

# TEAM EXCELLENCE MADE *EASY!*

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**KMack**

TRANSFORM\* CREATE\* BECOME

# CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	.....3
<b>Great Teams Start with Great Leadership</b>	.....4
<b>Three Keys to Team Excellence</b>	.....6
<i>Understand your unique team</i>	
<i>Create the right climate</i>	
<i>Create synergy</i>	.....7
<b>Keep that Great Team on Track</b>	.....8
<i>Clarity on potential and personality</i>	
<i>Answer the question WHAT and WHY first</i>	.....9
<i>Have a simple process</i>	.....10

## Introduction

I love working with teams!

Providing results for hundreds of organizations and leading a team myself, I know what works. Contained in these pages are the morsels not readily found in cookie-cutter books on corporate and team-development. That is because the focus is primarily on the emotional landscape underneath the behaviors. We ALL have emotions, and these emotions drive the many decisions we make on a daily basis including how we work together, interact with customers and support other colleagues.

The easy part of our working world is the tangible. What boggles most is the emotional terrain that impacts everything from the quality of work produced to the bottom line. For these things I am hired. Whether coaching a lawyer to trump anxiety in public speaking, getting a person on the right career track or targeting a team's real issue for low productivity, getting to **the root** saves time and money.

The most underrated success driver is human emotion. Emotions drive leaders, staff and business. They make or break teams and keep or chase customers. They demoralize to depression or inspire to greatness. Regardless of the arena, emotions have BIG POWER. My intent with this work is to offer an inside look at those intangible factors that make the biggest difference in how your team will thrive - without compromising the importance of structure and accountability in overall team success.

I hope you enjoy this e-book as much as I have enjoyed writing it! 😊

## Great Teams Start with Great Leadership - *Know Your Team*

A great team is organic. It can move, adapt and respond to a variety of situations. Sure, if you have the space and the function, put the right person in the right spot. This will bring excellence. Great book on positioning employees is *Good to Great, Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't* by Jim Collins:

<http://www.amazon.com/Good-Great-Companies-Leap-Others/dp/0066620996>

However, if you have a small team and your expectations are high, it is essential to hire people with **great communication skills, creativity and adaptability**. In many small operations in particular, employees are asked to do more than their job description, and indeed, many are drawn to smaller places for that very reason — to learn, gain skill, have freedom to create and get their hands on interesting projects.

Take the time to really get to know each team member and where they might want to go **long term**. Ask the following questions:

1. Do they demonstrate the ability to easily work with others?
2. What do they **love** to do vs. what they **like** to do?...*notice where natural enthusiasm surfaces or body language shifts*
3. What do they avoid doing and what are they drawn to?...*look for patterns with existing employees*
4. Is an identified weakness really a fear? What resources can you offer to help them overcome that fear?

Answers to such questions will give you great insight into your team and help you as a leader to better inspire them as people and professionals.

### Listen to Emotion

People are emotional. They have feelings; they want to feel good about their work; they get embarrassed when they mess up; and they want to appear (and feel) important and valuable to the team. Know this as a leader, and nurture them. Acknowledging and addressing emotion is key, especially if you want them to stay passionate for the vision at hand. Try the following:

- Be a great example (with actual behaviors not words) so they have a **high standard** to reach for.
- Point out when you see someone reaching beyond their comfort zone and praise them — publicly is best.
- Allow mistakes, but do not make it so cushy that they lose the incentive to reach greater heights. Acknowledge and apologize for your own.
- Constantly take a pulse of how the team feels with meetings and casual chats — take the pulse often before minor issues morph into big communication breakdowns.

- Avoid hiding from your team. Leaders need to be out and about, engaging with their team and having good exposure.
- Seek input, and listen and admit when you are wrong (authentic leaders have greater influence).

### **Know about those Weeds...and pull them!**

Weeds do come up along the way. Here's why...

- Leaders feel too busy to address “minor” issues, which can then fester and multiply. *Address issues promptly.*
- Attitude and morale issues are not prioritized. One bad apple on the team can poison the bunch. *Find it, fix it or pull it.* It is not fair to others and will hurt business and customer perception in the long run.
- Some leaders are great builders and organizers, but lack good interpersonal skills and make too many mistakes in terms of people's feelings (which is a huge human driver). *Seek further education and practice new behaviors.*
- Not listening to staff or their challenges and focusing only on the “bulls eye” of a completed project. *Put and communicate (with appreciation) value on the human investment in a **visible** way.* The best way to do this is to focus on how the employee improved against *their former best*. When they show growth, acknowledge it.

### **Finally, Be an Example**

When you decide to become a leader, you have made the decision to be someone everyone is staring at, taking notes on and emulating. Do not underestimate this truth. While you would like to forget your mistakes, others like to remember them, as this gives them “mental slack” to fall back on when they get frustrated. This does not mean that you should try to project some version of perfection, but rather, do not overlook the impact of your choices and make decisions wisely.

Great leaders are honest, keep their team and operations transparent with open communication and praise often. Great leaders find the best fit for each team member, hire well and support each person to achieve greatness. They clear the path so that the team has an arena to thrive, innovate and synergize. They lead by example and show passion for why the team is together in the first place. A sign of great leadership is high trust throughout the team regardless of its size.

***Key tip – The biggest indicator of great leadership is when everyone around you shines!***

Leadership is something some are born with and others learn with consistent practice. When you decide and practice being a great leader and nurture new behaviors, they become natural. New habits create new connections in your own brain. These new connections make the task of leadership an easy one. Your influence grows by being an example.

## Three Keys to Team Excellence

Before we get into motivating teams, let's assume you hired well and demonstrate good leadership ability. All set? Let's get started...

### KEYS

1. **Understand your unique team**
2. **Create the right climate**
3. **Encourage synergy**

#### Understand Your Unique Team

Every team is unique. It is essential to take note of the unique chemistry of your team. As one team member leaves and another is added, the entire dynamic will change. The best way to truly understand your team is to do the following:

1. Have a clear vision and hire right from the start.
2. Take the time to watch your team in action in a variety of situations.
3. Notice who on the team leads, nurtures, challenges and calms up, as this will serve in determining strategy repositioning, should a need arise.
4. Create an environment where folks can freely (but professionally) express themselves honestly. This will offer a true pulse check of the current climate and help thwart unnecessary bottlenecks in process (i.e. an expansion) and/or a missing link (i.e. if a key player leaves team).

#### Create the Right Climate

If your vision is to have a few key players work well together, create synergy and make things happen, then creating the **right climate** is the difference between success and failure. The most viable seed in the world will not grow on glass; by the same token, if it lands on mediocre soil, it will not flourish.

Creating the right climate is about making the environment support the vision. Below are a few ideas:

**Objective:** Open communication

**Right Climate:** Open office structure, inclusive meetings, leadership presence, exposure and involvement

**Objective:** Fast turnaround

**Right Climate:** A work area that is well stocked organized and provides easy access to information and supplies (any time spent on annoying "where do I find this" or "how do I do that" will not meet this objective).

## Create Synergy

First and foremost:

**SYNERGY CANNOT BE FORCED, OR IT IS NOT SYNERGY.**

Synergy is a *byproduct of team cohesiveness*. It is not a business buzz word (although in many circles, it has been demoted as such). Rather, it is the reward of envisioning, creating and supporting a great team.

A great working team has movement and flow, either consistently or for the majority of time. Creating an environment with a synergistic byproduct is worth the effort because it feels and moves like “magic” and gives birth to unique ideas, innovation and expansion. The only way to create this type of environment is to provide the fertile soil.

These steps will get and KEEP you on track when motivating a small team:

1. HIRE RIGHT (can you tell this is key point? – repetition drives learning)
2. CREATE SIMPLE STRUCTURES (depending on your business) for clear direction on procedures, ease of movement in obtaining information and overall support, but leave the rest to the creativity of the team
3. FOLLOW UP with support and resources. Avoid heavy criticism; especially in the embryonic stage of any team...everyone is just a little more sensitive and fragile in the beginning. The beginning can mean a new leader, direction or venture. Beginnings create uncertainty and uncertainty generates fear.
4. GIVE ENERGY to the first sprout of synergy. When you notice the team easily coming up with ideas, encourage it, applaud it and ask it for more — other sprouts will soon follow, as it’s now deemed safe to sprout too.
5. WEED and NURTURE. Watch out for weeds (bad behavior, ideas being shot down in an unconstructive manner or anything that would cause negativity). Never ever allow yelling - demoralizing is an understatement.

Creating synergy does not mean you need to walk on egg shells. It means you nurture the very dynamic you would like to see take root naturally. Once the garden is grown and maintained, new players will be eager to join the chemistry.

I have witnessed and worked with countless teams successfully. A big issue that often surfaces is around team members being afraid to address issues due to the consequences experienced from unskilled leaders (retaliation/negative feedback/issue continues to remain unresolved). The saddest of the bunch is when someone is publically embarrassed for sharing an idea. That is never good leadership. This not only hinders great ideas from surfacing but prevents the magic of team cohesiveness. However, when team members are encouraged and relax, they offer greater levels of excellence in a shorter timeframe.

## Keep that Great Team “On Track”

Whether you have one employee or 50, its important to keep folks motivated and on track. The quality and consistency of your team will play a big role in outcomes. Not only is it essential to hire well, but also create the right environment to keep thriving.

When you hire a great team, you want to see each one of your employees express great talent and reach new heights. Their abundant and shiny resumes speak of promise while their firm handshakes melt the concerns mounted from little support. Your response may be, “yes!” My response would be, um, “let’s see.”

As polished as a resume may be, you can never predict how an employee will continue to grow and evolve. For example, a salesperson may have excellent interpersonal skills, but now that your focus is 80% online, their writing skills may not be as effective. The point is that all things expand and grow. Keep that in mind when hiring. Hopefully, you hired well and you are now coaching your team member/s toward greatness.

### Three Keys that Work

1. **Clarity on potential and personality**
2. **Answer the question WHAT and WHY first**
3. **Have a simple process**

#### Clarity on Potential and Personality

Let’s say you hired well and want to ensure that the employee keeps performing well and grows as a professional.

Get answers to the following questions in meetings, chats or performance reviews (your choice):

- a. **HOW** does this person like to work?
- b. **WHAT ATTRACTED** them to your organization and what is their personal vision (is it a promotion or a more skill-enhanced driver, like increased proficiency in web code?)
- c. **IF THEY HAD A MAGIC WAND** what would they be doing? This taps into the right hemisphere of the brain and can offer insight. This last question may appear silly on the surface, but if a person’s heart is not in the type of work they are doing or where you envision your business going, they will grow disinterested and disempowered.

## **Answer the question WHAT and WHY first**

The market will change, you will change and new ideas will surface. Although being flexible is essential, having a moving target as your business vision can waste time, money and confuse anyone you bring on your team.

Answering the question of WHAT you are doing is the first step.

For example, I personally have many interests and topics that I like to explore. To answer the question of WHAT methodology I own: it is writing, speaking and drawing. As much as I love clothing, I will not be sewing anything anytime soon. I may **write** about fashion, but the more tactical approach to fashion is not my game, except perhaps for getting dressed in the morning.

Answering the question of WHY you are doing what you are doing is the secret hurdle jumper.

First, let's pull out the "make money" card because that goes without saying. As we have recently learned with our economy, making money for the sole purpose of making money has its drawbacks either in relationships, quality, ethics or the planet. However, if we can make a wonderful living for ourselves, our team and others doing something we are passionate about that does not feel like work everyday, but rather a creative extension of who we are, we will be richer than most. Nothing is more powerful than passion. If you do not have it, **don't expect anyone you hire to have it for what you do either.**

**WHAT you do is your CRAFT.  
WHY you are doing it is your PASSION.**

The WHY is the heart of it. My "why" for what I do is that I love to teach about transformation. And because of that, I have learned about transparencies and workbooks, then moved to creating my own handouts via Word, then learned about PowerPoint, then learned about embedding videos... websites...blogging...podcasts....on and on until the next technological advance.

***Key Tip - The WHY jumps hurdles fueled by your passion. This also applies to any employees you hire.***

I will always reach to learn the new skill that will allow me to do what I love to do. Knowing this about team members will give you great insight into what drives them, motivates and inspires them to keep **upgrading their skill set to meet the demands of your growing business.** Passionate employees keep growing and upgrading their skills. If they don't have that passion, you run the risk of having employees with obsolete skills, soaked in fear and no self-motivation. And that is just sad. ☹

Once you get through this psychological dance, things get simpler. Having a team that has passion makes everything **easier**. Finding the resources to support the necessary new

skills is a delightful challenge, rather than an “I did not sign up for this” morale dive at the first sign of change. And oh, situations do *change*.

## **Have a Simple Process**

So you have a new employee with great skill (what) and **passion** (why) for your business. This is good stuff! But “good stuff” is not perfect stuff. People are human and regardless of your business size, you should have a process in place to manage and coach your team.

Below is a simple process to follow at the first sign of a drop in performance. The sooner you record it, the better. Everyone makes mistakes, so avoid following this process unless you begin to see a pattern, have rising concerns or feel the need to communicate expectations in a stronger manner due to multiple errors or problems.

This is the classic corporate set up. Even if you have a simple two-person team, it is savvy to know how things are done in larger organizations. I cannot tell you how many people asked me in seminars (regardless of their business size) how to deal with employee issues – and conflict. That is what inspired me to write this book. I like to help!

The Coaching and Counseling Stages include:

- **Step one** – The unwritten verbal conversation. Here, the immediate supervisor (or you) has a chat with the employee and makes notes in an informal local file.
- **Step two** - The COACHING session. This is a form designed to capture a conversation, feedback given, responses by employee etc., but in the HR world, it’s deemed “informal” and just a step to keep the employee on track. Regardless of what is communicated, the moment an employee sees a written form, it’s perceived as serious. Both parties should sign and date. Walk mindfully...
- **Step three** - The COUNSELING session. This is used to send a strong message and clarify expectations. The form should include:
  1. The issue (unmet expectations) listed in behavior and fact-based language
  2. The expectation and how it should be met and measured with timeframe indicated with a follow up meeting scheduled and indicated on form
  3. A place for the employee to make comments
  4. A place where consequences are indicated (if expectations are not met) which may include another counseling session up to termination
  5. A place for both parties to sign and date
  6. Include all necessary records to file

Ok, so we did not end on the most cheerful note, but hopefully, having this information will prevent you from ever having to use it on your wonderful team. Remember, when

we are passionate about what we do because our reasons for doing it are aligned with our values, then we (and our employees and coworkers) will always be open and eager to learn new skills, keep up to date and be grateful for all the resources offered to support that process.

Strive for excellence, not perfection with human beings and you will create the fertile ground for greatness.

If you are interested in a custom team-building workshop, or keynote presentation please contact 954-704-2199 or visit me at <http://www.kristinmackey.com>.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

##### **Kristin Mackey**



### **Named one of *Training Magazine's* 2010 Top Young Trainers to Watch (July/Aug issue of *Training Magazine*).**

She has successfully lead seminars for groups ranging from 8 to 500, for hundreds of organizations and thousands of people, including Lockheed Martin, Mercury Media, PriceWaterHouse Coopers, Children's Trust, Rowan University's Management Institute, Children's Services Council of Broward County, Underwood Memorial Hospital and TCI Bank Limited as well as many others with outstanding feedback.

She is invited to keynote large conferences as well as conduct executive leadership retreats. Her unique approach to teaching has attracted United States media coverage as well as in the Caribbean Islands. Kristin was named one of *Training Magazine's* **2010 Top Young Trainers to Watch**.

As a consultant for Fred Pryor Seminars, she was ranked first among 250 speakers worldwide for her work in teaching conflict resolution. As a consultant for Franklin Covey, she facilitates several key programs including *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Kristin has also been hired by Careertrack, AMA (American Management Association), ProEdge Skills Inc. and The Nyman Group as an instructor with exceptional satisfaction scores.

Prior to her current work, she was a director for a large health care system. She introduced progressive programs and implemented extensive internal changes. As part of her goal to build a culture of service, she delivered two key milestones in the enterprise's 5-year strategic plan and increased key performance metrics. Kristin also conducted regular media training for award-winning physician authors on national television and radio book tours.

Kristin was instrumental in planning and executing *The Radio Only Management International Conference* with Peter Drucker to prepare radio General Managers for change. It was the most attended conference in the program's three-year history.

She co-authored the custom e-book, *I AM Worthy of Greatness* with success coach Scott Baker to encourage transitioning youth (who aged out of the foster care system) to follow their dreams. This resource is now being used in several high schools and distributed to a Florida juvenile detention center. Some of her published articles include *True Inspiration* and *Personal Transformation* and *Embrace Your Wingspan*.

Kristin supports organizations such as SOS Children's Village and Painting for Charity in London.