iTeams

Why High Performance Teams 'Fit In' AND 'Stand Out'

2nd Edition

With Case Studies From Education, Health, Industry, Government and Social Services

Dr Pete Stebbins PhD
with Alistair Kerr

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Leaders Must Be Readers:
An Open Letter to Educational Leaders

One inescapable truth in the field of educational leadership is that no one individual has all of the answers. This is because what works beautifully in one context may not necessarily work well, or at all, in a context that is quite different.

Real leadership also requires a cyclical approach which fosters ongoing reflection on current practice as well as a focus on continual improvement – creating a situation where we do more of what works and less of what doesn't. While it is also important to share effective practice at the local level with colleagues on an ongoing basis, it is also imperative for leaders to keep abreast of leadership trends from farther afield, to be informed.

This in turn builds a deeper sense of knowledge about educational leadership, allows for critical reflection and scaffolds deeper interactions with peers through leadership conversations. One great way to foster this knowledge sharing is through professional conferences, but these cannot be attended year-round. As suggested by the heading above, the obvious alternative for leaders is to commit to professional learning through reading on an ongoing basis.

For this reason, I hope you will enjoy *iTeams: Why High Performance Teams 'Fit In' AND 'Stand Out'* by Dr Pete Stebbins, provided by QASSP for your enjoyment in our Golden Jubilee year.

Read on!
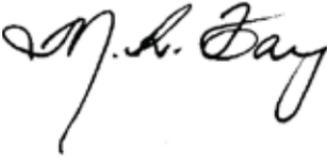
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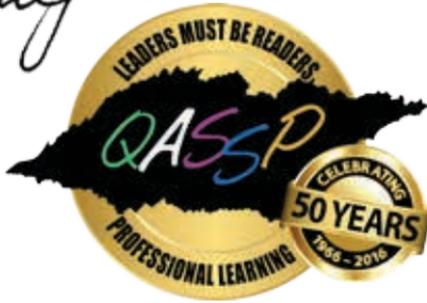
Foreword

Albert Einstein said *'if you can't explain something simply, you don't understand it well enough'* and I am pleased to tell you the authors understand the subject of High Performance Teams very well indeed!

High Performance Teams are essential for every organisation trying to survive in a fiercely competitive global market. Let's be frank about it, success in an organisation is not directly achieved by great leaders or brilliant strategy—these factors create the opportunity for success but do not guarantee the result. It is the teams of people who then seize the opportunity and turn it into sustainable products and services that create the sustainable success that separates the good from the great organisations!

Being part of a team is a reality for everyone in the workplace. From large organisations with thousands of staff to small businesses with very few employees and a network of partners or affiliates, we all have to find a way to work effectively with others to achieve common goals. For this to be a genuine collaboration, we must ensure we, as the 'I' or individuals, are able to fully understand and engage with the wider 'Team' agenda so as to seamlessly unite individual and group focus.

In *iTeams: Why High Performance Teams 'Fit In' AND 'Stand Out'*, Pete and Alistair use the High Performance Teams Framework to unpack the complexities (and practical steps)

of both engaging with your team and achieving outstanding results. The authors also give us some powerful insights into why teams fail and the leadership challenges faced by leaders in team transformation. Most importantly this book is evidence-based and grounded in outcome-based research with case studies from health, education, industry, government, and social services.

As the founder of a global provider of business education resources, I have worked with many of the great business writers of our time: Jim Collins on the success factors behind great organisations, Liz Wiseman on effective leadership behaviours, and Verne Harnish on scaling up business effectively. I am pleased that I can now also add both the authors and this book to my list of recommendations!

Karen Beattie
Director, The Growth Faculty

Introduction

Team Performance & the Silent Disaster Unfolding

"Why fit in when you were born to stand out?"

—Dr Seuss

"There is no 'I' in team but there is in win."

—Michael Jordan

"Remember that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other."

—Abraham Lincoln

High Performance Teams are not a 'luxury' item—they are an 'essential' across every organisation. The world today expects so much more and pays so much less in a fiercely competitive 24/7 global market. Businesses survive on razor-thin margins and staff face wage pressures and increasing workloads as unemployment climbs and more people are competing for fewer jobs. This is the reality of our global workforce and it is only getting worse with many experts agreeing that 40% of all current jobs will disappear in the next 10 years!

As if the workplace survival challenges were not already hard enough, there is something even more threatening and perverse that blocks and suffocates individual, team and organizational performance—something insidious, poisonous and profoundly disabling—a disease that infects most people, often beginning in childhood and gaining ever more power into adulthood, a hidden barrier to our education

and development, and a glass ceiling over our careers; robbing us of our ambitions for leadership and greatness and leaving us depressed and disillusioned in our retirement as our health gradually fades away. Something that countless coaches, motivational speakers, military leaders, parents, business gurus, management consultants, and managers have told us all:

"There is no 'I' in team!"

Now we all know this statement is not a spelling lesson but rather a criticism of individualism and prioritizing our own personal needs ahead of others—a reminder that 'the team is more important than ourselves' … so untrue!

This statement sets in motion one of saddest and ultimately tragic curses we give ourselves and our organisations. Telling people to repress and deny themselves, telling people that fitting in is more important than standing out. Creating workforce cultures that force people to conform and submit to the status quo, the average, the safe place where you don't stand out and can't be criticised.

For too long we've been cutting down the tall poppies, ridiculing people who stand out or stand up and turning our backs or looking away when we are challenged by people striving to make a difference, raise the standards, gain a competitive edge, or simply avert disaster by highlighting where we need to improve before we are overrun by the competition.

Enough is enough! It's time we put the 'I' into team to unlock the hidden potential of individuals and empower them

to not only fit in but also stand out as together they drive their team to new levels of sustainable high performance.

Welcome to iTeams: Sustainable High Performance Teams where individuals are just as important as the team! Where Achievement is just as important as Engagement and where there is an obsessive focus on four Key Performance Indicators (4 KPIs) of success shared by everyone!

In High Performance Teams each team member is individually and uniquely invested in helping the team succeed by zealously focusing on the 4 KPIs:

Firstly, they help the team Maximise Achievement & 'Stand Out' by:

Having A Common Vision & Clear Actions (KPI 1); and

Ensuring there is Clear Accountability & Performance Reporting Systems (KPI 2).

Secondly they help the team Maximise Engagement and 'Fit In' by:

Leveraging Diversity & Lead by Example (KPI 3); and

Supporting Each Other's Work/Life Goals (KPI 4).
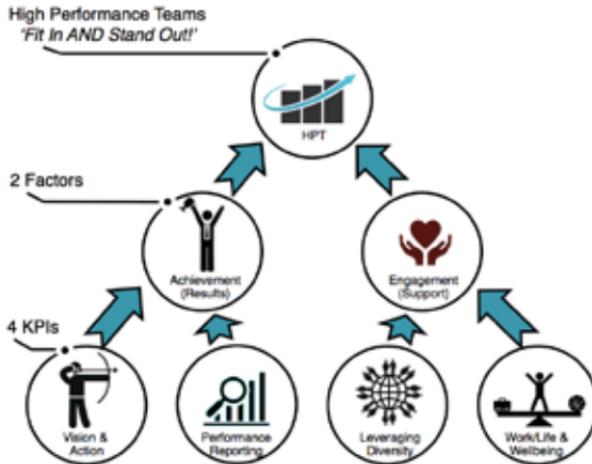
Not only that, but communication across the team is so effective, and awareness of group and personal dynamics is so high, that the team can operate seamlessly, and intuitively respond to the operational challenges they face, have higher job satisfaction, lower stress, and greater productivity than their peers!

Leaders that help people discover their own 'I'—why and how to belong and achieve in teams—will inevitably create sustainable High Performance Teams. This book is about helping leaders build sustainable High Performance Teams and help individual team members to both 'fit in' and 'stand out' to deliver amazing results and enjoy prosperous careers

Part 1

Why Teams Fail

3 Early Warning Signs

"Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups."

—Nietzsche

Human beings are not perfect and therein lies the reason why teams fail. When we get groups of human beings together in teams, the potential for these imperfections to create much bigger problems is magnified exponentially!

Each team failure and subsequent business failure is usually made up of an inextricably complex and ultimately unique set of circumstances which made all the decisions and omissions seem perfectly reasonable at the time, yet in hindsight were so obviously wrong. The famous philosopher Søren Kierkegaard summed it up well when he said 'life must be lived forwards but can only be understood backwards' and this is also true of understanding why teams fail.

However there is some good news! There is some common ground that invariably sits beneath the surface of the unique and complex processes of team failure. After twenty years of management consulting and a multitude of root cause analyses on dysfunctional teams I have found there are three early warning signs of disaster all teams and leaders should become aware of:

1. Fear of Conflict & Avoidance of Feedback—One of the most profoundly disturbing and also most common early warning signs of team failure is a team culture where there is a lack of feedback and conflict avoidance. Teams which are not able to robustly discuss issues nor tolerate dissenting or alternate views are unable to innovate or manage challenges and change effectively. Teams that are unable to give each other critique or developmental feedback are unable to grow and develop. If you don't know you can't grow.

2. Unhealthy People Pleasing: Groupthink & the Abilene Paradox—While some forms of peer group pressure can be healthy in aligning teams and achieving goals, other forms of peer group pressure can become unhealthy, leading to toxic team dysfunction. There are two types of unhealthy people pleasing phenomena that will almost certainly result in group failure. The first is Groupthink where unhealthy peer group pressure leads to faulty decision making, cliques, and passive/aggressive conflicts. The second is the Abilene Paradox where team members become pre-occupied with mind reading and people pleasing to such an extent they engage in activities they do not like or advocate for decisions they don't agree with—all with the goal of maintaining team relationships and keeping the status quo ahead of their own needs or opinions.

3. Confusing team happiness with team health—
Teams which don't have a clear understanding of
their purpose, role, and key performance indicators
in achieving the organizational objectives are unable
to maintain their morale through job satisfaction
based on achievement. Instead they seek to maintain
their morale through the pursuit of happiness and
make team building and harmonious relationship
the main priority, which invariably leads to failure
as the honeymoon effects wear off, workloads
become unevenly distributed, and petty conflict
turns into serious grievances and complaints. Or to
put it another way, when relationships are driving
team performance the status quo remains and
performance declines, whereas when performance is
driving team relationships feedback and innovation
occurs and performance increases.

In the sections that follow you'll dig deeper into the Tragic
Triad, exploring each of the 3 common causes of team failure
in detail. You'll also learn how you can identify the early
warning signs of team failure so that you can prevent disasters.

Fear of Conflict
& Avoidance of Feedback

"Feedback is the breakfast of champions."

—Ken Blanchard

"Businesses don't fail for want of intelligent staff, they fail for want of intelligent and courageous feedback."

—Unknown

"Feedback is the bridge between strategy and successful execution."
—Pete Stebbins

High Performance Teams thrive on feedback. But sadly, many of us avoid feedback and settle for mediocrity, whilst gossiping to our teammates about what is wrong and backstabbing our managers.

Having difficult conversations and giving staff feedback is tough!

When I was a senior executive in a large corporation, my managers and supervisors were always telling me what was wrong with their staff. 'So and so' is always late, rude, lazy, manipulative, etc., etc. When I would talk to the staff they

would always tell me what was wrong with their managers in a similar way. When I would sit in the lunch room and listen to the chatter, the gossip told a similar story.

Yet whenever I asked someone if they had directly spoken to the person they had an issue with to give clear and specific feedback they would either say that they were going to soon or exclaim that it was pointless because the person wouldn't listen anyway!

Feedback is the bridge between business strategy and successful execution. The failure to provide people with specific real-time feedback lies at the heart of most business failures.

There are plenty of early warning signs for business failure—team conflict, poor quality products, poor customer service, system failures in administration or finance—all of which feature heavily in negative gossip and backstabbing before the eventual disaster strikes.

Gossip & Backstabbing is Easy

So why do many people engage in gossiping and backstabbing rather than give direct feedback?

The term 'backstabbing' has a much darker truth behind it then most people realise. It was derived from history initially from the death of Julius Caesar, the Roman Emperor. Caesar was literally stabbed in the back by his friend Brutus, which was seen as a deceptive and cowardly act compared to engaging him in a fair and open confrontation.

While Brutus was labeled a coward for his actions, many people seriously under-estimate how hard it is (unless you're a psychopath of course!) to engage people in fair and open

conflict—not just in the arena of physical conflict and battles, but also in the arena of psychological conflict and office politics.

Lessons from Military History

Our tendency to avoid direct conflict and instead adopt indirect means is deeply ingrained in our primordial instincts. We, as human beings, have a bias not to harm each other that is incredibly strong. Studies examining soldiers on the battlefield in World War II show that only 15-20% of soldiers fired directly at the enemy—even when they were being fired upon by the enemy! That means only 1 in 5 soldiers was actually defending themselves from attack! This finding in military psychology has been confirmed on numerous battlefields both before and after World War II and has led to dramatic changes in training to help soldiers overcome their innate tendency to avoid conflict and in turn save their own lives when under attack (but more about that later).

Safe in Society but Toxic in the Office

The phenomenon of refusing to harm other people is disastrous on the battlefield but conversely incredibly helpful in maintaining peace and order in society. It is clearly a good thing to avoid conflict and violence wherever possible. However, there is an accidental side effect of this innate desire to avoid conflict, which creates some unexpected toxic outcomes in workplaces. Our desire to avoid conflict is so strong that it

extends well beyond violence and physical confrontation into psychology, communication, and feedback.

Let's face it, we all know it is much easier to complain about someone's work performance or behaviour to similarly frustrated co-workers (i.e., gossip) than it is to have the courage to confront them directly and calmly and clearly give specific constructive feedback. I believe this avoidance pattern is rooted in the innate conflict avoidance mechanism and as such, is much harder to change than we realize!

Direct Feedback is Hard and Necessary at Work

So how do we overcome our tendency to avoid conflict in the workplace and learn to have difficult conversations and give direct feedback? Well, let's go back a step to see how the military address this issue. Firstly, they use an important technique called 'distancing'—namely, the idea that when you can emotionally distance yourself from hurting someone else you are more likely to be effective in conflict.

Military techniques such as mechanical distancing (i.e., using long range weapons that do not involve face-to-face contact) can be translated into the office environment in healthy strategies such as the use of 360 degree feedback, peer review, customer satisfaction surveys, and performance reporting systems transparent to all members of the team OR unhealthy strategies such as the use of email wars and social media.

Social distancing is another important technique used to improve effectiveness in conflict. In the military this is about classifying people in terms of rank and stature and dictating

orders and actions accordingly. In an office setting this is translated into healthy strategies of clear role descriptions and performance management conversations that are fair, firm and results focused. This ensures we do not get swayed by emotions and enables improvement, business survival, and job security for the person who may otherwise have continued to under-perform. 'Around the room' feedback where every staff member participates in a discussion also lessens social pressure and the risks of unhealthy personalising. Unhealthy use of social distance in the office setting is about pecking order behavior, cliques, and favoritism.

Moral distancing is also important in understanding conflict. In an office environment, managers are more likely to have difficult conversations with subordinates if they believe the actions of staff are immoral and damaging to the company. They are also more inclined to engage in healthy conflict if they share similar values of their superiors and align to the company mission, strategy and goals.

The other (and arguably most important) strategy the military use to make soldiers more effective in conflict is rehearsal and role-play—also known as military exercises. That is, they repeatedly simulate the actions they would need to take to be effective in conflict—this was one of the most important training issues to address after the massive losses the allies faced in the First World War. In the office environment this is translated to frontline leadership skills training and regular skills drills and role-plays where leaders can effectively practice the professional skills they need to have effective (and supportive) difficult conversations about staff performance and behavior.

Difficult Conversations: Performance and Behaviour

What two topics are the most difficult to discuss (and most important) at work?

Work performance is about the amount, quality, and speed of work a person does relative to targets. Where poor performance occurs there is a negative outcome for the individual (either lower self esteem or encouragement of a lax work ethic), the team (unequal distribution of workloads and team conflict), and the organization (poor productivity, lowered profitability and toxic culture). To prevent performance problems, managers need to provide feedback to staff to ensure they are clear about their specific actions that are aligned to the business vision and strategy as well as measure and report their achievements against targets.

Workplace behavior is about the way in which a person engages and interacts with other employees, clients, and customers. Poor behavior at work in the form of ignoring and avoidance, abusive language, threats, sexual harassment, and inappropriate jokes and humor can be highly distressing for the victims and witnesses and can lead to formal claims of bullying, harassment, discrimination and work related stress, and cause massive reputational and financial damage to the business. To prevent workplace behavior problems managers need to be aware of their company's code of conduct and values and provide ongoing feedback to their staff, as well as role model appropriate workplace behaviors.

Difficult Conversations, Conflict & Feedback: 4 Success Strategies

To prevent team failure, managers need to be able to engage in regular difficult conversations and provide direct feedback about work performance and behavior to their staff. As we have discussed, this direct approach to feedback is much more difficult than many of us realize due to an innate desire to avoid confrontation whatever the cost. To overcome this avoidance tendency we need to use the strategies of 'distancing' and 'rehearsal' that had their origins in military training protocols.

The four healthy conflict strategies we have seen so far that will improve an organization and team's performance relate to:

1. Effective use of assessment surveys such as 360 leadership feedback, customer satisfaction feedback, and performance reporting systems that are transparent to all team members.
2. Effective provision of role clarity and task allocation systems and clear and consistent use of performance feedback that is job-focused, not person-focused.
3. A strong alignment with the company mission and values and reference to these values when managing performance and behavior that is contraindicated.
4. Practice, practice, practice! The use of behavioral training and role-plays for frontline leaders to be effective (and supportive) in having difficult conversations about staff performance and behaviour.

Unhealthy People Pleasing: Groupthink & Abilene

"When performance drives relationships business success is inevitable. However, when relationships drive performance, the urge to maintain the status quo will lead to failure."

—Pete Stebbins

"More teams (and businesses) are ultimately destroyed by unhealthy people-pleasing than by overt hostility and aggression."

—Pete Stebbins

A Boardroom Drama I Will Never Forget

"What do you mean 'we may be insolvent'? How much cash do we need? Why did we all agree to pay a dividend at the last board meeting if cash flow is so poor?"

This team of directors was in trouble! Yet they were all highly competent, capable and overtly supportive of each other.

How did they get into such a mess? The answer lies in an insidious strain of conflict avoidance known as 'people-pleasing'. This form of conflict avoidance has contributed to

a range of major disasters including financial catastrophes, major industrial accidents, plane crashes, shipping disasters, and company-destroying product failures.

To be a High Performance Team that maximises results and minimises risks, effective, honest, and real-time communication is essential. But our primordial urge to avoid conflict not only creates the tendency for gossip and backstabbing, but also for excessive politeness and hyper-vigilance towards people-pleasing and peace-keeping.

This excessive politeness and peace-keeping leads us to feign agreement with others or severely compromise our own needs, thus creating unnecessary team dysfunction and distress. In fact, this excessive politeness and unhealthy people-pleasing destroys a lot more teams (and businesses) than overt hostility and aggression.

Dangerous 'People-Pleasing' Part 1: Group Think

Have you ever been a part of a team that, despite good intentions, made some very bad decisions?

Why do intelligent groups of people make stupid errors causing monumental disasters? As individuals we are regularly shaking our heads in disbelief about the decisions our leaders and their advisors are making.

Most recently we have watched Greece opt for bankruptcy over bailout, which was a path strongly recommended by their own government. There have also been some other standout incidents in the last decade. The erosion of financial security laws and inconsistent decisions by the US Treasury

(against the advice of many experts) which directly led to the Global Financial Crisis; the refusal of Industrial Nations to reduce emissions despite the evidence of global warming; the list goes on …

Clearly something is wrong. But surely it is not a question of basic adult intelligence; as all of the decisions referred to above were made by groups of very intelligent and experienced people who had access to expert information that was both favorable and unfavorable to the decisions that were taken.

What then was the cause of such monumentally bad decisions? If it is not based on individual errors it must by default be related to team dynamics. Something must be happening when these collective groups of people are meeting which leads them (in hindsight) down the garden path. The team dynamic creating such a disaster is called 'Group Think'.

Group Think is a phenomena reported by Irving Janis in his 1972 book *Victims of Group Think: Psychological Studies of Policy Studies & Fiascoes*. This is a fantastic book and a must read for anyone interested in team dynamics and leadership with great case studies on world historical disasters such as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the escalation of the Vietnam War, and the Watergate Crisis. But Group Think is not just restricted to politicians and policy makers. Group Think can emerge in any team situation and is marked by three common team dynamics.

Group Think: More Common Than You Think!

Group Think is far more common among teams and organizations than most people realize. Let's take a look at

Janis's three Group Think criteria and some much more frequently occurring team situations that many of us can relate to:

1. **Over-estimations of the group's power and morality.**

   Teams involved in making decisions on eligibility and provision of services may have to deal with finite resources, unhappy and/or complaining customers, and at times vague or inconsistent directions from management about how to navigate the dilemma of finite resources that exceed demand. To solve this problem they may make value judgements amongst themselves, which may not necessarily be fair towards customers, but rather based on their own ideas about relative 'worthiness' and end up treating customers quite unfairly. Every week or two a telecommunications company, power or water utility, or social security department somewhere on the planet is exposed in the media as allegedly favoring some customers whilst denying services to others—the seeds of which may begin in this Group Think team dynamic.

2. **Close-mindedness**.

   Teams that have worked together for a long time, often in isolation, can rationalise and minimise objective risks and threats, and so increase the overall likelihood of disaster. There are many examples of this seen in workplaces across the world. From the spectacular mistakes small teams

of deep sea fisherman make on TV shows such as The Deadliest Catch to the tragic disasters of gas explosions on oil rigs and cave-ins in deep underground mines, there are many examples of the effect of closed-mindedness in ignoring signs of escalating risk ultimately leading to disaster. Teams in the banking and finance industry are also victims of this Group Think process when they minimise fluctuations and downturn in the stock market or interest rate changes instead of taking action to prevent subsequent losses.

3. **Pressure toward team uniformity.**
    Many teams have one or two dominant personalities who overtly or accidently create pressure on the team to conform to a particular view which may or may not be the most helpful or accurate perspective on an issue. Team members may self-censure and fail to adopt an effective 'devil's advocate' role to enable arguments of pros and cons to be fully tested in order to remain safe within the group. The result of this may lead to premature and faulty decision making similar to the examples of mining, oil and gas, and financial services outlined above. An additional example of this form of Group Think can be seen in the hierarchies of the medical profession where the doctor's opinion and power may create pressure on nursing and allied health staff to withdraw their own opinions despite having greater knowledge leading to misdiagnosis and medical negligence.

My Own Group Think Disasters

During the course of my career I have had front row tickets to several classic Group Think disasters—some of them more public than others. I have selected three examples, each from a different personal or professional perspective, to show how commonplace Group Think is in today's world of team dynamics.

IT System Failure: The Queensland Health Payroll Disaster

I was privileged to work alongside some of the most talented, hardworking, and professional leadership teams I have ever met as they were preparing to launch a new payroll system across 80,000 staff. This would prove to be one of Australia's greatest IT disasters costing $1.2 billion, instead of the $6 million originally forecast, and placed the public healthcare system in extreme crisis. It turned out to be a very complex project, since the subject of a Royal Commission, and had many different stages of testing and implementation leading up to the launch. As each stage progressed I remember an increased level of anxiety among senior executives about risks and uncertainties, yet in parallel, an increased amount of expectation and pressure from the oversight committee made up of government officials to adhere to the launch schedule.

These group dynamics appeared to suppress the escalation of growing concerns raised by many people. Ultimately leaders were placed in untenable positions to proceed to launch a system that was, in hindsight, not ready or face the end of

their careers by asserting themselves against the majority. A clear no-win situation for them personally and a Group Think catastrophe that cost over a billion dollars and took five years and a Royal Commission to properly understand and ultimately recover from.

Medical Negligence: My Father's Misdiagnosis & Near Death

I still remember the unbelievable and unfathomable shock I felt at holding my father in my arms as he shook violently and uncontrollably, his body cold and clammy in one instant only to experience sky-rocketing temperatures the next. He was almost incoherent and in extreme pain when the ambulances finally arrived. I immediately gave the paramedics the temperature chart showing the wild fluctuations and told them of my concerns that he was gravely ill.

To my surprise they conferred among themselves and then told me he was not gravely unwell but rather my thermometer was broken and he simply had a high temperature and a likely cold or flu on top of his stomach pain. I was aghast!

How could they ignore my direct touch of his skin and the obvious coldness he was showing? How could they not even test my own medical equipment yet declare it was broken? Group Think had gone too far. They left our midnight emergency only to have us drive my father to hospital later that evening to be correctly diagnosed with a gangrenous gall bladder, with death narrowly avoided through emergency surgery.

Small Business Turnarounds: The Cavalry Didn't Come

The last Group Think team experience I want to share is common to many small businesses and teams delivering products or services to big business or government clients. There was a freeze placed on consulting projects and a sudden stop to most of the work we were doing for several large public sector clients. It was the beginning of the Global Financial Crisis, yet my team mates and I in the leadership team believed the freeze would only last a couple of months and then things would return to normal. As time wore on and more and more lay-offs occurred, we kept ignoring the obvious signs of the deepening crisis and instead kept reassuring each other things would turn around very shortly. We kept all our own staff and our costs quickly drained our cash reserves to dangerous levels.

Instead of developing new markets and products and investing accordingly we spent most of our remaining dollars marketing to previous clients who could not make any purchases and telling our demoralized staff to work even harder at networking and selling to a market that could not buy. In hindsight this seems so ridiculous, but again the spell of Group Think—where we all so desperately wanted to believe in a 'happy ever after' turn around rather than confront our business' rapidly escalating distress—prevailed and the disaster kept escalating.

Group Think & Your Team

How about you and your co-workers?

Have you ever found yourselves ostracizing people who didn't 'fit in' and reassuring yourselves that the doomsayers and negative people were wrong—only to find out later they were right (or at least partially so?).

Have you ever been on the blunt end of a customer complaint or criticism of your staff, your company, or your product and found yourselves minimizing and distancing yourself from their feedback?

Have you ever found yourselves working too closely together for too long and in the familiarity of routines, and so missed some important steps in a process or failed to see a safety problem that later created a serious risk or disaster?

Group Think is real and an important part of understanding why teams fail. The antidote is, of course, a commitment to objective evaluation, seeking data and evidence to inform decisions and encouraging and respecting people in the team with contrarian views. Take some time out today to consider how your current workplace culture and dynamics either prevents or encourages the Group Think dynamic in your team.

Dangerous 'People-Pleasing' Part 2: The Abilene Paradox

The tendency to please others, often at our own expense, plays out in personal relationships when we offer to do an activity with our partner that we do not want to do, but think

they do. Recently, despite my own tiredness and desire to have an early night, I offered to take my wife out for dinner. My wife then felt obliged to agree to it in order to avoid appearing ungrateful, despite her own tiredness that evening and her need to finish some work. Subsequently, we went out for dinner only to both feel tired and frustrated when we eventually realised that neither of us really wanted to go out in the first place!

This cycle of suggesting and agreeing to things you do not like or want to do, (but which you believe someone else likes or wants to do) is known as the Abilene Paradox. The term was introduced by management expert Jerry B. Harvey in his 1974 article The Abilene Paradox: The Management of Agreement, where he described a trip he took with his family from his home to Abilene, Texas. Jerry initiated the trip one hot sunny afternoon, despite his own desire to remain at home in the cool and relax. As you may guess, the proposed trip was endorsed by all family members, despite their own unspoken reluctance to go to Abilene. The trip ended with all family members resenting the hot afternoon car trip that they all would have much rather avoided.

'People-Pleasing' Disasters at Work

While we often associate team breakdown with overt hostility and conflict, it is far more common for teams to fail due to a culture of excessive people-pleasing and peace-keeping at the expense of business goals. Take a look at these 3 classic failures below:

Delegating Disasters: Confusing Fairness with Capability

Scene 1: At a meeting, I asked someone to do something important on a project (who I tended to avoid as they were notoriously unreliable) in order to show fairness to all team members. They reluctantly agree, but then don't complete the task resulting in both I and them (and the wider team) being frustrated and the broader project being adversely affected by the delay.

Acting Up: Confusing Obligation and Desire

Scene 2: My manager takes three months' leave and I am one of three supervisors in her group. My manager, who is much friendlier to the other two supervisors, gives me the opportunity to act in the manager role first so as to avoid the risk of bias. I don't want the role but feel obliged to say 'yes' or risk negative consequences. I take the job reluctantly and resent the additional demands while my motivated colleagues miss out and workplace morale declines.

Social Drinks: Confusing Politeness with Genuine Interest

Scene 3: My staff plan Friday night drinks and invite me out of courtesy. They are much younger

than me and have different interests, but I feel obliged to go to show my commitment to the team. I turn up reluctantly, wishing I was at home. The team placates me with small talk while avoiding their own preferred topics. I escape early feeling frustrated that I even went while the team finally get to leave the venue they didn't prefer (but had booked because it was closer to where I lived) and go to a club in the city to party the night away.

The Heart of the Matter: Does Performance Drive Relationships or Vice Versa?

In these examples of the Abilene Paradox of dysfunctional people-pleasing, my focus in maintaining harmonious relationships at the expense of both good business decisions and my own work/life balance seem obvious in hindsight. In each case subjugating my own needs in an attempt to 'fit in' didn't improve workplace morale or performance nor my own personal happiness. Instead of creating a 'win-win' situation it was a 'lose-lose' for myself and the team. To turn this around I needed to stop being relationship focused at the expense of business performance but instead make business performance the content and focus of building effective relationships with team members.

Performance Driving Relationships—A True 'Win-Win'

When I finally stopped my excessive people-pleasing I could start focusing my conversations on business objectives and build team engagement and relationships around the achievement of work focused goals and objectives. This was a much simpler and easier dynamic for the team as we were less preoccupied with people-pleasing and more satisfied with achieving business objectives and celebrating results. This placed less pressure on each of us to 'fit in' to team social activities and instead let social groups form naturally as a value add for those inclined, without placing any additional obligations on others.

Prevention is Better than Cure: Workplace Culture— Keep it Real-Time & Results-Focused

To prevent the Abilene Paradox of excessive people-pleasing and peace-keeping from destroying team performance, you need to have a results-focused culture where scorecards and dashboards regularly highlight real-time results for the team to see and discuss. By devoting your relationship energy towards problem solving and supporting staff achieve business objectives you will avoid the trap of becoming pre-occupied with personalities and pecking orders so common in cultures that fall into the Abilene Paradox.

Confusing Team Happiness with Team Health

"Vision without action is just a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world."

—Joel Barker

By far the most exhausting and expensive mistake I have made in my career has been trying to make people happy at work in order to improve business performance. I have confused the concepts of a happy vs healthy workforce and in doing so lost many opportunities for business growth and innovation.

Happy Workforces: The Honeymoon Never Lasts …

As a psychologist, I know through the ground-breaking work of the Viennese Psychiatrist Viktor Frankl that genuine lasting happiness is elusive—the more we strive after it, the harder it is to achieve. That is, of course, because long-term happiness is a byproduct of being busy and engaged with things that are worthwhile and meaningful as opposed to experiencing some temporary mystic blissful state whilst either reacting to

a novel change or sitting idle and disengaged (even in a luxury holiday resort!).

Happiness and Hawthorne Effects

One of the most important things we know about the impact of happiness on productivity came from research in the 1920s and 1930s at the Hawthorne Electric Utility near Chicago, USA. A series of experiments on workplace productivity were conducted by introducing novel changes to the level of lighting in the environment. In each case of change (either higher or lower levels of light), there was a temporary positive change in employee behaviour and productivity BUT it was only short lived with productivity dropping again once people had got used to the change. This temporary change in workplace behaviour was described as the 'Hawthorne Effect' by Henry Landsberger in the 1950s and is akin to the 'Honeymoon Effect' in relationships where we feel extra affection for our partner as a result of a positive change (a wedding and relaxing holiday together) which wears off as we adjust to our new lives.

So what has all this got to do with confusing the concepts of a happy vs healthy workforce?

Long-term happiness is a byproduct of being busy doing meaningful and worthwhile tasks. Yet, when people are unhappy at work, they usually complain about being 'too busy' and insist that more downtime is needed to relax and

have fun. This complaining and demand for time to relax is a trap for both themselves and their managers who 'give in' and engage in some 'happiness'-focused fun and relaxing activities. As a leader, have you ever felt disappointed about the results from these common workplace happiness strategies: Company Retreats & Team Building Sessions, Social Clubs, Dinners & Drinks?

Don't get me wrong, these are great strategies to kick-start change, on-board new team members, debrief after major challenges, and provide perks to compete with other companies hiring similar staff. However, none of these strategies will stand alone and deliver improved business performance. In each case the initial positive benefits of this will give you a 'honeymoon' or 'Hawthorne' effect, which will wear off quickly if the underlying workforce culture is unhealthy.

Healthy Workforces—Trading Happiness for Clarity

In the midst of my people-pleasing crises at work a wise mentor once told me:

> *"Pete, your number one job as a leader is not to make people happy about their job but rather to make them clear about their job. If they are clear about their role, their key performance indicators (KPIs), the company mission and values, their team's dynamics, and the level of flexibility available to balance work/ life needs, then they can responsibly choose to embrace*

*their job and thus be happy or take steps to
move into a different job and/or company."*

This was some life-changing advice for me, which
transformed my approach to leadership. Since that fateful
leadership crisis I have devoted much of my leadership
energy to increasing clarity in the workplace (as distinct
from increasing happiness)—be it clarity of mission and
values; clarity of role; clarity of KPIs; clarity about individual
differences and team dynamics; or clarity about available
support for work/life needs.

Signs of a Healthy Workforce: Creating Sustainable High Performance

After many years studying workforce culture, morale, and
performance I have come to the conclusion that all sustainably
High Performing Teams and workforces have two critical
success factors: High levels of Achievement and High levels
of Engagement.

Where only one of these success factors are evident, team
performance is not sustainable. In the case of only high
Achievement, the failure to also maintain high Engagement
results in unhealthy competition, isolation, marginalisation,
bullying, stress, and unwanted turnover. In the case of only
high Engagement, the enjoyment of a highly supportive and
cohesive team is short lived when failure to achieve destroys
the underlying organisation that enabled the team to exist in
the first place.

Your Approach To Leading Teams—A Healthy or Happy Focus?

As leaders, we are focused on maximising business performance. However, many of us fall into the trap of confusing workforce happiness with workforce health and end up wasting time and resources in unproductive strategies which do not create any long term benefit for either staff wellbeing or business profitability. To be a truly High Performance Team we need to focus on Team health. If we do happiness (and profit) will follow. In part 2 we will learn how to create a healthy High Performance Team by digging deeper into the two factors common to high-performing workforces (both Achievement and Engagement) and discovering the four KPIs needed for success.

Part 1: Why Teams Fail

1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Forward Actions
1. Conflict Avoidance		
2. Unhealthy People Pleasing		
3. Happy vs. Healthy Teams		

Part 2

High Performance Teams

Becoming a Part of the Solution: The HPT Framework

"There is no more neutrality in the world. You either have to be part of the solution, or you're going to be part of the problem."

—Eldridge Cleaver

Looking Into the Abyss ...

My journey into High Performance Teams began many years ago. After I finished my post-grad studies and qualified as a psychologist I spent the first few years of my career investigating workplaces where an employee had suffered a stress injury or psychological condition. I would have to interview their colleagues and managers and review their work systems and procedures.

In most cases staff were highly distressed and angry towards their managers, and teams were divided into cliques or silos, often at war with each other. Managers were usually exhausted, stressed, frustrated, and felt like they too were victims in the situation— complaining of inadequate resources and a lack of support and clear direction from their senior managers as circumstances spiraled out of control.

The cost of these claims was enormous. Workplace productivity ground to a halt while investigations took place, costing tens of thousands of dollars—not to mention the longstanding lowered productivity prior to the actual workplace injury. Absenteeism and sick leave sky-rocketed as people looked for any excuse to avoid working in a toxic culture. Unwanted turnover was a crushing blow for management as many of the brightest and best staff gave up hope and were quickly hired by competitors eager for their skills. But the biggest losses were in customer service and innovation. Because staff and managers became so consumed by lengthy investigations and legal proceedings they were unable to stay focused on innovating products and services in the business or providing outstanding customer service. As a result their customer base gradually winnowed away to nothing. When all these costs were added together, the damage done to the organization could, at times, easily surpass a million dollars. This was indeed a high price, many small businesses were unable to recover and were forced to shut down.

After doing literally hundreds of these investigations I came to realize that there were two re-occurring themes in every case regardless of the worker demographics or type of industry. These two themes were:

1. ***Problems with Staff Engagement***—an inability for staff to feel like they belonged to their team or organization, caused by:
    a. Inadequate feedback and trust among staff and their managers to be able to leverage individual differences instead of causing personality clashes

b. A lack of awareness and support of each other's work/life needs and wellbeing amplifying personal stress levels in the workplace.

2. ***Problems with Achievement***—an inability for staff to obtain business results, caused by:
   a. A lack of clarity about the link between their work role and the mission and goals of the organization
   b. A lack of transparent feedback about individual and team performance enabling self-driven accountability instead of haphazard, vague, and often ill-timed criticisms by managers.

Becoming a Part of the Solution

Anyone who spends a lot of time dealing with unhappy people will tell you how demoralising and draining it can be. After several years in this line of work I was burned out and longing to spend more of my time working with positive and happy people. I remember one particularly difficult workplace investigation in a prestigious law firm where we had identified some very inappropriate behavior among staff and managers who had bullied a co-worker who subsequently suffered stress and depression.

As I was finishing a very difficult interview with the director of human resources she lost her temper:

"I feel very frustrated and angry about this investigation interview—you have only asked me questions about specific incidents and are not taking into account how much effort we are all putting in to making positive changes in this workplace. If you really cared about people maybe you should stop spending all you time over-analysing the problems and start helping organisations like ours find the solutions!"

Ouch! This blunt critique drove a splinter into my mind which has remained ever since, and was a catalyst for massive change in my own career leading me to spend the next decade of my life working in team transformation, helping individuals and teams identify and resolve the barriers and obstacles they faced, and strive towards higher levels of achievement and engagement, ultimately leading to sustainable levels of higher performance.

It was through this 10-year period of intensive consulting work and research on team dynamics and performance that the High Performance Teams Framework was created.

The High Performance Teams Framework
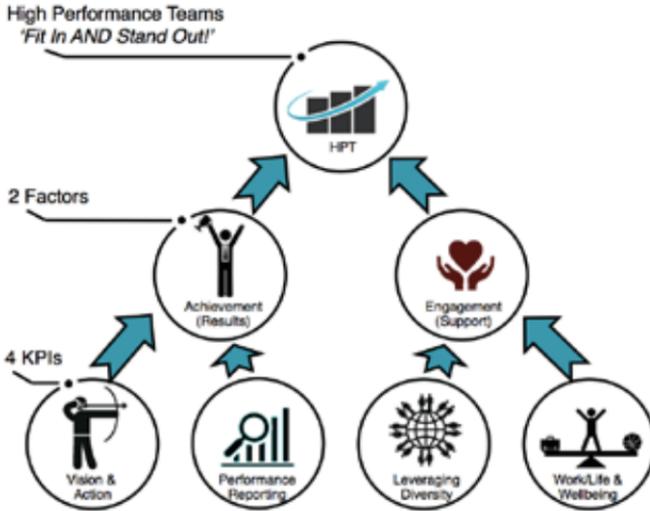
High Performance Teams is a simple yet powerful framework which identifies the key factors that exist within High Performance Teams. This framework underlies all teams that are able to achieve sustainable high performance over the long term. As you can see in the diagram above there are two distinct factors which define high performing teams, Achievement and Engagement, and beneath these, four KPIs for success.

> *Achievement* is the ability to consistently meet and exceed business performance targets with the two KPIs (1) clear vision, strategy, and actions and (2) a culture of performance reporting.

Engagement is the ability to generate positive team dynamics to create long-term working relationships and enable innovation based on cumulative knowledge. Within the factor of Engagement we find the remaining KPIs of (3) leveraging diversity and leading by example and (4) supporting wellbeing and work/life needs.
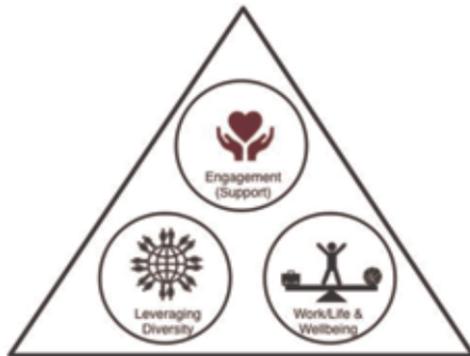
A focus on only either Achievement or Engagement will not create sustainable High Performance Teams. Solely focusing on Achievement may create short-term high performance,

but excessive competition and isolation will cause low morale and unwanted turnover. Solely focusing on Engagement will create cohesion but risks organisational failure due to the lack of attention to results.

The Unique Benefits of the HPT Approach:

The HPT Program has been designed to enable teams to develop sustainable high performance over the long term. The HPT Program is unique for three reasons.

Firstly it has a dual focus on both supporting the Achievement of business outcomes and maximising staff resilience and Engagement, as opposed to only focusing on either organisational outcomes or wellbeing.

Secondly, the HPT Program takes a longitudinal approach to the transformation journey, supporting individuals and teams through three phases: establishing baseline, driving for results and coaching for sustainability.

Finally, the HPT Program includes a simple and effective series of metrics including pulse surveys and 360 Assessment tools, ensuring that results are measured and accountable beyond the effects of workshops and coaching sessions.

For me as a workplace psychologist, helping teams shift from good to great levels of Team Performance has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. To be able to walk alongside the everyday heroes who hold our future in their hands and who persevere, innovate, and strive for excellence despite the challenges they face is truly humbling and inspiring.

In this next stage of the book we will explore the High Performance Teams Framework in greater depth examining the often misunderstood twin factors of Achievement and Engagement as well as lift the lid on each of the 4 KPIs of high team performance and discuss the practical strategies any team can use to succeed in shifting from good to great. But before we unpack the model further I first want to address an important misconception when it comes to team performance namely the myth that: *'if your team is already good there is no need to try to make it great'.*

Myth-busting Team Performance: If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It!

"Good is the enemy of great."

—Voltaire

Our Team is Already Good. Why Do We Need to be a High Performance Team?

Good is the enemy of great. 'Good' is safe. 'Good' is acceptable. As Jim Collins reveals in his ground-breaking book, *Good to Great*, "We don't have great organisations, principally because we have good organisations. Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life." The comfort and ease of a 'good' or satisfactory level of team performance can become a massive barrier for leaders who want to transform their teams to a 'great' level of high performance.
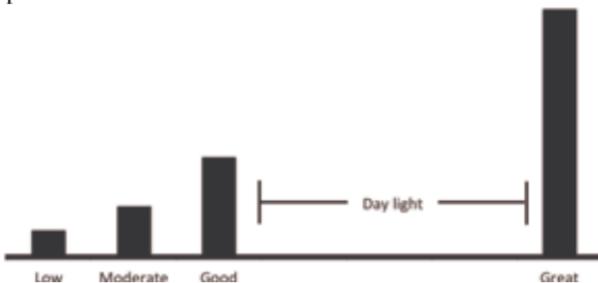
Right now I'll bet your organisation may be merely surviving when it could be thriving. Organisations are complex places requiring a depth and diversity of leadership capability, to effectively meet ever-increasing challenges and opportunities. Maximising the performance of teams is no longer an optional extra. It has become a necessity, so that leaders and teams can respond to the broad range of demands of accountability and responsibility including:

- Increased pressure to improve organisational outcomes
- Reduced budgets and cost pressures
- The need to adapt to rapid change and advances in technology
- Increased competition and higher expectations
- Increased reporting obligations.

Resilient and high performing leaders and teams manage performance, provide regular feedback and engage in effective continuing professional learning. This enables them to support all staff to achieve high standards and maximise each individual's potential.

High Performance: Real Benefits For Your Team and Your Organisation

Over the past decade, leaders' roles and responsibilities have evolved exponentially and leaders now, more than ever, are suffering from lack of sleep, burnout, stress and physical aches and pains. However, this is not so for leaders of High

Performance Teams. High Performing Teams can create real benefits and savings for an organisation, in terms of:

- Higher quality working hours (worth at least twice the average hourly rate according to the OECD productivity commission)
- Higher resiliency and lower distress (30% of your workforce may have clinical levels of stress at any given time)
- Higher customer satisfaction and new customer referrals
- Reduced sick leave and absenteeism
- Fewer injuries and compensation claims
- Lower turnover and improved retention
- Lower conflict and customer complaints.

On the reverse side, workplace research shows us that the pressure created by lowered performance increases the risk of:

- Higher burden,
- Increased stress,
- Lower team morale (Engagement) and
- Lower performance (Achievement).

Frighteningly, many scholars feel that these costs are underestimated, with the true cost of conflict, absenteeism, disengagement, workplace stress, work-related stress, injuries, and lower quality working hours holding many businesses hostage.

For the majority of us, working in lower performance teams generally proves to be a more stressful and less satisfying

experiences than working in High Performance Teams. This is due to the extra demands of managing team motivation and behaviour, working with multiple stakeholders and competing agendas, and effectively working as a part of a wider team of professionals—all of whom encounter their own work and life pressures. A quick look at the statistics will show that work-related stress is higher in the lower-performing teams, where conflict and distress are high and role clarity and leadership support are low. Contrast this with higher-performing teams where distress is lower and there are higher levels of supportive relationships and clearer accountabilities and much higher productivity.

Spotlight on ROI: Calculating the Financial Return on Investing in High Performing Teams

One of the most frequently occurring barriers to organisations investigating in implementing the High Performance Teams Framework is reflected in the question: "Can you really prove how much benefit it will really give us in dollars and cents?" This is often not really put to us as a question but rather as a statement to escape the commitment of investing in team development. As you can see in the table below there are some very relevant and well established costs associated with lowered team performance in Australia:

Business Costs of Low Performance

Area of Business Impact	Business Costs
Stress claims	$41,186 per average claim*
Recruitment & Training	> $30,000 per employee**
Loss of Key Customers	10-15% of total business revenue

* on average $17745 > the cost of one physical injury claim

** 3-6 months' salary plus recruitment fee of 15% of contract value

BUT we don't just rely on general workforce statistics or our own benchmarking data set. Instead we offer to test the assumptions against their own organisational data, however most executives when asked for their own workforce costs do not actually know themselves, leading us to rely on a combination of the data they actually have and our own benchmarks.

Where organisations do collect accurate workforce data—such as in the case studies in Appendix 1, we can prove the dollar value of the return on investment for High Performance Teams.

One of the best examples of this was in the case study of a large local government organisation who was willing to partner with us and share their information in terms of sick leave, lost time injuries, workers compensation, and absenteeism.

Combine the hard data collected by the organisation itself with the basic OECD productivity ratio and we had some well proven numbers that conservatively show the value of implementing high performance teams in the workplace. In the Local Government Case Study this led to massive savings and productivity gains literally returning the organisation $6165 per employee per annum. With 111 staff this created a financial benefit of $684,315.00 which could be reinvested in better services to the local community, enhanced training and development opportunities for staff, and replacement of old or worn equipment to improve workplace health and safety. What would your organisation do if they got an extra $6165 per staff member per annum to reinvest in their business?

Case Study: Calculating ROI on HPT with a Local Government Workforce

The High Performance Team Program was implemented in a large outdoor workforce from the one of the largest Local Governments in Australia which kept excellent records on a range of workforce statistics.

Net Savings—In the initial pilot period of HPT, the results showed a decrease in physical and psychological injury claims of 56% (i.e., 1 per month vs. 2.25 per month in the preceding 12 months), a decrease in lost days of 90% (i.e., 6 days per month versus 58 days per month) and a decrease in monthly claim costs of 83% (i.e., $4,895 per month vs. $28,352 per month).

These results were then replicated during the intervention period with a decrease in claims (60%), lost days (17%) and monthly claim costs (91%). Net Benefits—Given the increased number of days worked instead of previously used as sick leave and improved morale associated with the HPT Program the additional hours worked were both more productive and associated with lower levels of workforce distress. Using the OECD productivity ratio we can calculate the dollar value of these additional hours based on their average hourly rate.

Total Financial Benefit (ROI)—In the Local Government HPT Case Study, using Council's own detailed human resources and productivity data we found that there was a total financial benefit of $6165.00 per employee which was a whopping $684,315.00 able to re-invested into better services for rate payers!

If It Ain't Broke—Then Improve It Before It Does Break

As has been shown, High Performing Teams create enormous financial savings and productivity gains. They also dramatically improve the job satisfaction and quality of team members' work/life experience, and promote innovation and increase the business advantages in an increasingly competitive market. So if you're satisfied with just 'good' performance you can stop reading now. However, if you know that your team

can do better, let's get started! In the next two chapters we will unpack the full High Performance Teams model so you can develop an action plan that will fast-track your team to success and end this section with some real feedback from leadership teams who have been on the journey themselves!

Engagement & Achievement: Fitting In AND Standing Out!

"You can't have your cake and eat it too!"

—Unknown

High Performance Teams: The Secret Sauce

High Performance Teams that achieve sustainable results over the long-term have two co-existing top priorities focusing on maximizing both Achievement and Engagement simultaneously. All teams that are able to achieve sustainable high performance over the long-term share these and other key characteristics. As you can see in the diagram below, High Performance Teams not only rate highly on the two distinct factors of Achievement and Engagement but also, beneath this, they adhere to 4 KPIs of success.
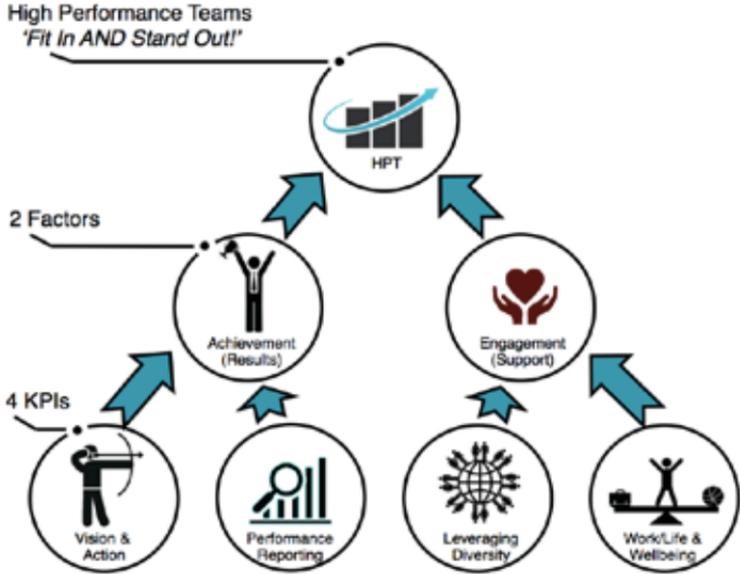
The first factor, ***Achievement***—is about the team's ability to consistently meet and exceed business performance targets and is comprised of two specific KPIs: (1) Clear vision, strategy and actions, and (2) A culture of performance reporting.

Standing Out—What High Achievement Looks Like

A Day in the Life of a HPT—*By Ben De Young*

I was recently working with a consulting team that was buzzing with energy. I was fortunate to be part of their team meeting. Just before the meeting was about to commence the vibe in the room was one of excitement and anticipation.

Team members were talking amongst themselves and you could overhear conversations about winning customers, achievement targets and stretch targets, different personal achievements, and new ways in which team members innovated solutions to solve customer problems.

When the meeting commenced the chair reminded everyone of the company's vision, local team mission, and values and asked everyone around the table to provide and describe 2-3 actions they had taken in the last week to demonstrate these values. One by one each team member enthusiastically described steps they had taken in the past week to help their customers and each other consistent with their team values. After the team had finished reviewing vision, values, and actions they went straight into updates on business activity.

Everyone gave an update on their progress since the last meeting and the team's scorecard was discussed. The scorecard measured the team's self-reported progress on key items they had developed to measure their success and progress on strategic goals. Team members did not 'go easy' on each other or pat each other on the back after each self report. Instead they asked what hadn't worked and what they could do to assist in overcoming any barriers that were reported to achieving both the individual and team goals. It was clear why this team had gone from good to great— they had both a clear understanding of Vision and Action as well as Clear accountability and Performance Reporting Systems.

I have worked with many teams who regularly undertake operational or strategic planning sessions and generate large fancy corporate documents with impressive goals

and grand ideas. Unfortunately, not all of these teams deliver on these like the one I was observing in action that day. This consulting team had regular individual and team accountability check-ins about the alignment between their behavior and team values as well as their progress against key targets at their meetings and they had a system to measure progress on these goals.

The use of these systems resulted in an obsession amongst team members on progressing these objectives, goals and deals as they knew that they would be asked to report their progress to their team members at the next meeting. These systems drove a culture that enabled and encouraged friendly competition amongst some team members as they sought to outperform each other and make the biggest progress or land the biggest deal. Despite the friendly competition, there was still support when a team member was facing challenges in progressing their goals. This was largely because the team's goals and progress was not only measured and reported internally but rather that they had set themselves up in a way that everyone in the organization could see their performance.

They had established a 'Projects Wall' which was displayed on the main wall of a common open-plan office. This made it important for the team as a whole to be achieving as any stagnation or failure to progress reflected on the whole team not any particular individual. This team was able to use some small but very powerful accountability and reporting systems to positively influence their culture to the point where it drove continual improvement and higher levels of achievement within the team. Without such systems and a regular focus on the accountability to deliver

the team and individual goals they would have risked the mediocrity that comes when teams set goals and don't implement a system to regularly measure progress and accountability to these goals.

The second factor is ***Engagement—***the ability to create positive team dynamics to create long-term working relationships and enable innovation based on cumulative knowledge. Within the factor of Engagement we find the remaining KPIs of (3) Leveraging diversity and leading by example, and (4) Supporting wellbeing and work/life needs.

Fitting In—What High Engagement Looks Like

<u>***Being a Member of a Highly Engaged Team***</u>—*By Ben DeYoung*

One of the characteristics that set a high performing team apart from an average team is that they know and support each other's work/life goals. This concept is not about having regular 'group hugs' but rather forming relationships with team members that have a deeper understanding of what is important to them in both work and life. High Performing Teams are clear on their vision, strategy, and have a culture of high accountability in relation to team members delivering on actions and results. When you consider this team environment and add to this the different individual work style preferences and personalities of the various team members, there is potential for occasional relational strain, tension, or even conflict.

High Performing Teams are conscious of these dynamics and while they push each other for higher and higher levels of performance they simultaneously work to understand each other's work/life needs. They invest in the strength of their interpersonal relationships so that they can draw on these when the going gets tough and heighten morale and support when the waters are calmer.

Unlike teams that only have a surface level insight into the work/life needs of members, high performing teams use this deeper understanding to support each other to achieve their needs. By getting team members to openly discuss with each other their work/life plans and goals they are able to identify when someone is looking to progress their career and take on projects or backfill leadership positions in order to learn new skills or gain new experiences. However, High Performing Teams don't assume that every member is always looking to climb the corporate ladder. In fact they acknowledge that some team members may be content to make high performance contributions to the immediate team but are in a more career-stable phase of their life as they concentrate on goals outside of work (i.e., travel, caring responsibilities, etc.). This understanding helps the team to ensure that where possible they avoid creating personal distress to one another by assigning (or not assigning) opportunities, tasks, and projects to team members when this is not aligned with their work/life needs.

High Performing Teams have peer mentoring arrangements in place to both induct new team members as well as support and mentor each other frequently. By regularly rotating the peer support relationships and using communication starters/ice breaker questions at every

meeting they create routine opportunities for team members to share information with each other and facilitate more in-depth conversations between team members.

By having these systems and routine relational tasks in place High Performance Teams are able to build a strong and sustainable balance between both Achievement and Engagement—the secret to High Performance

Leverage Diversity and Lead by Example

Early in my career I found myself in a team where silos were strong and gossip and complaining about other team member's performance had become part of the accepted day-to-day activities. Needless to say, the initial honeymoon of excitement that came with a new role quickly disappeared and my morale fell through the floor. This team was constantly dragging their feet and were so focused on the internal dynamics of the team that they were oblivious to the fact that their levels of customer service had all but disappeared. On a daily basis this team's level of customer service meant we had to deal with disgruntled customers regularly and business was being lost.

Fortunately, I later joined a team that had high levels of energy and performance. This team was regularly winning business and customer satisfaction was high. Comparing the culture of this team to my previous experience it was like night and day. The second team knew and understood how each member would contribute to the success of the team and were clear on their behavioral expectations of one and other. This resulted in a level of self-leadership from each

member that was not evident in my previous dysfunctional team. Each team member knew how to complement each other's strengths to ensure that team goals where met and continual improvement and innovation flourished.

Leverage Diversity—The second of these two teams understood the importance of the diversity within the team and actively sought to understand how they could use this to ensure it was a competitive advantage. They had taken time to understand what each other's strengths were and profiled the team to identify any gaps. They knew who in the team had strengths in 'big picture thinking' vs 'attention to detail', who had strengths and naturally thought more about 'outcomes and deliverables' vs 'people and culture'. This team understood the value of all of these preferences and that too much of a focus on one (i.e., outcomes and not people) would stifle the team's ability to perform at its best. The team would use this understanding to assign tasks and projects. They adopted realistic expectations of each other and thus would ensure big picture thinkers were not given attention to detail tasks such as proof reading final proposals or submissions. This meant that each member contributed at different stages but ensured that the sum of the individual strengths ensured the best performance from the team.

Lead by Example—The other competitive advantage that the second team had unlocked was their ability to each lead by example. In a High Performance Team there are still occasions when members don't see eye to eye on issues or where performance or behavior temporarily drops.

A high-performance team is clear on what they expect from each other in relation to behaviors and performance. This team had developed a clear customer service charter detailing their own expectations of each other's customer service behaviors and performance. In addition, they had developed their own internal team charter which outlined behaviors they classified below the line (unacceptable) and above the line (encouraged). Not only had they taken ownership of these two ideas by explicitly documenting and publicly displaying these charters they had also developed explicit team rules around how to deliver feedback to each other on their performance on these charters when they felt it was required. By taking the time to openly discuss their expectations regarding how and when feedback should be delivered, it empowered each member to raise issues as they occurred and not let them linger or fester until it was finally addressed by the leader.

The concepts of leveraging diversity and leading by example are simple ideas yet they are not often the focus of every team. High Performing Teams understand that some things need to be openly discussed and that they cannot assume each team member has the same initial understanding of what is acceptable or required. By taking the time to clarify their strengths and expectations they are able to leverage diversity, increase their ability to self-manage and lead by example.

Barriers to Sustainable High Performance: 'OR' vs 'AND'

One of the biggest barriers to increase team performance has been described by the term coined by business gurus, Jim Collins, as the 'Tyranny of 'OR'' whereby team members and their leaders believe that they can only operate effectively with one primary focus—either Achievement OR Engagement.

Over the years I have worked with a range of teams and leaders who believe you cannot be profitable and have high levels of achievement if you are focused on team Engagement and support (profit OR support). I have also worked with other teams and leaders who hold the opposite view that you can only create high levels of team Engagement and support if you lessen the focus on Achievement and profit.

This chasm between people who see 'Achievement' as the number one priority versus people who see 'Engagement' as the number one priority leads to inextricably complex and confusing arguments, conflicting strategies, and endless politics— choking the life out of many organizations. The sad tragedy for both the 'Achievement Only' and 'Engagement Only' camps is THEY ARE BOTH WRONG.

To focus on Achievement 'OR' Engagement is the problem in itself as there is already a prejudice against the importance of the other critical factor needed for a sustainably High Performance Team. Think about it … Solely focusing on Achievement may create short-term high performance but excessive competition and isolation will cause low morale and unwanted turnover. On the other hand, solely focusing on Engagement will create cohesion and higher morale but risk organizational failure due to the lack of focus on results.

The solution therefore is not to focus on 'OR', and the choice between Achievement OR Engagement but rather to embrace the antidote to the problem which Collins refers to as the 'Genius of 'AND". That is to let go of the rational and simplistic view that you can only focus on either Achievement OR Engagement and instead embrace the view that Achievement AND Engagement can both co-exist as equally important forces guiding the success of High Performance Teams. This is not to suggest they are somehow in balance and therefore our attention and focus is somehow divided or diminished but rather to seek full, complete and maximum effectiveness in both Achievement and Engagement at the same time. This is made all the easier—as we will see—if the nature and focus of team Engagement and working relationship is seen as planets that orbit around the sun of team Achievement.

Performance Driving Relationships or Vice Versa?

To be able to completely and fully focus on both team Achievement and team Engagement at the same time will either require some extremely bright, multi-tasking, emotionally intelligent, workaholic geniuses or a relatively simple strategy of using the team's focus on performance and Achievement to drive their Engagement and development of workplace relationships.

As we know, team Engagement—which prioritizes maintaining harmonious relationships at the expense of both good business decisions and our own work/life balance—

always ends in disaster. The solution is to stop being relationship focused at the expense of business performance but instead make business performance the content and focus of building effective relationships with team members.

Performance Driving Relationships: Achievement AND Engagement

When we start focusing our communication strategies on business objectives and build team engagement and relationships around the Achievement of work-focused goals and objectives, teams are more satisfied with achieving business objectives and celebrating results. To take the next steps down the road of becoming a sustainably High Performing Team we need to implement some simple yet powerful strategies to address each of the 4 KPIs of Success.

In the next chapter, 'High Performing Teams: The 4 KPIs of Success' we will take a detailed look at simple behavioral strategies you can implement to address each of the 4 KPIs of Success in your workplace and, in turn, become a sustainably High-Performing Team!

High Performance Teams: Fast-track the 4 KPIs for Success

"You can't build a great building on a weak foundation."

—Gordon B. Hickley

The Foundations of Success & High Performance

When teams are struggling with under-performance or conflict (or both) it would be great if we could simply wave a Magic Wand and 'presto!' instant transformation!

While it is true that genuine behavior change and lasting transformation takes time to occur and Magic Wands aren't available yet, it is also true that using the right performance acceleration strategies can fast-track high-performance and save massive amounts of time and money! These strategies are found within the 4 KPIs of High Performance Teams:

- **KPI 1**—A Common Vision, Strategy & Clear Actions
- **KPI 2**—Clear Accountability & Performance Reporting
- **KPI 3**—Leverage Diversity and Lead by Example
- **KPI 4**—Support Team Members' Wellbeing & Work/Life Needs

Implementing effective strategies to address each of the 4 KPIs of success forms the foundations of a High Performance Team, laying the platform for maximizing both Achievement and Engagement.
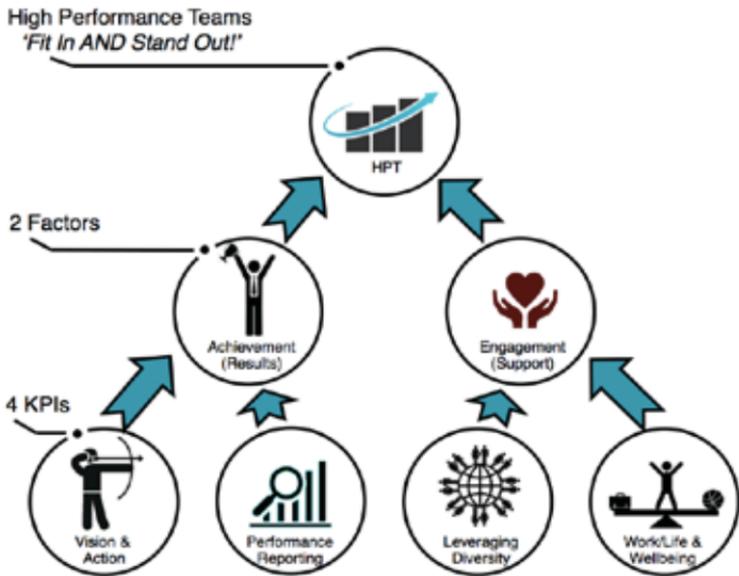
KPI 1—A Common Vision, Strategy & Clear Actions

"Vision without action is just a dream. Action without vision just passes the time. Vision with action can change the world."

—Joel Barker

A high-performance team has common vision and is clear on the strategies and actions they need to perform. Before reading on pause and ask yourself:

- How do you know your team is aligned around vision and action?
- Are the vision, strategy, goals, and accountable actions regularly discussed and endorsed by the team?

Most team leaders struggle to keep themselves clear and accountable to the organizational mission and values and do not prioritize these important foundational messages within the daily or weekly team meetings and discussions. Thus, staff are at risk of drifting away from the core values of the organization and becoming disorientated or disillusioned during times of change.

KPI 1 Insights: The Balcony & the Dance Floor—*By Ben De Young*

'Seeing the forest from the trees' doesn't come naturally to everyone and for some teams there just isn't enough time in the day to slow down and see the forest. Have you ever had one of those days when you have been responding to everyone else's requests, dealing with emerging urgent issues, and before you know it everyone has left the office to go home for the day and you haven't even started on the first thing on YOUR to do list? If you have then you are not alone!

It is easy to miss or lose sight of the big picture when there is so much in your daily in-tray. The constant connected world that we live in means that we are always reachable via smart phones which receive work emails around the clock. With the increasing tendency for people to carbon copy (cc) everyone that they think may be relevant to an email, it is easy to find that you are in information overload. As a result your focus begins to narrow and before you know it the only thing that is on your mind is what you need to complete tomorrow. However to do so means that as a leader you are not able to effectively do your job.

High Performance Teams need to be able to ensure they spend time working in and on their business. Ron Heifetz and co-authors in their book, The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, elegantly described the need for people to spend time on both the 'dance floor' and the 'balcony'. Put simply they describe the narrow focus of attention that occurs when one is on the dance floor. While on the dance floor they are focused on the music, their partner, and

ensuring they don't bump into those around them. This is akin to the day to day tasks that occupy a leaders time. Heifetz describes the different experience and perspective that one can gain from spending some time on the balcony watching the dance floor. From the balcony, observers are more likely to see patterns of behavior (no one is dancing close to the speakers), or that certain songs get more people on the dance floor.

It is important for people to spend time on both the 'dance floor' and the 'balcony' in their roles. Of course the appropriate amount of time for people to spend on each will vary depending on where they are in the organization with those in more senior management needing to spend more time on the 'balcony' and those on front line more time on the 'dance floor'. Nonetheless, all people need to be able to move between the two and be responsive to their changing environments.

The following real life example from one of the largest combined primary and secondary schools (P12) in Queensland shows us the importance of uniting behind a common vision with clear actions in order to be a High Performing Team.

Case Study 1, KPI1: Principal in Large Combined Primary & Secondary School Charts a New Course

One of the largest combined primary and secondary schools (P12) in Queensland implemented the High Performance Teams Program. The college has an ever expanding,

diverse population, spread across two campuses with a broad curriculum offering and high community engagement. Soon after taking on the role, the new Executive Principal set to work to ensure that the staff group was aligned around a common vision and was clear on how their actions contributed to the vision (KPI1). In joining the HPT Program the Principal's goals were to look at the leadership team's current performance and create a clear action plan to ensure the continuous improvement of team and individual performance, together with enhanced teaching and learning outcomes.

We worked with the principal to determine a program design that would best suit the school's needs. The College leadership team commenced a twelve-month program of learning and discovery that was delivered on site, and included regular team performance 'health checks' or 'pulse surveys' and 360 Feedback Assessments.

After the first two workshops where participants rallied around the school vision and created a group action plan, participants found a range of activities particularly valuable.

KPI 1: Take Action Now!

Would we find success indicators such as a 1-5 year strategy map, 30/60/90 day action plans, quarterly vision & strategy meetings, and team check-ins in your organization?

Things you can do:

- 1-5 year strategy maps;
- 30/60/90 day action plans;
- Quarterly vision and strategy sessions;
- Team check-ins.

Strategies you can use:

- Establish protocols for team communication;
- Introduce toolbox sessions—collate responses from people in different roles and schedule regular times to discuss the results as a group;
- Create flowcharts of processes—develop these collectively and decide on the communication plan;
- Develop a clear team charter and mechanisms for reporting on individual responsibilities.

KPI 2—Clear Accountability & Performance Reporting

"If you can measure it, you can manage it."

—Rheticus (1514–1574)

A High Performance Team has clear roles, accountabilities and performance reporting systems that provide transparent

real-time data to keep people focused and accountable. Before reading on pause and ask yourself:

- How does your team regularly measure and report their important performance metrics within the team and to key stakeholders?

Most teams participate in all sorts of metrics about organizational productivity, safety and culture but very few teams actually measure their own team specific culture, engagement and performance metrics nor use such data to maximize team performance. The following real life example from a Financial and Corporate Services Team on the Darling Downs (Queensland, Australia) shows us the true power of KPI2.

Case Study 2, KPI2: Implementing Restructure and Reform, Health and Hospital Services

As part of ensuring the success of a major organisational restructure, a large Hospital and Health Services implemented a High Performance Teams (HPT) strategy to support the formation and alignment of a new Division combining financial, corporate, infrastructure, and information services.

The establishment of a new division within an existing public sector workplace, which had a previous history that was marked by many years of structural stability and inflexible work practices

and systems, provided a significant challenge. This challenge was further complicated by a major overhaul of the funding systems and financial administration of public healthcare across Australia and urgent changes to the collection of activity-based data and reporting across the organisation.

The scale and complexity of change was unparalleled within the organisation over recent times and placed significant strain on all layers of the workforce.

KPI2 (Clear accountability and performance reporting) was familiar ground for this team. Working within finance they used to measuring performance (mainly the financial performance of other divisions), however prior to the utilizing the High Performance Teams framework, they weren't measuring the one thing that would make the biggest difference, their own team's functioning. Focusing on KPI2 and embedding clear accountability and performance around team functioning provided an excellent base to develop change management focused action plans enabling higher levels of team engagement and achievement through the complex transition period.

This significantly reduced incidences of work-related stress, reduced conflict, and fast-tracked the adoption of new technology and systems creating substantial savings and improvement

in the delivery of healthcare services to the community. Over the 12-month implementation cycle a number of measurable improvements were noted: Job Demands improved by 20% to an average of 87.75% in 6 months, suggesting an improved ability to proactively manage workload. Job Satisfaction improved by 11% to an average of 80.5%. Staff Engagement increased by 26% to an average of 61%, which is significantly above expected industry levels (15-30%). This result created a 6 Month ROI Total Benefit for the organisation of $254,951.50.

Beyond the impressive results shown in the data, the teams involved provided extensive feedback about their own satisfaction with the program, and more importantly their surprise and delight about exceeding KPI targets and increased motivation to aim for higher standards and set more ambitious goals for the organisation in the future. A key lesson from this case is that numbers and metrics matter—are you collecting the right ones?

KPI 2: Take Action Now!

Would we find success indicators such as effective team meeting cycles to update & report on action plans, a team self-governance system, and use of regular pulse metrics on organizational health & customer satisfaction in your organization?

Things you can do:

- Create clear accountability for action plans;
- Hold effective team meetings;
- Establish a self-governance system;
- Generate regular pulse metrics on important KPIs

Strategies you can use:

- Use flowcharts to align goals and timelines (your team accountability document);
- Systematise your team process—define individual roles and create cascading accountability documents and timeframes around a review process;
- Appoint a 'moderator' to support the 'chair' in managing team meeting dynamics.
- Create dashboards and metrics measures to report important performance indicators within the team and to key stakeholders.

KPI 3—Leverage Diversity and Lead by Example

"Be the change you wish to see in others."

—Gandhi

"There are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'"

—Saint Paul

A High Performance Team values individual differences and diversity, always leads by example and never mirrors the bad behavior of others. Before reading on pause and ask yourself:

- Is the diversity of personalities, roles, gender, culture, and skills an advantage or curse?
- Does your team lead by example to set high standards or simply mirror the behavior of others?

Many teams have a limited understanding of diversity and as a result only pay the idea lip service, rather than unleashing its real power. The following real life example from the Gold Coast City Council shows what can be achieved when diversity is taken seriously.

Case Study 3, KPI3: Workforce Transformation in Local Government:

Team performance is compromised when unresolved interpersonal tensions lead to conflict, grievances and injury claims. This was the challenging scenario facing an outdoor workforce from the one of the largest Local Governments in Australia prior to beginning the High Performance Teams Program.

Many interpersonal issues begin as misunderstandings or as minor difference of opinions, and this is what was found when the team focused on KPI3 (leveraging diversity and leading by example). Through utilizing a series of short toolbox-based workshops, eCheckIn wellbeing monitoring kiosks, and a parallel frontline leadership training and coaching program the group learned to appreciate difference and rise above conflict.

In the initial pilot period, the results showed a decrease in physical and psychological injury claims of 56% (i.e., 1 per month vs. 2.25 per month in the preceding 12 months), a decrease in lost days of 90% (i.e., 6 days per month versus 58 days per month) and a decrease in monthly claim costs of 83% (i.e., $4,895 per month vs. $28,352 per month). These results were then replicated during the intervention period with a decrease in claims (60%), lost days (17%) and monthly claim costs (91%). Feedback from staff and managers also

reinforced the positive gains shown by the data—setting the organisation on a new and lasting path of workforce transformation and improved service outcomes.

KPI 3: Take Action Now!

Would we find success indicators such as regular team profiling, above and below the line behavior charts, team charters, and peer mentoring systems in your organization?

Things you can do:

- Profile your team's personality types and communication styles;
- Define 'above the line' and 'below the line' behaviors;
- Establish a peer mentoring process;
- Provide training in *communication* skills;
- Provide conflict management training;
- Create a 'customer service charter' for your team's attitude to customers.

Strategies you can use:

- Establish ground rules for communication and use them regularly;
- Establish working parties that are solution-focused;

- Create processes for peer feedback, independent evaluations, and buddy systems.

KPI 4—Support Team Members' Wellbeing & Work/Life Needs

"They who have a 'why' can endure any 'how'."

—Nietzsche

A High Performance Team is supportive of each team members' individual work/life goals and needs and creates flexibility and support for long-term careers within the organization. Before reading on pause and ask yourself:

- Does your team understand and support each other's work/life goals?
- Are there regular time-limited opportunities to get to know the wider needs and interests of staff?

Always connected, always contactable—the devices like phones and tablets that are meant to make our lives easier tie us to our workplaces 24/7. It's hard to take a break.

At the same time that we've never been so connected, we've never been so disconnected. Often, we spend more time with the people that we work with than our families or significant

others. But, just because we spend time with coworkers doesn't necessarily mean that we get to know them. This is a shame because the more we know about each other the more we are able to support each other in achieving personal goals. Everyone has bills to pay, but most people work for a love that is greater than money. It is clear that modernity has put pressure on work/life balance and wellbeing, but as we can see from the real life examples of a remote security services provider and a large national welfare agency, there is a solution at hand.

Case Study 4a, KPI4: Remote Security Workforce (FIFO)

Rapidly deploying hundreds of staff into a remote location for security services provided a complex series of challenges for a remote security services provider. The High Performance Teams (HPT) program was used to provide the framework for a rigorous staff wellbeing and safety system to ensure that high levels of work performance and wellbeing were maintained despite the challenging workplace environment.

Given the challenging and remote nature of the work particular emphasis was directed at KPI4 (Supporting work/life and wellbeing). Frontline supervisor groups were engaged in additional training, support strategies and toolbox education programs. These were delivered on a 24/7 rotating basis along with the use of online delivery methods to ensure key content was received by all staff and ease of access for follow-up support was promoted.

With regards to wellbeing and safety, the results showed (1) wellbeing ratings above 80% despite significant risk events occurring and significant redundancies during the project; (2) increases in self-reported fatigue and safety critical concerns occurred concurrently with declines in wellbeing ratings; and (3) job satisfaction, the ability to manage workloads and management support, were all rated highly with reductions also correlating to increased employee assistance program usage. Further, the return on investment, which included total annual savings based on data pertaining to sick leave, absenteeism, lost time, injuries, and claims was equal to $8,736 per employee—a significant saving to the organisation. Through adopting the High Performance Teams approach the organisation learned that it pays to do the right thing by focusing on employee work/life balance and wellbeing.

Case Study 4b, KPI4: Helping the Helpers: Welfare and Social Services

Welfare and Social Services are at the heart of helping people from disadvantaged circumstances rise above the challenges they face. Needless to say, working in this environment can be very challenging and at times stressful, but also very humbling and rewarding. Staff delivering

frontline services have had to adapt to changing performance reporting systems, funding pressure and regulatory processes. The twin factors of delivering frontline services while also adapting to rapid changes in administration, reporting and work patterns places many frontline welfare staff at risk.

Due to their tireless dedication to helping others, 'Helping professionals' often put their own needs last. This is why it was particularly important for this large national welfare agency to focus on KPI4 (supporting work/life and wellbeing) when taking part in the High Performance Teams Program.

The High Performance Teams (HPT) program was implemented to support team transformation in the context of rapid change as well as increase the focus and quality of peer support and supervision to further maximise workforce wellbeing outcomes.

Over the course of 12 months, there was a marked increase in team performance, service delivery, staff resiliency, co-worker support, manager support and response capability, as well as a reduction in occupational violence incidents. Further, results indicated that there were significant reductions in lost time injuries and grievances as well as improvements in wellbeing and performance, leading to a return on investment of $5,195 per employee accounting for sick leave, absenteeism, LTIs and improved productivity gains.

KPI 4: Take Action Now!

Would we find success indicators such as use of lifeline presentations, work/life strategy plans, peer support systems, work/life updates and communication starters/ice breakers in every meeting?

Things you can do:

- Lifeline presentations;
- Create work/life strategy plans;
- Establish a peer mentoring and support framework;
- Use communication starters in every meeting.

Strategies you can use:

- Conversation cards and ice breakers at meetings;
- Create buddy systems for newcomers and structured induction processes;
- Institute regular wellbeing check-ins and ask for feedback;
- On-board new staff by revisiting activities and exercises the rest of the group has already done.

Quick-Start For Your Team: Only 7 Minutes Per Meeting

Every company has meetings, team huddles, group teleconferences, or other discussions and forums that involve

several people. Whenever a group conversation occurs such as a weekly team meeting, a simple 7-minute investment of time and focus at the start can lead to stunning transformation if applied consistently.

In 7 minutes you can: (1) Confirm team mission and values; (2) Appoint a moderator and confirm agendas and outcomes (2 minutes); (3) Do a one-word barometer to gauge readiness and mood; and (4) Complete a quick icebreaker to get to know team members better (5 minutes). All 4 KPIs achieved in one 7-minute strategy! For those interested in how this would look in a typical meeting agenda see the screenshot below:

HPT Meeting Agenda DDMMYY

Chair:
Moderator:
Minutes:
Attendees:
Apologies:

Item 1	Welcome, Mission & Values & Appointing Meeting Moderator (Red & Yellow Cards)	Chair 2 mins
Item 2	Warm Up One Word Barometer & Communication Starter (Cards)	All 5 mins
Item 3	Team Updates.....	

Your Team & Fast-Tracking the 4 KPIs of Success ...

Take a moment to consider how your team currently addresses each of the 4 KPIs of Success.

- Are you implementing effective strategies to address all 4 KPIs or just focused on one or two and ignoring the others?
- Are your team meetings high-performance in addressing all 4 KPIs in the first 7 minutes or are they an ineffective talkfest?

Start the High Performance Teams conversation with your colleagues today to go from good to great!

So That Was the Easy Part

As you've read this chapter you're probably thinking to yourself this isn't rocket science, there's no voodoo magic here, and you'd be right. The 4KPIs of success are simple, and there are many possibilities for getting started, which are well within the reach of all teams. The hard part is bridging the 'knowing doing gap', turning theory into practice. For many of us it's easy to 'know' what we should do, but it is much harder to put this into practice.

After reading the previous section you probably have an intuitive understanding of how your team is performing on the 4KPIs for success, and some initial ideas about actions you'd like to take to make the leap from good to great. If so, you're well on your way to success. In the final chapter of Part 2 we will look at the transformation journey and understand the various stages of change that teams encounter on the journey to High Performance. Then, in part 3, we help you to bridge the 'knowing doing gap' by inviting you to roll up your sleeves and take concrete action towards leading your High Performance Team. The road ahead may be challenging, but this is where the fun begins!

"Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."
—Winston Churchill

The HPT Transformation Journey: Up Close & Personal

"There is never a right time, only time."

—Kasperi Apell

*"We are what we repeatedly do, excellence is a habit."*

—Aristotle

The HPT Transformation Journey: 3 Stages

As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day—and neither is a High Performance Team. Building and maintaining a High Performance team is a journey, which can be mapped out into three unique stages:

- ***Establishing Foundations***—All teams are different; because of this there is no 'one size fits all' approach to team development. Stage one is about establishing foundations—identifying where your team needs to devote resources and energy for maximum impact, as well as identifying where your team is already excelling.

- ***Drive for Results***—During stage two, you'll start to see the seeds planted at stage one blossom as your team transforms. Self-sustaining momentum for positive change will build as action plans are executed, performance systems begin driving accountability, and team members learn to leverage their diversity while supporting the work/life and wellbeing needs of their teammates.

- ***Coach for Sustainability***—Complacency kills High Performance Teams. During stage three, new strategies and supports are implemented to ensure that new-found levels of 'great' performance are consolidated and sustained while the Team sets its gaze towards the horizon of even greater performance in the future.

Stage 1 Establish Foundations	Stage 2 Drive for Results	Stage 3 Coach for Sustainability
• Baseline assessment • Foundation workshop 1 & 2 • Implement organisational health and performance eCheckIn • 360 Assessment and development planning for leaders	• Quarterly extended team meetings with professional development sessions • Monthly action plan updates in team meetings • Monthly eCheckIn analysis and score carding	• Leadership coaching and support • Continued professional development and intermittent observation and feedback on team meetings and self-governance • Program completion workshop – forward 12-month strategy

When Do I Implement the HPT Framework?

"My team are a bunch of really good and capable people but I want them to stretch and grow."

"By the time you realise you need help it is already too late …"

There are two points in the lifecycle of teams where commencing HPT makes sense

1. In establishing new and exciting goals for growth.
2. In recovering from major challenges.

1. Establishing new goals for growth

One of the best times for using the High Performance Teams framework is in establishing new teams, capitalizing on recent successes or preparing for growth. In these situations the HPT framework is implemented to help teams jump from good to great and build an action plan to enable a sustainable new level of higher performance. 3 of our 5 case studies came from teams in this stage of the lifecycle.

*Education—*Sharon loved a challenge. She had just taken over as executive principal of a very large P12 school (combined primary and high school). With a highly engaged leadership team of 25, 300 staff, and 3000 students she was eager to get a High Performance Teams action plan in place to establish a consistent best practice approach to service delivery across all layers of the school…

Industry—Security Workforce (FIFO)—Steve was excited. He was two years into the general manager role and all the audits were finished, the offshore centre was secure, his training budgets had been released, and he could finally invest in his leadership teams development and get the team onto the front foot in setting a vision and action plan to make the security service world class rather than constantly reacting to problems and simply trying to survive the daily challenges …

Welfare & Social Services—Rick was happy with his statewide team's achievements delivering recovery, welfare, and homeless services but there were a series of new opportunities on the horizon which would stretch his staff further and he needed to have a team support system in place to make the next stage of growth more manageable for the organization…

2. Recovering from challenges

The other (and equally important) time point for implementing the high performance teams framework is when teams have been struggling with conflict and performance issues and need a structured approach to recover from such challenges. The remaining 2 of our 5 case studies in Appendix 1 come from teams in this stage of the lifecycle:

Local Government—John was tired and stressed, at a loss on what could be done to put a halt to the slide on team morale, and the continuing silos and conflicts which were causing grievances, and worker's compensation claims and adverse publicity in the local media. After more than a decade

managing a very large outdoor workforce, he was puzzled and confused about why the problems had gotten so severe and urgently needed to get his teams working together better and refocus on delivery services to the local community …

Health & Hospital Services: Chapter Case Study—For the remainder of this chapter we will zoom in to a single case study on the transformation journey and hear directly from Chief Finance Officer, Scott McConnell, about his own reflections on the High Performance Teams (HPT) journey as he implemented the HPT Framework to support his leadership team in recovering from a period of major restructure and reform.

Scott knew there was something wrong. He was running a large newly-formed division of a health and hospital service with a management team comprising of 20 capable staff but morale was falling, indecision was rising, and despite a new structure and new leaders, the team seemed to be reverting to past bad habits of indecision, analysis paralysis, and blame.

Scott thought he could lead the change process himself—he was an experienced and capable leader. However after months of fruitless effort and rising levels of frustration it seemed no amount of permission giving, role modelling, or team building was helping. They were missing deadlines, internal customers were complaining, and avoidable errors were becoming problematic.

More troubling were the comments made by his own leadership team who appeared to be blaming Scott for all their wider team culture and performance issues and expecting him to fix everything as opposed to taking responsibility themselves.

As Scott put it:

> *"I recognised I needed help with managing my team when one of my directors came to me with "There's a problem with morale in the team and <u>you</u> need to do something about that!" It was that great moment of realisation that I was on my own! For the previous two years the team had been in an almost constant state of flux. Most positions were acting, work was being decentralised away from the Department of Health, we were establishing a new operating model and we had a budget deficit to deal with.*
>
> *Despite the changes to structures and lines of reporting, the team was used to receiving direction from a "higher power", and they continued to resist higher levels of autonomy and instead waited on directions and orders from above.*
>
> *Looking back now, I see that by the time I was asking myself whether it was time to get help with my team the answer was already overdue. My mistake as a senior leader was thinking I could fix it all myself. The journey would have been less painful and delivered quicker results had intervention happened earlier."*

DIY vs Outside Help

"A prophet is without honour in his home town."

—Mark 6:4

In Scott's case, he learned the hard way that *'a prophet is without honour in his home town'*—a biblical quote about why it is difficult for an insider to lead a recovery-driven transformation process due to pre-existing relationships and biases that can cloud judgments. When this happens an outside consultant whom the team has no preconceived judgments about is needed to help teams with change.

However, this is not to suggest you must use outside consultants all the time—quite the opposite, as well established HPTs are self-governing teams with highly evolved processes and supports which do not require outside assistance very often at all. In fact the use of consultants in HPT are designed from the outset to become redundant once the three stages of change are complete and, aside from the first stage and action plan formation most of the HPT journey can be done with only minimal support.

However for some teams choosing the full support options also provides a form of recognition and reward with dedicated individual coaching and development opportunities increasing morale and engagement—yet unlike other offsite unfocused social team building, keeps everyone engaged on building a better organization.

The Three Stages of Transformation

1. Establish baseline

Every team is different. The context in which they work, the goals that they are trying to achieve, the skills and social intelligence of its members all contribute to these differences. During stage one we establish a baseline and identify what makes your team unique. We identify which of the 4KPIs of Success your team needs to devote resources and energy towards for maximum impact, as well as identifying where your team is already excelling. This is done through an initial consultation process with your leadership team where we jointly develop a strategy to implement the transformation program. Foundation workshops are conducted to align team members around the change journey.

Organisational Health and eCheckIn Surveys are conducted in order to provide data to the team, so that the team can become accountable for its own performance. Finally, 360 Assessments for leaders are conducted to ensure that leaders are accountable to those that they lead. With the insight gained during stage one, your team have now taken their first steps towards becoming a High Performance Team.

Case Study: Recovering From Challenges— Health & Hospital Services—A Leadership Perspective by Scott McConnel, CFO

Stage 1—Establishing Baseline:

Reflections on the Journey—During the first establishment workshops it became apparent

none of the leadership team really saw themselves as 'leaders'. These senior staff all had teams beneath them and had the ability and position to influence decisions made in the business. The senior leaders in the leadership team also didn't even really see themselves as leading their teams but rather saw their role as an 'administrator' to the team—manage leave forms, manage recruitment, relieving arrangements, and so on. There was no deliberate strategy on how to improve the performance of the team. Whilst being task focussed there was little future focus— people simply expected me to tell them. Not surprisingly there was little engagement in the leadership team meetings. When we began to develop an Action Plan to address the 4KPIs of Success, being a finance team, the members had very detailed discussions about the tool used to construct the action plan and the manner in which we were reporting results and collecting updates rather than identifying what they would actually do to address each KPI. A lot of the conversation became about the process rather than the outcome.

<u>Unexpected Results</u>—Almost immediately we rolled out a workforce wellbeing pulse survey—a weekly email asking staff 4 questions about their role pressures, satisfaction, and support from co-workers and management. Almost immediately an improvement was seen. A lot of

the lack of morale was actually an institutional memory, a programmed response to say they were overworked, undervalued. When they were asked to stop and think about it they realised that there was significant support within the team and from their managers. Other interventions had not commenced yet and I was amazed that simply asking the staff to stop and think about how they feel generated immediate and lasting benefits of its own accord.

My Own Reaction—They say meaningful change happens slowly. In these early stage I felt it was painfully slow. Getting the team to take ownership of developing and implementing an action plan was not an overnight success. One mistake I made was losing patience with the process and trying to accelerate the action plan by telling them what it should be. Rather than setting a high-level vision and letting the team work through it, I tried to take control of the plan. This didn't speed up the change but rather slowed it down. The best thing I did to accelerate progress was to leave the room. It was not easy for me to do this as it felt like I was losing control of the process. It wasn't long before I had the senior managers coming to me frustrated with the lack of progress. This was the first sign of success. The leadership team was now taking ownership of the action plan and more importantly the lack of progress. They were now driving the change.

2. Drive for Results

Stage two is about normalizing high performance and driving for results. This is done by embedding a series of interventions addressing the 4 KPIs of success into the day-to-day operations of the team. As these activities become embedded self-sustaining momentum for positive change builds. Monthly action plan updates in team meetings, score carding and discussion of team performance data, intensive behavioural training, and coaching support are all core elements of stage two. While consultants support the interventions, the onus is on the team to increasingly develop accountability for the process as they grow in skill and confidence.

Case Study (cont.): Recovering From Challenges—Health & Hospital Services—A Leadership Perspective by Scott McConnel, CFO

Stage 2—Drive For Results:

Reflections on the Journey—By this stage the leadership team meetings were being run by the team but still with the assistance of the external facilitator. The action plan and outcomes were being discussed and reviewed regularly. Trends in workforce wellbeing pulse data were being discussed. Performance was being owned at the local leadership level and the flywheel of productivity was starting to speed up.

However there was still some fluctuation in the levels of engagement and achievement among team members. One key action item from the team was to be a regular newsletter, helping

engage with the wider organisations and foster a better awareness and understanding of the role of our team. It took quite a while for the newsletter to be produced and circulated, with a lot of initial discussion focussed again on the process rather than simply designing the content, getting it done and refining the process along the way.

Unexpected Results—*The leadership team's progress was unexpectedly fast-tracked by the arrival of a couple of new starters into the team. Not having the history of the team they questioned lack of progress against some of the items and lack of engagement by some in the process. This objective questioning by peers appeared to give the team a sense of increased ownership and accountability for achieving the action plan.*

The other surprisingly helpful factor was the action plan itself. No longer did it feel to the team like someone was criticising their performance. Rather there was this inanimate object called a plan that was the focus of discussion. The conversation among the leaders switched from 'why haven't you done this' to 'how are we going to get this done'.

Stage 3—Coaching for Sustainability

By stage three, teams often feel that they are self-sufficient in the art of High Performance. They are correct, they have mastered the processes, however where 'good' was once the

enemy of 'great' now 'great' has become the enemy of 'greater'. This is a crucial time to provide follow-up coaching and team development strategies to ensure ongoing monitoring and accountability towards the team's strategy map and action plan to push towards the next level. During stage three leadership coaching and support, team professional development, intermittent observation, and feedback on team meetings and self-governance are provided as needed.

During the program completion workshop teams are encouraged to look back and celebrate their progress while at the same time look into the future to chart their forward 12-month strategy to levels of performance never before imaginable.

Case Study (cont.): Recovering From Challenges—Health & Hospital Services—A Leadership Perspective by Scott McConnel, CFO

Stage 3—Coach For Sustainability:

Reflections on the Journey—*The meetings were now being run very well by the team with the role of Chair and Moderator rotating among team members and the quality of discussion and debate rated very highly against the 5 Factors of Effective Team meeting dynamics. The team was also positively obsessional about their action plan and most items were being completed well ahead of due dates and there was a strong sense of team pride and camaraderie as goals and stretch goals were completed and new goals were*

set. The internal newsletter was also becoming an increasingly important document raising our profile across the wider organisation with many positive comments received from other department heads and several other executives asking for more information on how they could adopt a similar approach with their teams. This led to 4 other teams in the health service adopting the High Performance Teams Framework and provided a powerful and clear catalyst for further improvement.

It was useful at this point to revisit some of the work that was done with the team leaders during the establishment phase. Team members were so normalised to operating in a higher performance manner they were surprised by the extent of positive change that had been achieved and found it hard to connect with extent to which they had been struggling previously. My own conversations with the senior leaders became less detailed and more strategic. Importantly almost all the discussions about problems raised by the leadership team usually came with some well thought out and realistic (and often quite innovative) solutions.

Unexpected Results—I was surprised how widespread the transformation process had spread. The team almost always use language of 'we' and 'us' when previously it was 'they' and 'them' when to staff. There was a much better engagement by the team across the business and,

despite the reserved, conservative, and feedback averse culture, we saw an increasing volume of positive feedback from their key customers, peers, and other leaders within the organisation.

Sustaining High Performance Teams: A Journey Not a Destination

"Becoming great is one thing but remaining great is another …"

—Jim Collins

After exploring the three stages of the High Performance Teams process and having seen first-hand comments about the experiences of a leadership team recovering from challenges you may have noticed that the development of High Performance Teams is not 'linear' as with other lower-performance teams who have their ups and downs and then disband.

High Performance Teams are not without their fluctuating levels of motivation and engagement, similar to their low performance counterparts (however when issues of motivation and engagement do occur they are dealt with sooner and more effectively), but their development is not 'linear'. The development of High Performance Teams is 'cyclical' as they are on a never-ending journey for improved performance. High Performance Teams are the ultimate iterators, continually reinventing themselves as they redefine success.

High Performance Teams are not 'satisfied'—ever. True High Performance Teams reach the bar that they set

themselves and then raise it. By nature High Performance Teams are demanding; they demand excellence from themselves, and they demand excellence from their leaders. Given the prominent role that team leaders play, it is only fitting that we examine the unique challenges faced by leaders supporting teams on the High Performance Teams journey in the next section of the book. Onwards and upwards!

Part 2: High Performance Teams
1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Forward Actions
1. Becoming a Part of the Solution: The HPT Framework		
2. Myth-busting Team Performance: If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It!		
3. Engagement & Achievement: Fitting in AND Standing Out!		
4. Fast-tracking the 4 KPIs for Success		
5. The HPT Transformation Journey: Up Close and Personal		

Part 3

Leading High Performance Teams

Becoming Great: Leading Teams Through Transformation

"Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline."

—Jim Collins

It's tough at the top. Leading good teams on a day to day basis can challenge even the most experienced leaders' supportive and strategic management skills, and resilience. Leading teams transitioning from good to great magnifies the pressure on leaders further as teams move into a phase of personal and professional growth and change.

Growing pains in the form of conflict, role confusion, problems with trust and respect, adjusting to new levels of accountability and feedback, fluctuating levels of motivation, and change fatigue can test a leader's skills and resilience to breaking point. But it is important not to give up and return to the status quo of 'good'. Those who have triumphed and emerged on the other side can attest that the

rewards of achieving 'great' in terms of team performance, job satisfaction, self-confidence, self-esteem, and personal wellbeing are well worth the effort and struggle.

How then, do we support leaders helping teams transition from good to great so they themselves do not reach breaking point? The answer lies in helping them understand their own skills and abilities as well as the pitfalls and traps that they may inadvertently fall into during times of pressure, challenge and change.

In this final part of the book I want to address the challenge of how to lead teams on the journey towards high performance by examining healthy and unhealthy leadership habits as well as deep dive into specific pressure tests that can strain a leader's skills and coping. In this section I will be addressing the following:

- ***Horrible bosses and healthy leadership habits***—uncover the four most common types of dysfunctional leadership styles and the specific problems they create in disrupting team performance as well as discuss the six healthy supportive and strategic leadership habits of effective leaders.

- ***Pressure Test 1: Soft vs Kind***—lift the lead on supportive leadership at a deeper level to understand the dangers of a 'soft' approach and the healthy tension of the 'rubber band test' that captures the essence of a kind approach to leadership.

- ***Pressure Test 2: Trust & Respect***—understand the importance of trust and respect in leading High

Performance Teams and the paradoxes of showing fairness and credibility to create high levels of trust and respect.

- *Pressure Test 3: Personal Power & Status*— understand the importance of personal power and managing the status dynamic in leading high performance teams and how to avoid the trap of Accidental Arrogance.

- *The Need for Resilience & Role Modeling*— understand what resilience is for leaders managing teams in transition to high performance and how they can look after their wellbeing and role model effective team behaviors to 'be the change they wish to see' in others.

By providing greater clarity on both the challenges of leading teams transitioning to high performance, and skills needed to be effective and resilient, leaders will be better prepped to ensure their teams are able to escape the unhealthy and unsatisfying culture of 'good' and embrace and enjoy the high performance culture of 'great'!

Horrible Bosses & Healthy Habits

"People don't leave companies—they leave leaders!"

—Greg Savage

Did you know that we spend 34% of our lives (approximately 228,708 hours!) at work? Given how much time we invest in our work it is important to be in a job we are happy with, and even more important to have a Champion Boss (or be a Champion Boss if you are a manager yourself!).

Horrible Bosses: Four Leadership Patterns to Avoid

We all know what it is like to have a Horrible Boss—either through firsthand experience or through friends and colleagues. Check out these four common types of horrible bosses:

The 'Laissez-Faire' Leader

Laissez-Faire is a French term which translated means: 'let it be' or 'let them do as they will'. With this definition in mind you can easily imagine the dysfunctional leadership characteristics of the Laissez-Faire leader. Their preference is to avoid responsibility and not interfere with anything either above or below them in the organisational structure. In management meetings they avoid sharing their opinions and go with the status quo. When interacting with their staff they do not provide feedback, do not follow-up on requests for help, do not communicate their views about important issues and remain vague and elusive.

The impact of this style of leadership on staff is quite destructive, with increased withdrawal behaviours among staff who show low discretionary effort and poor performance, eventually leading to complete disengagement and team dysfunction.

The 'Popular' Leader

The popular leader may not initially seem like a dysfunctional leadership style. Popular leaders are, by definition, focused on being 'liked' by their staff. As such, their leadership style has some upsides, namely high support and a very strong focus on positive interpersonal relationships.

However the downsides of a popular leader are low focus on core business, neglect of performance management, avoidance of tough conversations, and a team vs corporate or 'us and them' mentality. The impact on staff working with a popular leader is initially positive with high discretionary

effort among staff to follow directions. However, the over focus on relationships and the lack of focus on core business invariably leads to poor team performance. Instead of addressing the issues, the popular leader engages in upwards bullying by blaming other teams and more senior leaders for issues rather than taking responsibility and accountability.

The 'Command and Control' Leader

Command and Control Leaders, as the name suggests, take the necessary management responsibility of organising and directing teams to unhealthy and extreme levels. The one redeeming characteristic of a Command and Control leader—high clarity—is completely overwhelmed by the negative characteristics of low perceived support, low engagement, poor communication, neglect of developmental feedback, and an over-emphasis on corrective feedback. The impact of this dysfunctional leadership style on the team is vast and includes a stigma about reporting personal problems, low discretionary effort, low innovation, increased withdrawal behaviours, fear, intimidation, and conflict.

The 'Follow the Rules' Leader

"What's wrong with a leader following the rules?" I hear you say.

Nothing at all—unless of course it is taken to the extremes and becomes the only focus of leadership activity at the neglect of everything else. The 'Follow The Rules' leader

is characterised by a strong focus on rules and procedures, low perceived support, a reactive people focus, high clarity, everything is black or white, and low engagement. When under pressure, they tighten adherence to the rule.

The impact of this dysfunctional leadership style on staff includes a reluctance to report problems, low discretionary effort, low innovation, increased withdrawal behaviours, harassment, and conflict.

Champion Bosses: 6 Healthy Leadership Habits

While many of us may have had to work with one or more horrible bosses in our careers, we may have also worked with several Champion Bosses but in all the mayhem and confusion of work and life may not have realised it at the time.

A Champion Boss isn't necessarily a boss who gives you everything you want but rather a boss who can bring out the best in you at work and make the workplace both engaging and profitable for the whole team. Champion Bosses are able to both (1) drive team performance and (2) effectively support staff by engaging in six Healthy Habits.

There are six Healthy Leadership Habits of Champion Bosses. Three Habits help drive team performance and the other three assist in effectively supporting staff.

Healthy Habit No. 1: Communicating Vision & Strategy

Champion Bosses have a great ability to regularly and clearly communicate to team members the short- and long-term vision and strategy of the organisation at both a global and team-specific level.

Healthy Habit No. 2: Showing Credibility & Getting Results

Champion Bosses are able to effectively demonstrate their own competence and to perform their role and get the team to deliver credible results at both the team and organisational level.

Healthy Habit No. 3: Providing Feedback & Development Opportunities

Champion Bosses are always on the lookout for opportunities to give and receive both positive and constructive feedback as well as provide developmental opportunities to team members in a way that is fair and equitable to all.

Healthy Habit No. 4: Being Trustworthy

Champion Bosses are able to create an environment of honesty and trust by being an effective listener and never

sharing in any negative gossiping. By being trustworthy, Champion Bosses help team members openly share their needs and concerns.

Healthy Habit No. 5: Providing Motivation & Encouragement

Champion Bosses have a great ability to motivate and encourage team members based on their individual needs and preferences. They are great at knowing what makes each individual 'tick' and can use friendly nicknames, jokes, small talk, and have goal driven conversations to make people feel encouraged and motivated at work.

Healthy Habit No. 6: Supporting People's Career & Personal Goals

Champion Bosses take the time to understand the career and personal goals of their team members and then provide feedback and support to help them when opportunities emerge.

Champion Bosses: What Healthy Habits Does Your Boss Have?

If we take a good hard look at our leaders (and ourselves) it is easy to find fault but not always as easy to see the Healthy Habits our Bosses may already have. It is just too easy to cut

down the tall poppy when they try to change for the better, or crush the seeds of hope when only a few redeeming features may be evident.

One of my all-time favourite sayings is about seeing the glass half full rather than half empty. I always try to encourage people to focus on the positive characteristics of their bosses. So take some time now to reflect and ask yourself the following questions:

How many different bosses have I had over the years and how would I rate each boss in terms of the 6 Healthy Habits to Drive Performance and Support Staff?

Focus on my current boss:

1. What habits are they already a Champion in? When was the last time I gave them some positive feedback about this?

2. What areas do they need to improve on and how could I support and encourage their Healthy Habits?

   Focus on myself as a Boss (whether you are currently a Boss or may one day become a Boss): what are my strengths and development opportunities across each of the six Healthy Habits of a Champion Boss?

By taking the time to assess and support the six Healthy Habits of the Champion Bosses around you, as well as setting your own leadership growth goals, you will be on a path to greater success and happiness in your workplace!

Pressure Test 1:
Soft vs Kind:
The Rubber Band Test

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors."

—African Proverb

I have confessed to a life of 'people pleasing' at work—giving in to the demands of others, rescuing them from their problems—only to be hated and vilified when eventually I put some boundaries in places and said 'no'. I felt confused and bewildered by this until recently, when I got to spend the day with Liz Wiseman—HR Guru and author of 'Multipliers'—and she shared some insights that dramatically changed my approach to leadership at work!

Soft vs Kind—Common Mistakes of Supportive Leaders

I thought bad leaders were easy to spot because they were the uncaring, aggressive, lying, back-stabbing scumbags that made the hair on the back of your neck stand up in alarm when they walked into the room. But there is another group of bad leaders, the softies (like me—ouch!)—always being nice, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile. In her book Liz classified these people as 'Accidental Diminishers'.

Accidental Diminishers

Accidental Diminishers are people who:

a. Inadvertently use their care and concern to the point of becoming 'The Micro Manager'
b. Through the motivation to protect others from mistakes become 'The Decision Maker'
c. Through their own deep knowledge of the business become 'The Know It All'.

I felt really uncomfortable about these terms particularly given I had fallen into all of these traps so many times myself despite my good intentions.

Sitting with Liz that day in Sydney I felt compelled to (foolishly) challenge her view—is being soft (i.e., being an accidental diminisher) really that bad? After all, what's wrong with sharing your vast knowledge and expertise, making

the final decisions to protect others, and providing close supervision to prevent mistakes?

As we chatted about this she made a very important point about the dual responsibilities of a leader to ensure the wellbeing of their staff as well as the sustainability of the organisation—and being soft on staff could end up lowering productivity and performance to the point of business failure, costing them their jobs and placing their families in severe financial hardship. The alternative to this was not about a 'hard' approach but rather a 'kind' and fair approach. She illustrated this with a simple rubber band.

Soft vs Kind—The Rubber Band Test

Liz did a quick role play where she held one end of the rubber band (in the role of manager) while a colleague held the other end (in the role of as a staff member). She then talked through the possible scenarios: The rubber band becoming too tight and breaking, or too loose and having no tension or energy to hold things together. Liz translated the actions of too much or too little tension in the rubber band to good and bad leadership practices and staff responses—too much tension to the point of stress and conflict, or too little tension to the point of idleness and apathy.

In the ideal situation the manager creates some healthy tension (but not too much) while the staff member steps forward to reduce tension and in doing so makes progress on work goals. The manager then increases the tension again in a positive direction and the staff member responds with the process repeating increasing productivity and performance.

Liz pointed out that the constant balancing to get the right amount of tension by the manager is an act of kindness in itself, as it allows the staff member to remain supported and prevents overload whilst still enabling them to achieve goals that sustain and improve the business.

A Kind Approach: The Need For Courage & Clarity

The idea that the key role of a manager is to provide the right amount of tension for staff performance without causing burnout or apathy was so simple yet had defeated me for much of my career. As I pondered over this I concluded that two other ingredients were needed by leaders to make this work:

1. Clarity of purpose
2. The courage to stand alone

'Clarity of purpose' refers to the leader's need to be clear on the organizational and team goals, and be able to break this down into hourly, daily, and weekly targets so realistic and achievable individual goals can be set and people are clear on what is expected. The 'courage to stand alone' refers to the leader's ability to wear criticisms without losing self-confidence nor becoming aggressive and thus be able to keep being 'kind' towards staff whilst focusing them on the goals that create success for the team and the organization.

Soft vs. Kind & You?

Does your leadership style match the kindness of the rubber band approach or are you too hard or too soft? Do you have the clarity and courage needed to be a successful leader?

Pressure Test 2:
Trust & Respect =
Credibility & Fairness

"I can't follow a leader I don't trust and respect!"

"You have to first earn my trust and respect before I will follow you!"

Do you agree? Two simple statements I have heard from many disgruntled employees that highlight how important it is for staff to feel that they can both trust and respect their leaders. The wisdom of hindsight has shown the failure of a company often begins with a breakdown in trust and respect between a leader and their team which then spreads like a virus, infecting the whole organisation.

Trust is arguably the most important element of a successful workplace. Much of the recent employee engagement research shows that when trust is eroded there is a corresponding decline in organizational performance, lowered morale, and an increase in turnover. High trust organizations earn a level of loyalty from all stakeholders including employees, customers,

suppliers, distributors, and investors that other organizations cannot match.

Trust & Respect: What Are We Really Talking About?

The specific meanings behind the use of the words 'trust' and 'respect' vary widely among people who use such terms. When I am listening to people who say they have a *'lack of trust and respect for their leaders'* I hear several different types of issues emerge beneath the surface of their complaints.

The Two Deeper Issues Behind Trust & Respect:

Aside from obvious inappropriate or unethical behaviour—which should never be tolerated, there appears to be two different types of issues sitting beneath the surface of trust and respect problems.

The first deeper issue underlying trust and respect problems with leaders seems to really be about an employee's lack of face-time or opportunity to interact with their leader about their job and to feel listened too (*'I have a lot of ideas on how to improve things but never get the chance to provide feedback, or if I do, I can tell they don't really care anyway'*).

The second deeper issue underlying trust and respect problems with leaders seems to be less about 'face time' with their leader and more about a lack of regular disclosure information and performance data in an open and transparent manner (*'we only get told when there is a problem, but are otherwise left in the dark'*).

In my role as an Executive Coach, I needed to not only understand what a lack of 'trust' and 'respect' really meant, but also to translate these potentially ambiguous negative perceptions into clear and specific issues that leaders could understand to help them take practical steps to build trust and respect between themselves and their team.

After two decades of managing conflict, dysfunctional teams, and leadership coaching, I can honestly say that aside from obvious intentional psychopathic behavior the most accidentally damaging actions of a leader in the area of trust and respect are in their failure to understand how to effectively demonstrate 'credibility' and 'fairness' to their teams—let me explain …

Trust & Respect: The Outcome of Credibility & Fairness

Showing Credibility as a Leader: What You Don't Know is More Important

Credibility is not so simple for a leader to show. If they brag and out-smart everyone they are seen as arrogant and egotistical. If they run around flapping their hands in the air telling everyone '*the sky is falling and I don't know what to do*' they are seen as weak and incompetent. What to do?

Clearly we need to find some middle ground between the two extremes above. That is, to show competence and credibility I must be able to share some relevant knowledge of the topic BUT this should lead me to ask questions of the team about their deeper understandings and how they apply

their own skills to the subject to create great results (and also ask what I can do as their manager to help them get even better results).

By sharing not only your knowledge but also your knowledge gaps and asking questions, you (1) show your openness and vulnerability (a great 'trust' builder) and (2) show the team you have some relevant knowledge AND enable them to genuinely input into the understandings, knowledge and success of not only their role but the wider team and, in turn, the organization (showing your 'respect' for their contribution—which they in turn will 'respect' you for).

Showing Fairness as a Leader: Transparency and Integrity are the Real Issues

Fairness in an organisation is at times impossible. If there are two candidates but only one job, then by default someone must miss out. If there are two people who need training but only enough resources to train one, then a decision must be made. In families, the same problem of fairness applies with parenting children, it is impossible to spend exactly the same amounts of time and energy with each child.

The solution is not to try to constantly adjust and equalize but rather be open and honest about the imperfection, and at times, the inequality of decisions whilst acknowledging and committing to always trying to find the fairest approach to all.

"Hmmm, are you saying that by admitting we are unfair and explaining why, paradoxically people will then feel like we are showing fairness as a leader?"

YES!

Remember, almost all problems of fairness are really problems of trust. People do not understand 'why' things happened nor how you came to your decisions—therefore they assume a personal negative bias. Once you share the information surrounding your decision and the effort you made to 'try' to be fair, they are more likely, despite possibly missing out on the opportunity, to have a better grasp of the ethics and morals behind you decision and in turn feel like you have greater integrity as a leader and thus 'trust' you more.

Trust & Respect: How Do You Show Credibility & Fairness?

Here are some questions for you to consider:

1. **Does your team trust and respect you as a leader?** What do you do to show them you are credible and fair-minded in your approach to making decisions? Remember the rule 'don't tell me—show me', and make sure your updates and interactions with staff 'show' them the reasoning, detail and transparency behind all the challenges and imperfections that sit beneath the day-to-day decision making you face, and they will find you both credible and fair minded despite the knowledge gaps and unavoidable biases you may need to overcome.

2. **As a team member yourself, do you trust and respect your leaders?**
   Do you allow them sufficient grace and tolerance—knowing how hard the leadership journey can be? Do you provide your leaders clear and specific feedback about what you need from them in terms of information sharing, support and feedback OR are you too harsh in your judgment and too quick to find fault?

My Trust & Respect Quick-Start

On a personal note, when it comes to earning trust and respect from others, not only do I strive to practice what I preach, but I also find it helpful to regularly reflect on these two powerful and ancient religious sayings: '*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*' AND '*As you judge others, so you will be judged*'**.**

Pressure Test 3:
Power, Status & Accidental Arrogance

"First impressions count."

—Unknown

First impressions count. The success of boardroom negotiations, job interviews, sales calls and first dates often hinge on those first few moments.

Have you ever had a bad vibe about someone you just met? Something was not quite right … they may have seemed vague, elusive, confused, or maybe over-confident, arrogant, stuck-up. Alternatively have you ever been surprised by feedback suggesting you gave off a vibe completely opposite to how you were feeling?

My Accidental Arrogance

I remember a public speaking event I did were I felt scared and anxious yet people later told me (and the comments on my feedback sheets also confirmed) that I sounded arrogant and dismissive!!?? I was confused and even more anxious about public speaking—worried giving off the wrong impression. It took years for me to fully understand what I was doing wrong. Eventually I overcame my accidental arrogance once I fully understood the concepts of personal power and the status dynamic.

Personal Power

Amy Cuddy is one of my heroes. Not only for her personal story of overcoming serious head injuries to regain an academic career; not only for her brilliant research on the psychology of power, influence, nonverbal communication, and prejudice, but also her desire to help people improve their self-confidence through a technique she calls 'Power Posing'.

Power Posing is about adopting specific powerful postures prior to communicating (i.e., body outstretched—arms up in victory; lean back on a chair fully extended with arms crossed behind your head; or standing talk leaning forwards with your hands on your hips (AKA the 'Wonder Woman) which her research has shown, that if held for 2-3 minutes, change your neurochemistry enabling you to appear more assertive and confidence regardless of any other factor. Conversely less powerful poses (i.e., sitting slumped or cross legged and hunched over in a chair, or standing with your head

looking down and shoulders rolled forwards change your neurochemistry making you look more timid, vulnerable and afraid.

Amy's TED talk—which everyone should watch and then get their spouse, kids and everyone else they know to watch too, is one of the most viewed TED talks of all time! As awkward as it felt the first few times I tried adopting power poses as part of my preparation for public speaking the results were compelling. As I went on stage I genuinely felt much calmer and less anxious then previously and this sense of calmness usually lasted for most of my presentation. With my nervousness and shaking hands now under control I was off to a good start in overcoming my accidental arrogance—but there was one other important ingredient I needed to understand—the concept of the status dynamic.

The Status Dynamic

The other part of the puzzle to overcome my accidental arrogance involved learning how to shift the status dynamic. Wherever there are two or more people communicating there is a relationship. Wherever there is a relationship there is a status dynamic where people adopt higher or lower status positions depending upon the circumstances.
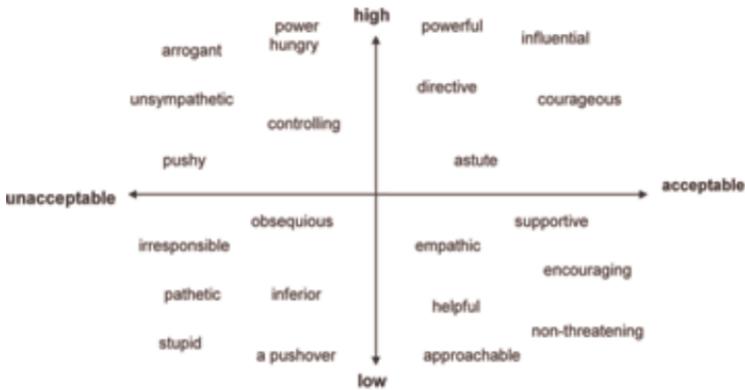
As you can see in the diagram people who are effective High Status communicators are often seen as carrying a sense of confidence in themselves and their capacity to make the right decisions. However if people are High Status and ineffective communicators they can be seen as arrogant or unsympathetic. Effective Low Status communicators are seen as actively committed to assisting in the interests of others. However, if people are low status and ineffective they can come across as an inferior or a push over.

The Status Dynamic at Work

In healthy relationships, different people adopt High Status and low status positions as is appropriate. For example, when a leader is required to determine the outcome of a situation, they must adopt a higher status. They must carry that sense of confidence in themselves and their capacity to make the right decisions. However, when a leader gets stuck in this mode, they run the risk of being seen as inaccessible, uncaring, or

arrogant. This is unhelpful when others require support, empathy, or encouragement to demonstrate the value they bring to the business. There are times when using a lower status encourages confidence and a sense of power in others.

When a leader adopts a lower status they become more accessible, supportive and humble. They can effectively communicate that they are genuinely committed to serving the interests of another, yet to get stuck in a Low Status mode is to run the risk of being perceived as weak minded, incapable, and inferior. Clearly, the ideal is to have a flexible style using both High and Low Status as is appropriate to the circumstances.

Importantly people generally have a default a status position where they feel more comfortable or safe—which is either primarily high or low status—and may not be aware of this default position causing them all sorts of problems. Some people resist holding status for fear of appearing to be arrogant or a 'tall poppy'. Some resist dropping to a lower status because they don't want to be perceived to be unimportant or inferior. However people who are comfortable in themselves and highly self-aware fear neither high nor low status. They have a strong sense of self and the capacity to change their status according to the situation.

Reversing My Accidental Arrogance

So with a new understanding of how to use power posing as part of my preparation before speaking in order to look and feel confident as a speaker combined with the ability to move between High and Low Status to show humility and

connection with the audience during my presentations I was finally free of my public speaking curse! And the feedback forms and evaluations on my presentations no longer said 'arrogant' but rather 'confident, warm, helpful, enthusiastic' all words which matched my underlying intentions as a communicator!

Power & Status: Are You Sending The Wrong Message?

Not everyone suffers from accidental arrogance but many of us have accidentally sent the wrong message or given off the wrong vibe to others but could not understand why. Whether we come across too weak or too strong is not just their perception but also something we can influence and control by using power posing to prepare ourselves and shifting the status dynamic when communicating.

It is my sincere hope that if you have struggled like me, you now have some very practical things you can do to make sure you feel empowered and well prepared, and able to adopt a flexible approach to communication showing your audience your strength and confidence as well as your commitment and humility—who you genuinely are!

Going the Distance: Resilience & Wellbeing

Resilience to Go the Distance

Have you ever worked as a manager, supervisor or team leader? Have you ever had to manage staff who are not performing well or in conflict with other members of the team?

I was speaking with some friends recently who are management consultants that advise companies on leadership and strategy. The conversation focused on why organisations perform well. My friends believed there were only three key factors that influenced this:

1. The frontline manager's leadership skills in managing their staff
2. The wider culture of the organisation, and
3. The ability to execute strategy effectively. I disagreed with them as I believed there was something missing from their list.

The Limits of Culture, Strategy & Skill

The three factors of Culture, Strategy and Skill made a lot of sense to me in explaining organisational performance, however after many years working as a consultant in leadership and organisational change I have been increasingly uneasy about the idea that these three things explain all the problems in workplaces. I have also always felt uneasy about the idea that the leaders of an organisations are solely to blame for all business failures.

After all, let's be frank, whilst leaders are ultimately responsible, if we push all of the responsibility onto the organisation leaders alone, we may create a vacuum of responsibility among the staff and the risk of an escalating pattern of blame and entitlement may emerge.

When I suggested to my friends that there was more to it than leadership skill, culture and strategy they immediately provided a series of case examples to prove me wrong. Military Teams Operating in life-threatening situations, Sporting Teams going from the bottom to the top, Corporations in a dynamic growth phase.

This all made sense and I had to agree in these cases but I added that I felt the tipping point was the element of personal accountability within the culture of these teams. Think about it. No matter how strong your leader is, if you don't take personal responsibility in military settings it can be a situation of life and death. On the sporting field no matter how good a coach is or how good your offense is unless players are accountable for their opponent then one player's mistake can lose a championship for their team members.

But what about where the majority of us work? The businesses both large and small in our local areas and the

public service agencies who, unlike the elite military and sporting agencies or fast-moving corporations, do not have the same level and consistency of high pressure challenge and single-minded objectives. I have seen some really toxic workplaces where there were clear values, good leaders and strong emphasis on strategy yet leaders were burning out and staff were distressed and complaints were rife.

In these cases, it seemed that the role of personal accountability among employees was lacking and management were to some extent powerless to do anything due to threats of service disruption, business failure or complaints and legal challenge. When personal accountability was missing from the team culture individuals filled their time with unproductive behaviours which resulted in politics and conflict.

Personal Accountability in Staff: The Journey of a Thousand Miles …

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

—Lao Tzu

As I looked deeper into the issues facing these leaders, I became concerned that they needed more than just leadership skills training, and culture and strategy programs to face their team management challenges. In effect, what is being asked of leaders in these difficult situations is to increase their team members' own levels of personal accountability. This can be a difficult and at times, lengthy process, during which the leader may continue to be exposed to the distress of the team as they adjust to change. To cope with this, leaders need to be

extremely resilient and able to manage high levels of conflict and stress. Leaders also need to keep themselves motivated (often over a much longer time frame then expected) in order to create enduring workplace behaviour change and sustainable levels of improved performance.

Building a Resilient Leader

In workplaces where personal accountability seemed to be lacking I found myself spending more and more time providing coaching and training programs helping leaders develop their own resiliency skills and stress management whilst they patiently endured the very gradual process of change and reform—the journey of one thousand miles.

Are You a Resilient Leader?

How resilient are you as a leader? If you have already got the humility, wisdom, and skills to develop the strategy and support your team (if not then this is a high priority) but are still struggling with difficult behaviours and the slow process of change then you are at risk of burnout unless you can increase your levels of resiliency.

Remember that it is true leaders are ultimately responsible, however employees are also responsible too—and where there is a failure in the partnership between managers and staff to build a sustainable organisation leaders may have to endure very difficult and stressful periods of time as the change process either improves performance or staff move on to more suitable roles.

Take some time out today to do a quick self-assessment about your resiliency and wellbeing and ask yourself about how you will maintain this as you lead your organisation over the next 12 months and beyond.

Wellbeing: Looking After Yourself and Your Team

Teams which are in transition from 'good' to 'great' levels of Team Performance are, at times, stressful places to work. This is due to the demands of managing team motivation and behaviour, working with multiple stakeholders and competing agendas, and effectively working as a part of a wider team of professionals—all of whom encounter their own work and life pressures.

In order to thrive, as opposed to merely survive the day-to-day pressures it is vitally important to prioritise your own wellbeing and stay fit and healthy. Staying fit and keeping to a healthy body weight is not always easy. Rates of obesity and excess weight are alarmingly high in many western nations. Australia is ranked as one of the fattest nations in the developed world, with almost 60% of the population overweight or obese.

But there are some reasons for this. We are busier than ever and have less time for exercise and healthy eating. The reality of working full-time and running a busy family makes time for fitness and healthy eating much harder. It is just too easy to simply collect drive-through takeaway after a 'crazy busy' day and then collapse on the couch exhausted.

One of the negative cycles that occurs when we face life's challenges is lowered energy levels and heightened fatigue.

Combine this with some weight gain and before you know it you can get into a negative cycle of low self-esteem and low motivation. This makes staying fit and healthy even harder.

Keep Yourself Motivated

When you don't have goals to achieve or fail at achieving your goals you can become disappointed, disillusioned and de-motivated, and have problems with low self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to the general belief that we are able to cope with the challenges of life and are worthy of happiness. People who have low self-esteem may take fewer risks in life. This is often due to fear of failure. It significantly limits our opportunities both personally and professionally. Further, people with low self-esteem may neglect their own needs.

In order to keep yourself motivated to stay fit and healthy and prevent your self-esteem from getting low, set some achievable exercise and diet goals and fulfil them. You will feel both a sense of accomplishment with achieving your goals as well as the health and fitness benefits. You will also be more confident and motivated to set and achieve bigger goals as one small success builds upon another.

Staying Fit and Healthy: Important Foundations

Research shows that having a high level of physical fitness actually provides a buffer to help manage the effects of stress, anxiety and depression. It also assists recovery from illness and injury. Conversely, being unfit makes us more at risk of

illness, infection and disease. The three important foundations to fitness and good health are sleep, diet and exercise.

Sleep

Too little sleep will slow down your metabolism and make weight gain a higher risk. It will also leave you tired and fatigued with less energy to exercise. Tiredness and fatigue can also heighten cravings for comfort food with higher levels of sugars, fats and caffeine.

Diet

Diet is an obvious area of focus when talking about staying fit and healthy. Firstly the amount of food we eat is important. Eating too many calories leads to excess energy which leads to excess weight gain. So eat in moderation. The amount of food we eat is also important for weight loss. Diet is responsible for 70% of weight loss results while exercise accounts for 30%. Secondly the types of foods we eat are important when staying fit and healthy. Remember the healthy food pyramid. Eat more fruit and vegetables and less fats and sugars.

Exercise

Exercise burns excess calories, and increases aerobic fitness which also helps our immunity and sends endorphins to the brain—giving a euphoric sensation at the end of a solid

workout. Exercise also helps regulate and improve our sleep-wake cycles. It is even more important to go for a jog or walk when you're tired and don't want to than when you do, hence the need to stay motivated.

By keeping yourself motivated with lots of achievable goals in the areas of sleep, diet and exercise you can stay fit and healthy—giving you an extra boost when managing life's challenges. By making sure you have healthy mind-sets, staying connected with your sense of purpose, and managing your emotions effectively you can optimise your wellbeing. This will prevent a lot of the problems associated with stress, anxiety, and depression; lower the risk of illness, injuries, and disease; and enable you to become an extremely resilient leader able to help teams manage the challenges they face on their journey to becoming High Performance Teams!

Venturus Est Optimus!

Part 3: Leading High Performance Teams
1 Page Action Plan

Topic	Key Learnings	Forward Actions
1. Horrible Bosses & Healthy Habits		
2. Soft vs Kind: The Rubber Band Test		
3. Trust & Respect = Credibility & Fairness		
4. Power, Status & Accidental Arrogance		
5. Going the Distance: Resilience & Wellbeing		

Afterword

The Missing Link

Fast-Tracking Sustainable Culture Change

"The easiest way to get people to do the right thing is to make the right thing the easiest thing to do."

Since the initial development of the High Performance Teams (HPT) Framework, we have supported thousands of leaders and teams through the HPT Journey. We have celebrated many successes as people found their work more enjoyable and sustainable and their workplaces thrived due to higher levels of productivity and team performance.

On the surface the positive results were at times hard to believe, yet when you looked deep into the transformation journey of most teams there were plenty of struggles and setbacks along the way. By far the biggest struggle most teams faced was in the area of 'sustainable culture change'; moving beyond simply learning about HPT and trying out new skills and strategies in workshops and seminars, into actually embedding these new behaviours into their workplace amidst the ongoing urgent issues, crises, organisational changes and personal challenges all teams must face.

It was during the mid-program follow-up sessions held with a multitude of teams that these setbacks and struggles with change were shared. A deeper analysis of these problems with change management showed that many people had overly optimistic/unrealistic ambitions for sudden turnarounds in team behaviour and/or were using poorly thought-out change management strategies for team transformation. These same people were very hard-working, well-intentioned people— some of whom suffered a lot of guilt and self-blame when changes did not work out as expected. This level of difficulty and personal struggle rang alarm bells to us, telling us something was missing in our approach to supporting team transformation.

In subsequent mid-program follow-up sessions we found ourselves increasingly focused on (1) not only encouraging people to be tolerant and forgiving of themselves and others as they persevered with the journey of team transformation, but also (2) reminding them of the fundamental psychological principles that underpin effective change management— in particular, the four success factors needed to fast-track sustainable culture change. And, as this additional change management training and support strategy progressed, we increasingly referred to it as the 'missing link' between understanding why teams fail and successfully undertaking the journey to become a high performance team.
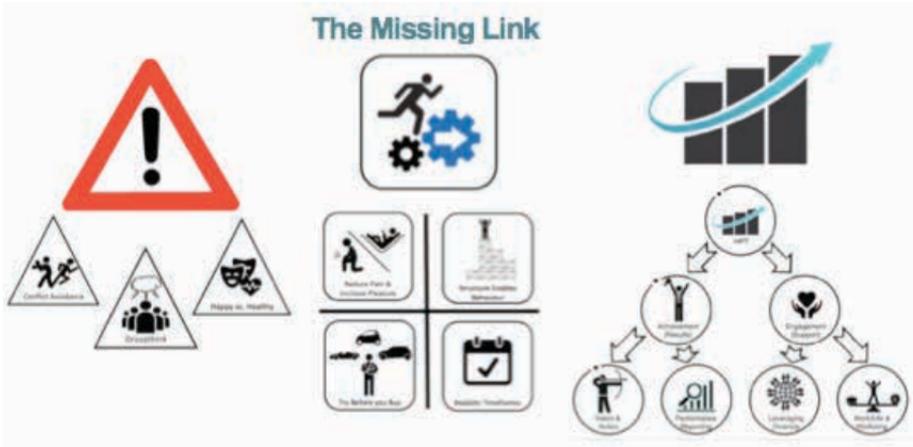
Fast-Tracking Sustainable Culture Change: The Four Success Factors

Let me spare you a boring lecture on sociology and psychology theory on organisational change and instead give you a quick outline of the four most important factors to consider when introducing changes to your workplace.

1. **Reduce Pain/Increase Pleasure.** For people to become genuinely interested in your product or initiative, they will need to feel a degree of pain to stay as they are and also believe that your offering will reduce pain and increase pleasure (Behavioural Psychology).

2. **Structure Enables Behaviour (but not vice versa).** Changing the structure or environment people work in can fast-tack changes in behaviour when we make the

Structure Enables Behaviour

new behaviour the easiest thing to do. Alternatively, people may aspire to change their behaviour and even attempt to adopt new behaviour, but unless the structure in the environment supports these changes, the result will not last (Safety Culture Design Principle).

3. **Try Before You Buy.** For people to make a genuine commitment and 'buy-in' they will need to have been exposed to your offering (i.e., they have heard about or

Try Before you Buy

seen it) approximately 20 times (Smith's Advertising Theory) and/or experienced it personally at least 3 times (Krugman's Theory).

4. **Realistic Timeframes.** It is widely accepted that a carefully planned new product or initiative will take twice as long as predicted to deliver, while a poorly planned new product or initiative will take 3 times as long as predicted (Project Management Theory).

There are two other very important factors that missed my Top 4 cut-off that I'll mention here as well. Firstly, regarding changes to internal moods and attitudes, in the absence of any consistent additional support it will take 8-12 months for a person to significantly change their attitudes and behaviours to enable recovery from conditions such as depression (NHS UK). Secondly, learning new languages that closely match your current language through full-time study and immersion will take at least 10-12 months or 2-3 years part-time (US Foreign Services Institute).

What does all this mean? Well, when it comes to culture change, these principles help me understand (1) the error score I should apply to my own planning in terms of how long it will take for my culture change initiatives to work (i.e., at least twice as long as carefully planned); (2) the typical timeframes and points of contact people need to have with new change initiatives to make genuine and lasting changes to their behaviour and language in the workplace; (3) the genuine personal benefits of the new change (or lack thereof)

in reducing pain and increasing pleasure; and (4) the need to modify the structure/environment related to the change so the new behaviour becomes the most logical and easiest thing to do.

Fast-tracking sustainable culture change therefore is about making sure these 4 Factors are incorporated into any initiative to shorten the timeframe needed to achieve a sustainable result. Where one or more of these 4 Factors cannot be adequately addressed then we will need to develop (a) compensatory strategies and (b) adjust timeframes back to normal change management parameters.

"Fast-tracking sustainable culture change is about making sure the 4 Success Factors are incorporated into any change management initiative to shorten the timeframe needed to achieve a sustainable result."

Predicting Timeframes for Culture Change

When we seek to introduce new proactive culture change initiatives into a workplace our strategies can target a number of different aspects of workplace culture.

At a theoretical level, Daniel Kim's model 'Levels of Perspectives' neatly highlights the various layers of perspective to consider in change management (i.e., Vision, Mental Models, Systemic Structures, Patterns of Behaviour & Events) with greater impact and leverage achieved by intervening on higher levels of perspective.

At a practical level, most workplace changes can be categorised as either structural and procedural (i.e., roles,

duties, policies and procedures) or behavioural and attitudinal (i.e., professional practices and cultural norms of behaviour and language). The table below summarises different aspects of workplace culture typically addressed in change management strategies and the difficulty and timeframes associated with such strategies:

	Types of Workplace Changes	Type of Learning	Difficulty to Learn	Minimum Timeframe for Competence (FASTRACK)	NORMAL Timeframe Required (x2 Minimum)
STRUCTURAL & PROCEDURAL CHANGES	Roles and Duties	Learn who does what	Easy (Relies on following organisational chart and job description	1-3 months	3-6 months
	Policies and Procedures	Learn new standards and consequences	Easy / Medium (Relies on following documented steps)	3-6 months	6-12 months
BEHAVIOURAL & ATTITUDINAL CHANGE	Professional Practices	Learn new skills	Medium (Relies on demonstrating skill)	6-12 months	12-24 months
	Cultural Behaviours and Attitudes	Learn new emotional, cognitive and behavioural reaction patterns	Hard (Relies on engaging in alternate behaviour when under emotional pressure	12+ months	24+ months

As you can see from the table above, structural changes are far easier and faster to deliver upon than attitude and behaviour changes. And this is where some of the magic lies … By using structural and procedural changes to trigger massive shifts in attitudes and behaviours of teams, you as the leader will be able to minimise the extent to which you need to undertake intensive individual support interventions along the way …

Let me explain with two simple common culture problems: (1) Poor behaviour in team meetings; and (2) Lack of developmental feedback among peers.

1. Changing Poor Behaviour in Team Meetings:

How do we stop team meetings from running over time or being a waste of time? How do we keep people engaged and involved? How do we deal with interruptions, side conversations and the bad behaviour of checking phones and looking at laptops?

Structural Approach: The structural solution is to implement an effective team charter about 'above and below the line' behaviours and introduce a 'moderator' in team meetings (rotated among team members) whose job it is to use red and yellow cards as needed to support the team addressing 'below the line behaviour' and optimising their 'above the line' behaviour.

Behavioural Approach: This is the personally confronting counselling/coaching approach where the line manager follows up directly on bad behaviour in meetings.

The Outcomes: The structural approach is fast and sustainable beyond the individuals involved and will quickly become part of the wider team protocols and processes lasting beyond the tenure and turnover of staff. The behavioural approach is high risk emotionally, demanding and not sustainable beyond the individuals involved.

2. Lack of Developmental Feedback Among Peers:

Many people struggle with having peers observe their work and provide professional development-focused feedback. People also struggle with giving feedback to colleagues about interpersonal difficulties—an important strategy to prevent minor issues turning into major problems. How do we get people to become more open to receiving feedback on their professional development needs AND also be able to give and receive feedback about their working relationships?

Structural Approach: Use an agenda item in the structure of meetings among staff that requires self-disclosure on strengths and areas to develop as part of a quick round-the-room warm-up to begin the meeting. Then after 3 months add another item requiring each team member to share a professional learning and growth story, followed by feedback from their peers on a rotational basis.

Behavioural Approach: Use 1:1 meetings to explore the team member's inner motivations and desires to encourage feedback and/or threaten to commence disciplinary action if they refuse to engage in peer feedback processes.

The Outcomes: The structural approach is a short, fast process that when repeated multiple times will increase the trust and willingness to disclose, building up to professional growth and learning discussions. It is sustainable beyond the individuals involved and has benefits across the workforce through group participation. On the other hand, the behavioural approach is time-intensive and high risk with lengthy professional

and personal challenges to overcome. Whilst we do need behavioural approaches to help staff engage with feedback, we will be fast-tracking sustainable culture change by focusing all our effort in succeeding at the structural changes as a first step.

Your Strategies & Expectations for Culture Change

Take a look at your HPT Action Plans and the strategies you are implementing for each of the 4 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

For each strategy you are implementing consider the following:

1. What types of changes will you be making in the workplace?
2. Are the timelines you have set realistic for a minimum standard of competency to emerge?
3. How will you expose staff to the idea of your proposed change numerous times and what experiences will they have before needing to fully commit?
4. Are there structural approaches that you could introduce to fast-track any learning and behavioural changes you are seeking amongst staff in your higher performance workforce culture?

Don't forget the 4 foundational principles of fast-tracking sustainable culture change: you need to be able to decrease

pain and/or increase pleasure AND be able to expose people to ideas 20 times prior to giving them 3 actual experiences AND ensure the structures and processes you implement consistently support the behavioural culture change you are seeking AND allow twice as long as you thought it would take!

A great saying to remember when it comes to workplace culture change is:

"In the end everything works our perfectly so if it's not perfect yet then keep working as it is not the end!"

Appendix 1

iTeams: High Performance Teams

Part 1: Your Team's Current Scorecard

The 4 KPIs for Success	No Performance	Low Performance	Moderate Performance	High Performance
Vision & Action — *"Team members share a common vision that drives their actions"*	☐	☐	☐	☐
Performance Reporting — *"Data is easily accessible & drives team level decisions and accountability"*	☐	☐	☐	☐
Leveraging Diversity — *"Individual differences among team members are a blessing not a curse"*	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work/Life & Wellbeing — *"Understanding & supporting each other's work/life & wellbeing needs"*	☐	☐	☐	☐

iTeams: High Performance Teams

Part 2: Your Team's Current Activity & Improvement Strategies

| The 4 KPIs	The Magic Questions…	Current Activity	Improvement Strategies
Vision & Action	*"How do all team members clearly connect their daily, weekly & monthly actions to the organisation's vision and values?"*		
Performance Reporting	*"What types of performance metrics do you regularly measure and report within the team to drive both improvement and satisfaction?"*		
Leveraging Diversity	*"How does your team promote inclusion and use diversity as a strategic advantage?"*		
Work/Life & Wellbeing	*"How does your team fast-track their understanding and support of each other's work/life and wellbeing needs?"*		

About the Authors

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD, is a workplace psychologist and executive coach. With many years of research and professional practice behind him he has managed to complete and evaluate numerous leadership and team transformation projects, providing the groundswell for the common sense approach of the High Performance Teams Framework. Pete is an active and enthusiastic leader of various transformation projects in the Private and Public Sector. Contact Pete at drpetestebbins@gmail.com or www.drpetestebbins.com or HPTSchools.com.

Alistair Kerr, MPsychOrg, MAPS, is a psychologist and leadership development professional with three driving passions at work: 1.) Building sustainable, high performance teams. 2.) Using technology to change the way that businesses support employee wellbeing at work. 3.) Building bridges across cultural divides. Over the last eight years Alistair has had the pleasure of working on his passion every day with teams and leaders at all levels, both locally and overseas. Contact Alistair at alistair.r.kerr@gmail.com.

Books by Dr Pete
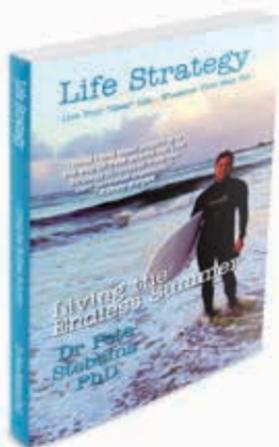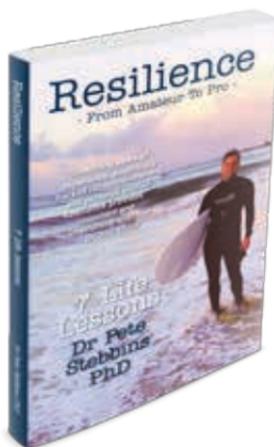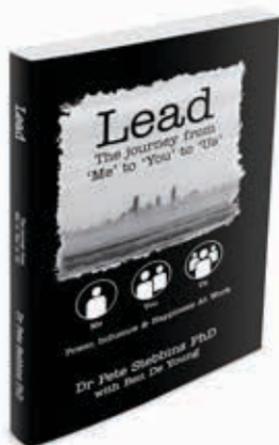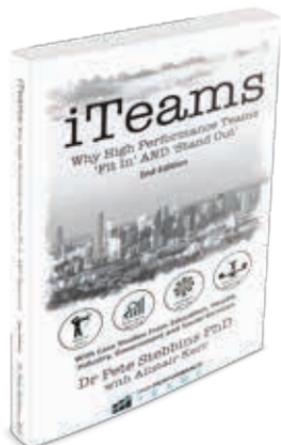
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