



## A Team of Leaders

### Empowering Every Member to Take Ownership, Demonstrate Initiative and Deliver Results

#### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

No matter how many good people you gather, most workplace teams settle into the same old rut. Once the initial enthusiasm dissipates, they become little more than order takers, satisfied with so-so results.

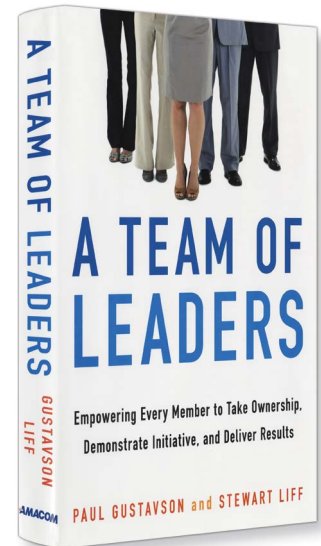
*A Team of Leaders* offers a completely new way to approach the team experience and an empowering formula for improving performance. At the core of the team dilemma is a little-known truth: It's not the people who need to change but the design of the team that needs an overhaul.

By improving the core design components — the systems, the processes, knowledge, management and visual management — you'll get far better results. Unmotivated teams will be transformed into energized groups of employees who take responsibility for long-term outcomes.

It all starts with the Five-Stage Team Development Model, which outlines a distinct set of characteristics that teams exhibit as they move from traditional Stage 1, leader-directed teams to self-managed Stage 5 teams full of knowledgeable people who think and act like leaders. *A Team of Leaders* supplies the tools, processes, and principles for putting them on this path to reinvention.

#### IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- To recognize the importance of choosing the right team structure, information systems and people systems.
- How to design integrated processes that support leadership growth.
- To adapt a value creation tool that pinpoints the contribution each team member makes and highlights the urgency of everyone pulling together.
- How to capture and quickly disseminate the key knowledge that teams need to become effective, self-managing units.



by Paul Gustavson  
and Stewart Liff

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# THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: A TEAM OF LEADERS

by Paul Gustavson and Stewart Liff

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Stewart Liff is an HR and visual management expert and the president and CEO of the consulting company Stewart Liff & Associates. During his career with the Department of Veterans Affairs, his office was selected for Vice President Al Gore's first Hammer Award for Reinventing Government because it successfully used the principles described in this book. He is the author of five books, including *Managing Government Employees* and *Managing Your Government Career*.

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## Introduction

How do you create an environment that successfully addresses the many challenges that supervisors and employees deal with while producing outstanding performance? The answer is simple: you have to create an environment where everyone is a leader. That is, an environment where everyone works together, takes the initiative, assumes ownership, is willing to deal with difficult issues, and accepts accountability for the team's results; an environment that is in stark contrast with one in which the supervisor tries to get everyone to produce.

This is a fundamental change in the way that most work entities operate. However, such a workplace design will produce better performance and make your work life much more exciting, enjoyable and fulfilling.

The model we recommend using to build a team of leaders is the Five-Stage Team Development Model. This model identifies the five distinct stages of team development. At Stage One (the way most units/teams work today), the team leader interacts with each team member one-on-one. The model goes on to describe how your team can evolve and grow in varying stages all the way up to Stage Five. This is the stage where the team essentially manages itself, everyone becomes a leader, and the supervisor's time is freed up to work in other areas that create more value.

Imagine being the leader of a team that is at Stage Five. Under this scenario, you would advise the team as

needed but spend most of your time working on higher, cross-functional and outside issues. Many of the problems that you typically deal with would now be handled by the team itself, freeing you up to work at a broader level.

If you are a team member, imagine what it would be like to be part of a team of leaders at Stage Five. You would be a valued member of a team that manages itself. Instead of having someone standing over you cracking the whip, you would now be part of a cohesive team wherein everyone holds each other accountable.

## An Example of a Team That Has Succeeded at Self-Management

You're probably wondering, "Is it possible after all? Can it work in the real world?" Here is an example: The General Electric plant in Durham, NC, does final assembly for the GE90 and CF34 jet engines. The plant has over 300 employees but only one boss — the plant manager. All of the employees report to the boss; they have no supervisor. Self-directed teams build the jet engines — teams that decide how to manage the work, how to manage time off, how to improve systems and work processes, and how to deal with problem teammates.

The teams do not maintain a typical assembly line. Instead, they own an engine from start to finish. Moreover, everyone's work varies on a daily basis, keeping the work interesting and resulting in a high degree of variety.

As you might expect, everyone does not successfully fit into this environment, especially "people who expect to



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take orders.” That is because the plant was designed to be operated by teams of leaders.

The people in the Durham plant are clearly engaged, have high energy, possess multiple skills, and are very motivated. In addition, they take tremendous pride in their team and the work they perform. More important, the plant’s performance has continued to excel, and it is considered by many to be an industry leader. When the GE plant first started out on its transformation effort, the plant had 175 employees. Since then, the workforce has virtually doubled, and GE continues to invest in the plant.

Since most problems are caused by the way teams and their management systems and processes are designed, in order to address the problems once and for all, teams need to change their design. If little information is shared, you will not know what value you contribute or understand the effect of your actions, in which case the unintended consequences are going to be low productivity and/or downstream errors.

The point here is that you get what you design for; if you want to have a team of leaders, you must design and align all your systems and processes to make that happen ... design your team for the results you want. ●

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### Creating Advantage Through the Five-Stage Team Development Model

*Key Principle: Leadership always exists in a team; however, everyone becomes a leader once a team achieves Stage Five of the model.*

A successful self-managed team generally evolves through a series of discernible stages. At the first stage, your team will start off with virtually every key decision being made by the supervisor or team leader. Because the transition to self-management is going to require a lot of change, the team needs an enormous amount of support.

Some of the initial enthusiasm often gives way to sarcasm as things will not go as smoothly as many people expect. This is why the team leader must be more involved than ever — to ensure that people understand how teams evolve, to address areas of uncertainty, and to deal with issues that the team is not capable of handling.

Slowly your team will become less leader-focused. As the team moves to Stage Two, it will start to grapple with what its goals and objectives are and try to ensure that everyone is on the same page. The team leader will still have to do a lot of coordinating and mentoring as the team be-

gins to take baby steps while the leader begins to gradually move away from exercising full authority.

Stage Three is the midway point in your team’s evolution. While there still may be some frustration, members will start to learn their roles and come together. The “big picture” starts to become clearer to the team and its members, and a few individuals will even step up and provide some limited but real leadership. Moreover, the team will start to focus on performance. This is also the stage where your team will start to deal with difficult people issues.

At Stage Four, your team will really start to hum. Most of the team members are able to step up and lead in at least one specific area. People will communicate quite well and learn from each other. They will also take a serious interest in performance and try and actively achieve many of their goals and objectives. The level of engagement will clearly rise, and the team will look to take charge of all its key processes and procedures. There will still be work to do, particularly in the areas of problem solving and conflict resolution.

You must also continue to work on ensuring that all the team members have the requisite skill sets. At this stage, the supervisor will now be more of a coach and be on a more equal footing with the other team members, and the primary focus becomes training and developing the team members. He will have time to begin to focus on higher order work and contributions.

### Reaching Stage Five

Once your team reaches Stage Five, you will now work together as a unit to set and achieve a challenging set of goals and objectives. Individual team members will no longer be followers — they will be leaders who look down the road and at their environment in order to get and stay ahead of the curve. Meanwhile, your team members will only accept excellent performance and beyond. Finally, the energy level of the team will be extremely high as its members will know what they need to do, will be committed to doing it, and will work together to provide the best performance possible. Now the leader becomes more of a peripheral member of the team and is free to work on larger issues such as analysis, planning and cross-functional concerns.

The principles and evolution of a self-managed team are the same regardless of whether you are dealing with a senior team of managers, a football team, a white-collar team, a manufacturing team or even a family. If you want to have a self-managing team, you must progress through a defined series of stages toward self-management. But in order to do this, you must have the requisite design,

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processes, tools and support systems in place — otherwise, frustration and chaos are likely to ensue. ●

## Secrets of Great Design

*Key principle: For everyone to become a leader, the team's management systems and design choices must be designed, aligned and properly implemented.*

Teams are perfectly designed to get the results that they get. This principle is the starting place for designing your team. Simply put, if for any reason your team wants different results from what it is now getting, you will have to change your design. The most successful high-performing teams have a common vision and purpose, and the degree to which you can involve your people in the cause and help them become strongly connected to one another is what will electrify and unify your team and help everyone realize its greatest hopes for success.

## The Organization System Design

The Organization System Design (OSD) Model illustrates the components of a team working together and shows their combined impact on results.

Outcomes are the result of all the choices your team makes — choices about strategy as well as systems and structures. The external environment inevitably affects your team as well. Your team's culture is hugely shaped by all your team's choices and can have a filtering or focusing effect, diluting or turbocharging final performance.

The model provides a framework for understanding the relationships that affect your team's outcomes — relationships between your external environment, design choices, culture and outcomes. Teams generally exist at a variety of levels within most organizations.

For your team to reach Stage Five of the team development model and produce the highest level of performance, all the requisite design elements should be in place.

Team design starts by understanding how all the elements of your team relate to each other. The first element is *external influencing factors*. The external environment places a constantly changing set of demands on your team, and you must learn to proactively respond to these requirements in order to survive.

You may want to offer your customers exceptional service that they have never requested but that delights them once they see it; your suppliers may be willing to collaborate with you on technology solutions; and/or you may help develop a creative strategy that can distinguish your team from others. All three examples show that your team can influence external expectations rather than take them as given.

There are five basic groups in your external environment: customers (both current and potential markets), stakeholders (shareholders and their representatives), influencers (suppliers, regulators, legislators), competitors and best-in-class teams. Make sure you are well aware of all five of these groups and understand their needs and expectations. Then figure out how you can best influence them.

The next element to consider in the OSD Model for Teams is *outcomes*. As previously discussed, teams are perfectly designed to get the results that they got. Therefore, it is crucial to consider what outcomes you really desire before making any design choices.

There are five categories of potential outcomes, along with possible indicators for an organization.

### 1. Customer Indicators

- Customer satisfaction relative to your competitors
- Repeat buyer rate
- Customer referral rate
- Market share

### 2. Stakeholder Indicators

- Profit and loss
- Earnings growth and revenue
- Return on investment and equity

### 3. Community Indicators

- Sustainability practices
- Community perception survey scores
- Compliance ratings
- Public service awards

### 4. Operational Excellence Indicators

- Cycle times
- Quality results and ratings
- Quantity of units produced
- Commitments made to plan
- Plans developed and approved

### 5. Team “Voice of the Workforce” Indicators

- Turnover
- Safety record
- Voice of the Workforce (VOWF) team survey scores
- Individual contribution to community (e.g., school boards, service organizations)

The actual indicators/metrics you choose for your team will reflect the size and focus of your team as well as its direct contribution to these organizational outcomes.

Now we come to *knowledge and culture*. Culture is “the way things get done around here.” It is the set of shared basic assumptions or emotionally charged beliefs that develop over time among your team's members. It is manifested in symbols, stories, rituals, routines and behavioral norms.

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Your team's ability to learn, share and apply new knowledge is the most important source of your competitive advantage. The culture of the team is a critical factor in its learning capability. Culture cannot be mandated, but it can be influenced. It modulates between design choices and outcomes — in other words, the explicit design choices you make will lead to improved results, but only through the culture of your team.

Culture encompasses the behaviors, feelings, and values shared by your team's members. The effect on your culture will be positive when your team harmonizes its plans and processes and when your team members are brought together with a common purpose.

Next are *choices*, which we can subdivide into choices about your *strategy* and choices about your team's *systems*.

Regarding strategy, there are four types of choices for your team to make:

**Mission.** A mission statement identifies your primary reason for being and your distinctive competency. A good mission statement should be energizing, simple and concise.

**Guiding principles.** These statements describe your team's underlying beliefs about the best way to create the right team culture to do business and achieve your mission and outcomes. They include beliefs that govern how teammates should treat one another as well as beliefs that should govern the decisions about the team's design choices.

**Uniqueness.** This is what separates your team from others and makes it special. In essence, it is your team's identity.

**Team metrics.** These are the measures important for achieving your desired outcomes. They can be summarized as a set of key performance indicators that measure ongoing performance in customer performance, financial performance, internal operating performance, and culture and knowledge.

Your team cannot make the overall strategic choices for your organization. That is the role of the organization's leaders. They need to be closely aligned with the organization's strategy, which will have a direct impact on your team's future. You can and should make supplemental choices at the team level. The key here is that your team must stay consistent with the organization's strategy while exercising its own initiative to excel.

When discussing choices about your team's systems, there are six categories of systems in every team:

*The team's business processes* deal with the activities you routinely carry out to create and deliver value for your customers. It also encompasses your physical arrangements for interacting and exchanging knowledge and technology.

*The structural system* is the way your team is organized.

*The decision-making and information system* deals with decision-making processes throughout your team. What specific responsibilities are given to which roles? What are your planning processes?

*The people system* pertains to how people are attracted, selected, oriented, trained, certified, performance managed and promoted. It includes capability and career development choices.

*The reward system* is your pay and benefits structure; it also includes incentives, celebrations, and informal rewards and recognition.

*The renewal system* is the way you encourage and formalize continuous learning process and performance improvement. What structures or processes are in place for gathering together to learn, to share best practices, and improve team processes and performance?

Three tools to use in carrying out a design effort are an environmental scan, process analysis and culture analysis. Using these tools yields information about how current design choices align and what future choices should be designed to accomplish the team's goals.

### Environmental Scan

The goal of the *environmental scan* is to verify or discover what your customers and other stakeholders value most. Teams are "open systems" — they exist in an environment that influences them. Environmental scanning is a review of the groups outside your team that most affect the team. It is a study of the specific requirements of those groups and an inquiry into how those requirements might be changed. The knowledge gathered during environmental scanning helps you make better design choices.

A good way to begin environmental scanning is to identify the important groups or elements in your environment. Customer and stakeholder interviews or surveys are a good way to flesh out your knowledge and gather what you need to know.

### Process Analysis

Once customer and stakeholder requirements are understood, turn inward to your team's processes. This analysis is called process management or technical analysis. This is the time to carefully analyze your processes and understand how well they are working. There are seven process analysis tools:

*Process mapping* is a tool that helps you visualize the flow of work in an organization and identify the points within a process where value is created. Process maps are an essential tool for grasping and communicating your organization's work.

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*Categorization of work* is a process for distilling your work into one of several categories (competitive work, essential work, compliance work, etc.) in order to determine the work's priority.

*Value analysis* is where you identify which tasks are value-added and which are not, and then reduce or eliminate non value-added tasks.

*Constraint analysis* is a tool that helps you identify the point(s) in the process most responsible for slowing it down and limiting the team from achieving higher performance.

*Variance analysis* is a series of tools for finding and eliminating mistakes and defects.

*Process management* begins as process analysis wraps up. Here is where the team considers who will own each business process. Every process should have an owner.

*Key decision analysis* is where the team looks at the decisions associated with any given process. Revealing and resolving ambiguities in decision-making activities ultimately results in clear roles and responsibilities.

### Culture Analysis

The *culture analysis* tool set helps you study knowledge, networks and culture in your team. Using information from process analysis about your distinctive processes, you can seek to understand what knowledge is distinctive and determine how well that knowledge is being converted into customer value. Culture analysis will also look at how well your team renews its knowledge base. In other words, you will study your learning capability.

You will also study the networks surrounding critical roles in the team. Much knowledge, by its very nature, cannot be shared outside the context of active, trusting, cooperative relationships — the right people talking to the right people about the right things at the right time.

The culture analysis tool kit contains the following assessments:

**Interaction network analysis** is a means of assessing the communication patterns and networks within a team. It helps diagnose where collaboration has collapsed or cliques have been cultivated, where talent and expertise could be better leveraged, where decisions are bottlenecked, or where opportunities for leadership and/or innovation are being lost.

**Individual needs assessment** is designed to determine the extent to which the needs of each individual in a team are met. The idea here is to rank the team members' overall satisfaction with the way their needs are being met and then address these findings when making future design choices.

**Voice of the team assessment** determines how well the members of a team display the behaviors, feelings,

and attributes needed to drive the organization to its desired outcomes.

**Knowledge assessment** links design choices about process changes, new structures, and other improvements with the corresponding development of beliefs, skills and information.

**Skills matrix**, the final culture analysis tool, helps outline the skills and skill levels needed by a team. A completed skills matrix is a useful template for training and selection initiatives.

With respect to individual needs, people only bring so much energy to work. If individual needs are met, people will most likely channel their energy in a positive direction. But if their individual needs are not met, people tend to devote energy to counterproductive purposes in the team.

Once the analysis work is complete and the design has been finalized, you need to turn your attention to implementing the design. Good implementation naturally begins with careful transition planning. Careful transition planning is crucial because in the middle of any change effort, people are likely to long for “the way it used to be” — even though they might not have liked the old way at the time. ●

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## Teams Have Processes, Too

*Key principle: All your processes must support the goal of making everyone a leader.*

Teams are generally part of a larger organization and at least one of its processes (e.g., product development, demand creation, supply chain); by the same token, teams have their own processes, which are essential to carrying out the team's purpose and objectives. These processes include performing the core work of the team, managing team performance, selecting and on-boarding new members, building capability of the team and its members, and managing the disengagement or deselection of team members.

Every team has its core work to perform. However, for everyone to ultimately become a leader, the team as a whole needs to understand how that work actually flows so that it can make sure that work is being performed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The best way to get started is through process mapping. By looking at your work in this manner, it will help your team map and define the strategic impact of your processes and activities. It will also help you identify waste and variability and bottlenecks in your processes.

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## Individuals in the Team

Periodically, your team should also look at how each team member is contributing to the overall team performance. A team is only as strong as its weakest link, and the more team members work together to lift everyone's performance, the better.

Individual performance standards should be closely aligned with your team's goals and objectives. The immediate supervisor should initially provide feedback, although as your team moves through the five stages of team development, this role should gravitate to the team. Feedback should let the employee know exactly how she is doing and what she needs to improve. The employee should also be given the opportunity to express her opinion.

The key to employee performance management, regardless of your team's current stage, is ensuring there are reliable consequences for every level of performance. Excellent employees should be recognized and rewarded commensurate with their contribution, average employees should retain their jobs and receive all the appropriate benefits, and action should be taken to deal with poor performers. Employees will then conclude that the system works as intended, will consistently follow the rules and processes, and will strive to achieve the team's goals and objectives.

## Selecting New Members

High-performing teams participate in the selection of their members. If that's the practice of your team, then your team will have much more at stake in its own success and exhibit a different level of ownership and commitment. Selecting the right person is one of the most important decisions your team can make.

Once a person is hired, your team will invest an enormous amount of time and energy in developing the employee. If the person proves to be a bad fit, more time will then be spent trying to turn the employee around and, if necessary firing him or her, in which case the process starts all over again. ●

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## Team Value Creation Model

*Key principle: People are much more likely to become leaders if they understand the value they contribute to the team.*

For your team to run as a self-contained business, with everyone being a leader, everyone must know his or her success in creating value for the organization. And for people to know their success in creating value for the organization, they must have two vital pieces of information: their cost for the process/team, and the value of the

output they produce. With these two figures built into a model and some basic business management skills, you can determine how much value the team and each team member generates. This information will ensure that team members understand their value and will prod the team to look at its outputs and processes from a more practical, business-driven perspective. Moreover, it will help identify weaknesses within your team and suggest opportunities for productivity and efficiency improvements.

For your team to truly succeed, it must take a whole-brained approach to managing the team operation. That is, while team members must know how they are doing and whether they are creating an increase or decrease in value for the organization, they must also be connected around a sense of purpose. ●

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## Developing and Managing Knowledge Is Key to Team Performance

*Key principle: To build leaders, you must determine the knowledge they need, decide how to acquire it, and then manage its distribution.*

It is said that knowledge is the purest source of advantage for high-performing teams. To deliver that extraordinary value, teams must manage the speed of discovery and diffusion of key knowledge better than any other alternative source. It is especially important to recognize that the diffusion and application of fresh ideas are inherently *social* activities. How well your team uses knowledge is dependent on the quality and extent of the social networks within and surrounding the team.

The team knowledge needed to deliver outstanding performance includes tacit values, attitudes and expertise. A design cannot be complete, nor can we be confident that it will be successful, until we consider the full range of team knowledge to achieve performance goals and make plans for developing that knowledge.

*Tacit* knowledge refers to knowledge that one has but cannot explain. It is difficult or impossible to put into words. *Codifiable* or *explicit* knowledge, on the other hand, is knowledge that can be explained and organized into rules or policies. *Know-that* refers to knowledge that is a fact or a truth, including an idea or a belief that's held as true. *Know-how* indicates the ability to perform tasks or operations either "in your head" or "in action."

High performance teams are more conscious of tacit (noncodifiable) knowledge. If you have ever played basketball, you know that when the team is playing at a high level, it feels as though everyone knows what the other

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player is doing. They are in the flow and can anticipate each other's moves.

Teams need to develop all types of knowledge and expertise so that it becomes second nature, thus enabling them to be able to make many rapid but sound decisions. The best teams possess and capitalize on the tacit knowledge that helps differentiate them from their competitors.

Tacit knowledge is more likely to be developed with unstructured methods, while codifiable, explicit knowledge is learned best in conventional, structured settings. Know-that is learned just fine through cerebral methods such as study, conversations and reflection, while know-how is best learned through action-oriented methods.

Conducting a knowledge assessment is a great opportunity to take a step back, look at the knowledge types required by your team, and then put a plan together to meet your needs. ●

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## Visual Management

*Key principle: Visual management, also known as visual performance management, is a program that uses the senses to reinforce the previously described principles, drive performance, and build future leaders.*

Assuming you take all the steps previously described, you will be well on your way to having strong, self-managing teams. However, there is another innovative design element you can add to the equation to continually keep the object of getting to and staying at Stage Five in everyone's face. Moreover, this particular innovation will support and reinforce all your design elements and help take you to another level. This element is called *visual management*.

Visual management is a time-tested approach that combines generally accepted management principles along with the fine arts to improve your team's performance by 1) transforming your space into an inspiring, data-driven environment and 2) helping to elevate employees so that they become leaders. It is not a program per se; it is a conscious choice to use your space to send clear and consistent messages, support all the other team design elements, and help brand your team with its own unique environment.

Visual management combines sound management principles along with the fine arts (painting, photography, sculpture, music, film) to create and sustain competitive advantage. It creates a work environment that supports and reinforces all the systems and processes explained earlier. Such an environment helps you change your culture and improve your team members' attitudes, perspectives, knowledge base, mindset and, most important, performance.

Think of it as a combination of a NASA or Pentagon war room combined with the beauty and clarity of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, with a touch of Las Vegas glitz thrown in. The idea is to have the one element of the work experience that people see all the time — i.e., your physical space — perfectly aligned with the other design elements so that everyone working in that space receives incredibly clear and consistent messages and information.

For instance, one customer contact team set up an area right outside the entrance to its offices showing video holographs of customers talking about their experiences. In a different team, the leader sits right in the middle of the workspace with no partitions or barriers, even though other team members have offices. The clear message here is that the leader's role is one of support, not dominance — a sign of a Stage Five team.

These types of images and displays will improve communication and teamwork, knowledge and understanding, engagement and commitment, responsibility and accountability, and innovation and creativity, all of which will elevate the employees and the team and drive performance. ●

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## Conclusion

In the 21st century, people want to be involved, challenged and empowered. They want to be part of something that is bigger than them, and they want to make a difference. Moreover, they want to continue to grow and develop.

Creating a team/organization of leaders is not an easy thing to do — if so, everyone would have done it by now. However, it is the *right thing to do*. A team of leaders will both produce the results you are looking for and make the work experience much more exciting and enjoyable for everybody ... and now is the time to get started. ●

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### RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *A Team of Leaders*, you'll also like:

1. ***Great Business Teams* by Howard M. Guttman.** Guttman describes a new high-performance horizontal model that changes the way leaders lead, team members function, challenges are met and decisions are made.
2. ***The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni.** Lencioni reveals the five dysfunctions that go to the very heart of why teams often struggle and offers a powerful model and actionable steps that can be used to overcome these common hurdles.
3. ***Winning With People* by John C. Maxwell.** Maxwell shows how relationships can be created and strengthened for success in work and life, and provides the tools needed to improve existing or future relationships.