



LEE FOSTER

# Rethink Performance

*A Manifesto for Leaders*

Who Want Performance That Lasts

*Part 1 - Why Trust Drives Performance*

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A Manifesto for Leaders

*Who want performance that lasts*

Part 1 – Why Trust Drives Performance

*By Lee Foster*

*“Innovation moves at the speed of trust.”*

— Julia Spicer OAM

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# Introduction

*Rethink Performance* is the first part of a six-part series exploring how trust shapes the conditions in which performance succeeds or fails.

This opening volume introduces the thinking behind the **InnoWise® framework**. It explains why traditional performance levers, such as strategy, process, and measurement, often struggle to produce sustained results on their own.

Across organisations and communities, capable people frequently find themselves working within systems where knowledge does not flow easily, decisions stall, and momentum fades. This book proposes that these challenges are not simply operational problems but signals of deeper structural conditions.

The series explores those conditions and how leaders can shape them more intentionally. The six parts of the series follow a progression from understanding the problem to applying a practical system for change, outlined as follows:

## **Part 1 – Why Trust Drives Performance**

Explores why trust is a critical structural condition of performance and how it influences knowledge flow, decision-making, and organisational momentum.

## **Part 2 – The How: The Four Phases of the InnoWise® Framework**

Introduces the InnoWise® framework and explains how its four phases — Form, Create, Adopt, and Critique — help teams navigate complexity and bring ideas to life.

## **Part 3 – InnoWise® in Action**

Examines how the framework operates in real organisational contexts, demonstrating how trust, knowledge, and energy shape outcomes in practice.

## **Part 4 – Measure & Manage Trust, Knowledge, Energy**

Presents the practical tools that support the framework, including diagnostic questions, facilitation methods, and approaches for observing trust dynamics within teams.

## **Part 5 – Scaling and Embedding InnoWise®**

Explores how organisations can embed the approach more broadly, building capability so that trust, knowledge, and energy are managed intentionally across projects and systems.

## **Part 6 – Leading with Trust**

Reflects on the leadership shift required to sustain performance in complex environments and how leaders can shape the conditions that allow people and ideas to thrive.

This work is being released progressively by design. Publishing the series in parts allows the ideas to evolve through real-world application and reader feedback as the thinking continues to develop.

The ambition of this series is simple: to help leaders rethink how performance emerges so organisations and communities can build systems capable of delivering better outcomes for the future.

## Prologue

Performance is not simply the result of strategy, capability, or effort. It is the outcome of the conditions in which people work. Even though, strategies may be clear, budgets are approved and the teams are capable and committed — initiatives stall, transformations underdeliver and momentum fades.

Across organisations and communities, leaders often search for explanations in the wrong places: for example, they do more planning, reporting, process changes and then apply more pressure. However, performance rarely fails for the reasons we typically measure. Part 1, of this book explores why.

This book is written for people responsible for outcomes — those leading, delivering, or participating in initiatives where performance matters. In many organisations and communities today, traditional performance levers are no longer sufficient. Strategies are clearer, tools are more sophisticated, and data is more abundant than ever. Yet despite these advantages, initiatives struggle to sustain progress. The challenge is not usually a lack of capability. It is a lack of visibility into the conditions that determine whether capability can be translated into performance.

At the system level of *Rethink Performance*, sits the InnoWise® framework. This framework, which is based on many years of academic level research, brings together three interdependent drivers of performance: trust, knowledge, and energy. These forces shape how decisions are made, how information moves, and whether effort compounds into meaningful progress.

At the centre of this framework sits the Trust Engine™. The Trust Engine is the mechanism that determines how effectively knowledge flows, how energy is sustained, and how people respond to uncertainty and pressure. It operates within every team and organisation or community, whether it is acknowledged or not.

When the Trust Engine is healthy, insight moves across boundaries, confidence grows, and effort compounds into performance. When it begins to degrade, familiar symptoms emerge: stalled decisions, defensive behaviour, rework, change fatigue, and rising delivery risk — often long before formal indicators register a problem.

As you read, you may recognise situations where outcomes were shaped less by technical constraints and more by how information moved, how decisions were experienced, or how people responded to uncertainty. These are not isolated issues — they are signals from the ‘Trust Engine’.

The InnoWise® framework, supported by tools such as the Trust Analyser™ and the Knowledge Canvas™, was developed to make these dynamics visible and thus, manageable. The framework draws on applied research, engineering practice, and years of facilitation across both public and private sector environments. Its purpose is not to replace technical or commercial discipline, but to complement it. The framework provides a structured way to observe, discuss, and manage trust, knowledge, and energy across the lifecycle of work — helping leaders understand the conditions in which performance compounds rather than stalls.

To be clear, the InnoWise® framework does not offer certainty. It offers awareness, alignment, and capability. It provides a framework that helps leaders navigate complexity and shape the conditions in which performance can truly last.

This book invites you to slow down just enough to notice those signals. Doing so often allows organisations to move faster where it matters most. Whether you are leading, delivering, advising, or participating in change, this book is intended as a practical companion. A guide that helps establish a shared language, support better conversations, and enable stronger decisions, earlier.

If this work prompts reflection, questions, or even disagreement, that is intentional. Rethinking how we manage performance requires the challenging of assumptions about how results are created.

The ideas explored in this book invite leaders to move beyond traditional performance levers and instead focus on the health of the systems in which people work. When those conditions are understood and shaped deliberately, performance becomes not just achievable, but sustainable.

## Part 1 – Why Trust Drives Performance

### *Trust shapes the conditions that determine whether performance lasts*

Performance does not fail for the reasons managers would normally measure. We can tick all the boxes:

- ✓ Strategies are clear
- ✓ Budgets are approved, and
- ✓ Teams are capable

Yet initiatives stall and transformations underdeliver. Projects overrun and momentum fades.

We diagnose the symptoms: scope creep, resistance to change, communication breakdown. However, do we examine the structural conditions beneath them? This book argues that performance is not simply a matter of execution. It is a function of trust:

*Trust determines whether knowledge flows or fragment  
Whether energy compounds or dissipates, and  
Whether performance lasts — or quietly erodes.*

This first part of the book explores those conditions. It begins by examining the broader performance challenge facing many organisations today. It then explores trust as a structural condition of performance, showing how trust influences the way knowledge flows, decisions are made, and effort is sustained within teams and systems.

From there, the chapters examine two additional system conditions that shape performance:

- Knowledge, which determines whether experience is captured, shared, and built upon rather than lost, and
- Energy, which determines whether effort compounds into momentum or dissipates into fatigue.

Part 1 concludes by examining the shift leaders must make if they are to move beyond managing performance through control alone and instead shape the conditions that allow performance to last.