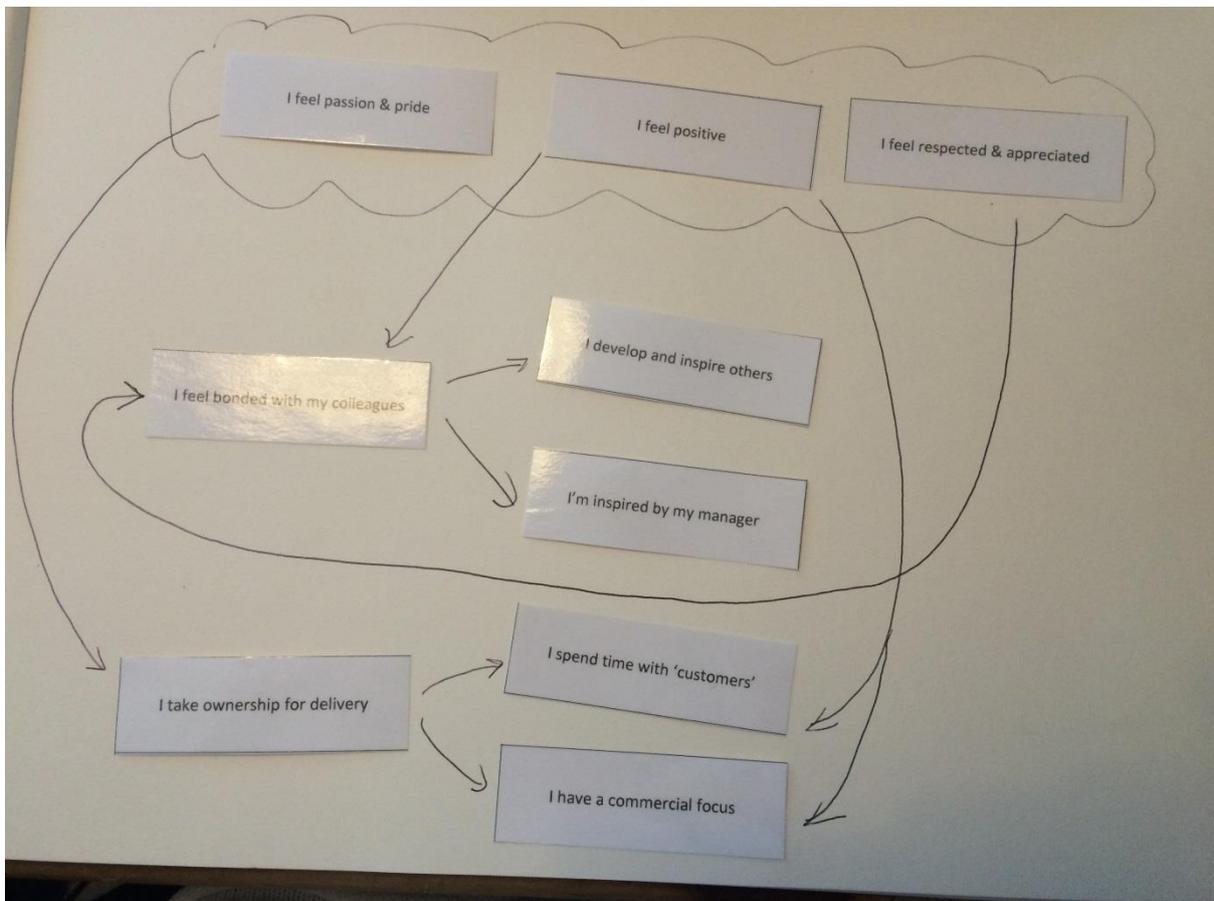
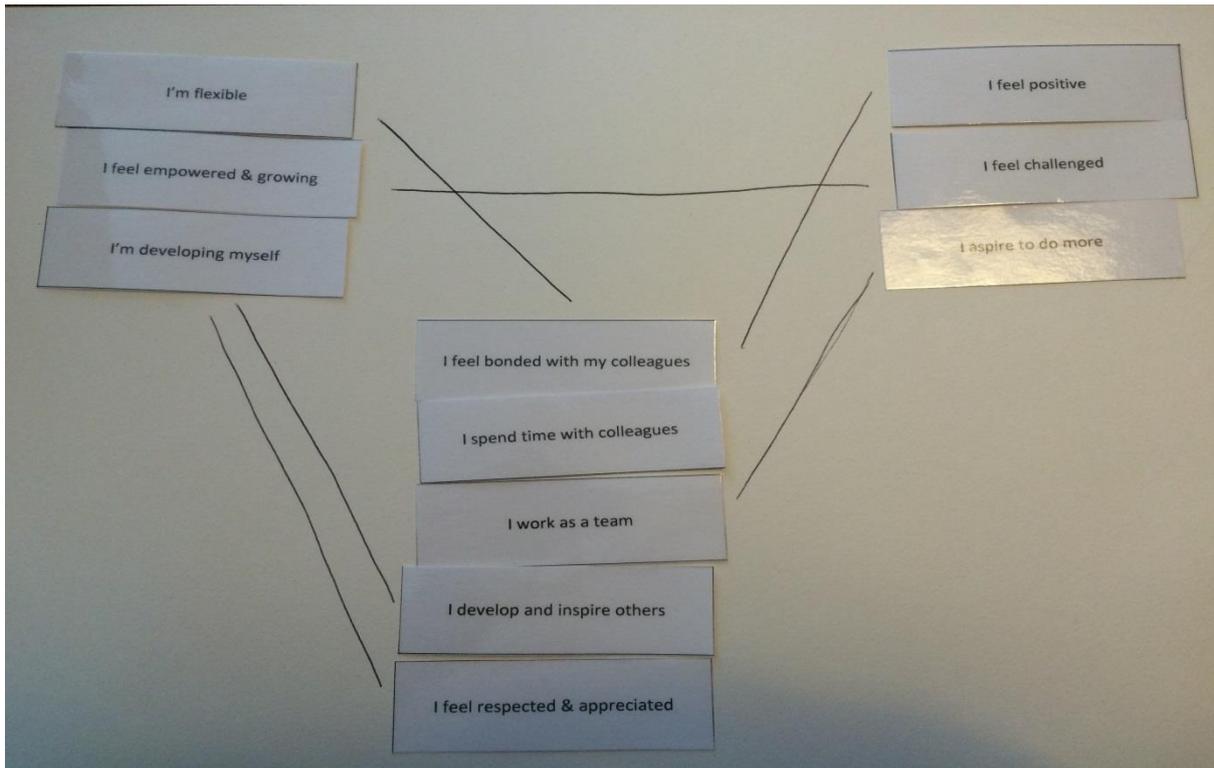
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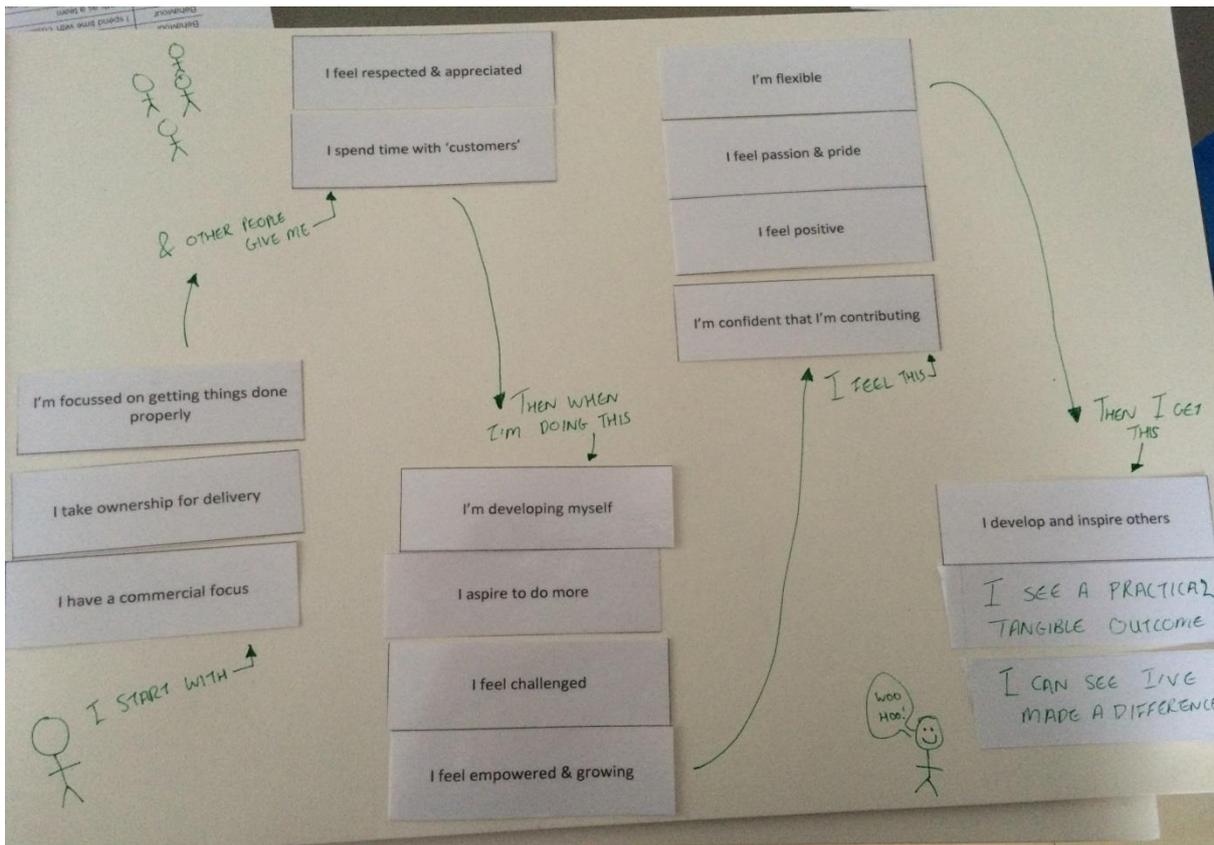
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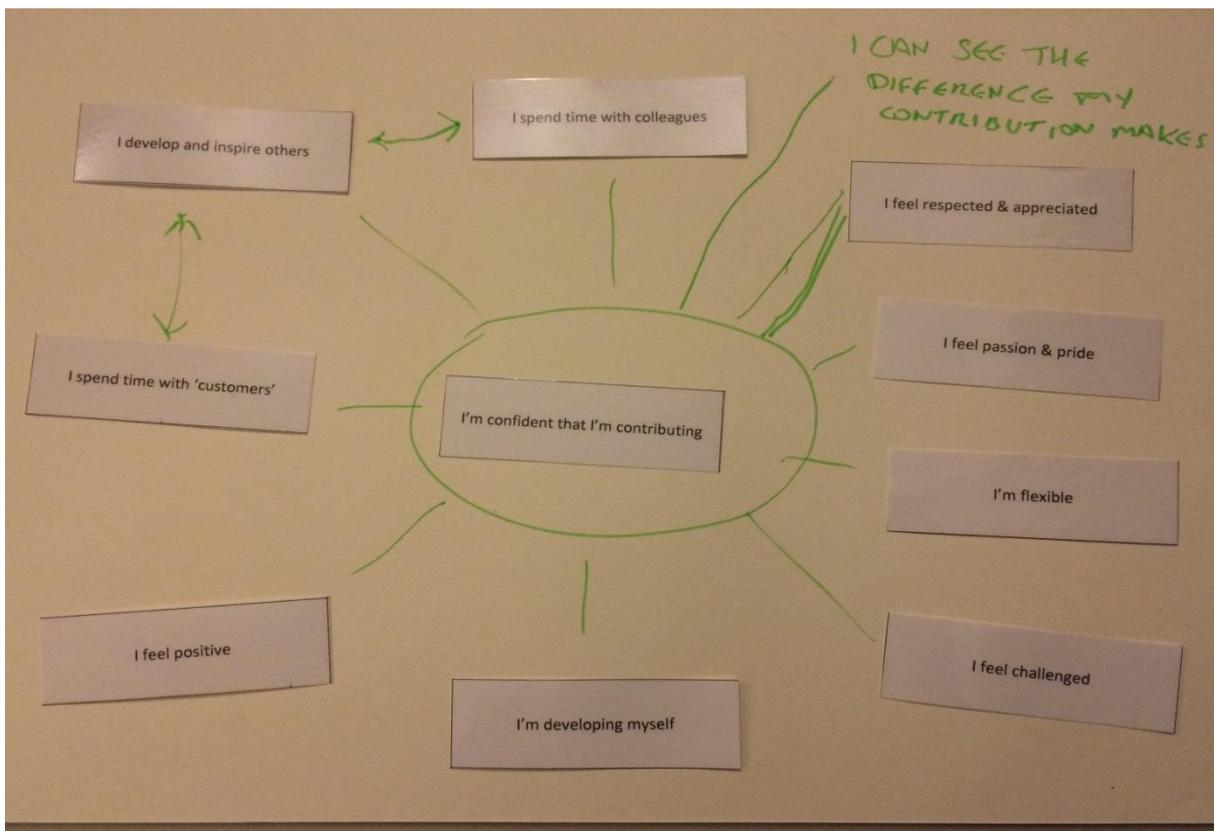
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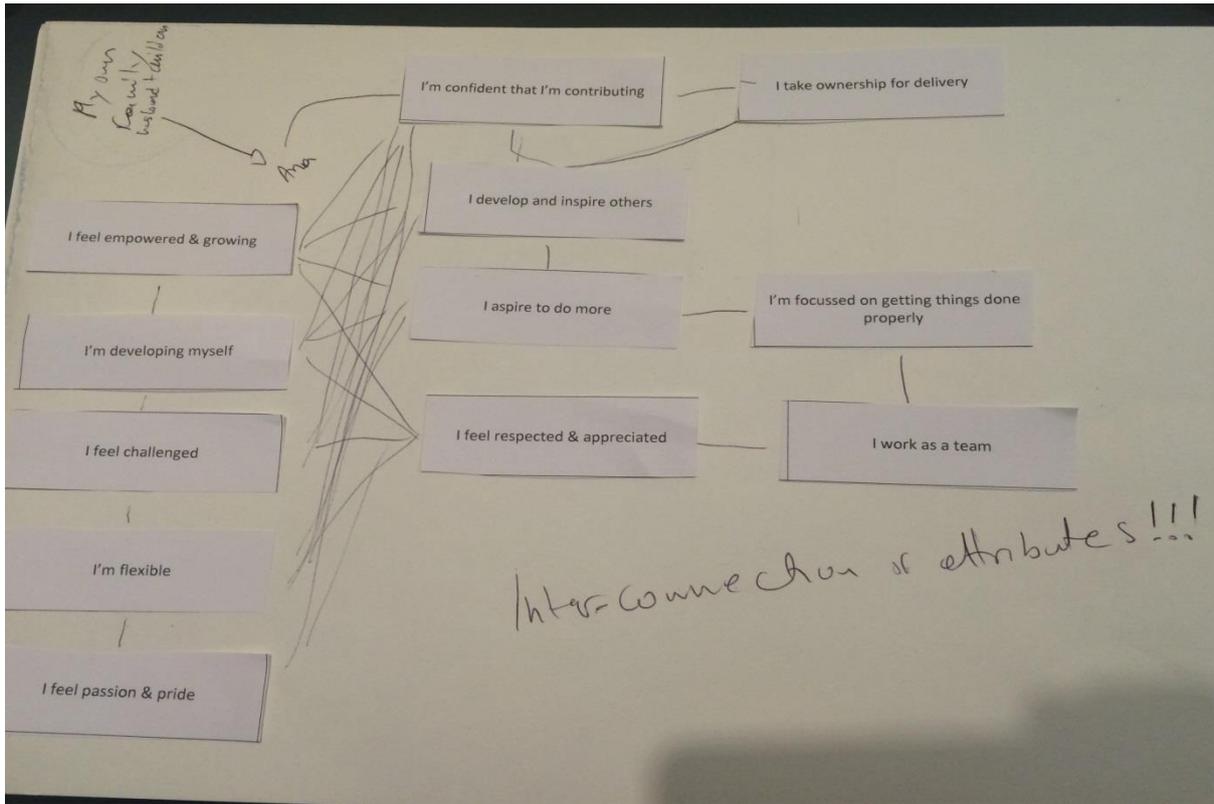
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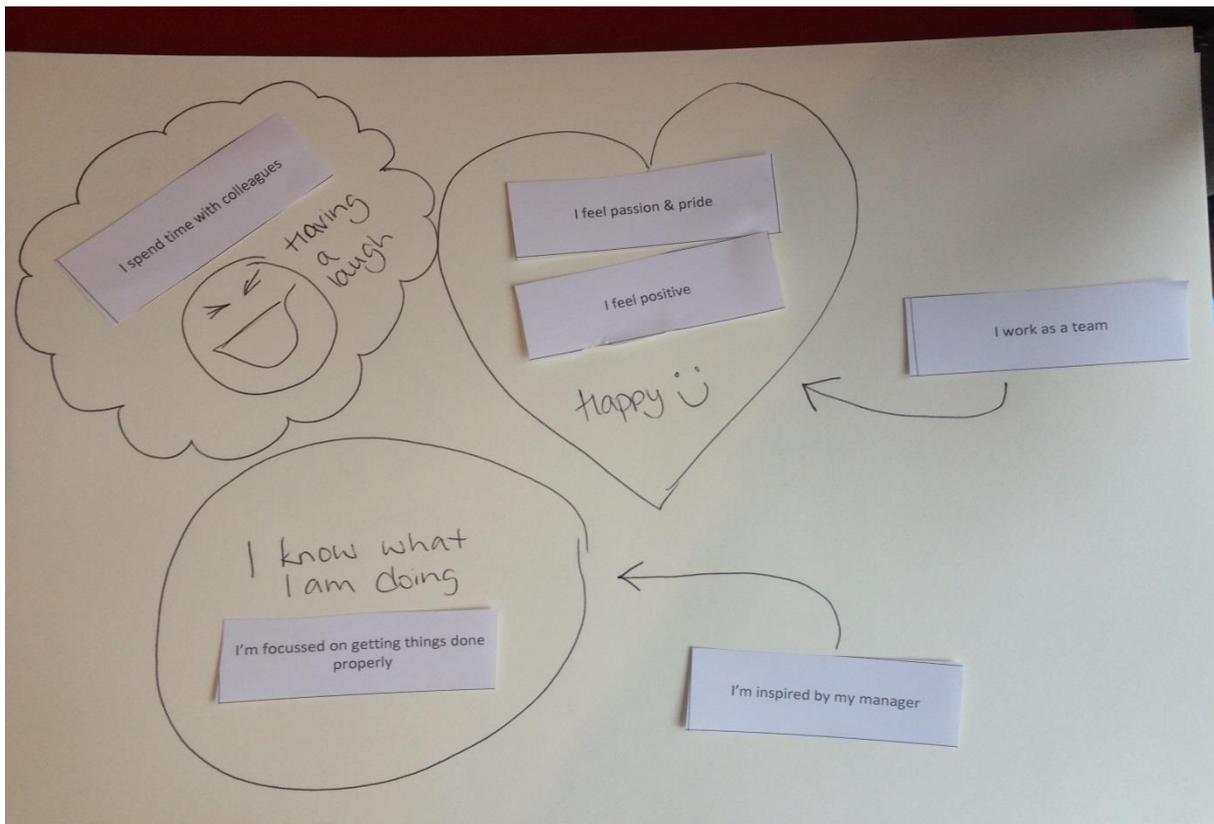
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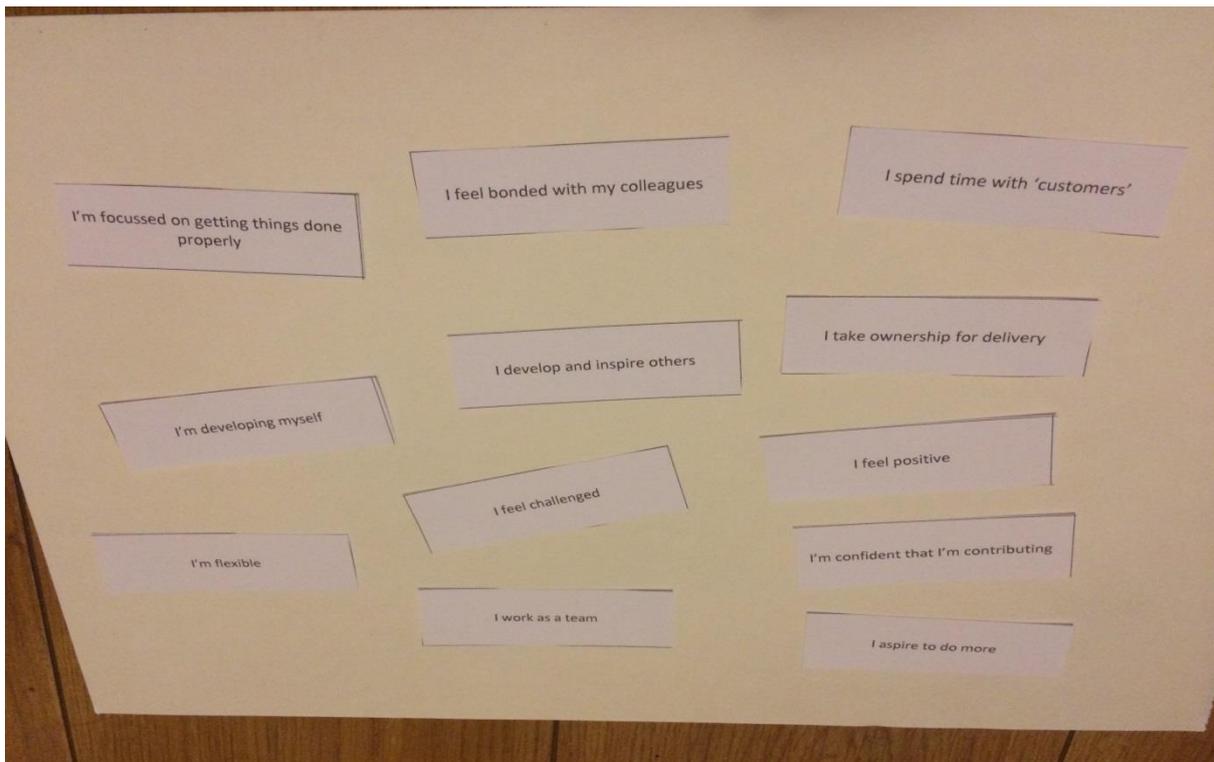
Participant 7:



Participant 8:



Participant 9:



Participant 10:

