

PART FOUR

Deliberately Building Teams with Superpowers



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One of the greatest misconceptions in leadership is that high-performing organisations are built by high-performing leaders.

They are not.

They are built by high-performing teams.

For much of the Third Industrial Revolution our focus has quite rightly been on results; Meet the KPI, improve productivity, increase efficiency, deliver today's targets.

Without those things organisations simply cannot survive.

The problem has never been our focus on results. **The problem is believing that results alone define great leadership.**

A leader can produce impressive short-term performance through systems, supervision and control.

People comply. -> Targets are achieved. -> The organisation functions.

But as we move into an increasingly complex, technology-enabled world, compliance will never be enough.

The organisations that will thrive over the long-term will need people who are adaptable, creative, resilient, curious, technologically capable and committed to continuous learning.

Above all, they will need people who are intrinsically motivated, not people who perform because someone is watching, but people who perform because excellence has become part of who they are.

That changes the leader's question completely. It is no longer, "How do I get people to perform?"

It becomes, ***"How do I deliberately build a team that naturally performs at its best?"***

Research into intrinsic motivation suggests that people perform at their best when three fundamental human needs are progressively met.

They feel **connected** to something meaningful. They become increasingly **competent** in what they do. And, as that competence grows, they are trusted with increasing **autonomy**.

While researchers describe these needs in different ways, the underlying principle is remarkably consistent: people become energised when motivation comes from within rather than being imposed from outside.

That observation has profoundly influenced our work.

Throughout this series we have argued that leaders create experiences, those experiences build connection, connection builds trust, trust earns influence and influence creates psychological safety.

Psychological safety creates the conditions in which intrinsic motivation can flourish. This is not an accidental process, it is deliberate. Leadership is a discipline.

Like every professional craft, leadership develops through practice.

The musician becomes better by playing. The artist becomes better by painting. The athlete becomes better by training. The leader becomes better by leading, reflecting and practising again.

Initially we bring our behaviour into conscious awareness. We deliberately practise better ways of leading and over time those behaviours become habits. Eventually they become part of who we are.

Great leadership is not instinctive. It is practised until it becomes instinctive.

I once interviewed the CEO of Volkswagen South Africa and asked him how he continued to grow as a leader. His answer has stayed with me for years.

He said that every evening, as he drove home, he asked himself one simple question: "How did I lead my people today?"

That question captures the essence of deliberate leadership. Great leaders do not simply lead. They reflect, they learn, they adjust.

Bruce Tuckman's model reminds us that teams develop through stages of *forming, storming, norming* and *performing*.

Our experience suggests that this is not a once-off journey. Every new employee starts again, every promotion changes the dynamics, and every resignation reshapes the team.

The leader's responsibility is therefore not simply to build a team. It is to continually help every individual move through that journey.

Connection. -> Competence. -> Autonomy. -> Trust. -> Reflection. -> Growth.

Over time the team begins to energise itself. Experienced members develop newcomers, standards become self-reinforcing, learning becomes continuous. The leader no longer supplies all the energy. The team does.

That is what we mean by a team with superpowers.

Trust-based leadership is sometimes misunderstood as being soft, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Great leaders are uncompromising about standards. They confront poor performance, they make difficult decisions, and, when necessary, they remove people who are unwilling or unable to contribute.

The difference lies not in accountability. The difference lies in sequence. Trust-based leaders first do everything within their power to create an environment in which people can succeed.

They connect. -> They coach. -> They develop competence. -> They gradually increase autonomy. -> They create trust. -> Only then does accountability become completely fair.

Leadership requires both compassion and courage.

The two are not opposites, they are partners. Ultimately, creating teams with superpowers is not about finding extraordinary people.

It is about deliberately creating an environment in which ordinary people consistently become extraordinary together.

In our final article we step back from individual leaders and individual teams to ask one final question.

How do organisations deliberately build cultures where trust, influence and intrinsic motivation simply become the way people work?

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