

3 Vital Skills for High Performance Leaders

Being a high-performance leader may come more naturally to some than others. However, the skills required can also be learnt, developed and continuously improved. Here's our observations on the leadership skills that most often crop up in our coaching work with leaders and managers.

The three skill areas that leaders can lever to bring about huge improvements in their own performance and that of their teams are:

1. Assertiveness
2. Delegation
3. Facilitating Teams

1 - Assertiveness - the power of 'I' in driving high performance

High performance leaders and team members ensure that what they need and want at work is given due consideration, while demonstrating their concern for others' needs and wants too.

They are assertive, rather than passive or aggressive in their interactions with others.

To move towards a high-performance culture, organisations need people to be able to communicate difficult, performance-related messages clearly. But this doesn't come naturally to everyone and people often overlook one of the simplest and most basic assertiveness techniques - using the word 'I'.

Using 'I' at the start of a sentence – rather than 'We' or 'You' - makes your wants, needs, feelings and opinions very clear.



For example

- I want this project completed by Wednesday.
- I feel concerned about letting the customer down.
- I believe that we could do this more efficiently.
- I want to cut waste out in this process.
- I need to think about your idea.
- I need to finish this before I start on that.

In the interests of continuous performance improvement, such communication needs to work well across or up the organisation as well from line managers to direct reports. The examples shown could be read as a mixture of boss to direct report, direct report to boss, or peer to peer statements.



2 - Delegation - three practical tips

Although there are some notable exceptions (Steve Jobs for one), most leaders of high-performance organisations and teams choose to delegate as much as possible.

They realise that, executed well, delegation can save time, make great use of the talent available, engage and develop people, and drive higher performance.

Poor delegation frustrates everybody involved and confuses people. Who's doing what, and by when?

There can be duplication of effort, misunderstandings and waste of all kinds. Team members feel resentful and demotivated; Managers feel let down and customers may too.

We know that delegation is sometimes a real challenge for leaders and managers. What we find is that most people will start off well; they decide what to delegate and select an appropriate person. They can explain the task and the required results, but somewhere around here things can sometimes go awry.

Here's our three tips to help keep things on track



Tip 1— Discuss the resources required and anticipate barriers together. Don't leave this to the individual to work out alone. Your help will often be required to remove barriers as early as possible.

Tip 2— Agree interim steps, deadlines and progress reviews. If you don't do this when first delegating a task, your future involvement will seem like interfering or a lack of trust. This could really 'switch off' your team member's commitment.

Tip 3— Share information. This sounds obvious but often gets missed - you need to share any information you already have, alert the individual to any sensitivities, communicate their new role to their peers, and other stakeholders.



3 - Facilitating Teams – leave your opinion at the door!

High performing leaders are excellent facilitators. They make it easier for teams of people to get things done.

By facilitating team-based problem-solving effectively, high performing leaders can:

- Help work teams to apply problem-solving tools and achieve performance improvements
- Encourage participation from all, working through conflict if necessary
- Generate and maintain the positive conditions required for creativity and innovation

Some leaders and managers find this particularly challenging, perhaps because their habit is to be chief problem-solver or decision-maker and not to facilitate these activities by others.

Conclusion

Why not reflect upon these practical tips to improve on your leadership style and identify opportunities for improvement? Sometimes you will do these things well but will need to do them more often, sometimes you won't, and sometimes you may just have to do these things differently.

Try something and see if it makes a change!

If you have a question about developing leadership skills, or if you're looking for support with a specific situation call us on 01926 633333 alternatively you can email us at info@bourton.co.uk.