

AQai® Certified Partner Engagement — Delivered by Andrew Southwood, FreshXpressions

INDUSTRY

Pharmaceuticals

LOCATION

Canada

ORGANISATION SIZE

40,000+ employees | US\$10bn+ revenue

67%

reduction in sick days in 2024

12%

staff turnover rate achieved in 2024

3-in-5

employees actively engaged in meetings (up from 1-in-5)

40K+

employee multinational organisation

S SITUATION *Who is the client? What were they facing?*

A Compliance & Quality Control Department within a large global pharmaceutical organisation was experiencing a significant and escalating workforce crisis — one that threatened to undermine the successful launch of several high-potential products with material implications for the company’s bottom line. Staff turnover was rising, stress and anxiety levels were elevated, and critical institutional knowledge was concentrated in a small group of experienced employees, most approaching 50 years of age, while the remainder of the team had been with the organisation for less than ten years. A further organisational restructure had left employees feeling disconnected from leadership, with little clarity on the reasons behind the change.

I IMPLICATION *Why did it matter strategically?*

With several high-potential product launches imminent, the organisation could not afford to lose its most experienced Compliance & Quality Control staff. Left unaddressed, the knowledge concentration risk alone had the potential to delay or compromise launches worth millions in future revenue — while compounding costs from attrition, retraining, and declining team performance continued to mount invisibly in the background.

A APPROACH *What was deployed, and what made it different?*

AQ® Certified Partner Andrew Southwood of FreshXpressions deployed AQme individual assessments across the department, mapping adaptability through AQai’s ACE model — Ability, Character, and Environment. AQteam data was layered in to surface group-level patterns, and findings were validated through employee interviews. This diagnostic approach uncovered a critical insight:

employees demonstrated strong individual capability, but low environmental support was generating burnout risk and active disengagement.

ACE Domain	Dimensions Assessed	Organisational Focus
Ability	Resilience · Mindset · Mental Flexibility · Unlearning	Team performance, learning agility, adaptive capacity
Character	Hope · Emotional Range	Wellbeing, career wellness, stress & anxiety
Environment	Team Support · Company Support · Work Stress	Talent retention, engagement, psychological safety

Three targeted interventions followed: a Junior Management Training Programme to strengthen adaptive leadership and people management capability; a Wellbeing & Anxiety Reduction Initiative focused on resilience-building and stress management; and an Enhanced Senior Management Communication Plan to increase transparency and close the perceived leadership distance.

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RESULTS *What changed as a result?*

By the end of 2024, the department had delivered measurable results across every target area. Sick days declined by 67% and staff turnover fell to just 12% – significantly reducing the compounding costs of attrition, retraining, and lost productivity. Active participation in team meetings rose from 1-in-5 employees to 3-in-5, signalling a fundamental shift in psychological safety and team cohesion. A structured mentorship programme, introduced as part of the Junior Leadership Development Programme, began transferring critical institutional knowledge from senior employees to the next generation of talent – directly mitigating the knowledge concentration risk that had threatened the product launch timeline. Most significantly, retaining its experienced workforce enabled the organisation to deliver its planned product launches successfully and on schedule, realising millions in projected revenue. AQ® assessment is now embedded as a core tool within the organisation’s Skills-Based Organisational Strategy.

“Incorporating AQ into our Skills-Based Organisational Strategy has been a game-changer in how we create a great employment experience for our employees and management. What was once intangible is now readily available at a few clicks on the keyboard. I would recommend this powerful tool to all business managers.”

– PJ, Anonymised Pharma

About AQai®

AQai® is the world’s leading platform for measuring and developing adaptability. Backed by science and built for modern organisations, our assessments help leaders and teams understand, predict, and grow their capacity to adapt – so they can thrive in any environment.

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