




DRIVERS OF TEAM PERFORMANCE

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ALMOST ALL ORGANIZATIONS ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GET MORE OUT OF THEIR TEAMS. BUT HOW COME THAT IN SOME TEAMS EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING SMOOTHLY ALL THE TIME RESULTING IN ONE SUCCESS AFTER ANOTHER AND IN OTHER TEAMS THERE ALWAYS SEEM TO BE ISSUES STANDING IN THE WAY OF EXCELLENT TEAM PERFORMANCE? IS IT THE LEADER WHO IS NOT IMPACTFUL ENOUGH OR LACKS THE SKILLS TO INSPIRE AND MOTIVATE HIS PEOPLE OR ARE THERE STUBBORN AND OPINIONATED TEAM MEMBERS WHO ACT SOLELY AND SELFISHLY? OR ARE THERE INDIVIDUALS IN THE TEAM WHO DO NOT REALLY EMBRACE CHANGE OR ARE UNABLE TO FULLY UTILIZE THEIR CREATIVITY?

Several important drivers underlie high performing teams and determine their (sustainable) success. Looking at many different teams in various sectors and types of organizations, we see that the following three important drivers are at the basis of team performance:

- Quality of leadership
- Mutual team dynamics and awareness among team members
- Individual mind set and behaviour of the team members

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QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP

The success of a team can be largely attributed to leadership. A good leader is able to lead a team successfully through change and ensures acceleration of the development of the team. Just like a 'bad' leader is, in no time, able to cause demotivation, low commitment, indecisiveness, mistrust and poor team results.

Leadership can be learned, but not everyone will become a good leader. This ability depends on a combination of congenital personal traits and the degree of self-reflection. Research shows that leaders mainly learn and grow when things don't go well and when they make mistakes. Organisations should therefore create an environment which allows room for young leaders to learn by doing.

Research has also shown that the right exemplary behaviour from senior management is crucial for the development of young leaders. Successful leaders pretty much always indicate to have had a really good manager in the beginning of their career, to whom they owe a lot. In addition, leaders also learn a lot from incompetent leaders, by experiencing how things should definitely not be going.

Everything about leadership revolves around self-awareness. Being conscious of the behaviour which ensures that people in your team feel themselves optimally stimulated and supported, so they dare to take risks together, to come up with creative solutions, to align things properly together and being aware of the importance of trust and respect at the basis for whatever they are doing. Everything depends on consistency and authenticity.

Effective leaders are naturally transparent in their communication and come across as trustworthy. They are authentic and command the respect of their people in a natural way. They really listen to what their people have to say and are able to find a good balance between the team, their own interests and the organisation's interests. However, when it comes down to it, they know better than anyone how to subordinate their self-interest to the interests of the team or the organization and expect this also from their people. They also have sufficient eye for the different (basic) needs of their team members, like the need for clarity, inspiration, credibility, recognition and appreciation. They don't need to know everything or to be able to do everything themselves but will rely on the brainpower of the whole team. In short, they get the best out of people.

But what kind of leadership do we actually need nowadays? Leaders who know how to inspire people with a higher purpose (the WHY). With a long-term mission which gives people a sense of meaning. Next they know to give people enough space to decide for themselves how to get there. It's the leaders that embrace diversity and know exactly how to use it in a way each team member's potential is fully used. Leaders who show vulnerability and give personal attention on the one hand and at the same time demonstrate drive and do high-impact interventions. Leaders that give trust and receive trust. Leaders that create deepening in the team's contact and personal contact with clients and suppliers. They make sure the collective resilience of the team is bigger than that of the separate individuals, so team members will never doubt the team's capacity to solve complex problems together.



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MUTUAL TEAM DYNAMICS AND AWARENESS AMONG TEAM MEMBERS

In High Performing Teams everybody knows exactly which team objectives they are aiming for and is completely committed. The leader takes care of a logical division of tasks and creates clear expectations. If somebody notices, for whatever reason, he or she can't commit him or herself to an idea or plan completely, this will be discussed openly. It will be looked into what the team or the person him/herself can do to make sure doubts are removed and someone will then come fully 'on board'. Or not, which can also happen and is important to find out in an early stage.

In effective teams team members realise how much they need each other to be able to be successful. Hardly any energy is lost on mutual misunderstandings. They know each other very well and utilise the differences in personalities and competences within the team. They always presume each other's good intentions and stand by each other, whatever happens. It is especially remarkable that you don't find strong egos within strong teams (or that individuals know how to put these aside). Team members listen to each other in an unprejudiced way and find it important and pleasant to reflect regularly on how they could improve their cooperation. They dare to address sensitive issues and keep each other on their toes, to become better as a team. The positive, pleasant team dynamics are often immediately noticed by externals. It works infectious, because everyone would like to experience such a positive flow.

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INDIVIDUAL MIND SET AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE TEAM MEMBERS

The last – but definitely not a less important - driver, is the self reflective power and learning agility of individuals in a team. Do they really have insight in their talents, their less positive qualities and their potential pitfalls, especially under pressure? This starts with knowing yourself really well and with accepting who you are. Daring to step over a threshold to learn new things, to be conscious of the balance between give and take in a team, to know how to give trust and create trust with others. Not to become insecure of continuous changes, but to embrace them and consider them as opportunities. To dare to put yourself in a vulnerable position and at the same time to get on with it at crucial times and demonstrate ownership. It's about showing leadership in every possible role, from an intrinsic drive to make yourself and others better.

Leadership is, in contrast to what many people think, not age-related or dependent on your position. Anyone can strive for it and apply it at any time, privately as well as in business. Once we succeed in this and can really show it to others, we will enjoy our job significantly more and find it more meaningful. Everyone naturally likes to perform well, often partly subconsciously, and show ownership, simply because it gives more satisfaction than 'cutting corners'.

The feeling of truly making an impact on your environment and to involve others in what you want to achieve, plays an important role in this regard. The key lies in demonstrating leadership. This means a life-time of learning. Keep developing yourself in order to deal with the inevitable duality of leadership: to be decisive and vulnerable at the same time, vigorous but not rigid, courageous but not overconfident. What prevents us still from not starting with this immediately, today?



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