

Raising team performance

The list below has been created from analysis of over fifty different research sources combined with our extensive experience working with teams from all sectors.

1. Vision and values:

Individuals share a clear and relevant vision, hence they share a sense of purpose. This focuses individuals on outcomes, thereby enhancing creativity, increasing solution-focussed behaviours, personal accountability and reducing dependence on detailed procedure and/or day-to-day 'management'. Vision is explained repeatedly using language and methods that are both engaging and 'real' to all stakeholders. The vision is framed with clear values that are reflected in policies, leadership behaviours, decisions, informal interactions and even aspects such as decor, advertising, etc.

2. Commitment:

There is a meaningful connection between the team vision and the personal goals of individuals, with real and perceived benefits to the individuals who join the 'journey' towards the vision. Opportunities to create, evaluate and review connections between individuals' goals and team vision are embedded within the performance management process as well as within informal interactions with leaders.

3. Personal effectiveness and growth

High levels of esteem, efficacy and goal setting skills exist right across the team, supported by training and coaching where required. Behavioural norms are agreed and also modelled consistently by leaders. Individuals are expected and encouraged to grow, both professionally and personally, as a direct result of being part of the team and engaging on the vision journey.

4. Behaviour and relationships

Secure levels of personal self-esteem reduce internally competitive and power-enforcing behaviours and support mature, high-performance relationship styles. This allows conflict to be managed effectively and even benefits team performance. Clearly defined and agreed values support a constructive culture where corrosive behaviour is unacceptable. When corrosive behaviour occurs decisive action is taken, regardless of any individuals' perceived technical skill, tenure or hierarchical position.

5. Leadership

Leadership is shared, flexible and highly constructive in style. Team members are encouraged, willing and able to take the lead where required, creating ongoing opportunities for individual growth and maximising the use of expertise within the team. Team leaders are high-esteem individuals who perceive the growth of all team members as a key element of their role. They seek and maintain an objective view of the performance of individuals and the overall team, using this to inform strategic planning and direction. Leaders take decisive action when required and communicate decisions clearly in terms of positive impact on outcomes.

6. Communication and talk

Team members at all levels are expected to make suggestions, pass on information, communicate openly and raise issues that concern them. Communication systems are effective, regularly reviewed and do not restrict informal interaction which is acknowledged as a key driver of team culture and performance. Individuals and leaders recognise the role played by 'talk' and intervene to control this; inside their own head and within the team. Underperformance is challenged with solution-focus talk, hence avoiding talk that reinforces unhelpful beliefs or damages esteem.

7. Decision making

Effective and clearly defined delegation allows decisions to be made on the ground based on what works, with genuine authority and power shared across the team. Where decisions need to be made by leaders these are made and communicated quickly and effectively with an emphasis on connecting the change to outcomes and overall team benefits. Team members accept the need for leaders to make decisions when required and support these decisions, even where there is some perceived negative impact on them.

8. Process and outcome

Processes are created and regularly reviewed to ensure effectiveness in terms of achieving outcomes, efficient use of resources, impact on individuals and alignment with agreed values. Policies, systems and procedures represent best practice and hence are perceived as helpful in most situations for achieving outcomes in line with agree values. They support rather than restrict creativity and performance.

9. Trust and respect

Behaviours that represent mutual trust and respect, or run counter to this, are well defined, understood and modelled by team members and leaders. Although defined by the team, these will generally include an acceptance that differences are beneficial to the team, overt responsiveness to individual needs, awareness of personal behaviour-impact (including subtleties such as voice tone and facial expression), maintenance of confidentiality, avoidance of gossip, etc.

10. Risk talking

Fear of failure is recognised as restrictive to creativity and de-motivating to performance. Although excellence and high-performance are prioritised, there is an acceptance that mistakes will occur and that success is not guaranteed. Mistakes are not rewarded but learning is. When necessary, leaders demonstrate total commitment to decisions and do not suffer initiative swing. They will, when required, defend the team from change forces and restrictive interventions external to team, including those from within the wider organisation.

ACTIVITY:

- Consider the above characteristics against your perception of your team right now.
- Identify three key aspects that you believe need to change.
- For each, list three actions that would support the required shift; even if only small.