

Introducing our High Performing Teams Questionnaire

Our extensive experience and cutting-edge research tell us certain key factors differentiate high performing teams from average teams – and distinguish high performing teams from groups of high performing individuals working in isolation.

Our High Performing Teams Questionnaire (HPTQ) turns input from teams and their key stakeholders, into clear, deep insights into how the team is performing – and importantly why.

An exceptional catalyst for critical conversations

The semi-structured feedback process turns a wealth of exceptionally rich HPTQ data into an even richer conversation. Rather than simply reading a static report, the team works together to analyse its contributions, and those of its stakeholders. This prompts the team to address critical topics that might otherwise take months or even years to emerge- or might never emerge at all.

For example, when we've used the questionnaire with teams in the past:

- We identified a particularly strong emotional attachment that one founder had to his business. The team was then able to evaluate the impact this was having on his ability to step back into a chairman role, and the implications for both the internal and external perceptions of the organisation's managing director
- A disparate senior management 'team' was able to forge itself a new identity focused on taking greater, collective responsibility for the organisation's strategy. Previously, the team had delivered exceptionally well on shorter-term operational responsibilities, but had left important strategic issues to the board
- The leadership team of an SME identified that it was time to acknowledge the company's successes and the years of hard work behind them. This enabled them to shift out of 'survival mode', allowing the team and its organisation to truly thrive. The result was a palpable sense of relief and pride amongst the team, and a commitment to display a different kind of courage going forward
- In preparation for a change in team leadership, we enabled a veteran leadership team to review its progress over a nine-month period, ending with a commitment to clear principles for maintaining exceptional performance during the transition.

Our underlying methodology

Team performance and team dynamics are notoriously complex subject areas. We help our clients make sense of their realities by focusing on three key themes that really make the difference to their teams' performance.

Three Core Disciplines

Our research and experience tell us that:

1. The team needs to establish its direction by integrating its own needs and aspirations with those of its stakeholders and the demands of its operating environment
2. The team needs to secure commitment to that direction, both within and outside of the team. A fully committed team will probably fail if its stakeholders disagree with the team's chosen path
3. The team needs to build and maintain the necessary capacity to get where it's hoping to go. It needs the right people, skills, resources, processes and structures – both within and around the team



Systems thinking

All teams are complex, shifting systems operating within complex, shifting systems. Research tells us that complex systems operate in certain ways, with common organising principles spanning organisations, sectors and cultural boundaries. Our approach helps teams and their leaders see how these 'systemic forces' are helping and hindering the team's performance. Teams and leaders that can learn to channel those forces find themselves with a considerable competitive advantage.

Three ARC Qualities

Channelling these systemic forces effectively requires teams and their leaders to demonstrate three qualities, as explored in Richard Boston's book *ARC Leadership: from surviving to thriving in a complex world*. The HPTQ assesses the extent to which teams are, and are perceived to be, 'Authentic', 'Responsible' and 'Courageous'. This generates a host of useful questions for the team, including:

- How much do our stakeholders trust us?
- How well do we manage feedback as a team?
- How well are our collective responsibilities distributed amongst team members?
- Which types of courage do we display as a team, and which types are less apparent?



Why use this questionnaire?

You might start by asking "Why use a questionnaire at all?" A questionnaire approach helps focus the attention of team members and stakeholders on the critical factors. It promotes openness and honesty and it accelerates insight: it takes most teams months of meetings to learn what you'll quickly learn from this questionnaire.

We've used the HPTQ to great effect when coaching leadership teams in a number of organisations, including Heineken and the Department of Health. It's been clear throughout that those teams gained far greater insight with this questionnaire than they would have done from similar tools. There are shorter, shallower questionnaires on the market. We've used them, and we've got some good results. However, they only really scratch the surface, and they generally focus on one particular area of team performance, typically the relationships between team members. Our intention with this questionnaire is to go beyond the team, and beyond relationships, to get at what teams are really interested in – and what really makes the difference to their performance.



How does it work?

1. We **engage** with the team, its leader and its stakeholders to discuss the process. This includes helping the team to identify and engage its key stakeholders
2. All participants **complete** the questionnaire online. This typically includes team members, the team leader, a sample of team members' staff and key stakeholders within and outside the organisation
3. We meet with the team and they work together to **assess** their current performance and the factors that are helping and hindering the team
 - Individual responses are confidential, sometimes with the exception of the team leader and their immediate boss. It is generally in a team's interests to have open discussions addressing the questions you'll see here, but not all teams and/or stakeholders are ready for such openness at the outset
 - We help the team in its analysis, where appropriate e.g. by asking thought-provoking questions or sharing our own observations from the data and/or our own first-hand observations of the team in action
4. We help the team **align** around key actions to take in response to the data
5. We provide varying levels of support, depending on the team, to help it **progress** against these key actions
6. We **review** the team's progress, typically by re-running the questionnaire 6-18 months later and meeting with the team to explore the differences in the data



What do I do next?

If you'd like to talk to us about your team completing our High Performing Teams Questionnaire, contact Richard Boston at rboston@leader-space.com to arrange an initial conversation.