



TRANSCRIPT FOR MODULE 5

# LEADING HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS

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## Introduction

Welcome to Module 5, Leading High Performance Teams. During this Module you will learn specifically about groups of people that need to work as a real team to produce results that could not be achieved through individuals working alone.

You will also uncover the fundamentals of Teams and the characteristics of High-Performing Teams before forensically examining how we need to see Teams as 'living systems' in order to truly understand them.

Following on from this, how we can diagnose a Team's current system, its norms and behaviours, and how we can build a Team system that can move towards High-Performance and then maintain that system will be uncovered.

At the end of this module you will:

- Understand the nature of real Teams
- Understand the characteristics of High-Performing Teams
- Understand the nature of Team Systems
- Establish an understanding of the Leadership style required of Leaders in High-Performing Teams.
- Establish an understanding of how Leaders can cultivate a High-Performing Team System/Culture.
- Apply the theory of High-Performing Teams to a Team within your own organisation

So, what is a team? And is team-working always required?

## Lesson 1: Some Fundamentals about Teams

### Session A: What is a Real Team and is Team-working always required?

Well we talk a lot about teams don't we?

Sports Teams, Project Teams, Sales Teams, Senior Executive teams,..... But working to create REAL Teams and TEAM-working is only worth the effort if Team-working can deliver results well-beyond what individuals acting alone could deliver.

Have a look at this short clip of a Ferrari Formula One Pitstop (available in your library). You have to watch it over and over to appreciate everything this team achieves in under 3 seconds!

Think about the coordinated team-working required to refuel, change tyres, remove debris from air intakes, clean the windscreen, make adjustments to suspension and aerodynamic settings... all of that in seconds.

Clearly.....co-ordinated, interdependent team-working is required here. Teams like this have absolute clarity on what they are trying to achieve, and they create a team system where:

- Everyone knows precisely what is expected of them
- Where they practice and review and debrief
- AND success is measured by their collective performance
- Where they drive standards looking for incremental improvements
- For which they hold each other mutually accountable

In their seminal work, Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith define a REAL Team as:

*A small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.*

Like everything in life.....this simple and concise definition took a lot of work to get to, so let's break it down:

Real Teams have complementary skills and a SHARED:

- Purpose
- Performance Goals
- Approach
- Accountability

When we consider this definition, we can begin to see where the work starts in creating a real Team, and it starts with assembling the team or making adjustments to the Team to ensure that it has the necessary complementary skills.

But let's take that as a given, because to be frank...that's the easy bit!

It's then that the real work starts, because this Team, if it is to be a Team, needs to have absolute clarity on what it's trying to achieve, how it will be measured or judged, how it's going to approach dilemmas and conflict and how it's going to establish collective accountability.....In other words all Team members judge success through achieving the collective goal and not through achieving personal, functional or departmental goals.

AND reward systems for Team members need to be aligned to all of this and NOT to individual goals!

When we think of sports Teams, we see all of this don't we? That's not to say that successful sports Teams don't have the occasional prima donna who doesn't put the Team first, but by and large sports Teams cannot function as a group of individuals.

Watch the clip "Better Men Make Better All Blacks" (available in your library) I should mention that since this was recorded, the Purpose statement has been changed to say "Better People Make Better All Blacks" and rightly so.

As you watch the clip, consider this.....How do you think this statement of Purpose contributes to making the All Blacks so successful? As with all short Purpose statements, its simplicity is the result of a huge amount of work, dialogue, reflection and clarification ...and like all great Purpose statements, everything else comes from here.

Let's face it, sport is somewhat different from organisational life, but there are many parallels and a lot of learning we can apply and which we'll explore later in the Module.

So.....now we have established what a real-Team is, and we can begin to see the complexity in delivering REAL Team-working ...let's assume that we have a group or a Team that genuinely wants to become a HIGH-PERFORMING Team...how do we get there? Well first we need to understand the characteristics of High-Performing Teams and what distinguishes them from other Teams.

### **Session B: What are High-Performing Teams?**

Here's a stat that might interest you.....The US-based Team coaching consultancy – Team Coaching International has worked with in excess of 1,000 Teams in organisations across the globe; and before working with a Team Coach, less than 10% of these Teams rated themselves as High Performing.

That's a lot of room for improvement, and from this it seems that High-Performing Teams are somewhat rare.

So, what are the distinguishing characteristics of High-Performing Teams?

Peter Hawkins is a researcher, author and Team Coach, and he cites the work we referenced in the last session by Katzenbach & Smith.

In his book, Leadership Team Coaching, he cites their research when they define a Team as High-Performing when it exhibits the following characteristics:

- “Meets all the conditions of real teams and (whose members) are also deeply committed to one another's personal growth and success
- Exceptional performance – outperform all reasonable expectations of the group, including those of the team members themselves'
- High levels of enthusiasm and energy
- Personal commitment that is willing to go the extra mile

- Great stories of ‘galvanizing events’ – turning points in their history where they overcame the odds
- More fun and humour than ordinary teams.

Hawkins also cites Ruth Wageman and her colleagues’ work on “Senior Leadership Teams and What it Takes to Make Them Great.”

They worked with over 120 Senior Leadership Teams around the world and with 12 experienced top team coaches to rate the teams against three key criteria:

1. Whether the performance of the team met or exceeded the standards of the people both inside and outside the organization who were most affected by the team’s work.
2. How well members worked together to enhance – rather than undermine – their capability to work together in the future. Did they build shared commitment, collective skills and smart work strategies, become adept at detecting and correcting errors early and noticing and exploiting emerging opportunities?
3. Whether the group experience contributed positively to the learning and personal development of individual team members.

Hawkins goes on to say that:

They found that teams that excel in all three of these dimensions are rare – but they exist. More common are leadership teams that fall short on at least one of these three criteria. Sadly some fail them all. Most common are teams that are modestly successful.

So, let’s summarise.

High-Performing Teams are ultimately judged as High-Performing, not by themselves or by the Team Leader, but by people outside the Team who are directly affected by their work.

And their characteristics include:

- Performance that exceeds their own and others’ expectations
- Genuine commitment to each other’s success, personal growth and learning

- Absolute clarity on the Team's purpose and each other's contribution
- Energy, enthusiasm and humour, and a willingness and commitment to each other to go the extra mile

### **Session C: Seeing the Team as a Living System**

So, we know what real Teams are, and we've given some thought to how we define High-Performing Teams; but it's a lot to take in so let's step back a little so that we can 'see the wood from the trees' so to speak.

Let's consider the notion of the Team as a 'living system'...one that we (as a Team member) are part of. Even though we are part of the Team, part of the Team System, we can stand back and observe how it works; we can think about what the conscious or unconscious rules are, and we can consider what it is about the Team system that is 'holding it back' or creating outcomes that nobody wants.

Have a look at the next clip where Peter Senge, the Author of 'The Fifth Discipline' talks about Systems Thinking (available in your library).

In that clip Senge uses the family as a familiar 'system' that we can relate to. In this 'family' context we can probably recognise "outcomes that nobody wants"... but the key here is that we are an inherent part of that family system and like it or not we create, shape, maintain, reinforce the system that produces these "outcomes that nobody wants".

Team systems are no different. If we're part of the Team, we're part of the system that is holding the Team back ...unless we do something different that shifts the Team system.

Let's face it, we mostly let Team systems evolve naturally until we have a problem and even then, we may not act to 'fix' it. Letting Team systems just evolve comes with some risk, don't you think?

Ron Heifetz in his work on Adaptive Leadership sees the ability to (as he calls it) 'step onto the balcony' and observe the 'system' as being critical to contemporary organisational leadership. In his words:

“Systems become tenacious quickly. From the first day in the life of an organization, the elements began taking shape: the structures, culture, and default responses. People make decisions about how to interact with each other, which ideas will be shared and which will not, what jokes are appropriate and funny, who gets the floor during debates and meetings, and what kinds of performance will be rewarded.”

So, if we don’t actively and consciously build the Team system or culture, we run a very big risk.

A great example of someone who was not prepared to take that risk was Paul McGinley, Ryder Cup Captain of the 2014 European Team.

Watch this clip (available in your library) and think about the Team system that McGinley shaped, years before the event itself. What do you think it was like being a member of this Team? And what did McGinley do to ensure that the Team system he wanted became a reality?

So now we’ve established that Teams are systems that have an inherent culture or dynamic whether we work to shape it or not.

## Lesson 2: The Defining Characteristics of High-Performing Teams

### Session A: The Leader’s part in Co-creating the Team System

So now let’s consider the Leader’s part in shaping the Team system ... a Team system that, ideally, is moving towards High-Performance.

We saw what Paul McGinley did with the 2014 Ryder Cup Team and how considered he was around actively creating the Team system he thought would work best. He talked about it in some detail and he was very clear about what he wanted and what he did to create this Team system.

But there’s another layer to this and it’s not just what the Team leaders says...it’s also about how the Team Leader behaves, their attitude and who they really are.



Have a look at this clip with Robin Sharma at The Pendulum Summit in 2018 (available in your library), and give some thought to the behaviours you are consciously or unconsciously modelling in your Team? Are they all the behaviours you'd like to see in your Team System?

Now that you've watched that clip, I want to bring you back to the Paul McGinley clip and consider this.....Paul McGinley was clearly someone who paid a lot of attention to lots of seemingly little details. If you were a Vice-Captain on Paul McGinley's Ryder Cup Team, just observing him, without him telling you anything.....what behaviour would Paul's attention to detail have encouraged in you?

I'm guessing it would have encouraged a similar attention to detail.

The message is clear for Team leaders....It's not just about what you say, it's about your behaviour (in good times and bad) and fundamentally, that's about who you are.

So, if you are a Team leader who is deeply uncomfortable with conflict, then the Team system you are likely to create, will be one that does not see conflict as potentially positive ...and therefore there is a risk that you will create a Team system that avoids conflict. We'll consider the consequences of avoiding conflict later in the module.

In order to actively shape the Team system so that it is moving towards High-Performance, the Leader needs to be able to first see the Team system as it is ...and that requires that she or he sees herself or himself as they are in that system as well. You've heard this before ...but as with all things in leadership, it starts with you!

Let's assume that you have a reasonably accurate understanding of yourself in your Team system, what then? How are you as Team leader going to make sense of all of the behaviours that define and shape my Team system; which behaviours will we need to amplify and which behaviours we need to reduce?

We need a framework through which we can view the Team system from "the balcony" as Ron Heifetz would say.

The rest of this module walks you through a framework that has been used by Team Coaching International with over 1,000 Teams around the World. The framework identifies fourteen competencies where High-Performing Teams are particularly strong and we're going to focus on nine of these.

### **Session B: Accountability**

In this session, the first Team competency, or characteristic, we're going to consider is Accountability; and here's an example from Peter Hawkins' book Leadership Team Coaching drawn from his work with one senior Executive Team.

You may be a little shocked by this example where he clearly outlines the accountability that he expects of Teams:

*"I was working with the senior executive team of a leading financial company. After my first few months of working alongside them in their meetings, I was still being lobbied in the corridor about the CEO's weaknesses. At the next meeting, I said to the team: 'I am fed up with you all telling me what is wrong with your chief executive'. The chief executive who was sitting next to me, turned and looked at me with shock and anger, and the team members all looked down at their papers! 'I think you are all delegating leadership upwards, and playing the game of "waiting for the perfect chief executive". Well I have some bad news for you. In all my years working with a great variety of organizations, I have never met a perfect chief executive. So, the question for you as senior team members is: "How are you as a team going to take responsibility for his weaknesses?"*

Hawkins showed a lot of courage as this Team's coach in saying what he said. But it's hard to argue with the sentiment isn't it? The Team members in this Team system were, by waiting for a better CEO, taking absolutely no accountability for improving the Team system.

A High-Performing Team would have held itself accountable for improving the Team system and then would have acted to improve the system.

But how, you might ask? What should they have done? Well give some thought to that yourself first, and then consider the same question in the last session of the module.

In the meantime, have a look at the following clip with Keith Ferrazzi at The Pendulum Summit in 2017 (available in your library), and consider what he says about accountability. Do you think that your Team system has established that level of accountability?

In that clip Ferrazzi also identifies another feature of High-Performing Teams and that is that they don't avoid giving hard to hear messages, they don't avoid the potential for conflict. They give absolutely honest feedback to Team members because they care about them.

We're going to explore Teams and Conflict a little more in the next session.

### **Session C: Constructive Interaction & Communication**

In this session we're going to consider how High-Performing Teams communicate even when it comes with a perceived risk of conflict. To a High-Performing Team, conflict is very interesting and not something to avoid. In fact, it is something to be explored for the potential learning that conflict offers.

However, High-Performing Teams don't necessarily see it as conflict, they see it as a Constructive Interaction because they have the skills to have potentially difficult conversations and they have created a Team system that understands that this type of dialogue is essential.

The Communication style in a Team system like this is clear and direct and comes from a mutually understood position of genuine care for the Team system and Team members. So, Team members in these Teams don't engage in less direct forms of communication such as 'side-bars', gossip, or politicising.

Watch this clip (available in your library) with Keith Cunningham from the 2017 Pendulum Summit.

Keith refers to the "Absence of Trust" as being one of the five dysfunctions of a Team and he's absolutely right.....but we'll come back to that in a later session.

What we want to focus on here is the fear of conflict.....and Keith said it very well when he said:

*"Nothing can change until the unsaid is spoken."*

*“It ain’t going to change unless someone is going to say it.”*

We’re all familiar with the Elephant in the Room.....that which everyone knows but no one has the courage to say. Well High-Performing Teams not only have the courage, they have explicit agreements and commitments to each other that they do not leave anything unsaid.

So, think back to Paul McGinley and his creation of the Team system he wanted and think of what Robin Sharma said about modelling behaviour.

If you wanted to establish a Team system where all Team members were open and honest with each other, and where constructive interaction and direct communication were seen as an essential part of the Team system...what would you do and how would you role model the behaviours?

One thing that leaders can do to role model constructive interaction is to ASK for it. Here, I’ll show you what I mean:

Consider these two examples of a Team leader trying to encourage their Team to engage in challenging each other’s views by getting them to challenge him or her first. Which do you think is going to be most effective, and why?

Here’s the first example:

*“My view is that we should go with supplier A. They may not have delivered this type of work before, but we know them. Does anyone disagree?”*

And the second example:

*“My view is that we should go with supplier A. They may not have delivered this type of work before, but we know them. Whatever decision we make, it’ll be a much better decision if we’ve challenged it. So, I need someone to challenge me on this, play devil’s advocate; and I won’t be happy making any decision until we’ve done that.”*

I think the answer is self-evident isn't?

In the first example the Team leader's underlying intention sounds like *"well I asked, I gave you the opportunity."* But in the second example the Team leader's explicit intent is *"challenge my view, it'll make for a better decision."*

By now you may be getting the sense that each characteristic of High-Performing Teams works with the other characteristics together, as an inherent part of the Team's system.

In other words, if you enhance one element in the system, for example Accountability, you're likely to see some form of change in, for instance, Communication. *"I feel more accountable so now I have to say something."*

Well you'd be right. So, in the next session we're going to explore Trust and Respect in Team systems, and I hope you'll be able to make similar links with what we've discussed so far.

### **Session D: Trust & Respect**

Do you remember what Keith Cunningham said in the clip from the Session on Constructive Interaction & Communication?

He named the *"Absence of Trust"* as one of the *"Five Dysfunctions"* of a Team. He's referring here to Patrick Lencioni's work on Team functioning and specifically to what Lencioni refers to as the *"Foundation of Teamwork"*.

Have a look at the following clip where Lencioni outlines his Five Dysfunctions (available in your library).

In that clip you must have recognised some of what we've already discussed. Particularly on Conflict and Accountability ...and the inherent connections between these High-Performing Team characteristics.

Without that solid foundation of Trust, Teams cannot deliver the results that real Teamworking can deliver ...Teams cannot become High-Performing and realise their full potential.

So, what is Trust and what can you as a Leader do to cultivate Trust within your own Team system?

Well Lencioni said in the clip that *“Trust requires that people get open and vulnerable with each other.”* Well, being open, and showing vulnerability, builds connections with people.

Now watch this clip with Keith Ferrazzi from the 2017 Pendulum Summit (available in your library), and pay particular attention to what he says about *“connecting.”*

If you want to cultivate Trust, you have to extend Trust and you have to be the first to do it. You have to make connections with your Team members and you have to create a Team system where Team members connect with each other. The good news is you can't do this all by yourself ...your Team must help you do this. The Team System itself needs to improve itself, that's not something you can do alone ...but you (the Leader) need to start the conversation ...you need to go first.

Building connections is certainly one aspect of building Trust within the Team System...but we all know that there must be more to it than that. For instance, I may be very open and good at building connections with people, but if you don't respect my knowledge or expertise then I'm unlikely to be able to cultivate Trust within the Team System.

So, you need to be very clear about how you can show the Team and your Team members that you Trust them and that you can be Trusted.

To look at this we're going to use the Trust Formula developed by David Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford in their work on The Trusted Advisor. To be trusted you have to be three things:

First you have to be Credible. Your Team must respect and value your expertise and your experience.

Second you have to be Reliable. You have to consistently follow through on your commitments.

Third ...and this is one of the biggest influencers of Trust, both in establishing Trust and undermining Trust..... You have to be Low on Self-Orientation. You have to put the Team first ...ahead of all personal interests and goals, including.....especially!.....your own.

You will not cultivate Trust in your Team if you don't role model Trust. And you are unlikely to be Trusted if your self-interest is what your Team sees. The Team's interests must come first.....the Purpose of this Team must come first.

Some of you may be thinking this could be a problem.....what about personal ambition? Is that not good? How will my career goals consistently work with putting the Team Purpose first?

You and your Team may have some thinking to do. You and your Team may need to talk about what this Team is all about and define its Purpose.

All Team members must feel a strong personal connection to the Team's Purpose, and the Team's Purpose should not get in the way of Team members personal goals. We'll discuss this further in the next session.

### **Session E: Clarity of Purpose & Goal Alignment**

For a moment, let's go back to our very first session in Lesson 1 (Session A). You may recall Katzenbach & Smith's definition of a Real Team; but let me remind you....they defined a High-Performing Team as:

*"A small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."*

Without absolute clarity on what you're trying to achieve, how can you measure performance? And if you can't measure performance, then how can a Team ever improve? How can it move towards becoming a High-Performing Team?

Gurra Krantz is very clear about the importance of this in the following Pendulum Summit clip (available in your library).

*“You have to have enough good people around you sharing the same goal and sharing the same determination to finish it off”*

So, the Team goal or Purpose has to be clear and it needs to have the absolute commitment from all Team members. And to ensure that all Team members are committed, it needs to mean something to them personally as well as to the Team.

It seems pretty obvious when you think about it, but Katzenbach & Smith’s experience of organisational Teams is that most Teams don’t invest the time required to clarify these things.

They say that:

*“Most potential teams, as well as the companies they are part of, pay too little attention to either the company’s performance standards or the purpose and goals of individual teams. Within teams, there is nothing more important than each team member’s commitment to a common purpose and set of related performance goals for which the group holds itself jointly accountable... It is not just that “the monkey is on the back” of every individual member, but that the same monkey is on all their backs together.”*

So, the Team needs to be clear about its shared Purpose and it needs clearly Aligned Goals in order to deliver on that Purpose. You may also remember one of Katzenbach & Smith’s characteristics of High-Performing Teams from Lesson 1 (Session B):

*“Meets all the conditions of real teams and (whose members) are also deeply committed to one another’s personal growth and success.”*

A Team Purpose and Aligned Goals that lead to organisational and Team members’ personal growth and success is part-and-parcel of ensuring that Team Purpose is meaningful for all Team members.

This ensures that the question we asked at the end of the last session..... *“How will my career goals consistently work with putting the Team Purpose first?”* doesn’t lead to divergent motivating factors within the Team System.

So, our Team has defined its Purpose and now we need to clearly define our Goals. Listen to Paul O'Connell at Pendulum Summit (available in your library) talking about how Goal Clarity helped him.

So, our Team Purpose and our Goals that will deliver on that Purpose need to mean something to all Team members' and they need to be precise and measurable. But what happens when the inevitable happens.....we find ourselves off track or something changes?

Let's look at that in the next session.

### **Session F: Leadership & Proactivity (within the Team)**

Now we're going to touch on something that many Team leaders may find challenges their view of themselves as a Leader:

Let's hear from Katzenbach & Smith again, this time referring to great Team leaders.

*"Team leaders genuinely believe that they do not have all the answers—so they do not insist on providing them. They believe they do not need to make all key decisions—so they do not do so. They believe they cannot succeed without the combined contributions of all the other members of the team...and so they avoid any action that might constrain inputs or intimidate anyone on the team. Ego is not their predominant concern."*

So leading a real Team towards High-Performance requires that you Lead ...you cannot manage and control a Team towards High-Performance.

Let's listen to Bob Davids talking about Management and Leadership (available in your library).

He's pretty clear isn't he? And by now you should be able to see that it's true when it comes to leading real Teams as well.

Leaders who are doing a lot of controlling and managing will have to relinquish much of this management and control in favour of cultivating a Team System that is self-managing and self-controlling.

It's only then that the Team System has the Leadership within it and the Proactivity to respond when something changes or when the Team is off-track.

When we talk about Leadership within the Team, what we really mean is that the team leader's role is clear...that should be a given...and that she or he is supportive of the team as a whole. But also, that other team members take initiative to provide leadership as the need for initiative arises.

For a controlling manager, allowing someone else to "take the initiative" will feel like relinquishing control and that may threaten ego....

And when we talk about Proactivity, what we really mean is that change is embraced and that the team is nimble and flexible in addressing opportunities for change, responding positively and creatively.

How is a controlling manager going to push his or her Team to anticipate change before it is upon them and to respond nimbly, positively and creatively? A controlling manager can't do that....

So, if we have a Team Leader that is controlling and managing (instead of leading), it's very unlikely we'll have either of these High-Performing Team characteristics in our Team.

The message is very clear.....a High-Performing Team requires a Leader whose ego is not fed by management and control.

A Leader who understands that the role of Team Leadership is to Lead the creation of a High-Performing Team System.

And who gives responsibility to all Team members for shaping and sustaining the Team System.

## Lesson 3: Creating and Maintaining High-Performance Team System

### Session A: Establishing Team System & Behaviours

So far, we've discussed the fundamental characteristics of High-Performing Teams; we've established that each characteristic works as part of a dynamic Team System, and that the Team Leader's fundamental role is to lead the creation of the Team System. Sounds easy...

But what does that look like, how do you create these Team Systems? Simply put the Team Leader and the Team needs to be very clear on what they're trying to create ...very clear on the desired behaviours and style of interaction with each other ...and what that behaviour will look like.

Let's take an example from Joe Schmidt and here he's talking about his tenure as Head Coach with the Leinster Rugby Team. Joe wanted to enhance the connectivity within the squad from senior players right through to young Academy players.

This is how he describes just one of the things that he did:

*"When I first started with Leinster, we had managed to win the Heineken Cup so I decided to do a bit of a review and I asked a few questions. Just of what the players had contributed, what they felt had made a real difference for the team. The most common positive was that I'd encouraged them to shake hands with everyone at the start of the day. It broke down the barriers between the young academy kids who really thought that the Brian O'Driscoll's were otherworldly. They grew in confidence and it grew the collective nature of the group."*

Sounds like a very simple thing...and it is...but the impact is profound. Think about it. You are a senior player like Brian O'Driscoll and at the start of the season there are a group of new Team members and you know nothing about them, you don't even know their names. Now you have to learn their names so that you can shake hands every morning and say hello by name.

Now think about it from a new young player's perspective...what do you think it would mean to you that Brian O'Driscoll knows your name and acknowledges you at the start of every day?

This is how Leaders create Team Systems. By defining the System characteristic they want to establish, by defining the behaviours associated with each characteristic, and by putting these behaviours into action and relentlessly reinforcing these behaviours.

Let's look at another example, this time from Brian Cody (available in your library) where he talks about "*Standards of Excellence*" and how he established standards for the new Team system he wanted to create.

So now we're going to get you to do some work:

Have a look at the clip of Bernard Brogan (available in your library) where he's talking about the Dublin GAA Team Culture. The Team Manager (or Head Coach you could say) is Jim Gavin.

We'd like you to watch the clip and consider the following questions:

- Which High-Performing Team characteristics can you identify as you listen to the Team System that Jim Gavin has led?
- How would you describe Jim Gavin's Team Leadership, where, or to what, has he devoted his thinking and his attention?

### **Session B: Maintaining a High-Performing Team System**

So, let's assume that your Team has arrived! It's now officially deemed a High-Performing Team by those who are most impacted by the Team's work. How do we stay there? How do we maintain this position?

The first thing to realise is that maintaining a High-Performance Team system is not about staying somewhere. Staying somewhere implies 'stasis' or 'inertia'. No.....maintaining a High-Performance Team system is about constant challenge, learning, improvement, adaptation and change.

You might recall some of Brian Cody's words from the previous session... "*You can never ever be the best you can be. You should never ever consider that you have now reached the ultimate of where you can go.*"

He understands this very well...he understands that an inherent part of High-Performance is the constant drive to be better.

In his work *“Legacy: What the All Blacks can teach us about the business of life”* James Kerr explains it this way:

*“When you’re on top of your game, change your game.”*

And to him this means three things:

First, that *“A winning organization is an environment of personal and professional development, in which each individual takes responsibility and shares ownership.”*

Second, that *“Organizational decline is inevitable unless leaders prepare for change, even when standing at the pinnacle of success.”*

And finally, *“You either adapt, or you lose; and sustainable competitive advantage is achieved by the development of a continuously self-adjusting culture.”*

Let’s hear from Brian Cody again as he talks about this from his perspective (available in your library).

What was it he said?...

*“It’s nonstop. It’s always. You look back on the year, you check on this, you check on that, can we make improvements here? Can we make improvements there? You have to.”*

Again, think of the system characteristics he’s established for Kilkenny Hurling. A system where honesty with oneself and continuous learning is required. From what you’ve heard from him, in a total of less than six minutes, I’m sure you can identify many more characteristics in this Team system.

So, if maintaining a High-Performing Team system is about maintaining anything ...it’s about maintaining the constant drive to be better.

### **Session C: Bringing it all together**

In this module, we've established what makes a real Team, and we've forensically examined the characteristics of High-Performing Teams.

We now see Teams as living systems, and we've established that if a Team is going to become High-Performing, then it requires a very particular leadership style from the Team Leader.

It requires that the Leader applies themselves, first and foremost, to creating a Team System or Culture that has all of the Team characteristics that we've discussed, and NOT to managing or controlling the work of the Team.

If there is one single, underlying and foundational characteristic that you've been hearing throughout the module it's that High-Performing Teams are constantly challenging themselves to learn and to become better, even when they are winning.

This constant challenge and learning can only be established and maintained when there is absolute clarity about what the purpose is, and when there is absolute honesty with how we're doing.

So, let's think about you as the Leader of a Team that wants to move towards High-Performance. If you want to establish a Team with all of the characteristics we've discussed, then you have to BE all of those things; and first you have to honestly assess who you are right now.

- Do you hold yourself accountable?
- Do you see conflict as essential and are you skilled at stepping into conflict constructively?
- Do you show trust and respect to your Team members?
- Are you clear about your purpose and what you stand for?
- And are you proactive? And are you willing to let others lead?

The best way to answer many of these questions is to ask someone else. Ask your Team what they think...do you hold yourself and others accountable? If they can't answer honestly, then you know the first thing you need to work on.

As a Leader, your Team needs to see that you put the Team first before your own self-interest, and if you are not prepared to listen to what your Team thinks of your leadership, then you're not putting the Team first, you are putting yourself first.

Listen to what Simon Sinek says about REAL Leaders in this clip (available in your library) where he talks about his work "*Leaders Eat Last.*"

We talked about Trust in Lesson 2 Session D and we identified that Self-Orientation was the single-biggest barrier to establishing Trust. The message is simple...if you want to lead a High-Performing Team, you have to put the Team ahead of your and any individual Team member's personal interests.

You have to find a Team Purpose that will connect everyone's personal goals.

Finally, I want to bring you back to the question I posed in Lesson 2, Session B. Do you remember Peter Hawkins, the Team Coach who was working with a Financial Services Senior Leadership Team?

His question for the Team was "*How are you as a team going to take responsibility for his (CEO's) weaknesses?*"

We said that a High-Performing Team would have held itself accountable for improving the Team system and then would have acted to improve the system.

So, now that you've completed the Module, what do you think the Team should do? How could they start taking accountability for this?

There may be any number of approaches to this...but any approach, if it's going to be effective must start with an open and honest discussion about the very thing that shocked and angered the CEO and made the rest of the Team look down at their papers.

As Keith Cunningham said in Lesson 2, Session C:

*“Nothing can change until the unsaid is spoken.”*

*“It ain’t going to change unless someone is going to say it.”*

It starts by saying what hasn’t been said, by getting it out there, but constructively ... and then the Team can start looking at their current Team System and how it is now. For instance, how are we on Constructive Interaction? Where do we need to be? And what behaviours will we need to start modelling with each other?

To do this requires courage from the Team leader and trust that their Team will respond positively. If you recognise a lot of what you’ve heard in the Module and you are in a Team leadership position, and you want to move towards High-Performance, a good first step could be to talk to an experienced Team Coach.

You’ll find all of the material we referenced during the Module in the bibliography as well as some additional reading we recommend.

You’ll also find a High-Performing Team Questionnaire (available in your library) that you are welcome to use as a tool to rate your Team. This is a self-report questionnaire and so it will be your own ‘subjective’ experience of the Team System. But it may be illuminating to see where your Team is strong, where it can improve; and it may well reveal the relationship between characteristics.

Try completing the questionnaire and then consider Lencioni’s work on Team Dysfunctions in Lesson 2, Session D; and see if you can see links with his work.