

TOPIC 2: TOOLS FOR DEVELOPING PERFORMANCE TEAMS



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IN THIS ARTICLE WE WILL OUTLINE A KEY TOOL THAT WE HAVE USED WITH TRANSFORM SUPPORTED ENTERPRISES TO HELP THEIR LEADERS SET CLEAR GOALS FOR THEIR ORGANISATIONS AND TEAMS, AS WELL AS MANAGE THEIR ACHIEVEMENT - THE MASTER PLAN.



CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS

Having carefully developed your business plan, selected, and briefed your Senior Leadership Team (SLT) how do you now get the best from them?

Each member will perform an essential role in executing the chosen business strategy, bringing differing skills and personalities to the mix. The challenge is to get them functioning at a high level, both individually and as a team. Success in today's complex, fast moving and specialised business environment, demands that the diverse skills of the senior leadership team come together in just the right way, at just the right time.

This means that no single business function (or person within a function) can operate successfully in isolation. Success requires people with differing skills, backgrounds, and personalities to work together as a cohesive unit to quickly achieve common objectives.

Whilst every team is different, there are common characteristics shared by high-performance teams. As a collective they strive for excellence via clearly defined goals and with each member allocated a clear role & responsibilities, they deploy shared leadership, based on the requirements of situation rather than simple hierarchy. They also share a culture built around open communications, mutual trust, and early resolution of conflict.



CREATING AND LEADING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS

Unsurprisingly, successful teams do not just happen overnight. It takes effort, focus, and consistency to create the culture and discipline necessary for them to thrive.

Success hinges on the performance of team leaders: it is their responsibility to set an example and create the working environment that gets the best from their team.

This means having:

- A well-formed business plan with defined goals and execution strategy.
- Realistic expectations about the key challenges faced, their potential to impact on success and how when they need to be tackled.
- Objective ways of measuring success and progress.
- Clear roles and delegated responsibilities.
- A collegiate attitude (meaning to, 'I may be your leader but I'm also your colleague and I value your expertise and rely on your contribution').
- An encouraging approach to creative thinking and stretch; seeing shortfalls and failure as opportunities to learn and improve, rather than apportion blame.

Developing high-performance teams across an enterprise depends on the culture adopted by the SLT and demonstrated by it daily. It must be actions led by credible 'do as I do' behaviours, rather than 'do as I say.'

Any disconnect between the words from the SLT and its behaviour will be seen as disingenuous by the organisation and contribute to masked behaviour and politics across it.

Successful teams do occur in adverse corporate cultures, but they are rare; and even more rarely do they last for long, as the surrounding environment starves them of the oxygen they need to thrive. However, once such a culture is established, it quickly ripples through the organisation and becomes embedded.

Small is beautiful when it comes to high performing teams: too many people creates challenges in coordination, increased tension and reduced productivity. In my experience, six to eight people is the top end of what works.

I recommend a maximum of six in the core team – although others with specialist skills may be brought in to collaborate for specific tasks or purposes.



TOOLS FOR BUILDING PURPOSE AND COHESION IN YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Whilst leading business transformation programmes for leadership teams of social enterprises across the globe, I have found I get the best results by keeping tools and systems as simple as possible. I have therefore developed a simple planning and execution tool to build what I refer to as the 'Master Plan.' Master Plans typically look forward 6-12 months and have three main components, which are best tackled in sequence, first by the CEO and then by each member of the leadership teams under the guidance and supervision of the CEO.

01 KEY BUSINESS CHALLENGES AND GOALS

The first step is to define the 3-5 key business challenges facing the enterprise in executing its business plan over the next year, and the goals that need to be achieved to overcome them (and in which order they need to be achieved). In my view, this is the most important part of the process and should not be rushed. The objective is to analyse the key success outcomes to be achieved and the challenges they bring to the enterprise.

Example of a subset of Challenges and Goals:

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	H
2	Priorit	Challenges	Resp.	SMART Goals / outcomes	When - by date	Status	Comments
4		Cash Collection					
5	1	High number of inactive and debt stressed customers (10%) = loss of revenue (circa \$60k+ pa)	RS	Decrease inactive/suspended customers to >4% by end of year	>8% by EO Q1; >6% by EO Q2; >5% by EO Q3 >4% by EO Q4	Q1 result 7.5%	On track
6	1			Increase on-time payment to 85%+ by end of year	70% by EO Q1; - 80% by EO Q2, 65% by EO Q3; 85% for Q4	Q1 result 69%	Close: Q2 MoMo promo will assist
7	2			Increase Mobile money payment to 100% by end of year	<80% for Q1 - <85% for Q2 <90% for Q3 - <95% for Q4	Q1 result 76.5%	Existing customer MoMo Promo for Q2, new customers on track
9	2	On-boarding of new customers needs improving as its producing too many late payments	RS	New customer payments to be 100-% mobile money and >95% on time by end of Q2	EO Q2	Q1 result 95%	Campaign successful over 1 qtr
12		Marketing Programs					
13	1	Marketing programme ineffective in generating sufficient volume of prospect leads to reach sales growth target	RS/DD	>5500 prospects be generated by EOY to reach sales growth target	500+ in Q1, 1500+ for Q2 - 3000+ in Q3 - 1250+ in Q4	Q1 result 623	Numbers distorted by customer referral promo. Main main campaign starting in Q2
14	2			Increase number of prospects reached through each sales channel: 50% from Door-to-door, 20% retail, 20% community campaigns, 10% referrals	By EO Q2	No data from Q1	Results to be monitored fro Q2 campaign
15	3			Improve social media outreach to increase leads generated through social media to 5%	By EO Q4		Start delayed to mid Q2 due to other higher priorities

I have built this process around the development of SMART operational goals. The acronym 'SMART' helps you to define your goals by reminding you that they should be:

S SPECIFIC

Be specific about what you want to accomplish, and the outcome sought. This is not a list of how you are going to meet a goal. It should define what you are planning to accomplish, who needs to be involved in achieving it, and when it needs to be achieved.

M MEASURABLE

The principle here is that if you cannot measure it, then it is not a real goal. So, what metrics are you going to use to determine if you meet the goal?

For example: if one of the key challenges in your enterprise is high customer churn (when customers leave your business) and you make it a business imperative to reduce it, then you need to clearly define your starting point and where you are targeting it to be at the end of a specific period. So perhaps you start at 4% per month and target through your plan to reach 1% per month by (say) the end of the year. However, it is not going to happen immediately and so you will need to a transition path of improvement to the intended goal – for example a 1% per month improvement each quarter.

It is for this reason that goals are linked directly to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that enable progress to be regularly monitored (daily, weekly, monthly etc) and appropriate action taken. For example: in the goal above your KPI for this might be 3% in Q1, 2% in Q2 1.5% in Q3 and 1% in Q4.

A ACHIEVABLE

It is important to ensure that the goals set be both challenging and achievable, if they are to be motivational and engage participation. Unrealistic goals discourage, rather than encourage, high performance.

R RELEVANT

Relevance implies focusing on something that makes sense within the broader business goals and priorities of the business. For example, if the goal is to launch a new product, it should be something that aligns with the overall business objectives. You may be able to launch a new consumer product, but if your company is set up to serve other businesses (B2B) with no consumer market expertise, then the goal is unlikely to be relevant.

T TIMELY

Anyone can set goals, but if they lack realistic timing the chances are they are unlikely to be achieved as required. Providing realistic target dates for goals is therefore an imperative. Ask specific questions about the goal deadline and what can be accomplished within the time allocated. If the goal will take months to complete, then it may be useful to define what should be achieved at various stages of the process. Providing time constraints also creates a sense of urgency.

Once the challenges and goals are clearly defined using the **SMART** principles outlined above, you are ready to move onto the next stage, the key actions.

02

MASTER PLAN - KEY ACTIONS

In the next step, the goals and challenges from the first step are divided into work streams and key actions. Each action is assigned to the appropriate member of the SLT, along with its priority level and clear deadlines.

This process is then repeated for each goal and key action until they are all assigned across the SLT. Only actions linked directly to the Goals and Challenges established in Step One, are to be included in the Master Plan, as the objective here is to focus the team's attention and work plan on the agreed priorities of the business.

Example of a Subset of a Master Plan:

Challenge	Work stream	Tasks/Actions	Priority	Timing	Result	Assign
Cash Collection	Decrease inactive/suspended customers to >4% by end of year	Report on customer debt & action by 25th of each month (latest)	1	Jan 31st	In place	RS
		Unallocated payments tracked and resolved with accounts daily	1	Jan 31st	Implemented	RS/AR
		Analysis of current debt and implement collection programme (separating service related disputes)	1	Feb 5th	Done	RS
		Weekly chase up program (sms, calls and visits) with detailed status reporting	1	Feb 28th	Implemented	DD/CSM/CR /
		Payment training for all customers & report sheet	2	Mar-31st	35% complete	RA/CSM
	New customer payments to be 100-% mobile money and >95% on time by end of Q2	Follow-up on suspension fees to encourage on time payments and recover outstanding debt	2	Mar-31st	on-time	RS
		Implement e-payment loyalty benefits program with minimum 4 months on-time initial qualification (combine with Hygiene benefits promo)	2	Mar-1st	Programme started, complete by mid April	RA/CSM
		Update training book and e-payments guide held by customer (inc with Hygiene training)	1	Mar-31st	Completed	RA/CSM
		Staff training on new payments guidance, customer training and follow up procedures	1	March 30th		RA/CSM

The development of the Master Plan is a collaborative process that will bring the SLT together and start everyone off on the same page. This will minimise the confusion over responsibilities, which can create delay and/or team politics. It is, therefore, always good to encourage feedback, as it is likely that something important may get overlooked during the planning process, or that colleagues may harbour doubts or concerns. **The earlier these kinds of issues are raised and dealt with, the better.** It is also important for the team to understand and accept that this exercise is not about individuals being 100% right, it is more about the plan being 100% complete and owned by the team. Importantly, if individuals accept advice and adjust their plan accordingly, it sets the tone for an open, collaborative team dynamic: this is especially so if it involves the CEO.

When the CEO's Master Plan is ready, the SLT should be briefed as a collective so that everyone hears the same message and the same priorities. With the group fully briefed, each SLT member is then individually briefed in detail by the CEO regarding their part in the overall Master Plan for the enterprise and are then set the task of building their own personal Master Plan for the department/function they are responsible for. This follows the process outlined above and is an iterative activity taking up to a couple of weeks, during which time it is important that reviews are held every few days to review progress and avoid strong positions being developed on the wrong issues, which can create conflict and/or cause thinking to go down 'rabbit holes.'

Once the CEO has approved a Master Plan, progress should be reviewed **monthly**.

03 SPRINTS

With the business challenges and goals agreed and the key actions laid down, it is time to address the detailed execution of the Master Plan on a week-by-week basis. This is where Sprints come to the fore; they are where the 'rubber meets the road' in terms of the immediately executable actions necessary to get the job done.

Sprints are agreed between the CEO and individual SLT executives at the beginning of each month, based on their Master Plan priorities and deliverables. Each sprint lasts for two weeks, so there are two sprints in each month. There should be a progress update after Sprint 1 (mid-month), and a full review of results in line with the actions agreed in the master plan at the end of the month. The SLT members should each set sprints for the teams they manage to help them deliver the work and follow up with their teams on a daily or weekly basis, depending on the action.

Example of a Sprint:

Work stream	Tasks/Actions	Priority	Timing	Result	Assign	Observation
Collect 100% of debt >Month+ 1	Complete analysis of current customer debt (separating service and Covid debt issues)	1	February 15th	Complete	CSM	only 90% by deadline but 100% complete by end of month
	Review and Implement Clear weekly chase up program with detailed reporting status for calls and visits to customer in the debt list	1	February 15th	Complete	DD -CSM	
All new customers pay via MoMo	Test new kiosk operator in the 5 service areas:	1	February 12th	60%	CSM	Difficulty reaching selection criteria
Improved payment education and training plan implemented (and well managed)	Update of the training book for customers	1	February 15th	Complete	DD -CSM	
	Implement improved SMS payment reminder messages	2	February 10th	Complete	DD -CSM	
Hire new CSM	Clear role and responsibilities	1	February 2nd	Complete	RA - AA	
	Release job advertisement	1	February 3rd	Complete	RA	
	Interview and selection of preferred candidate	1	February 11th	Complete	RA - AA	
CRM used 100% for all client contact activities, inc. customer cash collections	Candidate acceptance	1	February 15th	Pending		Awaiting confirmation and start date
	Create system account for new CRM	2	February 15th	Complete	RA - AR	
Increase lead conversion rate to 5:1 (20%)	Develop and formalize lead follow-up process	2	February 15th	80%	RS - CSM	Timetable too aggressive, will be 100% by March 5
	Synchronise new process with CRM	2	February 15th	Pending	RS	Timing reset to March 6th
	Update sales manual based of lessons learnt and insights from marketing agency	1	February 15th	Complete	RS	

Sprints not only provide a useful means of alignment between the CEO and their SLT, they are also an extremely effective communication, delegation and management tool for the SLT team members to use with their direct reports, they keep everyone focused on executing the same business priorities.

Sprints are therefore a vital execution management tool, as when well implemented they help manage daily the detailed activities that cascade up to deliver the **SMART** goals you have set for the enterprise. This ensures that everyone across the organisation is prioritising working on the important tasks (rather than simply reacting to the urgent daily issues all businesses get flooded with) and that any slippage or other problems in the execution of them are identified and dealt with quickly.

06 MANAGEMENT DISCIPLINE

Each component part of a Master Plan must be executed with diligence and consistency by each member of the SLT - both collectively and individually.

A major cause of failure with Master Plans is lack of executive discipline and instilling this is a fundamental responsibility of the CEO. It is not enough to simply conduct the exercise once and have it sit in a computer folder never to be looked at again. It needs to become a key performance management tool, used in monthly Master Plan progress reviews which utilise Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and bi-monthly Sprint meetings.

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WE DEFINED THE CHALLENGES WE WERE GOING TO FACE OVER THE NEXT YEAR AND THEN ALLOCATED THE SMART OUTCOMES TO SOLVE EACH CHALLENGES, WE THEN DEFINED KPI'S TO HELP IDENTIFY WHEN EACH CHALLENGE HAD BEEN TACKLED

**- ANSELME ANDRIAMAHAVITA,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, LOOWATT SARL,
MADAGASCAR**



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AS A BUSINESS, WE ALWAYS HAVE TOO MUCH TO DO, AND WE USED TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME JUMPING FROM TASK TO TASK. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SPRINT ALLOWED US TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC THINGS AND ACTIONS TO FOCUS ON FOR THE NEXT TWO WEEKS AND ALLOWED US THE TIME AND FOCUS TO FINISH THINGS. IT MADE LIFE EASIER, AND WE ARE STILL USING IT TODAY.

**- NICHOLAS KURIA, GENERAL MANAGER,
PIT VIDURA, RWANDA**

05 SUMMARY

In implementing a Master Plan, it is the CEO's responsibility to ensure that they:



Create and maintain the right team culture/mentality from the outset



Clearly communicate goals and expectations



Adopt an inclusive (collegiate) style of leadership by encouraging input and advice, treating objections as interest and engagement to be worked through



Hold regular, open communications with the SLT and the organisation in general



Encourage accountability, and treat errors as opportunities to learn and improve



Enforce discipline, and hold teams accountable for meeting deadlines



Deal with any conflict as quickly and objectively as possible



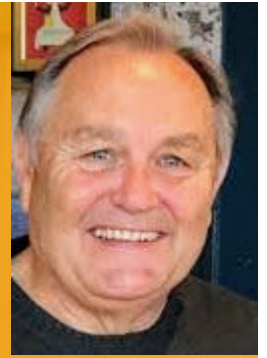
Have fun breaking new ground for the enterprise





Note about the author:

With over 35 years of C level experience, Peter has been responsible for leading performance transformation across a wide range of small to medium sized commercial enterprises, primarily in the IT&T and services sectors.



Since 2016 he has focused his attention on sustainability in the WASH sector: first developing a suitable business model and local management team at Clean Team Ghana - then an NGO owned home container base sanitation (CBS) service in Ghana's second city Kumasi - and subsequently helping successfully adapt the model to other home sanitation businesses in Peru, Haiti, Rwanda, Madagascar and most recently, the Philippines.

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