MEZZANA
partners

Mezzana Method

We blend our deep psychological knowledge of performance and behaviour change with over 25 years' experience with high performing leaders and teams in sport and business. We use our knowledge and expertise to help you achieve lasting changes that enable your people to thrive. We start by understanding the business outcomes that matter to you most. Then we assess where you are now and show you how the mindsets and behaviour of your teams and leaders need to change in order to achieve your outcomes. Together, we agree a programme that will bring these changes about through a combination of team and individual coaching, facilitated workshops and practical onsite conversations that you run yourselves.

Real change

We are only interested in bringing about real and lasting change that leads to our clients becoming more productive, purposeful and engaging places to work. We don't accept the prevailing belief (or perhaps it's a hope) that engaging in one–off training or an off–site workshop will result in participants doing something new and better. As we know through experience, even with the very best of intentions and no matter how fun or memorable the event was, training alone ≠ new business outcomes. For new results, we need to move from *knowing* something, to *doing* something in a new way.

Whether working with our exceptional team model, our leadership and capabilities framework, or with your own content, our focus is on creating behaviour change that leads to a sense of personal accomplishment as well as new business outcomes. We do so by harnessing the power of habits.

Behaviour change and habit formation

In today's busy organisations it is challenging to pause and dedicate time to learning. The great news is behaviour change and habit formation that leads to enhanced capabilities occurs most easily and successfully when we focus on one change at a time.

Another thing we know about habits is that they are formed through repeated repetition of an activity. While studies have shown that between 21–66 repetitions are needed, we find around 30 day works well. As a result, our approach incorporates four behaviour change principles:

1. Learn less more often,
2. Learn with others,
3. Learn in the context of work, and
4. Practice with supported accountability.

While our approach is not for every organisation, it does align with those ready to learn in a new way and who are serious about enhancing capabilities to make measurable, positive change.

For greatest impact we include these proven best practices:

- Priming participants for learning
- Sharing content in bite size pieces
- Using the power of teams to help people learn and improve
- Exploring and applying new content in the context of their work
- Providing a supportive framework to practice applying the new knowledge on the job for 30 days

- Using light technology to enhance practice, reflection and feedback
- Offering learning sponsors data and insights on behaviour change.

Our programmes draw on the following principles of performance and behaviour change:

Deep understanding of high performance

Sustained high performance doesn't happen by accident or through luck. It's the outcome of a disciplined, wholistic approach that leaves 'no stone unturned' in pursuit of excellence. This begins with a detailed understanding of the demands of your event, whether that is running 100 metres or leading a team, and the processes you need to master in order to meet them. For example, a manager may need to regularly make quick decisions under time pressure. In order to meet this demand, she needs to ensure the right information is available at the right time (an external process) and be able to manage her own emotions and attention (internal processes). *Confidence*, an essential underpinning for performance, comes from understanding the relevant demands and having the inner and outer resources to meet them. *Resilience* comes from knowing one's particular vulnerabilities and triggers and having a plan in place to mitigate and recover quickly from upsets. This requires a high level of self-awareness and emotional intelligence, an open mindset, and the capacity to plan, do and review. *Motivation* is based on achieving mastery of the process, not just outcomes. In fact, a focus purely on outcomes is often detrimental because it leads to unproductive anxiety and unethical behaviour.

A robust model for exceptional teams
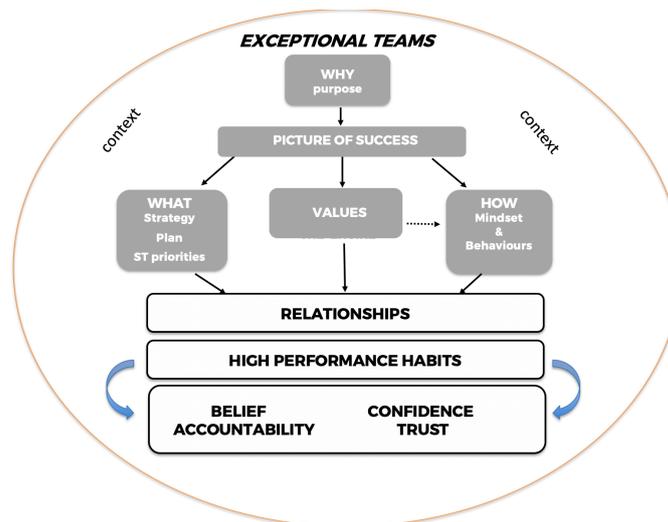
Our framework illustrates the *characteristics* of a high performing team, as well as a sense of an 'order' of stages to go through in *developing* a high performing team. So, if you were building a team from scratch, there's four distinct stages to becoming truly 'high performing' – which we define as a cohesive team where collective talent is fully utilised, there's high collaboration, shared belief and confidence, mutual accountability and shared responsibility, and high levels of trust.

Step 1: Establish a shared sense of direction for the team.

Call it team purpose and goals. Call it your team's picture of success. Call it your mission, vision and goals. The language doesn't matter. The principle does. The team needs a collective sense of

purpose and direction that is shaped in response to your context. Without it, you are at best a collective of individuals with broadly aligned agendas; at worst, you're a group of individuals with conflicting objectives, plans and ways of working. Put starkly – if you can't all articulate the same clear and compelling purpose then you're not a team.

Step 2: The Execution – your WHAT and HOW

Once you're aligned on WHY you exist and what you're aiming for, you need to understand what it'll take to fulfil that purpose and achieve your picture of success. There's two parts to this – the first is WHAT you need to do – your strategy, tactics and plans. Teams with very clear and aligned priorities tend to be successful (and cohesive). While we're not strategy consultants, we will work with you to create and stay focused on a clear, simple, high level sense of the areas that matter in delivering your picture of success – and ensure that you're all aligned and behind this.

Guiding the team's task focus is a clear role of its leaders, but leadership also requires attention the team's culture, HOW its members need to 'be' as a team – what you believe, how you think and how you behave as a team. It's the 'soft' stuff that's so hard – your values and behaviours. Often defined quickly and vaguely, and then left to rot on a wall or a forgotten team charter, we'll ensure that you're extremely clear what your values are, and how you're going to live them, each and every day. We'll help you hold yourself to account to these – in the same way that high performing Olympic teams use their values as their compass and guiding force.

Step 3 – Relationships

High performing teams don't just understand where they're headed and how to get there. They are also highly aware of their collective resources and strengths and how to best deploy them to fulfil their purpose. Each individual is clear on the contribution they bring to the team (expertise, knowledge and qualities), and what they need from others in return. The team constantly assesses how it's using its collective resource to meet the demand and achieve its goals; and can quickly identify when additional expertise may be required and move quickly to source that.

Individuals on high performing teams have a high level of self-awareness, and also an excellent understanding of others on the team. Relationships are based on clear and shared goals and roles, an understanding – and desire – to relate effectively with each other, and a genuine respect, caring and trust. This is not built overnight; there's an understanding of the need to invest in relationships, and time and energy is spent on ensuring that there's a consistent high quality of relationships across the team.

Step 4 – Team habits

We see three key processes in high performance teams:

Decision making. High performing teams have focused and efficient ways of making decisions. They hold limited and highly effective meetings with high clarity of purpose in which everyone is fully focused and present. They stick to decision making processes and timelines. They back themselves to make the best decision with the available information and commit to that decision once made (unless conflicting evidence emerges). They also know when and how to ditch the democracy, and who has the final call in what situations.

Doing what you say you'll do. Simple, straight forward, and seemingly easy to do. Yet lack of follow through is probably the biggest 'derailleur' for a team. Teams easily drift into the domain of unfulfilled promises, incomplete actions, and the cycle of discussing the same stuff and either not agreeing actions or not following through on actions. In high performance teams, there's a shared and high commitment to following through on intentions. Members of a high performing team will ask for – and anticipate and offer – support to get the job done for the greater good of the team.

Learning gives competitive advantage. You'll need to practise the skills of reviewing team performance and results so you can continue to learn to perform at an ever–higher level as a team. We'll establish a rhythm of predict, prepare, perform, and review so learning is embedded in the team's DNA.

Finally, the shared experiences of trust, confidence, belief and mutual accountability come from turning these processes into habits. You can work on these qualities directly, but they're really products that come when teams have built a solid foundation of high–performance behaviours.

Clearly defined personal and leadership capabilities

We have identified the key capabilities and mindsets that are essential for humanised, sustained organisational high performance. If leaders fail to develop these themselves and to foster them in others, then any attempt to evolve to a high performing, agile organisation will fail. We embed these capabilities in all our programmes.

Collaborate readily and effectively

Traditional hierarchical organisations invariably suffer from 'siloes', created and reinforced by leaders seeking to maintain control over information, resources and power. A new leadership mindset is required, marked by partnership rather than authority, and by support for others rather than self–interest. Leaders must become **stewards** who can put the needs of others (their people, the organisation and its stakeholders) first, whilst team members need the skills and enabling processes to quickly establish constructive relationships in pursuit of the company's purpose.

Handle ambiguity and uncertainty

Many traditional companies attempt to manage ambiguity out of existence by developing and imposing lengthy, detailed plans. In the agile world, leaders are required to first of all manage their own anxieties and accept the realities of an uncertain and volatile world. Leaders are more like **explorers**, navigating towards a strategic direction (the company's North Star) rather than train drivers on fixed rails expected to reach a set destination.

Open to learning

Learning is essential, whether that involves working through rapid iterations of a new product or capturing insights that lead to a step change in recruitment policy. An open, rather than closed, mindset underpins this learning capacity. Leaders must develop the capacity to **coach**, so that they can actively support individual and team learning and performance.

Willing to take risks and challenge convention

Leaders must learn how to be **agitators**; willing to confront, challenge and invent new ways of working and thinking. A clear pursuit of the organisation's purpose is necessary to keep this agitation within parameters and prevent it becoming destructive. Leaders must also foster a blame free environment and reward, rather than punish, thoughtful experimentation.

Proactive, accountable and fast moving

Everyone needs to be willing, and able, to take personal responsibility for their attitude and actions, because in a high performing organization teams are granted resources and accountability to make fast decisions on their own. This requires conditions of psychological safety so that people can access their full talents and resourcefulness. If people are threatened and fearful of 'getting it wrong' they will retreat to a place of denial, blame and justification.

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