



TRANSFORMING TEAMS MODEL

Seriously dysfunctional teams are very visible. The dysfunctional behaviours are overt and extreme. It is obvious that the team has serious problems. Often organisations which contain seriously dysfunctional teams tolerate them because they do not know what to do about them. Other internal stakeholder groups try to avoid them wherever possible or dread asking for anything from them knowing that it's going to be 'hard work'. These teams cannot undertake team coaching in their current state.

It is important to state that the individuals within the team are not necessarily dysfunctional in their behaviour in other settings, it is often the team dynamic that creates the dysfunction OR the behaviour of one or two members of the team. Nevertheless being part of a seriously dysfunctional team inevitably affects other areas of work eventually.

Behaviours that characterise a seriously dysfunctional team:

- Lack of leadership
- High degrees of blame
- Personal attack
- Overt or covert sabotage
- Contempt for one another
- Aggression which can be expressed either openly or passively
- Belittling
- Nothing gets achieved in the team – paralysis
- Extreme silo working
- Factions
- Serious pain
- Inward looking
- High levels of sickness and absenteeism.
- Complaints about bullying and harassment
- Point scoring.

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Resistant teams are not yet in the seriously dysfunctional bracket but are coming close to dropping into that place. These teams resent what they often see as forced change. The reasons differ: sometimes a new leader is appointed; sometimes the context in which they are asked to operate changes or sometimes a crisis in the organisation perpetuates change.

Whatever the reason, resistant teams are on a slide which if not arrested can easily tip into seriously dysfunctional. Whereas mediocre teams fear change and participate in behaviours that deny the impetus for change, resistant teams have felt the impetus and resent it. They push back strongly and use their energy in non productive ways. The team will swing back and forth at this stage, so it is often not as visible as a seriously dysfunctional team and the “day job” is still getting done but less and less effectively.

Often the leader(s) will be the ones trying to implement change (or the team will try to implement the change ‘because of’ the leader) and the energy gets focused on resisting the leader or team members personally – this can have the impact that a high potential leader or team members will either leave, or mentally abdicate and this makes things worse.

Behaviours That Characterise a Resistant Team

- Harking back to the past “it always worked well when we did”
- Resentment that is often personally focused on those trying to implement change
- Backbiting
- Denial of the need for change even when facts are very obvious
- Trying to protect personal interests
- One-upmanship or ‘bury the head in the sand so it’ll go away’
- Focus purely on personal tasks and refusal to accept team accountability
- Blame shifting
- Increased sickness absence (particularly stress related)
- Emotional outbursts
- Lack of flexibility
- Less effectiveness in the task
- High levels of frustration around small things
- Lack of awareness of the “big picture”.

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Mediocre teams are in danger. Jim Collins said that ‘good is the enemy of great’. A team that is good enough but not striving to be better very quickly becomes mediocre. Mediocre teams fear change – they fear “upsetting the apple cart” and are the epitome of “If it’s not broken don’t fix it”. Unfortunately in today’s world mediocre simply is not good enough. Team coaching can only work with these teams if they recognise the need for change and are willing to do the work to change. Often the level of complacency is what makes the difference.

Behaviours that characterise a mediocre team:

- Complacency
- Set in their ways
- Lack of challenge
- Everyone is polite but discussion is bland
- Overly concerned with how things “look” to outsiders
- People are always “nice” to each other
- Muted enthusiasm for the task
- Silo working
- Difficult issues and “elephants in the room” never openly acknowledged and therefore never tackled
- Tough decisions are avoided or put off
- Individuals fear being undermined
- Mistakes are covered up
- People watch their back
- Cynical
- Challenge is seen as confrontation
- Passive aggression
- Fear of personal change
- Meetings tend to be “talking shops”
- Lack of energy in the team.

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High potential teams are good teams which recognise they could be better, and have an appetite for the changes which will make them great. These teams have energy and commitment and really want to fulfil their potential. The danger is that if their potential is not directed and focused they can go off at tangents, take risks that are not well thought out and eventually run out of steam.

They are excellent candidates for team coaching.

Behaviours that characterise a high potential team:

- Enthusiasm
- Energy
- Commitment
- Generally willing to support each other although may defer to the leader for the final decision
- Appetite for change
- Can run after the “flavour of the month”/go off at tangents
- Will tentatively acknowledge the “elephants in the room” but don’t know how to tackle them so quickly move away from topic
- Humour is often used as deflector from difficult issues
- Willing to be vulnerable
- Vision is there but not fully formed
- Decisive but not always measured
- Willing to trust each other
- Less concerned about the appearance of success and want real success
- Willing to be challenged
- Open minded
- Good relationships with other stakeholder groups.

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Transformational teams are teams which have worked to develop the self awareness of the team to a high degree. They possess the energy and commitment of the high potential team but are more grounded. They are able to accurately self assess and are committed to ongoing learning and development. They are “fleet of foot” and able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Perhaps most importantly they are always looking ahead, scanning the horizon and have the imagination and courage to change their form and the form of the organisation as required. Very few, if any, teams are ‘transformational’ all the time so constant work needs to be done to keep them at the top of their game in every respect.

Behaviours which characterise Transformational Teams:

- Self aware
- Avoid ‘groupthink’
- Constantly challenging themselves to be better
- Give each other constructive feedback
- Celebrate success
- Praise others
- Make balanced judgements
- Lack of prejudice
- Committed to one another’s achievements, growth and development
- Talk openly about each others’ strengths
- Acknowledge mistakes without fear or rancour
- Candid
- Visionary and imaginative
- Have brave conversations and will tackle difficult issues straightforwardly and openly
- Take courageous yet well thought out decisions
- Fleet of foot/Adaptable
- Work as a team when they are together and when they are apart
- Transform the performance of others in the organisation and the organisation itself
- Engage effectively with all the team’s stake holder groups inside and outside the organisation
- Coach each other informally and, when necessary, formally.

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