

An Introduction to Building High Performance Teams

The Building High Performance Teams (BHPT) programme takes a coaching approach to performance improvement and focuses on helping individuals and teams change their thinking and how they approach fulfilment of their roles within the business. If people don't change their thinking, then their behaviour and habits remain the same and little progress is made towards improving performance.

The programme uses a methodology developed by Patrick Lencioni, a leading expert in the field of leadership, management and team development. It is delivered through a series of interactive workshops where I work with the directors, managers, deputies in an organisation on a real life situation based on an understanding of the areas they have ownership of, as a team, within the business. The basic focus being to help the team and its individual members make better decisions more quickly

The approach to developing individuals and teams through this programme is based on our knowledge of behavioural profiling and how it can be used effectively to help managers and team members understand one another's different preferences, skills and attitudes and identify collective strengths and blind spots within the team. This understanding accelerates the building of trust between managers and team members and this foundation of trust is the first stage in the programme we would take any team through to help them :

- Break down barriers
- Improve communications
- Build individual and team commitment
- Deal with problems and challenges
- Make better and faster decisions
- Deal with conflict
- Achieve better results through increased motivation

“If you can get all the people in an organisation rowing in the same direction, working as a team you could dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time”

Most companies and managers instantly recognise the inherent power of teams yet despite this acknowledgement; effective team work is elusive in most companies. The main reason being that teams are made up of imperfect human beings and they are inherently dysfunctional.

To overcome this problem it is important to master a set of behaviours that are uncomplicated but often difficult to implement.

We typically undertake a two day workshop to help management teams break down barriers and provide a practical, hands-on approach where we focus on clearly defined processes that work on the 5 key functions (or dysfunctions as we often refer to them) necessary for achieving truly effective teamwork. These five (dys)functions are represented in the model below.



The following provides an overview of the five behavioural challenges all teams must continually work to avoid. All of which are addressed in the Red Catapult BHPT Programme.

1. Absence of Trust

This occurs when team members are reluctant to be vulnerable with one another, and are thus unwilling to admit their mistakes, acknowledge their weaknesses or ask for help.

Without a certain comfort level among team members, a foundation of trust is impossible.

Members of teams with an absence of trust :

- Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility
- Fail to recognise and tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Waste time and energy managing their behaviours for effect
- Hold grudges
- Dread meetings and find reasons to avoid spending time together

2. Fear of Conflict

Trust is critical because without it, teams are unlikely to engage in unfiltered, passionate debate about key issues. This creates two problems. First, stifling conflict actually increases the likelihood of destructive, back channel sniping. Second, it leads to sub-optimal decision-making because the team is not benefiting from the true ideas and perspectives of its members.

Teams that fear conflict :

- Have boring meetings
- Create environments where back channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to the team success
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members
- Waste time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

3. Lack of Commitment

Without conflict, it is extremely difficult for team members to truly commit to decisions because they don't feel that they are part of the decision. This often creates an environment of ambiguity and confusion in an organisation, leading to frustration among employees, especially top performers.

A team that fails to commit :

- Creates ambiguity among the team about direction and priorities
- Watches windows of opportunity close due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Revisits discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourages second guessing among team members

4. Avoidance of Accountability

When teams don't commit to a clear plan of action, peer-to-peer accountability suffers greatly. Even the most focused and driven individuals will hesitate to call their peers on counterproductive actions and behaviours if they believe those actions and behaviours were never agreed upon in the first place.

A team that avoids accountability :

- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance
- Encourages mediocrity
- Misses deadlines and key deliverables
- Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

5. Inattention to Results

When team members are not holding one another accountable, they increase the likelihood that individual ego and recognition will become more important than collective team results. When this occurs, the business suffers and the team starts to unravel.

A team that is not focused on results :

- Stagnates / fails to grow
- Rarely defeats competitors
- Loses achievements oriented employees
- Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Is easily distracted

The Rewards

Striving to create a functional, cohesive team is one of the few remaining competitive advantages available to any organisation looking for a powerful point of differentiation.

Functional teams get more accomplished in less time than other teams because they avoid wasting time on the wrong issues and revisiting the same topics again and again. They also make higher quality decisions and stick to those decisions by eliminating politics and confusion among themselves and the people they lead.

Building High Performance Teams - Delivery

Building High Performance Teams is delivered in a workshop format and is inclusive of a team assessment profile (completed by each participant), individual behavioural profiles, reporting, workbooks and workshop documentation. The programme can be delivered in half day, one day and two day formats.

An outline for a typical two-day programme is provided in Appendix I.

Appendix I

Workshop Programme

<i>OVERVIEW & ASSESSMENT</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Five Dysfunction Model • Team Assessment
<i>FUNDAMENTAL #1: BUILDING TRUST</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Histories Exercise • Introduction to Behavioural Profiling • Behavioural Profiling Exercise
<i>FUNDAMENTAL #2: MASTERING CONFLICT</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Profiling • Conflict Norming • Conflict Resolution Model • Conflict Resolution Exercise
<i>FUNDAMENTAL #3: ACHIEVING COMMITMENT</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment Clarification • Cascading Communication • Establishing a Goal Exercise • Rules of Engagement
<i>FUNDAMENTAL #4: EMBRACING ACCOUNTABILITY</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Effectiveness Exercise
<i>FUNDAMENTAL #5: FOCUSING ON RESULTS</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a Team Scoreboard
<i>CLOSING THE WORKSHOP</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment Clarification • Cascading Communication Agreement • Personal Commitments

Post Workshop

Beyond the workshop programme the following activities are recommended to maintain momentum and review commitments made. A suggested approach and timeline would be as follows :

- First Review Session (1-2 weeks after workshop completion)
- Ongoing Reference & Discussion (weeks 4-12)
- Quarterly Review (week 13)
- Ongoing Reference & Discussion (week 14-25)
- Final Review (week 26)
- Ongoing progress review