



# Developing A High Performing Team

AH&<sup>2</sup>  
beyond . . .

“Humility, and willingness to  
be Educated while Educating”  
A.H.

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## I. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

“What’s the problem”? You have assembled some of the best talent there is, a team chocked with talent and potential...yet every year the performance does not correlate to the talent hype. Right about this time senior management has become frustrated because of the investment made on constructing this world class talent, and begins pointing the crosshairs toward your direction as the leader of the team. Now, you have a decision to make “do I blame the performance solely on the team” or “do I take the blame and hope for the best” both decisions have consequences. Blaming the team avoids accountability which carries a “leadership penalty”, accepting full blame for the team’s performance doesn’t soften the circumstance because now you’re seen as incompetent. Sounds like a lose lose situation...and it most certainly is. There are leaders of teams at this very moment facing such a problem, perhaps you yourself are one of them. There is a bittersweet silver lining to all of this and that is everyone who’s been in a leadership capacity for some time has had some iteration of this experience (so you’re not alone). There is a lesson to be gained however from such experience and that is “*talent doesn’t develop itself*”. This idea of throwing together the best of the best and just plugging and playing doesn’t work. Every year in business (including sports) we are told who is going to be the most successful or have the best record based on this earth shaking talent. However, predictions like these are rarely made based on *development* instead we substitute the word development for *potential* which the two can’t be any farther apart. Developing a high performing team is an “accountability assignment” that solely rests on the shoulder of leadership, a team that has potential is often taken for granted with very little accountability. In other words development requires culpability, potential requires being hopeful. Perhaps in the last few years we’ve underestimated the power of *people development* because we’re in the age of lightning speed technology where it’s assumed that everything there is to know is just a click of a button away. The need to be thoroughly coached and trained is seen as less efficient...we want the ready-made superstar in the next two minutes. I’m sorry to advise that “Developing a High Performing Team” isn’t a ready-made reality.

### **The “*DevelopmentChore*”**

The reality is developing people let alone a team is a time consuming, physical, and mental exercise which is probably the reason it’s often avoided. Development is a

“chore” much like its definition (e.g. a routine task, duty, job, errand), and chores can be perceived as unpleasant, tiresome...and sometimes mentally draining. However, the result of great development can be prosperous and rewarding to both the provider and recipient of development. It’s important to note the “Development Chore” is the responsibility and accountability of both parties. As the leader of a team your job is to provide direction and support, and conversely that support has to be accepted and acted upon by members of the team. I use to tell my teams years ago that “my support cannot land on deaf ears; you’re responsible for obtaining that support and turning it into personal development”. Far too often there’s an imbalance of accountability when it comes to how the “Development Chore” is divvied up between management and employee. For example, the manager who believes that development is 100% the responsibility of the employee doesn’t place the development of her/his employee as a priority, conversely the employee who feels their performance speaks for itself relies totally on management to place the golden opportunities in front of them. So you have this cognitive dissonance that occurs on both sides especially when either sees little to no value in the development process. In order for the development process to be successful the “Development Chore” has to be shared so that both parties are held accountable to executing on all agreed upon development action items. As folks in the training & coaching business will tell you “a development plan without action items is just a check off the box exercise”. Often time’s unfortunately corporate employee development initiatives are perceived as HR/Legal programs designed to safeguard against any discrimination and that’s why there needs to be more emphasis on development not as a chore but a value-add.

### ***The “Development Reward”***

I can say confidently there is a consensus out there that agrees our “*business society*” wouldn’t advance without some process supporting personal or professional development. The best advances in technology and medicine came from the evolution of human development. In fact, we know that intelligence can be enhanced with proper nurturing from development. However as a society it’s unclear if we truly understand the patience required in developing an individual or team to peak performance. We live in a microwave society where there’s value in a quick positive result. As mentioned earlier taking over a team of talented superstars requires that you develop them for peak performance, cutting corners and just relying on talent will not get it done. We hear all the time “*talent alone doesn’t win championships*” yet we rarely hear a succinct quote of what does. So, I’m here to say “**Development wins championships**”. I’ll go even as far as to say “**Development ONLY wins championships**”. Certainly there are arguments

against such a general statement what shouldn't get lost however is that talent has to be nurtured and cultivated otherwise it's just *potential*. So, the work is in the proverbial *details* in this case development in order to reach that "Development Reward". The proverb "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" is perhaps the single most important theme supporting development...and its reward.

## II. THE \$COST OF DEVELOPMENT

In business we know that everything has a cost...all the way down to the lone paperclip on your desk. Developing a high performing team requires a significant investment, but the dividend from that investment can be phenomenal. When you consider just the hiring and training alone the price tag can be quite steep, and that may not include paying the people who do the hiring and training. The cost of development can be daunting which is another reason why it's either un-prioritized or half a\$\$ed done. When corporate management challenges the impact that initiatives like training, leadership development, mentoring etc. have on the bottom line, the #1 question that always comes up is return on investment ("R.O.I."). It's the push back response that inevitably rears its skeptical head especially if there's a huge price tag attached to some sort of revolutionize training program. I've always instructed clients I've worked with to do a *cost-benefit* analysis to determine the value of any type of training & development program. Often times there is this anxiousness to jump on the new fad of training after going to an overhyped seminar that promises sales employees will become the next "Tony Robbins" of sales. There are specific categories that need to be addressed prior to any decision being made on a development program; the diagram below illustrates those categories:



It is extremely important that measurements on actual results are taken after each development program. One measurement that is overused and produces little to no results is “The Program Survey”. Post program surveys are lazy assessments that provide little to no assurance that a behavioral change will take place. Program assessments that have a “follow-up” mechanism offer the best determinant on behavioral change...and results. An example of a follow up assessment includes what I call a “Field Conference Report” (FCR), which requires the involvement of the manager to ensure the employee’s behavior line up with the completed development initiative. An FCR report can be used quite handily in a sales environment where the sales leader provides coaching that is adjacent to the sales training/development the sales person has received. Possible outcomes that can be delivered from this type of development assessment are:

- Real time successes, best practices/lessons learned validated feedback.
- A strengthening reinforcement of specific behavioral changes that produce results.
- An outlined “Coaching Report” that can be used for performance tracking and succession planning.
- A built in coaching strategic plan that can be used at the individual and team level. A “Development Scorecard”.
- An enhancement in consistency/continuity of those behaviors that produce high level performance, and are captured in the Field Coaching Report.
- Most importantly, the reduction in turnover (high employee morale), improved competencies, increased business profits.

There are certainly options available that may help predict a favorable outcome from a development program and can be cost-effective when implemented, however, my advice is to always lean towards the program that can offer a “roll-up the sleeves” follow up plan that includes accountability on both the manager and employee (e.g. “The FCR”). Surveys, feedback forms in my experience do not help to drive consistent behavior change...they only provide a *snapshot opinion* not a change in behavior. While the cost of development can be pricey not having a follow up mechanism on the backend will certainly not justify the cost.

## Developing a “Return on Investment” Process

As mentioned earlier the question always arises “What is my R.O.I. if I invest in people development”? This is a valid question and should not be seen as a negative against the development of people. For years and even today the training profession has had to overcome the notion that training is a non-essential overhead cost that produces little results. Having been in sales training myself for years I understand the frustration training professionals have in explaining the importance competency improvement has on bottom line results. I wrote a blog a few years ago talking about the *thankless* profession that is sales training and how no one thinks they need training until a crisis appears then training is asked to come in and put out the flames. It’s understandable that no business wants to commit a large investment towards something that doesn’t produce tangible results, and that’s why development programs sometimes get the skeptical eye. Developing an R.O.I. strategy not only answers that critical question, it establishes accountability that the development process will **produce results**. An R.O.I. development strategy should produce the value-added contribution of any development program in a business-intuitive format. Below are 5 steps that can construct that format:

1. **The collection of post-development program data:** A variety of methods including *development curriculum objectives, simulations and on-site observations, participant interviews (rather than surveys), instructor evaluations etc.*
2. **Training Isolation:** There are factors that influence development performance data, so there should be steps to isolate/pinpoint the amount of improvement that can be the direct result of development training. There are tools available to interpret such data (e.g. *isolate control group, trend line analysis, forecasting models, and impact estimates from selected groups*).
3. **Placing a “cost value” on data results:** Assess the collection of post-development program data and assign a “cost value” to each. Ways could include using *historical costs, using salaries and benefits as value of time, converting output to profit contributions, or using external databases.*
4. **Calculating the R.O.I.:** An R.O.I. can be calculated by dividing the net cost of the program benefits (program benefits less program costs) by the program costs times 100. This will help to identify the intangible

benefits, such as increased job satisfaction, employee morale, improved customer service, low turnover/vacancy rates.

While this appears to be a great deal of work consider these costs of an under-developed/under-trained workforce when people development is curbed:

### The High Cost of an Un-Trained Workforce

Zero Defects is a common business practice which aims to reduce and minimize the number of defects and errors in a process and to do things right the first time. The ultimate aim will be to reduce the level of defects to zero. However, this may not be possible in practice and what it means is that everything possible will be done to eliminate the likelihood of errors or defects occurring, and to fix any issues that are discovered.

Over the last two decades, the concept of zero defects contributed to the creation and development of Six Sigma®, which was pioneered by Motorola and now adopted worldwide by many other organizations.

Consider the relational costs of managing defects, which might cost:

- \$10 to "mistake-proof" a business process so that defects are avoided;
- \$100 to find and fix the defect during product or service creation;
- \$1,000 to find the defect before the service is delivered or the product is shipped;
- \$10,000 to have the customer find the defect, complain about it, and then engage in damage control;
- \$100,000 for reworks and warranty claims; and
- \$1 million to handle the lawsuit that results from injury or damage.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. COACHING "DEVELOPMENT"**

The subject of Coaching "Development" creates a lot of passion for me and I would argue is the single most important leadership behavior when it comes to the development of a high performance team. In the business world there's a lot of pontification on how to effectively coach the employee, and there are streams of books, lectures, webinars etc. on so-called innovative ways coaching can be performed. I have yet to find an adequate resource on how to effectively coach "Development", which is different from coaching the individual/team. Coaching "Development" is simply the act of focusing on the *process* or *vehicle* that supplies the finished development product to the employee. Below provides a depiction of the coaching "Development" process:

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<sup>1</sup> Independent Electrical Contractors (IEC) "The High Cost of an Un-Trained Workforce" by Jerry Bowman April 2013



## What is the shortest path from “Baseline” to Success”?



**The goal of coaching is to gain better results efficiently without compromising the integrity of the “Development” process.**

One of the challenges we discussed earlier when looking to develop a high performing team is the amount of time and energy it takes to execute. An important objective of building any personnel development process is to efficiently get the team up and running without compromising the integrity of the “Development” process. The depiction above illustrates the areas that require the most attention in the *process* or *vehicle*. The “Baseline” & “GPS” steps help us to reveal:

- **What is the goal?**
- **Where are we right now as compared to the goal?**
- **What is getting in the way of our goal or causing the current situation?**
- **How are we going to get to the goal?**

Today’s development of a high performing team often times doesn’t take the coaching “Development” process in consideration, and inevitably development doesn’t exist...but chaos does. As we revisit the coaching “Development” process, the baseline should always start with determining the goal prior to any further action in the development process. Both manager and employee have to define what the goal is and is it realistically obtainable. The *baseline* part of the process can be the lengthiest step because it requires a realistic valuation that in most cases tied to corporate goals. The *GPS* step illustrated in the diagram explains the “Cause” & “Result” of the coaching “Development” process. Cause is explained as “What could get in the

way of achieving the goal, are there roadblocks”? Result is explained as “How are you going to get to the goal, what tools do you need”? So the Baseline step requires collaboration between management & employee to determine the development “*valuation*” and the GPS step is an inventory and roadmap of the process. Prior to digging into any strategic plan of developing an individual or high performing team it is worthwhile to consider implementing a coaching “Development” process that will help avoid any land mines that may be hidden under the overall development process.

### **Coaching “Development” (Keys to Remember)**

Coaching “Development” is an iterative process, and therefore a linear approach does not accurately reflect the development process.

Consider these Keys:

**Key #1:** At the “Baseline” clarifying the goal and where the employee is currently in relation to the goal is critical. It will be difficult to move towards the development goal without determining a realistic valuation.

**Key #2:** It’s necessary to spend at least 60% of your time in the “Baseline” space (which again is the lengthiest part of the process) because it establishes how you’re going to get to your development goal. The “GPS” step notifies you of any distractions getting in the way of the development goal.

**Key #3:** Coaching “Development” involves 3 fundamental action steps: **Assessing, Taking Inventory, and Monitoring for Continuous Improvement.**

- Assessing involves clarifying the goal or success and identifying where we are in relation to it.
- Taking Inventory to understand the situation or what is getting in the way of the goal.
- Monitoring for Continuous Improvement is about coaching & development along the continuum and making progress in a skill or competency. It is also about following up.

Understanding “The Process” is useful in providing clarity on what needs to be accomplished in order of obtaining that development goal.

#### IV. TEAM DEVELOPMENT “DYNAMICS”

Providing a clear definition of “team dynamics” would be a perfect place to start this section, and the definition is as follows:

*It's the behavioral relationships between members of a group that are assigned connected tasks within an organization. Dynamics are affected by roles and responsibilities and have a direct impact on productivity.<sup>2</sup>*

There's no arguing that single-handedly a team's personality can either bring success...or failure to management's door. Because the dynamics of a team can be sometimes ambiguous or even invisible to the naked eye, it makes all the more reason for a management to proactively look for it. As mentioned in the definition the direct impact team dynamics has on a team is HUGE, for example:

- Impact on the profitability of an organization.
- Employee Morale: Do people enjoy their work.
- Employee Turnover Rates: Is there a heavy vacancy rate
- Impact on team/individual performance
- Impact on corporation reputation

Unfortunately, far too often team dynamics are often neglected or ignored (It's only when 1 or 2 of the bullet points above are present is team dynamics addressed). There's plenty of research out there that shows harnessing the unique expertise of team members is one of the most important factors in developing a high performing team. Unseen forces that exist in a team between different people or groups are called *team dynamics* and can strongly influence how a team reacts, behaves or performs. Many factors influence team dynamics, such as personalities of team members, how the team operates, how the team views itself and the team's organization. With the dearth of information that's out there on team dynamics it's very clear that the center of the “*team dynamic specter*” is how as a leader do you uncover and leverage the dynamics of your team to development excellence? In one of my favorite books simply named “Management 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition” authors Patrick J. Montana (Professor of Management School of Business Hofstra University) and Bruce Charnov (Associate Professor of Management School of Business Hofstra University) say there are 3 specific characteristics leaders of teams should look for to help uncover team dynamics; Group Behavior Norms,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/team-dynamics.html#ixzz3vAZw1RGa>

Group Size, and Group Status. Below the authors explain each characteristic in more detail:

### **Group Behavior Norms**

Identifying behaviors within a team that conforms to the expectations of its members. Generally this expected behavior takes place with a range defined by upper and lower performance standards. In other words, the group accepts a minimal level of performance—and if an individual performs below this lower acceptable level, he or she is ostracized and is made to feel potentially severe peer pressure for performance improvement. Management can readily understand this: any individual not performing at an acceptable level detracts from overall group accomplishment. Perhaps even more significant is that the other group members may feel that they can no longer rely upon the employee whose performance is deficient. This erosion of reliance threatens the very foundations of the group's identity.

**Note:** Group behavior takes place within a range of acceptability. Management (or employees themselves) defines the minimum acceptable performance standards, but the employees also define the acceptable upper performance level. If management wishes to increase worker productivity within the group, it must change both the lower and upper performance standards.

### **Group Size**

No universally accepted group size ensures maximal efficiency or performance, but management should follow some guidelines in helping to define group dynamics:

- A group should not be too small: it should have enough human resources to accomplish the assigned tasks.
- A group should not be too large: too many people make effective communication and leadership difficult.
- The ideal group size allows its members to know and rely upon each other: if there are too many members, some will disengage.
- Members should feel a sense of obligation to the group: if the group becomes too large, this sense of obligation suffers

### **Group Status**

Different groups have different levels of status within the organization. This status is related to five major factors:

1. The importance of the assigned task, is the task a priority of the corporation.
2. The level of group accomplishment, what is the group's performance history.

3. The status or competencies of the individuals within the group
4. The nature of organization's rewards to group members, past corporate acknowledgement.
5. The perceived external status of the group.

**Note:** The status of a group is dependent upon four major factors: The importance of the task assigned, The past success of the group, The status/competencies of the individual workers, and the nature of the rewards to the group's members by the organization. An organization should enhance the status of a group if it wishes willing and enthusiastic participation by its employees. If the reverse is true—namely, that there is no status attached to group participation—workers do not willingly participate in the group.

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Out of the 3 characteristics both authors have outlined in my opinion “Group Behavior Norms” stands out as the most significant in helping to identify team dynamics. I’m big on “behavior” because it’s the observable truth serum that tells you just about everything you need to know about an individual or for that matter an entire team. One approach to uncovering consistent behavior which can provide a hint to a team’s overall dynamic is to devise an “Open Door Policy”. This policy is not just the act of leaving your office door half-cracked or establishing open/transparent communication; it’s truly a policy with guidelines.

### **“Open Door Policy” ...on steroids**

Yeah, I used to say it all the time “I have an open door policy” ...but how many of us in a leadership position actually mean it. Well, I’m here to tell you just saying it and not demonstrating it is not going to help un-surface team dynamics and could impact negatively your relationship with your team. From a managerial standpoint being the eyes and ears of your team requires more than just leaving your office door cracked, you’ll have to set up a practice to proactively engage with your team even in the cases where you think you shouldn’t. An “Open Door Policy” on steroids refers to the act of proactively stepping outside the office and consistently taking temperature checks of your team. Consistent team check-in’s will result in establishing an environment that’s open to communication and transparency, which can help drive positive team dynamics. When a team acknowledges that their feelings, opinions and ideas are respected and listened too they’re more apt to believe in the reality of an “Open Door Policy”, which can help promote positive team dynamics. As mentioned in the Coaching “Development” section, corporate leaders have to make a conscious effort to establish vehicles, methods, and processes (e.g. Coaching “Development” process) for open communication. Uncovering the behaviors, opinions and ideas of employees let’s face it is not often high on the priority list yet most corporate leaders understand that an engaging

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<sup>3</sup> Management 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition by Patrick j. Montana & Bruce H. Charnov

inspired employee makes for a profitable company. To be clear NO manager can afford to set aside time for a “kumbayah” fire side chat every day at the office, but there should be a structure in place to ensure an environment that encourages open dialogue exists:

- Review and analyze how your organization currently communicates. Is it like a spider web, where there are too many communication points with ambiguous direction? This can impact team dynamics.
- Managers should build communication strategies into their business plans that reinforce sharing and gathering feedback.
- Consistently communicate with employees about....*communication*. Ask people how the current communication system helps them perform their jobs. Discuss your current communication culture and whether or how it should be changed. This is a GREAT way to encourage involvement in the process and demonstrate “behavior” that this will be a sincere effort.
- With your employees develop a communication philosophy that EVERYONE will be held accountable too. Every person on the team has input on the communication strategy thus it encourages team alignment.
- Develop “team advocacy” where there’s governance around contributing and the sharing of ideas and knowledge.
- Importantly, build follow up mechanisms that respond to all feedback, and ideas. Team members should feel that they’re being heard and that their correspondence isn’t placed in a black hole.
- Finally, as management be receptive to the ideas you hear....even the ones that are several feet “out of the box”. Showing a willingness to hear about an idea demonstrates once again the “behavior” of practicing “Open Door Policy”, and importantly helps to promote a team dynamic that welcomes the free flow of potentially great ideas.

Great Team Development “Dynamics” takes great team leadership. As management it is up to you to learn and cultivate your team’s dynamics that will place you in the best position to succeed. Poor leadership that ignores or takes for granted the importance of learning their team dynamics not only negatively impacts the team, but it can have a profound effect on the organization.

## V. **TEAM “LEADERSHIP” DEVELOPMENT**

The highest performing teams that have the most consistent success don’t just have one leader at the top...but have many leaders within. Self-governing teams are all the rage these days however developing a team that can be led on occasion itself is a daunting task. Who has the potential to be leader(s) on your team? What makes

them qualified? Do they inspire respect from others on the team? These are questions as the leader of a team you have to ask yourself. A well-oiled machine has internal parts that work as separate leaders within the machine; however the leader of the machine has to place each team leader in the best position to lead within the machine. The well-oiled machine analogy best describes what takes place with today's highest performing teams; the management identifies her/his team leadership potential and develops them accordingly. The challenging question which I posed earlier is "Who has the potential to be leader(s) on your team"? This is a critical question because there are many cases some I'm sure you've experienced yourself where team members either anointed themselves or were favorites of management made leaders within the team. That scenario is disastrous because it not only alienates other team members it creates a hostile environment that inevitably destroys the entire team. In an article for Harvard Business Review, authors Doug Ready, Jay Conger, and Linda Hill identified four "X" factors that are common among high-potential employees. High potential employees, Ready et al contend, are all hardwired with the following traits:

- A drive to excel.
- A catalytic learning ability (High potential employees scan and absorb new ideas and have the ability to translate them into productive action.).
- An enterprising spirit.
- Dynamic sensors (High-potential employees use these sensors to skirt risks. They have an innate feel for timing, the ability to read situations, and a nose for opportunity.).
- **A belief in the overall team "Vision" and is a champion of it.**

In addition, High-potential employees consistently deliver strong performance results and have the ability to build trust, confidence, and therefore credibility among colleagues. The respect and credibility factor among colleagues is a critical one that takes keen observation on behalf of management. There is some truth behind the assertion that some people have the intrinsic ability to attract "followers", which has nothing to do with power, money or title...those attributes attract transparent followers. Along with the history of stellar performance and a drive to excel, there is also a sense of humility about one who attracts followers and thus is recognized as the leader of the team. The last above bolded bullet point I added to the list and that is identifying those High-potential employees who have a belief in the overall team "Vision" and champion it to other members of the team. From a management perspective it's counterproductive to neither have a team leader who's not aligned with the team's vision nor champion its tenet to colleagues.

Clearly, it takes a skillful eye on the part of the management to identify those within the team that have the ability to lead within the team.

### **“Identifying & Cultivating Potential”**

Once you’ve identified those on your team that have the capability to lead from within, how do you get them to what we call “Ready Now” status? First, it’s important that you verify that the chosen few agree to the leadership assignment. Nothing is more nightmarish than to place someone in a team leadership capacity that doesn’t see the role as a personal growth opportunity...or importantly has the stomach for it. I’ve seen too many times in my career those that were anointed to be “leaders” on their team fail miserably because they thought they had to take that step because management basically forced it upon them. After validating that you have identified and selected the right person(s) to act as leaders inside the team, now the fun of cultivation starts. In corporate America there is a variety of High-potential employee development programs, which are a part of the organization’s succession planning. It’s always a matter of perspective which programs truly impact the development of a High-potential employee, so it’s important that management finds those programs that adhere to their corporate culture and meets their underlying performance objectives. Companies like IBM, General Electric, APPLE have their own internal High-potential employee development programs so they don’t have the burdensome to have to ship employees out to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party for development. That’s a luxury many of your top companies have and is the reason why there’s always a viable candidate internally that can step into a corporate leadership role. For example, Tim Cook who was APPLE’s homegrown talent was the heir apparent to APPLE legend Steve Jobs. While there are many positives to these corporate High-potential employee development programs, there are some drawbacks management should be aware of. Having been through the corporate development gauntlet myself and have experienced the advantages these highly esteemed programs provided, there were however some drawbacks. While these development programs did provide me a leadership foundation, one of the things I missed was the follow up “1-on-1 coaching cultivation” once arriving back from the program. It was if there was this expectation that once you came back from the development program you were ready to not only be a leader within a team, you soon would be ready to lead an entire business unit. You were deemed “Ready Now” in the succession planning process. The most important aspect of any corporate employee development initiative is the follow up plan...not the actual program (sound familiar LOL!). It’s worth repeating, the most important facet of an employee development program is NOT the program, and it’s what happens after the program where the development really starts. Many companies today rely too heavily on these fad employee development boondoggles to complete the cultivation process of



their High-potentials only to be disappointed when the investment doesn't work out. Developing a strategic follow up cultivation plan for the High-potential employee keeps the momentum of development going, and it inspires the employee to make the new skills learned a solid part of their repertoire. Preparing a follow up cultivation plan for your returning High-potential should consist of these points:

- Develop "Cultivation Plan" (different from coach plan). Illustration below.
- Develop action plans equipped with milestones, feedback mechanisms, and reasonable intermediate goals that sustain motivation.
- Locate opportunities within the team dynamics where the High-potential employee can apply their new skills consistently.
- Develop a check-in schedule that helps your High-potential stay on point so as to avoid slipping into old habits, which occurs when there's a lull in the development process.
- Set accountability parameters with the High-potential by requiring them to keep a log of their most successful (and in some cases unsuccessful) team learning experiences so they can institutionalize those best practices on a daily basis.
- Importantly, celebrate successes and coach on challenges.

Below is an illustration of a typical High-potential employee cultivation plan:

High-Potential's Name:	
High-Potential's INTERMEDIATE GOALS:	<b>MANAGEMENT PARTICIPATION AS CULTIVATOR:</b> (Management specifies ways they will work with the High-Potential employee through his or her development process, which includes how the cultivation process will be implemented and the accountability on both parties)
High-Potential's BEST PRACTICES/LESSONS LEARNED/MILESTONES:	
<b>Working One-on-One</b> What I will accomplish (Management): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The offering of insight, observations &amp; feedback</li> <li>• Share relevant stories and insights from own personal experience</li> <li>• Support and encourage the employee's effort to develop</li> </ul> <b>PROVIDING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES</b> What I will accomplish (Management): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create meaningful challenges and identify the opportunities to solve them</li> <li>• Provide mentoring opportunities (e.g Everwise)</li> </ul> <b>PROMOTE AUTONOMY/SELF-PRESERVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggest people your employee can network with, teach networking skills</li> <li>• Discuss ways that encourage the employee to learn from successes &amp; failures (e.g. "Moment in Time" coaching)</li> <li>• Teach proactive behavior, confirm that development is responsibility of employee...management is the bridge to that development</li> </ul>	<b>Time Frame</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:</b> (e.g. Readings, training seminars, mentoring assignments, cross-functional role responsibilities)	
<b>PERCEIVED ROADBLOCKS:</b> (e.g. corporate ambiguity, performance issues, corporate turnover, limited development options etc.)	
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## VI. LESSONS LEARNED

To reiterate a point I mentioned earlier “developing people let alone a team is a time consuming, physical, and mental exercise but the payoff tremendously justifies the work. With the personality of the workforce changing literally day by day, management has to be exceptionally good at inspiring its employees to achieve team centers of excellence. Those in management who are effective in getting the most out of their teams present a compelling case on why it’s critical to focus on development...and not ignore it. Additionally, the most successful leaders of teams have the uncanny ability to raise the positive emotional energies of their teams and that’s widely due to the fact that they care about each and every *person* on their team. These successful leaders take development seriously. As I’ve experienced in my career along with observations from other accomplished leaders, there are 3 behaviors that appear to be the most valued when leading a high performing team:

- Humility
- Willingness to be Educated...while Educating
- Embracing Diversity

Developing strong, trusting relationships with your team takes *humility, education,* and the acceptance of *diversity*. Making an effort to understand each member of your team’s personal and professional goals is an important step to not only gaining their support...but gaining their **TRUST**. In a study conducted in 2014 by The American Psychological Association (“2014 Work and Well-Being” survey) they found that 32 percent of American workers feel that their boss or organization is “not always honest and truthful”. That’s a devastating finding and not surprising why many companies fold after just a couple of years in business. Lack of “Development” and “Trust” I would argue are the two areas most unacceptable to a team trying to reach the pinnacles of success. Leaders who are untrustworthy are not taken seriously when the topic of development comes up, and the teams for which they manage typically take on a “Me Only” attitude which becomes combustible. Therefore as you take on the role of Developing a High Performing Team don’t forget these 5 important principles:



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