

## Chapter 5

### The Five Success Factors of a Truly High-performing Team

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*“The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”*

Aristotle

#### Objective

In this chapter, I explain the five success factors of high-performing teams. My guidance and insights for leaders are aimed at building the team they need to achieve the results they strive for. While these five factors are based on solid research, I take a practical approach to team development.

#### The Emergence of Teamwork

The widespread employment of teams has become indispensable to successfully operating organizations across industries throughout the world. Organizations establish teams to tackle challenges that are too comprehensive for individual employees to complete on their own. When, for instance, a new product needs to be launched, people from all parts of an organization are drawn together in cross-functional teams to combine their expertise and experience to jointly work towards this goal. The increased globalization of work has also contributed to the emergence of teamwork worldwide (Boundless 2016). Many of the challenges global companies face need to be addressed ‘glocally,’ thus considering the connections between global and local businesses. To do so, companies often form virtual teams, which enable large organizations to employ the knowledge, experience, and skills of people regardless of where they are located. These relatively new team types all benefit from new IT and telecommunications technologies. There is also an increasing use of project teams, which are formed for a specific time to work towards a larger goal. Project team members often belong to different functional groups and are chosen for the specific skills set they offer the team. In short, it is common for an organization to have many team types across the organization.

#### The Potential Benefits of Teamwork

The potential advantages of teamwork are based on several factors, each accounting for different aspects of the overall benefit of teamwork:

1. **Higher-quality outcomes:** Teamwork creates outcomes that make better use of resources and produce richer ideas.
2. **Innovation:** Individuals who combine their knowledge, expertise, and experience create more innovative ideas than individuals on their own.
3. **Higher efficiency:** Since teams combine the efforts of many individuals, they can

accomplish more in less time than an individual working alone.

4. **Greater effectiveness:** When people coordinate their efforts, they can divide up roles and can deploy their strengths to achieve better business results.
5. **Collective learning and motivation:** The social aspect of teamwork provides a superior work experience for team members, which can lead to higher motivation. People learn from one another, push one another to accelerate their learning, and celebrate successes together (Boundless 2016).

### **Ineffective Teamwork**

Reading through these potential benefits of teamwork should delight every manager. But reflect for a moment on your own experiences with teamwork: *Do teams always create synergetic effects by working together? Does Aristotle's notion that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts really apply the moment a group of talented people form a team?*

Common sense and recent research call the benefits of teamwork into question. J. Richard Hackman, Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology at Harvard University and a leading expert on team performance in business, has spent several decades investigating and questioning the wisdom of teams. His research shows that people are not always good at teamwork and that many teams perform less well than individuals working in parallel, despite all their extra resources. "When you have a team, the possibility exists that it will generate magic, producing something extraordinary, a collective creation of previously unimagined quality or beauty. But don't count on it" (Hackman in Coutu 2009).

### **Success Factors that Lead to High Performance**

The key questions are therefore: *What does it take to form a high-performing team? What are the success factors and what are the typical pitfalls a manager needs to watch out for when forming a new team and managing an existing one over time?*

I present a model, a diagnostic tool, and exercises to help leaders take a thoughtful, yet simple, approach to building and managing their high-performing team. This model – *The Five Success Factors of a High-performing Team* – is based on more than fifteen years of hands-on experience and research by my team and me, as well as on state-of-the-art knowledge and research results from the leading people and organizations researching high performance, leadership, and human behavior in teams around the globe.



This is not the first model to seek to explain peak performance in teams. So, why bother? The answer is that, in my many years of leadership consulting, I have not come across a model that truly works in practice. They may all have some academic appeal, but when applied in practice, the teams I worked with struggled to make sense of them. Important aspects of teamwork were missing. Therefore, I fine-tuned my thinking over the decade (the model, the practical activities, and the diagnostic tool) and tested it with the teams I worked with. *The Five Success Factors of a High-performing Team* pyramid is the result of all these efforts. We will now explore it in some depth.

### **Success factor 1: Team vision, goals, and mission**

A team is a group of people who work together towards a common goal. This is the most basic definition of a team. Sharing a set of team goals (and, ideally, a shared vision) is the first reason to form a team; it is a team's reason for existing. However, in practice, we often see that this set of shared team goals is either missing, or the team members are not aware of them.

Prof. Hackman's research shows that team members (here, executive teams of leading organizations from around the world!) often have little or no clarity regarding their team goals. These teams lack the most basic prerequisite of successful teamwork: A shared understanding of the team's reason for existing, which means that they cannot achieve peak performance.

All high-performing teams I have worked with have a shared understanding about their future direction. They thus continuously invest time in maintaining and building on this understanding in an ever-changing business environment, as this is the only way to create synergies together. These teams have agreed on *what* they want to achieve

together, written down in the form of a vision statement with shared goals and individual ones. Similarly, they have also agreed on *how* they want to work together in order to be successful, written down in the form of a mission or team brand statement. I will now explain team vision, team goals, and team mission in some detail.

### **Team Vision**

Creating a team vision statement is about describing your team's desired future. You are setting the direction towards which you are heading. It's not so much about how you're going to get there, but about defining the destination you are striving towards. The team vision statement is ambitious, dynamic, and will hopefully inspire your team to perform to the best of their abilities.

#### **A team vision statement:**

- describes the team's destination
- sets the team's purpose
- is easy to comprehend
- inspires enthusiasm
- creates commitment
- bridges the present and the future.

Organizational vision statements are created at the top of the organization. However, achieving the organizational vision can only happen with a buy-in by the entire organization, which consists of multiple high-performing teams pursuing excellence in their own right.

### **Team Goals**

Besides clearly defined goals for the individuals working in the team, the team needs a clearly defined and communicated set of team goals. Ideally, these goals have been agreed upon together to ensure high levels of awareness and commitment towards these goals. A product team goal could be determining the short-term and long-term profit targets for its new and old products. Product team managers may aim to increase the annual profits by X% for the most popular product and Y% for older models. Whatever the case, team goals should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely). It might therefore be unrealistic for a team to aim to increase the annual profits by 100% in a highly competitive marketplace. The goals should therefore reflect the context in which the team operates.

### **Team Mission**

A team vision statement describes the destination your team is working towards. When you create your team mission statement (ideally with your team), you are defining *how* you will get there. The advantage of agreeing on a mission statement is that it offers a frame of reference for daily behaviors that create the conditions for success. Success with ultimately achieving your team goals can usually not be guaranteed 100%. Many internal and external factors interfere with the business results a team or an

organization achieves. However, how we behave daily can mostly be planned and controlled.

### **The Leader's Role**

The biggest pitfall leaders should look out for in their team is individuals who focus only on their individual roles and on their assigned tasks at the expense of teamwork. Under pressure, people tend to focus on their own goals and might not equally care if and how they contribute to the overall team goals. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure that the team members also focus on the team's vision, goals, and mission by taking time collectively to discuss progress concerning the team vision, goals, and mission, as well as by ensuring that rewards are based on both individual and collective achievements.

### **Germany's National Football Team**

Sports teams are a good example of how teams work. Since I have extensively worked with and researched high-performance teams in professional football, I share relevant results from this research. An example of how a team vision and mission can be brought to life and can help a team to succeed is Germany's national football team under the leadership of Jürgen Klinsmann between 2004 and 2006, when the World Championship took place in Germany. When Klinsmann accepted the position of coach, Germany regarded the team very negatively. The country had not been successful for a number of years, and its football was known to be functional but boring to watch (a perception also held outside Germany).

When Klinsmann took over, he was determined to lead the team to success, to win the World Championship (vision) and to revolutionize both German football (mission) and the infrastructure behind it. As Oliver Bierhoff, who was part of the management team, put it: "Our vision was to win the world championship. However, we wanted to play a new kind of dynamic football, take risks and entertain the audience. We wanted to inspire all the children in Germany to play football again. We wanted to win as a team and act as ambassadors of our country." Although the German team did not become world champions in 2006, they were seen as extremely successful, coming in third, playing exciting and dynamic football, celebrating like world champions and helping Germany as a country to improve its reputation abroad. They also laid the foundation for the development of Germany's national team in the following years, which ultimately led to its winning the World Championship in 2014. In business, as in sports, this kind of success cannot ultimately be planned. However, creating the conditions for success makes winning and peak performance most likely.

### **Success factor 2: People and roles**

The second success factor of a high-performing team has to do with the people on the team. A team leader should find a way to first decide who is on the team, who takes

which role, and who is responsible for which task. Let's start with the first: Who is on the team?

### **Who's on the Team**

Depending on the situation in which the team leader operates, he or she usually finds a mix of two possibilities: either (as often the case in project teams) the team leader has the opportunity to build a new team from scratch, or (as is mostly the case) a promoted leader takes over an existing team.

### **Forming a New Team**

If the team leader has the opportunity to build a new team, it is important to get the right people on board: People who have the skills, experience, and expertise that fit the team goal and who have the ability to live up to the defined mission.

When the German national team under Klinsmann, and later under Jürgen Löw, was being established and developed further, only players who fit the team mission and had the right skills sets and talents were invited. Super-successful players considered too self-centered, arrogant, and not modest enough to live up to the values in the team mission were removed from the team or not invited, despite their individual achievements.

### **Working With an Existing Team**

When a team leader takes over an existing team (which is what usually happens), I recommend that they define the team vision, goals, and mission with the team and that they discuss the ways everyone fits the agreed *reason to exist*. However, if, as team leader, you feel that you have people on board who will not fit this agreed scenario, make all the painful decisions about letting people go as early as possible. One person who is not a team player is enough to undermine a team's performance.

### **Clarity about Roles and Responsibilities**

Gain clarity about who is on the team and who plays which role as soon as possible after taking over an existing team. Richard Hackman, who is Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology at Harvard University, analyzed the data of more than 120 top management teams from around the world. Unsurprisingly, he found that almost every senior team he studied thought it had clarity regarding people on the team and the roles for which they were responsible. Yet, when he asked the members to describe their team, fewer than 10% agreed about who was on it and who exactly played which role. And these were teams of senior executives! (Hackman in Coutu, 2009)

High-performing teams have clarity about who plays which role in the team and who is responsible for which tasks. These well-functioning teams understand how their individual tasks align with the team goals. The leader encourages these individuals to deploy their strengths and areas of interest when defining individual and collective roles and responsibilities, which further increases motivation in the team.

Conversations about these responsibilities are an ongoing part of business life in high-performing teams to ensure that people are aligned with one another.

Paradoxically, setting clear boundaries regarding roles and responsibilities is the prerequisite for creating space for people to be creative and innovative. Within these boundaries, people should find multiple opportunities for autonomous decision-making and self-directed activities.

Clarity about roles and responsibilities is critical for success, since it:

- improves collaboration between members
- allows members to work independently and stay task-focused
- avoids duplication of efforts
- creates awareness of each member's talents
- applies individuals' strengths to key tasks
- clarifies how the team can work towards the same goals.

### **Team Size**

As a team gets bigger, the number of links that need to be managed between members increases greatly. Managing the links between members makes teamwork difficult. A rule of thumb we recommend is to avoid a double-digit number. Having a huge leadership team that, for instance, includes all the CEO's direct reports might be counterproductive. There are many cases where the collaboration within a large team, particularly in truly creative endeavors, is an obstacle to excellent decision-making and high performance (Hackmann in Coutu 2009).

### **Success factor 3: Modern and collective leadership**

The third success factor of a high-performing team depends on the quality of the team leadership. A team needs a strong and capable leader at the top, a strong sense of collective leadership, and the required competencies in the team members.

Let's start with the first: *What does a strong, capable team leader look like? What qualities should he or she have?* While there are a great many possible answers to these questions, most executives and leadership experts around the world agree that effective leadership is above all adaptive, flexible, and contextual. This means that effective leadership considers factors such as the culture in which you operate (national culture, company culture, and team culture) and the psychological make-up of the people with whom you deal.

All high-performing teams I have studied and coached over the years had leaders at the top and players in the team who exhibited adaptive leadership behavior. These team leaders excelled in two qualities: They were capable of diagnosing the leadership needs of the situations in which they were and they deployed the most effective leadership behavior to positively impact how these situations developed. Thus, they

knew when and how to use which leadership style in order to help their teams and their organizations become the best they could be.

There are a number of leadership concepts with which team leaders can work to polish their leadership capabilities. I suggest the concept based on the work of Daniel Goleman, who became famous with his bestselling book on emotional intelligence.

Goleman (2000) differentiates between six leadership styles, which we will now briefly describe.

<p><b>Directive leadership style</b> This <i>do what I say</i> approach can be very effective in a turnaround situation, a natural disaster, or when working with challenging employees. If over-used, a commanding leadership blocks the organization's flexibility and diminishes employee motivation.</p>	<p><b>Visionary leadership style</b> A visionary leader takes a <i>come with me</i> approach: He or she states the overall goals, yet gives people the freedom to choose their own ways to achieve results. This style works especially well when a business is in a difficult situation. It is less effective when the leader is working with an expert team more experienced than the leader.</p>	<p><b>Affiliative leadership style</b> The affiliative leader has a <i>people come first</i> attitude. This style is particularly useful for building team harmony or increasing morale. But its exclusive focus on praise can allow poor performance to go uncorrected. The affiliative leader rarely offers direct feedback or advice, and so leaves employees unclear about their performance.</p>
<p><b>Democratic leadership style</b> By giving workers a voice in decisions, democratic leaders build organizational flexibility and responsibility, and help generate fresh ideas. Sometimes the price is endless meetings and confused employees who feel under-led. There is a positive impact on the organizational climate, but not as high as one might imagine.</p>	<p><b>Pace-setting leadership style</b> A leader who sets high performance standards and exemplifies them positively impacts on highly competent and self-motivated employees. However, others may feel overwhelmed by the continual demand for strong results and high standards; some will resent this leader's tendency to take over.</p>	<p><b>Coaching leadership style</b> This style focuses more on personal development than on immediate work-related tasks. It works well when employees are already aware of their weaknesses and want to improve, but not when they are resistant to changing their ways..</p>

Research shows that some of these styles have a positive and energizing effect on the climate and the development of employees (particularly the visionary, the affiliative,

the democratic, and the coaching leadership styles), while other styles (pace-setting and directive) impact negatively on these aspects (Goleman, 2000). However, in practice, we have seen that all styles that are over-used can have negative effects. For instance, over-usage of a democratic leadership style leads to a lack of speed, energy, and decision-making. The most successful leaders – those who achieve outstanding business results and high ratings for their leadership behavior – are capable of executing the styles that best suit situations.

The following quick test is a great way to think about your current leadership behaviors. *Which styles do you use most often and why? Which styles do you use less often? Does your leadership create the outcomes that you want to achieve?* This quick test might be a first step to reflect on how you can further develop yourself as a leader to become more effective.

### A Quick Test

Use the scale below to indicate how each statement applies to you. Evaluate each statement honestly and without over-thinking it. Note: 1 = Not often; 2 = Sometimes; 3 = Quite often.

How often do you apply a <b>directive leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quit e often
I provide clear instructions about what needs to be done and how.	1	2	3
I make decisions when others are still discussing a subject.	1	2	3
I check and follow up whether my decisions and instructions are carried out.	1	2	3
How often do you apply a <b>visionary leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quit e often
I make an effort to help others to see the bigger picture and make them aware of how their work contributes to the overall vision of the team and the organization.	1	2	3
I start a conversation, presentation, or meeting by first describing the bigger context of what I have to say.	1	2	3
My thinking is future-oriented and possibility-oriented, and I use these ideas to inspire my people to work towards an improved future.	1	2	3

How often do you apply an <b>affiliative leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quite often
I actively try to create harmony among other people and in my team.	1	2	3
I empathize with other people's feelings and make them feel important	1	2	3
Throughout my career I build friendly often long lasting relationships with colleagues and other stakeholders	1	2	3
How often do you apply a <b>democratic leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quite often
I encourage my team to get involved in discussions about important decisions and facilitate moments of joint or independent decision-making.	1	2	3
I ask my team to work together on setting team goals.	1	2	3
I share responsibilities with my team and reward team efforts.	1	2	3
How often do you apply a <b>pace-setting leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quite often
I set standards for excellence and speed and expect others to do the same.	1	2	3
I role-model excellent work ethics and expect others to follow this example.	1	2	3
I notice poor performance by others and follow up immediately.	1	2	3
How often do you apply a <b>coaching leadership style</b> in the course of a day?	Not often	Some times	Quite often
I ask others open questions that make them think about solving a problem and help them to develop their problem-solving skills.	1	2	3
I ask more often open, intelligent questions than I offer advice or solutions.	1	2	3

I take time to explore the career ambitions, long-term goals, and talents of others so that I can give them the support they need to develop in the most efficient ways.	1	2	3
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### Interpreting Your Results

This quick test can give you a first indication of how adaptive your leadership currently is. Please contextualize these results in your current work situation to reflect on the question whether you currently have the balance right. For a more comprehensive picture, you would also need solid feedback from the people you lead and others around you (i.e. your peers and your boss).

### Collective Leadership

It's crucial to have a strong sense of collective leadership in the team. This means that people hold each other accountable for their actions and their behaviors. An important leader task is to build a sense of collective leadership by sharing responsibility with team members and ensuring that all five success factors of a high-performing team are considered when building the team. A sign of collective leadership is when people voluntarily coach and support each other without involving the team leader.

### Success factor 4: Establishing a *we* culture

One of the outstanding characteristics of all high-performing teams with which I have worked is that they have established a successful *we* culture. In a *we* culture, all the team members generally work towards a set of common goals, support each other, have fun along the way, and often celebrate successes together. They are comfortable sharing insights and information with one another and with upper management, hold each other accountable, and are highly motivated and results-driven. The team members trust one another and have a constructive approach to conflicts. If they were to describe the team atmosphere, they would emphasize the great team spirit.

### Negative Effects of a *Me* Culture in a Team

Building a *we* culture is one of the five success factors of any high-performing team. Building and maintaining this culture is a key leader task. However, it's not as simple as it might sound. In practice, I often see a *me*-centric team culture and its negative effects on a team's performance.

A research project by Professor Paul Harvey (2010) of the University of New Hampshire on generational differences concluded that *me*-centric employees:

1. have problems accepting negative feedback
2. are less likely to see the positive aspects their job
3. have exaggerated expectations about themselves and their work
4. are more likely to engage in workplace conflicts

5. are more likely to blame others for whatever happens on the job
6. are more likely to take credit for other people's work
7. are considered less effective at leading teams and bringing people together.

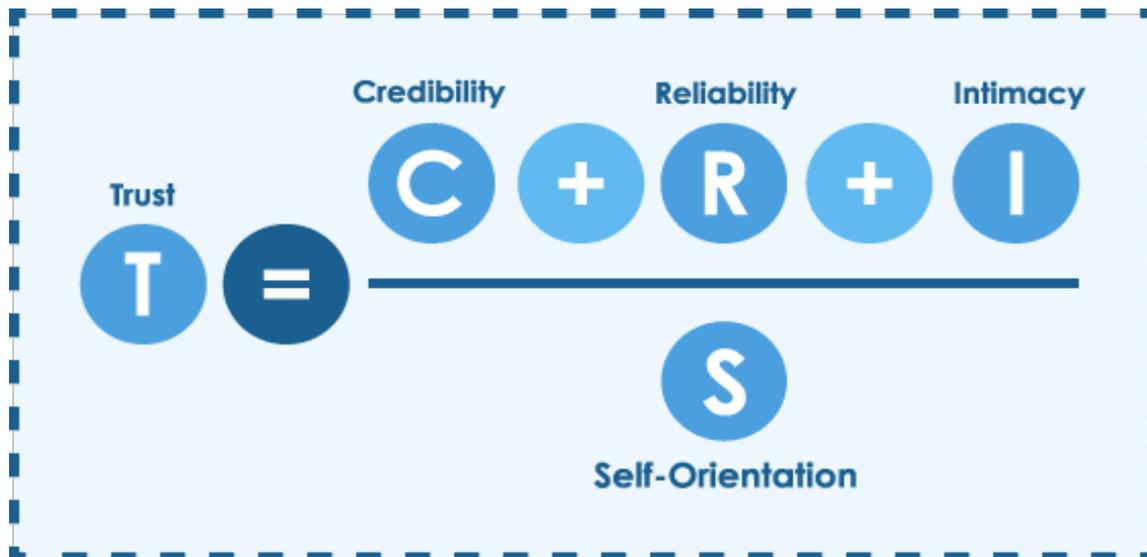
### **The Three Pillars of a *We* Culture**

The three building blocks of a *we* culture can be summarized as follows:

1. **Clarity about goals:** As noted, every high-performing team needs clear individual and team goals. Without clear individual goals, single team members might be demotivated, without clear team goals there is no cooperative interaction between team members. When assigning tasks and defining job roles, clarify how the work contributes to the team goals everyone contributes to individually.
2. **Agreement on mission and team values:** I have already emphasized the importance of having a team mission or a set of team values on which everybody agrees and tries to live up to. Two values have to be part of your mission statement if you want to build a *we*-centric culture: a) cooperation and b) accountability. If you do not focus on teamwork and cooperation between team members, you are unlikely to excel in this area. On the other hand, accountability is the value directly linked to the business results that a team or the entire organizations achieves. Be outspoken about the culture when hiring new team members.
3. **Be conscious of what you reward:** If your recognition activities focus on individual results rather than team results, you will most likely nourish individual success at the expense of team success. If you verbally emphasize team cooperation, but reward individual achievements or egoistic behavior, you are undermining your efforts to build a high-performing team. However, as a leader you need to find a balance between building a *we* culture on the one hand and acknowledging the part individuals play. Most people want to be part of a team, but they also want to be recognized for their individual efforts (Glaser 2006).

### **Building Trust**

The prerequisite for going from *me* to *we* is a foundation of trust between the team members. The trust level in any relationship determines the quality. This holds true for personal and business relationships. Teams who build trust early on experience fewer conflicts later and are more likely to develop their full performance potential. The trust equation (Maister, 2000) is a concept the managers with whom I worked found very useful. This trust equation highlights key factors that determine trust levels in the team or in one-on-one relationships.



**Credibility** relates to our words, and is revealed in our credentials and honesty. It focuses on a person's technical, job-related expertise and capabilities.

**Reliability** relates to our actions and is revealed when we keep our promises. *Can I trust this person to deliver on time and in the manner they promised?*

**Intimacy** relates to our emotions. People feel safe talking about difficult agendas. *Can I trust this person to keep information confidential? Do they reveal something about themselves?*

**Self-orientation** relates to our caring and is revealed in our focus (us or them?)

### Coaching for *We*

Once you have started creating a *we* culture, coaching is an effective tool to involve your employees in the process. Ask your employees to identify best practices, processes, and tactics that can improve the company performance. Sharing ideas and best practices is an essential way to leverage talent, inspire commitment, and nourish the *we* culture in the team. Colleagues who learn from one another are more inclined to create a *we* culture together (Glaser, 2006).

### Success factor 5: Effective external and internal communication

The fifth success factor of a high-performing team is the quality of its internal and external communication. We describe this quality as *we-centric*, effective, efficient, and resource-friendly. People focus on communication that adds value to all involved in the communication. The key question is: *Does the right message go to the right people at the right time using the best means of communication that fits the purpose?* In 90% of cases, the answer is *no*, which is a tragedy in modern business life. Billions of working hours are wasted by people writing billions of emails that collectively only waste people's time. This can be avoided when people think carefully about what value their communication adds to others and themselves. This table summarizes the most

important characteristics of a we-centric communication culture, in contrast to a me-centric communication culture, which is often ineffective, inefficient, and resource-unfriendly.

We-centric communication	Me-centric communication
<b>Principle of attraction:</b> We build on common ground. We build a future together.	<b>Principle of assertion:</b> I state my needs or wants; I make a proposal; I persist; I offer logical arguments why <i>my way is the highway</i> .
<b>We-centric attitude:</b> I am aware of you.	<b>Me-centric attitude:</b> I am aware of myself and my needs.
<b>Push and pull are in balance:</b> Pushing (talking) and pulling (asking and listening) information in conversations are in balance.	<b>Push and pull are out of balance:</b> Focus on sending information; mainly talking, less listening.
<b>Building bridges:</b> I recap what you say; I explore your arguments, views, and feelings and offer my arguments, views, and feelings.	<b>Logical arguments:</b> I make proposals, I state logical reasons, and if you are not convinced, I provide more of the same.
<b>Share the <i>big picture</i></b> and the right amount of detailed information. Start by setting down overarching goals.	<b>Share only detailed information:</b> <i>Big picture</i> information about changes are shared too late in the process.
<b>Encourage people to learn from mistakes.</b> Admitting when you are wrong can turn a mistake into a learning moment.	<b>Finger-pointing:</b> Openly blaming people for making mistakes.
<b>Recognition:</b> Verbally recognize others' achievements.	<b>Criticism:</b> Only speaking up when criticizing others.
<b>Share power:</b> At meetings, give the lead to your employees, so that they learn how to lead and communicate effectively.	<b>Hold on to power:</b> Dominating every conversation and meeting.
<b>Encourage feedback:</b> As everyone (including the boss) receives regular feedback, everyone grows faster.	<b>Discourage feedback:</b> Feedback proceeds from the leader to the employees only, not vice versa.
<b>Turn attention of the team inwards and outwards</b> to the organization and the customers.	<b>Turn attention inward only:</b> For instance, to the boss.
<b>Role-modeling behavior:</b> Communicate by role-modeling desired behavior.	<b>Not walking the talk:</b> Asking others to change doesn't create change. Show, don't tell.
<b>Email hygiene:</b> Ensure that the right message gets to the right people at the right time.	<b>Email madness:</b> Unstructured emails, copying everyone in, wasting people's time.

## Constructive Conflicts about Subject Matter

Another facet of productive, healthy communication is that people feel safe enough to approach conflict about a subject in proactive, constructive ways. I encourage team leaders to select team members for a diversity of perspectives. Innovation happens in the clash of diverging ideas. If team members are mature enough to handle conflict, the team will be rewarded. In sub-optimal teams, conflict is avoided, resulting in a false sense of agreement.

### **Balanced Communication with Relevant Stakeholders**

In business, no one succeeds alone. This also holds true for teams. No team can work in isolation. Teams always need the support of the organization and that of other teams if they are to succeed. Teams need to ensure that they are visible in the organization and that their successes are recognized. To ensure organizational support and to create win-win situations across the organization, teams need to establish effective and efficient external communication methods (as we have suggested here). Teams should put in the effort to identify their most important stakeholders. A team's ultimate task is to work towards satisfying its internal and/or external customers, as defined in its team vision and the team and individual goals. Effective communication with these customers is a cornerstone of a team's overall success.

### **Conclusion**

The five success factors of a high-performing team are interdependent. It is fair to say that factors 1 and 2 should be looked after first when building your team. Regardless of the scores you receive in the following team assessment, know that a high-performing team needs constant work, because without it, even the best ones go off track. As a leader, you need to create space for this kind of leadership work if you want a team that produces better and faster results than an average team. Well-organized and professionally facilitated off-site meetings are among the best and proven interventions to bring teams on track in keeping with all five levels of *The Five Success Factors of a High-performing Team* pyramid.

Paradoxically, as a leader, you need to develop the discipline to regularly stop to think and discuss the *how* of working together before you can continue to achieve the results (the *what*) that you are all striving for at high speed. High-performing teams work smarter, not harder.

### **Team Assessment**

This questionnaire is a straightforward diagnostic tool to help you evaluate your team's performance along the five success factors. If possible, have all team members complete it, and review the results, discussing different responses and identifying clear implications for the team. Use the scale to indicate how each statement applies to you. Evaluate each statement honestly and without overthinking it.

Notes: 1 = I do not agree at all; 2 = I sometimes agree; 3 = I agree.

<b>Success factor 1: Team vision, team goals, and team mission</b>	Not at all	Some times	Agree
In our team, we have a set of clearly defined team goals, and everyone contributes equally towards achieving them.	1	2	3
Our team vision sets standards for excellence and inspires team members to perform at the best of their abilities.	1	2	3
We have clearly defined behavioral standards and values that we all live up to in daily business life.	1	2	3
<b>Success factor 2: People and roles</b>	Not at all	Some times	Agree
Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined based on the individuals' strengths.	1	2	3
Everyone knows how the individual and team responsibilities contribute towards the team's overall success.	1	2	3
Within the team's clearly defined boundaries, members have enough space to be creative and make autonomous decisions in their areas of responsibility.	1	2	3
<b>Success factor 3: Modern and collective leadership</b>	Not at all	Some times	Agree
The team leader knows when to use which leadership style to apply to achieve maximum results and to create a good working atmosphere.	1	2	3
Team members coach and support one another to stay on track with the team's goals and mission.	1	2	3
There is a strong sense of collective leadership, with people holding each other accountable for their actions.	1	2	3
<b>Success factor 4: Establishing a we culture</b>	Not at all	Some times	Agree
In our team, we have a great level of trust.	1	2	3
Team members feel safe enough to engage in healthy conflict about subject matter.	1	2	3

The team has a great team spirit and everyone supports one another.	1	2	3
<b>Success factor 5: Effective external and internal communication</b>	Not at all	Some times	Agree
Our communication is balanced. We effectively communicate inwardly and outwardly (to internal and external customers).	1	2	3
The team leader and team members learn from their mistakes and proactively seek feedback from one another.	1	2	3
Communication in the team is efficient. Everyone repeatedly reflects on the question: <i>Do I send the right message to the right people at the right time using the best means of communication that fits the purpose?</i>	1	2	3

### Interpreting Your Results

It is less about the exact scores you and your team achieve with this questionnaire than about using this tool to stimulate in-depth conversations with your team members in order to create a shared understanding about where you are at on your journey towards a high-performing team and what work still needs to be done for you to attain the desired state. This tool is best used as a regular *health check* (at least once or twice a year).

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