

# TripleGoal Helps Joint Venture Companies Collaborate to Complete Transit Infrastructure On-Time

## NORTHWEST RAPID TRANSIT GROUP – INFRASTRUCTURE JV (CPB CONTRACTORS & JOHN HOLLAND GROUP):

The NRT – Infrastructure JV, a CPB Contractors and John Holland Group joint venture, was created to build transit infrastructure for the Sydney Metro Northwest (SMN) project, which included 13 railway stations, 36 km of track, 4 new buildings and more. In 2019, the A\$3.7 billion SMN project was completed on time, on budget and safely.

- 600 staff
- 10 offices/locations

### Challenges:

- Multiple, highly diverse teams
- Different goals, cultures, terminology (language)
- Focused on employee, department & company loyalty vs infrastructure success
- Poor communication

### Solution:

**TripleGoal's Vertical Growth and Accountable Conversations Leadership Programs**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2015, NRT-IJV, a joint venture between CPB Contractors and John Holland, turned to TripleGoal's leadership and culture frameworks and consulting to create a collaborative culture and bring them together as one team with a common goal.

For the first time, the companies offered employees behavioural and leadership training in addition to the technical training they'd come to expect. Leaders and employees recognized that aggression, abrasiveness and triangulation were counterproductive although they were common in their organizations and industry.

Accountable Conversations was used to teach feedback, coaching, mediation, conflict resolution, team building, and communication skills. Employees were open to improving their interpersonal and communications skills because they realized it would benefit them professionally and personally.

The leadership training and Accountable Conversations helped NRT-IJV complete the project on time and maintain a stable 70 to 80% retention rate on a challenging, complex project in a competitive environment.

## Results:

- Delivered the A\$2.3 billion joint venture scope to what was regarded as a first in Australia for a joint venture project at this scale: on-time, on-budget, and safe delivery.
- Maintained above 80% retention in a complex, high-pressure project environment and highly competitive labour market.
- Achieved an 85% favourable score on senior leaders living the organisation's values during one of the project's toughest phases.
- Sustained top-tier engagement, with survey results remaining in the "A" category despite peak project pressure.
- All the senior leaders on the project went on to bigger positions, including executive team positions. It was career defining for many.

## CASE STUDY

CPB Contractors and John Holland contracted TripleGoal to help them define their collective “green zone” values, and to create culture of common language and framework around accountability, collaboration, trust and psychological safety so that counterproductive red zone behaviours were addressed in a sustainable and constructive process. This was essential for NRT-IJV to keep the massive Sydney Metro Northwest infrastructure project on schedule.

“With two groups from different organisations and different backgrounds, we had to get everyone aligned around working together to deliver the entire SMN infrastructure project on time not just our respective scope and components,” says Alice McMillan, senior HR advisor in 2015, now head of Organisational Development for all of CIMIC (the parent company of CPB). “We were heavily reliant on one another to achieve our goals.”

CPB knew they could rely on TripleGoal to build the NRT-IJV’s one-team culture based on their previous experience with TripleGoal’s training and development programs. To complete the infrastructure project on time, leaders had to manage the NRT-IJV team as a single unit rather than operate their CPB or John Holland teams and departments as separate, independent entities. As importantly, leaders and employees had to be accountable and loyal to the NRT-IJV not CPB and John Holland, their original employers.

“When people were onboarded to the project, we linked our culture back to what we were trying to achieve in all of our training and conversations,” says Alice.

## TOP-DOWN TRAINING FOR SUCCESS

Leaders have to take the initiative and let employees see them behaving differently before they can ask their teams to replace their old behaviours with new habits. Self-awareness and the ability to acknowledge negative behaviour is the first step toward replacing that bad habit with more positive actions. In time, leaders, and then employees learned to stop, think and reflect before they reacted from the red zone.

“The training and development has to start at the top and be top-down to be effective,” says Alice.

Leaders have to hold themselves 100% accountable for their attitudes and behaviours and expect 100% accountability from their teams and direct reports. That’s 200% accountability. That is one of TripleGoal’s core concepts and it became a core value for the project.

## TECHNICAL VERSUS SOFT-SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Leaders’ and employees’ behaviour, capabilities and skills rather than their company affiliation earned them a place on the NRT-IJV team. As part of the joint venture, they had the unique opportunity to work on their leadership behaviour, which were critical on this complex, time-sensitive project.

Industry-wide, organisations like CPB and John Holland consistently offer technical tools and skills-based training. However, leadership behaviour, team behaviour, communication and conflict resolution development are rare even though they address classic, counter-productive red zone behaviors such as protecting patches, image management, getting defensive and blaming others, which account for a 39% loss in productivity according to our extensive research.



**“Employees’ response to the training, development and coaching were generally positive because we were investing in them as people not just as workers,” says Alice. “TripleGoal also showed people how the interpersonal skills could be used for personal as well as professional development. Everything they learned could be used at home to have better outcomes and conversations with their spouses, children and other loved ones.”**

NRT-IJV and TripleGoal worked together to customise a multi-module leadership development program that would roll out over 12 months. It was designed to address issues that were as common at the NRT-IJV as they were industry-wide.

Critical aspects of the programme included the Leadership Growth Profile (LGP) 360° Assessment, which invites individuals to self-assess their leadership behaviours and gathers structured feedback from managers, peers, and direct reports to provide a comprehensive view of their impact. Through this process, leaders gained insight into behavioural patterns that were limiting their effectiveness.

In particular, the feedback revealed tendencies towards Red Zone behaviours such as being abrasive or overly aggressive, as well as engaging in triangulation—discussing issues about others rather than addressing them directly. These insights created a foundation for increased self-awareness and targeted leadership development.

While common in the construction industry and at CBP and John Holland, these behaviours create a psychologically unsafe environment while also damaging accountability and learning. Leaders then the green zone behaviours needed to develop the accountability and learning essential for project success.

It took 12 to 18 months for the leaders and their teams to commit to the cultural shift and consistently use the new skills.

## DIRECT, OPEN CONVERSATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

NRT-IJV upskilled its leaders with specific training on how to execute on the 7 evidence based Green Zone leadership behaviours TripleGoal offers. (see sidebar) Included in the training is a heavy emphasis on vertical growth and immunity to change. This unlocked rapid development which was core to the success of the project. The Accountable Conversations module was also offered to all employees as a one-day workshop with 6 ongoing follow up practice sessions. This helped people see, understand and manage their emotions to better relate to others and communicate with them more effectively.

**“With TripleGoal, we were able to collaborate with the coach and facilitators to adapt the fixed, off-the-shelf material and modules as the needs of the project and our leaders evolved,” says Alice.**

Accountable Conversations used the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) model, which is a practical and easy-to-learn process for clear feedback, coaching, mediation, conflict resolution, team building, and communication skills. Clear, direct communication is the key to green zone accountability. It lets employees know exactly what is expected and provides a tangible timeframe and deadline.

The training also helped employees understand why they avoid the tough conversations and why that avoidance creates even more problems. Those difficult, but important, conversations include addressing missed deadlines, disagreements regarding deliverables, poor performance and even what to do when you’re not getting along with another team member. The issues can’t be addressed and resolved if they’re ignored.

**“The Vertical Growth leadership training and Accountable Conversations helped us maintain a stable 70 to 80% retention rate on a challenging, complex project in a competitive environment,” says Alice. “When people really like coming to work because they like what they do and feel safe talking to us about things, they’re not as easily swayed by extra money from another organisation.”**

## 7 MINDFUL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

- 1 Self-Regulation**  
Cultivate the ability to manage your thoughts, emotions, and reactions so you can respond with clarity, composure, and intention—especially under pressure.
- 2 Inspire a Vision**  
Create and communicate a compelling picture of the future, helping people understand the purpose of their work and how it connects to broader goals.
- 3 Lead from Values**  
Clearly define the values you stand for, act with integrity, and ensure your decisions and behaviours consistently align with those principles.
- 4 Drive Accountability**  
Set clear expectations, make specific agreements, and hold yourself and others accountable for both performance and behaviour—while fostering learning and ownership.
- 5 Engage the Heart**  
Build trust and connection by showing genuine care, recognising contributions, and celebrating successes in a meaningful and authentic way.
- 6 Cultivate Curiosity**  
Encourage open thinking, challenge assumptions, and create a culture of learning, experimentation, and continuous improvement.
- 7 Empower Others**  
Develop people, foster collaboration, and create the conditions for others to take ownership, grow, and perform at their best.