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HOW TO
CREATE
HIGH
PERFORMING
TEAMS



It's a common thing to hear businesses and leaders say that they have a high performing team, but very often when you really look in detail, that is often not the case, and in reality there are lots of opportunities to improve.

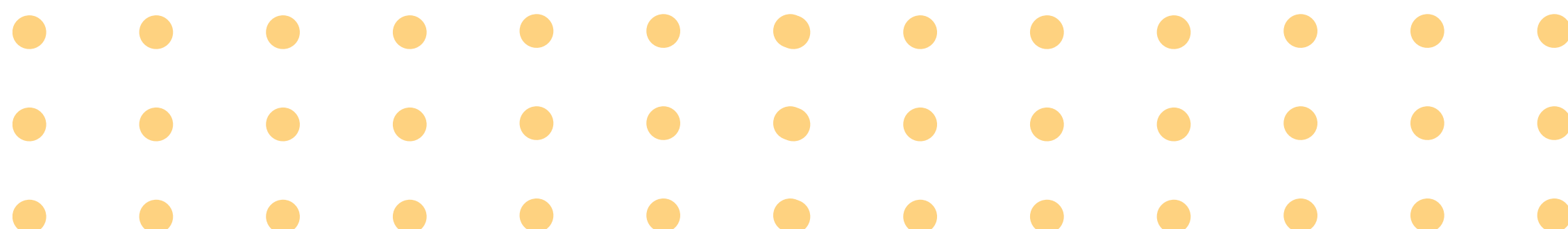
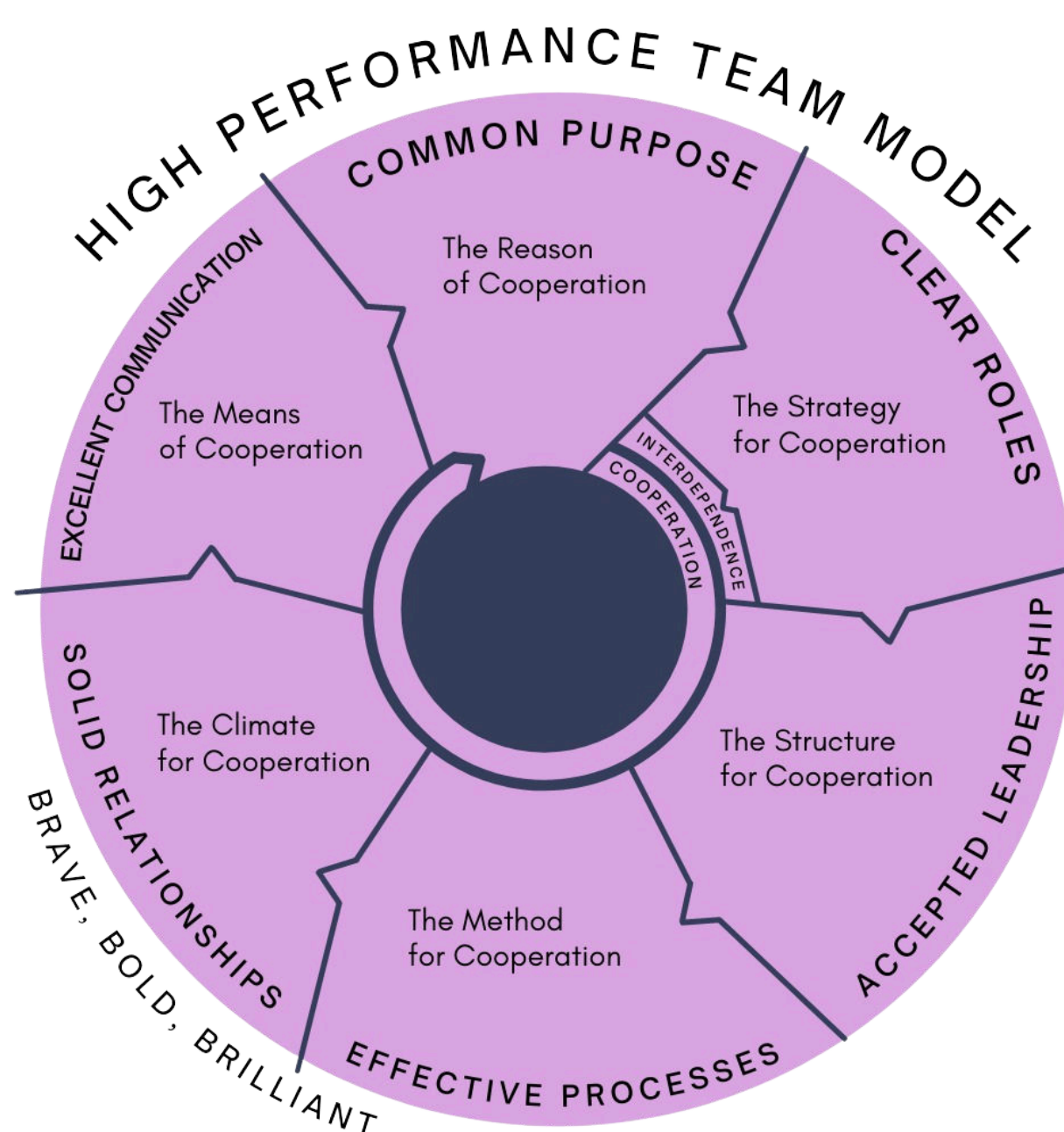
Being self-aware as a leader where you are today in reality with your team and the environment they operate in is the starting point.

A high performing team can only perform at their highest level if the culture and environment they operate in is also high performing, so when we look at the area of high performance there are a many different sub-areas which are critical to driving that high performance.

1. What are the Characteristics of a High Performing Team?



Now that we know how important a high performing team is, how do we identify if our teams are high performing vs the norm. There are 6 key elements to creating and achieving high performing teams:



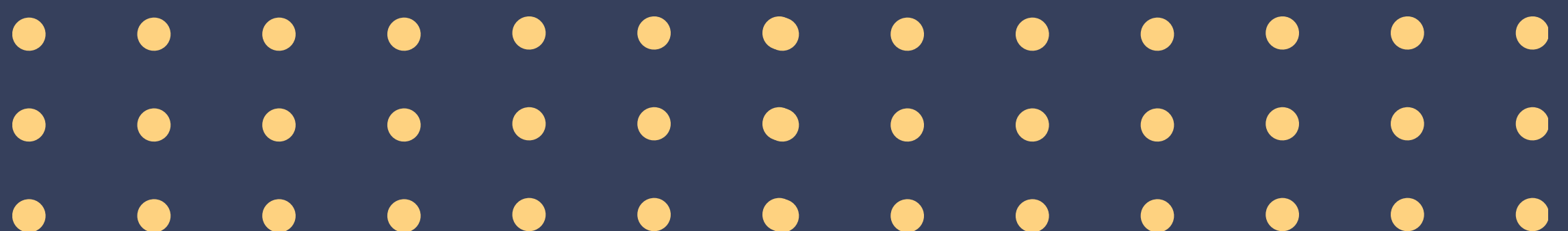
- Common Purpose – having the whole team clear on the purpose and reason why for the business ensures everyone is aligned behind a common goal. The strongest purposes are usually clear and simple so that there is no ambiguity in what everyone is aiming for.
- Clear Roles & Responsibilities – with high performing teams there is absolute clarity on who is doing what, by when and what success looks like with clear objectives and KPIs. The relationships between the team members is strong in particular where there may be interdependencies in order to achieve results.
- Strong Leadership – high performing teams need strong leadership that is respected by the whole team. A strong leader sets the direction, gets the buy-in from the whole team, makes key decisions, allocates resources and leads from the front.
- Effective Processes – high performance is optimised when the systems and processes across the business operate at maximum efficiency. Strong processes usually include a high degree of automation and are clearly documented and reviewed regularly.
- Solid Relationships – a strong team has ‘each-others’ backs’ and acts with a ‘one’ team mentality. Whilst the individual roles are clearly specified and essential, the relationship between team members needs to be open, honest, respectful to ensure that people don’t operate in isolation.
- Excellent Communication – communication between all team members is essential to make sure that all stakeholders are fully informed at all times. There also needs to be a seamless cascade of communication throughout the entire business so that the customer facing teams are fully aligned with the leadership team.

When all of these elements are in place that’s when high performance flourishes and the results achieved demonstrate that clearly.

2. Behaviours & Values of a High Performing Team?

Now we’re clear on the characteristics of a high performing team, how does this play out in respect to the behaviours and the shared values demonstrated and the ethos behind the way the team operates.

There are 8 behaviours that high performing teams demonstrate on a consistent basis. The key here is that high performing teams demonstrate these behaviours consistently not on an ad hoc basis.



8 BEHAVIOURS OF A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM

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SENSE OF PURPOSE



OPEN COMMUNICATION



TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT



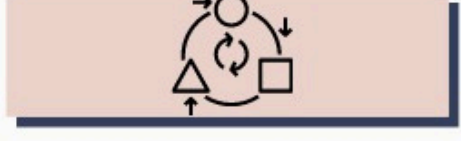
SHARED LEADERSHIP



EFFECTIVE WORKING PROCEDURES



BUILDING ON DIFFERENCES



FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY



CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The **8 behaviours** and shared values that high performing teams demonstrate

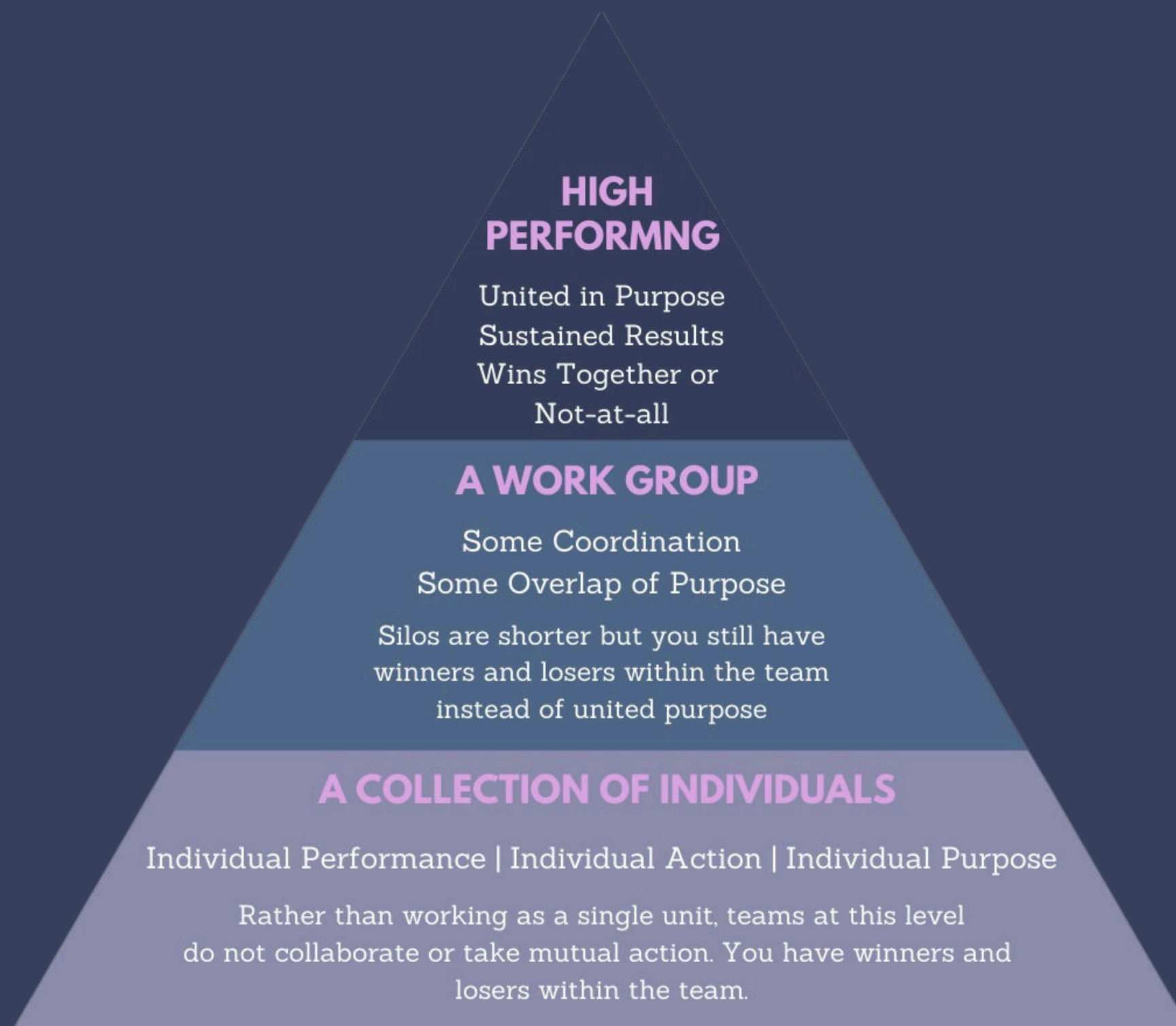
- 1) Sense of purpose
- 2) Open communication
- 3) Trust & mutual respect
- 4) Shared leadership
- 5) Effective working procedures
- 6) Building on differences
- 7) Flexibility & adaptability
- 8) Continuous learning

As you review how your teams are doing, the above list is a useful check in to see whether these behaviours are consistently demonstrated. Where there are gaps this will help you identify where you need to focus with your teams.



3. The Pyramid of Team Performance

When looking at your team it's useful to take stock where they are in the overall pyramid of team performance. There are 3 levels of teams as follows.



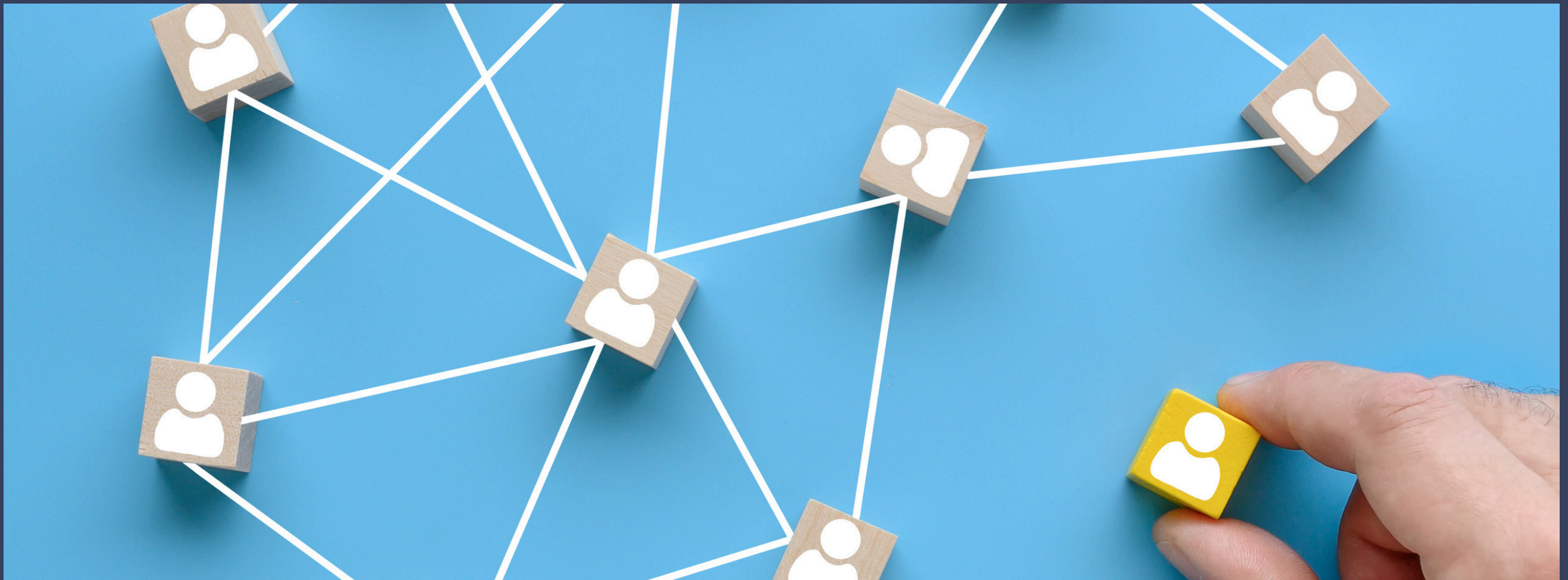
As you go through this, ask yourself where are you and your team on the pyramid? Be honest! Unless you know your starting point it's hard to move forward to creating a high performing team and a high performing culture.

A collection of individuals – individual performance, individual action, individual purpose
Rather than working as a single unit, teams who perform here act as individuals, do not collaborate or take mutual action, and sometimes will even make decisions and take actions that benefit themselves but to the detriment of others. You have winners and losers on the team.

A work group – some coordination and some overlap of purpose
Silos are shorter and less prevalent, but you still have individual actions taking place, limitations on communication and there are winners and losers within the team instead of a united team. This is often the level where a high number of organisations operate, which then results in mediocrity.

High performing team – united in purpose, sustained results, wins together or not at all
This is where every organisation and business leader should aspire to be. This is where amazing results are achieved, the team is genuinely acting as one whereby the sum of the parts is far higher than the individuals alone. This is about a win-win culture of high performance.

4. How to Create a High Performing Team



Before getting into the detail of how to create a high performing team, it's worth bearing in mind some key questions as we go through the steps you need to take. Some of the questions for you therefore to think about as we go through the process are as follows:

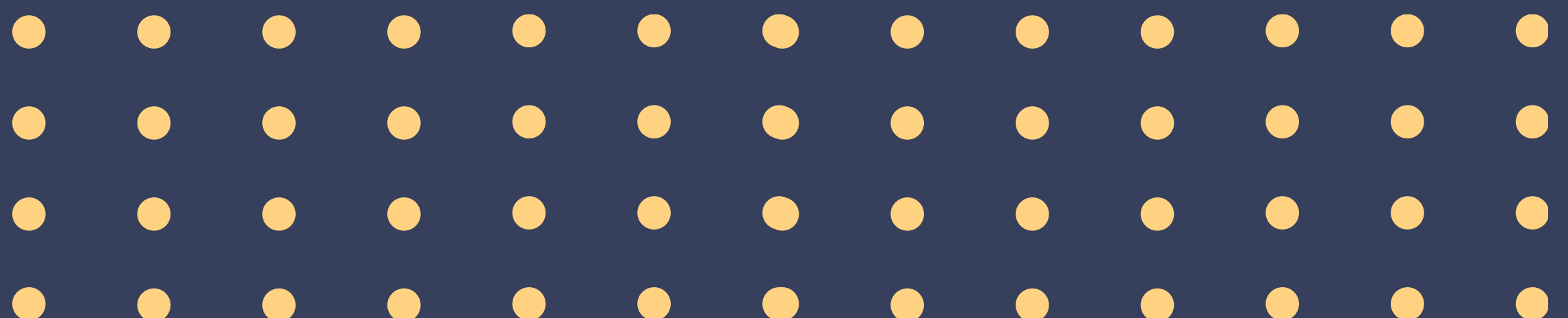
- Where are we today?
- How can we get to the next level?
- What specific actions can I take as a leader to get the team working more effectively together?
- Are there certain members of the team who are 'terrorists' and not team players that you may need to 'move on/out' of the business?
- Who on the team can take specific responsibility for each of the actions?
- What timeframe are we going to work to?
- What KPIs do we need to track to measure how we are improving?

When you do an honest review and take specific measurable actions to move you forward that is where you start to shift the dial.

The steps to creating a high-performing team are as follows:

Step 1 – Audit of where you are now with your team

Assess your current capability within your team and across the wider business. Do you have high performers already. Where do people sit on the 9 box talent matrix of performance. If you have a disproportionate number of people who are poor performers this brings down the performance of the entire team and business.



The talent matrix has 9 boxes that help you place people into one of the following boxes according to potential & performance:

1. Star performer
2. Rising star
3. Adaptable performer
4. Valued contributor
5. Key contributor
6. Solid performer
7. New to role
8. Marginal performer
9. Unacceptable performer

TALENT REVIEW MODEL

		Develop in role / similar role	Development potential	Promotable
Performance	Exceeds Expectations	Key Contributor	Adaptable Performer	Star Performer
	Meets Expectations	Solid Performer	Valued Contributor	Rising Star
	Partially / Does Not Meet Expectations	Unacceptable Performer	Marginal Performer	New in role
		Potential		

Step 2 – Assess the environment you have today

Review whether the working environment and conditions you have in place are conducive to a higher performance environment. Consider the public areas for teams to relax, have meetings etc. Are the catering facilities appropriate for high performance. Is there enough natural light in the building? Do your teams have the equipment they need to do their jobs to the maximum, eg IT equipment, technical gear, machinery etc

Step 3 – Review your culture and get feedback

Do you know what the culture is really like? Taking a temperature check with your teams can be really insightful. If you haven't done so before, doing a short survey can reveal a huge amount about how your people are feeling. This should really be done anonymously so people feel they can share their views freely and without repercussion. Where you have some trusted individuals you may want to do a brainstorm session.

Use the 5QF model – 5 frequently asked questions that will get to the heart of what's happening.

- i. What's working well?
- ii. What would your ideal be?
- iii. What are our options?
- iv. What are the gaps between where we are now and where we want to be?
- v. What resources and support do we need to get there?

Step 4 – Talent plan

Here it's important based on the review of your current team that you agree a course of actions to do the following:

- Address/exit poor performers
- Create development plan for those who need to step up
- Career progression and stretch for your rising stars
- Promotion for your star performers
- Identify any gaps and have a plan to recruit

This plan should be bought in to by your leadership team, with clear ownership of who is responsible for taking each part of the development plan forward. Whilst HR are critical to this process and will support throughout, it's imperative that the talent plan is owned by the whole of the leadership for their specific part, but for the collective plan overall.

Step 5 – Environment & culture plan

Based on the review of the environment and culture, come up with specific actions over an agreed timeframe to improve where necessary. Similarly to the talent plan there needs to be clear ownership across the leadership team, with specific actions allocated and agreed with individuals.

Step 6 – Mission, vision, values & goals

High performing teams all get behind a common goal. The mission of the business is clear to everyone involved, the reason why behind everything the business does is transparent through the vision and the core values are commonly known and discussed regularly. Setting clear objectives which are SMART helps remind people what they should be aiming for, what good looks like and how they then play apart in achieving those targets. The goals should then be broken down into smaller goals and KPIs for each department and individual, creating a clear cascade from the top to the bottom of the organisation.

It's a great idea to visually show the mission, vision and values around the office or premises you operate from, which then acts as a constant reminder to everyone where you're heading, your reason why, what your core values are and what the target KPIs are.

Step 7 - Scope out clear job descriptions/role profiles

Where you have identified gaps in your team, you now need to get into the practical stuff and get job descriptions/role profiles in place so that you know exactly what you're looking for when you go out to recruit.

It's also critical that you have clear criteria to measure candidates against so that when you get into the recruitment process you have a scoring matrix to assess against. If there are specific exercises or demos that you want candidates to complete as part of the assessment, then you would also design these against the skills you're looking to bring in.

Step 8 - Have a robust recruitment campaign

Now you have the job descriptions in place you need to kick off a robust recruitment campaign. Consider where you need to advertise the roles and whether you will engage a headhunter to help you with the search. Recruitment always takes longer than you anticipate so allow yourself enough time. Also be clear on who will be doing the interviews, whether you will have 1, 2, 3 or even more stages for very senior roles.



Make sure you know the interview schedule so that you can block space in diaries and ensure the right people are involved, in particular if you need the most senior people in the business to do the later stage interviews.

Often it can be HR that do the first stage interviews with the actual hiring manager/director coming into the process after that.

Remember also that referencing will need to be done and any successful candidates are likely to need to give notice period.

It's not unusual for the end to end process to take 3 months for senior hires with notice period on top of that which for junior roles will usually be one month but for senior roles could be 3-6 months and at CEO level maybe even 12 months.

Given the timeframes involved you need to be clear how you'll cover these gaps in the short term, which is also where the talent plan comes into place, with other people on the team maybe covering for the area in the short term whilst recruitment is underway.

Once you are at the stage of offering then HR would usually finalise the details of the offer, terms & conditions, salary, bonus, added benefits, annual leave entitlement, notice periods, exclusivity clauses etc

Step 9 - Clear career progression and development plans in place

Every member of your team should have a progression plan in place, which details their next career move and actions that are in place to support that person with their career development. The extent of this will vary according to the level of the role and often the size of the business. In a small business this may be less comprehensive.

Some options for career development could include the following:

- Training courses
- Formal qualifications
- On the job training
- Secondments to other departments
- Mentoring and coaching
- Attendance at external conferences
- Practice opportunities internally
- Leading on projects to raise profile
- Public speaking and presenting opportunities
- Shadowing
- 360 feedback

Step 10 - Reward and recognition

Reward and recognition are two big factors to motivating members of your team to perform at their highest level. Some people are motivated by financial rewards, whilst for others it's the recognition that's most highly motivating. In most cases a combination of the two is the optimum way to get the most out of your team.

Review your current remuneration and reward mechanisms to make sure that they are set up to drive the right behaviours. For example if it's important for teams to collaborate across departments for a joint goal or project, then this should be included in the individuals objectives with a measurement of success that achieves the collective goal. If all that is included in people's objectives is targets for their standalone performance, then they are less likely to deliver the wider group, cross departmental or company objectives.

Remuneration in many roles is a combination of fixed (salary) and variable (bonus) elements. The fixed part gets paid regardless of performance, whereas the variable part is directly linked to targets. In a sales role the proportion of fixed remuneration is often low with the variable element being a much higher proportion. The goal in this example is to drive a high sales performance culture that rewards accordingly for targets achieved.

There are many ways to recognise key members of your teams, which raises their profile and gives them a status above their colleagues in respect of a specific goal or project. Examples of recognition could be sales person of the month, employee of the year, awards, invited up on stage to speak, showcase in weekly newsletters etc.

Step 11 – On going performance reviews

It's important that every member of the team has ongoing performance reviews. As a minimum these should be twice a year, but I would also recommend that in monthly 1-2-1s you also do a check in on how things are going, how the individual is getting on, any issues that are arising and proactive discussion of what support or corrective action is needed.

By having regular reviews you avoid having hidden surprises and the individual knows exactly how they are getting on, whether they are meeting, exceeding or falling short of expectations. Importantly it allows you to agree any necessary actions to either correct performance or to step up to the next level.

Step 12 - Review and Adjust

Any good plan is regularly reviewed so you can assess how the team and business is doing. In the high performing team arena this is even more critical if you want to stay ahead of the game and ahead of your competitors.

I would suggest at least a quarterly review. If you have this as a standalone agenda item then it means it gets the focus and energy it deserves. High performing businesses have a razor like focus on performance and in reality at an operational level would be reviewing performance daily and in some businesses even hourly, depending on the nature of the business or function.

High performance is all about being BRAVE & BOLD to get the results of BRILLIANT!

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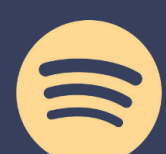
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