

Be a Better Team by Friday

A Playbook for High-Performance Business Leaders

by **Justin Follin with David Butlein Greenspan, PhD**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Building a dream team that is always at its peak performance is far from easy. But does that mean it’s not possible? Does it take months (or perhaps years) to unlock maximum team productivity, collaboration, and engagement? Absolutely not!

The gap between where you are now and a 10 represents your company’s potential. The book *Be a Better Team By Friday: A Playbook for High-Performance Business Leaders* will help you get to 10 fast. It contains the foundational skills and tools that turn groups of high-talent individuals into extraordinary work teams.

Having overserved high-performing teams reach exceptional levels for years, authors Justin Follin and David Butlein Greenspan lay out actionable and customizable steps for leaders to unlock the untapped potential of their teams and skyrocket their performance. The book also helps leaders grow motivation and engagement on the team, get more done with less work, build a sense of greater purpose, and ultimately become a better team by Friday!

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to build a high-performing team and business.
- How to adopt the mindset of great leadership.
- How to know your and your organization’s “Fundamental Why.”
- How to stay focused and get things done.

Introduction

The title of this book, *Be a Better Team by Friday*, is both an assertion and a promise. The assertion is this: in a matter of a few business days, your team's performance can skyrocket. The promise is this: the practices outlined in this book will get you there.

Each chapter in the book is a practice, which stems from our years of working with hundreds of leaders and studying the habits that help high-performance teams reach exceptional levels. Here, you'll find the disciplines of practice which are the basic exercise to apply repeatedly to build your skills. Inside many of the disciplines, you'll see questions to ask yourself and your teammates to facilitate better conversations.

Aside from positively impacting your organization, the seven practices outlined in the book will also help you create healthier, more authentic relationships with everyone you care about including your colleagues, your friends, family, spouse, and most importantly yourself!

Chapter 1: Choose Your Mindset

Being a great leader is not easy. You will face challenges that would seem insurmountable. When you're a great leader, though, you move through hardship and accomplish goals despite the challenges.

The first step to being a great leader is to choose to be great. The next step is to empower your team to lead, too. Being a great leader does not mean you're a lone hero making all the decisions. It is about finding better ways to work together on your team when facing significant obstacles.

Everyone on high-performance teams chooses to excel. High-performance leadership mindsets enable high-performance collaboration. But before you choose your way of thinking, you must first realize that what you think is a choice.

Your mindset is your choice. It is the answer to the question, "How am I thinking about this right now?" To be a great leader, you must choose the mindset of great leadership. To be a great team, everyone on the team must choose the mindset of great teams.

It is often easier to focus on what's wrong than on what's going well. This is due to a phenomenon called the negativity bias. This bias tells us that things are much worse than they are. Escaping the trap of negativity bias requires choosing a different mindset about the situation. While

circumstances might be out of your control, how you think about your situation is always a choice. Your mindset is the foundation that your entire leadership operating system relies on. The practice of choosing an empowered mindset is a simple one, but it requires tremendous effort. The three steps to help your team from a disempowered mindset to an empowered one include:

- Realizing you are in a disempowered mindset by practicing self-awareness
- Choosing an empowered mindset by shifting from complaining to creator, rescuing to coach, blaming to challenger mindsets
- Coaching each other to choose empowered mindsets

Chapter 2: Get Real With Each Other

In fast-growth companies, things change so quickly that the teams you worked with a year ago might look a lot different today. Teams build trust when they approach leadership as a conversation. When you practice deep listening, you empower your teammates to get real with you. You foster the trust that helps them be honest and vulnerable.

High trust equals high performance. Google's Aristotle Project concluded the single most important determinant of a team's performance is psychological safety. Listening is often the best way to build psychological safety in teams that don't have it. Through deep listening, you can deepen connections and encourage honest communication. When teams listen to each other, psychological safety goes up, which in turn builds trust.

Get real with each other to lay a foundation for better communication. The three disciplines of the practice of deep listening include:

- Listen to understand. Don't formulate your opinion while someone is talking. Instead, focus on understanding why someone is saying what they're saying and why it's important to them. When everyone listens to each other, they make decisions that are more inclusive than competitive.
- Be vulnerable. Your team's ability to get real with each other depends on everyone's ability to be vulnerable. Remember, trust takes time to build and only a second to break. To create an environment of psychological safety that leads to high performance, everyone must practice vulnerable exchanges in every conversation.

- Stop having Either/Or arguments. The Either/Or equation lies at the heart of every argument. Replace this habit and allow your team to include perspectives from all sides.

Collective deep listening requires a commitment from everyone. With consistent practice, collaboration, productivity, and happiness, your team will surpass everything you haven't seen yet.

Chapter 3: Know the “Fundamental Why”

The “Fundamental Why” simply means an underlying purpose or intention. A company’s Fundamental Why creates a shared understanding across the organization. It serves as a core intention for employees to return to when they temporarily lose their sense of purpose. Your team’s Fundamental Why should be what unites it. A meeting, project, or request that has a Fundamental Why answers the question, “Why is this request important to the person making it?” Knowing this “Why” leads to a level of intrinsic motivation.

All individuals have a Personal Fundamental Why as well. Ask yourself, “Why do I do what I do?” Other questions to consider as you make your way to Fundamental Why include, “What is important to me about the work I do besides a paycheck?”, “What achievements do I feel most proud of?”, and “What professional obstacle have I overcome that’s made me who I am today?”

Learning the Fundamental Why of each person helps you know what motivates them, find ways for them to do more of what they love, build deeper trust and collaborate better, and show them you care about them.

Make sure every request you make of others has a clearly articulated Fundamental Why. Get to know each of your team members’ Fundamental Why. Give everyone the opportunity to share their Personal Fundamental Why with their team members, including managers. Finally, seek the commitment to your Fundamental Why out loud regularly and often. Share it with those outside your teams. Finally, ask for help in making your commitment happen.

Chapter 4: Give Feedback Like a Coach

Everyone knows giving and receiving feedback is essential, but most people hate it because they’re used to experiencing

feedback as bad news. But feedback doesn’t mean criticism. It is information that leads to improvement.

If you’re not receiving feedback on a daily or weekly basis, or if you regularly experience hostile pushback when you give feedback, you’ve got room for improvement. A strong feedback culture emerges when the team adopts a coaching style of leadership. This helps the whole team get better by giving each other feedback that leads to performance development.

But how do you put it all into practice? As a team, commit to the practice of giving and receiving feedback on a day-to-day basis. Regularly offer specific feedback about “what is going well.” Include affirmations like “Nice job” and “Thank you.” Usually, this affirmative feedback is enough.

When needed, give solutions-oriented suggestive feedback that usually begins with, “From my perspective...” When necessary, give more difficult, direct feedback about areas that need specific changes. Make sure you provide concrete examples such as, “When... you did... then this happened...”).

Be considerate in both speaking and listening. When speaking to someone, have friendly body language and use a warm tone. Always give negative feedback in person. Turn difficult feedback into a dialog by asking, “What do you think? What do you see could be ways to address this issue?” Finally, practice care, dignity, and respect whenever you give feedback.

Chapter 5: Adapt Your Work Style

A great way to identify your strengths and weakness would be to use the TILT assessment. It covers four distinct styles: impact, connection, clarity, and structure. These four styles often allow people of diverse backgrounds and work styles to quickly work together on any team. By reflecting on how you communicate, you can quickly figure out how you can TILT.

If you’re an impact-oriented person, you talk a lot about the big picture. You want to set goals and talk about results. Sometimes you act like you know everything and dominate conversations when you get stressed.

If you’re a connection-oriented person, you talk a lot about people, big ideas, and feelings. You socialize ideas across the organization and make sure everyone is looped into your communications. Sometimes, you can seem checked out when things get too stressful.

If you're a clarity-oriented person, you cite research when anyone brings forward an idea. You are thorough in your reporting and presentations. When you get stressed, you get agitated by having to make decisions without more information.

If you're a structure-oriented person, you are the process planner and architect. You usually present each step of a plan in your presentations. When you get stressed out, you attempt to micromanage the process, which can make teammates feel stifled by you.

Map everyone on your team on the TILT quadrant model. Together ask, "Where are we strong? Where do we need to build strength as a team?" If you have a communication breakdown with someone, ask, "What is their preferred communication style on the TILT map? How can I adapt my style to fit theirs?"

Determine what TILT strengths you'll need each time you start a project. Identify the strengths of each person on your team. Share what you observed in a one-on-one conversation. All four styles create a well-balanced team. Once you understand how you TILT and how you don't TILT, you begin to recognize strengths in styles other than yours.

Chapter 6: Get Focused

Lower-performing teams are often plagued by a lack of strategic focus and inadequate time management. High-performing teams, on the other hand, do less but accomplish more. They focus on a few things and do them well. The practice of Getting Focused requires structure and discipline. It requires a strategy to work smarter instead of working more. This is where the value of the 80/20 model comes in. The premise here is that 80 percent of your results should come from 20 percent of your input.

Another mantra for attaining team focus is deploying the Big 2 Focus Goals. In keeping with the 80/20 principle, it suggests that you can usually focus on only three things at a time. Any more becomes too distracting to achieve well. With this in mind, there are not simply big, annual Rocks, but three quarterly priorities, three weekly priorities, and three daily priorities. Get clean on team and individual Big 3 Focus Goals for the year, quarter, and week. Make sure daily priorities work toward those Big 3 Focus Goals.

Apply the 80/20 rule for meeting scheduling as well. Ask yourself, "Do we need this meeting, or can this be done one-on-one or via email?" Make sure every meeting has a

clear, written Fundamental Why and Agenda beforehand. If it doesn't, cancel the meeting. To avoid going down rabbit holes, list any off-topic issues in your parking lot. Have a different person in each meeting to manage the parking lot. Make clear decisions about every agenda item, including who does what by when. Always write out your decision registry and share it with everyone in the meeting.

Chapter 7: Get It Done

You probably have highly skilled people on your team. But for some reason, things don't get done. Projects start strong, but then they stall.

On the other hand, teams that accelerate are teams where every member owns the success of the whole team. As a team, you must commit to bringing tasks "over the finishing line." This decision, however, requires concrete action plans and doing what you say you'll do. Here's your roadmap to effective planning:

- Articulate a clear Fundamental Why for any project or initiative
- Create a clear, compelling vision of wild success
- Document a collective point of view of your current state
- Have a conversation about options for potential actions
- Decide what you will do
- Write out a plan of accountability to determine who will do what by when
- Always do what you say
- Make clear, powerful requests

Conclusion: Put It into Practice

Now that you know the seven fundamental practices that will make you a better team by Friday, it's time to put it all into practice. Start with Practice 1 and you'll see the results will extend far beyond what you can imagine from your vantage point now. After you feel you have integrated one practice, move on to the next. Within the first week of applying these practices, you'll notice your organization's productivity and engagement increase.

At first, incorporating these practices may feel awkward or seem hard. But once you commit to these practices, you will

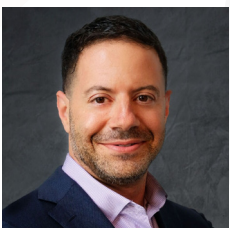
be energized by how quickly your workday becomes easier, more productive, and increasingly engaging. Keep in mind that the shift to high performance is an ongoing choice.

Your team will slip at times. After all, it's only human to fall out of practice sometimes. When you begin to see any warning signs, immediately jump back to the practice that will best recalibrate the team.

Throughout the journey, be patient with yourself and with each other. Good luck on your road to high performance!



Along with co-author and founder **David Butlein Greenspan**, **Justin Follin** is the co-founder and managing partner of Bluecase Strategic Partners. Drawing from David's PhD in high-performance psychology and their combined twenty-five years of organizational consulting expertise, Justin and David specialize in solving leadership cultural problems that inevitably come with scale.



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