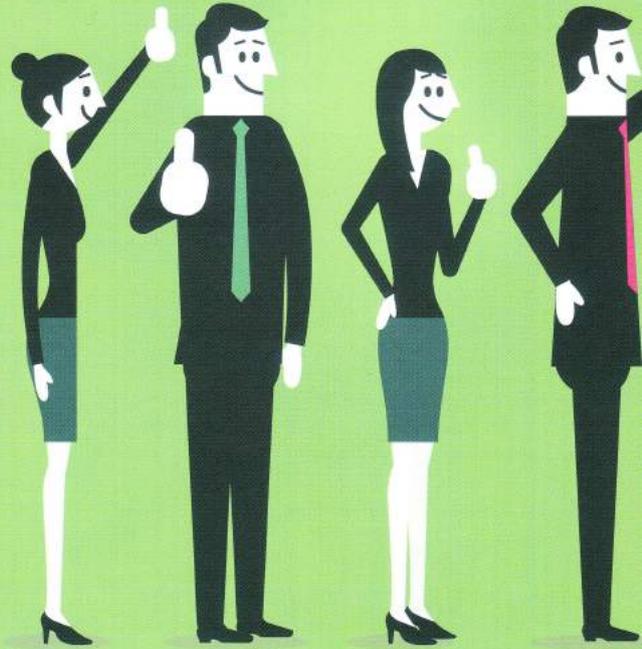


Resetting Teams



Over the years in my work I've been involved in re-setting numerous teams. What do I mean by re-set? Well you know when your computer or device is stuck, isn't doing what it's supposed to do, is frozen. You hit re-set. If all goes to plan you have a functioning operating device. That's the same for teams who are stuck, are working against each other rather than with each other, have lost sight of work goals and purpose, who expend their energy and focus negatively rather than positively. They're not functioning effectively. Common words that people use to describe their experience of this type of team include 'toxic', 'dysfunctional' and 'soul sapping'.

“ *High performing teams have strong relationships and demonstrate constructive self-change* ”

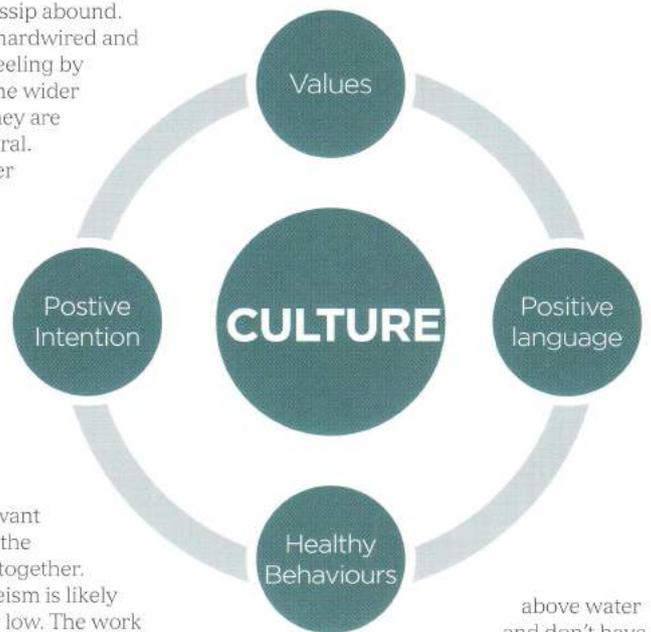
What are the indicators of a team in trouble?

People don't look after each other. They avoid talking to each other relying more on email communication than chat. They have poor interpersonal relationships. A blame culture evolves with people pointing the finger at each other. Negative

comments and negative gossip abound. People become negatively hardwired and may project how they are feeling by sharing their misery with the wider team. They don't see that they are perpetuating a negative spiral. This in turn affects the wider team. People start to self-protect, become patch protective and work to covering their backs. They come into work, flick on the computer and don't engage with colleagues. They work in silos. Social pleasantries are not the norm. They have started to hardwire themselves into a negative thought space. They don't want to be there and don't enjoy the 'how' of how they all work together. Staff turnover and absenteeism is likely to be high and productivity low. The work indicators are all going the wrong way.

What are the causes?

There are too many to list but here are common causes I come across. Unaddressed conflict, people don't know how to raise issues skilfully or safely. Poor, negative leadership that is more task focused and not so good at, or interested in, the people stuff. Not a leader that people want to follow. A rogue hire who over time brings down a team. Fear of change, of making a mistake. Burnout from too heavy workloads; people work to keep their head



above water and don't have the energy to pay attention to relationships.

Vision, goals or sense of purpose that are missing or unclear. An organisation that is more focused on results than the 'how' of how people achieve them. There is no sense of a baseline positive culture that binds them together.

When you are part of a team operating in a negative fag, it is difficult to see a way out to turn things around. It's difficult to pinpoint the causes and see what would be better. It often takes somebody from outside the team to help re-set.



Interventions I've often seen used focus on setting the team purpose and goals, or addressing the physical work environment. Helpful at one level but more of a sticking plaster solution. They don't fully address the root causes, helping the team to unpick their current DNA, to identify what isn't working for them and what would be better. To re-set you need to start with the team culture.

Team culture. What do we mean by culture?

Anthropologists talk about shared personal values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour, a source of identity, belonging and meaning. It is transferred from one generation to another. Culture stems from the individuals in a group and helps shape relationships. The same thinking can be transferred to team culture. Teams are made up of individuals who come together from different backgrounds and cultures. When the team goes home at the end of their work shift the culture breaks up. It comes back together when they regroup in their work. The culture shifts when one person exits the team and another joins. This is where having a clear picture of the values that bind them and how they want to work together creates a shared culture roadmap.

How do you re-set a team?

By working with them to identify what's getting in the way of them working positively together and what would be better. Using future focused appreciative enquiry to paint a picture of what a positive work culture looks like for them and what

they need to do differently to get there.

Positive, high performing teams have a healthy, positive work culture and climate. I've found that there are four key dimensions that underpin this.

Values. Positive Language. Healthy Behaviours. Positive Intention.

Values – this is about what the team values and what is important to them, creating meaning and guiding the 'how' of how they work together. Values are the glue of the team.

Positive Language – intentional positive language that is supportive of people and their work "how can we improve this.... is there a better way?..... what more can we do?.... how can I help?"

Healthy Behaviours – positive behaviours between team members. Behaviours that align with the values they have agreed. As one person described it to me "our ground rules for how we work together".

Positive Intention – team members are intentional in how they engage with people around them. They are conscious and deliberate in working positively not negatively with each other. They work to create a healthy, positive atmosphere and support each other.

Language and behaviours are the DNA, the bloodline of a healthy, positive work climate. Building and maintaining a positive work climate requires that people work consciously with others. When one or more of these factors starts to move out of sync, to go backwards, the work climate is at risk of eroding. High performing teams have strong

relationships and demonstrate constructive self-change. When the agreed culture starts to slip they work to bring it back on track. When disagreements occur they are resolved quickly and positively. Often I build into a team re-set programme training around how to have a courageous conversation and how to receive feedback. With this building block in place people become more confident in safely addressing conflict issues.

How do you maintain the culture glue?

Each person in the team has a role as culture guardian. I've come across teams that have Culture Champions, a great idea, although this might suggest that only one or two members are responsible for maintaining the culture. We all are.

Team culture starts with us. We all have a role to play. Ghandi said "Be the change you wish to see in the world". Be the change you wish to see in the team. If you're part of a team that isn't playing nicely together take a step back and find a way to hit re-set. Or give me a call. **HR**



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