



KELLOGG
RURAL LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME



Why do Sales Teams Succeed or Fail?

The Journey to High Performance

Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme

Course 45 2021

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I wish to thank the Kellogg Programme Investing Partners for their continued support.

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Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank my employer, Farmlands, for investing in me and my future through funding my course and allowing me the time out of the office to complete the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme. Special thanks to the management team of the program for their unwavering commitment to Cohort 45. Thank you for sharing your invaluable knowledge, for your impeccable organizational skill set to bring this program together seamlessly, especially during unprecedented times of continuing Covid outbreaks. Collectively, the work you do is amazing and your passion for our industry is hugely inspiring. Thank you for providing us the opportunity to be inspired and to grow our skillset and networks to make an impact on the future. To Patrick Aldwell and Scott Champion, your guidance in completing the research and putting together this report is very much appreciated. Your incredible level of knowledge in many different areas and the experiences and insights you have shared with us have contributed to this finished product. To Cohort 45, thank you for making my Kellogg journey very enjoyable and hugely beneficial to my future in the NZ Food and Fibre sector. Thank you for sharing your passion, your learnings, experiences, and broadening my knowledge in all facets of life.

Executive summary

Everybody wants to have the best sales team but not everybody can make it happen. In this current era of pandemics and economic uncertainty, organizations are focused on talent performance and optimization across all teams. Sales leaders need to understand the new realities of their dynamic selling environment and adopt new tools and management styles that empower their teams to foster an agile-driven culture. The most successful companies think regularly about how to improve teamwork in the workplace because they know they'll see a return on their investment. They actively work to create the kinds of conditions that promote collaboration.

My aim for this project was to break down the barriers and help create an understanding of **“Why do sales teams succeed or fail?”** and how organizations can unearth problems and enable their teams to discover the solutions to high performance. My focus was identifying the underlying causes and pitfalls of team dysfunction, investigating, and evaluating the critical components that contribute to high performance. Then offer a strategy to allow the organization to improve the standard of their sales teams.

This research project used a combination of a literature review and thematic analysis as a tool to examine key themes, implications, issues and identify areas of key importance.

What has echoed through the literature review is that there are four fundamental elements as to why teams either succeed or become dysfunctional and fail.

- **Leadership - What style of leader you are and the environment and culture you create from the characteristics of your behavior when leading teams.**
- **How culture always determines success regardless of how effective your strategy may be and the importance of taking the time needed to build a strong foundation at the inception of any sales team.**
- **Team dynamics, the makeup of skills, knowledge, diversity, and whether the team is unified or harmonized.**
- **And finally, the ongoing coaching and mentoring required to keep the team functioning at a high level.**

The following are the main recommendations that have come out of my findings that offer a strategy to help improve the standard of team performance of any organization.

- **The need for ongoing leadership training and continuous mentoring. Great leaders attract, hire, and inspire great people. The benefits are far-reaching for all employees.**
- **Have a clear organizational purpose. An organization's values lay the foundation for what the company cares about most and should create a unified why.**
- **Build an effective onboarding process and hire wisely.**

- **Involve leaders from all levels in corporate communications and decisions. Multi-way communication is the goal.**
- **Constantly strive for improvement - A relentless desire to improve and get better is one of the hallmarks of a highly successful sales team.**
- **Get out of their way and stop micromanaging. Every employee or team member works best when they are given an environment where they are allowed to do things 'their way'.**

Leadership was seen as the most critical component to team success. Effective leaders provide clarity of purpose, motivate, create a safe environment, and guide the organization to realize its mission. Leadership throws a big shadow and is an ongoing journey of training and discovery which is never finished. Every organization should do its best to enable effective leadership.

Introduction

It is past midnight. The sales team has been working around the clock for the past two weeks. An arctic chill swept through the room as another issue surfaced. More conflict erupts as the finger of blame is pointed yet again. As the issues increase and become more significant, the relationships within the team disintegrate further and further.

Already the company has lost tens of thousands of dollars and is suffering significant reputational damage. Everyone knows that it will be many months before the business is stabilized and sales return to a positive trend.

More importantly, the human costs will continue to mount. Several members of the team will suffer stress-related illnesses. Many families will be impacted through the absence of a parent. A marriage will fail. Careers will end and some will never recover.

Relationships in the company will be so badly damaged that the impact on organizational performance through the erosion of trust, resentment, and resulting politics will last for many years.

Yet none of this had to happen; most of the problems could have been avoided and most of them were predictable.

Does the above scene sound familiar?

Increasingly organizations are focusing on the performance of teams to create a competitive advantage. The success of organizations is dependent upon the constructive and collaborative interactions of individuals within teams. Often when teams become troubled, members of the team will view the reasons for poor performance as being external to the team. (Gorgenyi, 2008) Team members may see the causes as the inappropriate use of technology, unfavourable contract terms, an unreasonable customer, or an under-performing supplier, for example. Typically, one or more of these factors will be present in any troubled team environment.

There is, however, one constant of troubled teams that is rarely mentioned by the team. That is the performance of the team itself, specifically the internal dynamics of the team. High-performing teams that display a healthy internal dynamic are often able to overcome these challenges. (Gorgenyi, 2008) Effectively managing the dynamic of the team will have a positive effect on performance and outcomes.

This paper will enable organizational leaders to understand how they can improve an organization, project, and individual performance by acting upon the barriers to high performance and allow leaders and teams to address these barriers clearly and constructively. Thereby accelerating the process of team development and the attainment of high levels of sales performance.

Aims and objectives

Aim

- This report aims to break down the barriers and help create an understanding of ‘Why do sales teams succeed or fail?’ and how organizations can unearth problems and enable their teams to discover the solutions to high performance.

Objectives

- To understand and identify the underlying causes and pitfalls of team disfunction.
- To investigate and evaluate the critical components that contribute to high team performance.
- To recommend a strategy to allow organizations to improve their standard of high team performance.

Methodology

This research project used a combination of a literature review and thematic analysis as a tool to examine key themes, implications, issues, apply critical analysis and identify areas of key importance - Appendix A and Appendix B. A review of existing literature, including previous research papers, articles, opinion pieces, journals, and published books was used as a major component to evaluate the key themes.

A qualitative approach was used with thematic analysis (Clarke V. B., 2006) to help me critically analyze and draw conclusions on the opportunities for understanding ‘Why do sales teams succeed or fail?’ and recommend a strategy to help an organization succeed in the pursuit of high performance. I chose this methodology because it gave me a lot of flexibility in interpreting the data and allowed me to approach large data sets more easily by sorting them into broad themes.

Keywords used in literature review search: I chose the below keywords to get the balance between making the search comprehensive enough to encompass everything on the topic and precise enough to only capture those results that are specifically relevant.

Why do teams fail, Leadership in teams, Team dynamics, Common reasons why teams fail, Sales coaching, Characteristics of high performing teams, how to build teams, how to create high performing teams, Performance driven behaviour, KPI measurement, Changing employee behaviour, high-performance cultures, Harmony in teams?

Literature review

So Why do Teams Fail – What's the Gap?

The Five Dysfunctions of a team (Lencioni, 2020) argues that truly effective teamwork is one of the hardest goals for any organization to achieve, Humans are imperfect, with flaws, egos, insecurities, ambitions, baggage, distractions, personalities, and grudges. These imperfections make humans vulnerable to what causes the teams to fail. Lencioni went on to list the five dysfunctions below.

1. **Absence of trust.** Dysfunctional teams hold back with each other. Great teams admit their concerns, mistakes, and weaknesses without fear of reprisal.
2. **Lack of commitment.** All team members must buy into decisions.
3. **Fear of conflict.** Team members must be willing to argue effectively about an issue.
4. **Avoidance of accountability.** Team members must hold themselves to high standards.
5. **Inattention to results.** In unproductive teams, people seek out individual recognition at the expense of collective results and the goals of the entire team.

Executive Excellence; (Nickol, 2000) Goes a little further by describing the top ten reasons teams become dysfunctional. Teams are tricky animals (Nickol, 2000). As simple as the concept appears, it becomes intricate and complex in implementation and maintenance. When entering the combat zone of teams, one must be aware of 10 potential land mines why teams become dysfunctional. They also make a telling statement in one sentence that encapsulates all the 10 potential land mines why teams become dysfunctional. Is that - **'Most often, teams succeed or become dysfunctional because of poor leadership.'**

1. **Lack of education about teams.** Teams are not only a different way of doing business, but they represent an entirely different way of thinking about doing business. For teams to succeed, the executive management team must embrace this change in philosophy.
2. **Lack of commitment by upper management.** Because teams require a change in the way business is conducted, the restructuring process is painful. Resistance is pervasive. Sabotage runs rampant, and employee morale hits bottom. At times, all are convinced they will perish. Such upheaval requires committed leadership. Employees must know that there is no turning back. When the message comes that "teams are here to stay," people have a decision to make, learn how to be a good team player or resign. Destructive team behaviors can't be allowed.
3. **Lack of time.** The design, implementation, and maturation of teams take time as there is a significant learning curve. Production, morale, quality, efficiency, and timeliness often get worse before they improve. Many managers are unable to withstand these declines.

Teams should not be implemented when an organization is on the brink of financial ruin. They do not work well as a quick fix.

4. **Lack of money.** When team design, implementation, and maintenance are correctly executed, it is costly. Management and select employees must be taken away from their jobs to design and plan the rollout. Team members and coaches require extensive training to adopt basic knowledge and skills. Downtime and training time are expensive.
5. **Lack of an implementation or restructuring plan.** The vision, mission, values, titles, processes, systems, rewards, compensation, performance appraisals, and hiring strategies must all align with the team concept. It is incongruent to ask employees to be team players when the rewards and compensation are based upon independent production. Often barriers must be removed to facilitate open communication. Systems and processes must also change. Lines of communication, reporting structures, and workflow may need to be modified. Performance appraisal and hiring criteria need to align with team philosophies. Anything that does not align with the team concept represents a barrier to team success.
6. **Lack of communication.** If communication is avoided or handled insensitively or defensively, expect resistance. If the decision to move to teams is communicated "after the fact" or with a downsizing announcement, team members feel "put upon," devalued and victimized. If benefits are not stressed, it sounds as if there will be more work, longer hours, more responsibility, and no pay increase. When managers are told that decision-making power will be given to the teams, they become demoralized and afraid for their jobs.
7. **Lack of empowerment.** Often, the management team doesn't relinquish decision-making power to the teams. They give the responsibility without the authority to make decisions and act. Managers resist servant leadership because they work years to attain a certain level of control. They often sabotage the team to maintain authority.
8. **Lack of purpose.** Teams are often implemented because teams are a popular concept. Departments are abolished and employees are grouped and told to "start teaming!" Team members continue to be responsible for the work they do; however, they are now required to waste time attending "team meetings." Team members don't know what is expected of them. They lack a clear, specific purpose.
9. **Lack of training.** Successful teaming requires a four-stage training process: 1) Explain the concept of teams, the required changes, the maturation stages, and the benefits to team members, coaches, and the organization; 2) Teach "team player" skills in interpersonal communication, decision making, problem-solving, assertion, negotiation, conflict management, and change management; 3) Train in technical and administrative skills since most teams take on duties previously performed by management, and 4) Train members to perform each other's functions to maintain high performance in the face of changes in the team and workplace. All these training costs dollars and downtime.
10. **The buck stops in the ivory tower.** The problems teams experience are like gossamer threads that often lead to upper management. Teams can be set up to succeed or fail, and often teams are doomed before the first team member is chosen. But teams rarely fail; leadership usually fails teams.

Building on this key point. **The lean thinking company “How to create a high-performance culture in your organization.”** (The lean thinking company , 2011) – this goes into more personal poor leadership traits that affect the success of sales teams, listed below. They also state the belief that – “It all starts with leadership”- The Biggest Reason why teams fail comes back to one key point. **“Most often, teams succeed or become dysfunctional because of poor leadership”**.

1. **“No sense of reality!”** At times leaders are so removed from reality that they fail to understand the current situation of their people and the business. From the capabilities of yourself to the strengths and weaknesses of your staff and business, be realistic so that you make respectable and relevant decisions.
2. **“Don't ask people to contribute!”** A good leader will ask their employees for their opinion and challenge their thinking to improve drive and innovation etc. Unfortunately, there have been many times when we see people just not being challenged enough.
3. **“Pointing fingers and not the root cause!”** We have seen leaders want to blame something or someone when something is wrong. But we must challenge that in most cases the root cause of the problem resides with the leader for not giving clear and concise instructions, to begin with.
4. **“Don't challenge my attitude!”** We have seen this time and time again, where staff are not encouraged to challenge thinking. This is a shame as proactive debate and discussion usually lead to better results.
5. **“Micro-managing”** Productive employees do not need to be micromanaged and monitored, and good leaders have the patience to determine the best method of learning style and still have control over employees without them thinking they do. Suppression equals frustration and robotic thinking. Who wants that?
6. **“Not treating people as equals”** The misconception that leaders are the boss is so common and laughable, but it is one of the biggest killers of emotional connectivity with employees. We do respect all leadership styles, but we challenge it if it is not getting the best out of our staff members.
7. **“Not listening to the customer”** We see so many opportunities to make improvements based on what the customer is saying, but unfortunately, many leaders are not in the position where they are directly involved with customers, so they are not hearing direct feedback.
8. **“Not telling me why”** People will react better when you explain things to them. Simply telling them “It is the way it is” will not work. Employees also need to have confidence in their leader's decisions, and a good leader can do this by demonstrating they have planned sufficiently and assessed the risks. High risk usually leads to failure or false starts
9. **“Not seeing themselves as teachers”** Employees usually need assistance in their development, but we don't see many leaders who teach and inspire. What we do see is

a dependency on HR and learning and development to do it for them and get the blame if something goes wrong.

10. **“Not trying to get people out of their comfort zones”** After a while, people sit comfortably and plod along day to day and work on autopilot. We expect to see leaders mixing it up and testing, prodding, and challenging their workers by throwing them into new roles, giving them new tasks - anything that will get them feeling hungry again!

Evaluating and comparing the literature above from all three publications on team dysfunction. Some key topics and trends were highlighted and repeated throughout all. The lack of trust, commitment, accountability, empowerment, purpose, and the feeling of fear was all recurring and consistent themes on team dysfunction.

Lencioni (Lencioni, 2020) focuses on the human factor and the imperfections that human behavior brings to a team environment, and the relationship between team members within the group itself. Nickol (Nickol, 2000) builds on the complex nature of teams but focuses on the important part that team culture brings to the table and how organizations need to focus on building a strong foundation of vision and values well before teams can operate effectively. The lean thinking company (The lean thinking company , 2011) focuses on the ability of the leader itself and the vital role that the leader has in ensuring the vision mission, and value of the organization is executed.

By comparing the literature above the significant relationship between leadership and culture for team success and how they are critically intertwined cannot be overstated.

Considering this. The role of the leader in high-performing teams was the most vital central figure that brings team members together, creates the values, beliefs, and ultimately the **culture** that ensures team success. Getting team members **‘emotionally connected’!** (The lean thinking company , 2011) are the fundamental reasons for company success. Having staff who love to come to work, are passionate about their roles, and that they believe that what they are doing is making a difference, is one of the fundamental aspects of high-performance. Having staff emotionally connected is not easy but does however lead to the importance of **team culture** which will ultimately lead to success.

“Culture eats Strategy for breakfast” is a famous quote by Peter Drucker (Drucker, 2015). This implies that the culture of your company always determines success regardless of how effective your strategy may be.

The culture eats strategy for breakfast quote means that no matter how strong your strategic plan is, its efficacy will be held back by members of your team if they don't share the proper culture. When it comes down to it, the people implementing the plan are the ones that make all the difference.

If your employees aren't passionate about your company's vision, they won't be enthusiastic about executing the plan, and then your strategy stands no chance. Your company will struggle to execute daily strategies and implementing a new one would be doomed to fail.

Company culture happens, whether you work on it or not. It represents the core of the company, and most of it is created by the business founders—sometimes unknowingly. The actions of the founders and executives speak louder than their words in the process of culture creation.

Corporate culture is never definite. It's very complex and ever-changing. Culture is vulnerable and depends on the moods of the people who define it. It's a crucial factor for the long-term success of every business. No matter how hard you work on your perfectly organized strategy, in the end, the people bringing it to life are the ones responsible for its success or its demise.

Many company owners and executives focus on the financial, rational, and legal side of the business, but they fail to incorporate the appropriate culture. Culture is the way your company operates toward fulfilling your goals—but it also includes the behavior and core values of each employee.

While strategy defines direction and focus, culture is the habitat in which strategy lives or dies. The strategy focuses on resourcefulness and skillfulness, while culture defines engagement, passion, and execution.

With proper strategy, you create the rules for playing, but culture determines the way the game will be played.

If not based on the right values, culture eats strategy for lunch (as well as breakfast). However, in a perfect scenario, culture and strategy complement and nurture each other. Strategy and culture should be created simultaneously, making sure they are perfectly aligned. When in sync, they enable each other to create incredible organizational transformations.

When you're aware of the true culture of your business, it is easy to create a strategic business plan because you're familiar with all the factors. Think of culture as a landscape on which you execute your strategic plan. A walk on pavement takes less time and energy than climbing through a mountain pass.

Knowing your culture means knowing what to expect from your team, which comes as a valuable resource in planning a strategy. Your strategy plan has a greater chance of being efficient if you apply a realistic perspective to it. Culture and strategy make a powerful duo when combined perfectly, and you should always incorporate both in your plans if you want your vision to succeed.

In the book by Keith Rosen – **Sales Leadership: The Essential Leadership Framework to Coach Sales Champions, Inspire Excellence and Exceed Your Business Goals.** (Rosen, 2018) continues the strong argument of how important culture is. "People create the mindset, mindset shapes behavior, behavior defines culture, and ultimately, culture determines success. He also goes on to talk about the critical importance of **'Creating the unified why'**.

The key to being a great leader is understanding what your people want and expect from you, but more importantly, why they want it. When leading your team to a shared goal and vision, they need to understand not only what they need to do but also why they are doing it and what's in it for them, so they can see how they benefit.

To set and manage people's expectations and create alignment in thinking and action requires understanding people's why, who they are, their values, goals, and their intentions while ensuring they are aligned with the company's why. This is what it takes to transform the culture and performance of any organization. What would it mean to you, your team, and your organization if you could achieve companywide, unified alignment in thinking and action?

These leadership principles apply in every area of our lives. And when leading an organization or a team, when you can discover and articulate your collective why, only then can you harness the power of coaching as a cornerstone to develop your champion team and create a shared vision and a healthy, top-performing culture. What you do, what you sell, and what value you provide are the by-product. The journey to cultural greatness begins with **Why**, your one clear thing or vision, your beacon. Why you do what you do is the essence of who you and your company are— your values, goals, and priorities as an individual and as a unified organization.

In contrast, George Bradt the author of **Why Harmonized Teams Beat Unified Teams** (Bradt, 2017) talks about a slightly different idea and spins on this argument.

George talks about members of a unified team putting aside their differences to work together as one. They are reliable and predictable. In contrast to that, harmonized teams value differences. Their working relationships are messy and unpredictable. That messiness makes them more likely to be open to changes in their environment and be better able to adapt. Therefore, you should assemble people with diverse strengths, prompt different points of view, and reward harmonic thinking over unity. **There is a fundamental belief that team unity is to be desired. It's not. It is to be avoided** (Bradt, 2017). For example,

- Barbershop quartets are far more interesting when they are harmonizing than when they all sing the same note.
- A Rugby team of 15 identical backs would get dramatically outscored by a team that could scrum maul and tackle as well as run.

A business made of all salespeople would not fare as well as one that could build, deliver and service what its salespeople sold.

George Bradt went on to say, "I think I've made the point. Unity is bad. Harmony is good. All men are not created equal. Each man and each woman are unique and special" (Bradt, 2017).

It's not hard to argue that this is one of the most important attributes of a high-performing team. The difference between a collaborative group and a team is interdependence. Individual members of high-performing teams know that they can achieve more together than any of them can on their own. This is because they have different strengths and have figured out how to work in harmony to take advantage of those differences.

The significance of team culture and having staff emotionally connected through a set of values, beliefs, and shared vision was confirmed through the above literature. Both Keith Rosen (Rosen, 2018) and Peter Drucker (Drucker, 2015) emphasized these points strongly. Peter Drucker (Drucker, 2015) stressed the relationship between culture and strategy and that culture will always determine success. Keith Rosen (Rosen, 2018) confirmed the point of how culture is driven by leadership and the desire of the organization to create a unified why and unite thinking. However, Bradt (Bradt, 2017) argued the importance of diverse thinking over united thinking to help create the ultimate environment for problem-solving. Having a team of diverse strengths and experience and creating an environment that allows those differences to be fostered and promoted is fundamental and all lead to the team and eventually the organization's success.

One thing is evident through this literature review, **teams are highly dynamic and fluid and need constant attention from the team leader**. The role of the team leader cannot be understated. But what makes the best leaders?

The Role of Leadership in High Performing Teams

In the book '**building a high-performance team**'. (Cook, 2009) The book introduces the benefits of teamwork and describes the characteristics of great teams.

It also leans heavily on the **influence of leadership**. The book describes how leaders have a direct influence on the environment of the team. The degree to which they support and challenge their team members has a direct impact on their team performance. Offering support means that the team leader provides positive feedback, listens emphasizes, and assists. The team leader provides advice, guidance and permits them to act, and actively helps with resources. The challenge involves offering development feedback, encouraging others to do better both by the requests you make of them and by the challenges you set them. It can also mean challenging team members to rethink their actions and decisions by questioning and offering alternatives, setting stretching targets, stating positive and negative consequences of actions, and confronting issues assertively. The degree to which the team leader provides support and challenge can lead to very different working environments.

Sebastian Salicru author of '**Leadership Results**' (Salicru, 2017) - talks about how **leadership is fundamentally about relationships**. This means it is not about an individual's attributes, traits, personality, charisma, knowledge, skills, attitude, competencies, or stage of development. Instead, it's a social process that emerges from the relational dynamics in organizations. The best leaders are authentic, respectful, empathetic, inclusive, consultative, and collaborative. They lead with integrity and an uncompromising, commitment to ethical excellence. (Salicru, 2017).

The question is what makes the best leaders?

Both Authors (Cook, 2009) (Salicru, 2017) arguments answer this question based on the dynamic influence that leaders have on their relationship with team members that ultimately creates the desired team environment. They both reveal that leaders can dramatically influence follower motivation through their behaviors, and **style of leadership**.

Thus if Leadership style is vital what leadership style is best?

Leadership theory suggests that leaders tend to fall into one of two broad styles; those who lead predominantly as transactional leaders, and those who blend aspects of transactional and transformational styles. (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939)

Transactional Leadership (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939)

Transactional leaders seek to motivate followers by appealing to their self-interest, and this is its underlying flaw. Transactional leaders rely on positional power to gain compliance from their followers, and the legitimate ability to use reward and coercive power forms. They have continued, often outspoken interactions that sound like.

- “Do as I say, and you will get a raise”
- “Make this quota or you will get fired”

Transactional leaders accept the goals and culture of the existing organization. They must do so because this type of leadership is ineffective at bringing significant change.

Transactional leadership behavior results in a balance between compliance and self-interest.

One of the main advantages of this leadership style is that it creates clearly defined roles. People know what they are required to do and what they will be receiving in exchange. This style allows leaders to offer a great deal of supervision and direction if needed.

Group members may also be motivated to perform well to receive rewards. One of the biggest downsides is that the transactional style tends to stifle creativity and out-of-the-box thinking.

Transformational leadership (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939)

Transformational leadership has evolved from and contains elements of varying leader behaviors, such as traits theories, charismatic, situational, and transactional behavior. transformational leadership is closely linked to the effective use of expert and referent power.

Transformational leadership is often identified as the single most effective style.

Transformational leaders can motivate and inspire followers and direct positive changes in groups.

These leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate. They are not only committed to helping the organization achieve its goals, but also to helping group members fulfill their potential.

There are four components of transformational leadership known as the four 'I's, which are.

Charisma or Idealized influence: This is the degree to which the leader behaves in admirable ways that cause followers to identify with the leader.

Inspirational Motivation: The degree to which a leader articulates a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers.

Intellectual Stimulation: The degree to which the leader challenges assumptions, takes risks, and solicits followers' ideas.

Individualized Consideration: The degree to which the leader attends to each follower's needs, either as a mentor or coach to the follower, and listens to the follower's concerns and needs.

Versatile Leadership styles (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939)

A leadership style refers to a leader's characteristic behavior when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Great leaders can inspire political movements and social change. They can also motivate others to perform, create, and innovate.

As you start to consider some of the people who you think of as great leaders, you can immediately see that there are often vast differences in how each person leads. Fortunately, researchers have developed different theories and frameworks that allow us to better identify and understand these different leadership styles.

In 1939, a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin set out to identify different styles of leadership (Lewin, 1939). While further research has identified more distinct types of leadership, this early study was very influential and established three major leadership styles that have provided a springboard for more defined leadership theories.

Authoritarian Leadership (Autocratic)

Authoritarian leaders, also known as autocratic leaders, provide clear expectations for what needs to be done when it should be done, and how it should be done. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both command by the leader and control of the followers. There is also a clear division between the leader and the members. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently, with little or no input from the rest of the group.

Researchers found that decision-making was less creative under authoritarian leadership. Lewin also concluded that it is harder to move from an authoritarian style to a democratic style than vice versa. Abuse of this method is usually viewed as controlling, bossy, and dictatorial.

Authoritarian leadership is best applied to situations where there is little time for group decision-making or where the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group. The autocratic approach can be a good one when the situation calls for rapid decisions and decisive actions. However, it tends to create dysfunctional and even hostile environments, often pitting followers against the domineering leader.

Participative Leadership (Democratic)

Lewin's study found that participative leadership, also known as democratic leadership, is typically the most effective leadership style. Democratic leaders offer guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow input from other group members.

Participative leaders encourage group members to participate but retain the final say in the decision-making process. Group members feel engaged in the process and are more motivated and creative. Democratic leaders tend to make followers feel like they are an important part of the team, which helps foster commitment to the goals of the group.

Delegative Leadership (Laissez-Faire)

Lewin found delegative leadership, also known as laissez-faire leadership, was the least productive of all three groups. People in this group also made more demands on the leader, showed little cooperation, and were unable to work independently.

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave the decision-making up to group members. While this style can be useful in situations involving highly qualified experts, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

Lewin noted that laissez-faire leadership tended to result in groups that lacked direction and members who blamed each other for mistakes, refused to accept personal responsibility, made less progress, and produced less work.

In summary, authoritarian leadership is often presented solely in negative, often disapproving terms. Authoritarian leaders are often described as controlling and close-minded, yet this overlooks the potential positives of stressing rules, expecting obedience, and taking responsibility.

While authoritarian leadership certainly is not the best choice for every situation, it can be effective and beneficial in cases where followers need a great deal of direction and where rules and standards must be followed to the letter. Another often overlooked benefit of the authoritarian style is the ability to maintain a sense of order.

Democratic leadership tends to be centered on the followers and is an effective approach when trying to maintain relationships with others. People who work under such leaders tend to get along well, support one another, and consult other members of the group when making decisions. **Thus democratic leadership is typically the most effective leadership style.**

Evaluating all the above literature (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939). If leadership style is seen as critical, then recognizing your leadership style first and foremost is vital. Only then can you start the journey to leadership and team success.

This leads to the importance of Leadership training. Leadership training provides feedback and insights on the positive and negative aspects of a leader's actions and styles. Excellent training programs ensure those strengths are explored and mastered.

Building on the desired styles of leadership of **“Transformational and Democratic.”** The book **‘Delivering High Performance’** (Long, 2013) focuses on the idea of what they call **“Third Generation Leadership”**.

Third generational Leadership (Long, 2013)

Third-generation leadership moves us away from a world based on power and authority. Away from a world in which hierarchy is accepted as normal and necessary. Third-generation leadership moves us away from a world in which the leader knows best. Third-generation leadership moves us away from a world of compliance, compulsion, and conformance. It moves us to a world in which people engage with each other regardless of who they are or where they may be and in which they then engage together to achieve whatever performance is desired.

The characteristics of third-generation leadership and leaders are.

- They engage with others as individuals rather than seeking to obtain obedience or compliance.
- They are collaborative and facilitative
- They encourage growth and self-directed learning by everyone
- They respect other people even if they are not receiving respect in return
- They invite questions and genuine discussion
- They ask questions intending to help others find their solutions
- They listen to help others engage with their own or shared solutions
- They are non-discriminatory in thought, word, and action

Because of these characteristics, third-generation leaders can create environments in which people feel.

- Emotionally safe
- Unconditionally respected
- Believed in as individuals

- Listen to

These are the critical conditions for people to be engaged not only with what they do but also with their fellow employees. The real positive is that because these conditions are created by the leader's behavior, they are not some idealistic ways of thinking. **They are behaviors and behaviors that can be learned.**

These leader behaviors create the optimal conditions for organizational and personal success and the conditions for achieving high performance.

In Addition to this – '**How to build a high-performance team**' (Leggatt, 2021) expands this by touching on the importance of safe leadership as mentioned above in "third generational leadership". When someone is under threat or afraid (of their boss) they don't look after the team they tend to look after themselves. Conversely, a safe leader allows all team members to say basically what's on their minds at any time. It's as simple as that. Psychologically safe teams are significantly more productive than one's that fear getting in trouble. It's highly prudent from the bottom-line perspective to be psychologically safe. If you have team members that don't harbor grudges that are openly making suggestions and giving feedback without fear. Then the team is humming along. Lots of great conversations and work happen when people are happy.

Google (Edmondson, 2018) evaluated 180 teams over several years, it weighed numerous factors including team members' personalities, education, and skills. None of these factors explained the difference between high, average, and low-performing teams. Researchers found that purposeful work, reliable coworkers, and clear goals separated great teams from others. But by a wide margin, the biggest differentiator was psychological safety. Teams with high psychological safety may seem to make more mistakes, yet they turn out to be the most productive units. They don't make more mistakes; they just report and talk about them more. This fuels continuous improvement.

How to be a safe leader (Leggatt, 2021)_(Edmondson, 2018)

- Set the stage.
- Listen to hear and not to respond.
- Invite participation, encourage questions.
- Respond productively.
- Walk the talk.
- Talk last.
- Train for fearlessness and embrace it.
- Harness the collective intelligence of those around you before contributing your ideas. A psychologically safe leader may not share their ideas if the team comes up with better suggestions.

- Hold the team accountable with clear expectations on what each team member needs to do for success.
- Commit to increasing the skills of your team members and encourage them to rise through the ranks.
- Acknowledge a job well done and say thanks.
- Own your mistakes.
- Reward failure.

Analyzing the above literature. The influence that leadership plays in team success cannot be understated.

A leadership style refers to a leader's characteristic behaviors when directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of people. Having an understanding of the different approaches can help leaders be more effective through comprehending how and why they do what they do, as well as helping them identify where and when they need to adapt their style. They are behaviors and behaviors that can be learned and mastered. Once again this highlights the importance of recognizing your strengths and weaknesses as a leader through ongoing coaching, mentoring, and feedback sessions.

Other Important Components to High Performing Teams

As identified above leadership is a critical component to any high-performing sales team and a poor-performing team does have a high level of poor reflection on its team leader. However, in addition to leadership, many other components are critical to the performance of sales teams. If any of these are ignored, then any one of these will provide issues.

Firstly, the make-up of the sales team. Higher for the right traits (Holland, 2019) and assemble people with diverse strengths (Bradt, 2017). Both go into the importance of spending time on recruiting and hiring people with the right fit for your organization. Importantly referring to the importance of team culture (Drucker, 2015) and building a harmonized team.

Higher for the right traits (Holland, 2019)

When building a team many organizations shirk the hiring process. They take it casually and don't spend the required time and energy on getting this important step right. They hope a new hire will just get it and shine soon as they hit the ground running rather than be certain that they are in the right role and being accountable during the interview process.

They're in the need of someone now and that blinds them to signals that someone might not be the best fit for the role. That's why they don't end up with sales rockstars, and why teams can miss the mark.

Fortunately, there are ways to improve your hiring process.

When you spread the word that you're building a sales team you've probably received a ton of applications. But if you want to narrow it on the best talent you need to be able to evaluate the right personality traits. Ask yourself "Is this applicant coachable?" there are a lot of salespeople who do things based on their past sales experience-regardless of the sales process you've built out for them to follow.

Those are the types of people you might want to avoid since they likely implement techniques that may not work for your organization.

Instead look for reps who are naturally curious, humble, and willing to learn from other Peers, managers, and coaches.

Assemble people with diverse strengths (Bradt, 2017)

This starts with recruiting briefs. There are only three questions in an interview, getting at strengths, motivation, and fit. Your recruiting briefs should set up those interviews, clarifying the differentiated strengths you need for any role, the important dimensions of

motivation, and what you mean by fit. Fit is not congruence. You're assembling a team of puzzle pieces. The pieces need to fit together, but they should not be identical.

Then use the recruiting briefs to guide your interviews. Make sure you are evaluating candidates based on their ability to add to the team, not mirror the team.

Finally make sure your onboarding accommodates your new hires' needs, assimilates them into the team, and then accelerates their progress. The best new hires will converge into the team and then help it evolve. If all they do is assimilate, they don't add value.

Prompt different points of view (Bradt, 2017)

Don't expect anyone to change unless you prompt the change and then reward it. If you want people to bring their unique perspectives to bear and challenge the prevailing thinking, invite them to do so – explicitly. Following the crowd and following your lead is always the safe bet. But that's not what you want. You desperately need people to go against the grain. Invite them to do so.

Reward harmonic thinking. (Bradt, 2017)

Get the balance of consequences right. Prompting different points of view and then punishing those that dare to be different is worse than not promoting them at all. Make sure you are recognizing and rewarding those behaviors. Because it's risky, the absence of a negative consequence is not enough. Over-invest in positive reinforcement.

If you're like most, this requires a fundamental mind shift. Stop worrying about diversity by sex or race. Instead, invest your time and energy to assemble, prompt, and reward a diversity of perspectives and thinking.

Build an effective onboarding process (Holland, 2019)

It's tempting to recruit potential high-performing people and let them loose as quickly as possible. If you want to build a high-performance team you first must build and implement an effective team member onboarding process. Considering the average tenure of some team members is less than two years it's even more critical to have a repeatable effective onboarding approach.

Start by laying out a plan that highlights key responsibilities for the first six to 12 months.

Spell out your expectations. What below-par and above-par performance look like based on the accountability metrics you choose and how to work as a cohesive unit.

It's a good idea to keep an open line of communication. Help new hires feel more confident by communicating with them regularly and asking for their feedback. For example, what they think about the organization, the sales process, and the team. The most important

thing for you to do when you ask them is to listen. Not only does the dialogue allow the recruit to feel more involved, but it can also highlight potential improvements to the onboarding process. Also, don't forget to place a strong emphasis on delivering product knowledge. All good sales teams need to know the ins and outs of the product or service they are selling so they can explain its benefits and detail to prospects and customers. One way to do this is by making product information accessible as possible. Usual companies file-sharing tools to enable incoming and longtime reps alike to quickly access critical information. This also allows them to learn on their own and when they are away from the office. Lastly, make sure any apps and tools your new reps might need are already deployed before they arrive for work. Don't let your lack of preparation be a blocker for selling. This includes everything from calling software to prospecting and emailing tools to an easy use CRM.

Once your team is up and running it is important to keep building and developing your team. (Tolani, 2019)The vital components of coaching, feedback, development, and allowing your team to grow as they gain momentum. Both (Tolani, 2019)and (Hur, 2018) touch on the significance motivation and autonomy play in achieving higher effort.

Employ a robust coaching methodology (Tolani, 2019)

Roughly 75% of leading companies have said that regular coach training and monitoring are crucial for the sales team to perform well consistently (Tolani, 2019). To get a better sense of what strong sales coaching looks like here are some examples.

Reviewing a core session with a salesperson on what went wrong and coming up with areas where improvement can be done.

Conducting a weekly end meeting talks about the areas of sales where reps are less confident and then discuss strategies to boost confidence.

Ask your sales team if they are being trained and coached well and if they can use it to accelerate performance.

Arm your team with true consistent feedback (Tolani, 2019)

Few leaders give it the time it deserves, but if you want your team to get better, you must give them feedback. It will bring a great difference not only for individual team members but also for the team. Most often we think of feedback as positive or negative, but here is a new way to consider while giving employee feedback. Redirecting or reinforcing. Reinforcing feedback is when we want someone to keep doing a particular positive behavior. In other words, giving it means verbally reinforcing the positive effects of employee action. On the other hand, if we are sticking only to negative feedback that means we are only telling them to stop doing a particular action. With redirecting feedback, we are telling our team members to stop doing X and start practicing Y.

Allow some room for growth (Tolani, 2019)

Being a sales leader coming out with solutions to every problem is not very impressive, it's obsolete and wrong. To improve engagement, ask your team to come up with their solutions. For instance, you can say "Team we have scored low on this aspect what should we start doing or change to improve?" Also, don't sweat the small stuff. Be comfortable with the 10% that did not go according to the plan as it will make the 90% that went well more enjoyable for everyone around.

Share positive customer stories to instill motivation (Tolani, 2019)

Given the enormous dedication with which team members are consistently trying to get their targets/numbers up, it can sometimes feel like a vicious cycle of thankless grind.

Having a regular meeting to share positive customer stories and how the company's product is improving the lives of thousands around can go a long way and be much-needed motivation for team members.

It can help the teams to push themselves while facing new challenges when reminding them what they're doing makes some difference in the world and lives of people.

Changing employee behavior - (Hur, 2018) – builds on the importance of motivation.

Motivation gets people inspired, proactive and involved. When people are motivated to achieve and sustain a specific change, they are far more likely to succeed, as higher motivation means higher effort.

There are two types of motivation. Most managers are aware of the importance of **intrinsic motivation**, but mostly they focus on **extrinsic motivation**, such as awarding bonuses and merit increases. The latter is effective in boosting performance on those tasks that use mechanical skills. For cognitive skills, intrinsic motivation is far more effective.

Intrinsic motivation is fuelled by internal feelings – the fact we find something fulfilling or enjoyable. According to self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation includes the following three factors:

Autonomy: the sense of being in control and having a choice. When given more autonomy, people are more likely to put in sustained effort, perform better, fulfill goals, and experience enjoyment and satisfaction. To increase a sense of autonomy, managers should involve people, get the tone right and offer choices.

Mastery: the sense of being competent and relishing the challenge. People are more motivated if they feel competent, especially for complex and broad goals. Besides, challenging goals lead to higher job satisfaction and feelings of success. Reminding an

employee of their strengths is a good way to increase a sense of mastery. Positioning things as a challenge, rather than change, and appealing to their pride is also effective.

Connection: the sense of being meaningfully connected to other people and what you are doing. Having a sense of purpose leads to higher performance, enjoyment, satisfaction, and sustained dedication. Managers can boost connection by involving people – asking why it matters and what the benefits of change will be; explaining the reasons for change; and making it personal and practical.

Remember: One size does not fit all – people’s intrinsic motivation, as well as advice on increasing it, depends heavily on gender, culture, age, and career concept. The latter categorizes how people see their career path: Are they experts, or following a linear, spiral, or transitory track? Managers cannot apply the same challenges and goals to everyone to achieve optimum motivation.

Once the team is proficient and competent and is moving along its journey to high performance. – **‘6 Characteristics of a high performing sales team’** (HireDNA, 2019)

Continue the journey by pushing through to the importance of striving for improvement, increasing accountability, and managing poor performance.

Constantly striving for improvement (HireDNA, 2019)

A relentless desire to improve and get better is one of the hallmarks of a highly successful team. Never be content with previous achievements and always show a determination to exceed previous goals. The determination for improvement can be made visible through the metrics your team set each year. For example, a 10% rise in annual quotas every year. While this may seem like an aggressive tactic. It can help to push your team to achieve grander goals. On a more micro level, this translates to every team member trying to overcome their weaknesses.

Increased accountability (HireDNA, 2019)

Even though they work as a unit, a high-performance team holds every individual accountable for their performance. Every team member must be accountable for their performance. If there isn't a clear system to ensure accountability your performance can quickly decline.

Set clear realistic and actionable goals. Your team can't be held accountable for goals that are not clear.

Establish periodic check-ins. While you don't want to be overbearing, regular check-ins at both the individual and team level can let your team know that their performance is being monitored. You will also be able to act if you notice a team member's performance lagging.

Make corrective actions clear and fair. What is your plan to improve performance for a lagging team member? Your team should know what to expect if they begin to or repeatedly missed targets.

Coach and train were needed. Corrective action doesn't have to be the threat of termination. Remaining positive and providing essential coaching and training to lagging team members can help to establish a culture of improvement and success.

No space for poor performers (HireDNA, 2019)

As a manager, you need to enforce accountability for your team members to take their roles seriously. That may include some more tough decisions such as terminating continuously low-performing team members. A high-performance team is made up of overachievers who meet their goals consistently. If coaching is not helping to improve an individual's performance a performance improvement plan can be a great way to get them back on track. However, if they fail to improve beyond a certain period. They don't deserve a place in your high-performance team. Terminating a team member made be tough, but it may be necessary to keep the team on track.

As mentioned earlier it is evident that teams are highly dynamic and fluid and need constant attention from the team leader. Handling conflicts in teams is never easy. '**How to build a high-performance team**' (Leggatt, 2021). Touches on how important handling conflicts in teams is.

Handling conflicts in teams (Leggatt, 2021)

Team conflict can pose a significant threat to productivity whether it's tension caused by an ill-timed remark or professional rivalry. The best way to manage interpersonal team conflict is to uncover the root cause of the problem. Ask yourself where the stress is and what is putting them into that defensively aggressive position. The next step is to identify the stressors for each team member involved in the conflict to identify the common denominator. Then you bring everybody together and find a consensus around what the stressor is, maybe too much work for one person or a bad client and remove the issue. But if one person tends to dominate the meeting and thereby the team. I recommend a zero-tolerance approach. If it's a pattern of behavior it comes down to being honest and calling it out.

Lastly - Do not forget to have fun together (Tolani, 2019)

A high-performing team is not limited to the competency of individuals comprising it, but a spirit with collaboration is appreciated to achieve shared goals. The best teams are not willing to just work together but also enjoy and have fun together.

The bonding can happen by allowing a fun environment to prosper from time to time. The approach to creating it can be varied. Some companies do it through an annual sales kickoff event some do it by hosting sports matches in new locations, while others do it by conducting a fancy-dress day in the office. Whatever be the way the goal is to foster better relationships amongst professionals giving them space to build rapport outside their work environment.

In summarizing this section, numerous important components go into any sales team. Building a high-performing team requires more than just pulling together a group of talented people with the right skills. It requires careful development and the nurturing of key characteristics, behaviors, and best practices. As mentioned earlier in addition to leadership, many other components are critical to the performance of sales teams. If any of these are ignored, then any one of these will provide issues. The key is to be well planned and focused on the fundamentals.

The bottom line is all team dynamics are different. Teams depend on the personalities of their members as well as the leadership style of the managers. However, the ingredients for what makes a successful team are similar across the board. Having mutual respect, common aligned goals, open communication, and patience can help make for a successful team.

Findings and Discussion

In answering this research question, '**Why do sales teams succeed or fail**' it has become apparent that building a high-performing sales team is incredibly challenging. Human beings in their very nature are imperfect with flaws, egos, insecurities, ambitions, baggage, distractions, personalities, and grudges that all make teams highly dynamic and fluid. These imperfections make humans vulnerable to what causes teams to become dysfunctional. (Lencioni, 2020)

Leadership was seen as the most essential factor to team success throughout this literature review and everything starts with leadership. (Nickol, 2000) Effective leaders provide clarity of purpose, motivate, and guide the organization to realize its mission. **"But teams rarely fail, leadership usually fails teams"** (Nickol, 2000).

Thus, what makes the best leaders?

Leaders can dramatically influence follower motivation through their behaviors and style of leadership. Leadership styles were seen as a critical component depending on what type of team you are leading. A blend of **'transformational and democratic'** leadership (Bass, 2009) (Lewin, 1939) was seen as the most effective combination in leading high-performing teams. It contains the right mix that inspires and motivates followers for positive outcomes. These leaders tend to be emotionally intelligent, energetic, and passionate. They are not only committed to helping the organization achieve its goals, but also to helping group members fulfill their potential.

Moving towards **'Third generation leadership'** (Long, 2013) culture in which people engage with each other, **feel emotionally safe**, listen to, and feel respected, was seen as crucial for people to be engaged not only with what they do but also with their fellow employees. The real positive is that because these conditions are created by the leader's behavior, they are not some idealistic ways of thinking. They are behaviors and behaviors that can be learned. These leader behaviors create the **optimal conditions** for organizational and personal success and the conditions for achieving high performance.

Collectively organizations and leaders need to continuously bridge this gap and look for continuous improvement to ensure their organizations are performing where they need to be. **The consequences of poor leadership** will dramatically undermine the performance of any organization. All company leaders need to pay attention to its leadership strength within their organization and invest regularly in their people. Investing in leadership development sends a message to your people that you care about them and inspire them to meet and exceed performance expectations.

For a team to be truly effective, its members must unite with the same vision and be motivated to bring that vision to life **"Creating the unified why"** (Rosen, 2018). But putting the pieces together from scratch or the moment of inception needs plenty of careful consideration and patience. (Holland, 2019) High-performing teams revolve around and depend on the behavior of people and the culture they bring. **"Culture eats Strategy for breakfast"** is a famous quote by Peter Drucker (Drucker, 2015). This implies that the culture of your company always determines success regardless of how effective your strategy may be. The efficacy of your strategy will be held back by members of your team if they don't share the proper culture or vision. When it comes down to it, the people implementing the plan are the ones that make all the difference.

People who are motivated to do their part will certainly get things heading in the right direction. Establishing a strong foundation and building great team chemistry based on team members' drive and motivation and who can adapt to the job is a great first step. Don't worry about speed and instant perfection. Focusing on the fundamentals allows you to modify and shift the direction as you gain momentum.

Team dynamics in the workplace are important because they impact creativity, productivity, and effectiveness (Bradt, 2017). The ability to understand and improve team dynamics will lead to better work outcomes. The contrasts between **Unified and Harmonized** teams are

fascinating. Members of a unified team put aside their differences to work together as one are reliable and predictable. In contrast to that, harmonized teams value differences. Their working relationships are messy and unpredictable. That messiness makes them more likely to be open to changes in their environment and be better able to adapt. Therefore, you should assemble people with diverse strengths, prompt different points of view, and reward harmonic thinking over unity. **There is a fundamental belief that team unity is to be desired. It's not. It is to be avoided** (Bradt, 2017).

Signs that your team is showing positive dynamics include respectful debates even when people heavily disagree. Productive meetings where team members leave feeling invigorated and have a list of clear goals and takeaways, and where team members are fully aware of how their behaviors impact others. A team with positive group dynamics tends to have team members who trust each other (Bradt, 2017). They can work towards collective decisions, and they are held accountable for outcomes. A team with excellent group dynamics may be constructive and productive, and it may demonstrate mutual understanding and self-corrective behavior (Bradt, 2017). Open communication, empowerment, clear roles and responsibilities, goal clarity, effective leadership, and reward are all traits of a high-performance team.

Every organization should do its best to enable effective leadership (Tolani, 2019). Good leaders need a good support system for them to function well and maximize their potential. **The benefits of leadership training** for all employees are far-reaching. Improved individual performance and personal responsibility. Leadership training provides feedback and insights on the positive and negative aspects of a leader's actions and styles. Excellent training programs ensure those strengths are explored and mastered.

High-performing teams are **highly dynamic and fluid and need constant attention** (Tolani, 2019) (Bradt, 2017). On-going coaching and mentoring of teams and individuals are a vital part of the success of sales teams. Coaching and mentoring are development approaches based on the use of one-to-one conversations to enhance an individual's skill, knowledge, or work performance. **Why is this important?** Coaching and mentoring an employee makes them more valuable to your organization by developing and enhancing their skills- both professionally and personally. By being interested in the growth of your staff, you're showing them that you care about their progress, and this can and will increase their loyalty to you. Coaching and mentoring must be ongoing. This ensures regular interactions between employees and their leaders. They get to know each other better on both a professional and personal basis, which helps establish strong bonds, this helps improve camaraderie and reinforces company culture.

Conclusions

High-performing teams are the backbone of business success. In the modern knowledge economy, productivity often involves working with people from different backgrounds, skillsets, and industries. One mind alone cannot generate solutions to the kinds of large-scale problems companies have to overcome to succeed in today's world or whatever the future may look like.

This project aimed to break down the barriers and help create an understanding of **“Why do sales teams succeed or fail”**. And how organizations can unearth problems and enable their teams to discover the solution to high performance.

What has echoed through the literature review is that there are four fundamental elements to why teams either succeed or fail.

1. **Leadership - What style of leader you are and the environment and culture you create from the characteristics of your behavior when leading teams.** Recognizing that your influence and skills as a leader have a direct impact on influencing your team. Developing and enhancing your leadership skills will lead to a corresponding improvement in your team's performance. Collectively organizations and leaders need to continuously bridge this gap and look for continuous improvement to ensure their organizations are performing where they need to be.
2. **How culture always determines success regardless of how effective your strategy may be and the importance of taking the time needed to build a strong foundation at the inception of any sales team.** Building a great workplace starts from the ground up. What has been recognized through this literature review is the importance of an organization to build a strong foundation. Organizations that have a set of shared values, goals, attitudes have a strong foundation to build from. It's the way people feel about the work they do, the values they believe in, where they see the company going and what they're doing to get it there. Successful teams will be those that have staff who loved to come to work, are passionate about their roles, and believe that what they are doing is making a difference.
3. **Team dynamics, the makeup of skills, knowledge, diversity, and whether the team is unified or harmonized.** When teams work together smoothly, they harness the power of diversity and can come up with ideas an individual might struggle to come up with alone. The power of diverse opinions, knowledge, open communication, respectful debates, allows high-performing teams the ability for them to be open to changes in their environment and be better able to adapt to any future crisis or

challenges. Teams that work together also tend to work faster because they can draw upon a wider range of opinions, skills, and experiences, whether they're making decisions or putting together plans. When an entire team is working on a project, that project will move from the design phase into the implementation phase more efficiently — even with fewer resources. When teams brainstorm, they're more likely to come up with creative solutions to existing problems (and to anticipate future ones).

4. **And finally, the ongoing coaching and mentoring required to keep the team functioning at a high level.** The consequences of poor leadership will dramatically undermine the performance of any organization. Leadership training is always ongoing and is never finished. Excellent training programs will continually help bridge the gap and ensure strengths are explored and mastered. Organizations that include mentoring and coaching can boost employee morale and transform your company from a workplace to a great place to work.

The most successful companies think regularly about how to improve teamwork in the workplace because they know they'll see a return on their investment. They actively work to create the kinds of conditions that promote collaboration. **They also understand the consequences of poor leadership and teamwork** will severely challenge the execution of any organization. All company leaders need to pay attention to its leadership strength within their organization and invest regularly in their people. Investing in leadership development sends a message to your people that you care about them and inspire them to meet and exceed performance expectations.

High-performing sales teams can achieve things that individuals can't. They can use the knowledge and skills of all team members to arrive at a solution. Being part of a high-performance team generates ownership and commitment. It is a highly motivating experience for people who work in high-performance teams. They are more likely to be engaged with their organization, as a result, they are more likely to go the extra mile for their customer and the benefit of the business.

Recommendations.

The journey to high-performing sales teams can begin by following the 6 main key recommendations that follow. Organizations that follow this strategy will create the fundamental environment that will improve the standard of their team performance with a high chance of success.

1. Leadership training and continuous mentoring – This must be ongoing. Great leaders attract, hire, and inspire great people. Leadership development boosts employee engagement increases the organization's ability to deal with gaps in the talent pipeline, and reduces the headaches and costs associated with turnover. Creating a mentor program that pairs new team members with company veterans promotes cohesiveness and smoother collaboration. Team members will work together more effectively when they feel connected.

Numerous providers in New Zealand will engage with your company in all levels of leadership training whether it be basic to executive level. Be sure to carefully select an organization that reflects your organization's culture and values. So, how do you choose a leadership training program, system, and provider?

Below is a checklist for what to look for when selecting a leadership development resource for your organization.

- Provides support and development opportunities beyond a single, transactional event. Sustainability comes from steady progress over time.
- Supports skill learning with a coaching component. 1:1 and group coaching allow training attendees to get targeted advice and accountability for applying their training in their day-to-day work situations.
- Supports learning with a variety of reinforcements. Does the training include tools to help the participant reference and practice what they learned long after the training has ended? Are there supplemental learning tools like an app, videos, e-Learning, or workbooks?
- Equips leaders with a process for ongoing employee coaching. One of the challenges of managing people is maintaining a consistent practice of coaching not just for when things go wrong, but for the growth of the employee as well.
- Supports your business initiatives and metrics. This is especially important to consider when choosing an off-the-shelf training solution.
- Offer skills and tools that are applicable on the job. Team-building exercises can help build rapport among teams, yet don't translate into practical leadership skills.

Look for training that focuses on pragmatic skills that can be applied on the job, such as how to handle conflict in the workplace.

- Supports leaders across multiple locations with remote-learning options and technologies. Consider whether there are options for absent participants to make up any training they might miss.
- Equips all leaders at all levels with common language, skill, and approach. This supports building a leadership culture versus a collection of trained leaders. Leaders need to be coached from a common toolbox, or the tools sit idle.

2. Have a clear organizational purpose - An organization's values lay the foundation for what the company cares about most. It provides a common purpose that all employees should understand, work towards, and should create a unified why. Once you define and promote your values, employees come to understand the behaviors that are expected of them that will lead to success. For values to drive purpose and give employees a clearly defined direction, values need to be communicated effectively. It's all about raising awareness, building an understanding, and consistently reminding employees what your business is and what they should stand for. Here are some useful ways to communicate your values effectively:

Organize an event

- Whether you've already established your values and want to raise awareness or are introducing them, an event is a great way of bringing your values to life and solidifying their importance across your business.
- Events are effective platforms for communication because they bring people together and allow them to ask questions, engage in discussions, and get clear information. Organizing an occasion dedicated to your values, gives you, as a business, the chance to provide some context and explain how they represent your employees' purpose, while also allowing your employees to gain an understanding of how the values fit into their roles. Events are memorable too, whether they're company-wide or smaller scale, so your employees will be more likely to internalize what they learn.
- To be fully on board and engaged with your values, your employees need to be fully informed. Creating an event that introduces your values and explains the bigger picture behind them in a social, fun, and relaxed setting is a great way of reinforcing the unified sense of purpose your values represent.

Have visual reminders

- Consistent communication about your values is key to ensuring that your employees are aware of them and integrating them into their daily lives at work. Having visual reminders of your values throughout your workplace will subtly reinforce your employees' sense of collective purpose to build a stronger and more unified culture.

- While this communication method isn't as direct as sending an email, for example, having your values physically displayed in your work environment makes them feel like they're a concrete element of your culture. They also act as little reminders for your employees as they're going about their daily tasks to reinforce the expectations you have of them.
- You could have office graphics, notice board displays or device screensavers, any kind of visual representation of your values that remind your employees of your culture and purpose every day. When employees see their values regularly, they'll be more likely to think about them when they're doing their jobs. With many employees working remotely now, think about how you can display your values virtually. Your internal hub is a good place to start.

Lead by example

- Another effective way of communicating your values is for your leadership team to lead by example. Part of this is about making sure that leaders are regularly talking about their values with their teams and relating them to specific activities and tasks to emphasize their relevance and importance. At the same time, it's about ensuring that your leadership team are true champions of your values and living and breathing them every day in their roles.
- Actions speak louder than words, especially in this context because your employees learn from leadership and will be likely to emulate their behavior. It's down to your leadership team to get involved in your business' efforts to integrate your values into your culture and be accountable for ensuring employees are informed and onboard. When employees see members of your leadership team honoring your values, it upholds your business' integrity too which contributes to building a strong and engaged culture.

Align values to reward & recognition

- Building your reward and recognition scheme around your organization's values will further tie them to your culture, making them an everyday part of your employees' lives at work thus guiding their behavior and performance.
- Rewarding and recognizing employees that embody your values is a great way of communicating their importance across your business. Within a reward and recognition platform, employees can attribute the "thank you" messages they send to values, which means that everyone in the business can see how other employees are demonstrating them in their everyday efforts. This visibility reinforces employees' sense of purpose and it's immediately more compelling for employees to think about the values and use them as guidance in their jobs.
- Your organization's values are effectively the pillars of your culture and represent the ethos, behaviors and purpose your employees should reflect. Communication plays a key role in driving your employees' awareness, understanding, and engagement with your values, but it's about far more than sending reminder emails. To embed your values into your culture and ensure your employees embrace them

fully, you need to integrate them into various elements of your business, so they become part of every day.

- 3. Build an effective onboarding process and hire wisely** - Make new employees feel welcome. Ensure that newcomers know the organization (structure, vision, mission, goals, key developments, culture) and identify with it. Allow new employees to feel welcome, build and promote valuable relationships with colleagues and managers, and feel part of the organization. For a team to be truly effective, its members must unite with the same vision and be motivated to bring that vision to life. But putting the pieces together from scratch or the moment of inception needs plenty of careful consideration and patience.

Start by establishing a strong foundation and adding to it brick by brick. Don't worry about speed and instant perfection. Focusing on the fundamentals allows you to modify and shift the direction as you gain momentum.

Before jumping ahead, start by answering a few questions to create the outline for your new team:

- How many people do you need?
- What will they do? What role will they play?
- What skills and experience do you need to hire?
- How will you get these people?
- How will the team be structured?
- How will success be measured?

Remember the power of diversity when assembling your team and take advantage of those different strengths in experience and thinking.

Lastly, hiring is among the most important and strategic decisions leaders will ever make. Why? Ultimately, the people you employ to do the work will make all the difference in the results you achieve. Avoid quick hires simply based on credentials – just because they have a good resume doesn't mean they'll stay. Instead, surround yourself with the right talent. Take the time to make sure the people you bring on to the team are interested and enthusiastic about being part of the organization and seeing it succeed. And remember – you can never get rid of bad hires fast enough.

- 4. Involve leaders in corporate communications and decisions** - Leadership is a crucial driver of teamwork. For teams to work effectively, objectives need to be clearly defined. Competing projects and responsibilities pull most team members in different directions. It's up to leaders to set the bigger picture so they can set priorities. Ensure all levels of leadership are involved in internal communication planning so employees at all levels can understand the overarching company goal towards which they're working. Make communication a two-way street. Teamwork only works when team members feel like they can speak openly, share ideas without getting shot down (and build on those of

others), make suggestions, and voice their opinions. Make sure communication isn't just flowing downward, but also upward and between team members. Multi-way communication is the goal.

5. **Constantly strive for improvement** - A relentless desire to improve and get better is one of the hallmarks of a highly successful sales team. Never be content with previous achievements and always show a determination to exceed previous goals. A high-performance sales team holds every individual accountable for their performance. Every team member must be accountable for their performance. If there isn't a clear system to ensure accountability your performance can quickly decline.
6. **Get out of their way and stop micromanaging.** - Every employee or team member works best when they are given an environment where they are allowed to do things 'their way'. Most employees tend to lose interest as soon as they are being micro-managed by their bosses or managers. Define their job responsibilities and your expectations clearly to them. Now, get out of their way and let them work on their own. At the same time, be approachable so that if someone in your team has a question, they don't need to think twice to clarify their doubts. Always trust your team with utmost confidence. This further strengthens their confidence in themselves which helps them to perform with their best abilities. The best leaders in the business understand the power of ownership. When you make a team member accountable for their work, this induces a sense of responsibility in them regarding their work. They start to see their work differently in a way that their decisions can impact the performance of the entire team. It shows that you've entrusted them and their capabilities to handle a specific job. And when you do this, you realize that there is nothing more powerful than building someone's self-esteem in your organization.

Limitations

As with most studies, the design of this research is subject to limitations. Though I have touched on the importance of including diversity in team environments to bring different opinions and experiences to create a robust discussion to help solve problems. This research paper doesn't go into the detail and potential issues of diversity and more importantly cultural, ethnic, and religious beliefs when creating teams, especially when working across multi-national team environments. Challenges in working in diverse environments can bring **communication issues, cultural misunderstandings, slower decision-making, inequitable inclusion, and discrimination**. Due to time, this wasn't included in this study.

Secondly, in this current world of pandemics and uncertainty. Zoom and Microsoft teams calls have become a way of life for many businesses. Working remotely and away from face-to-face meetings does bring complexity and challenges when working in a virtual team environment.

Virtual teams have several potentially beneficial aspects that aid productivity. But there are certain challenges such as **lack of trust, cohesion, and conflict** that add to the difficulty in

working in such virtual teams. There has been related work done on the challenges and barriers of virtual teams but wasn't included in the scope for this research paper.

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Appendix A

Figure 1

Thematic analysis- Codes generated

Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Trust•Purpose•Influence•Safe•Transformational•Democratic•Motivate•Respect•Listens•Clarity•Communication•Authentic•Empathetic•Inclusive•Collaborative•Creative•Leadership Style	Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Purpose•Communication•Accountability•Conflict•Commitment•Trust•Unified Why•Emotionally connected•Vision•Values•Poor performance	Team Dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Diversity•Experience•Different opinions•Harmonized•Perspective•Creative•Problem solving
Onboarding <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Training•Welcoming•Tools•Hiring	Autonomy <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Micro Managing•Empowerment•Motivation•Mastery•Decision making	Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Constant•Feedback•Reinforcing•Growth•Realistic•Accountable•Coaching•Mentoring•Corrective

Appendix B

Figure 2

Thematic analysis

Why do sales teams succeed or fail?

Key Themes identified

