

Prove It! Book Launch

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Welcome everyone to this launch of my new book, *Prove It! How to Create a High-Performance Culture and Measurable Success*.

I'm Stacey Barr, performance measure specialist and creator of PuMP, one of, if not the most deliberate and practical approaches to performance measurement.

Thank you so very much for joining me today, for this launch of my new book, *Prove It!*

You're busy, and we all are, and getting our priorities right is the way we can stay sane in a world of too much to do. I hope you being here with me today means that improving organisational performance is one of your big priorities.

I'm so glad you're here.

If what we know now was enough, our organisations and companies

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would already have high-performance cultures:

- The direction would be clear as crystal to everyone.
- Everyone would feel like they personally own the organisation's purpose and direction.
- Everyone would know what matters most to improve.
- Targets – the right targets – would be achieved often.
- Improvement initiatives would work; they'd have big ROIs.
- And there'd be enough evidence to prove it.

But this isn't the norm, is it?

And least, it's not what I see in just about every organisation I've worked with over the last 20 years.

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What I've seen and heard and experienced over the last 20 years was the inspiration for writing Prove It! And it's just been released in Australia, this month. And next month will be released internationally.

I wrote Prove It! because of the biggest struggle my clients have with organisational performance, after they've adopted PuMP: and that's how to lead it from the top.

PuMP has been very successful in helping people get the best measures they've ever had, and improve performance with those measures. But the success people have with PuMP has been limited by what their leaders believe and do about performance measurement. When their progress has been hampered, the most common reason they give me is that leaders aren't supporting it.

You can make a difference with good measurement practice without

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leadership support, but it takes a long time and it's a hard road. But when leaders really get the power of measurement in transforming organisational performance, it's all systems go! What it takes for leaders to really get the power of measurement, is what Prove It! is all about.

And measurement is what I've been about, for my whole career...

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more about Stacey... staceybarr.com



- Performance measure specialist
- Creator of PuMP
- Author of:
 - *Practical Performance Measurement*
 - *Prove It!*

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I'm passionate about evidence, evidence that helps us learn how to make the biggest impact we can, and helps us celebrate the impact we have.

That's why my work specialises in organisational performance measurement and its role in evidence-based leadership. My baby is PuMP, which is a logical and practical measurement methodology designed to directly solve the biggest struggles people tell me they have with measuring performance. And building from PuMP, I help leaders to make their strategy measurable, easier to cascade, and much more likely to become reality.

Good performance measurement is a catalyst for building a culture of high-performance, that achieves the organisation's goals sooner and with less effort. This is why we measure and want to make evidence-based decisions: to reach our goals, reach them sooner, and reach

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them more easily.

Now, truth is, I've never been a senior leader in an organisation. So I'll never pretend that I can show leaders *HOW* to lead. But I've had a perspective that most leaders never get the chance to have: to see, from further back, the patterns in behaviour that are associated with organisational success and failure, by working with and observing hundreds of leaders, over more than 20 years.

I can show leaders *WHAT* to lead, to lead their organisation to measurable high performance.

And this is what we'll explore together now...

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our purpose now...

- **The cornerstone principle** of evidence-based leadership
- **The six habits** to lead high-performance
- **The three mindsets** for evidence-based leadership that are the most important to establish first

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Too many leaders are stuck in out-dated ways of creating a culture that drives organisational success. They focus too much on accountability, on reward and recognition, on employee performance management.

They don't focus nearly enough on ownership, collaboration, and measurement as a tool for people to learn and improve business processes. Leaders need a new framework for leading organisational success. And that framework is evidence-based leadership.

To explore this framework, we'll discuss these three things:

- The cornerstone principle of evidence-based leadership
- The six habits leaders and their organisation's must master to lead high-performance
- The three mindsets for evidence-based leadership that are the most important to establish first

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But let me warn you: evidence-based leadership is not a quick fix. It can't be delegated.

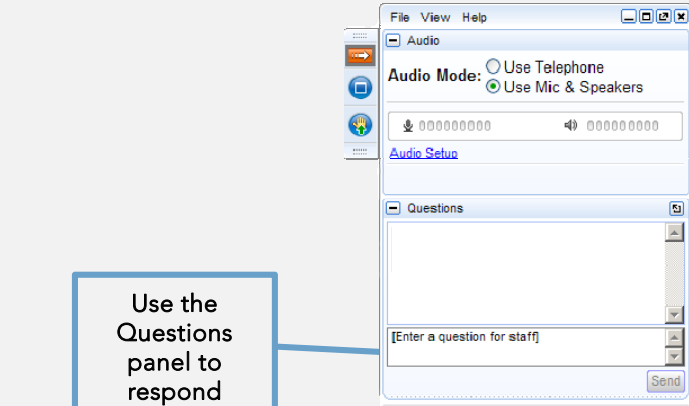
And I don't know if I've nailed the best framework yet, because not enough leaders are practicing it, to find out what works and what doesn't. It takes time to master evidence-based leadership – to unlearn those out-dated ways, and practice new ways that work, but that are awkward at first.

So... I'm hammering on about evidence-based leadership... but what does it mean to you?

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What does evidence-based leadership mean to you?



Use the Questions panel to respond

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What are your thoughts about what evidence-based leadership means to you?

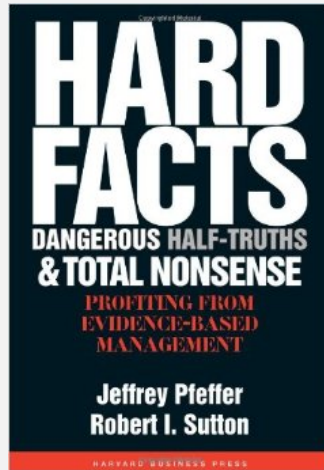
- What does it look like?
- What does it sound like?
- What do evidence-based leaders talk about?
- What do evidence-based leaders do with their time?

Almost any organisation can prove that it does things. It can prove that it hires people, that those people carry out different tasks, and that money is earned and spent. But what many organisations cannot prove is the most important thing: whether they are fulfilling their purpose or not.

High-performance organisations don't just do stuff. They have an impact — ideally, the impact they exist to make. And they can prove how much impact they create. This is evidence-based leadership.

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"If doctors practiced medicine the way many companies practice management, there would be far more sick and dead patients, and many more doctors would be in jail."

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One of the inspirations for writing *Prove It!* comes from authors Jeffrey Pfeffer & Robert I. Sutton.

"If doctors practiced medicine the way many companies practice management, there would be far more sick and dead patients, and many more doctors would be in jail."

What this means to me is we have untold amounts of waste of in organisations, because we're not making decisions based on the best available evidence. We've all seen it. We've seen decisions made on hearsay, gut feel, opinion, unreliable data, and guessing.

What we want is for our decisions to have a high chance of success. We want our decisions to create the results we intend. And evidence is essential to making this possible. Evidence-based decisions have many times higher success than guesses.

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Evidence is the central word in my work, and certainly evidence-based leadership is the central theme in my book, *Prove It!*

To me, evidence-based leadership is more than evidence-based management or fact-based decision making. It's not about what a single leader or person does for each decision they make.

It's about what the leadership team does, routinely, to set, monitor and execute their strategic decisions. And it's how they inspire the whole organisation to follow suit.

When a leadership team practices evidence-based leadership, some of the struggles they've never figured out how to fix get fixed.

- When they create and share a corporate direction or strategy, everyone truly understands it and can relate to it.
- They can more easily get the rest of the organisation focusing on what their contribution to the strategy is. And get them owning it.
- Measuring performance becoming easier and meaningful for everyone, and it gives them leverage to achieve the strategic goals – and the organisation's purpose – quicker and with less effort.

This last point, about measurement, has much more weight in a high-performance culture than many people assume...

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To prove it, we have to measure it. To prove that something worked, that the result we intended has become reality, we have to measure it.

What our gut says, and what 'they' say, is not proof. A finished improvement project or change initiative or capital investment or new product line is not proof.

For proof we need objective measures of the results that these investments were supposed to improve.

Measuring performance is like gravity. It pulls our attention and action toward a centre, toward the most important things we should focus on and improve. Like an eagle circling the sky, seeing her prey, assessing how far away it is, lining up the most direct path toward it. And gravity pulls her to it.

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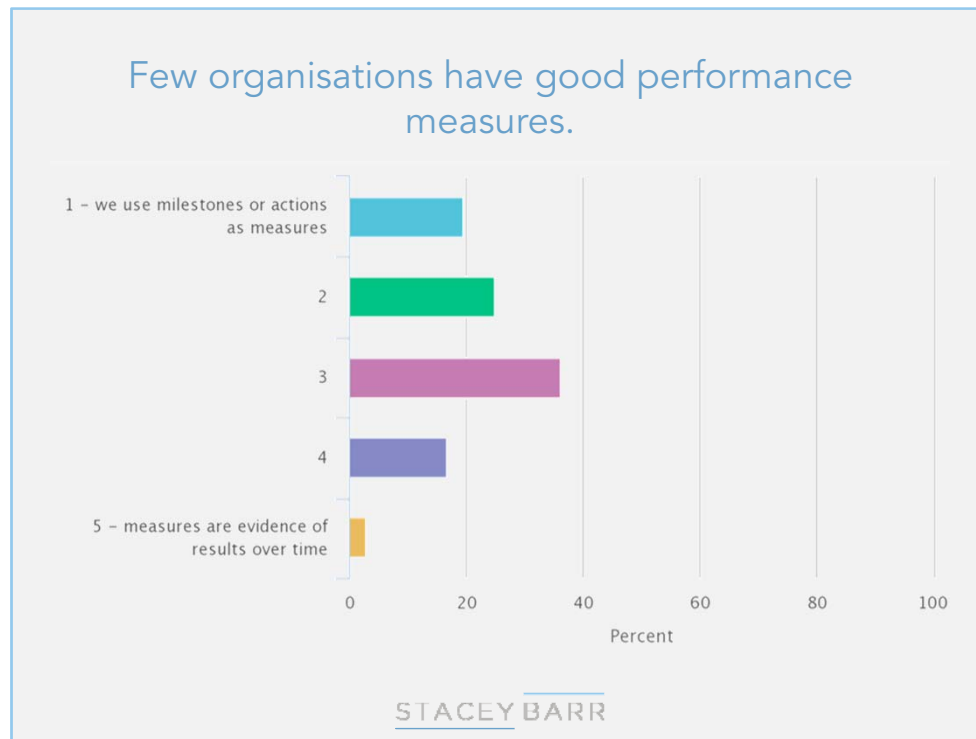
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Measuring performance well is the gravity that pulls our attention and action toward the purpose and strategy for our organisation.

But measurement is done poorly in the vast majority of organisations.

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Each year I run a free webinar series, called the PuMP Primer. It's a light introduction to the PuMP approach for measuring performance. And one of the questions I ask participants to respond to is about the quality of their measures.

Poor measurement practice is that milestones or actions are mistaken for measures. Good measurement practice is that measures provide direct evidence of results and they can be tracked over time. The responses here from an audience of 60 people show just how few have good measures.

If we want high-performing organisations, that can achieve their purpose and strategic goals convincingly, our measurement practice has to dramatically improve.

Something you can do immediately is to list all the strategic

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performance measures – or KPIs, whatever you call them – and assess how many of them truly are evidence of results over time. If the proportion is low, then measurement is not giving you much gravity toward your goals.

While measurement might be a cornerstone of evidence-based leadership, it only has power when a few other pieces are properly meshed with it...

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There are three leadership habits of high performance that evidence-based leaders master. Leaders personally practise them, and by practising them routinely, they become role models for their organisations.

These habits – and we'll dive into each of them shortly – are called:

- Direction, or the organisation's strategy.
- Evidence, or the measures used to monitor the strategy.
- Execution, or the choice of change initiatives to achieve the strategy.

Let's look a bit more closely at these first three habits...

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Direction is about articulating a well-designed strategy that is results-oriented, understandable to everyone, and ruthlessly prioritised.

When our strategy is results-oriented, easy to understand and focused, it becomes measurable. Because when it's measurable, it's clear what evidence we need, to prove that it's really happening. No guessing, or hoping, or assuming. We can know.

And a measurable strategy should be measured!

Naturally then, the next leadership habit is *Evidence*.

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Evidence is about setting meaningful performance measures for each strategic goal that are quantitative, aligned to what matters and focused on improvement.

The idea is to measure results. And measure the results that are a priority in the current strategy, and that contribute to fulfilling the organisation's purpose. We don't want trivial and irrelevant measures that no-one finds useful. Even if we have the data for them, or have always measured them.

Good measures make a strategy tangible, recognisable and observable.

And that will make it much easier to practise the next leadership habit of *Execution*.

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Execution is about implementing the corporate strategy and achieving the strategic goals using the leverage found in the continuous improvement of business processes.

We need to cascade corporate goals into process goals, and cascade corporate measures into process measures. When we do this, it's far easier to find the leverage that defines high-performance organisations, and the leverage that makes stretch targets reachable. We don't want to spend squillions of dollars on change initiatives that cost more than the benefits they return.

Evidence-based leaders practise these three habits, but remember - they also inspire high-performance habits organisation wide...

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And there are three organisational habits of high performance, that everyone will practice and master:

- Decision, or people taking ownership of their contribution to the strategy.
- Action, or the implementation of change initiatives to achieve the strategy.
- Learning, or not fearing failure.

Let's look a bit more closely at these three organisational habits...

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Decision is about helping people take ownership of the results that matter by role-modelling ownership, getting their buy-in and giving them a clear line of sight to the corporate strategy.

Decision in evidence-based leadership is about everyone owning their contribution to the organisation's purpose and direction. They know what their goals and measures need to be, in order for the strategic goals to be achieved. And they know how to measure their goals, so they can prove they're making a difference. This is much better than the usual cynicism and excuses people have about strategy.

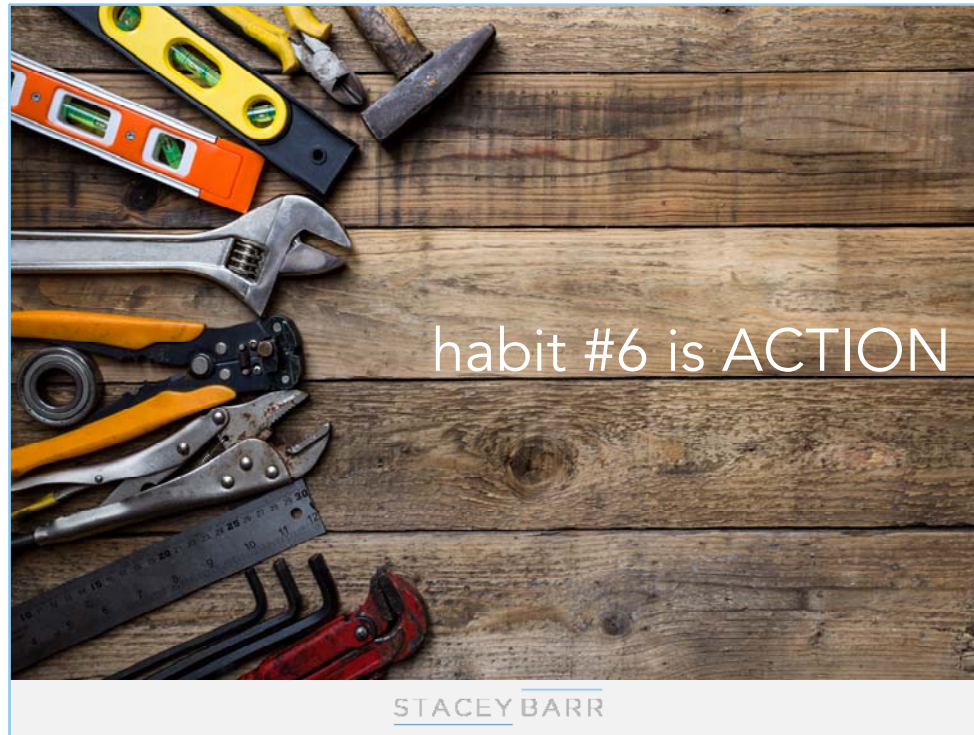
When people have the Direction from leaders, and the know-how and authority to choose the improvements they will focus on to contribute to the organisation's success, they're ready to make it happen.

They're ready for the next organisational habit of *Action*.

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Action is about helping people get the right things done to achieve the results that matter, through a focus on causal analysis, practicality and collaboration.

A major component of understanding this habit of Action is targets. Targets give performance improvement a direction and a state in the distance to reach for. And so targets, when they're designed and chosen well and set in the context of continuous performance improvement, give Action a very deliberate focus: it's the focus to close performance gaps. It's not about reaching milestones and completing projects. It's about making performance better.

But we rarely get improvement right the first time around. We make mistakes, we sometimes fail, and we need to get over it.

This is why there is one more habit of evidence-based leadership...

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Learning is about helping people work on the business as a normal part of their work, by adopting an experimental mindset, learning from failure and iterating to success.

One of my all-time favourite books is *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig. It's a philosophy book more than a story. And I love this quote from it:

"If a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. If a revolution destroys a government, but the systematic patterns of thought that produced that government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves ..."

If we fix our organisational performance problems with the same level of thinking that created them, the problems will simply resurface later.

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And so this final habit of Learning must be mastered, before an organisation can truly improve.

And when an organisation can truly improve, it has a bigger impact...

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These 6 habits, when we practice them routinely and ultimately master them, are the way to having true IMPACT. Can you see how much these are about strategy and culture, and how measurement pulls it together?

Building culture and setting strategic direction are the two most important drivers for business success. And measuring the right things is the key to proving business success. Every good leader knows this.

But what do leadership courses actually teach? No matter who I speak with, they say basically the same thing: they never learned how to set a measurable strategic direction the people will buy into, nor how to create a high-performance culture.

Consequently, you may not find many clues in your organisation of the mastery of these habits.

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What clues would you look for, to find out if these habits are practised in your organisation, or not?

Evidence-based leadership isn't mastered overnight. It takes time, and patience, and dedication. But great things start happening very quickly, even in the very early days of practicing some of these habits.

Habits often start with mindsets, rather than behaviours. And there are a few mindsets that are particularly useful to start with...

3 mindsets to establish first.

Results, not actions.

No weasel words.

Be ruthless.

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The first mindset to start with is “Results, not actions”.

It means writing strategic goals that are results-oriented, not action-oriented. Goals should describe the outcome we want. Not the actions we want to take. Only after we know the outcome can we know what actions are worth doing. And only after we know the outcome can we know the right things to measure.

The second mindset to start with is called “No weasel words”.

But I’m already thinking of wording this one as “Clearly, not weasely”. If you can clearly articulate the strategic goals in language everyone will understand, they’ll get it. We don’t write strategic goals for any other purpose than to have people understand them so they can help achieve them. People can’t buy into what they don’t understand.

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And the third mindset to start with is “Be ruthless”.

Ruthlessly prioritising is so important when we set strategy. Too often, after helping executive teams to de-weasel their goals, we discover that they have many times more goals. That’s because their original goals were so broad, that they in fact meant several different outcomes or results. The strategic goals must focus on performance results that matter most, right now. The more goals you have, the fewer you’ll achieve.

These are the three mindsets of Direction, the first leadership habit. And I think they’re a great place to start, because they set the right context for measurement.

Language impacts the meaningfulness of numbers. Sometimes to me it feels like no-one seems to realise this connection. But the clearer we are with our intentions – our goals, our results, outcomes, priorities, objectives – the better we can recognise them when they’re happening, the better we can improve our actions if they’re not happening, and the better we can prove it when they’re achieved.

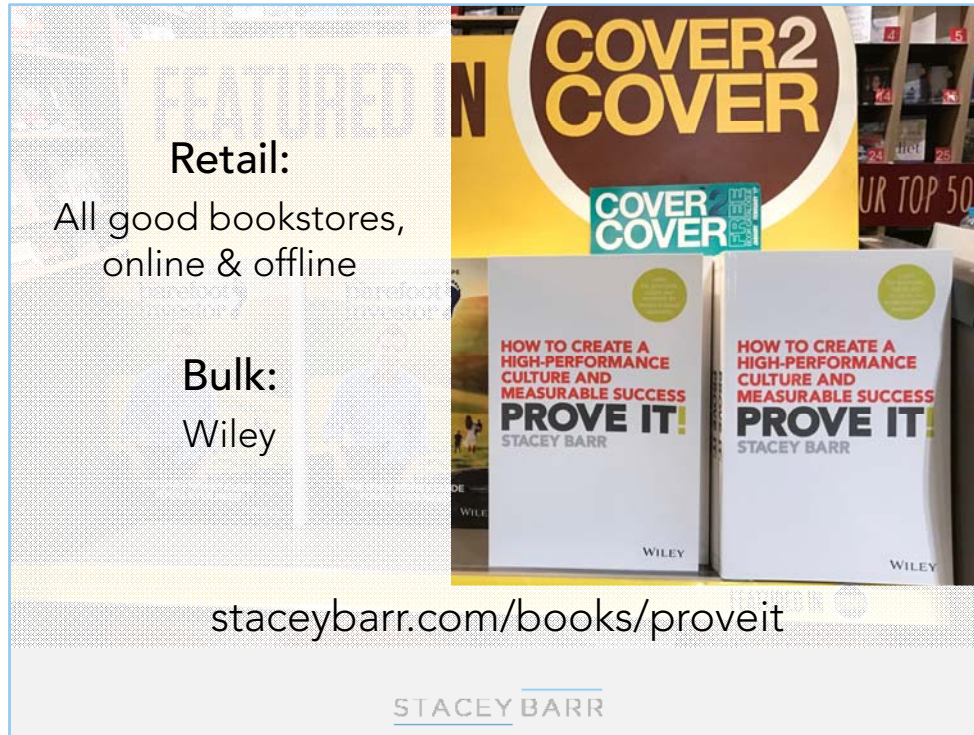
Try this:

1. Pick one goal in your organisation.
2. Check if it’s a result. If it is an action, figure out what the result is (and that’s your real goal).
3. Look for weasel words. If you find any, translate them into plain, simple language that anyone could understand.

Then see how much more measurable it is. And, how much easier you can help others understand it, and see their impact on it.

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All good bookstores,
online & offline

Bulk:
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The great thing about books is they are a very inexpensive way to learn. Particularly books like the kind I prefer to write, which have a strong bias toward practicality.

When you take on the ideas from *Prove It!*, you will:

1. Execute your strategy and save hours of misunderstanding and wasted effort heading in the wrong direction or spinning wheels doing nothing
2. Get a higher return on investment from your change initiatives
3. Prove the real impact you're creating to yourself, and to all your stakeholders, and likely get even more support from them

Prove It! is for...

- Leaders who are passionate about their organisation's purpose and truly want to see it excel
- Strategy & performance professionals who are courageous enough

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to challenge their leaders to rethink the way to a high-performance culture, through measurement

- Soon-to-be leaders, who want to quickly prepare themselves for taking full responsibility for organisational performance, and demonstrate great results quickly

But *Prove It!* will not resonate with you if...

- You want to continue to measure people
- You want a quick fix
- You want to prove something that isn't really happening

You can grab a copy of *Prove It!* in all good bookstores, online and offline. In both paperback and ebook.

And if you want bulk orders – to give a copy to all your senior leaders and managers, or to your customers – you can download the order form, from the book's webpage, staceybarr.com/books/proveit

What do you really want for your organisation's performance? How badly do you want it? If you believe it really can be better than it is, then *Prove It!* is a practical path to follow. And it works.

Thanks so much for sharing this launch of *Prove It!* with me. I wish you all the best for your journey to a high-performance culture and organisational excellence, and I hope I can help along the way.

This is Stacey Barr, signing off.