LEADERSHIP
Excellence
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> "Guttman Development Strategies puts high-performance back into leadership."
> —Ken Shelton, editor / publisher since 1984, *Leadership Excellence* magazine

Performance

Are you a high performance leader? This Special Edition of Leadership Excellence contains seven articles by Howard M. Guttman, CEO of Guttman Development Strategies. Use them as a Learning Module by doing the facilitation and application exercises on page 8. Start with a clear picture of what a high performance team looks like.

HOWARD M. GUTTMAN

Change breeds fear. It is difficult for people to embrace your vision of some new tomorrow, no matter how brightly you paint it, when they remain frozen in fear. Managing *the fear of change* is a top priority for high-performing leaders.

High-performance leaders have confidence in their ability, but recognize that others also make valuable contributions. They easily *share authority* and *empower others* to make decisions. Ego-centric leaders come

from a place of fear: the fear of losing control and never getting it back.

Decision making, the ability to choose the right path among competing alternatives, remains a quality of effective leadership. But, today, *not making decisions*—asking others to assume accountability for them—has become a sign of high-performance leadership.

High-performance leaders clear bottlenecks, gain momentum, and resolve issues rapidly by having a

disciplined *issue-resolution process*. Reluctance to tackle issues, take a stand, or confront colleagues can result in failure to avert problems and seize opportunities.

Feedback need not be a negative experience for the leader who receives it or the players who give it. When players deliver it in the right spirit—*feedback*, not *feedattack*—and the leader takes it as constructive criticism and acts on it, the team is the winner.

How can you transform

your meetings from *dull* to *dynamic*? **Insist on several behavior-related protocols.** *Everyone* follows the *agreed-upon rules* and holds each other accountable for promised deliverables and results. Such protocols can transform meetings from *mind-numbing* to *memorable*.

In executive coaching, the mentor plays a critical role by offering advice, lending moral support, observing, providing feedback on progress, smoothing the way when the road gets rough, and providing forward thrust as *coachees* move toward their intention.

Overcome Resistance

G i v e   c h a n c e   t o   s u c c e e d .

by Howard M. Guttman

WHAT PROMPTS PEOple to do what they do? Why do they behave in a certain way? What causes them to overcome fear and inertia to follow some new, untraveled path?

These are complex questions. We don't have scientifically valid answers for how organizations can change the behavior of those who show up each day in varying states of readiness, willingness, and ability to shift paradigms and routines.

What we can offer are practical tips —a kind of results verification—that come from great leaders who have overcome resistance to change to take their teams to a very different place.

• *Be reassuring.* Not surprisingly, change, especially in lean times, breeds fear. It is difficult for people to embrace your vision of some new tomorrow, no matter how brightly you paint it, when they remain frozen in fear.

Managing the fear of change is a top priority for high-performing leaders, who know that "greatness" requires making deep organizational and personal change. When Grant Reid, now global president, Mars Drinks, was faced with the challenge of turning around sales at Mars' Snack unit, he first went directly to associates—especially those whose leader had been replaced by Reid, to reassure them.

Reid set up one-on-one meetings with his VPs and their direct reports to explain his vision for the future and ask for their help in achieving it. He encouraged them to express their feelings about the changes by asking questions: "How are you feeling? What are you thinking about your future here? What are your major concerns?"

Listening to the answers, Reid realized that people wanted reassurance that their future was secure. He carefully explained what was going to change and what their role would be going forward. He let people know the end game; let them know they would have a hand in bringing it about. Before long, they were fully committed to Reid's plan.

• *Pace change.* People can only deal with so many changes before they go into "Future Shock." One way to keep Future Shock from undermining your efforts to implement change is to make sure that people have sufficient time to understand and absorb the upcoming move to the high-performance model— and to give them plenty of opportunity to ask questions. As Axcan Pharma's CEO, Frank Verwiel, reminds us, "It's a challenge to strike the right balance between getting people to change enough to make a difference and not making so many changes that they become paralyzed."

There is no formula for finding that balance. High-performing leaders know how to weigh the business case for the change and its urgency with how far the organization must travel to get

there. They also know how to convey to everyone that moving horizontally is the "real deal" rather than just another this-too-shall pass initiative.

Bottom-line lesson for leaders: Keep in mind that change doesn't just happen—it happens to people.

• *Tie-in self-interest.* People are more apt to change when there are incentives to do so—and disincentives for clinging to old habits. What will the high-performing model mean in terms of how players in an organization earn their living and live their professional life? What's the cash value to them? What are the rewards in terms of their career, their ability to operate freely, to tap their creative energy, and to express themselves freely without all the task interference of a siloed, hierarchical environment?

Brian Camastral, regional president, Latin America for Mars, Inc., is a superb consequence thinker—a skill that he

uses adeptly in managing high-performance change. Imagine, he asked his change-shy team members, if we could create a situation in which each of the decentralized geographical units could work together as an area-wide team, continue to operate independently, and yet improve individual unit results?

Camastral got his team's attention. He then made the business case for aligning each unit's strategy with Mars' global strategy. Camastral took his top team through an alignment session, which barreled home the point that with each unit working off the same strategic plan, parts would be more interchangeable, allowing for cross-border mutual assistance. Executives on his team realized that they would remain accountable and be rewarded for their unit's results, not the region's, but their unit's results would improve, given a freer flow of talent. "The attitude began to shift," says Camastral, "until everyone wanted to be on the winning team, and they were all determined to make it work, individually and collectively."

When Paul Parker was vice president of HR for Colgate-Palmolive's Africa-Middle East Division, he was charged with reining in the South African team of "mavericks" who enjoyed the rough-and-tumble of the local marketplace. The only problem: The region wanted to play a more robust corporate role and become a global supplier for CP, which it couldn't do if it remained at its current level.

Enter the universal motivator: self-interest. When it was pointed out to the South Africans that they would never be viewed by corporate as a source of talent for the global organization, they realized that their behavior wasn't in their own best interests. They asked: "How do we accelerate our careers within CP?" The answer: "By demonstrating high-performance behaviors." They began to do so.

Then there is that effective, stand-by carrot: pay for team performance. Many companies now reward both results *and* how they are achieved. In one company, 40 percent of compensation depends on "soft" behaviors: authenticity, following protocols, depersonalizing, holding others' accountable, being receptive to feedback. And it really helps people take that leap of faith onto a new path. **LE**

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ACTION: Reward results and how they're achieved.

Egocentric Leaders

Are you stuck on the ego floor?

by Howard M. Guttman

SOME PEOPLE ARE PATH-ologically egocentric. No matter what you do, they'll have an excessive need to *be in control, assert themselves at the expense of others*, and *be the center of attention*.

For example, I recently worked with the president of a financial services company who always had to be center stage. His team members were highly competent and experienced, but he refused to accept their advice or listen to their points of view. Worse, he often took credit for their accomplishments or berated them in front of clients when they dared to disagree with him. Not surprisingly, his narcissistic behavior began to rankle clients, who one by one began moving to other companies.

The term *ego* evokes both condemnation and praise. It's defined both as an "*exaggerated sense of self importance, conceit*" and "*appropriate pride in oneself, self-esteem*." It's helpful to think of the sense of self, or ego, on a continuum: on one extreme are people whose low self-esteem keeps them from asserting themselves, expressing their point of view, and making decisions. With little or no confidence in their ability to do the right thing, they avoid doing anything. On the other extreme are those who think so highly of themselves and their judgment that they see no need to ever involve others in their decision making or planning. They act—and direct others to act—without ever asking for additional input.

High-performance leaders fall in the center of the ego continuum: They have confidence in their ability, but recognize that others also make valuable contributions. They easily *share authority* and *empower others* to make decisions. They know that they can *choose* to relinquish control and, if necessary, get it back. They come from a place of *strength* and *conviction*. Ego-centric leaders come from a place of fear: the fear of losing control and never getting it back.

Conscious leaders recognize that working horizontally is the best way to increase their probability of success.
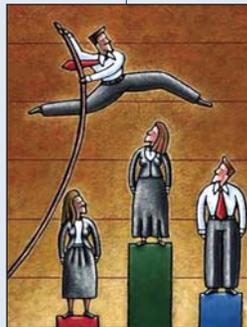
They have the *emotional intelligence* (EQ) to *enroll rather direct* those they lead. Sadly, some leaders who score high on IQ tests fail miserably on EQ measures. They're so self-involved, so concerned with their own image that they fail to see how their egocentric behavior limits the results they achieve through others. I try to raise the consciousness of leaders whose *elevator is stuck at the ego floor,* preventing them and their team from ascending to higher performance. They need to see *how* their ego is getting in the way, not *why*.

I've never coached an executive who said, "I have an ego problem." Most ego-centric leaders are aware that they don't feel good about where they are, that they have a hard time letting go of control and delegating, that it is hard for them to acknowledge others' contributions. But they haven't made the connection between their *unhealthy ego* and their *unsatisfactory performance*. Getting them to see it starts with identifying the behaviors that impede performance, then probing why they engage in these behaviors. Are they aware that they are choosing them? What is the price they are paying? It isn't until they become fully aware of the *balance sheet*— the benefits vs. the costs of indulging their ego—that they can make changes.

The ultimate goal: a leader who wants his or her team to be made up not of followers, but of other leaders. The difference between a high-performance leader and one who is ego driven was clear to me when I heard about the way several teams in one client organization made presentations to its Board. In presenting his group's plan for the year, one team leader put on a one-man show. It was a dazzling performance, but it left the board wondering how any team could withstand the onslaught of such a *supercharged* ego.

Another leader shared the stage. Each player presented the portion of the plan that related to his or her function and, as the subject-matter expert, provided in-depth responses to questions that the leader wasn't nearly as well prepared to answer. And they got rave reviews from the Board.

One leader was *stuck on the ego floor*; the other rode past it. In your leadership, what would your ride be like? **LE**

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ACTION: Tame the ego to create other leaders.

Making Decisions

Get others to make some.

by Howard M. Guttman

DECISION MAKING, THE ability to choose the right path among competing alternatives, remains a quality of effective leadership. But, today, *not making decisions*—asking others to assume accountability for them—has become a sign of high-performance leadership.

Decision overload tires you out. Having one person make multiple daily decisions can lead to *decision fatigue*, since the more choices you make in a day, the harder each one becomes. The typical reaction is to shortcut the decision-making process by either acting impulsively or doing nothing at all.

Having others make decisions is smart. It leverages capabilities around you. Today's global enterprises are too vast and complex for one-person rule, and the *immense data flow* makes it impossible for any *one* person or team to intelligently make all calls.

As a high-performance leader, you can effectively pass the decision-making baton *without shirking your responsibilities* in five ways:

1. Create the right context. Delegation fright is understandable. If those below are not in sync with the strategy and capable of shouldering the burden of decision making, *delegation becomes a roll of the dice*. In high-performance cultures, decisions are not so much *delegated* as *distributed*, under *controlled conditions*, to teams. Leaders can be confident making decision handoffs when teams are: *tightly aligned with strategy, accountable for the team's success, clear on goals and responsibilities, agreed upon decision-making protocols*, and *transparent in relationships*.

2. Set decision-making ground rules. If you're planning to hand off decision-making responsibility to a team, your delegation *fright index* will rise if you know that there is confusion regarding *who* is going to make decisions and *how*. Such confusion reduces speed and efficiency, lessens accountability, and creates *decision waffle*, where team members spend more time bickering about who is the *decider* than thinking through *the nature of the deci-*

sion and *its implications*.

To increase the speed and efficiency of its decisions, teams must agree on *who* should be involved in making a decision. For example, which decisions will be made: *Unilaterally*—by one person, with no input? *Consultatively*—by one person, after soliciting input from a few people who will add value? *By consensus*—everyone has input and must live with the outcome? For each key decision, team members must agree on which of the three decision modes applies; otherwise, *confusion*, *hard feelings*, and *subterfuge* reign.

3. Use a common decision-making process. Decision making is a discipline that can be transferred. When distributing decision-making, ensure that those you involve all work off *the same script* and follow *the same systematic process*: first define the decision, then lay out the objectives, generate alternatives, and consider the benefits and risks of each. This will increase your confidence that every decision maker touches all the right bases before coming to a conclusion. It will also make it much easier to review others' decisions.

4. Streamline. Examine the *processes* for making decisions. What's the lag time between *asking teams to make decisions*, *having those decisions made and approved*, and *then implementing them*? Wherever there is a need for information sharing and handoffs, you'll find overlapping, competing systems, processes, procedures, layers, interface structures, coordination bodies, and decision approvals. Such complexity retards decision making and demotivates. *Distributing decisions* is one thing; *enabling implementation* is quite another.

5. Provide the right venues. Once decision-making protocol and process are in place, let teams attack real decisions that make a difference. Think of *intact teams* as platforms for decision making. *Are the teams aligned? Do team members know how to ask the right questions, process information, and test the integrity of their conclusions? Have you removed complexity, so there's a clear line of sight from start to end of the process?*

Once teams are aligned and members are equipped with the know-how, and once noise in the system has been removed, they relieve decision-making pressure up the line and create a powerhouse for making the decisions that will get you to *where you want to be.* LE

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ACTION: Delegate some decision making.

Issue Management
Go the high-performance way.

by Howard M. Guttman

Since the speed at which issues are resolved can make or break your company, you need to confront the practice of "parking" troublesome issues, placing them on long lists. It's a battle on many fronts: a culture that doesn't reinforce accountability, reluctance to tackle thorny issues or take a stand, fear of confronting colleagues. The result is failure to avert problems and seize opportunities.

High-performance leaders of great teams clear the bottlenecks, gain momentum, and resolve issues rapidly by having a logical, disciplined issue-resolution process—such as this one:

Defining issues. In full group, the leader defines an issue as *a threat or opportunity for which some action must be taken by me and/or other members of the team.*

Identifying issues. Team members generate a list of all the issues confronting the team and/or each of them as a member of the team. The leader captures the discussion and keeps the list visible for the team.

Clarifying issues: Team members review the issues to ensure specificity, asking: Is each issue clear and specific? Do issues need to be further divided? Is the issue actionable—is it stated in a way that an action can be taken?

Setting priorities: The list of issues is reviewed to identify High, Medium, and Low priorities, by asking: What's the *impact* of the issue—on the organization, team, department, competitive position, or completion of a mission-critical project? How *urgent* is it?

Action planning. An action plan is laid out by the team, starting with high-priority items. For each issue, the plan includes: *Selecting a subteam*: The fewest number of people required for closure. *Identifying the primary owner of the issue*: someone who is process-focused, able to depersonalize, has sufficient time, is adept at involving others. Determine major steps needed to gain closure. Agree on key deliverables. Establish timeline/milestones. Plan to communi-

cate results. Resist the jump-to-resolution temptation. "List but do not resolve" is a good rule.

Keeping it visible. "Out of sight, out of mind" is a danger to teams when trying to track issues. Great team leaders don't allow issues to fall off the radar screen. They make sure that, once an issue is identified and an action plan made, it gets resolved, period.

To keep track of issues, create and maintain an issues log, or list of action items. A log includes the date the issue was added, a short description of it, the person responsible for resolution, the date scheduled to be cleared, and a notes column. You might list the people with whom the issue's owner needs to partner or who need to weigh in; briefly describe the action plan; identify people who are likely to get in the way. Update the log after every meeting, or between meetings, and send the updated log, with the agenda, several days before each meeting so team members can review it, prepare questions, and give thought to issues they feel should be added or addressed.

Focusing on accountability. Designating a point person or issue owner for each issue ensures that the job will get done. Each time the log is reviewed, there is no hiding. The point person is accountable for reporting progress.

When you follow this issue-resolution model, your meetings are focused on specific issues; and at the end of each meeting, you decide on next steps in a follow-up plan. Holding people accountable for commitments made in meetings adds value to the process.

Accountability can mean coming forward to discuss the need for a midcourse correction: If it's clear that the plan in place won't lead to the desired results in the desired time, redesign the project, adding monthly milestones at which you check each team member's progress to ensure you achieve your goals on time. If the point person fails to step up with full disclosure, peer-to-peer accountability kicks in.

As your leadership team becomes more adept, when items appear, they are handled and quickly disappear. Resolution, not stagnation, becomes the norm. That's the benefit of managing issues the high-performance way. LE

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ACTION: Manage issues this HP way.

Accepting Feedback

It's a challenge for all leaders.

by Howard M. Guttman

LEADERS OFTEN EXPERience difficulty in doing away with the traditional leader-follower model and moving to a horizontal approach where the leader and team members agree to play by a new set of ground rules.

When we asked Helen McCluskey, president of Warnaco's Intimate Apparel and Swimwear Group, about creating a horizontal, high-performance team, she responded, "My toughest challenge is learning how to deal with negative feedback. At first, I took it well on the outside, but then overanalyzed, dwelled on it, and catastrophized it."

In theory, leaders understand the need for everyone on the team to possess the leadership skills and authority formerly reserved for the leader alone. That authority includes the right and the obligation to call one another—or their leader—on behaviors that compromise business results. But this new notion of accountability is easier understood than practiced. The leader needs to learn how to receive feedback, and the team needs to feel comfortable delivering it.

Three Actions to Take

Here are three actions you can take to lessen the discomfort for both sides.

1. Give them the green light. Knowing how difficult it is for people to give him negative feedback, Larry Allgaier, CEO of Novartis's Global OTC business, makes it easy. "If I have an inkling that something is troubling someone," he explains, "I initiate a conversation that makes it easy for them to give me the feedback. For example, I called our GM in France and said, 'I don't think I'm as connected with the European GMs as I need to be. What do you think?'" Knowing he had "permission" to deliver honest feedback, the GM didn't hold back. His response: "You're right, Larry. I understand that the developing markets may need you more this year, but we would like to see you in our countries more often."

Allgaier believes that, "Getting good feedback, honest and timely, is hard for any executive because of the natural fear in the system. You have to disarm people if you want the truth, and the faster you can get the truth, the faster you can apply the learning."

In contrast to Allgaier's informal approach, Joe Amado, past CIO of Philip Morris USA, formalized the feedback process. Every year, he asked members of his IT team to complete a "leadership scorecard" on him. "It's like 360-degree feedback, but it's not on paper. It's person to person." Joe kicked off a half-day meeting, then left team members to confer and answer questions in four categories: How well does Amado allocate resources? Provide direction? Build capabilities? Give feedback on performance?

They gave him their honest feed-

back, and Amado carefully considered their input and made adjustments to progress toward high performance.

2. Don't take it personally. As chief learning officer for Mars, Jon Shepherd is part of the global people and organization (HR) team. One post-alignment session included a review of the team's answers to the questions, "How would you rate your leader's performance, and what does he need to do differently to improve it?" Shepherd believes that the team's leader showed bravery in the way he handled the feedback.

"Hearing these things can shake you up and raise doubts about your abilities," says Shepherd, "but our leader never got rattled or became defensive. He just listened. He didn't try to explain or excuse himself; he didn't try to provide solutions. He just absorbed it." The leader then led a follow-up session in which he first "reflected" back the team's concerns; then, they jointly identified actions they could take to address the situation.

Shepherd's team leader was textbook perfect: He depersonalized the group's comments, treating them as a "business case" rather than an attack.

Depersonalizing feedback was hard for Roy Anise, former VP and GM of Chrysalis Technologies, a division of Philip Morris USA, and his team. He says: "Their self-worth always seemed to be on trial. They didn't understand that being questioned didn't imply being criticized personally." Anise helped the team break out of this mindset by role-modeling willingness to take accountability for his performance and depersonalizing feedback. He told them that, if they saw him not living up to his commitments and came to him with that feedback, he would view it as a gift. He even distributed a number of Starbucks gift cards to his team and asked them to give one back to him each time he transgressed, so they would feel as though they were giving him a gift.

3. Act on their comments. Being open to feedback is one thing—acting on it is an even bigger challenge. When Roy Anise received candid feedback from the members of his team, he was surprised to learn that they judged him to be far more aggressive than he believed he was. He received similar feedback from his boss, which spurred him to seek coaching.

During his first session with the coach, Anise explained that he was unsure of how his team was progressing and where he needed to take it.

The coach commented, "I have no idea what you're thinking. I can see why people who work for you feel the same sense of not knowing what's going on with you and why they're intimidated."

Anise bristled at the exchange. But a day later, he contacted the coach to thank him for his insight. As Anise said about his coach, "He exposed me, and initially I didn't like it; but I needed to hear it." Once Anise had seen himself as others saw him, he could begin making changes. As he projected a more open, receptive image, his team became more comfortable offering opinions and raising objections.

Feedback need not be a negative experience for the leader who receives it or the players who give it. When players deliver it in the right spirit—*feedback*, not *feedattack*—and the leader takes it as constructive criticism and acts on it, the team ends the winner. LE

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ACTION: Take these actions during feedback.

Leading Meetings 101

Transform them from dull to dynamic.

by Howard M. Guttman

Here's how Mars, Inc.'s president, *Paul Michaels*, describes his global team's meetings in the pre-high-performance days: "We wasted a lot of time in meetings. There was no rationale to the agenda, so we never dealt with the actual issues. We dealt with a lot of small issues, but not with the big ones or the right ones. . . People either didn't say anything or quickly became disengaged. Our global meetings were viewed as energy-draining and unproductive."

Now Michaels' team hews to a new high-performance, horizontal model. Meetings are no longer energy-drainers but swift-moving, productive sessions in which key issues are put on the table. If an issue isn't resolved on the spot, a plan for resolution is put in place and reviewed the next time the group convenes. As a result, the team is now working at peak efficiency.

How can you transform your meetings from dull to dynamic?

Start With Protocols

There are many meeting devils: weak leaders; unruly participants; unclear objectives; no agenda; cell-phoneitis; distractions, detours. Great teams eliminate such barriers by setting up specific, hard-and-fast rules for the following aspects of meetings:

• *How often will the team meet and how long will meetings last?* I once attended a regularly scheduled meeting of *Ken Bloom*'s senior team at INTTRA, Inc., which had been working in high-performance mode for the past 12 months. The agenda, circulated in advance, called for eight segments, each laid out with subpoints; point person; length of time for discussion, status, and actions. Within each segment, the point person reported on the status of work on key issues and, where necessary, solicited ideas and assistance from the group.

In three hours, INTTRA's senior team discussed each issue— from IT to product management to ocean schedules. They questioned each presenter, made suggestions, and pointed out potential problems and opportunities. It was an impressive testament to the speed and effectiveness at which an *aligned team* works to conduct business.

• *Where will the team meet?* This is not a big issue for teams located near one another. Here, the most attention needs to be paid to "hygienic" factors, such as meeting room atmospherics, layout, temperature and ventilation. But there's more to the "where" when dealing with a team whose members are not co-located. Global teams face special challenges when it comes to meetings, and creativity is a must if far-flung members are to become at-a-distance great teams. The team must meet face to face as often as possible. To do so, piggyback team meetings onto other functions. Consider meeting in regional offices to give personnel in remote locations a chance to meet the members of the global team and to showcase their operations.

When they can't be in one location, patching remote members in by phone or videoconference provides valuable interaction—if you keep in mind time zones, non-U.S. holidays, and local religious observances when scheduling.

• *Who will lead meetings?* As VP of Wal-Mart's *Global People Division*, **Craig Williams** describes how one leader's style compromised meetings where he once worked. The leader "went through agenda items one by one, asking for discussion. The people who were comfortable with him spoke up; the rest remained silent. He listened—although he often showed annoyance or frustration—then made a decision." Williams says that when the team became a high-performing one, you could no longer identify the leader during meetings. "A strong, effective leader is likely one of the least vocal people in the room. He or she doesn't hold court, direct conversation, or make decisions on agenda items."

On many great teams, there is a different "leader" at each meeting. Some teams rotate the role. Other teams let the content determine the leader: Whoever is most—or least—affected by or familiar with the issues to be discussed will lead the discussion. Still others employ the services of a facilitator, who "owns" the process of the meeting and keeps the group on track.

• *How will the agenda be set? By whom?* Before the transformation of Williams' team, the leader set the agenda for meetings. Afterward, the agenda was "built by the team." That's standard on a great team: Whoever is leading the meeting sets the agenda, with the input of others on the team.

Ken Bloom's experience verifies the team approach to agenda setting. "We were planning a big meeting with all our ocean carriers," Bloom recounts. "When I queried team members about what the meeting objectives should be, I got a different answer from each person. It wasn't until we agreed on objectives that we came up with a tight, meaningful agenda."

An agenda for meetings might include: review the goals; business update; progress-check on issues identified previously; reports of sub-teams assigned to them; decisions or next steps; identify new issues; identify players to resolve them; accountabilities and time-lines; plan meeting follow-up; agreement on the message(s) the team will convey; and check on protocols, asking "How are we doing?"

Note the *bias toward action* in the agenda. There is no time for the usual FYI round-robin reporting of activities.

Set Some Behavioral Protocols

Meeting protocols deal mostly with logistics. But as Williams points out, "You can be disciplined and still be dysfunctional. Some poor-performing teams have protocols around meeting times, agendas, and minutes, but none that address meeting behaviors."

Great teams insist on several behavior-related protocols: • The meeting starts on time, with or without you. • If you can't make it, send a substitute. • Cell phones are off; laptops and hand-helds are out. • No digressions; if someone raises a new issue, it's *parked;* • No side conversations. • Everyone participates. • Everyone follows the agreed-upon rules for conflict resolution. • All players hold all others—and the leader—accountable for promised deliverables and results. Such protocols can transform your meetings from *mind-numbing* to *memorable.*   **LE**

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ACTION: Make your meetings memorable.

Mentoring Leaders

What makes an effective mentor?

by Howard M. Guttman

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, people have gone to mentors for counseling and guidance. *Socrates* was mentor to *Plato*. *Julius Caesar* mentored *Marc Antony*. *Ralph Waldo Emerson* served as an inspiration to *Henry David Thoreau*.

In business, mentors have likewise had a dramatic influence on talent.

In executive coaching, the mentor plays a critical role by offering advice, lending moral support, observing, providing feedback on progress, smoothing the way when the road gets rough, and providing forward thrust as *coachees* move toward their Intention.

Having the right person in this role is vital; so, in our coaching assignments we ensure that mentors meet specific criteria. Whether you are a manager who is arranging coaching for one of your staff, a leader who is considering serving as a mentor, or a candidate for coaching, you should seek these same traits in a mentor.

A mentor needs to be someone: whom the coachee trusts and respects; with whom the coachee is comfortable; who is in a position to observe the coachee's on-the-job behavior consistently; who doesn't hold back and will not hesitate to give coachees candid feedback; and who has their best interests and success at heart.

When I first meet with a coachee, the mentor is present. The three of us discuss *observations* or *aspirations* that led to the coaching. Together, we project *what success will look like*. We either ask, *What new behaviors will replace old, dysfunctional ones?* or *What new capabilities do you want to possess at the end of the coaching experience?* We then select colleagues from whom we'll solicit *data* on the coachee's behaviors and *suggestions* for improving performance.

As the coach, I form questions to ask these colleagues and summarize the information that they give me and feed it back to the coachee. The mentor is present when I give feedback to the coachee, so that he or she has *a complete picture of what needs to be achieved*. The three of us then develop a plan to either replace the behaviors in question or develop the needed capabilities. Finally, we agree on a schedule of phone calls and visits to track progress.

One key role of the mentor is *shadow coach*. Since I'm present only at scheduled intervals, I have limited time to observe the coachee and provide real-time feedback. In my absence, the mentor acts as another set of eyes and ears, pointing out both progress and setbacks. In some cases, the mentor can provide suggestions for dealing with setbacks in real time; at other times, all the mentor can do is ensure that the issue is addressed in our next three-way phone call or face-to-face meeting.

As an executive coach, I've met several mentors who stand out because they added so much value:

• One executive required constant prodding to take action, and his first reaction was to make excuses for his inertia. When his boss, an excellent mentor, saw this, she would say, "It seems like you are still playing out the same game." Her feedback was timely, specific, and *focused on corrective action*.

• One coachee often *alienated coworkers* by his aggressive style. The first time I sat down with him and his mentor, he began to defend his behavior. His mentor countered with, "The way you're reacting to this feedback is the same way you behave with others. You believe that you need to *justify your behavior*, so you explain yourself rather than capture their point of view. Why is that?" She asked one provocative question after another until he stopped talking and started listening.

• When her company made an acquisition in Asia, a marketing executive realized that she needed to dial up her ability to *work cross-culturally*. She asked a VP who had worked abroad for years to serve as her mentor. He zeroed in on two capabilities that she needed to develop: *the ability to give feedback diplomatically* and *the ability to influence*. Through one-on-one *advice and practice sessions*, the executive learned to give feed*back* without it becoming feed*attack* and to get buy-in by raising questions.

I know a mentor is doing great when I deliver feedback and the coachee responds, "I know. *I've already talked about that with my mentor*," or when I check in and the coachee says, "My mentor suggested that you and I discuss . . ." **LE**

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ACTION: Become an effective mentor of others.

1. Read these seven articles and report on them, including the author's major ideas and recommendations.

2. What does Howard Guttman recommend to create a culture of high performance?

3. Combine ideas from these articles, along with team member recommendations, for application.

4. What ideas are most relevant and rewarding for our organization? Who will facilitate the application of these ideas in our organization?

5. How can we best apply them (excellence in action)?

6. Who will assigned to do what by when with what accountability (action items)?

7. How will we measure and report results?