human interest

2018 annual

insights

Inside this issue

Humble leadership: What is it?

Characteristics of Elite Teams

People leave managers not organisations: Truth or myth?


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We are a specialist organisation design and development consulting firm whose interconnected, targeted actions are aimed at changing identified, measurable indicators associated with high performance.
Our bespoke solutions are aimed at transforming individuals, teams and organisations.
Our team of trusted advisors use our proprietary instruments, processes and tools to facilitate the desired change.
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Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to share our second annual publication with you. Our articles once again focussed on global trends and challenges/ opportunities that our clients face. We welcome your feedback on our views and invite you to connect with us on social media for timeous notifications about our latest articles, research papers, new solutions and events.

We are thankful for significant business growth in 2018 and for the opportunity given by our clients to challenge the status quo. Some highlights included collaboration on an international scale, the finalisation of our research-based Elite Team Profile™ and the introduction of our proprietary Elite Team assessment and team transformation methodology to a number of clients and teams.

We were involved in a number of conference presentations during the course of the year, with our New Zealand All Black Rugby Team presentation a favourite amongst clients and conference delegates. We will maintain our involvement at these events as it provides an ideal platform to share our learnings and to enhance the knowledge of leaders on the intricacies and prerequisites of Elite Teams and Elite Leaders.

We look forward to 2019 and will continue to challenge ourselves and enhance our solutions – in particular the technological enablement of our Elite Team and Elite Leader solution.

We wish you all the best and look forward to partnering with you to move your business performance dial through the power of your people.

Janko Kotzé

Managing Director
Human Interest

Contents

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During their respective careers, our team of advisors have designed and delivered solutions across the globe for various companies across different industries.

Banking, Finance & Insurance

Resources & Construction

FMCG, Services & Communication

Manufacturing, Retail, Hospitality & Forestry

1

Insights

Leadership & Strategy

Humble leadership: What is it?

Humility and leadership are two words that are not often seen together. Humility is often perceived as being weak, lacking confidence or being a pushover. This is incorrect. Humility is not about thinking less about yourself but thinking about yourself less. The humility we refer to is not general humility, such as refraining from buying a new and fancy car or not wearing designer brand clothing, but rather intellectual humility. This refers to understanding the limits of your own knowledge.

In today's prototypical corporate culture, power can cause leaders to become overly obsessed with outcomes and control and, therefore, treat their employees as a means to an end. This in turn puts great pressure on employees and creates fear regarding the consequences of poor performance.

People with intellectual humility are more:

- Likely to acknowledge limits to their own knowledge;
- Open to new ideas and criticism;
- Willing to consider new sources of evidence;
- Receptive to learning new things; and
- Equipped to engage in constructive discourse.

Google's SVP of People Operations, Lazlo Bock, says humility is one of the traits he actively looks for in new hires. He goes on to say that humility is about what can we do to solve problems together and not just humility in creating space for others to contribute. Without humility, you are unable to learn.

The way in which a person perceives the nature of intelligence can either hinder or foster intellectual humility. According to Stanford psychologist, Carol Dweck, there are two types of mindsets:

1. **Fixed Mindset:** Those with this mindset believe that everyone is born with a certain amount of intelligence and, that because of this, there is little point in trying to improve yourself. A person with a fixed mindset and a high IQ, for example, might take on an arrogant stance, presuming they 'already know everything' and therefore inadvertently holding themselves back from learning something new. This is a very binary way of thinking.
2. **Growth Mindset:** Those with this mindset view intelligence as something more malleable, more like a muscle that can be strengthened. This fosters a love for learning and organisational growth.

Dweck outlines the main attributes that create a Growth Mindset environment:

- Presenting skills as learnable;
- Conveying that the organisation values learning, not just ready-made talent;
- Giving feedback in a way that promotes learning and future success;
- Encouraging respectful and constructive criticism; and
- Presenting managers as resources for learning.

Being empathetic even when work needs to get done

Everyone has experienced this. Tasks are piling up and a key individual on the job is experiencing personal problems that are affecting their ability to perform. As much as leaders would like people to leave home issues at home, this is not always realistic. A leader may ask: Why is empathy such a big deal? Here are some statistics to illustrate its importance:

The Businessolver 2018 Workplace Empathy Study in the United States of America found:

- 92% of employees and 98% of HR professionals say an empathetic employer drives retention;
- 75% of all respondents would leave their organisation if it became less empathetic;
- Nearly 80% of employees would be willing to work longer hours for an employer they perceived as empathetic; and
- 60% of employees would actually take a pay cut to work for a more empathetic employer.

In 2015, Amazon came under scrutiny due to an article in the New York Times, describing the harsh management practices. Following this article, Amazon's founder and chief executive, Jeff Bezos, wrote a memo to Amazon employees saying: 'our tolerance for any such lack of empathy needs to be zero.'

A problem surrounding this topic is the misunderstanding of what empathy actually is. It is often confused with rooting for the underdog, supporting and sympathising with the downtrodden, being sensitive, nice, tolerant and feeling sorry for others. This makes empathy sound like a soft skill. Empathy and sympathy are not synonymous, but they are related.

Empathy, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is 'the ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.'

There are two types of empathy:

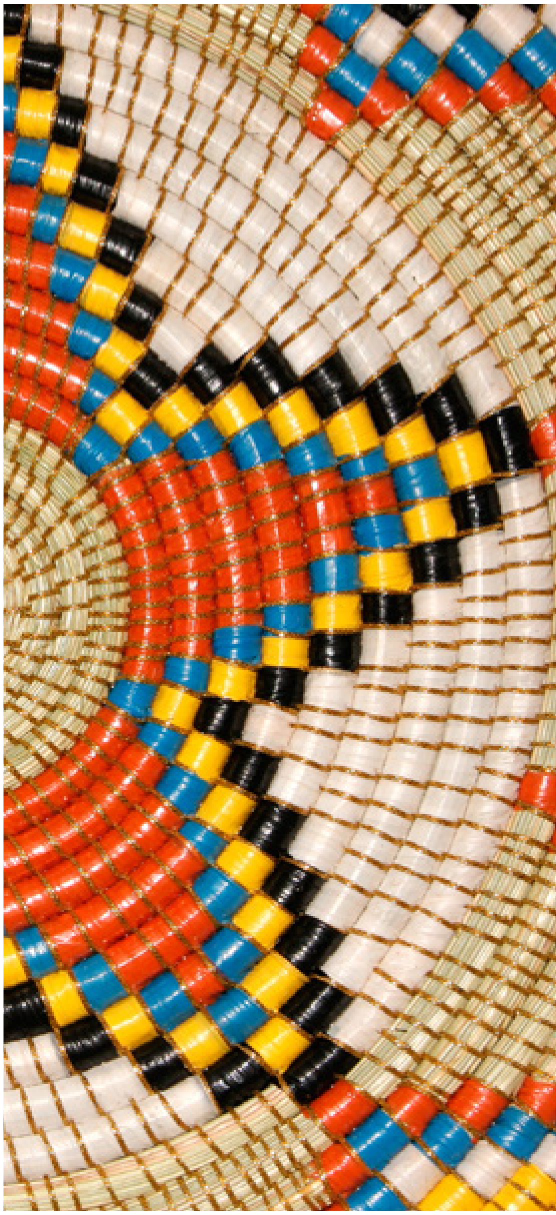
- **Cognitive Empathy:** The ability to understand another person's perspective (perspective-taking); and
- **Emotional Empathy:** The ability to feel what someone else feels.

While emotional empathy is automatic, cognitive empathy is deliberate and can be learnt. Cognitive empathy is a skill and not a personality trait. Just like any other skill, it has to be practiced in order to improve.

This does not mean that, whenever a leader is presented with somebody's personal problems, they must give them time off to sort out their problems. If you are a manager, the next time an employee comes to you with a problem or complaint, resist the 'Not again. What now?' attitude.

1. Try to remember how you felt in a similar situation;
2. Actively listen to what they are saying, not in order to reply but in order to understand;
3. Acknowledge the person's situation – this does not mean you have to agree with it; and
4. Where possible, try to be flexible and provide support.

Being more empathetic shows that a leader appreciates the contributions made by their employees and that they are more than just money-making agents.



Emotional agility: The evolution of emotional intelligence

Everyone has hundreds of feelings and thoughts rushing through their minds every day. These include criticism, doubt and fear. The way in which people respond to these inner thoughts is a key determinant for success. For example, having a negative self-image impairs potential for success.

Emotional intelligence refers to being aware and in control of your own emotions. Emotional agility, meanwhile, refers to approaching your inner experiences mindfully and productively. Emotional agility does not place emphasis on suppressing emotions. Thus, a person can be emotionally intelligent but still lack emotional agility.

Leaders are always expected to be 'in control'. In turn, they tend to suppress negative emotions. When leaders become hooked on their negative emotions, their thinking becomes rigid and repetitive. The world of work is constantly in flux; thus we need to be equipped to adapt to it rapidly. Those leaders who lack emotional agility may compromise their ability to:

- Make effective decisions;
- Think of new and innovative ways of doing things;
- Embrace new challenges;
- Set a good example to employees; and
- Embrace personal development.

Susan David, a psychologist, wrote a book titled *Emotional Agility*. In her book she presents four ways in which to develop emotional agility.

1. Showing Up: Spend time acknowledging both negative and positive thoughts, even if it is uncomfortable.
2. Stepping Out: Unhook yourself from your thoughts and acknowledge that they are *just* thoughts and emotions. These thoughts do not define you or limit future possibilities.
3. Walking Your Why: Keep your core values at the front of your mind. Let these values guide you, rather than inner negative thoughts.
4. Moving On: Continually work on adjusting your mindset and habits in order to prevent yourself from getting hooked by a negative emotion.

Increase emotional intelligence to enhance decision making

Too often, when making decisions at work, we are influenced by emotions that are usually unrelated to the decision being made. For example, the drive to work is highly frustrating and the emotions we feel during traffic influence decisions we make when arriving at work.

Researchers from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto conducted a study that was subsequently published in the journal *Psychological Science*. The aim of the research was to investigate how different levels of emotional intelligence influence decision-making.

Half of a group of volunteers were made anxious by asking them to give a presentation before completing an unrelated gambling task where they could choose a high-risk option for a high reward or a safe option for a low reward. Those who were low in emotional intelligence and who were made anxious were much more likely to go for the safe option than those who were high in emotional intelligence. This is because the first group of people were unable to attribute their anxious feeling to the presentation they had just given. Instead, they attributed it to the task at hand – choosing between the high-risk, high-reward option and safe, low-reward option.

However, when the researchers told the volunteers that they may be feeling anxious because of the presentations, they were no more or less likely to choose the safe option than other participants. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence can help stop any emotions, both negative and positive, from influencing unrelated decisions. People who are emotionally intelligent do not remove all emotions from their decision-making. However, *they remove emotions that have nothing to do with the decision.*

According to Daniel Goleman, an emotional intelligence expert, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to identify, assess and control your own emotions, the emotions of others and that of groups. Emotions give us the tools we need to interact and develop meaningful relationships with others, and our ability to understand and manage them.

People who are emotionally intelligent are self-aware and intuitive to others. They can effectively manage their relationships with people and, importantly, they have a healthy relationship with themselves. Great decision-makers have the ability to empathise with others and are effective communicators.

Successful decision-makers do not dismiss their emotions (or gut-feeling), they allow themselves to experience it so that they can remove the emotions that have nothing to do with the decision. It is easy for most people to see the flaws of others but the most successful decision-makers can identify their own emotional triggers and work past them.

Harvard Business School professor and behavioural author, Francesca Gino, calls this checking your 'emotional temperature'. Gino suggests that, when you're in a situation where you feel yourself getting highly emotional (positively or negatively), you should ask yourself questions in the moment of the decision, such as, 'Does this fit in with my original objectives?', 'Am I reacting to social/organisational pressures? ' Gino also recommends taking a short break from that situation. Those few minutes where you allow yourself to process the information and identify your own emotional state could save you from making decisions that you later regret.

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Elite Team Development

Deploy our proprietary assessment and approach to develop high-performing teams throughout an organisation.

Leadership Development

Facilitate accelerated leader growth through a custom development programme founded on our proprietary Elite Leader Profile.

Elite Accelerator

Custom Mobile Application that enables and accelerates leader and team development.

Talent Management

Develop integrated solutions to effectively plan for, attract, develop and retain talent.

Organisational Diagnosis

Assess culture, climate and engagement levels and design and implement interventions to address identified gaps.

Succession Planning

Develop and implement objective frameworks to perpetuate the organisation for long-term success and sustainability.

Organisation Design

Co-create fit-for-purpose organisational structures to enable successful strategy execution.

Change Management

Design and employ change interventions to increase the pace and certainty of successful organisational change.

Culture Transformation

Design and implement interventions to foster the desired culture at an individual, team and organisational level.

Coaching

Assist individuals to move from where they are to where they want to be through a robust coaching programme.

HR Transformation

Partner with HR Functions to meet business demands through a customer-centric approach, services and solutions.

Bespoke Masterclasses

Design and deliver highly impactful topical workshops to meet expressed needs and deliver desired objectives.

Unconscious bias in decision-making

Some people often find it very surprising that well-intentioned leaders make poor decisions. One way of explaining this is through our influence of innate biases. Unconscious biases are those that occur automatically, triggered by our brain making quick judgments of people and situations based on previously determined judgments or socially accepted norms while disregarding any level of rationality or good judgment.

A digital learning platform recently conducted a survey among 98 managers and HR leaders. 60.2% said they have experienced unconscious bias at work. Sixty-one of the 98 admitted to unconscious biases having affected their own decision-making at work.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that we can eliminate our biases as they are a natural part of human functioning. According to psychologist, Joseph LeDoux, biases are our 'danger detectors', as they provide a quick way to ensure our safety. We make fast judgments about what is 'normal' and what is not, and often this works in our favour. For example, a leader may sense that certain behaviours are consistently more dependable and may develop a 'bias' toward those behaviours.

Even if biases are often incorrect, it is still quicker to use a 'rule' than to view every similar situation as new. In organisations, unconscious biases affect how people recruit people, make appointments, mentor employees (or not), assign tasks, delegate work, choose people for training, listen to people's ideas, make promotional choices, give performance reviews and treat customers.

It is important to note that biases can be both positive or negative. Apart from overt biases based on, for example, race and gender, some other common biases are:

- **Affinity Bias:** Affinity bias refers to when you unconsciously prefer people who share qualities with you or someone you like. It occurs because your brain sees them as familiar and relatable, and we all prefer to be around people we can relate to.
- **Confirmation Bias:** Confirmation bias refers to how people primarily search for bits of evidence that back up their opinions, rather than looking at the whole picture.
- **Halo Effect:** The halo effect occurs when we focus on one particularly great feature about a person. As a result, you view everything about the person in a positive light which makes you think they are more perfect than they are.
- **Horns Effect:** The horns effect is the opposite of the halo effect. You focus on one particularly negative feature about a person which clouds your view of their other qualities.
- **Beauty Bias:** Thinking that the most beautiful/handsome individual will be the most successful. This can also play out in terms of other physical attributes (e.g. height, tone of voice). Interestingly, while 60% of CEOs in the US are over six foot tall, only 15% of the total population is over six foot tall. And, while 36% of US CEOs are over 6.2 feet, only 4% the population is over 6.2 feet tall.

As previously stated, biases cannot be eliminated. However, there are ways in which to mitigate their negative effects on organisational decision-making:

1 Building self-awareness that everyone has biases. If we accept and are more aware of our biases, they are less likely to cloud decision-making.

2 Develop tactics that enable more conscious decision-making:

a Priming is a memory effect that gets created when one activity subtly, and often unconsciously, impacts subsequent behaviours. By consciously priming people to pay attention to potential areas of bias, they can be encouraged to be more conscious of their decision-making processes. For example, before reviewing CVs, managers can be asked to respond to a series of questions like:

- 'Does this person's CV remind you in any way of yourself?'
- 'Does it remind you of somebody you know? Is that positive or negative?'
- 'Are there things about the CV that particularly influence your impression? Are they really relevant to the job?'
- 'What assessments have you already made about the person? Are these grounded in solid information or are they simply your interpretations?'

b Reorganising structures and systems can also help reduce the impact of bias. Systems in organisations create behaviours, for example, in terms of consistency of practices. Take structured interviewing processes – in which the questions are consistent across candidates – they have been found to reduce bias relative to unstructured interviews.

c Putting into place accountability measures can make it easier to see when bias is occurring. An example of this is if one manager consistently rates his female subordinates lower than the males. An inquiry can then occur in order to probe why this occurred and if bias was involved.

Do groups make better decisions than individuals?

It has long been under debate whether groups make better decisions than individuals in isolation. According to the idea of synergy, decisions made collectively tend to be more effective than decisions made by a single individual. Building on the psychological concept of gestalt, it is assumed that an organised whole is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

However, existing empirical results are mixed. For instance, Cooper and Kagel reported that small groups in strategic tasks deliver outcomes beyond the most optimistic expectations, i.e. better than those from the most skilled individual in the group. In contrast, other studies report no difference or even worse performance of groups relative to individuals.

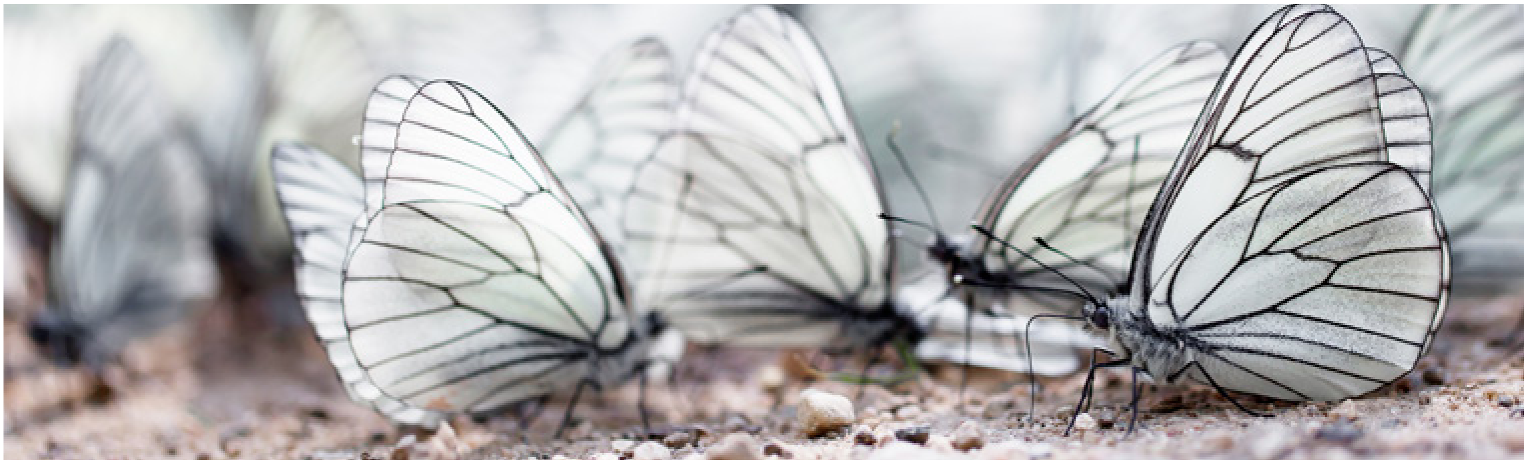
Group decision making has the advantages of drawing from the experiences and perspectives of a larger number of individuals. Hence, they have the potential to be more creative and lead to a more effective decision. In fact, groups may sometimes achieve results beyond what they could have done as individuals. Groups also make the task more enjoyable for members in question. Finally, when the decision is made by a group rather than a single individual, implementation of the decision will be easier because group members will be invested in the decision. If the group is diverse, better decisions may be made because different group members may have different ideas based on their background and experiences. Research shows that, for top management teams, groups that debate issues and are diverse make decisions that are more comprehensive and better for the bottom line in terms of profitability and sales.

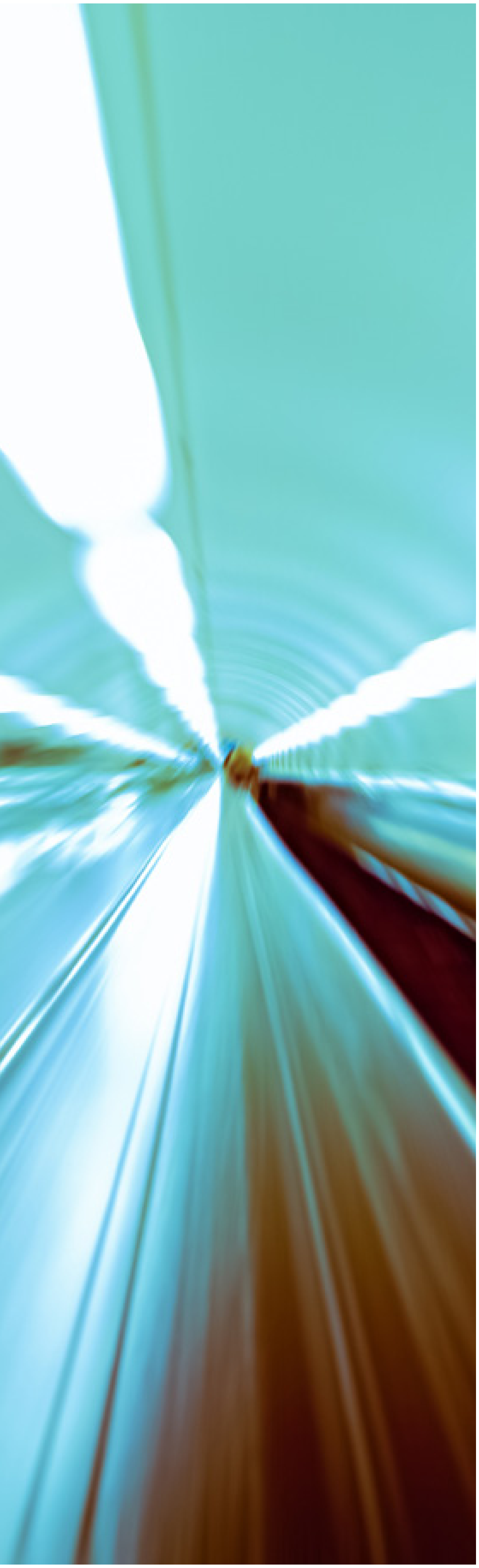
Furthermore, groups can overcome some, but not all, of the problems of individual decision-making. Some common pitfalls are a lack of independent knowledge displayed by the phenomenon of Groupthink. Groupthink occurs when group members are too similar, converge too strongly, have a desire to fit into the group and believe other group members have better knowledge. In addition, certain hidden group biases are more prone in group decision-making, such as:

- **Shared Information Bias:** One well-established finding in the scientific literature is that group discussions tend to focus on information that is shared by all group members, often at the expense of information that is essential but only held by a minority; and
- **Amplifying Biases:** Groups often amplify the initial preference held by the majority of its members – an effect known as group polarisation.

Other pitfalls are that of social loafing and competing goals between the individual and the group. For example, some individuals may be more concerned with their reputation than making a good decision.

Thus, there is no hard and fast rule as to when to make use of group or individual decision-making, as it is context based. For example, if there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made quickly, individual decision-making might be preferred. Individual decision-making may also be appropriate if the individual in question has all the information needed to make the decision and if implementation problems are not expected. On the other hand, if one person does not have all the information and skills needed to make a decision, if implementing the decision will be difficult without the involvement of those who will be affected by the decision, and if time urgency is more modest, then decision making by a group may be more effective.





Strategic thinking is not for everyone – and that is okay

We are often told to be more strategic; however, what does that even mean? Telling us to think about the bigger picture is certainly not helpful; we want tangible advice.

Strategic thinking has many definitions but one of them states it is a process that defines the manner in which people think about, assess, view and create the future. You may be asking yourself 'so what?'

Strategic thinking is important because it allows a person to recognise opportunities and take advantage of them at a quicker rate. We all have *different degrees* of strategic thinking that come naturally to us.

Despite the fact that there are hundreds of resources with different ways to become more strategic – our experience has shown that people very seldom 'become' more strategic.

Leadership often displays concern over certain individuals, saying 'I need them to be more strategic'. But ask yourself – have you seen anyone just become more strategic? There are, of course, people who are able to think strategically but, due to being in an operational role, believe strategic thinking is not required of them.

It is obviously important to give people a chance to develop and provide them with the necessary support but, what we stress is that, if after a year there is no change, recognise and admit that the individual is not going to be more strategic.

Some individuals are naturally more strategic than others, and this is fine. There is a place for everyone in an organisation. Often, people who are highly strategic struggle to be operational. If the entire organisation were strategic, who would execute on the strategy?

It is a fallacy to say that being strategic is superior to being operational.

What leadership needs to do is:

1. **Make an honest assessment:**
   - **a** What roles do I need to drive the transformation or growth that the business requires?
   - **b** Do I have all the right roles defined?
   - **c** Do I have the right people in them?
2. **Then, decide if you are going to act:**
   - **a** If your desired outcome is to grow the business, then you need to get the right people in the right jobs and address the people who are not meeting the requirements.
   - **b** If your desired outcome is to help people keep their jobs, you can move them to different roles and free up strategic roles to be filled by more strategically inclined people.

Ensure that there is alignment between people's skills, abilities and aspirations, and the requirements and expected outputs of each role.

Why strategy execution fails

Strategy execution has always been the essential complement of strategy formulation. However, in 2016, it was estimated that 67% of well-formulated strategies failed due to poor execution.

Here are the top 5 reasons why executing on a strategy may fail:

1. **Some 'strategies' are not strategies at all** – Not every organisational plan can be automatically considered a strategy. A strategy involves a clear set of choices that define what an organisation is going to do and what it is not going to do. 'We want to be number one in the field' is not a strategy but a goal. It indicates the outcome, not how it will be achieved. 'We want to increase operational efficiency' is not a strategy but a priority. Without a clear strategy, any implementation process is doomed to fail.
2. **Viewing execution as a 'thing'** – Strategy and execution are often viewed as separate entities. Different strategic environments require different approaches to strategy and execution. In predictive environments, strategy can be seen as separate to execution but, in adaptive environments, it cannot since 'strategy' continually emerges from intensifying the results of execution. *Both* your strategy and your execution need to be flexible.
3. **Metric obsession** – Some strategies are difficult to track and measure. Thus, for some strategies, it is not the best idea to pursue it directly. For example, a strategy in sales is easy to track, whereas a strategy in talent management is not. Thus, it is key to ensure that a strategy's trajectory is visible and continually tracked using qualitative metrics.
4. **Lack of tracking** – although some organisations may be obsessed with tracking the metrics associated with the success, others simply lack any. If an organisation is not tracking the success/failure of a strategy, there is the risk of the execution losing momentum as there is no feedback.
5. **It is not a strategy problem but a people problem** – To deliver results, people need to be hyper-aligned and overly-focused on actions that will drive the organisation's most important outcomes. This is often very difficult to achieve as people are very often misaligned and/or focused too broadly.

From strategy to action through the use of a sounding board

'Vision without action is a daydream. Action without vision is a nightmare.' – Japanese proverb.

The strategy execution gap is a classic problem. There are numerous reasons for this but the key reason, for the purpose of this article, is to emphasise that planning and execution are interdependent. Strategy formulation and implementation are separate, distinguishable parts of the strategic management process. Logically, implementation follows formulation; one cannot implement something until that something exists. But formulation and implementation are also interdependent parts of an overall process of planning-executing-adapting.

The thinking styles of the people who create strategy are often different from those of the people who implement it. Strategy is usually developed by people who employ long-term thinking, while execution is often done by those who are detail orientated. Furthermore, strategy is usually done by people who are focused on ideas and connections, while implementation is done by those who focus on process and action.

This difference in thinking styles creates a problem when strategy turns into execution. Those who create the strategy are often thinking about the destination, particularly the opportunity and intended outcomes. Meanwhile, those responsible for implementation are thinking about the realities of what it will take to get there.

Our suggestion is to do strategy formulation and implementation planning in parallel. Yes, they are different processes but it is pointless to go through the whole process of preparing a strategic plan only to be told that the time and expense associated with the implementation thereof makes it unrealistic – and then you have to start all over.

Instead of viewing different thinking styles as a hindrance, harness the differences to create an infallible strategy. It is important, when developing a strategic plan, for a person to be able to state how it will realistically work and vice versa.

This could take the form of two employees in an organisation working together or through business coaching. Coaching would enable a person to have an objective sounding board when translating strategies into actions. Coaching would also enable a person, during the process, to identify where they may be difficulties and to develop plans in order to improve on that development area – such as not focusing enough on the details.

Insights

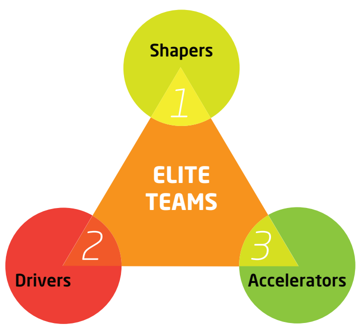
Leading & Managing Teams

2

Characteristics of Elite Teams

The term 'High Performance Team' or HPT describes a team that consistently shows exceptionally high levels of collaboration and innovation that produce superior results. First described in the 1950s by the Tavistock Institute, these teams will often achieve a quantum leap in business results within one year. The HPT is usually regarded as a tight-knit group so focused on their goal that they will surmount any barrier to achieve the team's goals.

Based on our experience and a plethora of research, we have developed the Elite Team Profile™ comprising key components for a team to be elite or high performing.



Shapers

- ***Sense of purpose*:** A high performing team shares a strong sense of purpose. They are clear about what their work is and why it is important. Their purpose is what focuses energy and drives interdependence and performance. It is from purpose that mutually agreed upon goals are derived, roles defined and strategies developed. If purpose is not clear, the team will falter.
- ***Clear and achievable goals*:** Clear and achievable goals are essential. To have multiple people work toward a common goal, objectives must be clearly understood by all team members. Research shows that, if goals appear to be unrealistic, the likelihood of individuals simply giving up increases substantially.
- ***Clear roles and responsibilities*:** Each team member must have clearly defined responsibilities within the team and these team roles must be assigned based on strengths and preferred behaviours for working within a team. Each person must know exactly what their responsibilities are in relation to the achievement of the team objectives.
- ***Focus on delivery*:** The ability to focus on getting a single project to completion is the key to high performance. There is a commitment to high standards and quality. High performance teams take great pride in meeting deadlines, achieving goals and getting the job done swiftly.
- ***Open communication:*** Team members need to feel free to express their feelings on the tasks and on the group's operation – without fear. These communication channels need to be open and constant. A 2012 study by the Harvard Business Review revealed some interesting facts about communication on high-performance teams. By tracking and analysing the interactions of teams in a wide range of workplaces, the researchers found that around 12 communication exchanges per hour between members of the team seems to be the optimal number.

Drivers

- ***Shared commitment:*** Commitment of every team member is key – to each other, to the organisation and to their goals. Leaders can foster this by ensuring that everyone understands the importance of their role to the team and how their specific strengths and skills contribute to the success of the organisation. It's not just about individual impact; it's also about how each team member positively impacts the group. Shared goals provide the reason for collaboration.
- ***Joint accountability*.** Being accountable means you are responsible for addressing your problems directly with others rather than avoiding them or asking others to handle it for you. Joint accountability also means that you share responsibility for a situation, including the consequences it creates.
- ***Psychological safety:*** Psychological safety refers to the belief that you will not be punished when you make a mistake. This speaks to trusting others. Studies show that psychological safety allows for moderate risk-taking, speaking your mind, creativity and sticking your neck out without fear of having it cut off – just the types of behaviour that lead to market breakthroughs. It is the ability to be yourself and knowing you have the team's support.
- ***Diversity:*** Effective teams are composed of members with a wide range of skills, strengths and differences. One important difference is diversity of thinking styles. According to a study by Deloitte, cultivating 'diversity of thought' at your business can boost innovation and creative problem-solving and guard against the phenomenon of GroupThink. Elite teams leverage a wide range of backgrounds, experience and perspectives for the potential for unpredictable insights and linkages. High-performance teams actively seek out divergent views because of what they offer to the decision-making process.
- ***Adaptability:*** A high-performing team needs to be agile in terms of learning from past mistakes and adapting their style according to changing conditions and demands. If a team does not adjust, the same mistakes will continually be made.

Accelerators

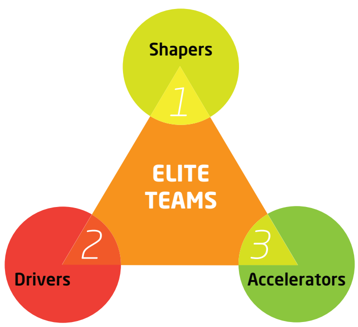
- ***Empowerment:*** Team members need to be fully empowered through effective delegation. This ensures that individual speciality and strengths are utilised. The team should have unhindered access to relevant information and resources.
- ***Recognition:*** Recognition and appreciation is the responsibility of all team members, including the leader. The organisation must recognise and value the team's contribution. Individual and team accomplishments are recognised and celebrated in order for team members to feel highly regarded in the team.
- ***Talent optimisation:*** Team leaders look at individual strengths and place people in roles where they are likely to thrive and provide the most value.
- ***Continuous feedback:*** Members of the team ask for regular feedback on their work and leaders provide continuous feedback. Feedback aids in two ways: Positive feedback enables the team to learn and engage quickly, while constructive feedback allows for team members to change and optimise their ways of working. This also allows teams to review their objectives and whether they are being met timeously.
- ***Collective leadership:*** The team leader is not one person in charge while the others purely follow. In elite teams, leadership is more than a role; it is an influence parocess that requires leadership from team members as well as the team leader.

Case Study:

The All Blacks rugby team

Teamwork, both in the elite sporting arena and the business context, involves the engagement and interaction of individuals to achieve an outcome that is, ideally, greater than the sum of the efforts of the individuals.

One undisputed elite team, is New Zealand's All Blacks rugby team. They have a win rate of 77% of all games played in 125 years of rugby, winning three Rugby World Cups including the inaugural tournament and is also the first Rugby Union nation to win 500 test matches. No other team has had such consistent success.



Using the All Blacks as a case study, we will demonstrate how the Elite Team Profile™ discussed in *Characteristics of Elite Teams* and shown above, applies to an elite team, who has created a high-performance culture.

Shapers

- ***Clear and achievable goals:*** The All Blacks set clear goals that are known to the entire team. At the conclusion of the 2011 World Cup, they set the objective of being the first team to win back-to-back world cups. To meet this goal, they set several milestones that charted their path to success along the way.
- ***Clear roles and responsibilities:*** The All Blacks are very big on *both* empowering and enabling. They ensure that everyone knows where they fit into the team and knows the end goal – which is, of course, winning.
- ***Sense of purpose:*** The purpose of the All Blacks team is 'to leave the jersey in a better place than where you found it'. Values are very important and there is a strong alignment between team and personal values. When Richie McCaw got his first All Blacks shirt, he spent a minute with his head buried in the jersey. They live by the Maori quote: *'The person with a narrow vision sees a narrow horizon. The person with a wider vision sees a wider horizon'*. The All Blacks also believe that better people make better All Blacks and understanding '*why*' identifies the purpose of being an All Black. A key factor in the All Blacks success was the development of the new haka, *Kapa o Pango*. Rituals reflect, remind and reinforce the belief system to reignite their collective identity and purpose.
- ***Focus on delivery:*** There's a Maori saying, '*the way the sapling is shaped determines how the tree grows*'. All foundation for success on a rugby field is built in training. In order to ensure a focus on delivery, the All Blacks set their watches 10 minutes fast so they are never be late. This is because they believe in total accountability. Focus is vital for the All Blacks, and there is no paradox – play to win, don't play not to lose. Don't be a good All Black, be a great All Black.
- ***Open communication:*** The All Blacks have strong and regular communication, so everyone knows what is happening every step of the way. This even extends to include those people on the fringes of the team, who may be called upon in the future. They also debrief immediately after each game.

Drivers

- ***Shared commitment:*** In Maori, *whanau* means 'extended family'. It's symbolised by the spearhead. Though a spearhead has three tips, to be effective, all of its force must move in one direction. The All Blacks select on character over talent, which means some of New Zealand's most promising players never pull on the black jersey – because they don't have the right character, their inclusion would be detrimental to the *whanau*. Like all the great teams, the All Blacks seek to replace the 'me' with the 'we'. No one is bigger than the team. The team always comes first.
- ***Joint accountability:*** The All Blacks have long had a saying: 'leave the jersey in a better place'. Their task is to represent all those who have come before them and all those who follow suit. Understanding this responsibility creates a compelling sense of higher purpose.
- ***Psychological safety:*** In rugby, an offload is when you pass the ball behind you knowing someone will be there to catch it. Sonny Bill Williams is well-known for his offloads. They are so well-known that to 'Sonny Bill' is to offload to someone. Although this is a highly risky move, he had the trust and psychological safety within the group to try something risky, that could very well have failed but didn't. The All Blacks have the ability to be true to themselves. They have an unwavering personal as well as a collective identity.
- ***Diversity:*** The All Blacks have effectively harnessed the diversity of skill sets and personalities in their team to make their 'star performers' into a 'star team'.
- ***Adaptability:*** It is the philosophy and focus on continual improvement and the continuous learning environment that are at the core of All Black culture. They believe that when you're on top of your game, change your game. Adaptation is not a reaction but an everyday action. Even failures (for example, the 2003 Rugby World Cup) are seen as learning opportunities.

Accelerators

- ***Empowerment:*** Central to the All Blacks' belief is the development of leaders and the nurturing of character off the field to deliver results on it. This involves a literal and metaphorical handing over of responsibility from management to players, so that, by game day, the team consists of one captain and 15 leaders.
- ***Recognition:*** The All Blacks are internationally celebrated; however, the team believes in remaining humble. After games, all players 'sweep the sheds', meaning they themselves clean their own locker rooms. No player is better than another.
- ***Talent optimisation:*** Each player has an individual player profile. This profile has, amongst other things, their strengths, weaknesses and ways to develop their development areas.
- ***Continuous feedback:*** The All Blacks believe in a philosophy of 'stabbing in the front not the back'. They have developed a culture where there is no blame and players actively seek criticism and feedback. Because they are empowered, they trust. Because they trust, they take feedback constructively. The coaches also use empowering performance feedback, whereby feedback is given on improving strengths and not only on reducing weaknesses.
- ***Collective leadership:*** The All Blacks' management believes that, if it is up to leadership to take responsibility for managing what happens on the field, they are doomed. There is a personal responsibility for own performance. Former head coach Graham Henry made pre-match time the team's own, as part of his evolved leadership plan. He left the players alone as a group to do what they had to do.

Creating Elite Teams

Teams exist in almost every organisation and most people will work as part of a team at some point during their working life. A team is by definition 'an interdependent group of individuals who share responsibility and a common goal'.

The focus, however, is shifting towards high-performing or elite teams. Elite teams are thus enhanced teams that outperform standard teams. Using the definition above, an elite team would be 'an interdependent group of ***stable, role-defined*** individuals who share ***mutual trust, values***, responsibility and a ***clear focus*** on a common goal, ***who outperform in anticipated productivity***'.

Up to 50% of the variance in organisational performance can be attributed to the top team.
– Peterson, 2003 and Thomas, 1998

The value of a high-performing team has long been recognised. There is a 1.9 times increased likelihood of having above-median financial performance when the top team is working together toward a common vision. It is known that elite teams have the ability to outperform other teams. However, they do more than that. Elite teams also have the potential to lift both the performance of other teams within their organisation and other teams within the competitive market space.

In 1964, psychologist, Bruce Tuckman developed the Stages of Team Development model. He theorised that these four stages (Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing) are all necessary and inevitable in order for the team to grow, face up to challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work and deliver results. Once a stage has been passed, it is still possible for the team to move back and forth between stages.

The model, which consists of four key stages, explains how a team develops over time:

1 Forming →

- Group members learn about each other and the task at hand.
- Indicators of this stage might include: unclear objectives, uninvolvement, uncommitted members, confusion, low morale, hidden feelings and poor listening.

2 Storming →

- As group members continue to work, they will engage each other in arguments about the structure of the group. These arguments are often significantly emotional and illustrate a struggle for status in the group.
- These activities mark the storming phase: lack of cohesion, subjectivity, hidden agendas, conflict, confrontation, volatility, resentment, anger, inconsistency and failure.

3 Norming →

- Group members establish implicit or explicit rules about how they will achieve their goal.
- They address the types of communication that will or will not help with the task.
- Indicators include: questioning performance, reviewing/ clarifying objectives, changing/ confirming roles, opening risky issues, assertiveness, listening, testing new ground and identifying strengths and weaknesses.

4 Performing

- The group reaches a conclusion and implement the solution to their issue.
- Indicators include: creativity, initiative, flexibility, open relationships, pride, concern for people, learning, confidence, high morale and success.

When using Tuckman's model for high-performing teams, it is necessary to look at what is imperative for a team to become elite. Looking at the diagram below, the red line indicates development of a team, whereas the green line represents an elite team's accelerated performance. One of the main tasks of a leader of a high-performing team is to shorten the Storming phase and to prolong the Performing stage.

Below are some pre-requisites for each stage in order for this to occur, using our Elite Team Framework as a guide.

Forming

- Leader as 'co-ordinator'.
- Purposefully pick the team.
- Establish clear and achievable goals.
- Clearly articulate individuals' roles and responsibilities.
- Assist in creating a shared purpose.
- Create shared mental model for the team.

Storming

- Leader as 'coach'.
- Establish processes and structures.
- Build trust and good relationships between team members.
- Resolve conflicts swiftly if they occur and leverage diversity.
- Learn about different work styles and strengths in order to optimise talent.
- Encourage open communication.

Norming

- Leader as 'empowerer'.
- Provide continuous feedback.
- Foster a sense of shared commitment and joint accountability.
- Allow for the transfer of leadership.
- Set time aside for planning and engaging the team.

Performing

- Encourage a focus on delivery.
- Delegate tasks and empower individuals.
- Celebrate successes.

Motivation through meaning

The meaning of life is to give life meaning – Victor E. Frankl

In our article, the *Drivers Behind Employee Engagement (p.30)*, we looked at the three top drivers. In this article we are going to take a deep dive into the driver of meaningful work.

Research has found that meaningful work is a good predictor of desirable work attitudes like job satisfaction. In addition, meaningful work is a better predictor of absenteeism from work than job satisfaction.

Daniel Pink, coined the term Motivation 3.0 to differentiate between previous beliefs about motivation:

- Motivation 1.0: The implementation of this motivation system presumes that the employee works for their survival (i.e. for their basic needs – salary). This reflection is linked to Maslow's' theories. Research has shown that pay, albeit still an important factor, is not the principal source of motivation.
- Motivation 2.0: This motivation assumes that employees respond to the 'carrot' (reward) and the 'stick' (punishment), with no evolution. Consequently, this motivation system forces employees to work without thinking, doing routine and seemingly unnecessary tasks. We are raised in an education system which rewards excellence and condemns mediocrity.
- Motivation 3.0: Daniel Pink introduces the notion of intrinsic needs (the drive to do something because it is interesting, challenging and absorbing):
    - **Autonomy:** The need to direct your own life and work. To be fully motivated, you must be able to control what you do, when you do it and who you do it with.
    - **Mastery:** The desire to continuously improve at things that matter.
    - **Purpose:** The desire to do things in service of something larger than ourselves.

According to Michael Steger, Associate Professor of Psychology at Colorado State University, there are three questions that measure whether work is meaningful for an individual:

1. Does the work have significance and purpose?
2. Does it contribute to finding a broader meaning in life?
3. Does it make a positive contribution to the greater good?

It is important to note that meaningful work does not only lie in social impact or charity organisations. Meaning can be found in any job according to Steger. Any employer can create meaning within their workplace for their employees. A two-year study carried out by Deloitte found that allowing time for relaxation, having small empowered teams, selecting the right person for the job, and giving people the tools and autonomy to succeed all contributed to meaningful work.

Some aspects that have been found to contribute to feelings of meaninglessness are:

- A disconnect between what an employer values and what an employee values;
- Not feeling recognised or rewarded for hard work;
- Tasks being perceived as pointless;
- Employees feeling that they are not being treated fairly;
- Being micromanaged and controlled;
- Isolation from others; and
- Extreme risks associated with a job.

Most of these are fairly easy to ensure and should be seriously considered, considering the impact meaningful work has on the employee and the organisation.

Leicester City is a good case study. They made an incredible turnaround after a 14th place finish for the 2014–15 season, their first season back in the Premier League since 2004, when they won the Premier League 2015–16 season. So, what can we learn from this? How did the team come back to defeat the odds and win? How did they move from being a 'normal' team to being an elite team?

One of the many factors that had a huge contributing impact was leadership. We often hear stories of a dynamic leader going into an organisation and changing everything to achieve success. But what happens when, as is much more often the case, the leader has to work with what is already there? In Leicester City's case, they won the Premier League.

To do this, the new manager, Claudio Ranieri, prioritised building a culture of trust, both in each other and in him, and diligently stuck to that.

Case Study:

Leicester City Football Club

What sporting teams and business teams have in common is the human dynamic. In an organisational context, we choose to work together in order for the combination of skills to drive an outcome in the form of a 'collective dividend'. In a sporting team context, this is not so much a choice as a requirement of the rules of the sport itself. However, in both cases it is clear that some teams are able to work more effectively together and create a much higher 'collective dividend'.

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To do this, the new manager, Claudio Ranieri, prioritised building a culture of trust, both in each other and in him, and diligently stuck to that formula for the duration of the campaign in order to get the victory that he needed. As ex-military, he applied some of the principles of war, such as:

- ***Concentration of Force:*** To concentrate your greatest strengths at the right time to achieve the objective.
- ***Simplicity:*** Simple plans and clear, concise orders minimise misunderstanding and confusion.
- ***Maintenance of Morale:*** Morale is a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion.

While preparing Leicester City for their season, Ranieri devised the team's systems and tactics perfectly with each individual players' strengths and weaknesses in mind, optimising the talent they already had.

Despite having a much lower budget than their competitors, they won because of the following factors that had been instilled in the team:

- Relationships;
- Culture;
- A deep understanding between players and coaches/management;
- Trust;
- Shared respect;
- Mutual understanding; and
- A fundamental confidence in their own ability and that of their team mates when pulled together.

This ultimately, enabled Leicester City to transform from being a team, to being an elite team.

How managers can assist in virtual team formation

With the advent of an increasingly global work environment, teams are now able to work together – even without having physically met before. Virtual teams are difficult to manage due to the need to navigate many different types of distance, such as geographic, time, cultural and linguistic.

Every one of these dimensions affects team dynamics and, therefore, has an impact on effectiveness and performance as well. There are numerous problems associated with distance.

In 1964, psychologist, Bruce Tuckman developed the Stages of Team Development model. The model explains how a team develops over time, which consists of four key stages, 'forming, storming, norming and performing'. Tuckman believes that all phases are both essential and inevitable for team growth. A virtual team will often struggle with these stages due to distance, however, it is the manager's job to assist the team in adapting in order to create a high-performing team.

Forming

Description of Stage: Team members get to know each other, exchange information about themselves and the task at hand, establish trust among group members and clarify group goals and expectations.

Challenge to Virtual Teams: Fewer opportunities for informal work-related conversations and those that are not work related; risk of making erroneous stereotypes in the absence of complete information; trust is lower and more difficult to develop.

Potential Solutions: Set specific times purely for teams to get to know each other over a shared video digital platform; ensure the project requirements are very clearly defined.

Storming

Description of Stage: Similarities and differences are revealed and conflicts surface as the group attempts to identify appropriate roles and responsibilities among the members.

Challenge to Virtual Teams: Reliance on less rich communication channels may exacerbate conflicts by provoking misunderstandings; ease of withdrawing behaviours; diversity of work contexts.

Potential Solutions: Request and accept feedback throughout the team, define rules of engagement, such as agreeing on mutual times to discuss things as a group.

Norming

Description of Stage: Team members recognise and agree on ways of sharing information and working together; relationships are strengthened, and team members agree on a team strategy.

Challenge to Virtual Teams: Difficulty in developing norms around modes of communication, speed, and frequency of responding.

Potential Solutions: Assist in creating a written document that has all the group norms (modes of communication, speed and frequency of responding).

Performing

Description of Stage: Team members work toward project completion, actively helping and encouraging each other.

Challenge to Virtual Teams: Vulnerability to competing pressures from local assignments, frustrations over loafing or non-committed teammates, and communication discontinuities due to asynchronous communication.

Potential Solutions: In order to ensure that team members share a common focus communicate effectively, schedule regular check-ins where people have to share status updates of how far they are.

Managing virtual teams

Virtual teams create all kinds of distances, including physical and emotional. Distance affects how people perceive others. It creates a sense of 'social distance' with a perception of an 'us versus them' mentality. There is a lack of shared identity.

Distance also affects what you know about people. Team members do not know what knowledge the other team members hold because a shared sense of context, a shared understanding of not only what you do but how you do it and why, is a key driver of your ability to coordinate and collaborate.

Both unshared identities and context have been shown to be strong drivers of task-based conflict.

Recent Australian research shows that leading effective virtual teams does not require a huge investment in technology but it does require strategies which are fit for the purpose and not a carbon copy of face-to-face leadership practices.

Below are five practices that can assist in managing a high-performing virtual team.

Establish Communication Tools
Defining platforms on which to communicate makes communication across the team quicker and more efficient. By using the same platforms, a sense of togetherness can also be created.

1 **Schedule Regular Meetings**
Scheduling meetings at the same time on the same weekday contributes to creating a routine. Routines provide the team with something they are used to and familiar with. Routine can put the team at ease and reduce stress.

2 **Have Clear and Detailed Deliverables**
Ensure that deliverables are very clear. Some ways to ensure this are to provide detailed descriptions of the tasks and an example of what the end product should ideally look like. This will help to reduce miscommunication and conflict as everybody should be focussed on the same goal.

3 **Make Sure Work Hours Overlap**
Regardless of what time zones your team members are in, it is recommendable to have at least two to three hours a day where most of the team is online at the same time. When everyone is online together, solving problems becomes quicker and more efficient.

4 **Find the Right People to Work With**
Not everyone is cut out for remote work and not everyone fits the team personality-wise. If possible, ensure that different personalities provide diversity but that no two personalities are likely to butt heads. This can ensure a smoother team process without unnecessary stumbling blocks.

Emotional intelligence of teams: What is it?

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) emerged in the 1990s. It has up until now been viewed as an individual competency. There is no denying the positive impact that individual EQ has had on individuals in the workplace. However, most work done today is done in teams and, thus, the focus is moving on to how to make teams as effective as possible.

Putting a group of emotionally intelligent individuals together, does not automatically create an emotionally intelligent team. A team takes on its own character, separate from the characters of the individuals. Team EQ is more complicated than individual EQ because teams interact at more levels.

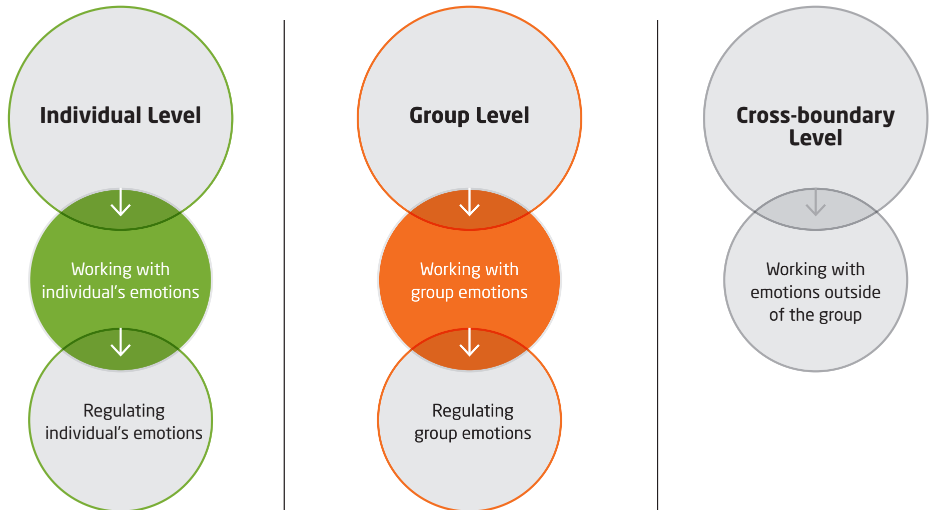
According to Daniel Goleman's definition of individual EQ, the major characteristics of Emotional Intelligence are:

1. **Personal Competence:**
   - Self-Awareness
   - Self-Management
2. **Social Competence:**
   - Social Awareness
   - Relationship Management

Personal competence, in Goleman's words, comes from being aware of and regulating your own emotions. Social competence is awareness and regulation of others' emotions. In Exhibit 1 the behaviours and characteristics of a highly emotionally intelligent individual are described.

Looking at team EQ, a group must attend to three other levels of awareness and regulation, as shown alongside.

EXHIBIT 1: EACH LEVEL IN MORE DETAIL



Individual Level
- Working with Individual's Emotions: Understanding sources of individual's behaviour and taking steps to address problematic behaviour.
- Regulating Individual's Emotions: Handling confrontation effectively.

Group Level
- Working with Group Emotions: Having norms for group self-awareness (emotional states, strengths and weaknesses, modes of interaction and task processes).
- Regulating Group Emotions: Establishing norms that strengthen group members' ability to respond effectively to the kind of emotional challenges a group confronts on a daily basis.

Cross-Boundary Level
- Working with Emotions Outside of the Group: Identifying and supporting other groups' expectations and needs.

Our Elite Team Profile comprise the building blocks of an Elite Team. It is no surprise that, is all those building blocks are in place, it should result in an emotionally intelligent team. The correlation between team EQ and the Elite Team Profile characteristics is shown below.

	Recognition	Regulation
Personal Competence	**Self Awareness** ■ Self-confidence. ■ Awareness of one's own emotional state. ■ Recognising how one's behaviour impacts others. ■ Paying attention to how others influence one's emotional state.	**Self-Management** ■ Getting along well with others ■ Handling conflict effectively Clearly expressing ideas and information ■ Using sensitivity to another person's feelings (empathy) to manage interaction effectively.
Social Competence	**Social Awareness** ■ Picking up the mood in the room. ■ Caring what others are going through. ■ Hearing what the other person is "really" saying.	**Relationship Management** ■ Getting along well with others ■ Handling conflict effectively ■ Clearly expressing ideas and information ■ Using sensitivity to another person's feelings (empathy) to manage interaction effectively.

The necessity of team emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence was ranked sixth in the World Economic Forum's list of the top 10 skills that employees will need to possess to thrive in the workplace of the future.

In 2006, Hillary Elfenbein, an assistant professor at Berkley, conducted a study that linked emotional intelligence with team performance at work, and found that 'teams with greater average emotional intelligence have higher team functioning than groups with lower emotional intelligence.' Moreover, in a team, 'the ability to understand one another's emotional expressions explained 40% of the variance in team performance.'

There are five reasons why teams need to have training in emotional intelligence to maximise it and utilise it for top performance:

1 More work is being done in teams. A study conducted in 2016 found that the phenomenon of collaboration overload is occurring. Teamwork has increased roughly 50% and takes up 80% or more of peoples' time.

2 Emotions are stirred up in social interactions. It is very common and normal to feel certain emotions during teamwork (frustration, anger, uncertainty), however, the important thing is how to manage those feelings so they do not become destructive.

3 Too much focus on the task. Neuroscience shows that problem solving and empathy use different brain channels. In today's world of work, emphasis is placed on the task and, therefore, emotions are left behind. When emotions are ignored, EQ is lost and negative consequences can occur.

4 Lack of listening. One thing that does not often occur in teams is listening. Team EQ places a huge emphasis on open communication and listening. When only 'telling' occurs, people are less and less likely to provide input and inquire, which leads to a group of people with one directive leader.

5 Tough conversations are avoided. If team EQ is properly in place with established norms, then issues should be flagged as soon as they occur. This eliminates the need for tough conversations. Processes will already be in place when dealing with difficult behaviour or conflict.

Fostering team emotional intelligence

Team EQ is a set of norms that develop as group members interact with each other. Norms need to be created in order to establish the following: **1** Mutual trust among members; **2** A sense of group identity; and **3** A sense of group efficacy.

When working within a group, it is important to recognise that developing team EQ is most effectively done as the group engages in its task. Group norms develop as a result of the actions or inactions of team members.

Using the additional levels of awareness and regulation for team EQ, recommended norms are provided at each level.

Individual Level

- Working with individual's emotions:
  - Take time away from group tasks to get to know one another;
  - Have check-ins at the beginning of meetings and ask how everyone is doing;
  - Assume that undesirable behaviour happens for a reason – understand the reason and avoid negative attributions;
  - Tell team members how you feel or what you are thinking; and
  - Ask whether everyone agrees with a decision.
- Regulating individual's emotions:
  - Set ground rules and use them to point out errant behaviour;
  - Hold members accountable for errant behaviour;
  - Support members and volunteer to help if they need it, while being flexible and providing emotional support;
  - Validate individual's contributions – let members know they are valued;
  - Protect members from being attacked by other team members;
  - Respect individuality and differences in perspectives; and
  - Never be derogatory or demeaning.

Group Level

- Working with group emotions:
  - Schedule time to examine team effectiveness;
  - Create measurable tasks and process objectives, and then measure them;
  - Acknowledge and discuss group moods;
  - Allow members to question the process;
  - Post your work and invite feedback; and
  - Benchmark your processes.
- Regulating group emotions:
  - Make time to discuss difficult issues;
  - Find creative ways to express the emotion in the group;
  - Create fun ways to relieve group stress and tension;
  - Express acceptance of group members' emotions;
  - Reinforce that the team can meet a challenge;
  - Focus on what you can control;
  - Remind members of the group's important and positive mission;
  - Remind the group how it solved a similar problem before;
  - Focus on problem-solving, not blaming; and
  - Anticipate problems and address them before they happen.

Cross-Boundary Level

- Working with emotions outside of the group:
  - Create opportunities for networking and interaction;
  - Ask about the needs of other teams;
  - Provide support for other teams; and
  - Invite others to team meetings if they have a stake in what you are doing.

Insights

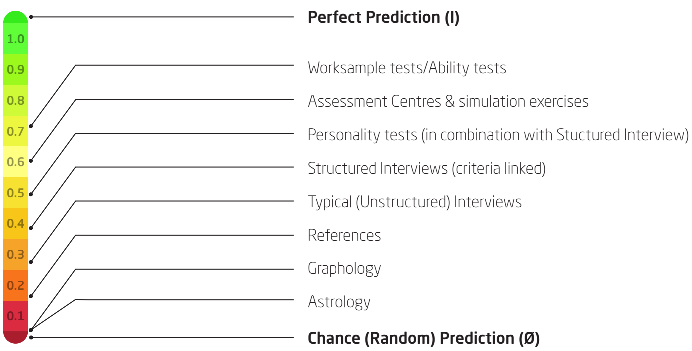
Talent Management

3

Assess first, then interview - Optimise your hiring process

Most companies have a standard hiring process. After CVs are screened by recruiters and sent to the person in charge of the hiring at the organisation, interviews are conducted with the shortlisted candidates. Based on the outcome of the interview, those candidates who are rated at a satisfactory level proceed to the next step – psychometric assessments to assess which of the remaining applicants are the best fit. This is known as the Multiple Hurdle Method.

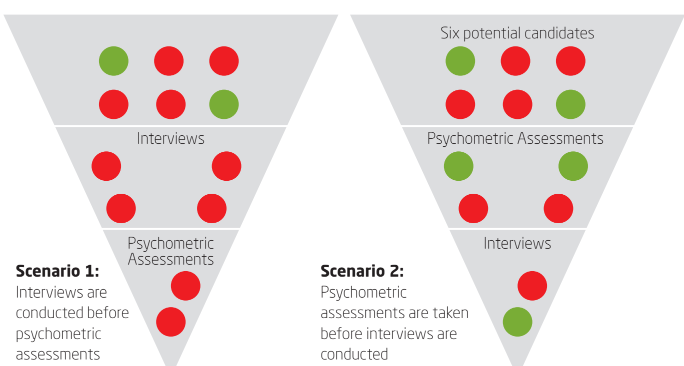
This is somewhat worrying, considering that interviews on their own have been shown to be a lot less effective in predicting job performance than psychometric assessment results.



Source: Quest Partnership Business Psychologists

The diagram above shows the relative validity of particular assessment methods or, in other words, how well they are likely to predict job success. The closer to 1.0 a method is, the better it predicts job success.

Exhibit 1: Two different hiring processes



To illustrate two potential scenarios, refer to Exhibit 1 above. The inverted triangle on the left illustrates the most common standard hiring process where interviews are used first to eliminate candidates. The triangle on the right first uses psychometric assessments.

In the figure, all the green dots represent top talent, who are best qualified for the role. The red dots represent those individuals who are the least suitable applicants. In this scenario, the organisation receives a list of potential candidates, consisting of two 'top talent' individuals and four less suitable candidates.

(1) Interviews (2) Psychometric assessments

It has been said that interviewers form an opinion of the candidate in the first five minutes and spend the rest of the interview experiencing a multitude of unintentional biases, such as Confirmation Bias, First Impression Bias or Stereotyping Bias, in order to confirm their initial perceptions. It has also been suggested that over 80% of people lie during interviews.

As a result, interviews have very little ability in predicting job performance – anybody who 'interviews well' will make it to the next stage of the hiring process. As there is no scientific rigour behind the decisions, anyone, including the least suitable candidates, will proceed and top talent can be declined. Once these shortlisted candidates complete the psychometric assessments, as illustrated in Figure 1, the organisation is left with the task of determining who is the 'best of the worst'. Thus, it has been argued that performing interviews before psychometric assessments is hiring backwards.

(1) Psychometric assessments (2) Interviews

When psychometric assessments are used first, top talent candidates are more likely to proceed, as the assessments are one of the best predictors of actual job performance. Psychometric assessments are scientific and objective, and provide quantifiable insight. Thus, hurdling, at this point, has defendable evidence.

Based on Figure 1, using the information from the psychometric assessments as well as the information gathered in an interview, the end result is having one top candidate with one less suitable candidate to choose from. It is important to note that interview data can also be useful when used in conjunction with other data. There are ways to interview that are more effective than others (see our article *The best way to interview*).

Despite all the evidence pointing to using psychometric assessments first, it has been argued that this option is not viable due to high costs. However, it can easily be argued that interviews cost just as much, if not more, in management's time. So too, one needs to consider the cost of hiring the wrong person. According to an American study, the average cost of hiring the wrong employee was estimated at $20,000.00.

With these facts, it would make sense to use psychometric assessments first in order to ensure a greater chance of hiring top talent. If more organisations hurdled candidates at the start of the hiring process using psychometric data, they would secure a better workforce and streamline a function that consumes enormous resources. The best option would be to use psychometric assessment results in conjunction with other data. This is the gold standard.

The best way to interview

When interviewing as part of the hiring process, there are ways in which to make them more effective.

It is important to note, however, that interview data used on their own can be problematic (see our article Optimise your hiring process) but, in conjunction with other data, they can add value. Broadly speaking, there are two types of interviews, unstructured and structured.

Unstructured interviews follow no predefined procedure. They can consist of any question the interviewer feels like asking in the moment, which may or may not be related to the role and is likely to differ between candidates.

Structured interviews, of which a 'competency-based interview' is one, allows an interviewer to ask many different candidates the same question, which allows for easier comparison of data. The questions are also strictly based on role requirements – they do not pertain to any personal questions or questions that are perceived as irrelevant.

Although both styles have their pros and cons – many countries, including South Africa, are governed by labour laws. In South Africa, the main purpose of the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 (EEA) is to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination. The EEA is clear that an employee must only disclose that information during an interview that is part of the inherent requirements of the job. One way of ensuring fairness is the use of structured competency-based interviews.

It has been suggested that interviews can add something not covered in an assessment. This is true as it explores job-specific activities and scenarios, whereas assessments are more holistic. Research shows that interview questions that are based on specific job competencies – identified through job analysis as being critical to job success – demonstrate high levels of legitimacy and reliability, and decreased levels of adverse impact.

Incremental validity refers to the extent to which a new assessment adds to the prediction of job success above and beyond the predictive powers of an existing assessment. Research has shown that, used alongside cognitive and personality psychometric data, structured interviews add an increment of 18% more predictability.

If used as part of the hiring process, where psychometric assessments are used first (see our article *Optimise your hiring process*), structured interviews can provide useful additional information.

Data-driven decision making

In most organisations that utilise psychometric data as part of the hiring process, the data is only used for selection purposes.

Taking into account that assessments are often relatively expensive and that results are still valid after the individual has joined the organisation, it seems like a waste to not reuse the data for other purposes, both individual and organisational-wide.

We believe in having an integrated assessment strategy in place to ensure effective use of data across the entire value chain for the specific purposes of selection, development and succession planning.

The first aspect that should be in place is agreed-upon, standardised assessment batteries mapped for different occupational levels. This will enable an easy comparison across individuals at the same level, which would make, for example, succession management simpler.

The data will be used differently, depending on the intentions of the situation.

1. **Selection:** To determine which candidates will be a good fit for specific roles in an organisation.
2. **Development:** To establish targeted, relevant individual training and development requirements, while providing candidates with a greater appreciation of their needs. This would result in, for example, personal development plans.
3. **Succession Planning:** To identify potential early in one's career, to optimise talent and to develop growth opportunities as soon as possible. This would result in, for example, a 9-Box Talent Matrix with differentiated strategies.

The above refers to using assessment results to inform decisions regarding individuals. Another way assessment data can be used is to assess the effectiveness of organisational processes, such as hiring and employee development.

This need not be complicated. Below are the following analyses a large global company conducted, using a simple spreadsheet.

1. Comparison of the average competency ratings of new hires with those of current employees;
2. Comparison of the qualities distinguishing high-potentials with those actually being promoted; and
3. Comparison of the actual strengths of members of groups to those needed to fulfil strategic goals.

This enabled this organisation to transform its selection processes.

Making use of assessment data, beyond the selection process, can enhance an organisation's talent intelligence by providing analytical insights.

The drivers behind employee engagement

To date, there is no single and generally accepted definition for the term 'employee engagement'. This is evident if one looks at three different definitions by three leading researchers in employee engagement:

- Robinson, Perryman and Hayday define work engagement as 'a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation.'
- According to Schaufeli and Bakker, work engagement is 'a positive work-related state of fulfilment that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption' and has been described as the opposite of burnout.
  - Vigour is explained as high levels of energy and mental resilience even while working during difficult times, unlike people with burnout who are likely to be less productive;
  - Dedication refers to being strongly involved in your work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride and challenge; and
  - Absorption can be described as being engrossed and fully concentrated on one's work.
- Gallup organisation defines employee engagement as the involvement with and enthusiasm for work.

Looking at all these definitions, it is clear that employee engagement is the result of a two-way relationship between the employer and employee.

Studies have demonstrated that work engagement is positively related to performance outcomes such as retention and productivity. Employee engagement has been found to positively correlate with productivity, for example, in a study of professional service firms, the Hay Group found that offices with engaged employees were 43% more productive than companies without engaged employees. According to another study, employee engagement should result in enhanced concentration levels and a greater sense of job satisfaction.

In South Africa, Gallup's 2016 Employee Engagement survey suggested a bleak engagement outlook. Of the 91% participants who were disengaged, 45% were actively disengaged, meaning that they were very negative about their job and work environment, and likely to spread that negativity to co-workers.

Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter argued that a lack of work engagement is likely to lead to employees wasting time on tasks that are unimportant, not putting in the maximum effort into tasks and leaving their jobs often. Much evidence exists that points to the importance of employers making employee engagement an important focus within companies.

Many researchers have tried to identify factors leading to employee engagement and developed models to draw implications for managers. Their diagnosis aims to determine the drivers that will increase employee engagement levels. According to Quantum Workplace's 2018 Employee Engagement Trends Report, the following top three drivers were identified. The survey was conducted on 600,000 employees from over 8,000 American organisations. These reflect other research conducted in the engagement arena.

1. ***Meaningful work***: Forty-two percent of respondents who have been seeking new employment believe their job does not make good use of their skills and abilities. Furthermore, surveyed employees who are planning to switch companies cited the lack of career progress (37%) and challenge in their jobs (27%) as the two top factors influencing their career decisions. It's impossible to be engaged at work if you feel like the work you're doing is not engaging. Situations like these create strong feelings of unhappiness, inadequacy and frustration. Nearly one-half (43%) of employees surveyed reported that meaningfulness of the job was very important to their overall job satisfaction.
2. ***Management/ leadership***: In the survey, the following four statements ranked highest in importance:
   - The leaders of this organisation are committed to making it a great place to work.
   - I trust the senior leadership team to lead the company to future success.
   - The leaders of the organisation value people as their most important resource.
   - The leaders of this organisation demonstrate integrity.

   Research by Deloitte found that more than 62% who plan to stay with their current employers reported high levels of trust in their corporate leadership, while only 27% of employees who plan to leave express that same trust. Moreover, 26% of those who plan to leave their jobs in the next year cited lack of trust in leadership as key factor.
3. ***Relationships with co-workers:*** Good relationships with co-workers have proven to be essential in the workplace. In fact, one of Gallup's Q12 reputed employee engagement survey statements is 'I have a best friend at work'. The reason is that, when you have a close friend at work, you feel a stronger connection to the organisation and you are more excited about coming into work every day. In the 2016 Job Satisfaction & Engagement survey of the Society for Human Resource Management, two out of five employees felt that relationships with co-workers were very important to their job satisfaction and 77% of employees were satisfied with these relationships.

People leave managers not organisations – Truth or myth?

'People leave managers not organisations' is considered wisdom. However, is it actually a case of enough people have said it enough times, so, it must be true? This has largely been advocated by Gallup, a management consultancy. Could it be that they have fallen prey to 'if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail'?

Culture Amp decided to test the validity of this statement by doing their own research. After combining existing data and analysing 175 teams to assess why people wanted to leave or were not committed to their organisation, these were the results:

- People do leave bad managers; however, it is not the number one reason why they leave;
- In 'good' organisations, managers make a difference; and
- In 'bad' organisations, having either a good or bad manager makes little to no difference to a person's decision to leave.

This is a demonstration of the Differential Susceptibility Hypothesis. Some people are naturally more susceptible than others to environmental influences in a for-better-and-for-worse manner. That is, they are susceptible to both the adverse effects of negative environments and the positive effects in more supportive ones. Thus, these types of people are likely causing the adage to look true when they are in a toxic organisation.

It has been shown that, in terms of employee engagement, drivers differ according to factors such as tenure or being part of a particular group. Quantum Workplace's 2018 Employee Engagement Trends Report illustrates this well. The longer an employee works at an organisation, the more engagement is driven by feeling valued. Newer employees, on the other hand, are more driven by professional growth and career development opportunities. Thus, tenure is a defining factor when looking at drivers of employee engagement. The survey also found that employees with a high school diploma or less education were the only groups with the item 'The leaders of this organisation demonstrate integrity' as a top five driver of engagement, while an interesting and challenging career was most important to those with a bachelor's or master's degree.

In another study, where employee engagement was assessed in the National Health Services in the UK, feeling valued and involved is the key driver for employee engagement in every job group except for one – pharmacists, for whom job satisfaction is the most important factor. Another interesting observation is that the importance of equal opportunities and fair treatment as a driver varies considerably. For healthcare assistants and nursing auxiliaries, it is the fourth most important contributor to engagement, whereas, for community nurses and therapists, it is eleventh and seventh highest respectively.

Drivers are also dependent on what level of engagement the individual sits at at that moment. The image below illustrates Maslow's hierarchy of needs applied to employee engagement and demonstrates that, for disengaged people, their drivers look completely different to a highly engaged individual.

Thus, providing a disengaged employee with meaningful work is not likely to be as effective when compared to an engaged employee.

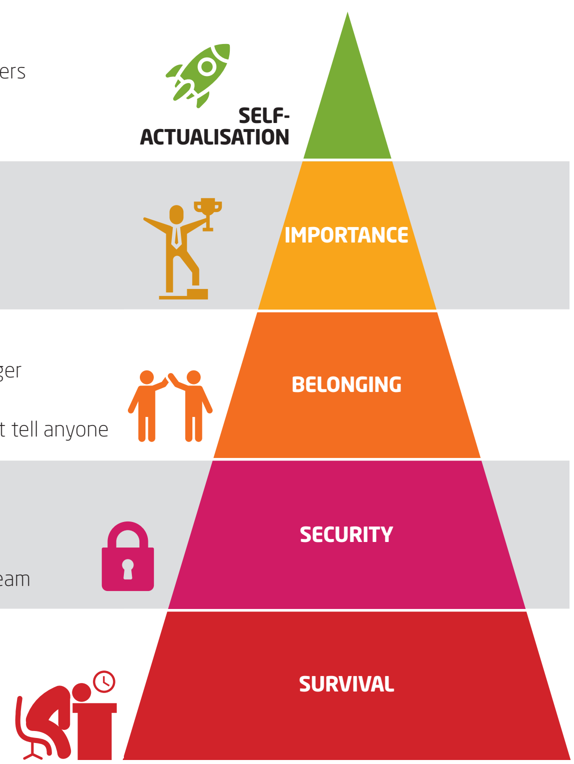
1. Highly Engaged
- I love to work here and to help others
- I inspire others to do their best
- I am a high flier

2. Engaged
- I am a vital part of the institution
- I feel important at work
- I am an achiever

3. Almost Engaged
- I know I am part of something bigger
- I might leave if I am tempted
- I am proud to work here but I won't tell anyone

4. Not engaged
- I read job ads
- I have poor working conditions
- I don't like my supervisor nor my team

5. Disengaged
- I am here for the money
- I am leaving when I can
- I am not satisfied with my job



Remote working: Is it for everyone?

With the rise of technology and the ability to always be connected, working from home is more possible than ever. People are striving for a better work-life balance, and remote working is seen as a potential solution. However, there are two important questions to bear.

Does remote working even suit every job?

In a study, call-centre employees in a Chinese company were randomly assigned to either work from home for a period of nine months or stay at work as usual. Results indicated that the cohort working from home were 16% more productive and more satisfied with their jobs. Similarly, in a survey, MBA graduates whose firms had flexible work arrangements were more likely to aspire to senior positions in their organisations than those working at less flexible companies.

However, call centre agents work largely independently. There is little need for collaboration or creativity. In some instances, success of organisations depends on employees working in the office together and sharing ideas.

Thus, jobs that are routine and do not require human interaction are best suited to working from home, such as translators, data capturers, web developers, social media managers, analysts and transcriptionists.

Jobs that require use of specialised machinery or interpersonal interaction, however, are less likely to work – such as medical doctors, heads of strategy, client liaison officers and people working in innovation hubs. In 2013, Yahoo!'s CEO placed a ban on remote working as she believes that people are more collaborative and inventive when together.

Is remote working really for everyone?

To some this may be rather obvious, but not all personality traits enable a person to be successful when working remotely. Some skills and traits that are considered 'success factors' are:

- Introversion;
- High levels of conscientiousness;
- Being very organised;
- Lots of self-discipline; and
- Good communication skills.

A recent Gallup report demonstrated that employees working from home were more engaged than their office counterparts. However there is a catch. The report indicated that only the remote workers who spent less than 20% of their time working from home were more engaged, whereas remote workers who spent almost all of their time working from home had the same level of engagement as on-site workers. The report thus emphasised that working from home was most effective in moderation.

Working from home? What needs to be in place

Working from home sounds like the perfect dream. No more traffic and dress codes, with increased work-life balance and flexibility.

In South Africa, it has been estimated that one third of employees are working outside of their company offices.

However, in reality, it is easy to lose the balance between personal and work obligations when structure is lacking and self-discipline is required. We believe that the following five aspects need to be in place before attempting to work from home.

1 Set boundaries with others

Let family and friends know that, even though you are working from home, this does not mean you are available. Just like when you work from the office, interruptions should be left for urgent matters only. Once you have informed people of your boundaries, ensure that you stick to them. That way people will understand you are serious. If personal commitments need to be completed, set aside a specific amount of time for it, just like you would for a meeting.

2 Set working hours

If you do not set clear times for work, it is easy to end up fulfilling personal commitments during the day. This is likely to create guilt regarding time spent working and is likely to impact productivity negatively. A good heuristic to use is to ask yourself: 'If I were at the office, would I be doing this?' A survey conducted by an organisation who designs technology for remote working found that a quarter of employees admitted to having an alcoholic beverage while working from home. This does not mean that you have to set your hours from 9h00 – 17h00. Choose hours where you feel you work the best.

3 Clearly mark out your workspace

Ensure that there is a place at home that is strictly demarcated for work. This way people know when you are working and you know that, when you are at your desk, you need to focus. If you were to work in front of the TV, for example, the likelihood of distractions increases tremendously. If possible, do not place your desk in your bedroom and do not work in bed. This is likely to reduce quality sleep due to the mental confusion between home and work. Let your bedroom be only used for sleep.

4 Create a daily to-do list

For people working outside of their office environment, the trap of procrastination is easy to get caught in. One way of creating structure is to make a to-do list every morning. Having a list demonstrates what needs to be completed by the end of your working day. So too, be realistic and take into account the likelihood of disruptions. Your list should also include planned break times.

5 'Leave' work

People who work at the office are able to leave work and go home. Working from home does not make this easy. Just because you are working from home does not mean you have to work all the time. Using your working hours as a guide, make sure you stop working at some point. This will make the distinction between home and work clearer.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Our Methodology

We follow a phased approach in the development and implementation of tailored solutions aimed at the individual, team and/ or organisational level. All our solutions are supported by integrated change management, effective programme delivery and comprehensive benefits tracking.

6. Embed

Develop and agree on mechanisms to maintain the momentum created.

1. Initiate

Understand the client context, opportunities and challenges.

5. Implement

Utilise proprietary processes and tools and execute activities according to agreed timelines and standards.

2. Define

Co-create and articulate the desired end-goal with associated measurable results.

4. Design

Co-create tailored solutions aimed at moving the individual, team and/ or organisation towards the desired end-goal/s.

3. Analyse

Establish a baseline with our proprietary diagnostic tools and processes.

Change Management: Develop and implement targeted change, communication and engagement initiatives to facilitate the required change and transformation.

Programme Delivery: Adhere to agreed programme governance to ensure successful project delivery, both within time and budget.

Benefits Tracking: Perform constant monitoring of agreed measurable indicators to ensure expectations are met.

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