



Topics:

- I will get you for that (later).
- Round peg. Square hole.
- Any questions?
- Dead man walking.
- Mind over matter.
- Time demand analysis.

Develop High-Performance Teams



8

I'll get you for that (Later)

'No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its power of acting and reasoning as fear.'

Edmund Burke, 1729-1797, English statesman, orator and writer, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*

Teams won't develop into high performance teams where psychological fear is prevalent.

"Speak up openly and honestly? No thanks. I tried that once. Never again. Management don't want you to tell them the truth. They want you to tell them what they want to hear. They want you to tell them that you will unquestioningly go along with their plan or strategy or that you are doing it their way. And you'd be an idiot to do otherwise."

This is the gist of a conversation I have heard many times in many different workplaces. Does it matter if people don't speak openly and honestly? After all, most people don't really speak their mind in wider society. Most of what we think is filtered before we say it. And that's probably a smart thing. Imagine if you could read everybody's mind – what they're really thinking. Could be very unsettling. Could be very titillating too.

So why this emphasis on openness and honesty in the workplace? People don't really want to know what you really think about them unless it is something positive. And most people don't really like you to disagree with them even when they invite you to express contrary opinions.

Back to the question. Does it matter? Yes. I've seen or heard of too many incidents of waste, inefficiency, counterproductive behaviours, damage to equipment or property, injury, damaged relationships, loss of trust, lowered motivation, loss of sales, withholding of important information, lost opportunities and even death because people feared the repercussions or reprisals for speaking openly and honestly.

The reality is that you would be a mug to speak openly and honestly on all occasions. Unless you are so pure of mind that you have transcended all negativity. And even then that can be dangerous. Ask Socrates or Jesus. If what you really think is that your boss is an arsehole, it's probably not a good career move to share that with him or her.

But as a manager, if people can see a flaw in my plan or strategy or reasoning or instructions or proposal or request or they can see a better way, then it is in my very best interests to know. But here's the rub. It is my reaction or response to the openness and honesty that dictates the degree to which my team are open and honest. They won't be moved by what I tell them about being open and honest, but by what I do to them. Immediately or later.

As with most if not all problems in life and work, you can't do much about this issue until it is brought into the open. Here is a game plan to investigate the extent of or to remove psychological fear in your workplace. Do this with your people (this is a challenging exercise and will require a healthy self-esteem on your part).

- Discuss the concept of psychological fear in the workplace.
- Discuss the extent that people fear reprisals or repercussions for speaking openly and honestly.
- Discuss incidents that team members perceive as examples of reprisals or repercussions.
- Identify the consequences of people not speaking openly and honestly because of a perceived threat to them.

Develop High-Performance Teams



- Discuss the benefits of reducing psychological 'fear'.
- Identify the causes of psychological fear in the workplace.
- Identify and discuss what things currently happen in the workplace which prevent openness and honesty.
- Identify the commonly agreed major issues and resolve them first.
- Discuss the concept of an open environment.
- Establish communication sessions where team members can air their opinions without fear of consequences.
- Conduct a review to measure the perceptions of team members in relation to psychological fear in the workplace.
- Deal with the facts when discussing issues which pose a threat to team members.
- Identify situations where people will not speak openly and honestly and discuss what can be done to reduce the perceived fear in each situation.
- Seek professional development for management in relation to handling this issue.
- Discuss the role of all stakeholders in reducing fear in the workplace.
- Discuss with senior management what they can do to help reduce fear in the workplace.
- Discuss how our 'organisational culture' contributes to psychological fear and what needs to be done to change it.
- Review regularly the progress of your 'workplace fear reduction' process.

Develop High-Performance Teams



8

Round peg. Square hole.

'Here lies a man who knew how to enlist into his service people better than himself.'

Andrew Carnegie

American industrialist and philanthropist, Epitaph.

'Obviously the interviewer learns little or nothing when he is talking.'

John D. Drake, President, Behavioural Sciences Technology,

Interviewing for Managers (AMACOM, 1972)

'A man is not always what he appears to be, but what he appears to be is always a significant part of what he is.'

William Gaylin, Psychiatrist, Columbia University,

The New York Times, Oct 7, 1977.

'The World's great men have not commonly been great scholars, nor its great scholars great men.'

Oliver Wendell Holmes 1809-1894, American physician and popular writer,

The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.

Probably the most critical interview that a manager conducts is the selection interview. Choosing the wrong person for the job and team fit can have disastrous consequences in terms of cost, loss of customers, productivity, your own reputation and the effect on other team members.

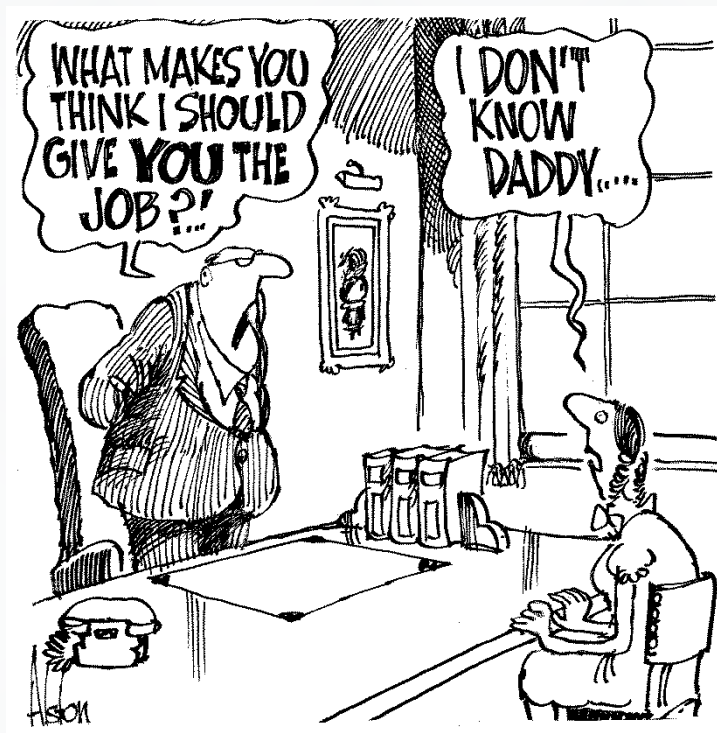
To develop high performance teams, it will help if you recruit the right calibre of people into the team

Some things to consider in conducting selection interviews:

- Unless the situation requires a pressure interview, create a relaxed, supportive atmosphere. Reduce the initial anxiety of the applicant by engaging in some small talk regarding a hobby or some aspect of their work experience mentioned in their resume.
- Allow that nervousness at an interview does not necessarily mean that the person would not be able to perform well in the job. Some of the most competent and capable people on the job actually show up poorly at interviews.
- State the purpose of the interview - for the candidate to **demonstrate** that you should select them for the job - the format it will take and the role of others if it is a panel interview.
- Prepare and use a candidate assessment form which lists essential and desirable criteria, weightings, ratings and score. Complete your assessment and make your notes immediately following each interview. Make a note of their dress or a physical feature to remind you later of who was who.
- Plan the interview in advance and maintain flow and direction during the interview. Prepare statements and questions in advance and ask them clearly.
- Remember to maintain an appropriate ratio of talking to listening - about 30:70 in their favour.



- Listen to what the person is saying, how they are saying it, how well they listen to your questions by their response, and for feelings behind what they are saying. Paraphrase, summarise and reflect their answers when you want more information.
- Listen for generalisations and probe them for specific details.
- Keep asking them to verify any claims they make.
- Sort through irrelevant answers by asking the applicant to explain how it relates to this job.
- Ask open-ended questions which make the applicant think and continually probe for specific examples or justification.
- Remind the applicant that the onus is on them to demonstrate that they are the best person for the job.
- Be aware when your own biases are affecting your judgment. A person you dislike for a variety of reasons may be a top performer in the job. Idiosyncrasies which annoy you might have no effect on others.
- Ensure that you have asked all the questions from your list and that the applicant has no further questions.
- Indicate clearly the next course of action to be taken.





Any questions?

‘You can train for skills. It is very hard to train for attitudes.’

Daniel Kehoe

When you are recruiting a new team member for your team, are they likely to tell you anything which will show them in a poor light? Unlikely. Will they try and tell you what they think you want to hear so that you will select them for the position? Of course.

One of the factors which determines the success of a recruitment interview is the ability of the manager to ask probing questions. Questions which make the applicant **demonstrate** that they are the best person for the job. Good interviewers constantly probe an applicant’s answers for facts, verifiable examples or precise meaning. Remember that the candidate will attempt to put a good spin on everything.

Unless you are checking on details in their resume, avoid asking questions that can be answered by yes or no. Here are a range of questions you might ask in a recruitment interview. Remember that you are looking for evidence of can do, will do, will fit.

- What assets do you bring to the job? What are your best qualities? What qualities do others see in you?
- What are your shortcomings? What areas do you need to develop or improve? What qualities do you wish to develop further?
- How do you contribute to teamwork and team morale?
- What are the key characteristics of high performance teams?
- What constructive criticism have you received?
- How might you be a risk for an employer?
- What things have you done best? Done less well? What things have you liked best? Liked less well?
- What are your major accomplishments? How did you achieve them? Describe your most difficult problems and how you handled them?
- In what ways are you most effective with people? In what ways are you least effective with people?
- What have you learned about yourself from your work experience?
- What is the key to managing people? Or fitting in with people?
- How would your present boss describe your assets and liabilities? How would your friends describe your assets and liabilities?
- What will be your main challenges in this job? How would you spend your first week or two in this job?
- What verifiable examples can you give to back up your claims?
- How do you like to spend your spare time? What social activities do you take part in? To what extent are you involved in the community?

Develop High-Performance Teams



8

- How would you describe your home life? How do you feel about your current financial status? What are your goals in life?
- How would you compare your attitude to work with that of the average person in this country? What factors mainly influence your motivation at work?
- How would you describe the best boss you've ever had?
- How would you describe the worst boss you've ever had?
- Why would you be able to perform successfully in this job?
- What skills or knowledge have you gained which will be required in this job?



Dead man walking

Stress is now known as the silent killer. Many traditional medical practitioners now readily accept that stress (or more importantly, how a person reacts to stress) is a major contributor to illness and disease. Stress is a fact of life. You can't avoid it, you can only respond to it in some way or another. Stress is any change that you must adjust to. Both positive events and negative events can produce stress.

Stress takes its toll on all of us, but many of us are unaware of the damage being done to our health. Unfortunately, awareness in the message of a heart attack may be a little too late. However, your body is advising you constantly on how you are handling stress. You don't need to wait for the giant 'tap on the shoulder' of a heart attack - your body is sending you messages all the time.

The trouble is too many managers are unaware of what our bodies are telling us or, worse, ignore the message. These are some of the symptoms of stress:

- tightness in the stomach or chest
- grinding teeth
- shallow breathing
- clamped jaw
- tense muscles
- frequent deep sighing
- slight headaches
- cold, sweaty hands
- rapid breathing
- shaking limbs

In the workplace, managers have an additional stress factor. They are accountable for resolving the 'people' issues within their team. Managers who are not dealing with stress effectively make poor managers and team leaders. Their communicating style, clarity of perception, their approachability, their ability to make decisions and to resolve problems will be seriously impaired.

Ever had this experience? You're running late for work and an important meeting. As you are driving to work you seem to get every red light. If you have to cross a railway line, the boom gates will be down. The car in front of you will have a learner driver or be moving excruciatingly slowly. The cars on the freeway will be moving slower than usual. The traffic jams will be longer and more frequent. Every donkey behind a wheel will be out driving in front of you. Get the picture. And you're late. And as you sit there and wait for the light to change to green, you're starting to stew. You are getting angry at the traffic lights, at the driver in front of you, at the traffic authority because they deliberately set the lights to turn red when you show up. You are letting the situation cause you stress. In fact, you caused the situation in the first place by choosing to be late. Phew. That's a bit harsh, isn't it?

Contrast this experience with the time when you are not in a hurry. Everything seems to flow better and you're not getting angry. In all probability, the situations are the same. The only difference will be the images you are creating in your mind in relation to each situation.

How you and your team members deal with stress directly affects team morale. Do this exercise yourself and show the article to your team members and encourage them to do the same exercise.



Learn to listen to your body. Your body tells you when you are stressed.

- Do this exercise focusing on your body at least twice a day.
- Find a place where you won't be disturbed.
- Close your eyes and starting with your toes slowly move up your body. Imagine that part of your body in your mind.
- Slowly sweep up and down your body searching for areas of tension.
- When you locate a tense spot, focus on it so that you become very aware of it.
- Be aware of the muscles in your body that are tense.
- Take a deep breath, hold for 10 seconds and as you exhale imagine that the tension is leaving that part of your body.
- Repeat this four more times.
- Check out how you feel now. Note that you will feel immediately more relaxed.

(As always, if pain persists consult your professional health practitioner).



Develop High-Performance Teams



8

Mind over matter.

‘Men are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them.’

Epictetus, c. 60-120 Roman stoic philosopher, Encheiridon.

‘It is not work that kills men; it is worry. Work is healthy; you can hardly put more upon a man than he can bear. Worry is rust upon the blade. It is not the revolution that destroys the machinery, but the friction.’

Henry Ward Beecher, 1813-1887 American clergyman, Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit.

‘Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it’s stored than to anything on which it’s poured.’

Anonymous, How to Live With Life

(Readers Digest, 1965)

‘Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm.’

Pubilius Syrus, c. 42 B.C. Roman Writer, Maxims

A team leader who does not manage stress effectively and healthily is unlikely to be able to create and maintain a high performance team. Where does your stress come from? Is it caused by the deeds of others, things they say and do? Or is it caused by your interpretation or thinking about the things others say and do?

Your mind - the set of thoughts you have about yourself or others in any given situation - is a major player in how stressed you are at work or anywhere.

Why is it that some managers show obvious signs of stress in response to a particular situation and other managers remain calm and unstressed in response to the same situation? While there are different schools of thought in answer to that question, I believe that the nature of the thoughts the managers hold about themselves in relation to that situation dictates their level of stress.

Simply put, what you think creates how you feel - think bad, feel bad; think good, feel good. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. It is hard to understand why many people have a propensity to always think the worst in any situation. It is hard to change those people who suffer from chronic depression or violent anger. Yet for most of us it can be a great stress release to see what our mind is doing when we are experiencing stress. We're talking here about stress which is damaging to us or others not the normal stress we need to help us function effectively.

The next time your body tells you that you are experiencing a level of anxiety, anger, frustration or fear etc., and you want to feel less stressed about the situation, try this process:

- Think about the things that are currently happening in your life or imminent things about to happen. They could be work related or unrelated to work.
- Isolate the one situation which is causing you most stress.
- Note where and how you are feeling this stress. Is it a sinking feeling in the stomach, shallowness of breath, a tightness in the chest, a feeling of a weight on your shoulders, etc.?



- Now make a list of the full range of thoughts you have about you and others in the situation. Describe the images in your mind. Write them down randomly - as they come to you, even thoughts that may appear irrelevant. Don't judge them in any way.
- Note how your level of stress changes as you write them down and 'get them off your chest' - or more accurately, get them out of your mind.
- Now go over your list of thoughts and for each thought allocate either the letter (A) or (B). (A) is for thoughts or images that are rational, positive, useful, freeing or functional. (B) is for thoughts or images that are irrational, negative, useless, limiting or dysfunctional.
- Now write these thoughts on to two separate lists - A and B.
- Take the B list and reflect on each thought. Is the thought based on fact or assumption or inference? What is the evidence to support this thought? Is it really true? Where has this thought or image come from? Is the thought based on something that has actually happened or that you imagine could happen? What are other thoughts which I don't hold, but could still be true?
- Eliminate those thoughts from your B list which crumble into nothingness under this scrutiny or rewrite them to more accurately reflect the facts.
- Focus on your A list. Read and re-read.
- Note how calmer and more clear-headed you now are about the situation.
- It is helpful to do this exercise with someone wise whom you trust who can help you accept other ways of thinking.

Develop High-Performance Teams



8

RELAXEVOUS. STRESS.

‘Learn calm to face what’s pressing.’

Horace, 65-8 B.C., Roman poet and satirist, *Odes*



As a team leader, during the course of your day you will be required to react or respond to many happenings. Some of these happenings will have the propensity to raise your level of stress. Teams work best when both team members and the team leader, tend to respond not react when things go wrong.

Instant reactions (except in life-threatening situations) are usually less effective than considered responses. In fact, if you observed how the leader of a high performance team deals with crises or things that go wrong, you would see that they are far more inclined to considered responses instead of instant reactions.

Here are some simple things that you can do to help alleviate the symptoms of stress at work or at home. These exercises will not remove the cause of the stress, but they will make you feel better, be better able to successfully handle stress, help prevent stress-related illness and disease, and help you respond rather than react.



MEDITATION

The benefits of meditation are now well documented and accepted. Meditation doesn't mean that you have to shave your head, change your belief system and start wearing saffron coloured robes. Meditation can lead to greater enlightenment, but if you have a problem with that for 'meditation' read 'relaxation'. Many successful business people, top sports people and Olympic athletes use meditation to enhance their performance.

Just as you create your stress response you can also create your relaxation response. (Adapted from the best-selling and highly recommended book by Herbert Benson, MD, 'The Relaxation Response'). The four conditions necessary to bring on your relaxation response are as follows:

1. A quiet environment
 - quiet, calm, no distractions.
2. A mental device
 - A sound, word or phrase repeated silently or aloud, e.g., 'I am calm'. Or fixed gazing at an object, e.g. a candle or a pin-prick hole in the side of a cardboard box placed over a bright light.
 - Repetition of the words or phrases helps prevent distracting thoughts.
 - Eyes closed (except if doing open eye meditation).
 - Breathe normally but not shallowly.
3. A passive attitude
 - Most important element.
 - Suspend any judgement about what you are doing.
 - Distracting thoughts will occur. Let them - become aware of them and then return to repetition or gazing. This is the hardest part of meditating, but rest assured this affects everybody. With practice you will become better at calming your mind.
 - Do not worry about how well you are doing or about those distracting thoughts that keep popping up.
4. A comfortable position
 - Any way which is comfortable and relaxed, but you don't want to fall asleep.



DEEP BREATHING

- Try this - it will produce instant relief from stress symptoms such as rage, anger, frustration, anxiety, fear. You can do this sitting at your desk or in your stationary car or while standing up (although not in your stationary car).
- Take a deep, full breath filling the stomach first then the upper lungs. Exhale fully and completely. Keep your mouth closed and inhale and exhale through your nose. If this is uncomfortable for you, open your mouth. Inhale again and mentally count slowly from 1 to 4 while inhaling. Hold your breath and again count slowly from 1 to 4. Slowly count from 1 to 8 while exhaling fully and completely. A couple of practices will show you how slow to count.
- You may have run out of breath before you made it to 8. If you did, try again inhaling deeper and exhaling slower. This exercise is best done with your eyes shut. Repeat the process four times and feel the difference.

Develop High-Performance Teams



8

Time demand analysis

‘Whoever admits that he is too busy to improve his methods has acknowledged himself to be at the end of his rope.’

J. Ogden Armour, 1863-1927, President Armour Meat Packing Co, *Conversations and Reflections*

High performance teams use their time more effectively than dysfunctional teams.

Ask your team to conduct their own ‘time demand analysis’ and then discuss the results with a view to managing our time demands more effectively.

WORK PRIORITIES

DEMANDS	PRIORITY	CUSTOMER INT / EXT	%AGE TIME



- A – most important
- B – less important
- C – least important
- D – internal customer
- E – external customer

What is your 'demand analysis' telling you about how productively your time is used?

Answer these questions:

- What percentage of your time goes on non-value adding activities?
- What percentage of your time goes on low priority activities?
- What things are low priority for you but high priority for others?
- What things are high priority for you but low priority for others?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on high priority activities related to internal customers?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on high priority activities related to external customers?
- What demands could you stop responding to with little or no consequence?
- What demand priorities do you need to renegotiate with your manager?
- What demand priorities do you need to renegotiate with your team members?
- Which people make the most demands on your time and what are the priorities of those demands?
- What demands on your time could be delegated to your staff?
- Are you able to stay focused on your high priority demands?
- Which demands are routine and expected?
- Which demands are non-routine and unpredictable?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on things you like to do?
- What percentage of your time do you spend on things you dislike?
- What do you now need to do to be better focused and to manage your time demands better?

An alternative to doing the time demand analysis is simply to ask your team members to respond to these questions leading to a discussion focussing on the last question.