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Great Business Teams

Cracking the Code for Standout Performance

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

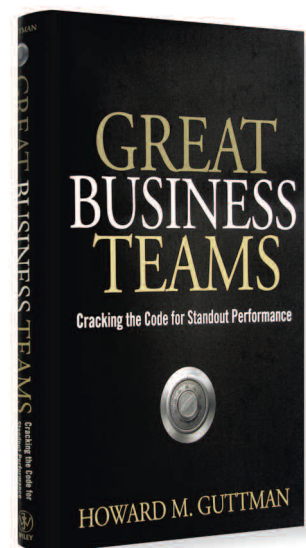
Everybody knows that great organizations start with great teams. But it turns out that there is a code for standout performance within great teams that applies to every organization, regardless of size, type or industry affiliation. Cracking this code does not guarantee a perfect outcome every time companies engage in competitive play, but by changing the game, companies can acquire a sustained competitive advantage and the ability to excel in a very difficult marketplace.

The code is the horizontal organization — an organization in which everyone operates according to a clearly defined set of decision-making protocols, where people understand what they are accountable for and then own the results. In *Great Business Teams*, renowned business consultant Howard M. Guttman draws on his decades of experience inside some of the world's most successful corporations to show how that powerful new high-performance horizontal model has changed the way leaders lead, team members function, challenges are met and decisions are made.

Though “going horizontal” requires leaders to fulfill certain imperatives, behave in certain ways and be responsible for aligning their teams with company goals, it also requires every employee develop the skills and characteristics of a “leader”: become more intellectually invested in group performance, embrace accountability and handle conflict well. It's for these reasons that great teams do more than improve a company's performance; they continually raise the bar and redefine what “high performance” means.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The five key characteristics of great business teams.
- How leaders of high-performing teams behave.
- How members of high-performing teams behave.
- What teams and leaders need to do to align themselves around a goal.
- How great teams make decisions and overcome challenges.



by Howard M. Guttman

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: GREAT BUSINESS TEAMS

by Howard M. Guttman

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Cracking the High-Performance Code

Whether it's a CEO and top-management team charged with setting strategy; a plant manager and shop-floor personnel committed to getting a defect-free product out the door; or a cross-functional, global project team dedicated to a worldwide product launch, teams are today's locus of power, responsibility and action.

Great business teams share five characteristics:

1. Great business teams are led by high-performance leaders who:

- Create a "burning platform" — an energizing principle — for fundamental change.
- Are visionaries and architects.
- Know they cannot do it alone.
- Build authentic relationships.
- Model the behaviors they expect from their team.
- Redefine the fundamentals of leadership.

2. Members of great business teams are us-directed leaders. On a great business team, no one's performance — not even the leader's — is exempt from scrutiny and feedback.

3. Great business teams play by protocols. Ambiguity kills effective decision making. It also wastes precious time. Great businesses are specific about what decisions they need to make, who will make them, and how.

4. Great business teams continually raise the performance bar. No matter how much it achieves, a great business team is never satisfied. On a great business team, self-monitoring, self-evaluation, continuous improvement, and raising the performance bar are the norm.

5. Great business teams have a supportive

performance management system. Whether your aim is to create a single great business team or an organization made up of great teams on every level, the shift is not merely structural but profoundly cultural. In order to effect permanent behavior change, a team's performance management system must support the new expectations. Team and individual goals have to be crystal clear; the necessary technical and interpersonal skills have to be provided; performance has to be monitored; and feedback has to be timely and well thought out. ●

The New High-Performance Leader

Leadership Imperative: Develop and Drive the Horizontal Vision

Within Australia's fast-moving, competitive dairy industry, consumers have become more and more sophisticated, with ever-increasing wants and needs. In 2004 the industry was also witnessing dairy production declining, international farm gate milk prices skyrocketing to historic highs and at record global fuel costs.

That same year, Robert Gordon took over as CEO and managing director of Dairy Farmers, an Australia-based milk and value-added dairy company. Financially the company was not performing at capacity. There was unnecessary product proliferation and too much complexity. Organizationally, the company was largely siloed. Each function operated independently and was run by a general manager, sometimes competing with other functions for resources. It was time for a radical change.

Gordon was convinced that the only bet was to go horizontal, which to him meant moving to an organization in which everyone operates according to a clearly defined set of decision-making protocols, where people



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understand what they are accountable for and they own the results. “It means moving to an action- and results-driven workforce at every level — not one that waits around for instruction or trips over functional boundaries. It means giving employees the opportunity and skills to decide who needs to be involved in solving problems and making decisions, dividing responsibilities, then stepping aside to allow people to implement.”

Three years later, Dairy Farmers saw a dramatic turnaround. It became significantly leaner: reducing its product portfolio by more than one-third, closing four of 15 sites and 17 distribution depots and divesting noncore businesses. The new, lean, horizontal organization chalked up a number of significant successes, including significantly reducing time to market for new products. Dairy Farmers closed out 2007 leading the growth rate in every retail market in which it participates, improving market share in every category.

For an organization to raise its level of performance, every team, on every level, must be a great team. It must be aligned, or in sync, in five key areas:

1. *Business strategy.*
2. *Business deliverables coming from the strategy.*
3. *Roles and responsibilities at individual and business unit or functional levels.*
4. *Protocols, or ground rules, for decision making and conflict resolution.*
5. *Business/interpersonal relationships and interdependencies.*

Leadership Imperative: Create the Right Mindset

On a great business team, candor is king. Candor requires leaders to walk the talk. They do this most convincingly by listening to critiques of their own performance and acting on them, and by changing behavior that the team tells them is unacceptable, by not cutting off dissenters or denigrating their opinions, by not pulling rank when it is time to make a decision. High-performance leaders have an up-or-out approach: Those who cannot adapt and thrive should take their game elsewhere.

Leadership Imperative: Provide the Right Skills

Working horizontally is something of an unnatural act, given most people’s experience in working hierarchically. This creates another leadership imperative: Ensure that everyone in the organization not only wants to contribute but can contribute. Great leaders immediately develop an action plan to close skill gaps through formal skill-development workshops, an ongoing search for

opportunities to apply the skills and individual coaching as needed.

Leadership Imperative: Keep the Game and Guard the Ground Rules

One of the most important tasks of a team leader is to serve as keeper of the high-performance game. It is up to him or her to make sure the team remains on track. “On track” means that everyone is clear about and committed to the business strategy and the operational goals that flow from it; understands his or her roles and responsibilities; and adheres to the agreed-upon protocols, or ground rules, for decision making and for interpersonal behavior, especially those relating to conflict management.

Ultimately, when the leader is keeper of the game and guardian of the ground rules, he or she is looking at the team and asking important questions. Are the members of my team playing for real, or are they just going through the motions? What’s the best way for me to hold up a mirror to members of my team to accurately reflect their behavior? How do we change?

Leadership Imperative: Raise the Bar

One of the characteristics of all great business teams is that they continually raise the performance bar. But the performance-improvement attitude is an acquired one, which often requires not-so-gentle prodding from the leader.

When Helen McClusky joined Warnaco as president of its Intimate Apparel group in 2004, revenue had fallen by 50 percent and profits had declined over the previous five years. McClusky began the turnaround by stripping the team’s priorities down to one: Intimate Apparel must reach the company’s average profitability. If the company generated an average 10 percent operating margin/profitability, the Intimate Apparel division had to do the same.

She began holding regular monthly staff meetings with agendas. They started on time, with or without laggards. She also role-modeled meeting behavior, showing up on time and remaining throughout the meeting. She worked with the team to establish protocols for meetings, and disseminated them broadly. Line-management approval processes were put in place. Specific margin targets, which had to be hit during the product-development cycle to make sure profitable business was being delivered to the bottom line, were identified.

Leadership Imperative: Be Player Centered

High-performance leaders seek to *leverage* power, not to monopolize it but to put it to use to drive up their team’s or organization’s performance. As a means to driving up results, high-performance leaders favor “*distributive power*”

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Let's Follow a Leader

Believing that a picture can be worth a thousand words, here is a brief “snapshot” of one high-performing leader, Grant Reid, in action. Before he became global president of Mars Drinks, Reid was executive vice president of sales and customer care for Mars Inc., Snack. When he assumed full responsibility for snack sales, he faced a significant leadership challenge. Sales had not met expectations in this key strategic unit, and a quick turnaround was needed. His experience can be distilled into six principles that guided him during this plight.

1. *Don't bury the past; build on it.* They were going to put the past behind them, but not before they had learned all they could from it.
2. *It's all about relationships.* Reid learned that people wanted reassurance that their futures were secure.
3. *Don't just lead your team — be a part of it.* Reid also believes that leaders should not ask others to do things they would not do themselves.
4. *Help everyone become a high performer.* Everyone was encouraged to hold one another — and Reid — responsible for achieving snack results.
5. *Show how it's done.* In front of his team, he is comfortable challenging his boss when he feels things are moving too slowly, role-modeling the upward confrontation that he expects from the players on his team.
6. *Park your ego.* Effective leaders in a high-performance environment possess a special kind of self-confidence — the ability to admit to not having all the answers.

— putting power and authority in the hands of teams and their members, provided the conditions are right, the protocols in place and the players sufficiently evolved to deliver maximum payoff. ●

The New High-Performance Player

As organizations evolve horizontally, the traditional leader-follower paradigm is no longer a fruitful construct. On great business teams, “followers” assume many of the same behaviors and traits previously ascribed only to leaders.

On any team, players require three types of skills: technical, strategic and leadership. But, as a member of a team of leaders, every player on every great team needs the same degree of proficiency in leadership skills,

including the ability to influence others.

Assessing Where Others Stand

Look around you, both at members of your team and at others in your organization with whom you interact. Following is a short description of each type of individual, along with some tips for influencing them:

Double Dealers agree with you at the business-concept level, but have for some reason decided to withhold their support. Focus on listening to their concerns, encouraging them to speak candidly and working to build trust between you.

Foes neither agree with your goal, nor are they among your supporters. Encourage candor, “story” sharing and the forging of new agreements for moving ahead.

Members of the Loyal Opposition support you while disagreeing with your point of view. Present a strong business case as objectively as possible to turn your colleagues around.

Partners and Middle-of-the-Roaders present opportunities. The former group supports and agrees with you. Partners can have a positive influence on others, especially the Middle-of-the-Roaders.

As a player, the skills you need will vary according to the circumstances. For example:

- When another player's needs are pressing, you need *active listening skills*: the ability to clarify, understand and acknowledge another's point of view.
- When your needs are pressing, you need *assertion skills*: the ability to state your case from a position of strength rather than being passive or running over others.
- When both players' needs are pressing, you need *conflict-management skills*: the ability to manage each party's perceptions to defuse emotions, create a common understanding of the real issues at hand and work toward a collaborative solution in which everyone “wins.”

The Player as Coach

One of the hallmarks of a great business team is the willingness of team members to assume accountability for the success of their colleagues. This can take many forms, from tough questioning to providing resources to coaching.

While leaders are ultimately responsible for making the call on the coachability of their players, every team member has an obligation to turn the table on him- or herself by asking, “Am I up to the task of continually

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reinventing myself to meet ever-more-demanding performance standards?”

The thorniest coaching issue is how to deal with team members who are nearly or fully uncoachable. Players resist change for many reasons. Some do not see what's in it for them; others disagree on the need for change; still others are distrustful and suspect a hidden agenda. The challenge is to part the curtain to see what is behind the resistance to change. *Intention* is paramount. Is a team member's intention to change stronger than the lure of remaining comfortable with past ways of operating?

When it comes to dealing with the uncoachable, timeliness is crucial. When do you press the “eject” button? Once you determine that a player is *unwilling to change*, there is little else that can be done. ●

Aligning for High Performance

When a team is clearly committed to a common direction, when it focuses on business deliverables that evolve from that direction, when it is clear about its roles and responsibilities, when decision-making protocols are in place, and when business relationships are open and avoid siloism, then it acquires new performance muscle and the will to win. This is what is meant by “getting aligned.” The alignment process is made up of two phases: *making the diagnosis* and *gaining agreement*.

Phase 1: Making the Diagnosis

Whether the team leader is the CEO, a division president, a general manager, or a functional head, here is the basic question that he or she must address at the outset: *What would the team look like if it could be taken to the next level of performance?* It is here that the leader communicates with his or her team members, allays their fears, secures buy-in, and generates excitement for the new world of significantly higher performance. Finally, there needs to be a segue to data collection, the next phase of alignment and team transformation.

Phase 2: Gaining Agreement

During this phase an alignment session is held during which new patterns of behavior in the five key areas — business strategy, business deliverables, roles and responsibilities, protocols for decision making and conflict resolution, and business/interpersonal relationships/interdependencies — are agreed on.

The end result of alignment in the first three areas is agreement among the players and their leader about *what* the team as a whole is going to accomplish and *what* each individual will contribute to those results. Alignment in the fourth and fifth areas deals with agreement about *how*

the group is going to carry out its tasks and *how* the players and leaders are going to interact with one another. ●

Accelerating to High Performance

Whether the team coach is employed by the organization or is an outsider, he or she needs to be alert to common red flags that indicate that the team is veering off course:

- Team leaders who retreat to Grand Inquisitor or Solomon mode.
- Too many “grey beard” issues that hang around forever.
- Sidestepping delicate issues.
- Protocols that fall by the wayside.
- Failure to hold one another accountable for underperformance.
- More “me” than “we” in the air.

Skilled team coaches are masters at giving feedback. First, they depersonalize feedback, presenting the facts without judging them. Second, effective team coaches carefully formulate their comments. Third, effective team coaches present the facts and then ask the individual or team to confirm or refute them, keeping the coach from being perceived as judgmental. ●

Following the Protocols at Chico's

CEO Scott Edmonds describes the toughest struggle that he had as the leader of Chico's top team during the move to the high-performing team model:

“The hardest part of the transition was following the model all the way up to the point of terminating those who refused to abide by the new rules. One of the senior vice presidents on my team wasn't being honest with me and kept going underground. In the prealignment interviews, the other players made it clear that they believed she had to go. I realized that I had to terminate her immediately or I wouldn't be playing it straight, and the day after the alignment, I asked her to leave. As a leader you must say, ‘Okay, these are the new rules of the game.’ To use a baseball analogy, it's like saying, ‘Three strikes you're out is no longer the rule. It's now only two strikes.’ If I allow someone three strikes, I'm not playing by the rules and neither are they.”

Whether or not you institute a “two strikes” policy is situational and beside the point. What is important is having in place — and sticking to — agreed-upon rules of behavior for handling contentious situations.

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How Great Teams Make Decisions

Keep in mind three overarching points that help to explain why great teams are well primed for decision making. First, great teams are strategically focused. Second, the high-performing model counteracts the social pressure on group members to conform to the majority view. The third point about great decision-making teams: The high-performance decision-making model is built for speed, quality, maximum accountability, and engagement.

The Challenges

In observations of leaders and teams who have gone through the process of distributing decision-making authority, there are a number of traps into which teams typically fall:

- Team members accustomed to working in a hierarchical organization will tend to defer to the leader. Team leaders must refuse to play Solomon or Monkey in the Middle.
- When assigning members to subteams, remember that *value added* is the key criterion.
- Technical knowledge or a certain position in the organization does not automatically qualify a person to be the decision maker.
- Do not permit a subteam to try to lobby other players; do make sure that everyone on the team makes a public commitment to abide by the decision once it is made. ●

How Great Teams Manage Meetings

Great business teams set basic protocols for meetings:

- How often will the team meet, and how long will meetings last?
- Where will the team meet?
- Who will lead meetings?
- How and by whom will the agenda be set?

Here are several behavior-related protocols that great teams insist on:

- The meeting starts on time, with or without you.
- If you can't make a meeting, send a substitute.
- Cell phones are off; laptops and hand-helds are out.
- There are no digressions from the agenda; if someone raises a new issue, it is "parked" for later discussion.
- There are no side conversations.
- Everyone participates.
- Everyone follows the agreed-upon protocols for conflict resolution.
- All players hold all others — and the leader — accountable for promised deliverables and results.

Issue Management

There are many ways to go about managing key issues. The method outlined here — using issue definition, issue identification, clarifying issues, priority setting and action planning — has been adopted by many great business teams.

The most efficient way to keep track of issues is to create and maintain an issues log, or list of action items. Designating a point person or issue owner for each issue ensures that the job will get done. ●

How Great Teams Communicate

Great teams cannot be bothered with pseudocommunication. Here are the 10 common elements that make up the pattern of high-performance communication:

1. Clarity
2. Authenticity
3. Accuracy
4. Efficiency
5. Completeness
6. Timeliness
7. Focus
8. Openness
9. Action orientation
10. Depersonalization

Traits of High-Performing Communicators

Communication involves implicit and explicit messages. High-performing speakers make it easy for listeners; they do not play games or encode their messages. Whenever possible, they back up their statements with facts. They refrain from using emotionally charged language. They do not resort to euphemisms or doublespeak.

Here are 10 rules of thumb that great teams follow in whole or in part to help them manage virtual communications.

1. *Use the right medium for the message.* It is unacceptable to use e-mail to either raise an issue of concern/conflict or to engage in negotiations.
2. *Substitute active-reading for active-listening skills.* First ask, "Is the content of this message clear?" Then ask, "What are the underlying feelings being conveyed or implied?"
3. *Practice the Golden Rule.* In other words, think before you send.
4. *Respect confidentiality.* High-performing players never pass along a confidential e-mail to anyone not authorized to read it.
5. *Know when — and when not — to "cc."* Teams should agree on protocols for keeping others in

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the “cc” loop.

6. *Do not retain a rescuer.* Just as great teams do not permit face-to-face triangulation or recruitment of supporters, they frown on anyone circulating e-mails to third parties.
7. *Acknowledge the recipient.* High-performance players look for opportunities to congratulate or thank one another whenever possible, and e-mail can be a very effective medium for delivering positive feedback.
8. *Get to know your e-mail correspondents.* Electronic communications with team members you have never met in person are often easier when you build your relationship by sharing a personal detail or two.
9. *When in doubt, do not send.* Waiting 24 hours, then opening and rereading the message can prevent embarrassment and regret.
10. *Pack a parachute.* Great players are not afraid to bail out of e-mail, especially when they sense the undertow of strong emotion. ●

From Great Teams to a Great Organization

As you think about moving to a new leadership and operating model for your organization, consider the following five requirements for success:

1. *Keep it simple, stupid!* In our experience, organizations that have succeeded in going horizontal take a direct, straightforward path.
2. *Leaders must lead.* If the change to a high-performance, horizontal organization does not begin with the top leader and his or her leadership team, there is no point in continuing the process.
3. *Talk it up — and down — and every which way.* Any team within arm’s length of a newly aligned team must be brought into the circle.
4. *Do what works.* The organization’s needs should dictate the sequence in which high-performing teams are replicated.
5. *Create a high-performing culture.* Take stock of your values. Be a role model. Continue to communicate. Celebrate and reward success. And make it visible. ●

Great Leaders and Teams: Challenges, Responses and Remaining Issues

Overcoming Resistance to Change: One way to keep future shock from undermining your efforts to go

horizontal is to make sure that people have sufficient time to understand and absorb the change — and plenty of opportunities to ask questions.

When the Leader Gets a New Team: A word of caution for high-performing individuals attacking new roles: Do not try to conquer the world; start in your immediate area. Following are four practical tips taken from great leaders who have successfully met the onboarding challenge:

1. *Start at the beginning.* Great leaders play it straight right from the start by letting candidates know what to expect.
2. *Stay close.* One way to do this is by putting in place a weekly feedback session to answer questions and address needs and concerns.
3. *Role-model.*
4. *Provide mentors.*

Measuring Results: Revenue, profitability and return — the *what* of results — are important indicators of the value of the high-performance, horizontal model. But so is the *how* by which you achieve them, which is why great leaders are attentive to both the hard and soft factors and insist on measuring both.

Sustaining Momentum: The need to sustain high performance is a significant challenge, given all the forces at work in an organization — from strategic change to turnover — that can slow or even reverse momentum. Soul-searching and gathering like-minded souls represent an effective one-two combination for keeping energy up and momentum going. ●

Player-Centered Leadership

Great leaders know that there is no one “right way” to lead. Here is a brief description of each of the four leadership behaviors:

1. **Prescribing/Directing.** In horizontal, matrix organizations, where managers often need to get results from those over whom they have no direct authority, the ability to influence — to persuade others to change their points of view and behaviors so they are aligned with yours — is a critical skill.
2. **Coaching/Instructing.** By coaching players through tough issues, leaders help them develop the skills they will need to operate effectively on their own.
3. **Collaborating/Partnering.** While collaborating in a problem-solving or decision-making session, the leader can take the opportunity to do some additional coaching, increasing the skills and

Building a Great Organization the Redken Way

When L'Oréal bought Redken USA in 1993, the brand had slipped from number one in hair-color sales to number three or four. Four years later, despite a flurry of effort, not much had changed in terms of Redken's overall market position and bottom line. It decided to make a radical shift to the high-performance, horizontal model.

As a result, the senior team and the directors began to work together more seamlessly. By 2007, Redken had achieved 10 years of double-digit sales and profit growth — a record no other hair care company matched. Roles and responsibilities have become clearly delineated, eliminating interdepartmental tugs of war. People no longer hesitate to admit a mistake. Communication to customers has become more focused and on point. Customers view Redken as an organization that knows what it is doing.

confidence of those involved.

4. Inspiring/Empowering. Once again, it is the responsibility of the leader to make sure that those who will be held accountable for results are set up for success and not failure. ●

The Skills of a Great Team Member

When another person's needs are pressing, you need active listening skills. When your needs are pressing, you need assertion skills. When both people's needs are pressing, you need conflict management skills.

Using Active Listening Skills

Not focusing on those who come to us with a concern can bruise egos, but we add insult to injury by continually interrupting. In our desire to help someone — or cut short the conversation — we may come in too rapidly with our own opinion. Withdrawing is another deadly response. Body position, facial expression, and gestures such as head nodding and hand movements provide cues that you are tuned in — or out. "Say more" responses are phrases that encourage the speaker to tell you more about his or her ideas and feelings.

Using Assertion Skills

There are four skills that enable people to move toward the mid-point of assertion:

1. Persistence. It works best with salespeople, contribution seekers, telemarketers — people with whom you are not trying to cultivate lasting relationships,
2. Sidestepping. When you sidestep, you acknowledge that the other person may have a good point.
3. Straight talk. Put your statement into the following format: I want/need _____ because _____.
4. The three-part "I" response. When you deliver the message, it is most effective if you use the following formulation: When you _____ I feel _____ because _____.

Using Conflict-Management Skills

In every conflict situation, there are four options available:

1. Play the victim: say nothing, act powerless and complain.
2. Leave: physically remove yourself from involvement.
3. Change yourself: move from your position, and shift to the other party's view; "let it go."
4. Confront: address the issue openly, candidly and objectively; communicate with the other party.

Use an overall strategy — the Four C's approach — for confrontation:

1. Connect: Establish a rapport with the other party by addressing the issue between you openly and candidly and asserting yourself.
2. Clarify: Seek to understand by active listening and exploring all points of view.
3. Confirm: Reach mutual agreement as to what each party wants and needs and establish your willingness to collaborate.
4. Contract: Negotiate agreements for future interaction. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Great Business Teams*, you'll also like:

1. ***People Styles at Work*** by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Bolton. Everyone fits into one of four personality groups. Know which one you are in and how to deal with others.
2. ***Mastering Business Negotiation*** by Roy J. Lewicki and Alexander Hiam. Learn the skills of and techniques of the "master negotiator" that are essential for resolving conflict and handling difficult conversations.
3. ***The 360 Degree Leader*** by John Maxwell. Become a 360 degree leader and learn to develop your influence from wherever you are in the organization.