

TEAMS IN TURMOIL?

5

**Simple Ways
to Improve
Your Team's
Performance**

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INTRODUCTION

In the flurry of getting daily and special work done on time,

“ you notice your gut feeling telling you that there is some hidden drag on your team’s smooth and efficient work. ”

If you have difficulty putting your finger on just what the problem might be, but you know it makes you uneasy – pause and look at your people with new eyes. Your team may be in trouble. **Your company’s bottom line, if not already feeling the squeeze, may be in trouble, too. Why is that? Denison research data, from 161 publicly traded US corporations from a broad range of industries, clearly identifies a 6% Return on Equity (ROE) for “low performing cultures” against a 21% ROE for “high performing cultures”.** When teams are not working like a well-oiled, high-performance machine anymore, **your “people power” needs to be re-energized, so that your entire organization can better “profit.”**

There are some simple things you, their leader, can do to help your people. We will show you how to find out what the trouble is. You will learn five simple things to do that can turn team performance around – by focusing differently on the people who work with you. And what is more? You will see that this different people-focus is able to return your team’s performance to its usual outstanding levels. But you can also go beyond your current best – exceeding it with a consistent practice of these performance approaches.

What a Team in Turmoil Looks Like

If your company's performance is faltering, you might ask yourself if your team is suffering from any of these symptoms:

- The team's own results have measurably declined.
- Conflicts are on the rise amongst team members.
- Teams are not satisfying their internal or external customers to the level they used to.
- People don't "get" each other anymore. They're not getting along and they know it. In the worst cases, they don't seem to care that they don't get along.
- You have a gut feeling that people just aren't happy or motivated on the job. They don't seem to be learning or growing or taking risks toward improvement of any type of results.
- They don't value each other – not for who they are as people, and not for what they bring to the team as professionals.
- There is no understanding or connection amongst members of the Team.

When your own people are not getting along, but they have been until recently, trouble may be afoot. When your people are uncomfortable with each other, with their work spaces, and even with customers, to the point that it has begun to show "around the house", your team has likely already been in trouble for a little while.

“ And by the way, if you are having trouble talking meaningfully and connecting with your own business partners, that will trickle down into your staff. ”

The problem is not just "them." The trouble is a slump in connection and performance amongst "all of us".

What started under the surface bubbles to the top. When a team is not happy, can't or won't connect, doesn't have leadership to guide them in the job, performance inevitably suffers. What was hidden for a while finally appears in your bottom line numbers as lower sales, less profitable ones, outright loss of customers, higher rates of error that cost money to fix. You'll know there is turmoil in your teams – and in your leadership of them – when you see the numbers, because your data won't lie.

That is, unfortunately, when management and leadership wakes up. A bit late. Better late than never, however.

When your people aren't happy and are not getting along, the company is not getting ahead. All the signs are visible that you have something needing fixing. As a leader, your job is to move the company forward while profiting and thriving.



Getting Out of Denial

Who is it that identifies and reports this turmoil, this problem to the top people? We know it is the job of a direct leader, but if a team member – prominent or not – gets frustrated enough, you’ll hear about it from him or her first. Anyone should be able to come to you with such an observation and concern, and you should listen! Anyone can get that gut feeling that something is wrong, that things have changed amongst team members, that your prior connection has shifted into disconnection. Even a lower-level staff member on the team can perceive a change in productivity and performance – so listen.

Your best approach as leader? First, remember that it is your people who will make or break your business success, and you must include yourself with them.

“ Don’t go into denial: It is entirely feasible that “sales are slumping because people are not talking to each other”. ”

We have a tendency to look instead for “hard” reasons for the slump, like “our emails are not reaching people” or “our competitors bashed us last month on television”. “Soft” reasons – problems amongst your people – are real; human conflict, even subtle, is destructive at worst and an obstacle to success in all cases. Investigate. (Thomas-Kilmann).

“ We all know if we are connected and communicating well or not; it is something we know from our gut long before the numbers tell us problems are afoot. ”

We go into denial that the problem exists. Maybe we have just been too busy to really notice; if we've noticed, we may not have the skills to act; if we have the skills, denial leads us back to the excuse of no time to deal with it. And around we go and the situation worsens.

Did you know that couples in marriages in distress wait about 6 years to see a therapist? If your business waited that long to seek guidance, you'd be out of business first!

In our experience, most business leaders wait less than a year to get in touch with us for help. Most leaders are on top of performance and watching the bottom line in real time.

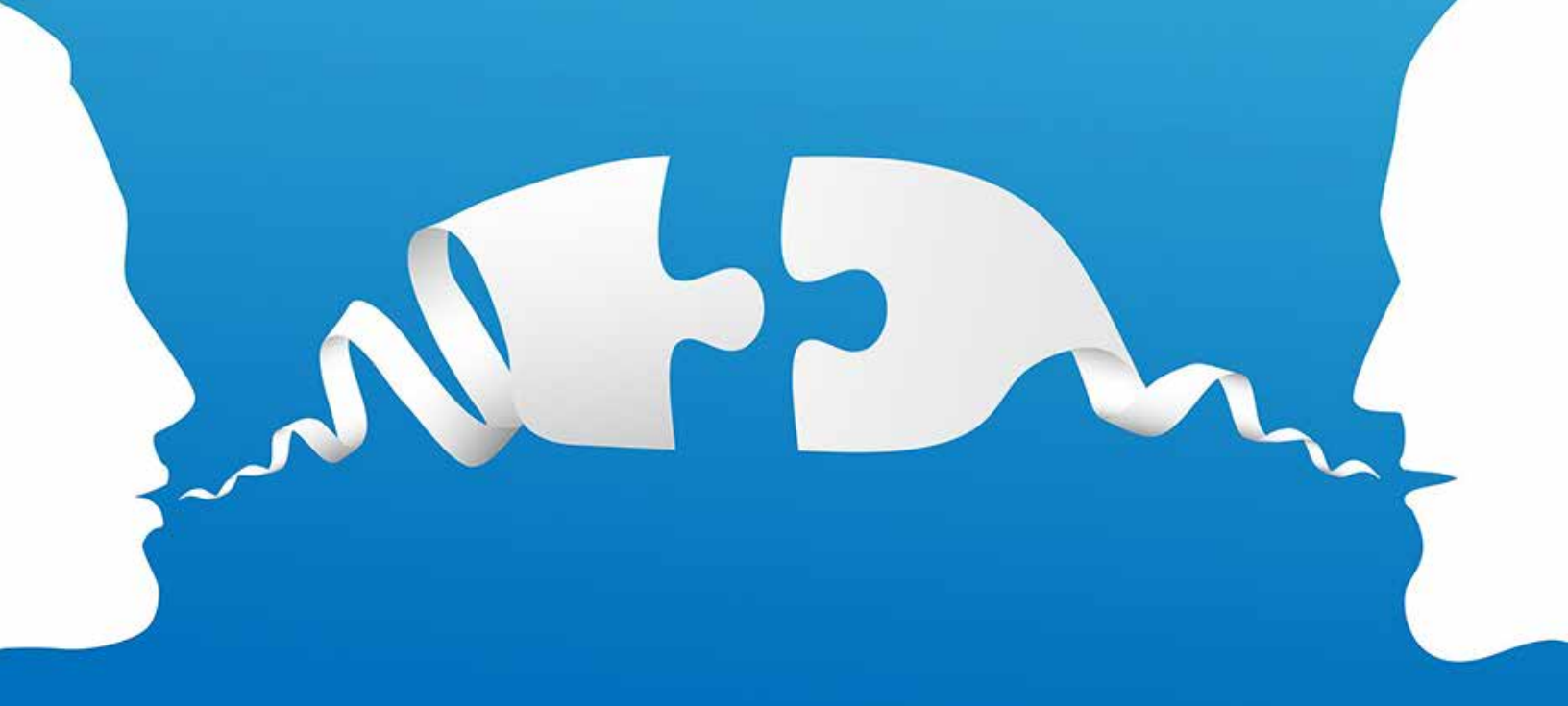
Face it. Denial just wastes time. Take action.

You notice by your performance measures that your teams' prior excellence is in decline. That's pure data. You notice that people have become less and less approachable, less forthcoming or less happy. That's pure gut feeling and dispassionate observation.

“

**You have kept your eyes open
and that helps when you need
to help a team get back on track.**

”



Emotional Intelligence, Connection and Performance

A team that doesn't get along cannot produce stellar results for the company. When team members are not connecting and communicating well with each other (leader-to-team members, team members amongst themselves, leader-to-leader) or supporting each other, meeting team goals and rising into performance expectations is difficult or impossible. Efforts to excel will stall.

Team turmoil can be due to “soft skills” issues. In this case,



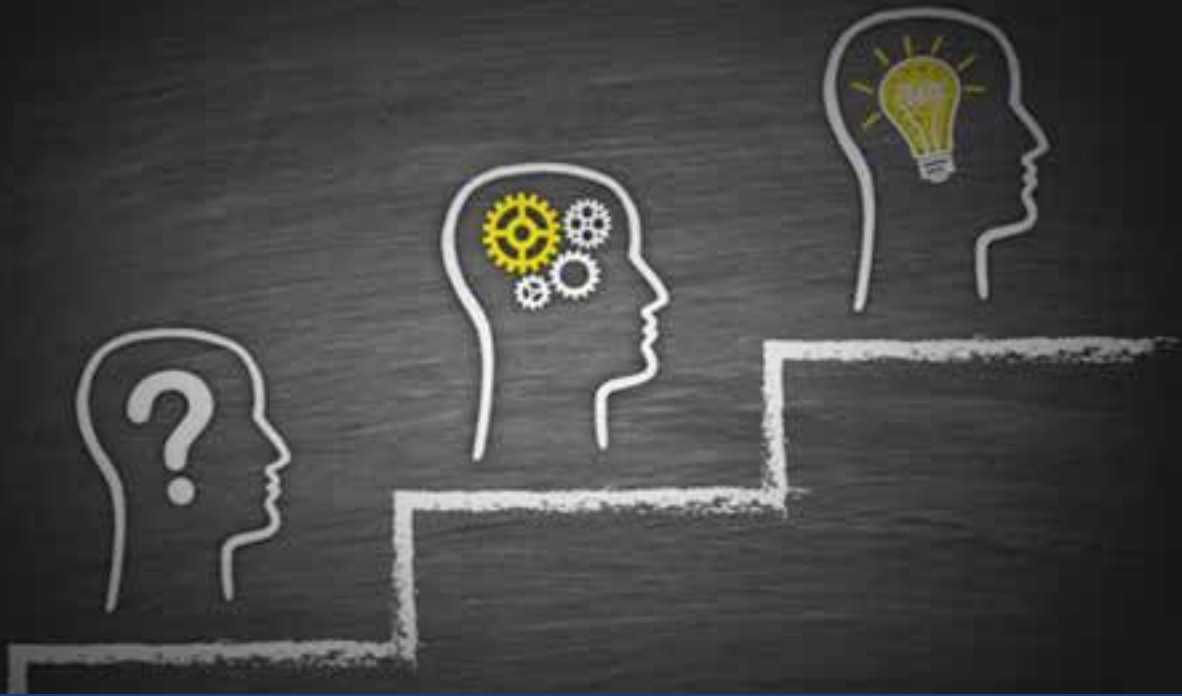
**Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the soft skill
you need to polish up and apply to nudge
your team back into harmony, happiness and
high performance.**



All team troubles – and its successes – circle around each member's Emotional Intelligence. The basis of EI is to understand self and others, and then develop communication approaches that work for everyone.

EI is all about personal and interpersonal development. You the leader can derail your team and your leadership when you don't have sufficient effective Emotional Intelligence. Without EI, your team members will feel a loss of internal support and may feel they've been left to their own devices to perform.

Developing and using Emotional Intelligence is a learned skill as we will see below. A good start is for leaders to focus on developing their own EI first. Then build a more solid team by offering EI skills training to all staff.



Passion, Purpose and People

You may never have thought of your company as being among the Crème de la Crème of high-performing international or even national companies. Why not? All businesses are about people, and you can excel in your people and Emotional Intelligence skills – and thus at whatever business you are in. Whether male or female, team leader or front-line staffer – we all need to understand the principles of connection and cooperation to achieve excellent Performance.

We all benefit from understanding and appreciating each other’s differences as well as how we are alike. We benefit from being willing to dance and dialog to bridge our differences. How? We grow. We are happier; we are thriving. Our companies thrive.

A philosophy and plan for continuous learning and ongoing development of each one’s skills at

“ **connecting and developing respect, rapport and real relationships is money, energy and time well spent.** ”

The performance chart below can help dramatize the outcomes when one invests in connectivity of teams. In their book, “Firms of Endearment: How World-Class Companies Profit from Passion and Purpose”, the authors state that businesses are writing and following new rules. (Sisodia) What new rules? They are driven by passion and purpose – and that means a focus on people. These companies become “firms of endearment.” Business is about people, for people and by people: the firms of endearment know how to help people thrive! Customers, employees, contractors, vendors, financial partners and

investors, shareholders, co-founding partners, Board members, people from the town your business operates – these are all the people your business draws in and, hopefully, helps to prosper and thrive.

“ Business is about the bottom line, but it is people who create it. ”

This is why earlier we put you on guard against a denial that “people problems” are a cause of bottom line declines. It is all about people, make no mistake!

Firms of endearment are raising the bar on what it means to be a high performance company, as the chart of results shows.

Firms of Endearment (FoEs) have outperformed the S&P 500 by 14 times.

Good to Great (G2G) companies outperformed the index by 6 times over a period of 15 years [1998-2013].

Cumulative Performance	15 Years	10 Years	5 Years	3 Years
US FoEs	1681%	410%	151%	83%
International FoEs	1180%	512%	154%	47%
G2G Companies	263%	176%	158%	222%
S&P 500	118%	107%	61%	57%

(Sisodia)

5 Simple Ways to Turn Turmoil into Teamwork

Here are five simple and successful ways that we have helped clients and their people get back on track.

1) Be Approachable.

This applies to the team leader, but also to all individuals on the team.



**People need to be able to see
and have face time with their leader
on a regular basis.**



This is about access and mutual openness to the connection. The team needs to know, to believe that their leader has their backs when things go sour or when the team as a whole needs to find urgently needed solutions in a timely manner.

In the case of remote team members, your attempts at contacting each other need to get timely responses. This means being open and attentive to the outreach, and available to respond to it. Team leaders need to have an open door (literally) and open mind-heart spirit (figuratively).

All parties trust each other to be accessible and approachable.

2) Be Connected.

This is about Rapport, Relationships and Resources.

If we have no particular direct rapport with a person (that is, we feel no connection, access or understanding with you the leader, or with any team member), we might not be willing to go through any time of turmoil or stressful challenge with him. We have no connection to grab onto, no trust has been built. We won't be willing to go through the turmoil with that person, as we perceive he/she won't have our back. Building rapport requires trust and understanding – by having done tasks together with success when there has been no pressure, for instance. We all need a real relationship on many levels in the work we do together. Having a relationship means we can say about someone, “I know him. I know something about his background, his beliefs, his way of doing things, how he thinks, how he talks. He knows me a little, too. We have some connection.”

We can then reveal our resources, or our strengths, to each other. I can help you with my strengths and you can contribute yours, as each one of us amplifies the other's resources.

“ Every person on the team, from its leader to its newest member, performs better through these 3 R’s of Rapport, Relationships and Resources. ”

3) Be Courageous.

“Coeur” means ‘Heart’ in modern French, and courage means living from the heart rather than only from the head.

Being courageous – and this is not just for the leader, but for all members of the team – means willingness to be vulnerable. We don’t generally like that! It means others can see our weak side; it means we have to admit we need help, or extra explanations, or a bit more guidance to do our work.

Being courageously vulnerable helps us turn to the other person both to get help doing our own job and to lean in to what the troubles are so that we can help define and fix them. Creating a safe environment for being emotionally vulnerable and allowing the other one to do the same helps you build an emotional bank account with each other, upon which you can both draw in times of future challenge or need.

“ Courage involves turning toward others and toward the problem and facing it all head-on. ”

Steadiness and steadfastness in our mutual purpose and goals is also courage, and we invoke that steadiness during turmoil. We each get involved or engaged together in times of trouble – not alone.

(Brown; Sandberg)

4) Be Curious.

An important key to good leadership in all cases of interaction and problem-solving, but particularly in periods of turmoil, is the ability to ask good questions, to ask the right questions.

A curious leader needs (and thus goes out and collects) facts upon which to base a plan or strategy to move out of the problem and into the solution. Good questions assume that your team has or can access the answers; this assumption on your part helps build more Trust.

When a leader can dispassionately ask relevant questions, it has many effects on your team: It demonstrates your interest in them and that it is not “my goal” but “our shared goal as a team”.

“ **Asking questions is also called active listening, and when you listen, your team knows you care,** ”

are actively and openly working at understanding you, and working to support them to resolve issues and move forward with full information. (Steven Covey).

5) Be Empathic.

This is, simply stated, activating your awareness and understanding of the feelings and emotions of other people, almost as if you are feeling those feelings yourself. Although this is not the whole of Emotional Intelligence, it is a big piece.

“ **Empathy is not “feeling for” someone - that is sympathy. Empathy is “feeling with” someone,** ”

by using your memory of having had those feelings yourself, and your imagination of those feelings when you have not.

This allows you to follow the first rule of leadership, which is

“ **“Meet them where they are so that you can take them where they are going.”** ”

Developing empathy calls for:

- **Awareness** of our own emotions and feelings, so that we can relate to those of others. (For instance, this may involve coming to grips with the notion that feelings aren't just for children, or weaklings; it may involve taking more deep breaths to observe oneself in action; it may involve admitting that we have feelings like grief or arrogance when we have not before).
- working on ourselves so that we achieve some **regulation** of our personal emotions. (For instance, a boss who explodes in anger as his first reaction can work on controlling or eliminating that reactivity, which is now in his awareness). This requires us to be in continuous development of our Emotional Intelligence. When awareness and regulation are in place, we can take the next step.
- **holding a steady space.** This permits you to see where your people are and meet them where they are with clarity, so that you can lead your team out of the

troubling situation. It is from this space that you see the next step to take or that the team is/is not ready to launch the next phase of your shared project.

In case your mind has kicked up more excuses like, “our company/our people aren’t compatible with these strategies”, we give some cases below, and how the five strategies can be adapted to circumstances and business models. We have worked with businesses in a number of industries and circumstances, and have seen the strategies work for all of them.

Business Case: Remote Teams

Core basic human nature doesn’t change because your team(s) are remote from you, as may be the case with bank agencies, retail or restaurant chains and the like. Not only are location managers distant, but their own teams are in one more degree of separation from you.

If you manage one or more remote teams, apply the 5 tips to all communications media your people use to connect with you – phone and voice mails; texts or emails and so on. Timeliness is even more vital with remote teams,

“ as humans subconsciously seek out or expect a bond with you, or a safe haven for their needs and problems, with you, their leader. ”

Being ignored thwarts this expectation, and providing your response quite late, after the fact or in an indirect path can enforce the feelings that he is not an important enough part of the team to merit your direct care and attention. Timeliness conveys your message of connectivity and support. Remember attachment behaviors we had from our youngest youth to our parents or first caregivers and the safe haven our family home provided. Would you be surprised that we transfer these attachments to our leaders at work? True! Applying an etiquette to such communications – such as guaranteeing each other a response within 2 hours and so on – reinforces connectivity and the sense of team.

Business Case: Two Partners, Moving “Toward, Away, Against”

From couples research (both marriage partners and other non-family pairs), we have determined that

“ the central core of the relationship is built around the concepts of safety and connection. ”

Whether in a business partnership or a marriage partnership, this relationship rule applies.

1) “Turning toward”:

In whatever media (whether face-to-face or via email or phone and the like), when someone makes a move to connect with or influence us, it is essential to turn toward them. We need to be actively attentive when someone comes to us for connection; we turn toward them with all our attention on them. We make a deposit in our joint emotional bank account in this way. This needs to be done by both of you, on a regular basis, building up the bank account, so that when times get tough, you have plenty of trust and support to withdraw from that account.

2) “Turning away”:

When we turn away from the other who has approached us, and particularly when we do it as a recurring habit, we drain that emotional bank account, perhaps to the point of having little to nothing left in it. When the account has gone down so much that we become emotionally “edgy”, we end up at a loss to find responses for each other and our connectivity is at risk.

3) “Turning against”:

We have effectively turned the emotional bank account upside down and poured out the remaining connectivity, rapport and trust. Finding common ground with an individual you have turned against can be difficult or impossible, and the partnership is on the rocks. Teams you manage singly or jointly don’t know who to turn to. Like children in a family, team members may start playing one of you against the other. One partner may ask employees to take sides; employees on their own may find themselves favoring one of you and ignoring direction and instruction from the other. Business operations grind on with difficulty, sometimes all the way to a full halt.

Business Case: High Turnover Teams

For those with companies in high turnover industries like restaurants and retail stores, IT services and tourism/hospitality industries – what hope do you have of influencing a team that might be so new that none of its members even know who you are yet?

Leaders in this type of industry or business need, even more than Other managers and leaders, to dare to care earlier. **We could say, as we did earlier, that it is about “People Power Profits”.** More than ever, you need to state your team communication and connectivity approach from the very moment of hire and day one’s orientation, and get immediate buy-in and engagement from your newbies. **You reconnect with and revitalize your “people power” and your entire organization “profits” in more ways than one.**

“ You tell employees from the start that your business philosophy, company culture and implemented plan is about engagement and connection, empathy, compassion and care. ”

But don't tell them so if it is not true! The company needs to build, test and regularly use methods that build a sense of belonging from day one.

Methods that kick in that early for all employees, accompanied by the guidance and support of an assigned mentor or buddy, need to be strong messages. Messages convey that you purposefully build great teams and that each new employee is valuable – because you always hire very, very Wisely.

“ Also get feedback from any employee upon his (sooner; later) exit from the company; ”

this demonstrates your real concern for his continuing success in the workplace as a whole and his chosen field of endeavor.

Business Case: Male / Female Team Leaders

Having both male and female team leaders brings the business a bouquet of beautiful differences! “What one appreciates, appreciates!” – and that philosophy travels positively in many directions for you.

Both genders bring great – but different – strengths to the table. Strengths of one gender are not more valuable than strengths of the other. Both are needed. Building a successful, prosperous business that is long-lived and evolves with its marketplace, and employs happy, productive staff and managers is an everyday job, and all kinds of strengths come into it.

Both genders need to understand core human nature, which is called “core” because it does really apply to both genders. All leaders need to apply the principles of communication and connectivity through our 5 tips in good times. We simply correct for slippage and more diligently focus upon improving our success with all 5 tips in time of turmoil, to rebuild and pull the team back together for great performance.

Conclusion

For any number of reasons, your team can lose its ability to perform as well as you know it can. Before the bottom line suffers, and before your valued employees and managers start sending resumes in search of a new, better job elsewhere, give your awareness time to tune in to your people again. Look at how everyone's soft skills could use retuning. Examine how you are behaving with each other; look at what needs adjusting, and then repair things. Retrain and practice using your own soft or people skills, and set up some retraining for your team members. Let go, at least momentarily, of the distractions of the mechanics of your business and return to your core business. A people-focused business – run by people, for people.

Your business is the people in it; putting out those daily fires helps us forget this. Readjust your people focus by becoming and remaining approachable, connected, courageous, curious and empathic. Doing so requires you to be aware of your people and of what they need to work harmoniously and effectively together. Support the people on your team and they will do an outstanding job for the other people in your business – your customers, investors, partners, vendors and greater community.

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