



5 Key Things Leaders of High-Performance Teams Do

One of the best things business leaders can do is build quality teams. Working with a great team can be an exceptionally productive and satisfactory experience. People look forward to coming to work every day when their teams are energetic and motivated, not to mention willing to be pushed to complete projects and achieve goals that seemed too difficult. A definite advantage of being part of a driven team is that they will always have each other's back.

On the flip side, working with a team of people that constantly cause conflicts, have poor communication skills, and are not transparent in their duties will generally drag you down. It's quite easy to guess which team your employees

would want to work in!

Considerable research has been done to determine how leaders can build and maintain high-performance teams. This post will outline five of the best leadership characteristics that give birth to productive teams.

1) Team Leaders Become an Incredible Source of Inspiration

As per [Joseph Folkman, a renowned psychometrician](#), organized, smart and high performing workers and [teams are not always the result of the push factor – there is always a lot of pull involved as well](#). Team leaders and managers that have a great team know how to instill a good amount of excitement, energy and motivation in their people.

They know what is going to make them feel constantly inspired and part of a mission. They make them understand that everything that they do as a team counts considerably, every step of the way.

2) Leaders Always Develop a Healthy Environment of Accountability

According to [John Eades, CEO of LearnLoft](#), there is no question that [the most difficult thing about being a leader is handling consequences and discussing accountability](#).

You see, accountability isn't where you discourage or demotivate your employee for doing something wrong. It's all about appreciating your employee's honesty regarding their mistake and presenting the results in a transparent manner.

3) Situational Leaders

According to [Johanna Tommervik, tech enthusiast and entrepreneur](#), another great [trait of leaders is that they are](#)

[helpful to their team members in every phase of the operation.](#)

They are there to meet a variety of needs of the team throughout the different life cycles of a project. There is nothing more important for a business leader than to diligently adapt to dynamic changes in the nature of any project and to back their teams all the way through.

4) The Leader's Ability to Diligently Communicate the Direction of the Company and Their Vision

Great leaders also invest their time in helping their team remain focused on the company's vision and the purpose behind their efforts. Highly motivated and performing teams will never deviate from the message of their leader.

Business managers and team leaders consistently communicate this to their people in order to keep them focused on the job at hand and on their mission. There is no question it is easy for anybody to get distracted, which is where leaders step in to ensure their team is up to date with everything and are right on track.

5) Visionary Leaders Make it a Habit to Stretch their Goals

This is also a powerful trait that some leaders exhibit; they can stretch their objectives and milestones to develop an internal drive for their team to go above and beyond the call of duty.

These leaders understand that their productive workforce does not always want to do something that can be easily achieved. Professionals don't grow that way. High performers want to be pushed beyond their limits to accomplish something magnificent and extraordinary. And when they do, leaders highlight the contributions of their team and remind them how significant

they are to them.

Bottom Line

Working with a team “from hell” will make it far more difficult to accomplish anything regardless of whether you own a small or large business. In addition, negativity can be infectious and will deviate your team members from their mission. Instead, focus on developing the traits mentioned above to significantly help you create and maintain high-performing teams, regardless of your industry.

Fatima Mansoor is a writer at [Aepiphanni](#), a Business Consultancy that provides Management Consulting, Managed, and Implementation Services to business leaders and entrepreneurs seeking to improve or expand operations. She specializes in business & entrepreneurship, digital marketing, and health & fitness. Her focus is on creating compelling web content for small and medium businesses from diverse industries. She mostly writes for entrepreneurs and marketing agencies across the US, Australia and UK.

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4 Ways to Invest In Employee Development To Cut Turnover | Extraordinary Business

Employee engagement has plateaued to 70 percent for some time, with concerns about lack of career advancement opportunities being the top reason why employees quit their jobs, according to a LinkedIn survey of 7 million members.

Meantime, an estimated 45 percent of survey respondents said lack of potential career advancement was the main reason they left their job, while 59 percent added that perception of a better career path was the main reason they joined a new organization.

For employers, this makes offering employee development opportunities a high priority. The [total cost of replacing an](#)

[employee](#) can cost 90 percent to 200 percent of that employee's salary, adding up to 12 percent of pre-tax income for the average company, according to research cited by the Society for Human Resource Management.

This does not include the impact on the overall business performance of other employees, who sometimes must compensate for lost manpower by helping to train new hires. The exodus of employees can also lead to a snowball effect of even higher turnover rates.

Want to help safeguard your company from the debilitating effects of high turnover rates? Here are four strategies you can implement to promote employee engagement.

Invest in Employee Development

A Great Place to Work study of Fortune's 100 best places to work found that the most competitive employers experience a 65 percent lower turnover rate than other companies due to a strong company culture and commitment to employee development.

The best companies to work for invest an average of 58 hours of training annually for hourly employees and 73 hours annually for salaried employees. Meantime, 88 of the 100 best companies offer tuition reimbursement programs, with an average reimbursement of \$7,375 available to each employee per year.

Tuition support and on-the-job training are two excellent ways to reduce turnover rates and help companies retain their most valuable employees.

Provide Mentoring and Team-Building Programs

Another way to support employee development is providing employees with [training support from mentors and teams](#). Likewise, an estimated 71 percent of Fortune 500 companies use

mentoring programs, according to talent development provider Chronus.

A Sun Microsystems study found retention rates are much higher for mentors and mentees who participate in mentoring programs, with a 72 percent retention rate amongst mentees and 69 percent for mentors. Another way to deliver peer support is by creating teams that function as mentoring groups.

For instance, a Great Place to Work study describes how legal firm Arnold & Porter divides its staff into teams of 10 to 12 associates supervised by three to four leaders. Each team meets once a month to discuss professional development and other issues. Teams also participate together in social events.

Provide BYOD Devices

An estimated 74 percent of companies are now either following [a bring-your-own-device policy](#) or planning on implementing one in the near future, according to a 2015 Tech Pro Research survey. BYOD policies encourage employee engagement, increase productivity, reduce training time, and trim tech costs, according to Truvian Labs.

These policies can also serve as way to motivate employees by investing in them. Some employers may choose to cover the full cost of [an approved device, such as an iPad Pro](#), as a way to incentivize employees. Another method of covering BYOD costs is paying employees a monthly stipend to cover their own equipment costs and upgrades.

Recognize Employee Achievements

Investing in employee motivation is another important aspect of employee development. *The Wall Street Journal* emphasizes the importance of [recognizing and praising employee achievement](#) as a strategy for reducing employee turnover.

One simple way to implement this strategy is sending a thank-you note to employees upon completion of a project. Copying the note to senior management enhances the effectiveness of this method. Monthly awards, periodic recognition events with prizes, and annual reviews and raises are other ways to recognize employee achievement.

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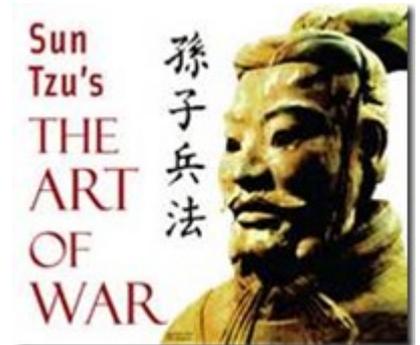
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Sun Tzu and “The Art of Small Business”

If you are not familiar with the book “*The Art of War*” by Sun Tzu, it is a book that contains a number of tactics for leaders focused on winning wars. It covers many topics, from readying yourself, mentally, to intimidating your enemy. If not, the image to the right contains a link to the book on Amazon.com.



When first approached by Bryan about his post “*The Art of Small Business*,” admittedly, I was skeptical, at best. While it is clear that businesses must act strategically to “win” in the marketplace, *The Art of War*” seems to carry that idea that one must destroy their enemy, never to return.

As business leaders, we know that competition in the marketplace is good, for a number of reasons. However, after reading the post and reviewing the infographic he created to go with it, I think that it is a brilliant analogy for business leaders to build their businesses.

Please take a few minutes to review the article, and take a look at the link to the infographic, below. I hope that you will appreciate it as much as I did, and would be willing to share it with your associates.

Both Bryan and I would love to hear your feedback. Please do so here, or in the LinkedIn Group, [Better Managed Business](#), where we discuss topics relating to small business management and resources to help them grow.

Warmest regards,

~Rick

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Is it possible to win against your competition by never fighting them? According to the ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu, it is not only possible; it's advisable. Author of *The Art of War*, arguably the greatest text on tactical strategy, Sun Tzu teaches that the best way to beat your competition is to subdue them without ever fighting them at all. Today, business leaders apply Sun Tzu's strategy and tactics to overcome their competition in the business marketplace.

Sun Tzu Says, “If you know your enemy and you know yourself you need not fear the results of a hundred battles”

Sun Tzu is telling us to intensely focus on our incumbent competitors in the marketplace and to take time to speak to their customers to learn about the competition. By doing so, we learn what they are not doing very well. After we understand the gaps that the competition is leaving unmet, we can then focus on filling that need. Rather than competing in an area where your competitor is superior, ascertain what your business can do better than your competition and focus on that strength. Do not go head-to-head on pricing alone as the outcome will most likely be a blood bath in terms of hemorrhaged cash, and most of the time no winners.



Sun Tzu Says, “So in war, the way is to avoid what is strong, and strike at what is weak.”

What are the parallels that can be drawn from military strategy and entrepreneurialism? Those of us who have run businesses know the feeling that many times it can be outright war. Business enterprises at their core are competitive with

each another. Sun Tzu's thesis is to "win all without fighting." We can gain market share without going head on against our competitors.

Team Building

Sun Tzu Says, "Regard your soldiers as your children, and they will follow you into the deepest valleys; look upon them as your own beloved sons, and they will stand by you even unto death"

It's going to be nearly impossible to accomplish anything great by yourself. You are going to need a strong dedicated team to take your organization to greatness. Sun Tzu teaches us that as the leader of your team you must focus on serving your people. He urges us to be empathetic leaders, moreover, if we care about our people they will care about the overall mission and the objectives of the business. A unified team will be instrumental in success of your company by granting it a real purpose, and why it even exists.

Sun Tzu's teachings are practical, tactical guidelines that help entrepreneurs and business leaders have clarity of their vision and their mission. While it might seem farfetched for business owners to think of themselves as generals on the battlefield, Sun Tzu's philosophies are relevant, and are implemented by successful business owners of today and ignored by the unsuccessful, as seen in the following illustration.



Bryan Clayton is a serial Entrepreneur and Co-founder of

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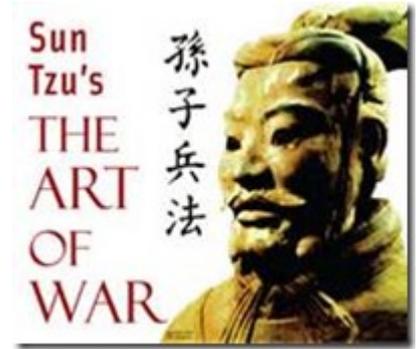
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Upgrades! If You Buy it...Will They Use it? | Extraordinary Business

Challenges with getting your team

to adopt your new software solutions

After investing the lion's share of cash and time to source, customize and implement the latest, greatest be-all-to-end-all solution for your company, you find that your people still aren't using it, or at least, aren't using it to a level where you can see a return on your investment. You don't get it. You stand there, scratching your head, not knowing whether to scream, have one-on-one counseling, provide additional training, or just let it go.



Having done a number of CRM and Business Management installations, this is a challenge that many business leaders face when doing a software implementation. Sure – it is a good idea. If used, the solution will probably enable you to run your business more efficiently, give you some idea of predicting leads, project expenses, managing productivity and other business critical analytics. Unfortunately, this struggle is a typical change management issue, wherein different groups of people will approach change in different ways.

The challenge, at times, is that change management often takes a combination of commitment, time and money. It is not an overnight process, and typically, you can't manage or watch over everyone's key-strokes to make sure that people are doing the right things.

Here are a few things that you can do in order to increase the likelihood of success:

1. Plan – Don't just do it. You will end up with a big mess and costly cleanup. Plan out the steps, the budget, the resources, the timeline. It may only be 80%

accurate, but typically, leaving it completely up to chance will be 80% wrong. Although it might work out, eventually...maybe...

2. Make the benefits clear – not just for the company or from your experience, but from theirs. Even if you, personally, have great buy in from your employees, showing them how your solution will make their jobs better or easier, or achieve their goals will help to get them on board
3. Get them on board from the start – have them involved with the purchasing process, from determining what features would be necessary, helpful and/or nice to have, to participating in trial runs and choosing among the top three, for example.
4. Make training accessible – ensure that they aren't "thrown to the wolves" when it comes to learning the new solution. Understand that people have different aptitudes for IT. Your fast learners will probably be bored to death with an ongoing blow-by-blow of how things work, while your slower people will require hand-holding. Make training accessible, though videos and/or documentation. Your vendor should assist with this.
5. Customize the solution – use terms and processes that the team is familiar with so that the learning curve isn't so great. You probably don't want to overly disrupt a ship that isn't sinking! A key consideration when purchasing your solution: *don't adapt the business to the solution; make sure that the solution fits the way you do business*. I.E., don't use a restaurant POS to run a retail outlet.
6. Listen to them! – The suggestions that come from the users are the ones that will be of most value to you. By making it clear that you aren't looking for complaints, but are rather looking for solutions on how to make things better, you will maximize their communications
7. Set clear, consistent expectations with your team –

throughout the process of purchasing, installing, customizing, testing and implementation, ensure that you clearly articulate your expectations with the software and the team. Expectations include what the software will do *and* how you expect your team to use it. This should include a timeframe, adaptation rates (I expect 80% compliance by...), responses to non-compliance all based on quantifiable outcomes. Your team should agree that these are reasonable expectations and be held to them.

8. Be transparent and consistent – show the team success and challenges faced with the new solution. Involve them in celebrations (reaching goals/expectations) and challenges (process re-engineering, expectations not being met)

Unfortunately, there hasn't been a single secret sauce to getting teams to adapt to a new solution. Different people have different personalities, preferences and abilities. Some will adapt right away, others will resist until you drag them out the front door. Never the less, if you have chosen your solution wisely, gotten your team on board and stick through the difficult challenges, your solution could move you just a little bit closer to building an [extraordinary](#) business.

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