

How to Lead Winning Teams that Deliver Outstanding Results Year on Year, Faster!



Seven steps to greater productivity
and a more balanced life

By Mark Rosenberg

balanced**curve**

Do you sometimes feel like you're a police officer directing traffic in the middle of a busy intersection when the lights have failed? There's a constant stream of people coming at you from all directions, and you're turning from one stream to the next just keeping things under control?

Being a business leader is a bit like that. You often get caught up in the day-to-day traffic and don't find time to work on the things that are really going to drive your business. Things like your people, your suppliers and your customers. Things like product development and strategic marketing. And things like managing cash flow, financial planning and measuring results.

Instead of getting on with the important stuff, you're constantly wasting time putting out 'bush fires' and correcting work that hasn't been done properly by members of your team. You're managing unproductive conflict or battling the 'silo mentality' within the team. And then there are the underperformers...

Well, at least that's how it was for me. And that's why I've written this paper. After working as a senior manager and leader for most of my professional career, I discovered a number of years ago that there are some simple steps to getting it right.

And I want to make sure it doesn't take you as long as it took me to discover the secret. What follows is a seven-step process that will fast track development of action-oriented strategies and building "winning" teams to implement the strategy.

Here are **the seven steps** that will deliver you an outstanding team that constantly achieves great results. And, if you follow these steps, you will end up with a greater sense of control and balance in your life.

1. **Understand yourself.** Clarify your personal drivers, priority values, competencies and goals.
2. **Develop a clear and simple strategic plan** that drives and guides your business.
3. **Develop a 'Team Charter'** that acts as a compass for delegation, individual decision making and behaviour.
4. **Recruit the right people and clarify and communicate roles, responsibilities and goals** so that everyone understands and appreciates each other's role and value to the organisation.
5. **Take control of your time.** Stop being the pinball and start being the flipper.
6. **Introduce and maintain a culture that reinforces *collaboration and accountability*** so team members work together to deliver outstanding results.
7. **Coach the team** so that you get the absolute best out of every player.

Step 1: Understand yourself

Effective leadership begins with an understanding of who you are and what you stand for.

“The instrument of leadership is the self, and mastery of the art of leadership comes from mastery of the self”¹.

Gaining mastery of oneself doesn't happen overnight. It is in fact a lifelong project. However, if you are going to be a successful leader, you need to invest heavily in “Me 101” as a core subject. You must block out time as a priority to ask and answer some of the hard questions.



Questions such as:

1. What are my core drivers and value priorities?
2. What is my purpose in life?
3. What are the specific things I want to do before someone is reading my obituary?
4. What are my goals in each of my various “roles”?
5. What am I really good at?
6. What am I not so good at?
7. What has made me successful in the past?

You need to be clear about what drives you, what you stand for and what shapes the way you behave and interact with others. You need to understand your strengths and weaknesses and how you impact on others. This understanding will make you a better leader.

How do you do this? There are lots of ways to attack the exercise, but the critical step is to commit time to kick start the journey. Using a 360-degree survey is a great starting point. Working with a coach is another useful option. Reading books on ‘Emotional Intelligence’ works for some. Others enjoy using psychological profiling tools. The critical thing is to make this a priority and commit to doing the hard work.

¹ Kouzes & Posner, The Leadership Challenge 2007, p344

Step 2: Develop a clear and simple strategic plan

Academic experts, strategy textbooks and highly paid strategic planning consultants all have an interest in emphasising the complexity of the thing called 'strategy'. At Balanced Curve we take a different approach. We believe that while your business may be complex, any strategy that can help drive its success must be simple, clear, and easy to implement.

As Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, notes, the essence of strategy is "making clear-cut choices about how to compete". All businesses have competitors, so such choices are always made whether or not you call them strategy. It's about developing a sustainable edge over your competitors.

The challenge for you and your team is to take the time to gather critical information, think through the issues important to your business and develop a plan that provides this sustainable competitive advantage.

To inspire your people and drive the business, your strategic plan must be clear and easily understood. Otherwise, it will be ignored and sit on the shelf until next year's planning session. Unfortunately this is what happened far too often earlier in my professional career.

So how do you go about developing a clear and simple strategic plan, and in a timely manner? At Balanced Curve we approach the task by resolving the following strategic questions:

1. What is your desired end game?

What is your ambition for your business? Is it increased market share and growth of the current business? Is it growth through diversification into new product or market areas? Or is it consolidation of the business through reorganisation and cost reduction? What financial results do you want to achieve, and by when?



2. What business are you in?

This question looks deceptively simple; answering it less so. How you conceive your business determines the scope of its activity. Answering this seemingly simple question is, in reality, an important exercise in reviewing the concepts on which the business is based and gaining a clearer view of possible futures.

3. How well do you create value for your customers?

Value is something that only customers can determine. So you need to understand your customers. What keeps them awake at night? What is it that they really value? The question to be answered is how well you create the value that your customers seek and how your performance in doing so compares with that of your competitors.

4. What are the key factors for success in your business?

What are the things you must allocate resources to in order to succeed? For maximum effectiveness, your scarce resources must be concentrated on those things that are decisive in achieving success. And you need to think about how you can allocate your resources to achieve a competitive edge. You can't just do what everyone else does.

5. Who are your ideal customers?

Given your skills, resources and experience, who are you going to target? Which segments make most sense for your business? Which customers have the greatest need for what you offer? Ultimately it's a question of which segments will provide the best return on your investment. You can't be all things to all people.

6. What are your strategic choices?

Who should you be? Where should you be? The answers to previous questions should have identified your competitive edge and your most attractive markets. Now is the time to create a new vision for the future of the business.



7. What are your key strategic goals?

Having a small number of clear strategic goals is critical, as a strategic plan simply defines what your organisation will do (and indirectly what it won't do) to achieve your goals. It is critical that the goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

8. How should you proceed?

This is where the rubber hits the road. You need to develop an action plan. The plan must be simple and specific enough for even a child to understand. The milestones must be both challenging and realistic. The plan must lead you to your goals. You need to spell out what will be done, how it will be done, by whom and by when.

Your focus in your action plan should be on activities that enhance customer and employee satisfaction, improve efficiency and process, develop organisational skills and lead to better business.²

In my experience, having too many strategic projects in an action plan is usually counterproductive. Organisations have limited resources and the day-to-day work doesn't disappear simply because you begin to implement a new strategic plan. It is far better to pick three-five key areas and focus on delivering positive outcomes.

It is suggested you track each project monthly and then, every three months, review progress and develop the next three- month plan. New projects can be added when appropriate. This simple disciplined process leads to constant improvement and increased profit.

² See D.Meister, Managing the Professional Services Firm, 1997, pg 237

Step 3: Develop a “Team Charter”

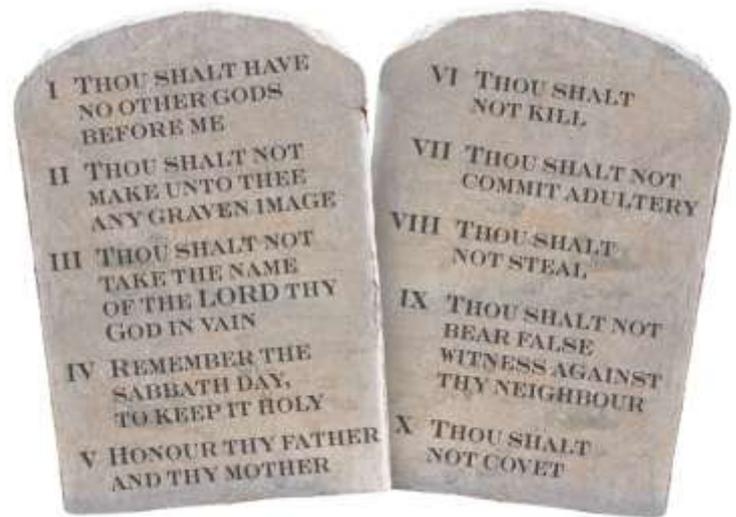
Whether you are looking to revitalise an existing team or to create a new team, developing a Team Charter or Rules of Engagement is a great investment of time. What you are doing is spelling out the ‘rules’ or setting the boundaries that the team agrees to live by in the workplace.

In much the same way as your values act as a compass to your personal decision making and behaviour, an effective Team Charter provides guidance for team members on how they should make decisions and behave at work.

Coming up with the Charter is of course only half the exercise. Once you develop it, everyone needs to live it. The values and behaviours expressed must become the way you do things, every day.

And there must be consequences for those who don’t comply.

Otherwise the Charter will become obsolete very quickly. Behaving consistently with the Charter must become part of the organisation’s performance review process.



How do you create a Charter? Well, it’s really about engaging the team. In my experience, once you have a clear understanding of your own values, you can develop a Team Charter relatively quickly by initially conducting a two or three hour facilitated workshop.

Start by explaining what you are hoping to achieve by developing a Charter. Share your hopes, aspirations and values with the team, spelling out your ‘absolutely not negotiable’ rules (of which there should not be more than three or four), explaining why you feel they are not negotiable. Then open up the discussion for everyone to contribute. Break into small groups of four to five people to allow team members to explore the issues. It is important you get everyone to participate and express their views.

As a group, you are seeking to establish **the things that should not be compromised on at work**. Capture the ideas and thoughts, take them away to reflect, and develop the first draft of the Charter.

Once you have prepared the first draft, circulate the document to all team members. Invite further comment to ensure you give everyone an opportunity to shape the final document.

Once you have finalised the Charter, send it out to the team. Reiterate that for the Charter to have any value, it needs to be lived, every day. Highlight the fact that you expect behaviour to be aligned with the Charter and that assessing behaviour in this way will become an important part of the performance review process.

You also need to take some time to explore how you will bring the Charter to life. What are the small things that will act as indicators and reminders? Think about the things you would reward people for at team meetings or drinks. And of course, leaders must walk the talk every day!

Step 4: Recruit the right people, and clarify and communicate roles, responsibilities and goals

To develop a high-performing team you must make sure you 'get the right people on the bus'.

Recruiting the right people is perhaps the most important task you will ever perform as a manager, so don't take short cuts. In addition to understanding the **skill sets** you require, you need to be clear about the **attitude and behaviours** you want from your team members. Ideally you should seek to create as diverse a team as possible in order to increase the team's problem-solving ability. Of course, the more diverse the team, the more challenging it is to manage!

If you are inheriting a team and it becomes clear you have team members who are not meeting your expectations and are unlikely to do so in the future, you need to be prepared to ask those people to 'get off the bus'. This is never an easy exercise, but a failure to do so will inevitably poison morale and totally undermine your efforts to build a high-performing team.

Once you get the right people on board, you must ensure that they fully understand their role and what is expected of them. You need to invest time developing a detailed position description (PD) that clearly sets out what they are to do and how you will measure their performance.

SMART goals with meaningful and fair key performance indicators should be created for every team member and be incorporated into an annual action plan that forms an attachment to each person's PD.



PDs should be reviewed and amended annually to ensure they are always current and relevant. In my experience, few organisations take the time to do this, but those that do reap the benefits of having employees who know what they are doing and are clear about what is expected of them.

For a team to work to its potential, it is important that team members understand what each other does. They should appreciate why each role exists and the value that role will bring to achieving the team objectives.

PDs should be crafted to make it clear that in addition to the individual's specific tasks, there is a general obligation and expectation that team members will assist each other when required.

Where it is expected that a role will work closely with other roles, this should be spelt out so that everyone is clear about the need to work together. I have seen too many instances of conflict that arose because each individual felt they owned responsibility for a specific task and outcome. Get people used to the idea that there is nothing wrong with sharing the glory!

Step 5: Take control of your time

If you want to develop and lead an outstanding team, you need to stop being the pinball and start being the flipper.

You need to take control of your time and ensure you are working on the things that are really going to drive your business. And this is hard. It's a constant battle that never ends. It doesn't matter how many time management courses you do or books you read, it is likely that at some point you will end up back where you started, with a big fat in-tray, high levels of anxiety and feeling completely out of control.

So how do you get a sense of control? Here are some basic things you can do to manage your time.

1. **Be strategic – set some clear big picture goals (both personal and professional).** Take the time to sit down and think about the different roles you play in life (partner, parent, manager, friend etc) and what's important for you in each role. Then write down your two or three big-picture goals for each role. Make sure the goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound). These big-picture goals should drive how you spend your time.
2. **Develop a plan for the ideal month.** With the benefit of your SMART big-picture goals, begin to allocate how you would like to spend time during the ideal month. Allocate time to activities that will ensure you achieve your big personal goals. Break your professional role into key goal-related categories (e.g. team management, administration, strategic planning, customer management, sales and marketing etc) and set SMART goals for each of these areas. Then allocate the time you would like to spend on each area over the month.
3. **Audit the current situation.** Spend a week monitoring how you are actually spending your time. Create a chart which has days of the week on one axis and the various goal categories on the other. During the day, keep a track of how much time you are spending on each type of activity. Then at the end of the week, add them up and create a percentage of total time spent against each category. Ask yourself how you would ideally like the percentages to look. Then you can begin the task of moving from the current situation to what you would like it to be.
4. **Book time for key tasks.** We all block out time in our diaries for meetings with colleagues, customers and suppliers and stick to our commitments. But most people don't book time in the diary to do key strategic tasks. Or if they do, they don't apply the same discipline to honouring those commitments. This simple action can be incredibly powerful in getting back a sense of control and achievement.

5. **Delegate.** When you do your 'ideal work week' time allocation against your key goal categories, you may end up with a 120 hour week! So you need to use your time more effectively. Delegating work is one way you can do this. You need to ask yourself what are you doing that you can and should delegate to others. If you don't have anyone to delegate to, you need to explore how you can make this happen. It may be cost effective for you to be spending your time on higher paying activity. It may be possible to outsource or employ an additional employee on a part-time basis. Or it may be you can attract volunteers. Be creative!
6. **Make meetings productive.** Meetings are without doubt one of the biggest time wasters going around. You must make sure that your own meetings are well run and necessary. To the extent that you are invited to meetings by others, ensure that it is time well spent. Diplomatically explore whether you really need to be there. Investigate whether you need to be there for the whole meeting. Politely offer suggestions to colleagues on how the outcomes might be achieved without needing to meet for as long or as often.
7. **Make yourself accountable.** One of the reasons we fall off the time-management tree is because we don't have anyone to hold us accountable. Find a way to make yourself accountable for sticking to your plan. Work with a buddy, get an executive coach or mentor but find someone who will help you stay on track. Staying focused and maintaining discipline under pressure is not easy. Having someone you trust working with you makes a huge difference. Apart from the benefits that come from working with a skilled supporter, no one likes fronting up to someone who is committed to helping them succeed and explaining that you didn't do what you said you would.



Step 6: Introduce and maintain a culture that reinforces collaboration and accountability

It's an oxymoron to say that we should develop 'collaborative teams'. Yet everywhere you look, you find 'teams' that operate as a group of individuals. **Silos are all around us and self-interest is often the name of the game.**

Collaboration is essentially about **working together to achieve outcomes**. It's about creating a sense of **interdependence** and **mutual respect**.

So how do you create a collaborative culture? To create a collaborative culture **you must be prepared to cede some of your personal power and status** as 'leader' in order to capture the enormous potential of the team. Effectively you must move away from the traditional command and control 'pyramidal' structure and turn the pyramid on its side.³

In their book *'The Leadership Challenge'*, James Kouzes and Barry Posner provide some valuable tips for creating a collaborative culture. I summarise and elaborate on some of these below:

1. **Show trust to build trust.** Share your values and beliefs, admit mistakes, seek feedback and acknowledge the need for your personal improvement. Be open, honest and authentic. Listen, consult, share information, acknowledge others, and give ground when it makes sense to do so.
2. **Say 'We', ask questions, listen, and take advice.** Talk about common goals, and use 'we' and 'our' when talking about plans, actions and achievements. Ask questions, listen with an open mind to new ideas and inconvenient truths, and be prepared to take advice.
3. **Get people interacting.** Hold regular formal and informal meetings. Create workplace hubs. Encourage discussion. Have group planning sessions. Do social activities as a team. Celebrate small and big wins. Share the pain when things go wrong.
4. **Develop cooperative goals and roles.** Develop shared goals that make it clear why you are a team. Identifying and sharing a common purpose binds people together. Having common 'Key Performance Indicators' ensures team members work together, not against each other.
5. **Structure projects to promote joint effort.** Design projects so that people understand each other's roles and can see that by working together they are more likely to achieve great outcomes than if they were to go it alone.

³ For a detailed discussion of the significance of structure and its impact on collaboration and organisational effectiveness, please see Peter Rennie, <http://www.leadershipaustralia.com.au>

In addition to creating a collaborative culture, **you need to build a team of individuals who hold themselves accountable for their own actions and who are held accountable for their performance.**

So how do you create a culture of accountability? Here are five actions that will make a difference:

1. **Recruit the right people.** Recruit people who have the attitude you want, as well as the skills. Explore potential employees' values and work styles. Find people who are comfortable with being held accountable and enjoy working in a collaborative environment.
2. **Ensure people understand their roles and responsibilities.** It is critical that team members understand their roles and responsibilities (see discussion above) and have key performance indicators (KPIs) that are specific, relevant and meaningful.
3. **Measure the right things.** Great thought and care needs to be taken when determining exactly what it is you are going to measure and hold someone accountable for. As the management guru Peter Drucker points out, "What you measure is what you get".⁴
4. **Publicise goals and results.** Having a small number of simple, relevant KPIs that track team performance and displayed in a public place can be very powerful. Team meetings should, as a matter of course, always have some focus on results and how the team is tracking against key goals.
5. **Recognise success, address failures.** There needs to be fair implementation of 'consequences management'. When people succeed or comply with expected behaviours, they should be acknowledged and recognised. When they behave inappropriately, there must be adverse consequences.

Great care needs to be taken when addressing 'failure'. Some failures will be 'unacceptable', as they are the result of poor judgement or inappropriate behaviour. Such failures should have negative consequences. Other failures will not be a result of poor judgement or behaviour but will be the result of the uncertainty that is associated with doing business. Given that you don't want to unreasonably inhibit creativity and risk taking, such failures may need to be accepted as necessary business learning experiences.

⁴ P. Drucker, *The Daily Drucker*, 2004, pg 292.

By creating a team that has a collaborative culture combined with a focus on achieving specific goals, you will have gone a long way toward creating a high-performing team.

Special Offer: Free discovery session

- Discuss where you and your team are at and where you want to be
- Explore what you see as the big issues impacting on your business
- Ask questions about the Balanced Curve coaching process and outcomes to determine if we can make a difference to your business.

Contact mark@balancedcurve.com

Step 7: Coach the team

I recently read an article by Taine Randell, the former New Zealand Rugby All Black captain, who commented that the most important figure in any team is the coach. He stated:

“It’s the same in business or sport: the person who creates the environment where people want to work or play for each other is going to succeed more than someone who’s technically astute but inhibits performance”.

Great teams have great coaches. If you want to create a great team, then you need to focus on becoming a great coach.



What are the attributes of a great coach? While “coaching” means different things to different people, there are a number of common attitudes, skills and behaviours you will find in any great coach, both in sport and in business. I briefly outline below seven of the key attributes:

1. **Great coaches care about their people.** I recently went to a luncheon where the guest speaker was the great Rugby League coach, Wayne Bennett. When asked the secret to his success at a variety of clubs over such a long period, Bennett gave a typical short one-line answer: ‘We show the players that we care about them.’
2. **Great coaches listen. They really listen.** Listening deeply is not an easy skill to develop. Great coaches know that the key focus needs to be their team member, not themselves. They turn off the little voice in their head that constantly tries to take over and offer advice, and instead listen intently with both their head and their heart to understand what their team member is saying. And genuine listening is about acceptance without judgement.
3. **Great coaches believe in the potential of their team members.** Great coaches build confidence in their team members because they genuinely believe in their potential and somehow convey this to their players. Knowing they have someone in their corner, who genuinely believes in them, inevitably causes people to strive to achieve their best.
4. **Great coaches ask powerful questions.** They recognise the power of questions to help them understand what is being said, and to help their team members find their own solutions to problems. They ask short, sharp questions that raise their team member’s self awareness and force deeper thinking. Most questions will begin with ‘what’ or ‘how’.

5. **Great coaches create trust.** They empower people to find the answers. They rarely tell people what to do. Rather, they recognise that the most powerful learning comes from discovering the answer themselves. They are honest and supportive. They do what they say they will do. They don't judge, but rather seek to understand. Ultimately they believe in the potential of their people. This belief breeds confidence and outstanding performance.
6. **Great coaches constantly challenge their team to do their best.** They recognise that part of their role is to push people beyond their comfort zone. They don't accept lame excuses or half-hearted effort. They challenge their people for greater commitment and performance when they can see there is more to give.
7. **Great coaches help people set SMART goals and hold themselves accountable.** They understand the need for people to set clear and meaningful goals, and create action plans to make things happen. They understand they play an important role in helping their people to do what they say they will do.

Becoming a great coach doesn't happen overnight. It requires commitment and hard work. But the rewards, for both you and your team, will make it worthwhile.

Conclusion

Creating a high-performing team is really all about applying common sense, isn't it? Yet, as Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert Sutton noted in the '*The Knowing Doing Gap*':

"In the world of management and organisations, common sense is far from common."

The next step

If the ideas in this paper resonate with you, and you'd like to improve your team's performance and bring some balance and control back into your life, contact me today to receive a free 'discovery consultation'. We can talk on the phone, or if you prefer we can meet face to face.

During our conversation we will:

1. Discuss where you and your team are at and where you want to be
2. Explore what you see as the big issues impacting on your business
3. Give you an opportunity to ask questions about the Balanced Curve coaching process and outcomes
4. Discover whether the Balanced Curve approach to business coaching makes sense for you and your team.

So, if you'd like to stop being a traffic cop and start taking control of your business to be more productive, more profitable and have a greater sense of balance in your life, contact me at mark@balancedcurve.com

Mark Rosenberg
Managing Director
Balanced Curve

About the writer



Mark Rosenberg is a highly regarded accredited executive coach and mediator with extensive experience as a senior manager and lawyer.

Experience

For the past 5 years Mark has specialized on working with senior executives and high potential leaders as a coach and mediator.

Prior to this Mark spent much of his career working at Caltex Australia before moving to an Executive Director role at Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

He has worked as a Solicitor, Corporate Lawyer, Retail Operations Manager, Franchising Manager, Brand Marketing Manager, Marketing Director and CEO across a number of industries.

Mark's experience provides him with a rich insight into the challenges leaders face when working with colleagues on complex issues.

He has a particular interest and expertise in conflict management and creating higher performing teams. He uses best practice instruments to assist leaders gain greater insight into how they manage conflict and how they can become more collaborative at work.

Mark is certified to deliver the Becoming Conflict Competent program, developed by the Center for Conflict Dynamics at Eckerd College and regularly acts as a mediator for the Office of the Franchising Mediation Advisor.

Organisations Mark has recently worked for include: Mirvac, Telstra, SnowyHydro, AMP, Wendy's, Subway, Navis Capital, Axient, Loop Branding, Hockey NSW and Athletics Australia.

Approach

Mark's approach to coaching, mediating and facilitating is simple:

- Listen
- Explore
- Respectfully challenge
- Navigate action
-

Qualifications

Mark has a combined Arts (Psychology) / Law degree from the University of NSW, a Master of Laws from the University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Management from Macquarie Graduate School of Management.

He is certified in Hogan Profiling, The Leadership Circle 360, The Kirton Adaption-Innovation Inventory (KAI), The Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP), the Facet5 Personality Profile and CINERGY Conflict Coaching. Mark is a Level 3 Accredited Coach with IECL and an Accredited Associate Coach with the International Coaching Federation.