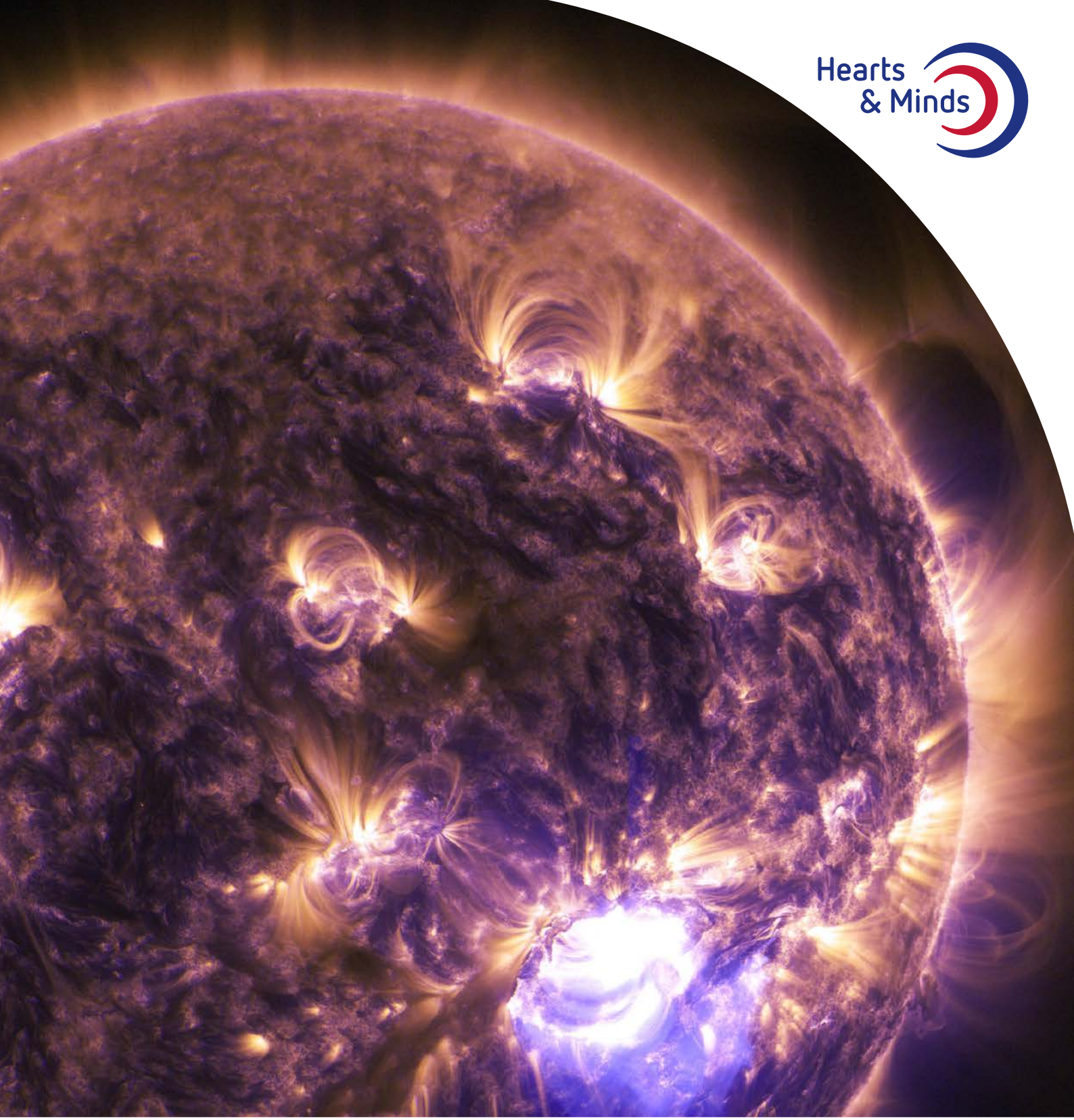


Hearts & Minds

Understanding your energy culture

energy institute

1.0 Introduction

A solidly implemented energy management system is an essential basis for good energy performance. However, outstanding performance and continuous improvement will only be achieved when there is a culture in which the elements of the system can flourish.

This booklet helps you to develop an understanding of the energy culture in your organisation.

Using it in meetings and workshops will give you a clear view of the current energy culture and help you see what better looks like.

1.1 Energy management systems

An energy management system is a system of rules, policies, and processes for monitoring and managing energy usage and cost, and/or carbon (and other greenhouse gas) emissions. Typically, this involves:

- an energy policy;
- a strategy for its delivery;
- baseline measurements to benchmark energy usage;
- performance indicators to monitor performance against the plan;
- targets to drive improvement;
- activities to improve energy usage;
- energy audits and surveys to assess how well the management system is implemented, and
- ways to engage the workforce.

The implementation of an energy management system can be assessed in various ways including audits and self assessment questionnaires. However, whilst the system can be implemented without workforce buy-in, having a good energy culture is neccessary for it to be effective.

1.2 Energy culture

Culture can be defined as 'the way we do things around here'.

Energy culture is what we do to manage energy use and carbon emissions. It is not just about what we *should* do (according to the management system), but whether we do it, what we think about it, and whether we go beyond the management system and try to improve upon it.

In a strong culture everyone:

- demonstrates energy management as a value;
- is always alert to ways to save energy or reduce carbon emissions;
- fully understands what they should do;
- is open to new ideas, and
- wants to make a difference and believes their behaviours make a difference for others.

In particular, managers:

- do not just manage, but show genuine leadership, and
- see others' perceptions and behaviour as a reflection of their own leadership.

1.3 Culture assessment

Culture can be divided into five levels of development, from 'Pathological' to 'Generative', as shown in figure 1. Each level describes how organisations typically behave. In section 2.0 (Organisational characteristics) typical descriptions are given for 14 'dimensions' (i.e. key energy management considerations). During an *Understanding your energy culture* workshop, these can be used to identify the current culture level of your organisation for each of the dimensions, and to begin to consider ways to improve.

1.4 Setting the scene

Prepare the workshop participants by providing information on the topic that is going to be covered. For example, consider whether all participants know what energy management is, or whether they have different interpretations of what it involves. For example:

- Section 2.0 (Organisational characteristics) sometimes refers to energy use, cost and carbon reduction, but depending on the nature of the organisation's business, they may only be interested in some of these aspects.
- Should they consider aspects *directly* and *indirectly* influenced by the organisation?
- Bear in mind that the size of the organisation may influence how regulations are applied and what this means for energy management.
- Consider not only electricity consumption, but also less obvious aspects such as transport, fuel, and procured goods and services.

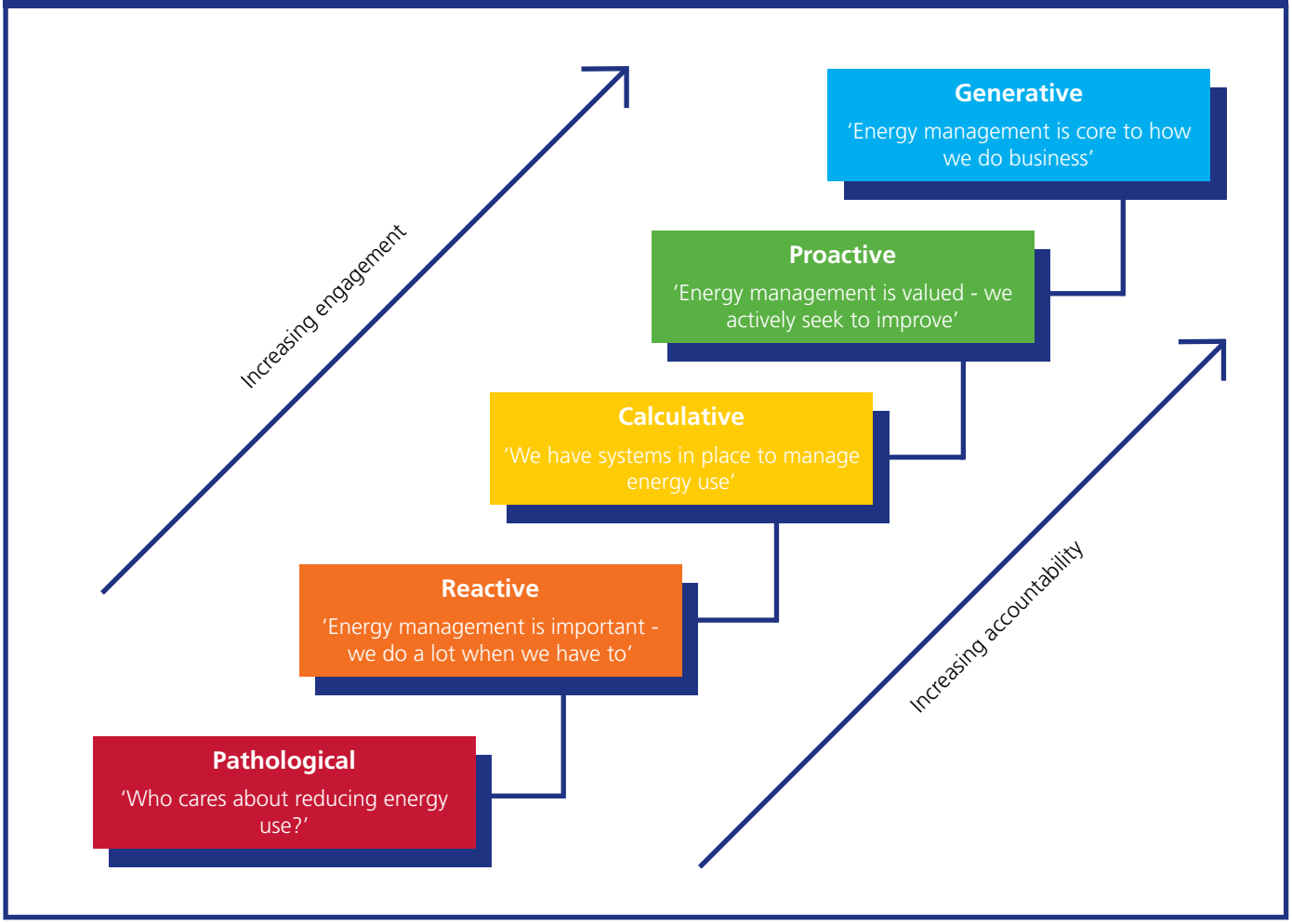
Consider delivering a short presentation at the beginning of the workshop or providing pre-read material. The Energy Institute provides a free booklet that may be useful: *Energy Essentials: A guide to energy management*, available at http://publishing.energyinst.org

1.5 Next steps

The purpose of this workshop is to raise awareness of energy culture, provoke a conversation about the level of the energy culture in your organisation, and identify specific issues that can then be addressed directly to improve that culture.

The Energy Institute's Hearts and Minds *Making change last* tool can be used to plan and support culture change by ensuring people's buy-in and engagement with the improvement actions.

Figure 1: The energy culture ladder



Workshop: Step-by-step instructions

1. Set up a workshop with 10-20 people from similar occupational levels. If participants have different levels of knowledge about energy management, consider how this might affect the discussions and how much scene setting will be required. You will need two-three hours to complete this workshop.
2. Provide everyone with a copy of this booklet (these can be reused).
3. Introduce the concept of energy culture and the culture ladder. Describe the aims of the workshop and explain that we want to understand and improve the culture.
4. Set the scene (see 1.4): briefly discuss with participants what energy management means to them, in the context of their work or business (e.g. electicity use, carbon emissions, transport, logistics, etc.).
5. Ask each person to do the following:
    6. Individually, carefully read the descriptions for each of the 14 dimensions from the organisational characteristics (2.0).
    7. Thinking about your own part of the organisation and your own experiences, for each dimension, select **one** description that most closely matches your experience of how the organisation 'does things around here'.
    8. Skip a question if you know nothing about that dimension (but try to answer as many as you can).
    9. The descriptions are generic and so will not perfectly match your experience. If you cannot decide between two descriptions, pick the one that is lower on the culture ladder.
    10. Mark your choices on the score sheet and hand this to the workshop facilitator when done.
11. As facilitator, input the results for each person into the provided spreadsheet (downloadable from http://heartsandminds.energyinst.org).
12. Present the results to the group and ask: Where did you place yourselves, and why?
13. Select those dimensions where most people chose proactive or generative. These are the things we do well - what can we learn from these? (Keep this brief)
14. Select those dimensions where most people chose pathological or reactive. These are things we most need to improve. Bearing in mind that there will probably only be time to discuss three or four dimensions, ask the group to share experiences and examples of how these things are typically done in the organisation (people may not agree with each other!). Make a record of the discussion.
15. Decide as a group which dimensions to prioritise for improvement and to identify potential specific actions that could be taken to improve energy management in the organisation.

Understanding your energy culture

Understanding your energy culture is a workshop-based tool to assess your organisation against the energy culture ladder. The discussions that this will create are the first step towards helping put in place a plan to improve the culture.

Adapted from the world-renowned *Understanding your culture* tool, *Understanding your energy culture* transfers the learning that has been applied to improve safety culture to improving energy management.

Put simply, it is not enough to have an energy management system in place if people are not interested in using and improving it. That interest manifests itself in the energy culture - the 'way we do energy management around here'.

The first step to improving the culture is to recognise your own culture and to see what better culture looks like.

How was this tool developed?

This tool is based upon the scientific research behind the tried-and-tested *Understanding your culture* method. Additional research was carried out in 2015, 2016 and 2017 with academics, government, leading energy management professionals and prospective users of the tool.

Funding partners

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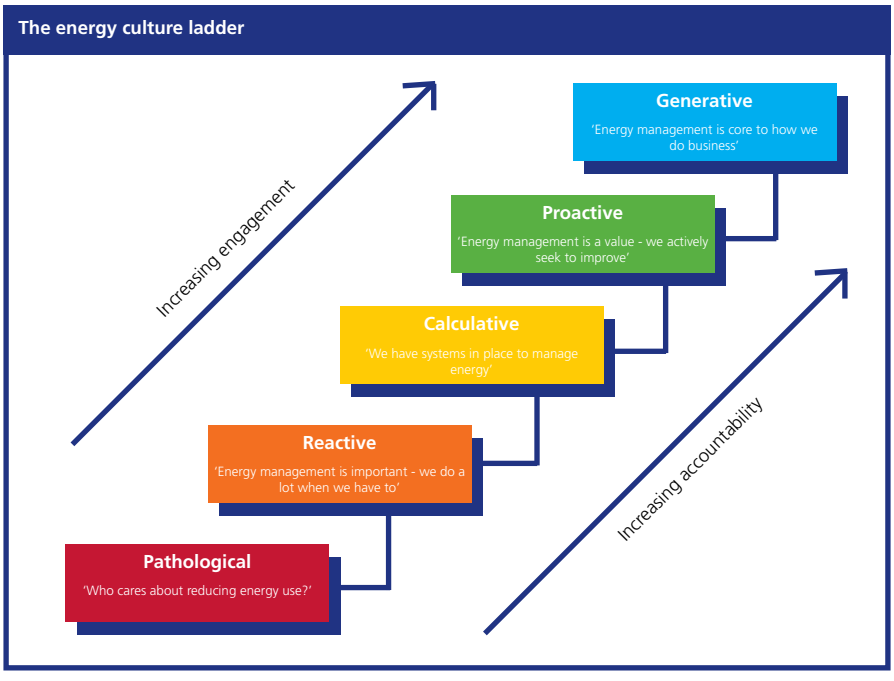
The following icons are used to help you find your way around this tool:



For more information please visit:
www.energyinst.org/heartsandminds

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