

HIGH VALUE CREATING TEAMS - A STARTING POINT.

A Blog From Peter Hawkins

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/we-need-move-beyond-high-performing-teams-professor-peter-hawkins/>

I need to start by apologizing. For many years I have written about the importance of high performing teams, created models of them and written and taught about how to lead, coach, and develop them (Hawkins 2011, 2014, 2017, 2018). Over the last two years I have woken up to how, like nearly all writers about teams and team coaching, I was caught in what is an out-dated paradigm. I now believe that the term is not only beyond its sell by date but is problematic and leading team development and team coaching in the wrong direction.

There are four ways that I see that the term causes problems.

A mechanistic rather than a living organism metaphor

High performing teams is a concept that grew out of 20th century mechanistic linear thinking. High performance was a term used for manufacturing machinery, or cars that could accelerate fast from stand still to 60mph. It was about achieving greater productivity and efficiency out of a fixed system, so that it creates more, faster, and cheaper. High performance is unconcerned about whether what is produced is of beneficial value. It is focussed on efficiency rather than creating benefit for all stakeholders.

Sub-optimisation

Some teams I have worked with over the years have been motivated to be the 'best team on the block', the standout region in their company. When they have succeeded they have often done this at the cost of other parts of the organisation and not through creating benefit for the whole organisation and all its stakeholders. Their achievement has been built on by being the most successful at gleaning joint resources, such as marketing, HR, sales support; and the least willing to share knowledge and to second staff when other teams and regions were struggling. The team member's loyalty has been to their local team, not the rest of the organisation.

A Place of arrival and a tick-box exercise.

For some teams, becoming a high performing team is the next thing on their development agenda. Last year it was becoming a 'Lean organisation', the year before decentralization and empowerment. They ask me: "What are the top things we need to do to be a high performing team?" They want help with creating a check list, that they can tick off, step by step. Often team leaders request a clear timetabled plan and 'Gant chart' including a date and place of arrival. But team development is not a pre-planned journey you can buy off the shelf. Being a successful team is never a place of arrival. As Bill Gates wrote: "Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose." A team that thinks it is now 'A High Performing team' often slips into complacency and arrogance. Successful teams and organizations are often the last to notice the world is changing around them.

Claiming the success as your own

Let me tell you an imaginary story, that could come true in the very near future.

It is a future gathering of the top team at Zoom. They have just received the annual performance figures for the organization and are celebrating a record year. Revenue, profits, and reputation have all risen sharply. In the midst of the champagne toasts, and congratulations echoing around the room, one team member says, "I think we should pause and thank the team member who made the biggest contribution to our record success. A team member who only joined us this year." She is greeted by blank and questioning faces. The CEO eventually says: "Who are you talking about? The reply comes: "Corona Virus." There is a stunned and awkward silence

All evolution is co-evolution all development is co-development and all success is co-created.



The success is co-created between a team and its wider organization, between the organization and its business eco-system, between a species and ecological niche. All evolution is co-evolution – a species and the niche co-adapt and respond to each other – so does a team and its context.

High Value creating teams

To move from an outdated mechanistic concept of teams, we need to find concepts and models rooted in systemic and organismic ways of seeing the world; approaches built on collaboration and co-adaptability, rather than competition and sub-optimisation of parts of the larger system. We need team development that is part of creating a wider ‘team of teams’ as Genera McCrystal discovered while leading the Allied forces to try and create sustainable peace in post war Iraq and finding they were constantly out manoeuvred (McCrystal et al 2015). We need to support and coach teams that can ‘continuously co-create beneficial value with and for all their stakeholders’, both human, and the ‘more-than-human’ stakeholders of the wider ecological environment, which is always the largest contributor to all human success.

What is beneficial value? That which improves quality of life, diversity, well-being, and sustainability, at all the nested systemic levels that our life is living and breathing within.

I again apologise for taking so long to move away from writing about high performing teams, and promise my next books will be about the practical ways we can create and sustain high value creating teams.

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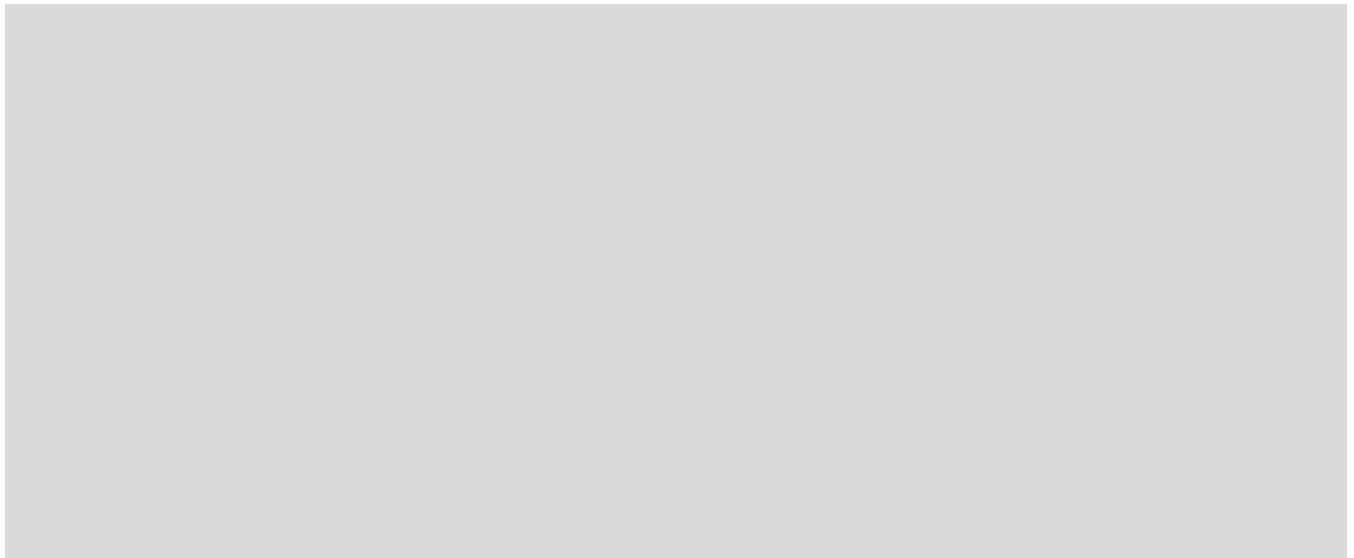
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Professor Peter Hawkins June 2020

Notes:



MOVING FROM THEORY TO REFLECTION - A STUDENT OF PETER HAWKINS REFLECTS ON 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR TEAMS

<https://www.lifesworkconsulting.com/leading-high-value-creating-teams>

Leading High Value Creating Teams

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Last year I completed the Global Team Coaching Institute (GTCI) Gateway programme, led by world class coaching experts Peter Hawkins and David Clutterbuck. Through the learning, case studies, and integration of this into my practice I've seen how valuable team coaching can be for leaders, their teams, and their organisation as a whole.

Here are my top 5 takeaways on how to create teams that are more connected, effective, future focussed and rewarded both personally and professionally.

1. Great teams have mutual accountability

Think of the best, most effective teams you have ever worked in, and you'll probably be able to identify the themes of mutual accountability, shared purpose, and partnership.

Instead of favouring individual stars in a team we should be asking, "what can we achieve together, that we can't achieve on our own?"

"In great teams everyone takes responsibility for their own and everyone else's performance, learning and well-being" David Clutterbuck.

Sometimes this may mean accepting personal discomfort for the collective benefit of the team, and the organisation as a whole.

REFLECTION: Think about what the unique contribution is that you bring to the team.

2. The importance of shared purpose

We can get so caught up in the day to day structures of an organisation that we forget to take a step back and think 'who does our work serve?'

A team should be defined by its purpose, not by its members. The purpose is the guiding compass for direction, and collaboration. Purpose driven organisations and teams are proving far more successful and better at retaining their employees than those focussed on short term profits.

"The purpose of a team is to continuously co-create greater beneficial value, with and for all, their stakeholders," Peter Hawkins

REFLECTION: What purpose does your team serve as part of your organisation?

3. Leading virtually requires thoughtful unity of communication

We are currently facing a complex situation of managing teams who may be part in the office, part out of the office, and others working entirely from home. The same principles of leadership apply - yet with new tools, flexibility of approach and thoughtful consideration in to HOW you communicate based on where your teams are located.

From personal experience I managed one of my direct reports based in Argentina when I was in the UK. We didn't meet face to face until 6 months after we started working together. Making her feel part of the team was always a key priority for me, I never cancelled our weekly 1:1's and made sure she was part of conference calls with the rest of team. It required pre-planning, consideration of time zones, increased trust, structure and regular communication - it can be done.

One of the common issues is keeping everyone fully engaged and fully present in the numerous video meetings.



TRY THIS: Start every meeting with an outcome based check-in eg. "What do we need to have agreed at the end of the meeting?" to help make the meeting focussed and meaningful for all attending. Encourage everyone to engage in social sharing eg. "Name one thing that has gone well, one thing that has been difficult, and one thing that you need help with." Encourage a co-coaching approach with team members supporting each other.

4. We need to shift from 'high performing' to 'high VALUE creating.'

Through coaching many leaders, and my own corporate experience, I've witnessed high performing teams first hand. High performing teams focus on results, clear goals, trust and respect each other and there is alignment of authority and accountability.

However what I've also witnessed is high performing teams focussing on their own success, short term goals, improving their own performance sometimes at the cost of other parts of the organisation.

The world needs us to move towards high value creating teams - that deliver for the organisation as a whole. So what's the difference between high performing and high value creating ? The characteristics of a high performing team are still present (trust, respect, secure leader, using people's strengths etc) however, high value creating teams think more systemically, and take an 'outside in' approach. There are no heroes. (unless it's the cadbury's kind for a team meeting!)

It's a much more future and externally focussed, bigger picture and customer centric approach which is much needed if organisations want to thrive today.

"A team is value creating when it continually co-creates greater beneficial value with, and for all, their stakeholders, current and future." Peter Hawkins

5. The impact of psychological safety on your team

Amy Edmondson's work on psychological safety (1999 & 2012) is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. Team psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team, that they feel safe for interpersonal risk taking. Team members are able to challenge each other productively and hold each other to account in a non threatening way. As a coach I've worked with many clients unhappy in their organisation because of the lack of psychological safety. The impact on them personally and professionally can be significant.

REFLECTION: What are you doing as a leader/team member to encourage psychological safety for all? In summary, high value creating teams look at outcomes, impact, AND the value the team creates for others now, and into the future. It's about creating success, collectively for ALL their stakeholders.

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