

Developing High Performing Systems

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I. Introduction

Learning Values

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Old Business Exercise

Purpose: Letting go of thoughts, feelings, issues and problems limiting participant contact and focus.

Instruction: Begin the exercise by taking a few minutes to reflect on the thoughts, feelings, issues and problems limiting your contact with the present situation. Write them on a piece of paper. Next, let go of them. Potential strategies are: (1) throwing away the sheet of paper, (2) visualizing putting them into a ball and destroying it with a laser beam, (3) stating the issues to the group, and (4) performing a deep breathing exercise. If you feel stuck, complete the following sentence stem: One way I can let go of my old business is-.

Expectations Exercise

Purpose: Creating a person agenda for the session and communicating this agenda to others. The exercise can also serve as a beginning personal development plan.

Instruction: Write down your expectations for this session. If you feel stuck, complete the following sentence stem: One expectation I have about this session is-.

Getting to Know You And I Exercise

Purpose: Getting to know self and others.

Instruction: Tell your group three personal attributes you are very proud of. Excluded those related to work. Next, tell them three contributions you will make during the next few months.

II. High Performing Systems (HPS) and Team Building

What is High Performance Exercise?

Purpose: Creating personal and group insights for developing High Performance Systems.

Instruction: Take a few minutes to recall your best personal experience of high performance. Next, recall your best experience with a high performing system. How did you feel during each experience? What might have caused you to experience high performance? What were the conditions of the systems that supported high performance? What is the relationship between personal and system high performance?

Attributes of High Performing Systems

Key Attributes of High Performing Systems (HPS)

A. Purposing

- * Purposing is the continuous stream of activities leading to the development of clarity, consensus and commitment about the organization's primary purposes.

B. Time

- * Leaders and members devote an extraordinary amount of time to achieving the purposes of their HPSs. They are not workaholics or driven expansive personalities.
- * Leaders and members put in an extraordinary amount of macro and micro time. Leaders and members stay with the HPS for a number of years.

C. Feeling

- * Leaders and members care deeply about each other and their HPS.

- * There is a Esprit de Corp.

"In the World that I had adopted as my own, Apple, the romance of business was what we lived-and lived for every day."

John Sculley.

"Love'em and lead'em."
Retired General John Stanford.

D. Focus

* Leader and members have a conscious and unconscious list of priorities for improving performance. This list is continuously evolving.

* This list is actively discussed and worked with.

HPS Learning and Application

Purpose: Generating personal and group insights for developing HPSs.

Instructions: Complete the following sentence stems: One thing I learned about HPSs that I can apply to my work unit is-, One thing that I can do to support my unit becoming a HPS is-, One way in which I need to change myself for my unit to become a HPS is-, The biggest barrier to my unit becoming a HPS is-, One resource I need to create a HPS is-.

Characteristics of HPS

A. There is clarity of purpose and objectives for achieve it. Members tell the same story.

B. There is exceptional commitment to HPSs and their purpose. Energy is high and focused. Motivation is experienced as "weird," strange and peculiar.

C. There is a feeling of rhythm to HPSs. They feel "good." They are vibrate and feel alive. They are exciting.

D. There is a high task focus and an emphasis on form. Spirit, task and purpose create form and structure. Self-created theory of organizing.

E. Strong and committed leadership. Leadership style is not an issue. Leaders have a strong sense of self.

F. HPSs are "hot beds" of focused innovation and creativity. Members are continuously scouting for ways to improve all aspects of the system. However, members are not addicted to newness. They have a mature attitude towards innovation.

G. HPSs have self-defined boundaries. They have a strong sense of organizational self. They are unique and engaged in a process of individuation. Leaders devoted a large amount of time to boundary maintenance. They create their own standards. Outsiders may consider HPSs as the "organizational problem child" because of its resistance to external control and direction.

H. HPSs tend to be composed of "rejects," renegades and castoffs. They are the Dirty Dozen and the Star Wars cast of organizational life.

I. HPSs have a "jelled" quality. There is a unity of content and process, spirit and structure. They have a "feel right" quality.

J. HPSs develop their own language, symbols, rituals and rites. They may seem weird to outsiders. However, they are critical to performance. They also have a lot of "good stories." These stories support strong feelings for the HPS and its leadership.

K. HPSs created cultures that trigger "peak experiences." Members experience working in the system as exciting, thrilling and joyous.

L. Members develop personalized systems for assessing their performance. They also develop personalized strategies for maintaining and enhancing their performance. These systems tend to have little meaning for others.

Issues and the Dark Side of HPS

I. HPSs are unique. They are not designable. They are not developed from a plan or logical model. Members talk about "having a dream and seeking to realize it."

"In the field of group endeavor, you will see incredible events in which the group performs far beyond the sum of its individual talents. It happens in the symphony, in the ballot, in the theater, in sports and equally in business. It is easy to recognize and impossible to define. It is a mystique. It cannot be achieved without immense effort, training, and cooperation, but effort, training, and cooperation alone rarely creates it. Some groups reach it consistently. Few can sustain it."

Dee Hock, former CEO of Vista International

"Constantly they come out with such statements as, "We had no idea things would turn out like this." "In the early years, we hardly knew what we were doing." "We were really groping." "We just did what we thought we were supposed to do." "

Peter Vaill, George Washington University.

II. The process for creating the "jellying" quality of HPSs is mysterious.

"In the heat of the crisis, the management team jelled quickly. At first each member muddled in his own way, but as time went by, we started to gain a new understanding of how to be effective. Even now we do not completely understand the conceptual frame that has evolved, and maybe we never will."

David Hurst.

III. HPSs can suffer from the "Great Wall of China" syndrome because of their boundary maintaining character. They may lose contact with their environment. Norms against scouting and boundary spanning may evolve. HPSs may suffer from the "Not Invented Here" syndrome.

IV. HPSs can develop a closed value system. This can support group think.

V. The members of HPSs may experience self-induced personal and system burnout. High performance periods need to be followed by "down time" and R&R.

III. Ending and Beginning

Gratitude

Purpose: Expressing gratitude to self and others for the learning experience.

Instruction: Take a few minutes to reflect on what you feel grateful for about this learning experience. Next, express your gratitude to the other members of your group. Also, tell them why you're grateful they were here.

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