



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR BUILDING A HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENT



Presented by Bill Hogg and Associates

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Building a high performance work environment requires delicate handling of a number of different leadership levers. In a competitive market where few companies enjoy a competitive advantage based on a product or service, it is the work environment built around extraordinary people with shared values and a collective sense of purpose that creates a competitive advantage that cannot be duplicated.

Leaders who master the management of these levers are successful in creating a work environment characterized by increased productivity, loyal customers and improved business results.

In this whitepaper we will examine some of the essential elements necessary to create, maintain and grow a high performing work environment that will drive business growth.

FOUR LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS THAT BUILD HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Focusing on the small fixes will not put out the fire. Instead, this approach only takes up your time and leads to your company losing sight of larger, more important issues.

Successful companies understand that achieving success is about addressing larger culture issues within the organization. Getting your organizational culture right is what leads to building a high performance work environment. This starts with leadership.

A HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENT STARTS WITH LEADERSHIP



The most important component of a high performance work environment is people. Engaged and motivated people, when supported by appropriate tools, resources, and leadership will help your company achieve the desired results.

The reality is the drive and motivation you expect from your employees is not always there. Without the proper guidance, support, and a clear vision of what is expected of them, employees are not going to create the results you want. And, how can you expect them to? They are often unclear on where you want to go. They are looking for leaders to guide them. This is why high performance work environments start with leadership.

Your primary role as a leader is to create an environment where your team can be successful. If you want them to thrive in their role, not only do you need to understand what they require to be successful; you need to give it to them.

YOUR PRIMARY ROLE AS A LEADER IS TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOUR TEAM CAN BE SUCCESSFUL.

LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS TO CREATE A HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT

As a leader it is your role to shape organizational culture and create a high performance environment. This is accomplished through four vital behaviours:



DEVELOP A CLEAR INSPIRING VISION

The first step in any journey is deciding where you want to go. Without the end in mind, you are just wandering around and could end up anywhere. Having clarity in your own mind of where you want to end up is essential to developing a plan to achieve your goal.

Your vision should be something you have a personal passion for achieving. After all, it will be hard work and not easily achieved -- so if you are not inspired you will soon lose your motivation and those around you will quickly lose theirs as well.

COMMUNICATE AN INSPIRING VISION

Communicating an inspiring vision is more than simply talking about it or putting up posters on the wall. It is living the vision. As a leader you need to model the attitudes and behaviours you expect from your team. Importantly, you need to make the vision part of the everyday conversation, so it isn't simply words on a wall -- but an attitude that supports a clear picture of where you want the organization to go.

If you cannot clearly communicate your vision, your employees will lack direction and will adopt their own version of what they “think” your vision might be.

An inspiring vision needs to be articulated clearly and with passion if you want your employees to connect, adopt, and accept it. Your employees must understand two things about your vision for the company:

1. How their role in the company contributes to your vision
2. What is expected of them in their role within the company

If these points are not clear, their level of engagement and motivation will suffer. You as a leader need to take specific and intentional action to ensure employees understand their role in order to increase their level of engagement and strengthen their commitment to the company.

CONTINUOUSLY CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO REMAIN FOCUSED ON THE VISION

Keeping your employees focused and engaged is challenging. It is critical they place the company vision and goals above their own personal motivations.

Don't be afraid to hold your employees to a high standard. Make it clear that you expect quality results and challenge them to exceed expectations. Employees with easily achieved performance expectations can get lazy and lose their momentum and that leads to a dip in performance.

You need to set expectations that are aspirational but achievable, and then provide the support they need to achieve your vision and maintain a high level of performance. Offer coaching, training and challenge employees by offering performance incentives.

PROVIDE SUPPORT TO ACHIEVE YOUR VISION

Without proper support your vision will fall flat and your company's performance will suffer as a result. Your company vision is not a “create it and forget it” exercise. It is something that strengthens over time as your company evolves.

Support comes from coaching and providing feedback to help employees do their job at a high level and to ensure their actions are aligned with the company's vision. And, achievements that further the company vision need to be recognized to maintain employee engagement into the future.

While many companies are effective at creating a clear vision and communicating it to their employees, it is the support function that often gets overlooked. Revisit how you provide support to the employees in your organization.



THREE WAYS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE IN HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS

Consistently challenging your team and setting the bar high is only effective if you have the proper support in place. Failure to have a level of support that matches your expectations will not only make it difficult for individuals to meet their targets, it will also create an unnecessary source of stress internally.

THREE KEY WAYS TO SUPPORT PERFORMANCE

People thrive when they have the resources to do their job. There are three key areas of support all individuals require to perform consistently at a high level:

1. THE RIGHT INFORMATION

You need to provide your team with the right information to meet the expectations set for them. This starts with providing a clear and consistent message about the vision and setting expectations that each individual is required to accomplish to contribute to the vision -- then providing any information useful in executing their role. Openness and transparency are key.

2. THE RIGHT TOOLS AND TRAINING

Once clear expectations are set and communicated internally, you must provide the tools to execute. The tools will vary from department to department and from team to team, but it is important to make sure everyone receives the tools they need when they need them.

Required tools might include:

- The right technology and supplies
- Effective internal processes
- Guidance and coaching
- Access to internal and external resources
- An effective channel for performance reviews/feedback/recognition

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3. THE RIGHT INSPIRATION

A significant element of your role as a leader is to inspire your team. It's no secret that highly engaged individuals will produce better results and better contribute to the company.

How you engage and inspire individuals will depend on the culture of your organization and your understanding of what incentives will produce the best results for each individual. While many companies still use money as a motivator, it is only a temporary fix and not a long term solution to keep your team engaged. Other more emotionally founded activities are more effective to inspire your team.

Some examples include:

- Building strong relationships with individuals
- Modelling behaviours that re-enforce your personal dedication and alignment with the company's vision and values
- Regularly communicating how every person in the company has an important role in achieving the companies vision
- Providing opportunities for career development and growth internally
- Giving people the chance to have their concerns heard
- Recognizing exceptional performance

For a more detailed discussion of effective motivational tactics, please see *8 Ways to Inspire Employee Behaviour That You Can Implement Today*



SEARCHING FOR GOLD

The necessary information, tools, and inspiration are important no matter what type of company you are leading. These points hold true regardless of the situation.

Let's say that you are leading an expedition to find gold. If you want to be successful then you need to provide your team with:

- **THE RIGHT INFORMATION:** You need to outline what you want to achieve (vision) and explain how you are going to find the gold and extract it from the ground.
- **THE RIGHT TOOLS AND TRAINING:** You need to train your team how to mine for gold and then provide maps, transportation and other mining equipment/tools to get the job done most effectively. You wouldn't expect someone to find gold without a map and without the tools to extract the gold.
- **THE RIGHT INSPIRATION:** You would seek to inspire your team by reinforcing how finding gold will impact their lives and regularly communicating progress will help keep them focused on the goal. You can't expect your team to go above and beyond and work long hours if you cannot find the right source of inspiration.

High performance work environments are established only if you communicate a clear vision, set high expectations and provide support in the form of the right information, tools, and inspiration.

THREE CRITICAL ELEMENTS FOR FINDING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO WORK IN HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS

No matter how well defined your vision may be or how well the vision is communicated internally, you still need to have the right people in roles that are suited for their personality, skills, and abilities. Your organization is only as good as the talent you recruit, as previously discussed in the context of establishing a culture of leadership in the article *5 Steps to create a culture of leadership*.

Finding the right people to work in your company starts with well-defined recruitment expectations and using the right process to back them up. You can't hire the right people if you don't understand the type of people that are a good fit for your culture.

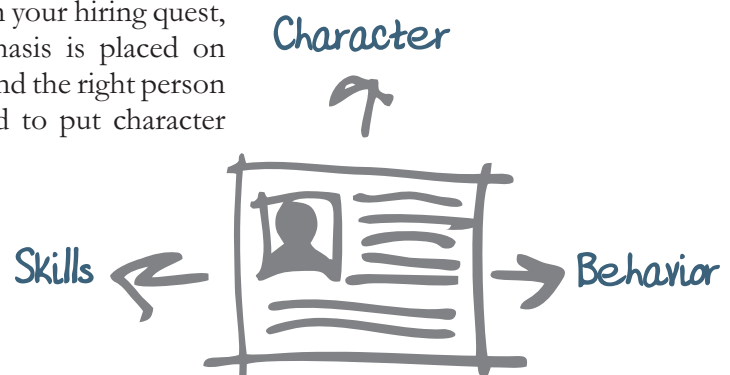
Here are three critical elements that leaders need to ensure are built into the recruitment process:

1. THE RIGHT CHARACTER

Good character and the right attitude is the first priority in your hiring quest, but something too often overlooked. Too much emphasis is placed on matching skills to the position that needs to be filled. To find the right person that will fit within your organizational culture you need to put character before competence -- or attitude before aptitude.

In most cases, people are hired for competence, but fired for character. It doesn't matter how skilled a certain individual is if they do not exhibit the right character. A poor attitude and the wrong fit within the culture of your organization will have a negative impact on the performance of that person and poison others as well.

This is why it is so important to find the culture fit first and then focus on qualifications. A person that is the right cultural fit and has the right mindset can often be taught missing skills through training after they are hired.



2.THE RIGHT BEHAVIOURS

A willingness to learn, go above and beyond, make the right decisions, and do what is in the company's best interests are all desired behaviours that companies need to look for when hiring.

People that exhibit the right behaviours have a positive impact on high performance work environments. As part of the recruitment process leaders need to look for people that have the character to go above and beyond what is expected -- and past behaviour is always the best indicator of future behaviour.

Remember, that as a leader, it is your job to influence behaviour by inspiring your team. Inspired individuals will be more dedicated to achieving your vision and meeting expectations. People that display the right behaviours will also help to improve overall morale and collaboration within their department and throughout the organization.

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3.THE RIGHT SKILLS

Seeking out the right skill set should come after you have identified candidates with the right character and behaviour. Missing skills can be taught. Of course, there is a certain level of knowledge, capacity and skills that a candidate must possess based on the job function, but training can be used to make up for gaps if the character is right.

Placing too much emphasis on finding a person with the right skills before you assess their fit in terms of character and behaviour often leads to a poor fit culturally -- and eventually cost more in the long term through poor performance, lost opportunity, negative impact on the balance of the team and having to start the hiring process over again when that person doesn't work out.

Revisit your current hiring practice and review the criteria that you use. Always hire for character, and then check for competence. If your company experiences a high turnover rate, then this may be a good indication that you are not placing enough emphasis on finding people that exhibit the right cultural fit.

When the people with the right character, behaviour and skills are hired, your team will achieve a common vision more effectively. An efficient and cohesive team will always deliver a better result than a collection of people who may have better individual skills.

FOUR CORE AREAS OF LEADERSHIP FOCUS IN HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS

As a leader you have a lot on your plate. Numerous issues are constantly competing for your time and attention. From day to day tasks and administrative duties to strategy development and the management of the long term vision for the company, you are constantly playing a balancing game and attempting to prioritize what deserves your immediate attention.

4 KEY AREAS THAT LEADERS MUST FOCUS THEIR EFFORTS

Since your time is a finite resource, focusing on the key areas that will drive your team to produce desired results and sustain a high performance environment is something that you cannot lose sight of -- even when your attention is being pulled in every direction.

Focusing on these key areas will help maintain a high performance environment:



1. ORGANIZATIONAL WELL-BEING AND ENGAGEMENT

A large part of creating and maintaining a high performance environment has to do with internal development. Your ability to create an environment to continuously develop people within your organization will help to drive results and keep people engaged. Most people don't want to work in a static environment; they want to grow personally and professionally through training, coaching, and exposure to new things and promotions. Therefore, you need to promote personal development that leads to additional opportunities for team members.

Never lose sight of the fact that the number one role of company leaders is to inspire and engage their people. If you don't engage your teams, your organizational well-being will suffer. As a leader you need to ask yourself:

- Do people in the organization have a positive attitude?
- Are there available opportunities for personal growth available to all?
- Are people engaged and in tune with the work environment?
- Are there opportunities to further engage people and expand their role?

**EFFECTIVE LEADERS
NEED TO ENSURE THAT
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ARE IN ALIGNMENT
WITH THE COMPANY
VISION AND MISSION.**

2. PRODUCTIVITY AND GOAL SETTING

Set expectations that challenge and will help you reach your goals for the company. You need to be well aware of what is being achieved in the short term and how these short term goals, achievements and milestones are working to help you attain your long term goals.

When it comes to individuals, you need to ensure that their personal goals are in alignment with the company vision and mission. A lack of alignment in this area will have an impact on performance levels as well as a person's level of engagement.

3. CREATIVE THINKING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Creative thinking plays a large role in high performance work environments. Leaders need to be creative and continually focus on ensuring rewarding work. You also need to communicate that everyone plays a meaningful role in achieving the company vision.

How is this accomplished? You need to create an environment where team members have the confidence to voice their opinions and concerns. When people feel that their voice is heard they will be more engaged and will feel that the role they play is important to the overall well-being and success of the company.

4. EFFECTIVE PROCESS

The final key area of focus is process. From the top down there needs to be efficiency in the day to day operations of the company. A good process adds value to the company and should not be a barrier to getting things done.

This is accomplished through effective internal processes and protocols. Performance will suffer without a solid foundation for how things are done and a clear directive for what is expected. Therefore, how you want things done and a timeframe for when tasks and projects are to be completed needs to be clearly communicated and mutually agreed.

Before implementing a process it needs to be well thought out. Plus, you also need to be open to adjustments down the road that are identified by providing your team with a forum to voice their opinions, thoughts and ideas to continuously improve how things are done.

Focusing on these four key areas will help to communicate expectations for employees, create further engagement, and improve efficiencies in terms of performance.



SEVEN STEPS FOR CREATING BEHAVIOUR AND PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS THAT DRIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The truth is, there is very little difference between most companies that compete in the same industry. In your strategy to achieve the highest percentage of the market you need to create differentiating factors that your competitors cannot match.

While most companies focus on tangible differentiators such as price, speed, delivery, and convenience, these are all things that your competitors can match. As an effective leader, you need to create an intangible differentiator that cannot be matched by your competition -- and that is your people and your culture

A high level of employee engagement (*see 8 Emotional Drivers of Employee Engagement*) and achieving desired behaviours is something that companies often fail to achieve. These failures lead to a lower level of performance by your team -- and missed performance milestones have an impact on your company's ability to deliver what you have promised to your customers -- creating a situation where customer experience will suffer as well.

Your ability to engage people will help you meet your corporate goals. And, you will be in a stronger position to exceed what you have promised and communicated to your customers.

FEW COMPANIES WILL EVER ENJOY A LONG TERM PRODUCT OR PRICE ADVANTAGE AGAIN -- THEY CAN BE EASILY DUPLICATED. BUT THE STRENGTH OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS, BUILT ON A STRONG CUSTOMER SERVICE FOUNDATION CAN NEVER BE DUPLICATED OR LURED AWAY.

7 STEPS FOR CREATING A HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENT

As a leader you are responsible to develop the company culture and work environment. Here are 7 steps you can follow to increase performance in your organization:

1. IDENTIFY VALUES THAT GUIDE YOUR BUSINESS

What are the core values that you want your business to be guided by? Is it collaboration? Openness? A team approach? Respect? Understand your values and communicate them to your team to set the tone for individual behaviour.

2. SET CLEAR AND CONCISE EXPECTATIONS

You need to set the bar high if you expect high performance. Make it clear, through regular communication, what is expected and how you expect things to get done. The clearer you are on what is expected, the easier it will be for people to follow through and execute.

3. EXPECT ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is vital. What are the repercussions for missed performance targets? Holding people accountable for their actions will help ensure that the team performs at the level established for them.

4. BUILD A CULTURE OF TRUST

People need to trust that their leaders and colleagues will do as they say. When people demonstrate trust they need to be rewarded with more responsibility and autonomy in order for them to grow within the company. Conversely, your team needs to believe that when they prove they are trustworthy they will be rewarded accordingly.

5. MANAGE THE CONVERSATION

Be consistently positive and define exactly what the desired experience/culture you want to achieve is for your organization. This is accomplished through regular discussion and conversations -- not special meetings. Leaders need to build ongoing dialogues with their team about culture. For this to work it cannot be a specific initiative, but rather part of daily conversations that builds over time.



6. MONITOR OUTCOMES

If you want to achieve a high level of performance then you need to measure it. This could be in the form of sales targets, customer satisfaction, new customers, or anything that makes sense for your business. Think about what you need your team to accomplish to achieve desired results and then measure what will drive your business.

7. ESTABLISH AN INTENTIONAL PROCESS TO REVIEW/REVISE/REWARD BEHAVIOURS

Create an internal process for how you will provide ongoing input with your team. How do you plan to review their performance? How are adjustments made? How are you going to reward desired behaviour? There needs to be both formal and informal process in place. A yearly review is seldom effective, especially when attempting to engage and shape behaviour internally.

These steps will help you to better frame a high performance environment for your company and determine actions that you can take to achieve a high standard for performance.

ACTIONS YOU CAN IMPLEMENT TODAY TO BUILD A HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Success starts and ends with the people in your organization. When your team is managed effectively and clearly understand their role and what is expected of them, good things happen. Good leadership shapes behaviour and increases an individual's level of engagement.

ACTIONS YOU CAN IMPLEMENT TO INCREASE PERFORMANCE IN YOUR COMPANY

There are a number of actions that leaders can implement to communicate that people are valued and create a high performance environment.

1. MAKE YOUR TEAM AWARE OF COMPANY PURPOSE AND GOALS

People want to be part of something. This is why it is important for you to include the entire organization in what you are trying to accomplish. Share your purpose and goals with the team and make it clear to them the importance of their role in helping achieve your shared objectives.

This should be accomplished through regular conversations with your team. It is not a “set it and forget it” task. Regularly reinforce why people are valuable and how they will be recognized if they demonstrate desired behaviours and results.

You should make your team aware of company goals through daily conversations as well as internal communications, newsletters, during meetings, and when they take part on training activities.

2. SHARE INFORMATION OPENLY

Transparency is essential. Answering the question *why* and sharing information with your team about why they are asked to perform certain actions and how their role in the company contributes from a big picture perspective will help them frame things in their own mind. The better understanding a person has of the impact their role has, the more engaged they will be in that role -- especially if they feel they are making a difference.

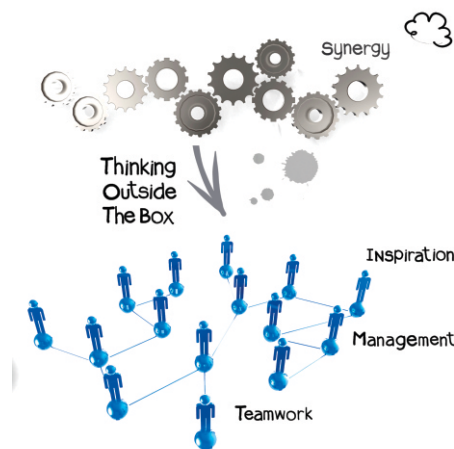
HIGH PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN PEOPLE FEEL THEY ARE A VALUED MEMBER OF THE TEAM. WHEN THEY BELIEVE WHAT THEY DO CONTRIBUTES TO THE OVERALL SUCCESS OF THE COMPANY THEY ARE WILLING TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND.



3. PROMOTE OPEN DIALOGUE

Directing from above and not being open to input from employees will not inspire your team. Be open and actively create a 2-way dialogue about topics, issues, and processes within the company. For this to be most effective, the effort must be intentional. It should be planned and not happen by happenstance or in passing.

This can be accomplished by using a comment form on your company intranet, a simple suggestion box, or through informal kitchen table discussions.



4. BUILD ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CREATIVE THINKING

Engaged employees will deliver better results. They will go above and beyond and will consistently look for new ways to achieve desired results more efficiently. This is why it is important to encourage creative thinking and strategic risk-taking. You need to create intentional opportunities to make innovation part of the organization.

Enhancing engagement, promoting creative thinking and encouraging strategic risk-taking can be as simple as making time to regularly talk to employees about their ideas. Or you could make it more structured by creating a process for submitting new ideas for the company.

5. ENCOURAGE AND OFFER FEEDBACK AND RECOGNITION

Feedback is an essential component of a high performance environment. Be willing to listen to what your employees have to say and consistently provide positive feedback to your team about how they are doing. Frequent feedback keeps people engaged. Provide updates about achievements, progress, developments, and reinforce your vision for the company.

Recognition, when done properly, is the most powerful tool for building an engaged work environment. So when you thank your team, make sure that it follows the 4 essential elements of effective recognition; frequent, timely, specific and relevant. Empty *thank you's* come across as insincere and quickly lose their meaning. So make sure that you tell your team why they are being thanked. Be as specific as possible.

Focusing on these actions will assist in the development of a high performance environment. Clearly communicating your company vision and goals, and including employees in internal conversations through feedback channels will give them the incentive to go above and beyond in the role and help your company build a high performance work environment.

CONCLUSION

Building a high performance work environment begins and ends with the people in your organization. It starts at the top with leaders that have the ability to create and communicate a clear vision and expectations -- and it is furthered when your team buys into this vision through proper internal support in the form of the right information, tools, training, and inspiration.

When the people with the right character, behaviour and skills are part of your team, you will achieve a common vision and develop a cohesive team that will consistently deliver better results than a collection of individuals that are focused on their own objectives.

A high performance environment exists when the focus is on having conversations, providing feedback, and communicating as a team to meet a common goal. When this happens, your team will be more engaged and have the inspiration and incentive to exceed expectation and help your company achieve its goals and objectives.



INSPIRING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS THAT DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS!

Bill Hogg: Performance *Excels*ator™

Leadership & Employee Engagement Expert | Professional Speaker | Executive Consultant

Bill is the "just do it" guy who has walked in your shoes.

He is recognized as the *Performance Excels*ator™ because of his uncanny ability to navigate change and transform organizations -- and measurably improve bottom line results.

Senior leaders hire Bill to influence and inspire higher performing, customer-focused cultures that create long-term, profitable relationships with customers and *excels*ate performance, productivity and profits with leaders and employees.



Bill has been a trusted adviser at national and international clients that include; Adecco, Anheuser-Busch InBev, The Bay, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Pita Pit, RBH/PMI, State Farm Insurance, Toronto International Film Festival -- as well governments like the City of Toronto, Ontario Place and ServiceOntario.

By drawing on real-life experience, his message is inherently credible and incorporates practical applications that change attitudes and behaviours.

Whether working with boards or operations teams and employees, his no-excuse approach breaks down the silos and gains consensus and clarity throughout the organization -- which inspires behaviour change and ultimately drives transformation across the organization.

Bill provides world class executive consulting, dynamic keynote presentations, transformative workshops and high stakes facilitation.

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