The 5 Disciplines of

Extraordinary

School Leaders

*Your Back Stage Pass To Leading
High Performance Schools!*

Dr Pete Stebbins PhD

with Alistair Kerr

More Influence
More Confidence
More Respect

The **5** Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders

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Thank You!

4 Years
262 Schools
1657 Leaders
6851 Staff
The journey continues...

What People Are Saying

"The best book on effective school leadership yet. Demystifies what underpins extraordinary school leadership."
– Judi Newman, Former Principal, Director, Neuroleadership Academy

"Extraordinary schools are led by extraordinary leaders. This book takes you behind the curtains, giving you an upfront, practical and personal insight into acquiring the five disciplines of extraordinary school leaders."
– Dr David Turner, Former Principal, Director of Professional Learning QASSP

"Dr Pete's book crystallises the key actions for school leaders to generate positive staff wellbeing and create a state of continual student improvement. Critical reading for any leader or aspirant."
– Shaun Holmes, Deputy Principal, Oakey State School

"By implementing the disciplines of extraordinary school leadership outlined in this book you will transform your school and improve the lives of your students, parents and staff."
– Natalie Wagstaff, Deputy Principal, Mount Archer State School

"Dr Pete delves into the purposeful actions that an extraordinary school leader needs to take to create the tremendous clarity of purpose, focus on improvement and flexible support systems that are the hallmarks of every High Performance School."
– Brendan Shannon, Deputy Principal, Urangan State High School

"This book is a treasure trove of clear, actionable steps to support leaders in schools. Every page explodes with great thinking and ideas. The gold of this book is the great balance between the pragmatics and processes of leading and the nuance and skill of dealing with people. Any leader reading this book will walk away with approaches that will improve impact, wherever their own zone of development sits."
– Tracey Ezard, Educational Leadership Advisor & Coach

"This is an outstanding book for anyone new to school leadership and for those who need to revitalise their practices. Combining inspiring stories with effective, practical strategies. I couldn't put it down."
– Teresa Anderson, Head of Campus, Capricornia School of Distance Education

"This book is seriously a game changer in unpacking extraordinary school leadership. Dr Pete gives you the WHY, HOW and WHAT so you can become the next WHO of extraordinary school leaders!"
– Liam Exelby, Former Deputy Principal, Director of YXL Institute

"Dr Pete takes leadership to the next level moving beyond 'good to great' and into the world of extraordinary leadership showing us not just what they do but also how they do it. A must read for all school leaders."
– Clifford Morgan, Psychologist, Consultant & Coach

"Dr Pete's passion and expertise around extraordinary leadership in schools is infectious. His ability to engage and interact with the audience is powerful, insightful and compelling."
– Rowdy McLean, CSP 2019 Keynote Speaker of the Year

Contents

Stepping Behind The Curtain

To lead people, walk beside them. Live with them. Learn from them. Start with what they know. Build with what they have. The best leaders, when their work is done and the task accomplished, the people will say, 'We have done this ourselves.'
– Lao Tzu

Have you ever had the privilege of working with an extraordinary school leader? Those insightful, compassionate, visionary, practical and incredibly relatable leaders who can conduct the orchestra of a school successfully. Producing a wonderful symphony from a group of imperfect human beings – all striving to somehow learn and grow together to deliver the best possible education to their students amidst a constantly changing and at times chaotic world.

Those wonderful leaders who, in the words of Mark Twain, *'make others feel that they, too, can become great.'* And great school leadership is now more than ever essential in building High Performance Schools – places where students can thrive and flourish maximising their intellectual, social and emotional capabilities to become the future leaders of our world!

When it comes to understanding school leadership, *'good is the enemy of great'.* Good leadership is worthwhile, valuable, hard to achieve and harder to sustain (and let's be clear right now – there is nothing wrong per se with 'Good Leadership' as it is a damn sight better than Bad Leadership!). Good leadership creates 'good' schools but as leadership guru, Jim Collins suggests, *'it is principally because we have good schools that we don't have great schools'.* And in this day and age

we need Extraordinary Schools and Extraordinary Leadership. Good Leadership is simply not enough for what our schools now require in the face of rapidly changing student needs, community expectations, teacher wellbeing pressures and a continuously evolving curriculum.

Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice and discipline.
– Jim Collins

This book is about the '5 Disciplines' that define extraordinary school leaders. We've purposely chosen the word 'Discipline' as it most accurately conveys the truth of the necessary hard work, and at times painful learning curve, of positive leadership behaviours that eventually become 'habits'. We do not simply acquire the 'habits' of extraordinary leaders. They are hard won through 'Disciplined Practice' – the trial and error, humility and service, and courage and risk that is required for anyone to attempt to truly serve the world in a manner that enables others to flourish around them.

Understanding the Disciplines required to be an extraordinary leader is more important than understanding 'post hoc' the habits that extraordinary leaders effortlessly display. This is because anyone who is willing can begin the journey of becoming more disciplined in their approach to leadership – this is within all our grasps – yet the polished perfection of the leader who 'habitually' shines with masterful greatness can be a form of sunlight too bright to see clearly the path that leads from where we stand today to where they shine so brightly.

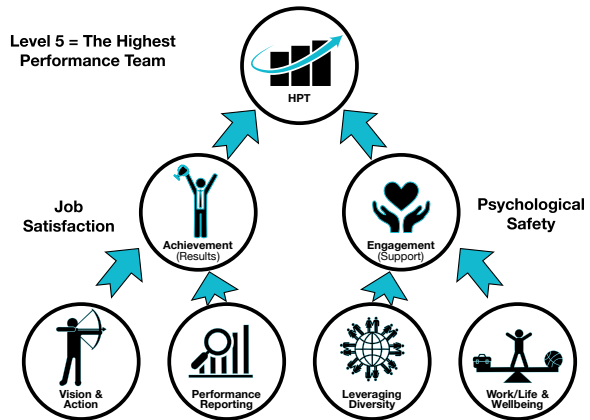## The High Performance Schools Journey

Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability.
– Roy Smith

The quest for understanding the disciplines that sit beneath extraordinary school leaders, and indeed extraordinary schools, is the foundation of our work in the High Performance Schools Project. Having spent many years working in the field of school transformation, it has become

all too obvious that the success of any school (as measured by student outcomes and staff wellbeing) is predicated on its leader's capability to create the structures, systems and behaviours needed to support

a high performance workforce culture. We use the High Performance Teams Framework (see diagram) to define a high performance culture – where there is equal focus on enabling high levels of both engagement and achievement among all staff who then consistently and explicitly translate this culture into their classroom in a differentiated manner to accommodate for the social and learning needs of their students.

Over 1500 leaders across more than 250 schools have now taken part in the High Performance Schools Project. Through this collaboration process, we have been able to review, research, prototype, test, refine and adapt the structures, systems and behaviours needed to support the transformation journey of High Performance Schools across the primary, secondary and special education sectors. We have simplified the steps required to build effective leadership and teaching teams in schools to support and enable diversity, create a culture of wellbeing, and most importantly, get 'buy in' and alignment around achieving the milestones and goals needed to fulfil the school's vision and purpose.

During the first few years of the High Performance Schools Project our work was focused at the 'team level'. Our goal was to empower people to be able to 'self-lead' as much as possible – decreasing the risk of relying on leaders and increasing the capacity and capability of people who were directly responsible for teaching students. Making sure that every staff member belonged to a High Performance Team – a place where they were supported in their work with students displaying variable

motivations and behaviours AND challenged to grow and refine their own professional practice to be the best educators they could be.

We avoided focusing too much on leadership itself – partly because the subject of leadership is dense with a myriad of theories and practices – some of which are brilliant (and some worryingly popular but highly dubious) and thus did not need to be restated or reinvented. And partly because we believed the topic of 'leadership' itself was too often the false prophet to explain successes and failures at schools when the true cause was cultural – the consistency or otherwise of the individual and team behaviours that flowed from structures and systems embedded within a school.

We purposefully attempted to flank the leadership issue entirely by concentrating our effort on developing effective structures and systems at all levels of the school which enabled consistent positive behaviour among all staff. We believed that achieving such consistency of positive behaviour by all staff would create an underlying culture of high engagement and high achievement. This 'High Performance' school culture would accelerate the effects of positive leadership behaviours and buffer the effects of any sub-optimal leadership behaviour.

However, the issue of leadership kept rearing its head as the years progressed and through natural attrition, leaders would come and go within the schools we had worked with. As the incoming Principal settled in to these established High Performance Schools we noticed three different patterns of adjustment.

Firstly, as expected, there were many cases where the new leader welcomed the underlying High Performance culture with open arms and quickly elaborated and expanded on this – much to the further benefit of the school community. Secondly, and unsurprisingly in some cases, new leaders paid 'lip service' to the well-established 'High Performance' ways of working and simply let the journey continue without themselves understanding the underlying benefit of the culture that was in place and leveraging the opportunities for further innovation and development for staff and students. Thirdly, and quite

concerning, in some cases new leaders would immediately abolish the systems and structures carefully built over time and install their own regime based on their default leadership style and preferred ways of working from their previous school. We would field urgent phone calls not just from the middle leaders within the school but also from regional administrators uncertain about how to get these school leaders engaged and aligned so their forward vision was inclusive of the extensive work already completed at the school.

As we struggled to comprehend why leaders would jeopardise sustainable High Performance School culture in favour of their own, at times less than optimal approaches, we began to see the folly behind our strategy of purposefully avoiding the leadership issue. In hindsight we made the rookie error of assuming common sense when, in the face of a myriad of different (and in some cases opposing) leadership theories and practices, the ability to identify common sense amidst all the theories and populist politics of school leadership was more difficult for many school leaders than we assumed. Thus, we learnt the hard way the need to explicitly communicate the necessary disciplines required to become an extraordinary school leader.

So began the journey behind this book. To document the real life stories of school leaders who had built High Performance Schools, their context, their experience, their struggles, their insights, their words. To attempt to describe not only the leadership journey of extraordinary school leaders but also the hidden dangers and 'the gravity of success' that stops the school leader's own development at 'good' which inadvertently blocks the path to 'great'. To make simple and accessible the differences between 'good' and 'great' school leadership and share the Five Disciplines that sit beneath the eventual habits that extraordinary school leaders display so effortlessly. Five Disciplines that any interested leader can apply into their own lives to massively increase the value, purpose and benefit of their leadership for the people they serve.

So get ready to step behind the curtain. To have a backstage pass to see what goes on behind the scenes in the life of an extraordinary school

leader – the scars, setbacks, perseverance and wisdom born from the experience of turning theory into practice, of turning perseverance into determination, of turning humility into vulnerability and turning stress into resilience. Let's begin …

INTRODUCTION
School Leadership
& The Gravity of Success

"The work of a school leader is complex. The challenge is how to remain focused on the right work. How to both support and challenge staff effectively in order to enable each and every student to remain engaged and progress both academically and socially to reach their full potential."

– Kay Kirkman,
Former Principal, Assistant
Regional Director

> **"The future success of schools hinges upon our ability to develop and support high performing school leaders and teachers who can sustainably deliver quality education to each and every student."**
>
> *– Trudy Graham,*
> *Former Principal, Assistant*
> *Regional Director*

> **"The work of a school leader can be a rewarding process, or a vicious circle depending on where our time is more concentrated. My challenge is to support my leaders to focus on systems and processes as much as possible so that we maximise our impact on the teaching and learning for students. "**
>
> *– Jorgen Neilson*
> *Principal,*
> *Kin Kora State School*
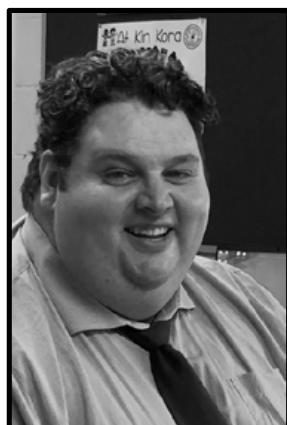
INTRODUCTION

School Leadership
& The Gravity of Success

This may sound strange, but it is not 'failure' that ultimately holds us back from greatness but rather 'success'. Leadership guru and author of Good to Great, Jim Collins, was right when he said, *"Good is the enemy of great and that is one of the key reasons why we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools."* From our experience, good school leadership creates its own gravity – the gravity of success.

When school leaders break through the barriers of mediocrity (with the accompanying exhaustive effort that it takes to do so) they naturally need to re-group and quickly scaffold and structure their newfound territorial gains by repeating and reinforcing the leadership strategies that led to the improvement. However, whilst this reinforcement of the leadership strategies that led to the initial improvement cements the positive gains, it ALSO hardens over time and becomes the new 'status quo' and a major barrier in itself to achieving further school improvement. By contrast, 'extraordinary leadership' is anti 'status quo' (even the status quo of good leadership) and continuously seeks to Level Up performance with a constantly evolving strategy.

We see the gravity of success appear in two developmental timepoints among school leaders: (1) in the transition from technical expert to middle leader and (2) from middle leader to senior leader.

From Technical Expert to Middle Leader

The hidden barriers that the gravity of success creates initially appear when someone who is a technical expert in their professional discipline (i.e., teaching) gets promoted to a position of leadership and is unable to move beyond their technical expertise into assisting others to grow and develop as experts themselves. Because of their own expert level of technical skill (which helped them get promoted into leadership in the first place) they struggle to tolerate the mediocre performance and the apparently slower learning curve of their own staff. They may also struggle to tolerate the juggling act of managing the expectations of their customers (aka students and parents) and their own senior leaders (aka Principals and Deputy Principals) whilst trying to accommodate for the learning curve of their staff.

Many middle leaders find themselves overwhelmed with the challenge that comes from being the 'meat in the sandwich' of school leadership. To maintain their own sanity and self-esteem, they may escape the 'learning pit' of leadership and let go of the struggle – drawn backwards by the gravity of their previous success as a technical expert in their professional discipline. This may lead to a chaotic Jekyll and Hyde style of leadership oscillating between 'micro-manager' and 'laissez faire' leadership. They switch between polar opposites – either hyper-focused on the outcomes needed to satisfy customers and senior managers as well as being overtly critical (micro-management) of their own staff OR escapist and avoidant (laissez faire) of the concerns, frustrations, needs and wants of the very people they are now responsible for supporting. Breaking through this Jekyll and Hyde barrier requires the development of frontline leadership skills as well as a conceptual shift in their professional self-identity – no longer focused on the black and white world of professional expert but now embracing the various shades of grey and shifting sands associated with leading people towards the goals and vision of the organisation.

By breaking through the atmosphere of technical expert into the world of effective middle leadership, the leader releases an enormous build-up of pressure related to both expectation and blame (self and others)

and expands the space in which their staff can develop and perform the tasks necessary to achieve the goals and targets of both their department and the wider school.

Mastery of 'middle leadership' occurs as the leader begins to cement new approaches to empower staff such as effectively sharing the school's vision and strategic plan, using coaching strategies to develop high achievers, chairing meetings effectively, improving tracking of goals and targets, promoting equality and fairness in task allocation and professional development opportunities, and promoting a culture of wellbeing – inquiring about others' welfare and actively engaging in wellbeing activities. With these positive leadership capabilities under their belt, it is only a matter of time and focus before they are promoted to a senior leadership position responsible for whole school performance where their next encounter with the gravity of success occurs …

From Middle Leader to Senior Leader

When you are promoted from middle leader (previously responsible for 'parts' of the school) to the role of senior leader (responsible for the 'whole' school) you feel like you are standing on the summit of a mountain you had repeatedly seen from the low lying plains of your career. However, up above you, beyond the clouds, is the true summit of senior leadership and you realise there is still a much larger mountain yet to climb.

This bigger mountain represents the journey involved in mastering the role of senior leader and may take far longer and far more resources to climb than you alone have at your disposal. The constantly changing weather higher on the mountain may not comply with your predictable and reliable middle leadership toolkit. The politics of shifting priorities and competing agendas, the change fatigue of bureaucracy bracing against uncertainty, ill-timed staff changes, and retention and wellbeing problems requires a new, higher level of leadership skill. The ambiguity and uncertainty of senior leadership requires a new level of simplicity, humility and inter-dependency between you and your staff

whilst you shoulder the ultimate responsibility and accountability for leading your school.
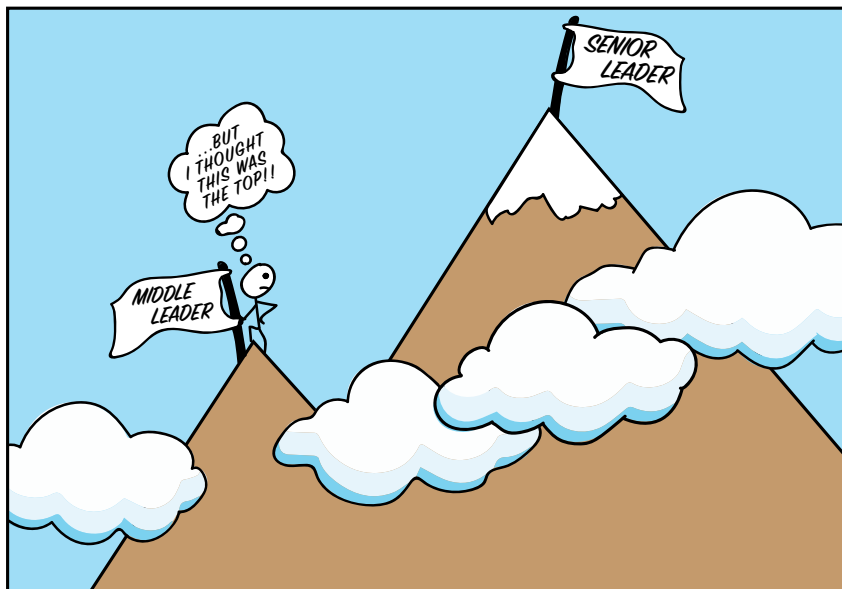
This 'land of grey' may be incompatible with your old middle leader toolkit – yet in your uncertainty you 'go with what you know'. Instead of building a new, improved, leadership toolkit to manage the complexity and ambiguity of 'whole school leadership', you let go and gravity takes you back to your middle leader strategies. Failing to cope with the uncertainty and uncomfortableness of senior leadership may block your future greatness and you may return to the safety of goodness using middle leadership tools on senior leadership problems. Inadvertently limiting true inclusion in order to guarantee equality, limiting flourishing to guarantee wellness, limiting extraordinary achievement to guarantee minimum standards are met. The gravity of your previous success as a middle leader, and its accompanying 'controls and certainties', may hold you back from the greatness of becoming an extraordinary school leader …

The 5 Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders

As water shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the leader works out their strategy in relation to the challenges they are facing.
– Sun Tzu

As a team of school leadership researchers and advisors, we have agonised and argued for years about the differing characteristics between 'good' and 'extraordinary' school leaders. Having worked with well over a thousand leaders across several hundred schools completing the High Performance Schools Project, we have learned a lot about good and extraordinary leadership practices across the 4 KPIs of High Performance and deepened our understanding about specific leadership behaviours that maximise the growth of individuals and teams.

As we kept analysing the data sets and discussing the accompanying leadership behaviours occurring within each school, a pattern began to emerge. We started to see some consistencies in the leadership behaviours among the Highest Performance Schools that were different to their peer comparison schools. We began a series of deeper case studies and interviews to further understand and describe these higher quality leadership behaviours evident among the extraordinary school leaders who build the Highest Performance Schools. These extraordinary leadership behaviours formed the basis of the 5 Disciplines we summarise below before unpacking in detail throughout this book.

Discipline 1. Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action

Extraordinary school leaders work with staff to build a *purpose driven vision* that is intrinsically motivating and develop a *clear line of sigh*t to enact the vision consistently across the whole school.

Discipline 2. Reporting Systems To Achieve The Impossible

Extraordinary school leaders use *lead indicator systems* to stretch what is possible for student growth, then embed these within the *golden thread* of communication and information sharing, enabling staff to be 'up-to-date' thus reducing additional meetings and creating time in otherwise impossibly busy schedules.

Discipline 3. Matching Communication To Leverage Diversity

Extraordinary school leaders create a sense of belonging among their staff by *matching communication styles* to connect with each and every individual. They turn this sense of belonging into a desire to excel by *managing the status dynamic* to increase people's self-confidence and self-worth.

Discipline 4. 'Going First' Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness

Extraordinary school leaders *'Go First'* in leading wellbeing check-ins by appropriately disclosing their own challenges and seeking ideas from others so that 'help seeking' becomes a natural part of conversation rather than an awkward one-off request. They also maximise their *relationship fitness* by practising the discipline of continuous team building.

Discipline 5. Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance!

Extraordinary school leaders lead 'In The Zone' – building *Advisory Relationships* which flexibly draw from three Leadership Approaches (Managing, Mentoring & Coaching) in order to *Right Size* their leadership to maximise staff performance whilst keeping the wider school's goals and objectives the main priority.

Each school leader we interviewed who displayed these extraordinary characteristics also displayed a deep sense of humility and vulnerability. In many cases the scars of 'learning the hard way' and mis-steps and mistakes only recognised with the wisdom of hindsight – wisdom now 'paid forward' to you in your leadership journey. We would suggest that the main challenge facing school leaders who strive to build the Highest Performance Schools is breaking free from the gravity of their own previous success in order to maintain the momentum upwards and outwards into the larger universe of extraordinary school leadership.

By consistently applying each of the 5 Disciplines into your leadership, you will create the habits of an extraordinary school leader and build extraordinary schools that maximise the potential of both students and staff!

Vision & Action

DISCIPLINE 1

Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action

"It takes time, effort and people working together as a team to bring the vision to fruition. You need to ensure the 'conditions are right'. Have I got the right systems in place? Do my staff have enough knowledge and understanding to feel confident and capable? Do they all feel included and part of this journey?"

– Katrina Jones, Principal, Frenchville State School

"I made it an early priority to collaborate with parents, students and staff to establish a clear vision and values for our school. It is vital for all teams to regularly revisit our school's vision and values to ensure we maintain whole of school alignment."

– Sharon Barker, Principal, Fortitude Valley State Secondary College

"For me, if you get the school's purpose and culture right, the outcomes will look after themselves. Asking students the question: 'Can you name two people in the school that know you are going to be successful in life?' is a powerful window into the underlying culture of the school."

– Dr David Turner, Former Principal, Director of Professional Learning QASSP

Strong Buy-In To Purpose & Vision!

The 'Why' II

Clarity! People & Data Leadership

DISCIPLINE 1:

Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action

Even a company dedicated to over-communication cannot maintain organizational clarity through communication alone. It needs to build a sense of that clarity into the fabric of the organization through process and systems that drive human behaviour.
– Patrick Lencioni

> **Extraordinary school leaders draw on the collective wisdom and experience of their staff to develop a purpose driven vision for their school. Yet, before they do this, they first establish a very clear line of sight through well designed organisational structures and systems to ensure the vision will be enacted effectively across the whole school.**

Part 1. A Clear Line of Sight

As a school leader, Susan was new to Principalship. The many years in Deputy (aka Assistant) Principal roles she'd accumulated meant she understood quite deeply the mechanics of how to run schools – the intuitive 'gut feel' of knowing how to keep all the plates spinning – staff, student and parent needs. She knew when to intervene and when to stand back and let self-generated solutions work their own way out in the classroom.

However, Principalship was proving to be an unexpectedly difficult challenge. Susan was not just expected to be a great mechanic – able to keep things running smoothly, but also now a car designer and manufacturer – able to create new systems and structures for a school undergoing transformational change.

Like many new Principals, Susan got her first gig in a short-term acting role at a school in turmoil due to the previous Principal taking leave amidst a series of complaints and investigations. Like many acting Principals, Susan wisely chose not to make any changes in the short-term and simply managed day-to-day issues supporting staff and keeping the ship steady. Yet, like many acting Principals, her original 'short' stint as leader of the school extended into a much 'longer' role with an indefinite ending and the need to 'fix' problems properly became increasingly urgent and necessary for the long-term benefit of the school.

First and foremost were the roles and structure of the leadership team itself. Although the leadership team had become much less hostile and more harmonious in working together to keep the school running and resolve the day-to-day crises and challenges, there was no real progress implementing the school's strategic plan. There was also a sense of confusion among staff about who to turn to for help and many issues were 'double handled' (or triple handled) instead of being quickly, simply and effectively sorted out by the responsible member of the leadership team.

So … Susan scheduled a couple of hours with her team to clarify roles and responsibilities in a bid to create more effective leadership team systems and structures so (1) staff (as well as students and parents) could seek help and raise concerns more effectively and efficiently; and (2) the strategic plan could be broken down into its key components and relevant actions assigned to members of the leadership team who already had a natural accountability link given their role and responsibility and were thus more likely to integrate this strategic work into their business as usual activity.

Mistake 1: Confusing People Leadership with Data Leadership

Rule 1: The Primary Purpose of Organisational Charts is to Manage People Risks

As Susan's discussion with the leadership team progressed, a contest about who was doing the most occurred as one by one each leader outdid the previous one when asked to outline their role and responsibilities. This exhaustively busy set of lists summarising everything everyone was doing, whilst creating a degree of empathy among team members for their shared sense of busyness, did not actually create any greater clarity for staff about who they could turn to for help on different issues.

Many 'issues' had 'sub-issues' which were the responsibility of several different leaders and there was a reluctance to consolidate responsibility onto a single leader who might or might not know everything about it (despite the obvious fact that members of the leadership team could share knowledge and train each other further on specific tasks). Once Susan raised the need to share information and succession plan better everyone agreed, but still hesitated. No one wanted to let go of the routines and knowledge that had now become simple habits – even though these 'habits' were the same things they constantly complained about.

What to do? As Susan sat amidst her leadership team in the stalemate of busyness and reluctance to shift professional boundaries and portfolios, she had a lightbulb moment! It occurred to her that the entire conversation was happening the wrong way – it shouldn't be so much about distributing workloads from the perspective of 'topics' of responsibility but rather about distributing workload from the perspective of 'people management' responsibilities.
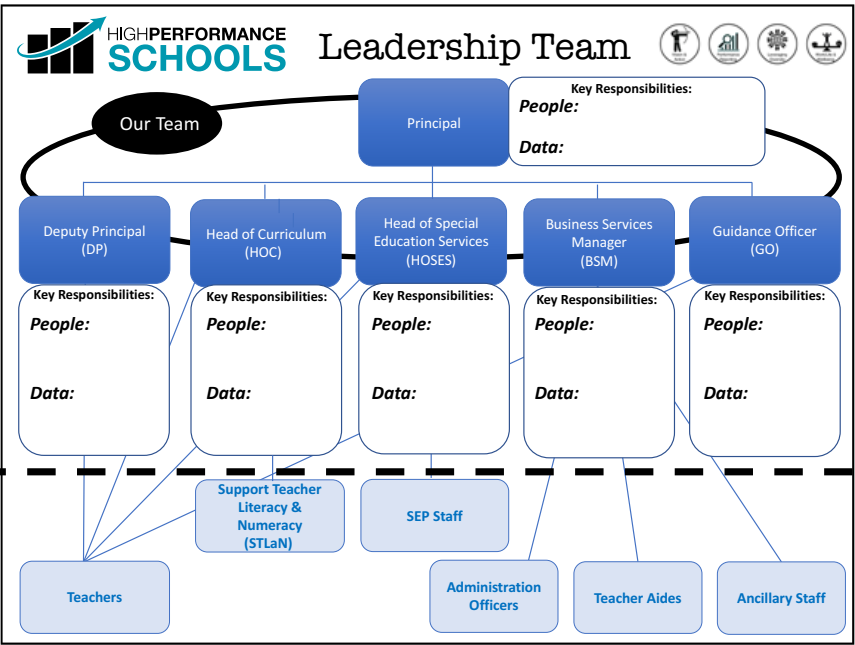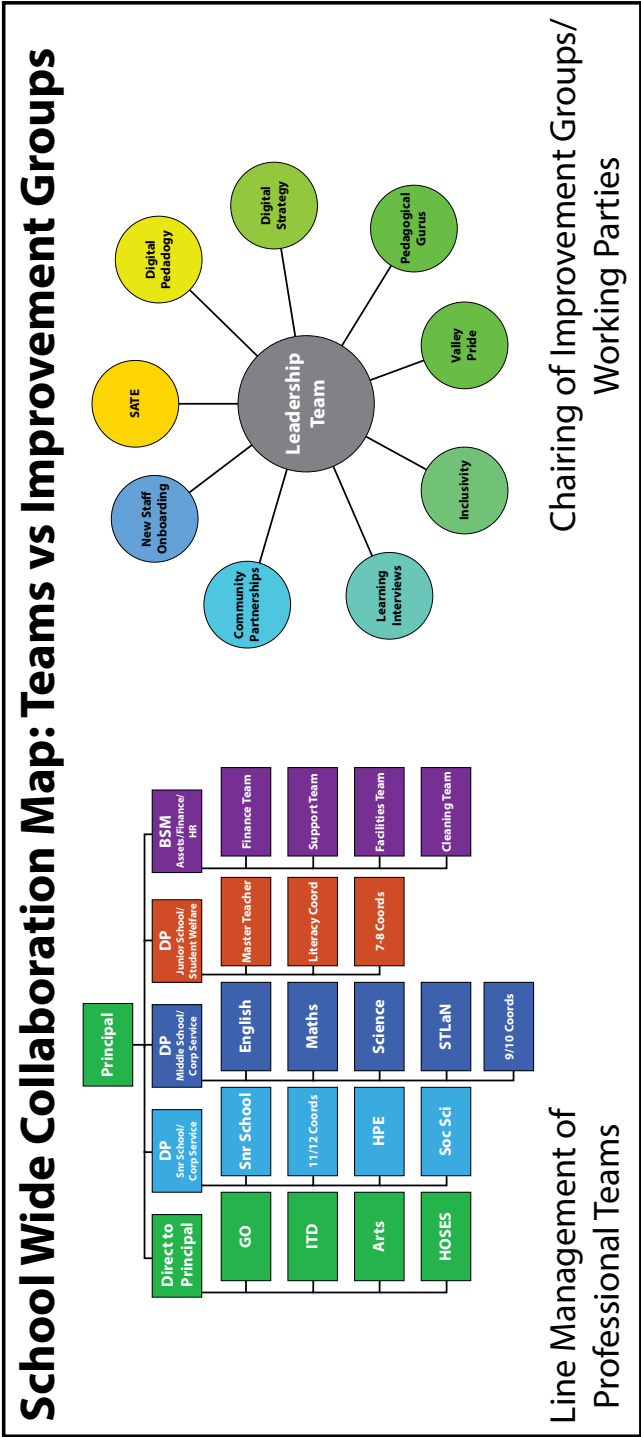
With this insight, Susan got each member of the leadership team to place a 'P' for people leadership or 'D' for data leadership next to each of their lengthy bullet point lists and was able to refocus the discussion into two parts. Firstly, she discussed the P lists (which were her main focus in terms of simplifying staff support) where the team was able to quickly reach agreement about a number of key issues (without having to compromise their 'D' expertise) and then secondly the D lists which could be managed through dashboards and data conversations as opposed to making significant changes to roles, responsibilities and reporting lines.

The realignment of the 'P' lists enabled Susan to refine leadership team roles, responsibilities and reporting lines according to the proportional people risks that needed to be managed. This meant Susan had a direct line of sight from her role through the middle leaders into the role of every staff member and vice versa – every staff member had a clear line of accountability and support to maximise their individual performance. No staff member was left out of the professional feedback, support and accountability loop.

**School Leadership Pro Tips:
Preventing Collaboration Confusion –
Governance vs Management**

Sorting out your leadership team's 'people leadership' roles and responsibilities so that all staff have clear lines of reporting, support and accountability is a 'must do' for all 'good' school leaders but can none-the-less still leave you vulnerable to a skewed focus towards operational or cultural initiatives and create blind spots accordingly. The most common examples of this are when there is too much focus on community engagement or cultural activities at the expense of core teaching and assessment responsibilities, leading to poor academic results, or vice versa where community and cultural activities are neglected because of the over-focus on teaching and assessment – leading to lowered parental satisfaction and lower community engagement.

'Extraordinary' school leaders ensure an appropriate mix of focus between (a) core teaching and assessment activities and (b) cultural and community engagement activities. They then 'map' activities against these two headings and assign school leaders to adopt a 'line management' approach towards managing 'professional teams' completing core teaching and assessment activity and a 'governance' approach to chairing/supervising the 'improvement groups' responsible for delivering culture and community priorities. Clarifying the differences between professional teams and improvement groups also allows staff working across multiple groups to be able to prioritise their own work when under pressure so they do not inadvertently prioritise their cultural and community activities at the expense of their core professional responsibilities (see example on next page).

School Wide Collaboration Map: Teams vs Improvement Groups

Chairing of Improvement Groups/ Working Parties

Line Management of Professional Teams

Mistake 2: Proportionality of Focus Misaligned Towards 'Business as Usual' instead of 'Strategic Risk'

Rule 2: The Primary Purpose of Leadership Dashboards is to Manage Strategic Risk (Not Business As Usual)

'Cool!' thought Susan – she now had a leadership team roles and responsibilities chart that enabled every staff member to know who to report to for what, as well as a dashboard reporting system keeping track of the data that needed to be managed! Over time this certainly created a new sense of calmness and focus among the leadership team and staff. The seemingly never-ending cycle of crises finally abated, and all was good … sort of … until the data showed student gains were well below targets …

What the …? Why are our results not improving? Our behaviour problems are down, our attendance is up, staff satisfaction is high – what's going on?

Susan's Regional Director was unhappy and had scheduled a meeting the following week. Susan called the leadership team together to discuss the poor results and develop a plan. Why was everything working so well day-to-day in the school yet not showing up in the data? Perplexed, the leadership team discussed the situation at length. As they introspectively began going around in circles trying to find a logical explanation for the results and some practical next steps, Susan found herself repeatedly referring to the *literacy data* (which was the state-wide 'Priority Focus Area'). These results were not at all what was supposed to be happening. Did the teaching staff implement the curriculum as per our strategic plan? How come no one knew for sure whether this was done properly? More worryingly, why did Susan herself not know given how important this was to her own career as a Principal?

This realisation led to the second revelation for Susan, namely that when designing leadership team role dashboards, they need to align proportionally to the strategic risks that need to be managed. You see, school leaders like Susan have access to massive amounts of data – which is a good thing – right? Well the answer is both yes and no. Yes, when it comes to being able to measure an amazing amount of school specific variables and giving students and parents highly detailed and specific feedback. No, when it comes to building simple and effective leadership dashboards. Sometimes too much data can be overwhelming, and we end up either focusing on the wrong data or simply avoiding data all together.

Susan's leadership dashboard was simply a copy of the headline indicator reports given to her by the central office of her Education Department. These are what we call "80:20 Dashboards" – 80% student data (academic / attendance / behaviour) and 20% staff & parent satisfaction data. Theses 80:20 dashboards are distributed to Principals once assessment results on key school performance indicators are lodged centrally and have a level of fidelity needed to comparatively assess "inter" school performance on a state-wide basis, which is not necessarily the same fidelity needed to assess "intra" school performance on a range of within school variables.

STANDARD SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD 80:20							
COHORT	**STUDENTS**					**STAFF & PARENTS**	
	Academic (A-E)	Academic (Naplan)	Priority Focus Area	Behaviour	Attendance	Staff Satisfaction	Parent Satisfaction

Standard 80:20 dashboards typically do not provide measures of quality teaching, nor regular measurement of staff wellbeing, effective teamwork or participation in the school community – all critical indicators of a healthy teaching and non-teaching workforce. These workforce level measures should be a critical part of leadership dashboards. Student data is also focused narrowly on academic, attendance and behaviour data when broader school participation and wellbeing data is far more

valuable at a local school leadership level. Parent and community engagement is focused primarily on 'satisfaction,' which does not yield insights into the local community demographics, socio-economic trends and inclusivity (or otherwise) of the P&C network – all key indicators of enrolment, participation, and student and family wellbeing necessary at the local school leadership level.

Whilst standard 80:20 leadership dashboards are fine for between-school and state-wide comparisons, we recommend school leadership teams develop and use more advanced 50:40:10 dashboards which provide higher fidelity in monitoring local level school performance indicators.

School leadership team dashboards should be focused 50% student data (academic results / attendance & behaviour / wellbeing & engagement), 40% on staff data (engagement / wellbeing / team work / professional development), and 10% on parent and community engagement data (satisfaction / engagement / local economy). You can see in the example below the spread of performance indicators that are easily able to be developed across the three categories of Students / Staff / Parents & Community.

ADVANCED SCHOOL LEADERSHIP DASHBOARD 50:40:10																																					
STUDENTS																			STAFF										PARENTS								
Academic (A-E)					Priority Focus Area			Wellbeing						Behaviour				Attendance	Wellbeing					Attendance	Quality Teaching				SOS	Engagement				SOS			
A	B	C	D	E	<50	50-80	80+	Teacher Referral	Self Referral	IDM - Intensive Care Management	Support Plans	Caseness vs. Community	PBL Awards	Long Term Suspensions	Short Term Suspensions	Admin Referrals	Absenteeism	Extracurricula IDLs	Work/Life	Co-worker Support	Professional Feedback	Achievement	Sick Leave	Extracurricula participation	Coaching & Observation	PDPs Completed	PLT Team Dynamics	PLT Datawall Updates	Satisfaction	Satisfaction	Participation Numbers	Participation Hours	Employment/Industry	Satisfaction			

Why 50:40:10 I hear you ask? Well, when it comes to managing risk, a school leader should spend at least half their time focusing on the quality of student outputs (the whole reason we have schools in the first place – and the main performance indicator Principals are personally judged on). This should be followed by a major focus on the quality of staff inputs (necessary to maintain the highest quality student outputs) followed by a much narrower (but none-the-less

diligent) focus on outside factors influencing student/staff behaviour (i.e., parental engagement and local industry/employment data).

As a Principal, the end game of performance rests upon student outcomes (outputs) which is largely determined by staff behaviour (inputs) along with parent engagement (influencer). Thus 50% student, 40% staff, 10% parent data typically results in a proportional focus for leadership dashboard design.

When Susan assessed the fidelity of her 80:20 dashboard compared to the fidelity of a 50:40:10 dashboard, it became clear to her that relying on the standard 80:20 post-assessment (term, semester or annual) dashboard most school leaders use, was the culprit behind the failure to notice a range of early warning signs of lack of growth in literacy data.

A better grasp on the wider trends critical for the success of such strategic priorities using the 50:40:10 approach would have prevented the strategic blind spots occurring in her line of sight and would have improved the likelihood of success of key strategic initiatives without disrupting the day-to-day focus of running the school.

**School Leadership Pro Tips:
From Lag to Lead Indicators – Using Higher
Frequency Dashboard Reports**

While many education systems automatically provide
dashboard data for their schools on a term, semester or annual
basis, we recommend school leaders look at dashboard data at
least twice per term or preferably, on a monthly basis. Higher
frequency monitoring of leadership dashboards increases the
likelihood of spotting issues before they become significant
problems and enables you to capitalise on positive trends.

But Pete, that's all fine and good for you to say, but WE DON'T
ACTUALLY HAVE MONTHLY DATA ON THESE TYPES OF ISSUES!!!!
… NOT A PROBLEM I say! As this simply means we must ask
the question – what do we know every month or twice per
term that indicates what the eventual result will be? These are
known as Lead Indicators. We'll discuss this in much greater
detail as part of Discipline #2 but, while we're here, let's do a
quick introduction.

There are two types of lead indicators – direct and indirect –
and each type can either be qualitative or quantitative (see
example on next page). Direct lead indicators are measures of
the specific activities that create the eventual result (i.e., final
mark on a major assignment) and can be either quantitative
(i.e., objective assessment results on various drafts submitted
as milestone measures, prior to the final result) or qualitative
(i.e., expert predictions made during the assignment timeline
based on observation of effort, attitude and responsiveness to
feedback). Indirect lead indicators are measures of the related
activities which influence the eventual result. Using the same
example, quantitative indirect lead indicators could include the
teachers' participation in marking, moderation and feedback

with peers (as higher collaboration and consistency among peer teachers is associated with more accurate and detailed feedback to students). Indirect qualitative lead indicators could include measures of subjective teacher wellbeing (as lower subjective wellbeing is related to higher stress levels and decreased performance in classroom teaching and student relationships).

Lead & Lag Indicators: Student Assessment Example
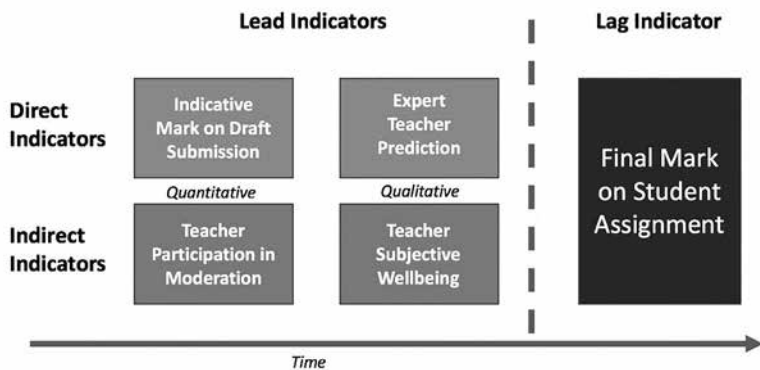
Line of Sight: Pause and Reflect

How clear is your line of sight as a school leader? Do your organisational charts and structures enable you to see each role in the school clearly through the lens of a simple and effective line management structure? Are staff hyper-clear on who they report to for different types of issues? Do you have zero (or very limited) double handling of issues maximising time and energy for each of your leadership team to proactively advance the schools strategic agenda?

What data sets are you currently using as a leader? Do you have dashboards that give you data on your strategic risks using a 50:40:10 perspective or do you rely on the traditional 80:20 approach, leaving blind spots in the implementation of your strategic plan? How often do you look at your data, and how do lead indicators inform your ability to prevent unexpected negative results and maximise emerging positive trends?

Part 2. A Purpose Driven Vision

Assumptions can make an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me' and when it comes to developing the vision, strategic direction and goals for a school. The assumption that this is a job exclusively reserved for the leadership team and the Board (if the school has one) can have disastrous consequences. It's understandable why school leaders make this assumption. After all, in business and corporate life, vision and strategy are developed by Boards of Directors and senior executives, which are then given to managers as plans to implement. For example the Australia Institute of Company Directors explicitly states, *'The role of the board is to provide strategic direction to the organisation and deciding upon the organisation's strategies and objectives in conjunction with the CEO.'*

Schools are often compared to corporations and Principals are often compared to CEOs, yielding some good insights about organisational development. Given the success of elaborations from the corporate sector in organisational development, it is understandable that adopting a similar corporate top down approach for vision and strategy also seems logical for schools. However, when it comes to setting a school vision and strategy, I do not believe the corporate example is a helpful comparison at all!

After all, schools are not businesses competing to make more profit than their peers. Schools are not bereft of intelligent strategists among their own staff. Schools are not volatile and vulnerable businesses needing to be sensitive to sudden changes in the market, but rather stable and enduring public service organisations in local communities (which will outlive the whims, fads and trends at any given time in the political

cycle of education). When developing a school's vision and strategy it is much more important to incorporate and enhance the underlying and enduring core purpose of the school articulated by its staff and local community than to focus too strongly on independent expert opinions and current and future trends in the wider education sector.

Because of this, an extraordinary school leader's job is not to 'set' their vision upon the school (no matter how insightful, amazing and brilliant it may be) but rather to collectively understand the underlying purpose of the school and then take this purpose and imagine its ideal future state. Similarly, the role of the school board (if applicable) is not to develop vision and strategy itself but rather to ensure the adequacy of consultation and engagement, appropriateness of the goals given the local context, and feasibility of the strategy in light of available resources.

Push will wear you out. When you're pushing to do something, you've only got so much willpower. But when you're pulled, when there's something larger than yourself that you're here to serve and that you believe you're made for, that brings energy.
– Tony Robbins

A good school leader recognises the importance of vision in leadership and draws on their many years of experience to craft a vision for their school and then carefully introduce the vision and strategy for the school in a supportive and empowering way – gently pushing everyone forwards. Extraordinary school leaders take a different approach. Firstly, they unify and align everyone's (pre-existing) understanding of the purpose of the school and then organise the purpose linked ambitions and goals of staff into a clear vision of the future state – creating a pull towards a future that has already been articulated by the staff themselves.

The sequence for vision casting in a school therefore begins with the leadership team collaborating with the staff to understand the DNA of the school – its core purpose within the community it serves and then to imagine an ideal future state from which strategy can be developed

and goals can be set. It may come as a surprise to some, but the deepest insights, understandings and wisdom are often found not among the leaders (who nonetheless must take responsibility for the process of setting the vision) but from the staff who feel the pulse of the school every day and are sensitive to the needs of the community and know where the real opportunities for improvement are.

Buy-in to Core Purpose: The Hedgehog

The easiest way to establish a clear, no BS understanding of a school's DNA (core purpose) is to have the team answer the three questions of the 'Hedgehog' concept first hypothesised by management guru Jim Collins based on his research on 'Good' versus 'Great' companies (see diagram). We've been using the Hedgehog concept with leadership teams in the Education sector for many years and have found it to be a simple, fast and powerful way to help leaders connect with purpose at both the organisational and team level.

As Jim Collins points outs, the Hedgehog process creates a powerful understanding of shared purpose, *'When these 3 things: (1) what you are deeply passionate about, (2) what you can be best in the world at and (3) what drives your resource engine come together, not only does your work move toward greatness, but so does your life …'*
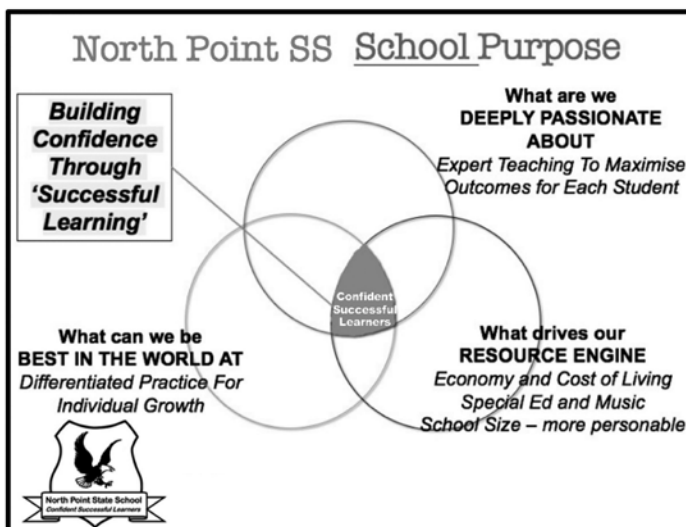
School Leadership Pro Tips:
Unpacking the Hedgehog

Here is some helpful scaffolding to assist in completing the hedgehog activity.

Question 1 asks: *"What are we deeply passionate about?"* – In answering this question, we encourage teams to think about the extent to which they are passionate about either (1) the quality of what they do and services they provide and/or (2) the needs they fulfil for the customers they serve. As you can see in the diagram, in the case of North Point State School, they are deeply passionate about expert teaching to maximise outcomes for each student.

Question 2 asks: *"What can we be the best in the world at?"* – As a stand-alone question this can sometimes be difficult for teams to answer, so we focus them on the application of their skills to their local/specific context. As you can see, in the case of North Point SS, their 'best in the world' is differentiated practice for individual growth for the students of North Point.

Question 3 asks: *"What drives our resource engine?"* – Sometimes teams can find this question a bit ambiguous so we prompt further thinking and clarity by asking the confronting obsolescence question – "what would need to change in the world for there to be no more need for our organisation?" We then drill down into why we exist and the resources that sustain us – such as the 'pain' people experience that the service relieves in the most convenient and affordable ways, or the 'pleasure' and benefits that people derive from the services. As you can see, in the case of North Point SS their resource engine is driven by the economy, cost of living, special education, music and a smaller school size.

The Hedgehog: Consolidating The 3 Building Blocks of Core Purpose

Once the answers of the three building blocks of purpose are clear we can see the overlapping elements that lead us to our ultimate core purpose. As you can see, in the case of North Point SS, the overarching School Purpose can be summarised as '*Confident, Successful Learners: Building Confidence Through Successful Learning*.'

Pro Tip: Whole School versus Team Specific Purpose

When thinking about core purpose as a team, sometimes it can be difficult to see the forest from the trees. Because school leaders are responsible for the ultimate success of the school, they sometimes confuse their own team's core purpose with the school's core purpose. As you can see in the two diagrams below, there are some subtle distinctions between the purpose of the school and the purpose of the school leadership team which if left unclear, could lead to unhelpful interference and conflict with staff.
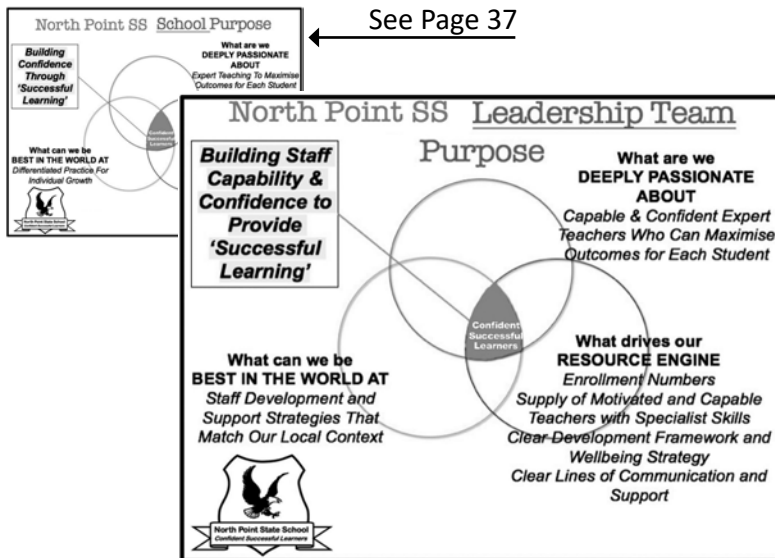
The Vision Casting Y-Chart

Once core purpose is clear, we move to vision casting. Vision casting is about getting staff to imagine an ideal future state at a specific time point in the future (usually 12 months or 5 or 10 years) and describing what it would 'look like', 'sound like' and 'feel like' if everyone was 100% committed to the school's core purpose every day. These descriptors fill up a Y chart style diagram to provide a rich description of the vision for the school. This activity works best in short bursts of energy so set a timer for 10 minutes and encourage staff to really connect with their ideal future.
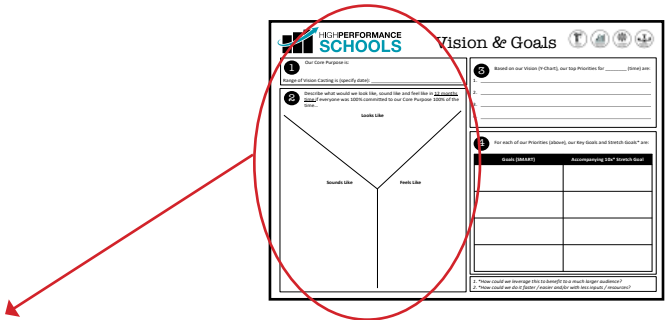
Step 1:
Our Core Purpose Is - Confident, Successful Learners

Range of Vision Casting Worksheet Is_____12 MONTHS - DD/MM/YY   (specify year date)

Step 2: Describe what would we look like, sound like and feel like by 08/19 (year) if everyone was 100% committed to our core purpose 100% of the time.....

Looks Like
Now – watching others work, knowledge of student interests, inclusion – differentiated, all students engaged, more academic awards, no D's & E's, everyone learning, Future Me, high attendance, clear roles and responsibility taking owner-ship

Feels Like
Feel welcomed
'Hi' wave
Collaborative
Safe
Happy
Challenged
A sense of achievement
Determination
Resilient
100% engaged
Proud
Knowing other staff

Sounds Like
Conversations about learning
Learning goals
Children questioning, engaging in groups, linking learning to goals
Parent feedback
Consistent vision – message
Positive gossips

Strategic Priorities, Goals & Stretch Goals

With a deeply detailed understanding of the ideal future state established (linked to the underlying core purpose) for the school, it becomes natural to spot the recurring themes in the vision, which creates the priority improvement areas for goal setting and strategy. Goals can then be set using the SMART technique and then stretched using 10x questions. SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound. Stretch goals take our SMART goals one step further by asking 10x questions: (1) How could we leverage this to benefit a much wider audience (who)? and (2) How could we do it faster and/or with less inputs/resources?

Step 3: Based On The Vision Our Top Priorities For (YEAR) are:

- Engaged learners and parents
- High attendance
- Inclusive Classroom
- Differentiated learning
- No D's and E's – U2B
- Vision Driven
- Clear roles and responsibilities

Step 4: We Will Address Our Vision Driven Priorities For (YEAR) If We:
1. Key Goals and 10x* Stretch Goals (specify...)

Goals (SMART)	Accompanying 10x* Stretch Goal
By the end of the year, there will be a decrease of 50% in behavior incidents. 2.4 > 1.5/day	2.4 > 1
By the end of semester 2 there is alignment in incidents = behavior result	There are no D's + E's for behavior on the semester 2 report card
By the end of semester 2 a 'differentiation toolkit' is developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders	All students will be welcomed and catered for in an inclusive classroom
By the end of semester 2, all the staff roles, responsibilities, and school vision have been drafted and agreed upon, published to start 2019	Everyone's role is succession planned with understudy named
By the end of 2019, all students yr2-yr6 achieve greater than or equal to C (prep, 1 students not on track identified)	No student not on track for years growth

Action Planning Strategic Goals

The strategy for achieving each goal is then articulated in an 'Action Plan' (often referred to as a Strategic Plan) which combines the core purpose analysis, vision casting and goal setting into a single action plan to guide the next stage of the school's development. It may seem basic, but creating a clear action plan by breaking down grand visions into the 4 W's (and the 1 H) of Who, What, When, Why and How can be the difference between real success and unforeseen failure.

Issue (Problem to Solve – What P1)	Key Goals & Stretch Goals (What P2)	Execution Strategy (How)	Link to Broader Strategy (Why)	Accountability (Who) & Reporting (When)

Purpose Driven Vision: Pause and Reflect

While it makes sense for businesses to set their vision from the top down, things are a little different in schools. When developing a school's vision and strategy it is much more important to incorporate and enhance the underlying and enduring core purpose of the school articulated by its staff and local community than focus too strongly on independent expert opinions and current and future trends in the wider education sector.

Is your school fully engaged with Vision Inspired Action? Have you got all three critical elements of success working in your school: (1) Genuine buy-in to core purpose, (2) Clear team focused vision and goals, and (3) Locally driven action plans to make things happen? What are your next steps?
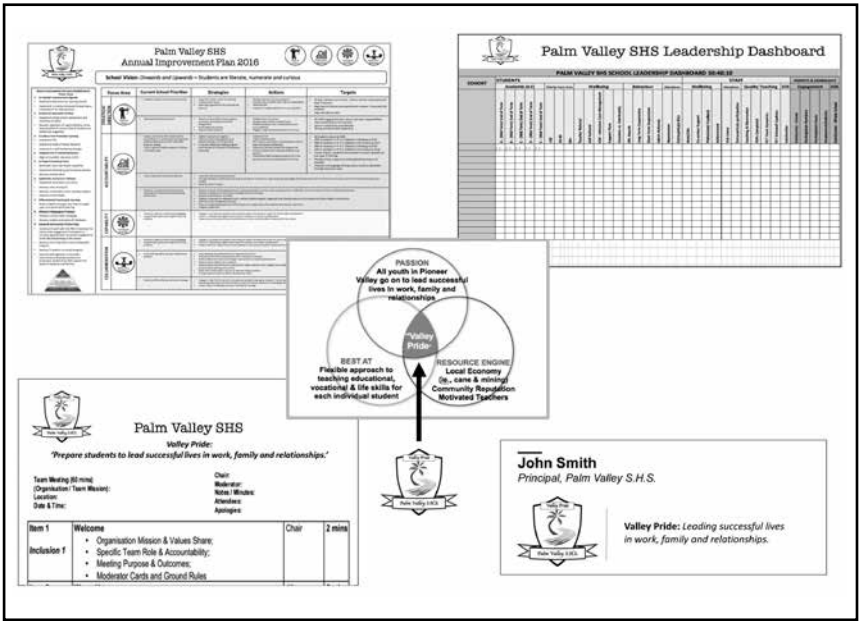
School Leadership Pro Tips:
Discipline 1: Going The Extra Mile …

Beyond developing 'A Clear Line of Sight' and establishing 'A Purpose Driven Vision' extraordinary school leaders take Vision & Action one step further by personally over-communicating the connections between the school's vision and the specific actions of their staff. They also role model vision focused leadership at every opportunity and ensure simplicity and accessibility of message in all passive communication (signature blocks, letterheads, meeting agendas, street signage, etc.) and active communication (verbal communication at the start of every meeting, assemblies, huddles and catch ups).

Internal Marketing & Branding Case Study: Palm Valley State High School

Using the Hedgehog exercise, Palm Valley SHS identified their core purpose as 'Valley Pride'. This core purpose was then socialised and reinforced at Palm Valley in every form of internal and external communication (e.g., the Annual Improvement Plan, leadership team dashboard, meeting agendas and signature blocks). Whilst the exemplars on page 40 represent only a small selection of documents linked to the school's core purpose they provide a strong example of communicating to staff, students and the community what the school stands for, making it impossible for staff 'not to know' the core purpose of Palm Valley SHS and thus increasing the purpose driven focus of the school.

Discipline 1: Bringing It All Together

Good school leaders use their own extensive experience and insights to create a *leadership driven vision* for their school. They then launch their school's vision in a manner that engages all staff and then rely on 'common sense' and 'personal responsibility' of staff to implement the vision into their daily work life.

Extraordinary school leaders don't rely on their own experience and insights to develop vision. Instead, they use the extensive experience and insights of their staff (who have a deeper understanding of the underlying purpose and context of the school), to develop a *'purpose driven vision'* for their school. However before they do this, they first establish a *'clear line of sight'* through well designed organisational structures and systems of continuous reinforcement and communication to ensure the vision will be enacted effectively across the whole school.

They ensure that the school's organisational structures accommodate the various activities needed to achieve the vision – particularly where people may need to collaborate across teams as well as within their normal teams. At the 'team level' they ensure teams are clear on the connection between the specific purpose of their team and the wider purpose of the school. At the individual level, they ensure the role descriptions and duties of their senior leadership team and accompanying dashboards and performance metrics create a natural and continuous focus on execution of vision and strategy into everyday school life.

DISCIPLINE 1
Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action

Activity: What's Your Number & What's Next?

Select the number which best reflects your current leadership capability and note some next steps for your leadership journey.

Extraordinary Leadership	10. 9. 8.	Do you overcommunicate the vision and action by having *a clear line of sight* through your organisation to engage your staff with a *purpose driven vision*?
Good Leadership	7. 6. 5.	Do you set a *leadership driven vision* that is shared with the staff and then implemented via common sense and personal responsibility?
Poor Leadership	4. 3. 2. 1.	Do you ignore the need for a shared vision and purpose trusting that everyone's personal 'why' and day-to-day communication will create alignment to drive the school forwards?

My Current Number Is:_____

My Next Steps Are:_____
_____
_____
_____

You Tube **Watch: 'HPTLevelUp' Channel: 5 Disciplines/ Discipline 1**

Performance Reporting

DISCIPLINE 2

Reporting Systems
To Achieve The Impossible

"The 'Golden Thread' of alignment is a very important aspect of leading a High Performance School. I spend a lot of my time working behind the scenes building and tweaking our performance reporting systems, meeting cycles, agendas, dashboards and communiques – making it easier for everyone to be constantly 'in the loop' and 'up-to-date' giving them more time and energy to focus on their students and their teaching."

– Scott Cage, Principal, Mirani State High School

"Team Data Walls are very powerful drivers of performance in our school. At every weekly meeting, teams review their data walls focusing on the school's vision and purpose, ways of working together, progress on goals and targets, and opportunities to stretch what is possible to maximise student outcomes."

– Tracey Egan, Principal, Mango Hill State School

"A strong performance culture delivers higher morale, higher staff satisfaction and, most importantly, continuously improving student outcomes. The challenge is to build flexible and adaptable structures and processes – knowing when the behavioural outputs have reached maximum improvement and then modifying the structures to enable further gains to occur."

– Phil Carleton, Principal, Gaven State School

Performance
Reporting

Motivated Students & Satisfied Staff!

The 'Why' II

Performance Reporting

In The Loop & Up To Date!

DISCIPLINE 2:

Reporting Systems To Achieve The Impossible

What gets measured gets done.
– Tom Peters

If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.
– W. Edwards Deming

Extraordinary school leaders use *lead indicator systems* to stretch what is possible for student growth then embed this within the *Golden Thread* of communication enabling staff to be constantly 'up-to-date' - reducing additional meetings and creating time in otherwise impossibly busy schedules.

Part 1. Maximising The Growth Of Each & Every Student

'I'm not satisfied that we're doing all we can to help each and every student succeed in our school …' replied John after I had congratulated him on the many accolades he was receiving as Principal of a (very) High Performance School.

Palm Valley SHS had recently achieved Foundation Status – one of only 2 high schools at the time to have been awarded such recognition. They built HPT throughout the school all tightly focused around their core purpose of *'Valley Pride'*. They were an industry leader in

pioneering innovative approaches to curriculum delivery and managing gifted students. They were the first high school in Australia to develop a systematic Golden Thread weaving through all their communication systems. They had been one of the first schools to develop a 50:40:10 School Leadership Team Dashboard (see 'Dashboards: Palm Valley SHS back story' below).

Leadership Dashboards: 50:40:10 – Example Palm Valley SHS

Palm Valley SHS, like most schools these days, is 'data driven' – using data to help improve educational outcomes. However, Palm Valley SHS has advanced beyond their old 80:20 dashboard by developing a much high fidelity 50:40:10 dashboard (using a wider spread of data with 50% focus on students / 40% focus on staff / 10% focus on parents & community).

Student Data: Palm Valley SHS local leadership dashboard was focused 50% on students across a broad spread of categories (which interact together to determine student performance). The school could use system level data from their Education Department on some of the student level dashboard metrics. However, local level data needed to be developed and refined to map Attendance, Extra Curricula Instructional Days Lost (IDLs; which if not well managed can inadvertently limit a students' academic achievement due to offsite activity interrupting classroom contact time), and Student Wellbeing – Caseness (where the school collaborate with local mental health agencies and accessed prevalence data for teenagers and children to help establish a baseline of likely referral numbers and diagnostic categories).

Staff Data: Palm Valley SHS leadership dashboard was focused 40% on staff across a broad spread of categories (which determine quality teaching and learning) such as staff engagement, wellbeing, team work and professional development, as well as system level data on sick leave and the School Opinion Survey (SOS). However, local level data needed to be developed to map Attendance (Extra Curricula Participation), Wellbeing (HPT Pulse Data on work/life, support, feedback and sense of achievement) and Quality Teaching (HPT Team Dynamics Scorecard and HPT Data Wall Updates).

Parent & Community Data: Palm Valley SHS local leadership team dashboard was focused 10% on parents and community across categories such as satisfaction / engagement / local economy. System level data could be used for whole school parent satisfaction dashboard metrics. However local level data needed to be developed to map Satisfaction with Events, Volunteer Participation Numbers and Hours, and Local Economy & Employment Trends. As Palm Valley SHS is a region with a heavy reliance on Sugar Cane for economic prosperity they tracked the demand and price of this commodity to forecast local economic growth or decline (and subsequent financial hardship and risks of family breakdown and related mental illness in parents and students).

With so many ground-breaking school improvement achievements during his tenure as Principal, I was a bit surprised to hear John's ongoing concerns about the need to better support the students at Palm Valley SHS.

Instead of trying to revisit all his achievements to bring balance to a seemingly self-punitive assessment of the state of his successful school, I instead took the bait and asked why he sensed, amongst all the great progress, there was still something missing? What had triggered his unease? If he could put his finger on the source of the problem, where was it? In the teams, systems, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment process ...?

I then waited for his very long pause of reflection before he continued…

"I think what bothers me is that when I'm doing walk throughs (classroom visits) I sometimes get a feeling that despite the great teaching I am observing, some students are not fully engaged. Some kids aren't learning as much as they could but aren't misbehaving either – so they're flying under the radar and we're not picking up on their learning needs. I raise this with the teacher concerned and their Head of Department and I'm reassured everything is fine ... then I look at the data at the end of term on our School Leadership Dashboard and even though all our indicators on staff and students are positive, I feel that in some cases it doesn't reflect great results – advancing the standards – pushing the envelope on what is actually possible but rather just good results – similar standards (but none-the-less quite satisfactory) to what has been achieved previously. Whilst I totally understand that people change over time and results fluctuate accordingly, I still have this uneasy feeling that we're missing something – that some students are slipping through the cracks and are probably more capable than their results would suggest ..."

He continued ... *"I want every teacher and every middle leader to be able to put their hand on their heart and list every student by name and confidently declare they are fully engaged in learning every day and in every lesson they attend! Then I'd be happier to accept the end of term assessment results no matter how good, bad or otherwise they were ..."*

I tried to frame his concerns as a question as best as I could ... *"So what you want is a system of more regular prompts, checks and balances to ensure all teachers are able to deeply reflect on the learning needs of their students and be able to adjust or intervene in emerging problems well before they show up in end of term results?"*

"Yes exactly! Don't get me wrong I think our teaching staff are extremely dedicated professionals but in such a large school with so many students it is easy to miss things – simply focusing on the squeaky wheels or high achievers. I want to create a safety net for every student. I want to know well before the final marks are in that we have done our very best as a school. By the time final marks are given it is too late to change things. We need to transform how we look at students and manage risk rather than simply manage results ..."

I felt much clearer about the focus of John's concerns so I said … *"Okay, I see where you're going now. We need some sort of simple, time efficient process that enables teachers to analyse every student's performance in class by no later than mid-term to predict their end of term result, as well as indicate any additional intervention needed if the predicted result is lower than previous achievement?"*

"Yes! And not just those at risk of failing the subject. I want anyone with a potential decline, even an A student at risk of falling to a B standard, identified and supported before it's too late!"

Well that conversation really set a cat amongst the pigeons! Just when we thought all the work with dashboards was done it was back to the drawing board. However, a very worthwhile struggle ensued as Palm Valley built a school-wide predictive risk strategy – transforming the manner and timing of student support and quality teaching and learning (see next page).

Palm Valley SHS Student Growth Lead Indicator System

Mid Term Classroom Analysis (Teacher x Teacher)

Mid/ End Term Faculty Level Dashboard (Heads of Dept.)

Mid/ End Term Leadership Dashboard (Principal)

The predictive risk processes adopted also increased the frequency of the school using their leadership dashboard from once per term to twice per term (and even monthly on some data), creating a very tight synergy between the qualitative observations of staff and the quantitative performance of the school.

The lead indicator system adopted by the school for managing academic performance was simple and time efficient. The increased frequency of student x student analysis was incredibly powerful at identifying students at risk of declining performance and providing early intervention support accordingly. The mid-term prediction cycle became far more important to the leadership team than the end of term post results discussion. The gains for students were quite pronounced post mid-term predictive cycle and there was an increased sense of confidence among teaching staff and the leadership team.

The data obtained via the new system was meaningful to everyone in the teacher / middle manager / senior manager leadership matrix AND was visible on data walls and was scheduled for discussion within the fixed agenda items of meetings (as part of their Golden Thread). The systemic approach of the school's Lead Indicator System meant there was zero risk of it becoming *another meaningless data collection exercise which we never hear about again nor makes any real difference to the school,'* but instead it became a truly transformative system to maximise each and every student's growth every day!

The 'icing on the cake' was in the Principal's increased confidence that, across his large and busy school, he was much more satisfied that they were doing all they could to help each and every student succeed!

Part 2. The Golden Thread …

… we are so overwhelmed by the urgent we never get time to focus on the important!

Have you ever heard a leader say this, *"We are so overwhelmed by the urgent we never get time to focus on the important!"*

This statement neatly describes the single biggest barrier to school transformation. Once I hear this my heart grows heavy as I listen to the enormous pressure and stress school leadership teams are feeling when faced with the somewhat opposing pressures of (1) addressing the seemingly never ending urgent minor and major everyday crises of staff, students and parents, and (2) ensuring the school's improvement plan is implemented and key strategic goals and milestones are being achieved on time and on target.

For many schools the urgency of everyday crises and the importance of implementing school improvement plans are like oil and water – they simply do not mix! The school leadership team manages the oil spills of everyday school life and rarely, if ever, break through into the clearer waters needed for genuine improvement and transformation. As the pressure mounts and the leadership team members reach tipping point, the various solutions they try make very little impact with a short half-life before the chaos returns. What to do?

In a sea of great ideas, it's hard to know what the most reliable and enduring solution is. Do we 'team build', 'explore our values', 'reconnect with our why', 'skill build in courageous conversations' ... the list goes on. Any of these ideas could be either good and bad – it simply depends on whether the 'Golden Thread' of communication has been established first. If the Golden Thread is established first, then any additional support strategy is like a band aid on top of a disinfected wound – it will speed recovery and add long term value. Without the Golden Thread, support strategies are like a band aid on an infected wound – complicating recovery and risking secondary infection.

So what is this mysterious Golden Thread? The term 'Golden Thread' is shorthand for the systems and processes that enable EVERYONE in the school to be fully aligned to the overarching mission, strategy and goals. The original use of the term was in Greek mythology where Ariadne's thread led Theseus out of the labyrinth.

In the High Performance Teams Framework, the Golden Thread is created through effective and systematic implementation of some

the critical elements of KPI 2: Performance Reporting (assuming the organisational mission and vision is already established). To address KPI 2, meeting protocols, dashboards and data walls are the keys to success. Whilst all 3 of these activities are essential at the 'team' level, two of these activities are critically important to achieve the Golden Thread at the 'whole of organisation level' – meeting protocols and dashboards.

Meeting protocols refer not only to the ground rules or norms of a meeting, but also to the structuring of agendas to ensure there is a balance between immediate proactive (aka urgent) topics in 'hot issues' discussions as well as 'deep dive' conversations around progress on more long-term strategic (aka important) issues.

(Organisation) Team Meeting (60min) (Mission) Location: Date & Time:		Chair: Moderator: Notes/ Minutes: Attendees: Apologies:	
Item 1 *Inclusion 1*	**Welcome** • Organisation Mission & Values Share; • Specific Team Role & Accountability; • Meeting Team Purpose & Outcomes; • Moderator Cards & Ground Rules	Chair	2 mins
Item 2 *Support 1*	**Warm-Up** One word barometer; Ice-breaker and/or Success & Challenge	All	3 mins
Item 3 *Proactive 1*	**Team Member Updates** Week/s Prior & Week/s Ahead Exception Reporting (2 mins max per team member) (Refer to Team Data Wall) *Live Notes:*	All	8 mins
Item 4 *Proactive 2*	**Hot Issues** • Pair & Share Top 2-3 Issues – Write on whiteboard and vegas vote (5 ticks per person) (3 mins) • Top 2 topics selected • 1 min – elaborate / 1 min – clarify / 3 mins – discuss / 1 min takeaway action *Notes:*	All	15 mins
Item 5 *Strategic 1*	**Senior Leaders Briefing and Q&A** *Live Notes:*	Senior Leader	10 mins
Item 6 *Strategic 2*	**Deep Dive Presentation & Strategy Discussion*** • Present strategic issue & question for discussion (use template) (7 min) • Discussion / brainstorm (use whiteboard to track conversation) (7 min) • Presenter comment on takeaway value of discussion (1 min) (*alternate with Action Plan Review & Update item as needed) *Live Notes:*	Presenter	15 mins
Item 7 *Support 2*	**Team Pulse: Culture & Communication Update** • Wellbeing Update –Team Pulse Survey data review & note of forward actions to promote wellbeing • Culture Update – round table discussion of notable personal news and events among team. Clarification of key forward messages for stakeholders. *Live Notes:*	All	5 mins
Item 8 *Accountable*	**Close (**Barometer, Takeaway Actions, Moderator Feedback & Next Mtg Roles) Moderator Feedback: Next Meeting Date/Time: Chair: Moderator: Deep Dive Topic & Presenter: Live Notes/Minute Taker:	Chair & Moderator	2 mins

Ground Rules (Red Card/ Yellow Card)
1. Openness & Trust- *Right to 'off record' speech with 'on the record' documented as formal feedback.*
2. Balanced Debate - *Respecting both sides of the argument and allowing diversity of views.*
3. Competency over Role - *Respecting the 'value' of the person's opinion regardless of their 'status'.*
4. Issues over Personalities - *Staying 'issues' focused and not letting personalities overpower the agenda.*
5. Accountable Actions & Clear Outcomes -*Being constructive in feedback and offering a solution focused*
6. No Devices – *Exception Moderator & Chair for Time Keeping & Live Notes/ Minute Taker*

Meeting protocols also ensure 'communiques' and 'minutes' are distributed to key stakeholders in a timely manner to deepen information sharing and engagement across the organisation about both the 'urgent' and the 'important' (see 'Pro Tips' box on page 61).

Dashboards are the other critical element of achieving the Golden Thread in a High Performance School. Dashboards simplify the myriad of data available to schools into easily understood lead indicators which provide early warnings of risks and opportunities at the classroom, year/faculty level and whole of school level.

Dashboard data is available to everyone but rolled up level-by-level to enable a more efficient and effective response to the 'urgent' whilst maximising the speed and success of achieving the 'important'.

The Golden Thread at Palm Valley SHS

As you can see in the diagram below, Palm Valley SHS has achieved the Golden Thread by systematically developing and aligning its meeting agendas, communiques and dashboards to create a comprehensive system of communication and engagement.

This enables everyone to be fully informed and engaged on urgent and important issues in their smaller teams as well as in the wider school and risk proofs the school from accidental ignorance or miscommunication. Every staff member is able to be both fully informed and supported in addressing both their important and urgent issues, which reduces the number of crisis situations and increases staff morale, quality of teaching and ultimately student achievement. It also means that equal time is given to both the urgent and the important and the wider school improvement agendas stay on track despite the ups and downs of daily school life.

Palm Valley State High School Meeting Cycle
(Agendas & Dashboards)

SWIG (fortnightly) Strategic implementation

YLC (fortnightly) Operational implementation

Exec Leaders Team (weekly) Strategic planning Feedback from SWIG, YLC, HOD mtgs to inform direction

Exec-HOD 1:1 (termly) - faculty dash - students at risk - update tool

Snr Leaders Team (fortnightly) Operational plan implementation

HOD-Teacher 1:1 (termly) - faculty dash - students at risk

Faculty/Dept (weekly) Operational implementation

School Leadership Pro Tips: Effective School-wide Meeting & Communication Cycles

All teams within a school need to meet for *regularly scheduled meetings* to maintain work momentum and strengthen the relationships between team members. They also need to use a structured agenda which maximises the effective use of their meeting time AND keep a record of progress and forward accountable actions as well as keep stakeholders and colleagues up-to-date on progress. The Table below shows school-wide meeting and communication cycles for both primary and secondary schools.

Team Type	Recommended Meeting Cycle					Meeting Toolkit		Communication Cycle				
								Live Notes / Minutes		Updates: Newsletters/Communiques		
	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Quarterly	Other	HPT Agenda Template**	HPT Update Tool**	Team	Team & Leadership	Team & Leadership	Team, Leadership & Peers	Whole School
Leadership Team (Small - max 6)	✓ 60min			✓ 1 day		✓	✓	✓				✓^
Leadership Team (Large - min 7+)	✓ 90min			✓ 1 day		✓	✓	✓				✓^
Cohort/PLT	✓ 60min*			✓ ½ - 1 day		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Faculty	✓ 60min*			✓ ½ - 1 day		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Operational	✓ 60min					✓			✓			✓
General Staff			✓ 60min*			✓		✓				✓
Improvement Groups (Working Parties)#					✓ Project specific	✓			✓			✓
P&C			✓ 90min			✓			✓			✓

Improvement group meetings may be incorporated as breakout sessions into general staff meetings where time does not allow for stand alone meetings.

* Pending school size & needs we recommend either a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio of teaching team to general staff meetings over a 4 week period (assuming 1 hour per week max, meeting allowance in teacher employment conditions – otherwise teaching team meetings every week plus other meetings as additional)

^ Weekly leadership newsletters are critical for staff communication between monthly general staff meetings & should be discussed at every cohort / faculty meeting.

** All HPT agenda templates and update tools are at www.HPTschools.com

The Golden Thread: Pause & Reflect …

How well have you woven the Golden Thread through all your communication systems so that all staff are able to focus on both the urgent and the important? The easiest way to find out is to answer this simple question in relation to any important school wide issue: *'How do you know that they know?'* To answer this question, you must have 'evidence' of what staff know – not simply an opinion of whether you think they know. This evidence will be inside the systems and process of communication that have been established in your school.

Discipline 2. Bringing It All Together

Good school leaders are consistent with their communication – using the 'we've always done it this way' approach of communicating across individuals, teams and whole of staff. Good school leaders keep everyone focused on the strategic goals they are trying to accomplish within the business as usual environment – keeping the 'main thing' the 'main thing' (as Stephen Covey would say!). They focus on evaluating results post hoc – using 'lag indicators' to drive the improvement agenda.

Extraordinary school leaders go so much further. They focus on the process – the *Lead Indicators* associated with striving towards the goal of maximum improvement for each and every student. In so doing, they break down the steps further and focus on measuring lead indicators that predict results more than focusing on the end result of the goal itself. Extraordinary leaders also build reporting systems that create a *'Golden Thread'* – enabling everyone to be up-to-date with a specific focus on measuring and managing the *'lead indicators'* of student growth. With everyone always 'in the loop' and 'up-to-date' there is no need for any additional meetings and briefings, which creates much needed time and space for staff in their otherwise impossibly busy schedules.

DISCIPLINE 2
Reporting Systems To Achieve The Impossible

Activity: What's Your Number & What's Next?

Select the number which best reflects your current leadership capability and note some next steps for your leadership journey.

Extraordinary Leadership	10. 9. 8.	Do you use *lead indicator systems* to stretch what is possible for student growth then embed this within the *golden thread* of communication and information sharing enabling staff to be constantly 'up-to-date' thus reducing additional meetings and creating time in otherwise impossibly busy schedules?
Good Leadership	7. 6. 5.	**Do you stick to the 'we've always done it this way' approach of communicating across individuals, teams, and whole of staff, and focus on evaluating results post hoc - using 'lag indicators' to drive the improvement agenda?**
Poor Leadership	4. 3. 2. 1.	Do you ignore and/or denigrate outcome data and use MBWA (Manage By Walking Around), as the main way to share information and keep people up to date?

My Current Number Is:_____

My Next Steps Are:_____
_____
_____
_____

You Tube **Watch: 'HPTLevelUp' Channel: 5 Disciplines/ Discipline 2**

**Leveraging
Diversity**

DISCIPLINE 3

Matching Communication
To Leverage Diversity

"Some of my most powerful professional learning has been around understanding how my leadership behaviours impact those around me. The goal, of course, is not just knowing how your leadership impacts on others, but rather how to modify your leadership to better meet the needs of others."

*– Kurt Goodwin, Principal,
Mt Archer State School*

"I recognised the need as a leader to build strong relationships first and foremost. If I didn't have a relationship with the people I would lead and provide feedback to, there would be no chance that they would feel that they could trust me as a leader."

– Roselynne Anderson, Former Principal, President QASEL

"Our leadership team has to know each other well enough to know our individual strengths and weaknesses. This ensures more effective communication and the full engagement of the intellectual capacity of our entire team."

– Scott Cage, Principal, Mirani State High School

Leveraging Diversity

Everyone Feels Heard & Understood!

The 'Why' II

Increased Motivation & Commitment!

DISCIPLINE 3:

Matching Communication To Leverage Diversity

When everybody is included, everybody wins.
– Jesse Jackson

> **Extraordinary school leaders create a sense of belonging among staff by *matching communication styles* to connect with various workplace personality styles and then turning this sense of belonging into a desire to excel by *managing the status dynamic* within each relationship.**

Part 1. Getting It Wrong: Mis-Matching Communication & Personality

It was a bad day, capping off a bad week for Greg the new Principal at North Point State School. Having just finished his Term 1 welcome back speech, and with morning tea starting, Greg was making a cup of coffee at the back of the room while staff were quietly chatting amongst themselves.

"Wow … that was the worst speech ever – the new Principal seems like a total jerk – he's only interested in improving our literacy data – couldn't care less about us and what we need …" whispered one frustrated teacher.

"Totally agree!" remarked another, *"Just a big 'to do' list to make him look good as Principal – where was the detail – the plan? I hate it when people make big promises and don't share the detail of how we're going to get there!"*

"For sure … no mention of our 'True North' vision for building resilience in our students – I get that literacy is a necessary part of the agenda but where's the link to our resilience programs?"

"Yeah, I would have thought he'd talk about 'True North' … but at least it was short and to the point. I hate long speeches!"

Greg's welcome speech was an absolute disaster! For any expert in communication, the technical reasons behind Greg's fatal errors were obvious – Greg had failed to match his communication to the needs of the different personality types in the room and had also failed to adjust his presentation style to incorporate a mix of 'high status' (commanding and confident) and 'low status' (humble and appreciative) messages. Instead, Greg took a 'high status' approach the whole time, resulting in staff perceiving him as an arrogant taskmaster. Had Greg matched his speech to appeal to the various personality types and status preferences of his audience he would have created the opposite effect – a powerful speech that motivated and inspired everyone, and staff would have perceived him as the kind, thoughtful leader that he genuinely is.

But at that moment, the reasons for the disaster that had unfolded were not obvious to Greg at all – resulting in him being extremely frustrated and confused. In fact, he was downright perplexed. For the past few days Greg had been burning the candle at both ends to change his proposed speech based on feedback he'd received earlier in the week from his veteran Deputy Nadine, who after listening to a first draft rehearsal, indicated that the speech was too vague, too big picture, and that Greg needed to stop waffling on and thanking everyone for everything. When revising each successive draft, Greg could hear Nadine's blunted tones playing over in his mind again and again – 'Greg, just get to the point!' Nadine had also told him that he needed to stand tall, address the group directly and be stronger and clearer in setting out his initial expectations.

Having respect for Nadine as a skilful operator, Greg assumed that she knew the staff group and what they wanted to hear. He also had a strong desire to make a good impression and launch the school year on

the right note. Because of this, Greg took Nadine's feedback to heart, abandoning his original speech and adopting all of her suggestions. However, instead of creating a well-crafted speech that inspired the entire staff group Greg had unwittingly created a speech for an audience of one – Nadine, catering to her preferred style.

An hour after the staff meeting Greg was sitting alone in his office, replaying the events of the day in his mind, desperately trying to figure out how he would win back the trust of the staff. Suddenly, the penny dropped, and Greg finally began to understand how he had become the architect of his own downfall – both the CONTENT of his speech and his DELIVERY didn't match what the staff needed. At that moment Greg vowed to take a different approach when communicating with his staff in the future …

The C.A.R.D. Model of Workplace Personality Types

To have another language is to possess a second soul.
– Charlemagne

To understand how to communicate with different personality types, start by understanding your own personality type and then quickly work out how to assess the personality characteristics of others. Personality Profiling tools are very useful for this purpose. However, there are a multitude of personality profiling theories and tools available and it can be easy to get confused amidst all the technical explanations and models.

In order to keep it simple and real, it is useful to consolidate and simplify all the various theories down into 4 important workplace personality types reflected in the acronym C.A.R.D and link them to basic colours to make them easier to remember. This simplification process (whilst clearly only being an approximation of each theory) enables staff to have a common language to use in integrating their understanding of individual differences as a team when they may have previously completed different profile tools. This approach also avoids the 'which tool is best' argument – leaving that for the researchers and scientists!

The C.A.R.D. Model:
Understanding Different Workplace Personality Types

Action:

AUS ID = WOMBAT
MBTI= TJ
HBDI = RATIONAL
DISC = D
16 PF = ANALYST
(architect, debater etc.)

Detail:

AUS ID = KANGAROO
MBTI = SP
HBDI: PRACTICAL
DISC = C
16 PF = SENTINAL
(logistician, executive etc.)

A
Blue

Action
Rational
Factual
Logic

D
Green

Detailed
Step-by-step
Realistic
Practical

Clashing Types

C
Yellow

Conceptual
Imaginative
Experimental
Creative

R
Red

Relational
Feeling
Co-operaton
Sensitive

Concept:

· AUS ID = EAGLE
· MBTI= NP
· HBDI = EXPERIMENTAL
· DISC = I
· 16 PF: EXPLORERS
(entrepreneur, entertainer etc.)

Relational:

· AUS ID = DOLPHIN
· MBTI = FJ
· HBDI: RELATIONAL
· DISC = S
· 16 PF = DIPLOMAT
(advocate, mediator etc.)

The acronym C.A.R.D. stands for Concept, Action, Relational and Detail which, from our experience over the years, tend to be the most useful descriptors when helping teams understand individual differences and personality clashes. 'C' stands for Concept and is represented by Yellow – the 'Why' people who perform at their best when they understand the vision and purpose behind the tasks they do. 'A' stands for Action and is represented by Blue – the 'What' people who perform at their best when they have immediately attainable 'next step' goals along with the tasks they have to do. 'R' stands for Relational and is represented by Red – the 'Who' people who perform at their best when they feel validated and connected with others in completing their tasks. 'D' stands for Detail and is represented by Green – the 'How' people who perform at their best when they understand the steps, processes and quality indicators associated with completing their tasks.

Identifying Your (and Their) C.A.R.D. Colour Preferences

As a leader working with a staff group, you need to know your own C.A.R.D. colour preferences to understand your own biases AND you need to know the C.A.R.D. colour preferences of your staff in order to better understand how they prefer to receive information. To identify C.A.R.D. colour preferences there are three approaches you can take.

The first approach to identify your own colour is to complete the quick quiz below rank ordering your preferences across the C.A.R.D. profile.

Type	Concept	Action	Relational	Detail
Description	I like to focus on thinking 'big picture' - innovating and solving complex problems...	I like to focus on the 'here and now' – taking logical and realistic actions to get things done...	I like to focus on making sure people are actively engaged and are working together effectively...	I like to focus on the detail, the process and the quality – making sure things are done properly...
You: Rank Order (1-4) (1= most like me)				

The second (and more thorough) approach is for you and your wider team to each complete any of the free or paid profiling tools referred to within the C.A.R.D Model Table on Page 64, then simply translate scores to the corresponding C.A.R.D. colours. The third approach, which focuses solely on understanding the other person's C.A.R.D. colour, involves individual communication and your intuition, and can be completed in two simple steps.

- **Step 1. Ask Open Ended Questions:** Ask staff some simple work-related questions (i.e., What have been your biggest successes and challenges in the classroom lately?). Listen to the answers that they provide and try to identify their primary colour preference (also keep an ear our for any secondary preference types).

- **Step 2. Respond in Colour Matched Terms:** Introduce your comments/feedback framed according to the dominant colour that you identified. If the conversation flows and they appear receptive, you've likely identified and matched their colour preference correctly.

Personality Types: Getting Out of Your Comfort Zone

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.
– Stephen Covey

When talking about personality types with staff we ask them to consider their preferred C.A.R.D. colour preference. As capable adults, all of us can and do display traits from every C.A.R.D. colour type. However, when stressed, tired, and busy (sounds a lot like a regular school day doesn't it?) we find that people tend to default towards their happy place, their comfort zone, their preference. Just think about it, if you're a big fan of chocolate ice-cream, you've had a stressful, tiring, busy day and you have the choice between chocolate and vanilla which would you choose?... Chocolate of course, though I'm equally sure that you could and would eat vanilla if it was the only option! The key takeaway here is that although we may have a strong preference we default to

under pressure, this doesn't give us a free pass to be rigidly true to our type, nor does it excuse us from the need to operate outside of our comfort zone.

More Than a 'One Trick Pony': Secondary Strengths

While everyone tends to have a primary personality type preference, research suggests that the majority of us (70%) have strong secondary preferences as well (with a much smaller number of us having strong tertiary preferences). That is, we would be equally comfortable operating from two colours. The most common types of secondary preference pairings are vertical (i.e., C and R, or A and D), or horizontal (C and A, or D and R) with a much rarer likelihood of diagonal pairings (C and D, or A and R) given the polar opposites in characteristics of these C.A.R.D. colours.

When Personalities Clash: A & R and C & D

Most people do not speak with the intent of empathy; they speak with the intent of competence.

While there is some overlap and similarity between some colour preferences, others are polar opposites (i.e., A & R or C & D), and it's most often in these opposites where, the seeds of differences of opinion can grow into personality clashes if 'competence' is more the focus of communication than 'empathy'.

Personality Types at North Point State School

Understanding different personality types was eye-opening for the leadership team of North Point State School.

Greg, the Principal, was identified as being a 'big picture thinker' (Concept-Yellow), and the team wholeheartedly acknowledged that they appreciated his creative 'out-of-the-box' thinking and uncanny ability to see the future needs of the school before anyone else. However, on the down side, it was noted that sometimes Greg became overly excited by change to the point where it seemed like some changes the school was embarking on were too rushed and/or too risky.

In contrast Lisa, the school's Business Manager was identified as being very 'thorough and procedural' (Detail-Green). Again, the team was quick to acknowledge the value that Lisa's attention to detail had brought to the school (particularly during the recent school review); however, some staff identified that Lisa's behaviour could sometimes come across as 'micromanaging'.

Nadine, the school's Deputy Principal in charge of behaviour management was identified as being 'realistic and logical' (Action-Blue), and while many staff appreciated Nadine's blunt 'straight shooting' talk, some staff noted that she could sometimes come across as lacking care, and as rude and offensive.

Finally, James, the Head of Special Education programs was identified as a 'people person' (Relational-Red). While everyone agreed that James's sociability and outgoing nature made the school a friendlier place overall, some staff commented that James sometimes came across as being overly intrusive.

> On reflection, the leadership team agreed with all comments put forward and appreciated the better understanding of the strengths that they brought to the team, as well as how they might have been unintentionally sending the wrong signals at times – with Greg and Lisa clashing due to differing personality types, and James and Nadine also feeling the strain of conflicting personality styles. Now previous points of contention were more easily navigated, and the team reached a new level of trust and respect for each other's differences.

Resolving Personality Clashes

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.
– Nelson Mandela

Thankfully once you understand the basics of the colour type preferences and the likely clashes that might occur as a result of group members' colours, individual clashes can be resolved just as quickly as they started (see diagram on next page). First, identify the traits from your own colour, which when displayed in their extreme, may antagonise those of a different colour preference. Then, increase the colour-based behaviours that you know your peers appreciate. Second, match your communication to the colour style of the person you are communicating with.

Acceptable Behaviour

Blue:	Green:	Yellow:	Red:
• More spontaneous	• More Flexible	• More organisation	• More assertive
• More harmonizing	• More Open minded	• More decision making	• More decisive
• More empathic	• More Relaxed	• More prioritising	• More stop & think

Subjective

•••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••• The Line ••••••••••••••••••••••••••••••

Subjective

Blue:	Green:	Yellow:	Red:
• Less direct	• Less rigid	• Less talking	• Less emotional
• Less analytical	• Less closed minded	• Less distractions	• Less personalising
• Less critical	• Less stressed	• Less procrastination	• Less overthinking

Unacceptable Behaviour

Resolving Clashes: Step 1. Reduce Your 'Below' & Increase Your 'Above'
Step 2. Match Your Communication To Enable Their Color

Beyond One-on-Ones: Effective Communication in Groups

Now that we've covered one-on-one communication, there is an obvious question hanging in the air: "*Okay, but what about staff meetings? ... How do I make sure that everyone's communication needs are being met?*"

While C.A.R.D. is the acronym we use for the 4 workplace personality types, when it comes to ordering the content of your communication in group situations A.C.D.R. is the sequence most likely to maximise effectiveness. This sequencing is based on respecting the different needs and tolerances for communication of each profile type (see table on Page 79).

Recommended Sequence of Messaging Based on Communication Tolerance:
What before Why, then How before Who

Type	Colour	Focus	Communication Tolerance	Approach
Action	**Blue**	What	Very Low	*Emphasis on right now / immediate practical actions*
Concept	Yellow	Why	Low	Emphasis on linking actions to big picture / creative / future focused ideas
Detail	Green	How	Moderate	Emphasis on specifics / detailed steps needed for actions
Relational	**Red**	Who	High	Emphasis on people, support and interactions needed for actions

Action people or 'Blues' have the shortest communication tolerance – all they care about is 'What'– so if you don't want to lose them, start with What! If you can describe what action needs to happen simply and quickly then you will get past the short attention span of the blues – getting them on board and prepared to listen a little longer.

Next are the 'Yellows' or Concept team members who, before their creative mind wanders onto other things, provide a clear and explicit conceptual link to 'Why' the action is needed to achieve the bigger purpose.

Then comes the Detail orientated 'Greens' who like to unpack and think through the specific details and need to understand the 'How' – the measurable specific steps needed to complete the action.

Finally comes the Relational 'Reds' who are good at having long conversations and need to understand the 'Who' of team connections, support processes and personal benefits in completing the action.

Verbal Communication to Groups

Below is a real-life example of a Principal from a regional high school giving an all staff verbal briefing on student behaviour:

> *"We need to be more consistent in enforcing classroom behaviour policy* ('What' – Blue) *to maximise every student's success in every lesson* ('Why' – Yellow). *By explicitly referring to the classroom behaviour standards on the poster at the front of the classroom at the start of each lesson, and then following protocols when breaches occur* ('How' – Green)*, every teacher can be confident we are increasing positive behaviour and improving the wellbeing of both our students and staff* ('Who' – Red).

Email Communication to Groups

Emails to groups of staff are the other area where communicating in all four colours is essential. A good way to get it right is to follow a simple recipe:

- 1st Sentence: *We need to do* (What) *... in order to achieve* (Why) *...*
- 2nd Sentence: *By taking these steps* (How) *... we are able to help* (Who) *...*

Have a look at the example below about how to construct a simple email invitation to a staff professional development workshop:

> *"Hi Everyone,*
>
> *Just a quick reminder about our HPT workshop next week* (What – Blue) *which is part of the wider High Performance Teams program we've all committed to* (Why – Yellow). *This session will focus on leveraging team diversity and will be held in training room 4.2, 8.30am - 4.00pm (agenda attached)* (How – Green) *and I'm really looking forward to seeing everyone and having a great day of learning together!* (Who – Red)*"*

Part 2. Body Language for a Healthy Status Dynamic

*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget
what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.
– Maya Angelou*

Let's be honest, leading others in a school setting can be a very
complicated and, at times, risky business. Not only do you need to get
to know others deeply enough to understand their own needs, wants,
and communication styles at work (so that you can engage effectively
with them), you also have to face the reality that you have very little
control over whether or not the other person is accurately receiving
the messages you are trying to communicate. Or worse yet, they may
be interpreting your attempts at communication completely opposite
to the message that you intended – Yikes!
Good school leaders have high levels of self-awareness of their own
personality characteristics and status preference which underpin
their approach to leadership. They also take the time to help staff
UNDERSTAND and adapt to their leadership style. Extraordinary
school leaders are not only self-aware BUT also have advanced
communication skills that enable them to flexibility adapt their
leadership style to MATCH the personality types and status preferences
of their staff (true servant leadership) – in both individual and group
conversations.

To effectively communicate and build powerful connections with
others, it's crucial to adjust your communication style (i.e., the process)
to address the status preference and personality types in your target
audience. In fact, this is even more important than the words (i.e.,
content) coming out of your mouth.

In a famous 1960s experiment (that has been replicated time and time
again) on communication effectiveness, Albert Mehrabian found that
a mere 7% of your effectiveness is based on 'what' you say (the content)
and that a staggering 93% of your effectiveness is based on 'how' you
say it (the process).

Effective Communication

Content 7%	Process 93%

Process Factors

Body Language 55%	Speech 38%
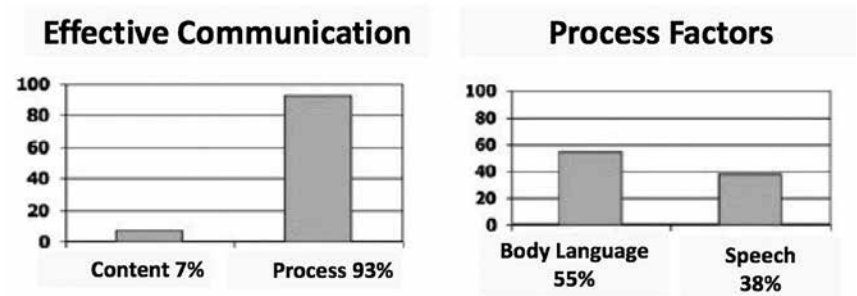
Knowing this, school leaders like Greg who are seeking to build powerful relationships that connect, inspire and motivate need to fully understand and master the 'process' of communication through 'matching' to suit the needs of their staff. To master the process of communication, Greg needed to understand both body language and speech. Body language is important in communication because the way we behave in communicating gives a 'presence' or 'vibe' to our message.

For example, we can come across as either 'caring' or 'commanding', 'weak' or 'strong', with these impressions determining our status, and so the other person's willingness to listen. Different people want different 'status' messages from us depending upon their preferences, so we need to adjust our status dynamic by changing our body language to suit the audience's needs.

While Mehrabian's work focused on how you adjust your speech in terms of volume, tone and speed, speech is not just about these variables. It is also about context, and the need to purposefully use language and phrases that appeal to the various different personality types in the room as you deliver the content of your message. Being able to match your speech (language and phrases) to appeal to the personality type(s) of those you are speaking to fast-tracks their ability to connect with you and hear your message.

Dynamic Delivery: Status Unpacked

Wherever there are two or more people communicating, there is a relationship. Wherever there is a relationship there is a status dynamic at play where people adopt "higher" or "lower" status positions depending upon the circumstances.

As you can see in the diagram, people who are effective "high-status" communicators are often seen as carrying a sense of confidence in themselves and their capacity to make the right decisions. However, if people are high status and ineffective communicators they can be seen as arrogant or unsympathetic. Effective "low status" communicators are seen as actively committed to assisting in the interests of others. However, if people are low status and ineffective, they can come across as inferior or a pushover.
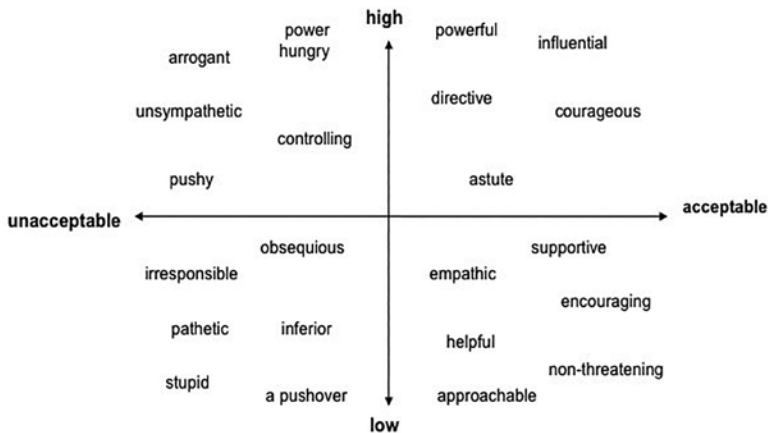
The Status Dynamic for School Leaders

Great people are those who make others feel that they, too,
can become great.
– Mark Twain

In healthy relationships, different people adopt high status and low status positions as is appropriate. For example, when a Principal is required to determine the outcome of a situation, they must adopt a higher status. They must carry that sense of confidence in themselves and their capacity to make the right decisions. However, when a Principal gets stuck in this mode, they run the risk of being seen as inaccessible, uncaring or arrogant. This is unhelpful when others require support, empathy or encouragement to demonstrate the value they bring to the school.

Just as with high status, there are times when using a lower status encourages confidence and a sense of power in others. When a Principal adopts a lower status, they become more accessible, supportive, and humble. They can effectively communicate that they are genuinely committed to serving the interests of another, yet to get stuck in a low status mode is to run the risk of being perceived as weak-minded, incapable and inferior. Clearly, the ideal is to have flexibility, using both high and low status as is appropriate to the circumstances.

As with personality types, people generally have a default status position where they feel more comfortable or safe – which is either primarily high or low status. However, despite all of us having a default we are not all aware of what it is, often inadvertently causing problems in communication. Some people resist holding status for fear of appearing to be arrogant or a 'tall poppy'. Some resist dropping to a lower status because they don't want to be perceived to be unimportant or inferior. However, people who are comfortable in themselves and highly self-aware fear neither high nor low status – there is no good or bad in either status per se, only appropriate and inappropriate depending on the context of the situation.

School Leadership Pro Tips:
The Status Dynamic In Public Speaking

To ensure that you are meeting the status needs of all group members in a public speaking situation such as a staff meeting, shift your status in line with the diagram below as your presentation unfolds. Start off strong with a mid-high status, and then ebb and flow between high and low status as you make key points throughout your presentation to maintain group interest. When rounding out your presentation finish on a high status note followed quickly by low status in thanking the group.
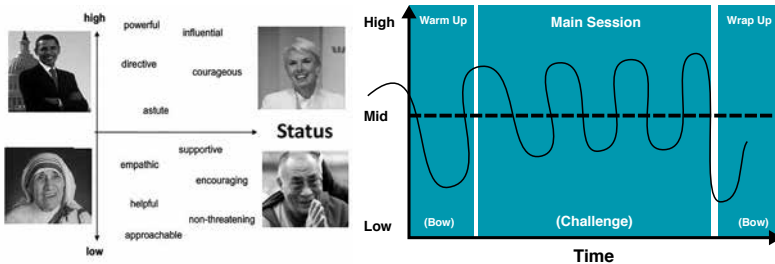
Mastering the Status Dynamic in the Blink of an Eye

Eye contact is one of the most important aspects of body language to consider – after all, as the saying goes, 'the eyes are a window to the soul'. Did you ever wonder why it's so hard to have a conversation with someone who avoids your eyes? People who maintain appropriate eye contact are usually perceived as more reliable, warm, sociable, honest, confident, and active, regardless of their underlying personality or social skills. If you're shy, it's quite possible you don't make any eye contact at all. Even though you might be listening intently to the person speaking, you appear to be distracted, bored, or weak (or all of the above!).

If you're the one doing the speaking and avoiding eye contact with the audience, then you likely look bored and disinterested and, no matter how great your speech is, the audience may not genuinely engage with you. Not making eye contact in a one-on-one conversation inadvertently suggests that you are trying to hide something or lying. However, 'staring' – looking very intently at somebody or continually locking eyes with the other person when you are speaking – is also to be avoided and can be very intimidating. A conversation shouldn't turn into a staring contest. When using eye contact properly, you avoid staring but still display interest and confidence.

The simplest way to do this is to use the 50/70 rule. This means: when speaking, maintain eye contact for 50% of the time; when listening, maintain it for 70% of the time. The second important guideline to follow is when you do make eye contact, maintain it for three seconds, slowly glance to the side, and then look back again. This will break the illusion of staring. Remember to move your eyes slowly, and always to the side. If your eyes dart away quickly it makes you look shy or nervous. Another eye contact tip for people who are shy or uncomfortable when speaking is to look at the other person's mouth rather than directly at their eyes, as this isn't quite as intimidating, but you still look like you are giving direct eye contact to the person you are speaking to.

Status and Eye Line – Looking Up or Down?

Beyond how long you make eye contact with people is your 'eye line' – the direction of your eye contact. Specifically, looking horizontally towards others sends a neutral (middle status) message, while looking up toward others shows respect (low status), and looking down at others shows dominance (high status).

EYE CONTACT: LINE OF SIGHT

EMPATHY
NEUTRAL
DOMINANCE
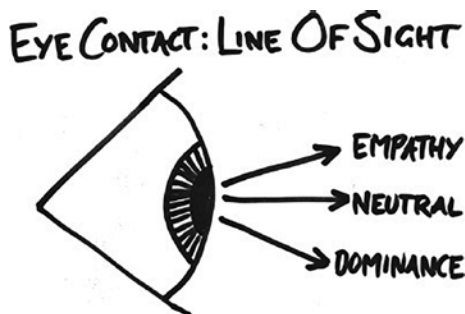
School Leadership Pro Tips:
Eye Line: Lead with the Chin

The old saying 'lead with the chin' comes from boxing, where to put your chin out was to show boldness and confidence. The chin is also used in phrases such as 'put your chin up', spoken to people who may look unhappy or sad. How you position your chin towards whomever you are facing is a simple way to get your body language right!

By purposefully moving your chin up or down you will make your body and eyes shift automatically towards your desired message (i.e., one of confidence and dominance or one of respect and empathy). In order to adjust your eye contact and 'line of sight' to match the message you are trying to send, simply move your chin down and your body and eyes will move towards a more respectful/empathic position or raise your chin up and your body and eyes will adjust into a more confident and dominant position.

Body Language: Pause & Reflect

Like Greg, I'm sure that all of us have at one time or another inadvertently sent the wrong message or given off the wrong vibe to others and failed to realise. Whether we come across too weakly or too strongly is not just our listener's perception but also something we can influence and control by using our body language and speech more consciously and effectively. Have you mastered the use of 'eye line' to allow you to adopt a flexible approach to communication, showing your audience who you genuinely are in both your strength and confidence as well as your commitment and humility?

Redemption as Greg Finds His Groove – After deep reflection on the disaster that was his Term 1 opening speech, Greg committed to

doing the work to get to know the style that his staff needed AND to change his style to match. Greg's presentation style for public speaking changed from high status, catering to only one personality style, to accommodating all 4 styles and flexibly shifting the status dynamic, seamlessly moving between High and Low status as appropriate. In a matter of weeks, the positive comments were flowing and by the end of his welcome back speech in Term 2 he received a round of applause from a much more connected, inspired and motivated team of staff!

Discipline 3: Bringing It All Together

Good school leaders believe in equality – ensuring everyone is treated similarly and afforded equal opportunity. Extraordinary school leaders go above and beyond this to maximise inclusion. To do this they need to deeply understand each person's goals, aspirations, personality type and work interests, and build working relationships which help their staff feel included and supported to be the best they can be.

This focus on understanding the whole person and matching communication and opportunity to individual needs is more powerful than simply providing equal opportunity. After all, not everyone 'equally' needs or wants additional training or leadership promotional opportunities. Also, the desire to be 'progressive' in your career vs 'stable' in your career fluctuates from person to person, but also within each person over their lifespan. Because of this, extraordinary school leaders are constantly looking to provide 'matched' opportunities to each individual which reinforces their personal sense of inclusion and belonging. Such leaders are also highly self-aware as they regularly reflect on their own leadership practices and how they may impact positively or negatively on those around them and on how to adjust their leadership style and manage the status dynamic.

DISCIPLINE 3
Matching Communication To Leverage Diversity

Activity: What's Your Number & What's Next?

Select the number which best reflects your current leadership capability and note some next steps for your leadership journey.

Extraordinary/ Leadership	**10.** **9.** **8.**	Do you create a sense of belonging among your staff by *matching communication styles* to connect with various workplace personality styles and then turn this sense of belonging into a desire to excel by *managing the status dynamic* within each relationship?
Good Leadership	**7.** **6.** **5.**	Do you educate others about your personality style and give others time to adjust to you while you consistently repeat your long established leadership behaviours equally and fairly across the organisation?
Poor Leadership	**4.** **3.** **2.** **1.**	Do you believe your personality style and approach to communication is the only right way and expect others to change, creating in and out groups among staff pending their adjustment?

My Current Number Is:_____

My Next Steps Are:_____
_____
_____
_____

 Watch: 'HPTLevelUp' Channel: 5 Disciplines/ Discipline 3

Work/Life & Wellbeing

DISCIPLINE 4

'Going First' Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness

"The core behaviours of a high performance school culture could be summed up in three words: 'learning', 'disclosing' and 'supporting'. These are the underlying drivers of effective wellbeing and learning strategies."

– Samantha Donovan, Principal, Norfolk Village State School

"The emerging challenge on the horizon, if not already with us, is staff wellbeing. The altruistic motivations that many educators are driven by means we are at risk of overly harsh self-criticism, excessive self-expectations and prone to unhelpful rescuing behaviour – often to our own detriment."

– Tania Angus, Principal,
Newtown State School

"I believe high performance is maximised when all members of staff feel known and understood. It is important to encourage the sharing of problems and failure as much as success. Listening is about understanding their story, and then finding ways they can develop so they can go to places they couldn't have gone by themselves."

– Anthony Lucey, Principal,
St Williams Catholic School

Work/Life & Wellbeing

Sharing Relatable Challenges Builds Trust

The 'Why' II

Open & Honest Wellbeing Conversations

DISCIPLINE 4:

'Going First' Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness

There will be no more 'them and us', only 'us', sharing struggles and challenges as part of being human.
– Laurie Davidson

Extraordinary school leaders 'Go First' in leading wellbeing check-ins by appropriately disclosing their own challenges and seeking ideas from others so that 'help seeking' becomes a natural part of conversation rather than an awkward one-off request. They also maximise their relationship fitness by practising the discipline of continuous team building.

Part 1. Moments From Disaster: The Conversation That Almost Didn't Happen

Melissa was a brilliant teacher – she was highly empathetic, very bright, and a skilled operator in the classroom – but she was also exhausted, burnt out and about to quit. Melissa's team leader, Kate, was an amazing Deputy Principal – compassionate, caring, insightful and dedicated to supporting her staff; she was also a fitness fanatic and incredibly self-disciplined and goal orientated, always encouraging others to do the same. Kate was always checking in on her team and enquiring about their wellbeing and offering help and support when needed.

Kate was the perfect Deputy Principal to have supporting the teaching staff – except for one thing – in all her compassion, empathy, self-discipline, professionalism and supportive behaviour she was just 'too good' and staff spent more time 'admiring' her than 'relating' to her. And whilst this mutually positive recognition helped motivate Kate to even greater levels of professional excellence, it also accidentally created a 'wedge' of gradually widening distance between her and her most vulnerable staff. The Principal of the school explains the impact of the problem …

"I remember at the end of one particularly challenging school day walking past the staff room well after everyone should have left and seeing Melissa at her desk, hands in her hair, quietly sobbing. I wasn't sure what to do but couldn't just leave the situation alone nor surprise her unexpectedly, so I paused in the corridor for a moment and then knocked on her door – waiting for her to speak first before I entered the room.

"Hey Melissa, I was locking up the office and saw you were still here … I don't know about you but today has been a shocker of a day for me. Are you going OK?"

"Well yes … sort of … well … actually, no if I'm honest I'm not OK at all. I don't think I can do this anymore. I think I need to give up teaching. Quit the profession."

"Gee, I'm sorry to hear that and really sorry you're not doing so well. I wasn't aware. Have you been able to talk to Kate? Has she been able to help?"

Melissa looked down at the floor and paused for a moment … "No, I haven't told Kate. I know she's always asking and offering help and I think she's wonderful, but honestly I feel ashamed to even bring it up with her."

"Okay …" (long pause).

"You see, Kate is just such an amazing person. I bet she's never struggled like me. I feel so stupid bringing things up with her. She works twice as

hard as I do and never complains. I just wish I was more like her. I feel so silly not being able to sort myself out. It must sound so trivial to other people. I just need to harden up, put on a brave face and 'fake it 'til I make it.' No one likes a whinger. I need to kick my own backside into gear again … Except I can't – I just can't – who am I kidding? I am flat out exhausted. I don't understand how to move forward despite how hard I have tried. I'm completely spent! I've got nothing left in the tank. Everyone else seems to be going just fine. I have come to the conclusion it must just be me. I'm hopeless and I need to stop teaching and do something else with my life."

We talked for another hour – mainly sharing disaster stories and I shared some of my own darkest hours and journey back from burnout several years ago. This seemed to be immensely helpful to Melissa as I could see her mood lifting and a calmness descending over her previously nervous and shaky body.

As I look back now it seems as though Kate (whom I also greatly admire and respect) in all her awesomeness had accidentally created a 'blind-spot' in her otherwise amazing leadership toolkit by over-sharing her successes and under-sharing her struggles. I came to realise in that powerful moment just how important it is for leaders to share their own experiences with staff – BOTH their aspirations and achievements AND their struggles and challenges.

Fortunately, when I shared my encounter with Melissa to Kate as part of her professional feedback and development planning, she quickly grasped the nuances of the problem that was created. Importantly Kate understood that I was not criticising her successes (making clear my ongoing admiration of her personal success) but rather seeking to simply adjust her leadership style to share more about the process of overcoming the barriers she experienced in her motivation to succeed with less focus on the eventual achievement. Over time Kate became more relatable in the eyes of her staff and they came to feel connected and safer to disclose when they were struggling. Importantly this did not in any way disrupt Kate's own goals, motivation and desire to succeed – a successful win-win for Kate and the staff she led!

What happened for Melissa and Kate made so much sense to me as a workplace psychologist. It shows how well-intentioned, humble, caring, and professional leaders can accidentally create a gap between themselves and other staff who may be struggling with stress and wellbeing problems.

Kate needed to think about (and ask) what help Melissa could offer her about her own wellbeing and motivation challenges as much as she thought about (and asked) what help she could offer Melissa.

When someone who feels inadequate is able to offer help to those they otherwise think are superior, they lift themselves out of the pit and begin to believe that they too are capable of more. This process is often referred to as a 'corrective emotional experience' and occurs when you experience something first-hand that challenges a previously held, and false or distorted belief (i.e., Melissa's belief that Kate was super-human and not having any struggles or needing any help).

For Kate (a deeply compassionate and caring person anyway) this meant she was able to more regularly share some of her own motivational stumbling blocks, and to regularly ask her team for advice. This mirrored the very process she wanted her team to do with her, making it much more likely they would ask her for assistance in the future.

In philosophical terms this is known as *'the service of being served'* remembering that service is not just 'Giving' assistance to others but also 'Seeking' their guidance – something many leaders accidentally overlook in their quest to be helpful and supportive. In practical terms, this is known as the "Go First" rule – be the change you wish to see in others.

The 'Go First' Rule

During my training as a Clinical Psychologist I was deeply immersed in therapy and recovery concepts such as the need to provide 'corrective emotional experiences' (i.e., role modelling help seeking behaviour). However, I did not understand how practical and simple this concept was applied to everyday life until I stumbled upon the 'Go First' rule in Tim Ferriss' book 'Tool of Titans' where he interviewed Gabby Reece and Laird Hamilton, a celebrity couple both famous for their elite sporting achievements. Gabby shared how her rule of Going First is helpful in their family and professional lives – going first by saying hello, saying sorry, asking for help, etc. breaks the ice in a world where most people opt out or avoid the risks of deeper communication. Since reading this I have been a big fan of the 'Go First' rule in my own life!

In my work with school leaders I often encounter stressed out staff failing to seek help despite help being offered. In the vast majority of cases their leaders are caring professionals willing and wanting to support their staff but the emotional distance between them is just too great – something easily overcome by understanding the rule of 'Go First' – creating a level playing field by practising the discipline of routinely 'help seeking' and seeking advice from others about their own wellbeing challenges.

'Going First' for School Leaders: 1:1 Conversations

Once you get the hang of it, applying the 'Go First' principle to wellbeing conversations becomes easier than you might think. As a first step, start your conversations with phrases like: *Can I get your advice on ...? I wanted to ask you if you had any tips on ...? Sometimes I get a*

bit stuck with ... What would you suggest …? What do you do when X happens …? How do you handle X situation …? What works for you …? Over time, these simple conversation starters will build up the mutual respect and confidence with your staff before you then enquire about their wellbeing needs.

This approach pays off immediately in terms of goodwill but also down the track – increasing the likelihood they will be comfortable asking for your help on wellbeing issues when they need it AND also opening the door for other conversations that could be potentially difficult such as performance feedback and improvement discussions.

'Going First' In Leading Wellbeing: Pause & Reflect

As a leader, do you 'Go First' – role modelling 'help seeking' behaviour not just in wellbeing conversations but also in relationship building, seeking feedback and other sensitive communication topics? Do you recognise that role modelling the action of 'seeking help' is far more critical for building a wellbeing culture than simply asking 'how are you going?' Do you share as many failings as you do successes? Do you seek ideas and advice yourself from others about work/life issues before you offer suggestions to them? Do you ensure wellbeing conversational strategies are woven into almost every staff conversation you have?

Remember that there is a simple yet large difference between extraordinary school leaders and good school leaders. Good school leaders enquire about the wellbeing of their staff regularly and offer support whenever asked for but this alone does not necessarily guarantee a culture of wellbeing and mutual support will be established. To build the strength of relationships and depth of trust needed for a true culture of wellbeing, an extraordinary leader must not only implement the necessary wellbeing systems and structures but also have the insight, humility and professional will to practise the 'help seeking' discipline of 'Going First!"

Applying the 'Go First' rule is only the beginning element in building a culture of trust, to take things further you can also borrow from some

of the strategies outlined in Part 2 of this chapter and adapt them to 1:1 conversations. Using the *'one-word barometer check-ins'* (*Right now I'm feeling …*) and 'Ice breaker questions' (such as *'my current successes and challenges …', 'the thing I need most help with this week …'*) typically used at the beginning of meetings can easily be adapted into discussions with individual staff – as long as you follow the golden rule of 'Go First' yourself! Read on …

Part 2. Relationship Fitness: The Discipline of Continuous Team Building

> *People change and forget to tell each other.*
> *– Lillian Hellman*

I have a question to ask you that, at first, may seem odd, but nonetheless highlights one of the most important health indicators of a High Performance Team: *What's the Current Level of Relationship Fitness for the teams at your school?*

One of the key differences between the Highest Performance Teaching Teams and every other teaching team is found in their level of Relationship Fitness. Just as physical fitness needs to be maintained through regular exercise (among other things) to ensure peak physical health, and mental fitness needs to be maintained by healthy thinking, problem solving and good sleep to ensure sound psychological health, Relationship Fitness needs to be maintained by sharing who we are (and how we are changing) to ensure optimal team health.

The advantage High Performance Teams derive from focusing on their Relationship Fitness is high levels of team engagement. This is evidenced by high levels of trust between school staff as they provide reciprocal support as well as frank and fearless feedback needed to succeed in achieving their ambitious goals and making a positive difference for the students in their care.

Successful Relationships: Quality vs Quantity

When you stop and think about it, Relationship Fitness is the key to all successful long-term partnerships. Let's take a look at long-term personal relationships such as a marriage as an example. In a marriage, high quality communication evidenced by an understanding of each other's needs, reflecting on past positive memories, and focusing on new and exciting shared goals is a sure-fire recipe for success.

Unhealthy marriages lack these critical success factors with people 'growing apart' despite the fact they see each other every day. There may still be a high 'quantity' of communication going on about transactional day-to-day issues, but the 'quality' of this communication is poor leading to unmet needs and a lack of shared vision for the future. An unhealthy marriage is characterised by low relationship fitness where the saying, *'familiarity breeds contempt'* rings true as people who have known each other for a long-time may fall into the *'close communication bias'* trap (where assumptions are made about individual needs and preferences lowering the quality of communication) much to the detriment of the relationship.

High Performance Teams are not immune to the risks of the close communication bias – especially in teams where people have been working together for a long time. High Performance Teams understand that this unhealthy bias can infect longstanding relationships lowering their relationship fitness and reducing the quality of feedback and support. To risk-proof the quality of team communication and maximise their relationship fitness High Performance Teams prioritise the discipline of Continuous Team Building.

Team Relationships Under the Microscope

1. Low Performance Teams

> *A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything,*
> *and the value of nothing.*
> *– Oscar Wilde*

Consider this unhelpful side comment I overheard as an observer of a school staff meeting recently:

> *"Why are we doing these stupid ice-breaker/warm-up questions at the start of every team meeting - we are an established team, we already know each other so this doesn't apply to us anymore!"*

If you're leading a school with one or more grumpy, jaded or disillusioned staff members then I'm sure that this comment, or a comment similar in nature, may sound very familiar to you. Over the years I have heard this type of comment numerous times from low performance teams – more times than I care to remember. However, I have never heard this comment from the highest performance teams – even when it is obvious some team members are not enjoying the warm-up process as much as others.

You see, staff working in low performance teams believe that relationships, once established, do not change nor do people grow or change in terms of their interests, preferences and needs. This is clearly wrong, yet an assumption far too common in many teams in schools. Teams that complain about the necessity of continuous team building to maintain their relational fitness often do so because they are blinded by their own PAST success, but teams are only as good as their NEXT performance. We need to keep each other up-to-date with our personal challenges, struggles, and victories so that we don't drift apart, and we need to build structures into our daily routine so that when the busyness of school life takes over, our commitment to building trust and developing our relationships with each other never gets bumped from the agenda.

Returning to our fitness analogy, think of any of the world's great sporting teams such as the New York Yankees baseball team. Their players are blessed with talent, but imagine if they were prevented from training or playing a game of baseball for a whole year. Would their performance as a team improve? Of course not – staying on top requires continuous effort. So too, teams that want to stay relationally fit need to work at it.

2. High Performance Teams

We are what we repeatedly do.
– Aristotle

Elite teams have two differentiators from all other teams: (1) long range clarity of purpose and ambitious stretch goals and (2) an 'All In' approach to giving and receiving frank and fearless feedback and a commitment to sharing everything they know. We discussed the first differentiator in *Discipline 1: Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action*. Turning to the second differentiator – sharing information and frank and fearless feedback – there are a number of critical success factors to consider, but at the most basic level it's about commitment to the discipline of continuous team building.

HPT Levels & Outcomes: Achievement & Engagement

HPT Level	Value* (Focus)	🏆 Achievement Outcomes	Confidence (Driver)	💚 Engagement Outcomes
Level 5 HPT Elite Teams	10x (Leverage)	**Clarity of Vision:** Long range with total clarity . **Goals & Targets:** Exceed team stretch goals & targets	100% (Legacy)	**Vulnerability & Trust:** Very High All - In Feedback, Zero Ego **Succession & Sharing:** Future Proof 3+:1 Team/ Org/ Indsty
Level 4 HPT Adv. Teams	5x (Strategic)	**Clarity of Vision:** Medium range with total clarity **Goals & Targets:** Achieve team stretch goals & targets	90% (Growth)	**Vulnerability & Trust:** High - Growth & Challenge Fdbk **Succession & Sharing:** 2+:1 Team/ Org Succession
Level 3 High Performance Teams	2x (Collaborative)	**Clarity of Vision:** Short range with total clarity **Goals & Targets:** Achieve all team goals & targets	75% (Understanding)	**Vulnerability & Trust:** Mod/ High – Want Regular Feedback **Succession & Sharing:** 1:1 Team Level - 2ICs Team Cross Skilling
Level 2 Functional Teams	1x (Constructive)	**Clarity of Vision:** Short range with partial clarity **Goals & Targets:** Partially Achieve team goals & targets	50% (Acceptance)	**Vulnerability & Trust:** Low – compliance level feedback **Succession & Sharing:** Team level sharing - no succession
Level 1 Dysfunctional Teams	-2x (Destructive)	**Clarity of Vision:** No Clarity at Team Level **Goals & Targets:** No team achievement (individual focus)	0% (Distrust)	**Vulnerability& Trust:** None – avoidance/ blame **Succession & Sharing:** None – Info withholding for power

Continuous Team Building: Hard Wiring Warm-Ups into Meetings

The discipline of continuous team building involves scheduling regular time when the team is together to get to know each other better. During a regular business-as-usual school day (extremely time poor) the simplest, safest, most time efficient, and powerful way that we have seen teams ensure that they stick to the disciplines of continuous team building is engaging in conversation starters (icebreakers) and the one word barometer in every single team meeting as a 'Warm-Up'.

Item 1 *Inclusion 1*	Welcome • Organisation Mission & Values Share; • Specific Team Role & Accountability; • Meeting Team Purpose & Outcomes; • Moderator Cards & Ground Rules	Chair	2 mins
Item 2 *Support 1*	Warm-Up One word barometer; Ice-breaker and/or Success & Challenge	All	3 mins

1. Ice Breakers: More than Meets the Eye

'Ice-breakers' are simple questions that team members answer one-by-one that allow the group to get to know each other a little better (e.g., my favourite childhood movie is …). Lower trust ice breaker questions get staff into the habit of sharing personal (albeit safe) information with each other and high trust ice breaker questions can provoke deeper disclosure and discussion outside of a meeting (take a look at the various types of icebreaker questions on the next page).

The trick with ice breakers is to start with low trust questions, increasing the trust level based on the group's trust tolerance. It's also important for very high trust teams to be mindful that they may need to lower the level of their ice breaker question when welcoming new members as the trust dynamic changes.

Category 1 - Icebreakers (Low Trust)	Category 2 - Icebreakers (Mod Trust)	Category 3 - Icebreakers (High Trust)
• As a child, my favorite game was. • My favorite movie of all time is. • Today, I have the most fun when. • I will eat anything put in front of me except. • I can explain my life as an animal & that animal is.	• What could you stop doing now to improve your growth & well-being. • If, by magic, you could change one thing in your life, what would it be? • What keeps you up at night –business, personal or family related? • My most prized possession is & why. • If I could throw caution to the wind and really take a risk, I would.	• The most important decision in my life was/is • If I suddenly found out that I had 24 hours to live, I would spend them • What has been the most difficult period in your life? • What is your most treasured memory? • What would you like your legacy to be? • Describe your greatest success & greatest failure.

The Power of Ice Breakers: Building a 'Helping' Culture at Palm Valley SHS

Ice-breakers are far more powerful change agents for team transformation than most people realise. Palm Valley SHS took a novel approach to using ice breaker questions in their team meetings. For an entire term the only ice breaker question they asked was: "The thing I need most help with this week is …"

Here's what the Principal had to say about the transformative experience …

"By the end of the term I was absolutely dumbfounded. In all my years of working as a Principal, getting staff to ask and answer this simple icebreaker question has been the most powerful strategy that I've seen in changing my school's culture. I think the key was in the repetition … My staff are all basically good people, and the act of everyone articulating what they needed help with during the meetings set in motion a chain of events where a lot more helping was going on afterwards. When staff realised that they would get help when they asked for it, they began to ask for a lot more help even outside of meetings … then about half way through the term

something magical happened, as well as an increase in help seeking behaviour, staff started to go out of their way to find ways that they could proactively help each other… our school now feels like a kinder place than it did one term ago."

2. Successes & Challenges: Hard Coding the 'Go First' Rule into School Meetings

Most teams in schools go to great lengths to build up a positive atmosphere. During a meeting this is commonly done by sharing weekly successes at the outset of the meeting – a highly recommended practice that gets the good vibes flowing. However, we also know that oversharing positives can create a disconnect between staff who are shining and those who are struggling. We know that it is crucial to share our vulnerabilities in order to build trust and empathy within teams (especially for team leaders). Because of this we recommend that all staff comment on their biggest challenge in addition to their biggest success at the outset of a meeting – and Leaders, remember to 'Go First'!

3. One Word Barometer: Taking the Temperature of the Staff Room

As with 'Ice-breakers', the 'One Word Barometer' is spoken one-by-one around the group. It is simply the one word that describes how you are feeling right now in the current moment (e.g., excited, nervous, distracted, hungry), and helps everyone to put their teammates in context at the start of a meeting. If one of our peers articulates that they are distracted from the outset of the meeting, we are less likely to be offended later on if they appear distracted.

As you're no doubt beginning to realise, the Warm-Up is extremely simple – even the most introverted of team members can answer basic questions about themselves. It's also very safe – each team member needs to share something about themselves, but they get to decide what that something is.

Each of these factors (barometer, icebreaker, success and challenge) give the Warm-Up tremendous power as a tool for team building. Without fail, the 3-minute Warm-Up always leads to deeper 'water cooler conversations' outside of the team meeting leading to richer team relationships.

Your Team's Comfort Zone: Low, Medium and High Trust?

> *You can't place a square peg in a round hole.*
> *– English Idiom*

When Team Building Goes Bad (and How to Get it Right the First Time)

While High Performance Teams are strong proponents of continuous team building, there is a very good reason that team building is criticised and held in contempt by lower performance teams – it's too often done wrong. We've all seen the classic comedy skits where the team is in the middle of the notorious (and highly risky) team building activity *the trust fall*, only to drop the first person who is brave enough to jump. Back in real life, while thankfully many teams haven't had the physical 'trust fall' experience they have unfortunately had an emotional one – when the team engages in a team building activity that requires high vulnerability and disclosure only to fail to catch the emotions of the first person brave enough to volunteer, leaving them exposed in an emotional heap.

It doesn't have to be like this. When it comes to getting to know others in a group setting there is an enormous range of activities you can choose from. The most important thing to remember is to MATCH the activity with the team's current level of trust (and if in doubt start low before moving higher).

Getting To Know Others – Team Building Quickstart

1. Low Trust (5-7min*)	2. Mod Trust (7-15min*)	3. High Trust (15-30min*)
• Ice Breakers - Level 1 & 2 • Who Am I? • Photo Share • Dream Destinations	• (Addtional to List 1) • Ice Breakers Level 3 • Life Line (Career) • Team Profiling • Bucket Lists	• (Additional to 1 & 2) • Life Line (Personal or Combined) • Letter to Younger/ Older Self • Dreams & Regrets • Life Strategy Map

* Team Size = 5-6 (Adjust Time Proportionally For Larger Teams)

The Table above shows some very simple group-based team building activities that can be done almost anywhere with minimal materials and minimal time input. We tend to stick with these in our work as consultants as most teams we work with are time poor and want to use strategies without further training or facilitation once learned.

Relationship Fitness Junkies: Tricks for Time Poor Schools

When it comes to becoming 'Relationship Fit,' High Performance Teams might seem like they are true gym junkies – spending a lot of time team building. In actual fact, they are 'time poor' when it comes to team building given all their other ambitious work goals. However, they are extremely wise in finding efficient ways to keep focused and engaged in continuous team building activities. They do this because they understand the following core truths about working together:

- Just like in marriages, people in teams change and forget to tell each other.
- When you're stuck, reaching out for help is hard because avoidance is the default option (distrust is unconscious whereas trust is a conscious act).
- Trust is a natural response to feeling connected and cared for – having someone share their own vulnerabilities and also seek to understand you better.
- Trust is the foundation of High Team Performance.

High Performance Teams also know that getting fit (and staying fit) can sometimes feel like hard work. Few people like to get up at 5am to train … if given the option, most people will sleep in. High Performance Teams know that when people are tired and stressed at work it's easy to stop doing the things that are good for them like taking the time to build higher trust relationships. Because of this, High Performance Teams know they have to make doing the right thing easy.

High Performance Teams set up structures and systems to do the hard work for them. They lay out their exercise gear and running shoes the night before – they hard-wire the short 3 minute 'Warm-Up' of barometers and icebreakers into every team meeting (participating openly and honestly no matter how they feel at the time) and then expand on these discussions amidst the business-as-usual post meeting conversations to further strengthen working relationships.

Relationship Fitness: Pause & Reflect

High Performance Teams achieve extraordinary results because they have 'super fit relationships' as a result of a deep commitment to the discipline of continuous team building. Continuous team building lays the foundation for high levels of team engagement and trust – the basic (and necessary) conditions for frank and fearless feedback – needed to pursue their extraordinary vision and achieve their ambitious stretch goals.

The level of relationship fitness of any team can be easily established by reflecting on the following questions: Do you include short warm ups at the start of EVERY team meeting? Are your ice breaker questions matched to the current level of trust AND designed to push the comfort zone and increase openness and sharing? Do you follow up on Warm Up information as part of business as usual conversations between meetings? And do you periodically extend team building time to explore and deepen the effectiveness of working relationships?

Discipline 4: Bringing It All Together

An extraordinary school leader not only implements the necessary wellbeing systems and structures but ALSO has the insight, humility, and professional will to practise the 'help seeking' discipline of 'Go First!"

Good school leaders promote a culture of wellbeing by practising what they preach – they role model wellbeing and actively enquire about the wellbeing of others. Extraordinary school leaders go one step further by being appropriately vulnerable – they 'Go First'! They know that role modelling 'help seeking' is the key to success and that sharing their struggles and journey towards enhanced wellbeing is more important than sharing their mastery of wellbeing per se.

What about Overcoming vs Overconfident? The reality is *'Nobody likes a show off'* – and we're quick to judge those who appear to be over-confident – even when their intentions are noble. The difference between sharing 'mastery' or sharing 'struggle' is enormous! Generally, people feel a sense of connection and increased motivation when they have empathy from others who have faced similar struggles and feel isolated and alone when they cannot emotionally relate to others who give the outward impression of 'having it all together.'

Extraordinary school leaders avoid the trap of appearing 'Overconfident' by practising the discipline of vulnerability in sharing the struggles they are 'Overcoming' and seeking advice and suggestions from others. They 'Go First' role modelling 'help seeking' behaviour to normalise peer support and create a true culture of Wellbeing AND they Go First in practising the discipline of Continuous Team Building within their own team and across all the teams within their school.

DISCIPLINE 4
'Going First' Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness

Activity: What's Your Number & What's Next?

Select the number which best reflects your current leadership capability and note some next steps for your leadership journey.

Extraordinary/ Leadership	10. 9. 8.	Do you as a leader, 'Go First' leading by example appropriately disclosing your own challenges and seek ideas from others to promote a sustainable culture of wellbeing, as well as 'go first' in developing *relationship fitness* by practising the discipline of continuous team building?
Good Leadership	7. 6. 5.	Do you promote wellbeing by simply enquiring about other's wellbeing and offering help when asked, and leave team building and getting to know each other activities to individual preferences and informal opportunities?
Poor Leadership	4. 3. 2. 1.	Do you ignore the personal needs and wellbeing of others, actively discourage team building and get to know you activities during work time whilst over focusing on compliance with rules and procedures?

My Current Number Is:_____

My Next Steps Are:_____
_____
_____
_____

You **Tube** **Watch: 'HPTLevelUp' Channel: 5 Disciplines/ Discipline 4**

Leading
'In The Zone'

DISCIPLINE 5

Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance

"Advisory Relationships are the next step in the evolution of coaching. Supporting school leaders in an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving landscape requires more than just coaching questions. Explicit direction and instruction is needed on different issues at different times. An Advisory Relationship enables me to vary the mix of managing, mentoring and coaching to best suit the needs of the individual."

– Nick Burnett, Former Principal, Educational Leadership Advisor

"There are three approaches that school leaders use to have purposeful conversations with their teams: Manager, Mentor, and Coach. Leaders need to 'match' their leadership approach to the current level of team performance. Too many leaders believe that 'coaching' is the answer for everything and that 'management' is a bad word but this is just not true."

– Judi Newman, Former Principal, Director, Neuroleadership Academy

"Leadership is about understanding the staff, students and community then applying a differentiated approach to working with them. When it comes to building leadership capability with my middle leaders, I take a flexible advisory approach. If they are a new Head of Department (HOD), it's about supportively managing and directing them. If they are an experienced HOD, it's about coaching them to bring about new insights and pathways for growth."

– Ray Clarke, Principal, Emerald State High School

Frustrated & Confused? = Managing	Capable But Uncertain? = Mentoring	Knowledgeable But Hesitant? = Coaching

Leading 'In The Zone'

The Right Approach = Maximum Growth

DISCIPLINE 5:

Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.
– John F. Kennedy

A good objective of leadership is to help those who are doing poorly to do well and to help those who are doing well to do even better.
– Jim Rohn

Extraordinary school Leaders lead 'In The Zone' – building *Advisory Relationships* that flexibly draw from three Leadership Approaches (Managing, Mentoring & Coaching) in order to *Right Size* their leadership to maximise staff performance while keeping the wider school's goals and objectives the main priority.

Part 1. Building Advisory Relationships: Leading 'In The Zone'

The Disaster Unfolds

If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.
– Abraham Maslow

Bob's lengthy career as a Principal and his deeply held values about leadership and serving others were almost destroyed by a series of

all too common events and misunderstandings. We were in the midst of a series of executive coaching sessions – Bob was on leave with pay pending the results of an investigation into complaints made about his leadership style. After sitting in my office and re-reading the investigation report, Bob was shaking uncontrollably – reduced to tears …

"I can't believe this is happening to me again!!! I just don't get it!!! Several years ago I was accused of being a bully and micro-manager by the Deputy Principal at my previous school. She accused me of being excessive in my supervision and monitoring and critical with my feedback. I was only double checking her work at her request as she was in the midst of a messy divorce and having a nervous breakdown. Then I reduced her workload because she was so stressed, however she later accused me of constructive dismissal because I removed areas of work responsibility from her and gave her some much simpler tasks – all things she thanked me for at the time!

"I couldn't believe the complaint was upheld when I was simply trying to provide additional help because she was in the midst of such a major personal crisis and had refused to take time off.

"They sent me away to a leadership course where I was told that I needed to stop being a 'manager' and start being a 'leader'. I was told 'a manager controls people whilst a leader empowers people'. I was told I needed to stop giving people direction and instead ask them questions and get them to solve their own problems. I was told that I needed to learn coaching skills – so I did their course and have strictly followed the guidelines ever since I started in my current school.

"Now, despite taking the complete opposite approach to my leadership, I am again accused of bullying. Except this time I am told I have set impossible targets and objectives when I was simply setting an inspirational vision for us to be the best school in the world! Even worse, I have been accused of deliberately withholding information from my staff – all because I kept asking them questions and encouraged them to look for better solutions (than the ideas they had already come up with) to the problems we faced."

The Dangerous Myth of Manager vs Leader ...

Poor Bob! His career as a Principal was a train wreck which was tragic in light of the fact that he was a very caring guy, an experienced and capable school leader, AND he was quite knowledgeable about contemporary theories on leadership. However, in pursuing his interest in leadership development, Bob had been sold a lie – but not just some little white lie which had very little impact in the real world. Bob had bought into one of the biggest and most damaging leadership lies there is, one that countless gurus and consultants sprout out willingly and gleefully at every opportunity. We call it 'The Myth of Manager vs. Leader.'

In 'The Myth of Manager vs Leader', so-called experts tell us that 'managing is bad and leading is good' OR 'managers use people, but leaders empower people' or other variations of the same idea. It is easy to understand how this misunderstanding was created. By taking literally the following inspirational quotes (which were probably not intended to be objective statements of scientific fact) the 'leadership experts' Bob was listening to set him up on a collision course with his subsequent destruction.

5 Famous Quotes Which Feed the Dangerous Myth of Manager vs. Leader:

1. *Management is about arranging and telling. Leadership is about nurturing and enhancing.* Tom Peters
2. *Leadership should be more participative than directive, more enabling than performing.* Mary D. Poole
3. *Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.* George S. Patton Jr.
4. *Most of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to get their work done.* Peter Drucker
5. *You manage things; you lead people.* Grace Hopper

From a behavioural perspective, the notion that *Managing* is *always bad* and *Leading* is *always good* is simply untrue! Even worse is the

idea that *Managing* and *Leading* are somehow categorically different activities – it just isn't so!

First, managing and leading are not separate categories of activity. As a behavioural psychologist I know that Managing is simply one form of leadership behaviour (with Managing defined as *providing clear instruction and direction towards a specific solution*). The other two forms of leadership behaviour are Mentoring (defined as providing suggestions and options to co-construct a solution) and Coaching (defined as *asking effective questions to enable self-generated solutions*).
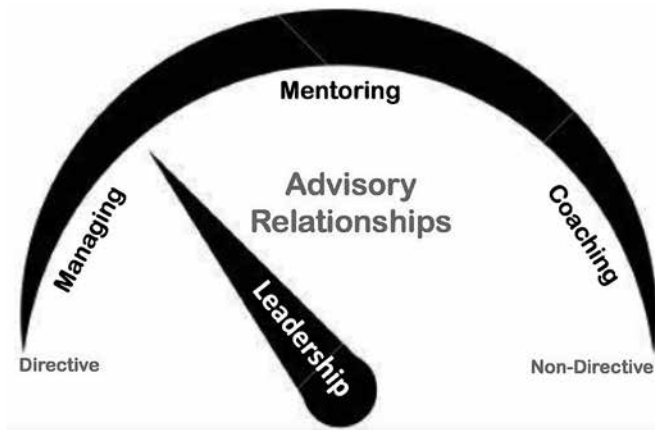
Second, if Managing is apparently 'bad' then it must be that Coaching or Mentoring is somehow 'good', as 'Leadership' is the umbrella term for all of these behaviours and not a specific behaviour itself. But is it true that Managing is 'bad' and Mentoring and/or Coaching is 'good'? Nope – not necessarily! It all depends on: (1) the quality and (2) the timing and context.

The Quality: As with any form of communication, each approach of Managing / Mentoring / Coaching could be done well or done poorly. The quality of a leader's skill becomes important. If managing by giving instruction or direction is done poorly than you could easily be perceived as being a 'Micro-Manager'. But if it is done well, you would more likely be perceived as being an 'Effective Instructor'. The same

applies for mentoring and coaching. In high quality mentoring you come across as being the 'Wise Old Owl,' while low quality mentoring creates the tall poppy syndrome response of FIGJAM (F*#k I'm Good – Just Ask Me!). Coaching also has the same risks – low quality questioning simply makes you look like 'Good Cop / Bad Cop' (firing off a million questions) whilst high quality questioning carries the air of 'Curious Listener.' (We'll unpack these in more detail below).

> *Observe due measure, for right timing in all things*
> *is the most important factor.*
> *– Hesiod, 800BC*

The Timing AND Context: The approaches of Managing / Mentoring / Coaching differ in the level of directness and can easily be distinguished along a continuum from highly directive at one end to non-directive at the other end. Selecting which approach to use depends on both timing and context.

The Directive Vs Non-Directive Continuum of Leadership Approaches

Managing   Mentoring   Coaching

Active/ Directive   *Passive/ Non-Directive*

First, with regard to timing, your approach depends on the timing of the support given within the overall learning cycle. For example, where the support is occurring early in the learning cycle greater direction may need to be given if people become distressed and/or 'stuck' in the learning process. Alternatively, less direction is needed later in the learning cycle as people's mastery increases, as does their ability to problem solve with fewer prompts.

Second, with regard to context, weigh up the risk management required in relation to the topic at hand. For example, if the issue is 'mission

critical' and has school wide implications then taking a conservative view and increasing the level of direction would be prudent (all the while openly acknowledging this to the people you are leading), while issues that do not have serious and/or wider implications may not require such a high level of direction.

Returning To The Story

Unfortunately for Bob he had buggered up on both (1) quality and (2) timing and context. No one had ever clarified with him the difference between high and low quality approaches to managing, mentoring, and coaching. Nor had anyone ever explained the matter of timing and the various different contexts which needed to be considered for each approach.

A Coach Who Doesn't Do Much 'Coaching'

After I had given Bob some much needed perspective on his self-worth and positive attributes as a school leader, as well as some very clear direction (and correction) about the quality, timing and context of various leadership approaches he paused to reflect.

Then he said, *"But Pete one thing I still don't get – if the definitions of managing, mentoring and coaching are as you say – how is it you are called a 'Coach'? Based on my observations you seem to spend most of your time using a managing and mentoring approach – providing me with explicit direction and/or suggesting various options I could take to certain problems. Come to think of it, you rarely use the coaching questions I was trained to use in my course – yet I have grown so much in such a short space of time and become so much more aware of my leadership – both the good and bad aspects – and more confident I can change for the better! So tell me what exactly what it is that you do?"*

I replied, "Well, to make a long story short, my job title is 'Coach' just like yours is 'Principal' and others have the title 'Manager', 'Supervisor', 'Director' etc. These are merely job titles – nouns or descriptors as it were. It's the verbs that count – the doing words that describe the

leadership behaviours we engage in to get our job done that are more useful to understand.

... my job title is 'Coach' just like yours is 'Principal' and others have the title 'Manager', 'Supervisor', 'Director' etc. But these are merely job titles – nouns or descriptors as it were. It's the verbs that count – the doing words that describe the leadership behaviours we engage in ...

You see, my original training was in clinical psychology where we learned from the research that active/directive approaches were far more helpful than passive/non-directive approaches for people struggling with common psychological problems. It is pretty obvious that people who are suffering and seeking help clearly need more than just reflective questions. What they need is to be able to have a supportive conversation with an expert – a trusted advisor – who will guide them with both the directions and suggestions needed to get their recovery back on track! And as their recovery progressed, the extent of my direction reduced, and by the time they were discharged I was much more non-directive as they were much more self-directive and almost fully recovered!

After my work shifted toward executive coaching, I initially took the same 'coaching' approach you were trained to do – asking a lot of reflective questions to help people discover their own answers. While this was helpful for high functioning leaders with minor problems this was not helpful at all for the majority of executives who had much more complex leadership problems to deal with. In such circumstances, and where the problems were within the scope of my expertise, I had to mix my use of coaching techniques with other more direct advice giving and suggestion because leaving them guessing when they clearly didn't know what to do next, was in my opinion unethical at the very least.

Bob interjected … *"But Pete I thought if you told someone the answer and they didn't learn for themselves then they would not grow and would become dependent on you as a leader?"*

I continued ... "Generally speaking Bob – this is simply not true – provided you match the level of directness of your leadership approach with their level of challenge each time! When you don't adjust your leadership approach to their level of challenge you make one of two possible serious mistakes.

First, you may overcompensate by providing too much direction, inadvertently making staff dependent upon you, which they may appreciate in the short-term but ultimately resent in the long-term. I suspect this may have been part of the problem you created which led to your first bullying complaint.

Alternatively, you may undercompensate by not providing enough direction, inadvertently making staff anxious, uncertain about their own capability and even suspicious that you may be withholding information from them. I think you may have accidentally created this type of problem in your more recent bullying complaint.

So, in my job title 'Coach' what I seek to do is NOT spend my time in an exclusively coaching focused relationship with you BUT RATHER develop an Advisory Relationship with you – where you interact with me as a 'Trusted Advisor'. An Advisory Relationship is simply a working relationship where I 'right size' the mix of managing, mentoring and coaching approaches I use according to your needs at any given time. As you're dealing with some pretty major crises right now, which I've had a lot of experience with, I am working in a much more directive/managing approach as you rightly point out; but this will shift towards a much less directive/coaching approach as you get on top of things and move forwards in your leadership development and growth.

An Advisory Relationship is simply a working relationship where I 'right size' the mix of managing, mentoring and coaching approaches I use according to your needs at any given time.

Leading In The Zone of Proximal Development

In educational leadership the work of Lev Vygotsky may be worth revisiting – in particular the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development and the idea of Scaffolding. The teacher must adjust the amount of scaffolding needed to keep the student 'in the zone' of learning. Too much scaffolding and the lesson is too easy and boring, too little scaffolding and the lesson is too difficult and anxiety provoking. So, the focus of your Leadership as a School Principal is to 'lead within the zone' – building powerful advisory relationships where you match your leadership approach (AKA Scaffolding) with the needs of your staff at any given time.
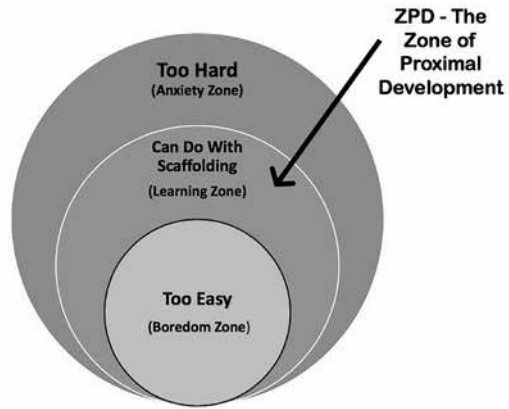
> *… the actual developmental level is determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development is determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.*
> *– Lev Vygotsky*

So Bob, to bring this together, remember that the key to your success as a school leader moving forwards from here will be about three things:

1. Understanding there is no universally good or bad distinction between the leadership behaviours of Managing, Mentoring or Coaching as each one is useful for a different reason and each one can be done well or done poorly; it depends on the quality of your leadership skills – something you can learn and develop.

2. Managing, Mentoring and Coaching are descriptors of three different types of leadership behaviours which sit on a continuum

from active directive at one end to passive non-directive at the other. The choice of which approach to take depends on the timing and context of the issues in focus.

3.   Your goal as an effective leader is to 'right-size' your leadership and lead 'within the zone' of proximal development – to build Advisory Relationships with your staff – to become a 'Trusted Advisor' – where you match the directness of your approach with the level of challenge they are facing, always adjusting your mix of skills from the managing / mentoring / coaching continuum in real-time to match their needs in order to support their individual growth whilst achieving the wider goals and objectives of the school.

As Bob sat and listened, he stopped shaking and became calmer. As this initial conversation concluded, Bob smiled. The penny had dropped! And the motivation was building inside him to rise to the challenges that lay ahead!

Part 2: 'Right Sizing' Your Leadership Approach To Become A Trusted Advisor

To become a 'trusted advisor' in the eyes of your staff you must develop a flexible leadership approach which provides the right amount of direction to enable growth and improve performance, without increasing the normal (and necessary) level of tension and stress associated with being in 'the learning pit' to the point of anxiety, and without reducing the necessary level of tension and stress to the point of boredom.

The Timing of Your Leadership Approach: Keeping People In The Zone

We first learned about the importance of 'Right Sizing' Leadership in our work building High Performance Teams. After reviewing hundreds of case studies on team transformation it became apparent that teams which ultimately moved up to Level 5 – to become the Highest Performance Teams – did so in part because their line manager was

able to adapt and change their own leadership approach to enable the continued growth and development of the team through the various levels of team performance.

Advisory Relationships & Team Performance

As you can see in the Table below, the leadership approach a line manager uses when working with teams depends entirely upon the team's current level of performance (measured in terms of value and confidence). Thus, it becomes important to 'match' the leadership approach to the current level of team performance in order to stabilise the team and support them to ascend to their next phase of team growth. 'Coaching' teams that are not confident and/or delivering low value outputs is not recommended, as they clearly need significant guidance and/or direction. Using a 'coaching' approach with a low performance team will likely prove fruitless and frustrating for all involved as team members look to their leader for answers yet are only met with Socratic questions.

Conversely, providing precise instruction and direction (Managing) can be stifling for a team that is performing to a high standard and looking to be challenged to stretch and grow. There is a different mix of approaches at play for leading High Performance Teams at each level of their journey. It is important to be able to accurately assess the teams 'value' and 'confidence' at any given time and adjust your leadership approach accordingly.

Team Characteristics	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Team Focus to Deliver Value	-2x	1x	2x	5x	10x
Team Trust to Create Confidence	0%	50%	75%	90%	100%
Approach Type					
Managing	Most Often	Often	Regularly	Intermittently	Infrequently
Mentoring	Infrequently	Regularly	Most often	Often	Intermittently
Coaching	Infrequently	Intermittently	Regularly	Often	Most Often

Advisory Relationships and Individual Performance

While the importance of 'Right Sizing' was initially discovered in our work with team transformation it is straight forward to apply this to individuals as well. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, the approaches of Managing, Mentoring, and Coaching sit on a continuum of directedness with managing being the most directive and coaching the least directive.

The Directive Vs Non-Directive Continuum of Leadership Approaches

Managing	Mentoring	Coaching

Active/ Directive   Passive/ Non-Directive

If we take the performance indicators across the 5 Levels and apply these to individuals instead of teams then it looks like this (see Table below):

Individual Characteristics	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Value of Current Performance	-2x	1x	2x	5x	10x
Confidence To Self-Improve	0%	50%	75%	90%	100%
Approach Type					
Managing	Most Often	Often	Regularly	Intermittently	Infrequently
Mentoring	Infrequently	Regularly	Most often	Often	Intermittently
Coaching	Infrequently	Intermittently	Regularly	Often	Most Often

The approach to take with individual staff can be readily discerned by asking two questions: (1) what is the Value of their current work in relation to the issue at hand? and (b) what is your level of Confidence in their ability to proactively self-improve post feedback? With these two simple questions answered it becomes more obvious which mix of approaches to take to maximise their performance while maintaining your relationship with them as a Trusted Advisor.

The Default Rule: What If I Don't Know Their Current Level of Performance?

Madness is the exception in individuals but the rule in groups.
– Friedrich Nietzsche

Let's be honest. We're often dealing with individuals or teams where we don't know their current level of performance on any given task. This may be because (a) we haven't had a chance to do any assessment/backgrounding on the issues we need to engage with them on; (b) we don't normally work with this team/individual or they are new; or (c) we're stressed and busy and have simply forgotten information we might otherwise have remembered if we had more time to prepare and reflect. The good news is there is a default rule you can apply for both teams and individuals.

The quote from Nietzsche above provides guidance about the assumptions to make with both teams and individuals when other performance data is missing. The default assumption for Teams is Level 2 – it is better to assume that groups may collectively be operating lower than the capabilities of individual team members. Accordingly, when using the default rule with teams, start with a "Managing" approach and adjust upwards as needed. The opposite recipe is applied with individuals where they are often operating individually at a higher level of performance than their combined team. The default assumption for Individuals is Level 4 so start with a "Coaching" approach and adjust down as needed.

The Quality of Your Leadership Approach & The Elephant In The Room

The manner of your speaking is just as important as the matter, as more people have ears to be tickled than understandings to judge.
– Lord Chesterfield

"My concern isn't their sole reliance on managing – indeed their team is so dysfunctional that to do anything else such as mentoring or coaching

would be pointless in the current crisis. My concern is the quality of their managing – the way they speak to the team is very confrontational and quite disempowering."

As soon as these words left my mouth, I immediately knew that in our endeavors to shine light onto the 'right sizing' argument, we had accidentally by-passed an even bigger (and more obvious) issue in the discussion of effective leadership. The old saying to 'assume' makes an 'ass' out of 'u' and 'me' was now a self-fulfilling prophecy as I quickly back-tracked to address some important differentiators between healthy and unhealthy leadership communication.

While we now know how important it is to 'right size' your leadership approach to match the needs of a team in order to become a Trusted Advisor, there is none-the-less an elephant in the room that we need to address. The elephant in the room's name is "Quality" – namely the quality of your approach as Manager, Mentor or Coach. As you can see in the quotation above, without understanding the issue of quality we can easily make the mistake of assuming that the antidote to a disempowering management approach is mentoring or coaching when in actual fact the management approach may be right in the circumstance, but the quality of the management may be wrong.

We all know that 'bad management' causes team dysfunction but could that also be true for 'bad mentoring' and 'bad coaching'? How can we tell the difference between 'good' and 'bad' uses of leadership skills? How can we improve our leadership capability, not only right sizing our approach, but also making sure the quality of each approach meets the criteria of 'good' and is exempt from the criteria of 'bad'?

Quality Approaches: Managing, Mentoring & Coaching

Managing: Effective Instruction vs Micro-Managing

'Managing' is defined as *giving instruction and directing people to a solution*. As you can imagine, anyone can 'tell someone else what to do' BUT there is a big difference between ineffective (AKA micro-managing) and effective (AKA effective instruction) managing behaviours. You can see in the Table below the Quality Indicators or 'Look Fors' that distinguish high quality managing conversations (which clearly show the use of effective instructional techniques [Example]) from low quality managing conversations (which look more like dysfunctional micromanagement [Non-Example]).
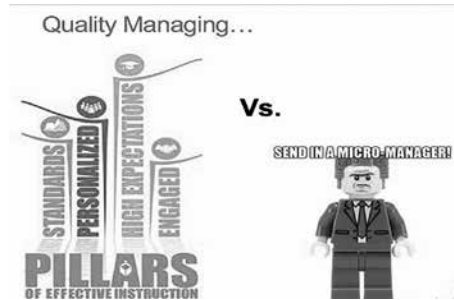
A Quality Approach to Managing: Effective Instruction vs Micro-Managing

Definition	Quality Indicators	Example *(AKA Effective Instruction)*	Non-Example *(AKA Micro-Managing)*
Giving instruction and directing them to the solution	1. Permission to engage & respectful/empathic tone 2. Clear and concise statement of issue 3. Clear and concise instruction & direction 4. Brief back – check for a consistent shared understanding 5. Closure – respectful and empathic	1. John, I need to update you on next steps on 'task' – is now ok?... I've realised that we may need to change the way we are doing this... 2. There were four steps to the task and I think we need to change step 2... 3. We currently do X in step 2 and get Y outcome, but we need Y2 outcome. Let's try doing X2 instead next week and see if that gets Y2 outcome & review at end of the week... 4. Let's make sure we're both on the same page going forwards – can you please give me a brief back on next steps... (open question) 5. Thanks so much – I appreciate your flexibility and responsiveness on this...	1. John, stop what you're doing now because you're doing it all wrong... 2. I needed you to do the task the way I told you so we'd get Y2 outcome but this isn't happening so we need to fix it! 3. Go back and check what you're doing and work out where you're wrong and fix it asap so we get Y2 outcomes from here on... 4. Do you understand what I'm asking? OR Are you OK to give it go? (closed question) 5. Let's hope you get it right next time...

Mentoring: Wise Old Owl vs F.I.G.J.A.M.

'Mentoring' is defined as *'Providing the team with advice to co-construct a solution'*. Anyone can 'dole out advice' BUT there is a big difference between ineffective (AKA F.I.G.J.A.M. - F#*k I'm Good Just Ask Me!) and effective (AKA Wise Old Owl) mentoring behaviours. You can see

in the Table below the quality Indicators or 'Look Fors' that distinguish the high quality Wise Old Owl style mentoring conversations (Example) from low quality F.I.G.J.A.M. style mentoring conversations (Non-Example).

A Quality Approach to Mentoring: Wise Old Owl vs F.I.G.J.A.M.

Definition	Quality Indicators	Example (AKA Wise Old Owl)	Non-Example (AKA F.I.G.J.A.M.)
Providing them with advice to co-construct a solution	1. As per Managing 2. Clear and concise overview of query 3. Advice sharing and collaborative discussion regarding next steps... 4. & 5 As per managing	1. As per Managing 2. Lately I have been concerned about X. I'm not sure if we've got it right yet... 3. (3a) Based on my past experiences with X I have found... and would suggest ... what do you think...? (3b) I have checked out how others do X and found... I would suggest ... what do you think...? (3c) I spoke with an expert on X who suggested we try... which made sense to me... what do you think...? 4. & 5 As per Managing	1. As per Managing 2. It is my expert opinion that X is not working out very well... 3. My advice to you is.... (no context or qualification to advice) ... do you agree or disagree? (closed question) 4. & 5 As per Managing

Coaching: Curious Listener vs Chief Interrogator

'Coaching' is defined as *'Asking questions to help the team generate their own solution.'* Anyone can 'ask questions' BUT there is a big difference between ineffective and effective coaching questions. You can see in the Table the quality Indicators or 'Look Fors' that

distinguish high quality 'curious listening' coaching conversations (Example) from low quality 'interrogation' coaching conversations (Non-Example).

A Quality Approach to Coaching: Curious Listener vs Chief Interrogator

Definition	Quality Indicators	Example (AKA Curious Listener)	Non-Example (AKA Chief Interrogator)
Asking questions to help them generate their own solution	1. As per Managing 2. Clear and concise overview of concern 3. Coaching Questions and discussion regarding next steps… 4. & 5 As per Managing	1. As per Managing 2. *I've been thinking about X and wondering what the next steps might be…* 3. *How do you think X is going…? What do you think we could do to improve…? What has worked well in the past for you…? What have you seen others do…? What would be some next steps we could take…?* 4. & 5 As per Managing	1. *As per Managing* 2. *Why isn't X working properly?* 3. *Do you agree X isn't working? Who's to blame for X? How long has this been going on? Who will be responsible for fixing it?* 4. & 5 As per Managing

The Other Elephant in the Room: Your Comfort Zone!

Leadership is about getting comfortable being uncomfortable.
– Anonymous

As a leader, you might be skilled at Managing, Mentoring and Coaching, but I'll bet that there's one that you most prefer. We've observed that the 'average' leader (if there is such a thing!) enjoys 'Mentoring' the most where they can share their wisdom freely without the need to double down on the detail, role modelling and accountability of effective 'Managing' and without the frustration of listening to their staff's struggles to help problem solve their own issues as a result of effective 'Coaching' questions … Hmmm, I wonder to what extent leaders may unconsciously influence teams through their own biases and preferences around their leadership style? (a.k.a. the cart before the horse …). Could part of the reason that teams fail to Level Up be because leaders are leading from their own comfort zones, and not the comfort zones of their team?

Right Sizing Your Leadership & Quality

As we now know, building Advisory Relationships is not just about 'right sizing' your approach to Manager, Mentor and Coach to improve individual and team performance BUT also about making sure the

'quality' of your right sized approach is optimal. As you can see in the Table below it is the combination of 'right sizing' and 'quality' that brings about success in helping teams Level Up.

Low Quality Approach At Wrong Level	Disaster
Low Quality Approach At Right Level	Resistance
High Quality Approach At Wrong Level	Confusion
High Quality Approach At Right Level	Success

The Context of Your Leadership Approach: Managing System Level Risks

The final aspect to consider when embracing the 5th Discipline of Extraordinary School Leaders is 'Risk Management' – specifically the need to ensure that the priorities for the wider school remain paramount in the day-to-day challenges of supporting the growth and development of staff. The delaying or adjusting of school priorities to suit the needs and whims of staff (not to mention the leaders themselves) is far too common an occurrence – and of course it is the students who ultimately suffer when this occurs. As leaders we may find ourselves shying away from the hard work of managing individuals and teams who are not improving at the pace needed to match the timeframes of the school's goals and objectives. We may also bow to the political pressure of the moment and adopt new ideas and approaches to appease staff who have hidden agendas or ulterior motives. This can all be avoided, not just through the 5th Discipline of building effective advisory relationships, but also through the first and second Disciplines – overcommunicating vision and action and reporting systems that achieve the impossible during business as usual.

As an extraordinary school leader your approach also depends on the risk management required in relation to the topic at hand. Where the issues are 'mission critical' and have school wide implications then taking a conservative view and increasing the level of direction would be prudent (all the while openly acknowledging this to the people you are leading), while issues which do not have serious and/or wider implications might not require such a high level of direction.

Discipline 5: Bringing It All Together

Good school leaders believe that 'managing is bad' and 'leading is good' – they believe that to empower their staff they need to use a 'coaching' approach to build effective working relationships. They believe that 'telling' others what to do is poor leadership and builds helplessness, so they are continuously using coaching questions and problem-solving discussions to enhance the growth of their staff.

Good school leaders believe that encouraging the growth and development of their staff according to their individual goals and aspirations will create innovation and increased cooperation to deliver on the wider school improvement agenda. However, in reality, such an open ended person centric approach invariably creates cliques and silos – pockets of knowledge which compete for precedence (i.e., explicit instruction vs direct instruction; PBL vs Trauma Informed Practice; PLTs vs PLCs etc.) and generate unnecessary politics in an already challenging environment.

Extraordinary school leaders know that managing is neither good nor bad but simply one of three different types of behaviours that sit within the leadership toolkit needed to build effective 'advisory' relationships. They know that managing is simply giving direct instruction and can be either good or bad depending on the quality of their skills matched to the needs of their staff. They know the same is true for the other two leadership skills of mentoring and coaching.

Extraordinary school leaders know the 'end game' of effective leadership is about building 'advisory' relationships with their staff – a place where they are person-situation focused and can freely move between Managing, Mentoring and Coaching approaches to fast-track the achievement of school priorities and maximise the growth of the staff member incorporating their situation specific individual learning needs. Extraordinary school leaders create deep and powerful growth and development opportunities for their staff tied to the goals and objectives of the school's improvement plan – minimising the risk of competing agendas and best practice politics.

Remember that many of the most senior and powerful leaders currently in education (and indeed across government and industry) have at one point or another been in Bob's shoes – down and out – devastated and believing their career was over – a chain of horrible events created by misunderstandings and well-intended yet in hindsight poor decisions. Yet it is from these scarring events that deeper wisdom is gained, and that greater skill is learned. Bob is now 10x the leader he was before these problems occurred, with a high level of leadership insight and capability. He has a far deeper understanding of how to build Advisory Relationships with his staff and the 'Look Fors' in any situation which enable him to adjust his approach to maximise their performance. And his humanity and compassion to share his learnings with other Principals in his local network is building a very positive and powerful leadership legacy, contributing to transforming the culture of many schools and improving the lives of students!

DISCIPLINE 5
Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance

Activity: What's Your Number & What's Next?

Select the number which best reflects your current leadership capability and note some next steps for your leadership journey.

Extraordinary Leadership	10. 9. 8.	Do you lead 'In The Zone' – building *Advisory Relationships* which flexibly draw from three Leadership Approaches (Managing, Mentoring & Coaching) in order to *Right Size* your leadership to maximise staff performance whilst keeping the wider school's goals and objectives the main priority?	
Good Leadership	7. 6. 5.	Do you believe 'managing is bad', 'leading is good', and only use a 'coaching' approach to build effective working relationships - encouraging the development of staff according to personal goals and aspirations assuming it will create innovation and cooperation to deliver the school's improvement agenda?	
Poor Leadership	4. 3. 2. 1.	Do you take a 'one size fits all' approach to staff growth and development - staying within your own leadership comfort zone - relying on your preferred method of managing, mentoring, or coaching regardless of the specific needs of the person or situation?	

My Current Number Is:_____

My Next Steps Are:_____
_____
_____
_____

You Tube **Watch: 'HPTLevelUp' Channel: 5 Disciplines/ Discipline 5**

NEXT STEPS

Breaking The Gravity Of Your Own Success …

"Growth in leadership comes from experiential learning, reliant on large doses of self-awareness and reflection. By working together, we can support and learn from each other to grow professionally stronger."

– Trudy Graham,
Former Principal,
Assistant Regional Director

"Sometimes we try to avoid components of leadership development simply because we are uncomfortable and end up suffering accordingly. We need to overcome our avoidance and adopt all the needed leadership behaviours and accountabilities. To use a medical analogy, we need to continue to take ALL our medicine – the full dose for the full course of the treatment to make sure we get the best results!"

– Michael O'Leary, Former Principal, Chief Information Officer

"As educators, we face a very big job, which can be extraordinarily challenging at times. I live by several key quotes that help me continue to grow my own leadership. Firstly, *'Leaders need credibility and credibility comes from experience and experience takes time.'* Secondly, *'If you're not learning, you're not growing.'* And finally, *'It'll be alright in the end – so if it's not alright, it's not the end'.*"

– Sharon Barker, Principal, Fortitude Valley State Secondary College

The 'Why' I

Keeping It Real!

The 'Why' II

Staying Connected & Inspired!

NEXT STEPS:

Breaking The Gravity Of Your Own Success

Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end.
But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.
– Winston Churchill

Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.
– Theodore Roosevelt

> **Extraordinary school leaders continuously break the gravity of their own success by purposefully living outside their comfort zone! They start where they are and work with what they have. They manage the stress and challenge of living in the learning pit by being 'authentic' with themselves and others – being vulnerable sharing their struggles as they 'fake it 'til they make it' – as their repeated disciplined practice turns awkward new leadership behaviours into mastery – the polished perfection and unconscious competence of extraordinary leadership.**

The 5 Disciplines & Your Leadership Behaviour

When it comes to enacting each of the 5 Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders, where are you currently at in your leadership journey?

Discipline 1. Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action

First, do you over-communicate the vision and action by having *a clear line of sight* through your school to engage your staff with a *purpose driven vision* OR do you set a leadership driven vision that is shared with the staff and then implemented via common sense and personal responsibility?

Discipline 2. Reporting Systems To Achieve The Impossible

Second, do you build reporting systems that create a *'Golden Thread'* – enabling everyone to know everything they need to know all the time with a specific focus on measuring and managing the *'lead indicators'* enabling goals to stretch and achieve the impossible during business as usual OR do you stick to the 'we've always done it this way' approach of communicating across individuals, teams and whole of staff and focus on evaluating results post hoc – using *'lag indicators'* to drive the improvement agenda?

Discipline 3. Matching Communication To Leverage Diversity

Third, do you create a sense of belonging among staff by *matching communication styles* to connect with various workplace personality styles and then turn this sense of belonging into a desire to excel by *managing the status dynamic* within each relationship OR do you educate others about your personality style and simply expect others to adjust to you while you consistently repeat your long established leadership behaviours equally and fairly across the organisation?

Discipline 4. 'Going First' Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness

Fourth, do you as a leader, 'Go First' leading by example and appropriately disclosing your own challenges and seeking ideas from others to promote a sustainable culture of wellbeing as well as developing *relationship fitness* by practising the discipline of continuous team building OR do you promote wellbeing by simply enquiring about other's wellbeing and offering help when asked and leaving

team building and getting to know each other activities to individual preferences and informal opportunities?

Discipline 5. Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance!

Finally, do you lead 'In The Zone'? Have you developed a high level of skill across the three leadership approaches (Managing, Mentoring & Coaching) and 'right size' your approach to build Advisory Relationships to match the level of direction you provide with the level of challenge staff are facing in achieving the school's goals and objectives OR do you believe that 'managing is bad' and 'leading is good' and only use a 'coaching' approach to build effective working relationships – encouraging the growth and development of staff according to their individual goals and aspirations, assuming this will create innovation and increased cooperation to deliver on the wider school improvement agenda?

How To Authentically Fake It 'Til You Make It!

To become an extraordinary school leader, you need to purposefully live outside your comfort zone – living in the learning pit – where you will at times experience the stress and frustration of learning new leadership behaviours. Breaking the habits of old leadership behaviours to embrace new leadership behaviours will feel awkward at times and you will not necessarily 'get it right' in front of your staff. Sometimes it may look like 'you are faking it' (and indeed sometimes you will be) just like anyone learning a new skill does. This is all part of a natural learning curve. You may not look or feel 'authentic' in the eyes of your staff and it will be important to openly acknowledge this with them as you grow.

'Authenticity' can be a confusing concept in leadership development. At its core, Brene Brown tells us that authenticity simply means *'embracing who we are and letting go of who we think we're supposed to be'. It is important to note this is NOT an invitation to shrink back from our responsibility as leaders to grow and change.* As leaders we are

responsible for adapting our leadership to meet the needs of others. Consider the following quote from Seth Godin:

"If you need to be 'authentic' to do your best work, you're not a professional, you're a fortunate amateur. Fortunate, because you have a gig where the person you feel like being in the moment actually helps you move forward. For the rest of us, there's the opportunity to be professional, to exert emotional labour in search of empathy – the empathy to imagine what someone else would want ... what might resonate with them."

For Seth Godin, authenticity is problematic if it relates to the OUTWARD BEHAVIOURS of 'being who you are in the moment – your true self'. But if, as Brene Brown suggests, 'Authenticity' relates to INWARD ACCEPTANCE of *'embracing who we are and letting go of who we think we're supposed to be'* then Authenticity is an invitation to simply accept our imperfections, to accept our struggles and to persevere with making the necessary changes to our leadership behaviours.

If we 'authentically' accept who we are while we 'fake it 'til we make it' then we are able to grow and change – accepting the awkwardness of learning new leadership behaviours and openly declaring to ourselves and others around us 'this is difficult for me' or 'I'm trying to take a different approach to how I lead on this issue' or any other open and honest disclosure whilst we persevere with our leadership growth. This enables the person / people we are communicating with to immediately recognise our 'awkwardness' not as false or disingenuous behaviour but rather simply a novice on the long and difficult road to becoming an expert. This creates a healthy vulnerability in the relationship and builds empathy and openness – 'going first' in acknowledging the struggles of professional growth and development.

It also allows us to embrace our imperfections, to not expect ourselves to be 'instantly perfect' and to give ourselves permission to keep trying, to persevere and to make mistakes on the road to extraordinary leadership. We are able to avoid the all too common curse of magical thinking where we're supposed to be perfect and get things right the first time. As Brene Brown tells us, *'Magical thinking is incredibly*

dangerous and will cost you more time and money that 'digging deep' ever will… The real work is the constant iteration, incorporating feedback, troubleshooting, figuring out when to push and when to pull and helping everyone reset after a setback and learn.'

Start Now! Break Free From The Gravity Of Your Own Success

Start the next stage of your school leadership journey now! Have a conversation with your own advisors and peer leaders about where you sit with each of the 5 Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders and what your next steps look like.

When you're ready, share aspects of your own journey with staff about each of the 5 Disciplines: (1) When do you sometimes forget the connection between the school's vision and your day-to-day work and what impact does this have? (2) When do you fail to keep up-to-date with relevant information and miss looking at the micro-progress towards the goals and fail to see what is really possible beyond the stated goals? (3) What do you need from your leaders in terms of healthy communication to feel heard and understood in order to maximise your sense of inclusion and motivation to excel? (4) Where are you most challenged on work/life and wellbeing – what tools and tips do you use to improve – who can you relate to in sharing similar struggles and challenges? and (5) Where are you at working with your leaders, coaches and mentors – do you have a flexible advisory relationship established or is it a traditional coaching relationship? Where do you need more direct advice and where do you need questions and sharing of experiences in order to be the most extraordinary school leader you can be?
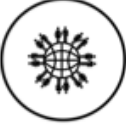
As you reach the end of the beginning of this next stage of your journey towards extraordinary leadership start moving forward now. As Theodore Roosevelt said, '*Do what you can, with what you have, where you are*'. Don't be complacent or overwhelmed by the obstacles you may face. As Jordan Peterson said, '*Consider, as well, that you may be blocked in your progress not because you lack opportunity, but because you have not made full use of what already lies in front of you.*'

Also remember the deep sense of humility and vulnerability that is characteristic of the extraordinary school leaders we have studied. Be grateful for their scars of 'learning the hard way' and the mis-steps and mistakes they only realised with the wisdom of hindsight – wisdom they have 'paid forward' to you in your leadership journey.

Keep moving forwards – authentically living in the learning pit of leadership growth and development. Break free from the atmosphere created by the gravity of your own previous successes and the good leadership it created in order to maintain the momentum upwards and outwards into the larger universe of greatness. By consistently applying each of the 5 Disciplines into your leadership you will create the habits of an extraordinary school leader. Whilst you may never get to hear it yourself, your staff will describe you to others as insightful, compassionate, visionary, practical and incredibly relatable. And you will fulfil your moral purpose and achieve a lasting positive legacy – building extraordinary schools that maximise the potential of both students and staff!

Get Started Now!   Personal Action Plan

The 5 Disciplines	My Capability Number	What Extraordinary School Leadership Looks Like	Developing My Leadership Capability
1. Over-communicating Purpose Driven Vision & Action		Working with staff to build a *purpose driven vision* that is intrinsically motivating and developing a *clear line of sight* to enact the vision consistently across the whole school.	
2. Reporting Systems To Achieve The Impossible		Using *lead indicator systems* to stretch what is possible for student growth then embedding this within the *golden thread* of communication and information sharing enabling staff to be 'up-to-date' thus reducing additional meetings and creating time in otherwise impossibly busy schedules.	

Discipline	Description
3. Matching Communication To Leverage Diversity	Creating a sense of belonging among staff by *matching communication styles* to connect with various workplace personality styles and then turning this sense of belonging into a desire to excel by *managing the status dynamic* within each relationship.
4. 'Going First' In Leading Wellbeing & Relationship Fitness	'Going First' leading by example appropriately disclosing your own challenges and seek ideas from others to promote a sustainable culture of wellbeing as well as 'going first' in developing *relationship fitness* by practising the discipline of continuous team building.
5. Leading 'In The Zone' – Advisory Relationships That Maximise Performance	Leading 'In The Zone' – building *Advisory Relationships* which flexibly draw from three Leadership Approaches (Managing, Mentoring & Coaching) in order to *Right Size* your leadership to maximise staff performance whilst keeping the wider school's goals and objectives the main priority.

School Leadership Journeys
The Case Studies

Kay Kirkman
Former Principal,
Assistant Regional Director

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Mt Archer State School

Judi Newman
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Jorgen Neilson
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Kin Kora State School

Sharon Barker
Principal,
Fortitude Valley State Secondary College

Ray Clarke
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Emerald State High School

Anthony Lucey
Principal,
St Williams Catholic School

Katrina Jones
Principal,
Frenchville State School

Tracy Egan
Principal
Mango Hill State School

Phillip Carleton
Principal,
Gaven State School

Trudy Graham
Former Principal,
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Roselynne Anderson
Former Principal,
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Newtown State School

Read About Each Leadership Journey At: DrPeteStebbins.com

About Dr Pete and High Performance Schools

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD is Australia's Leading Expert on High Performance Leaders and Teams in Education

Pete is seriously passionate about helping leaders and teams develop higher levels of performance by 'Fitting In' together through engaging at a deeper level AND 'Standing Out' together by achieving extraordinary results! With a PhD thesis examining chronic stress and burnout, Pete is also deeply interested in wellbeing and resilience – helping leaders 'right size' their approach to promote sustainable High Performance Teams over the long-term.

Pete has more than 20 years experience working as a psychologist, initially in mental health hospitals, welfare services and clinical private practice before building a large corporate consulting practice specialising in employee wellbeing and organisational change. After exiting the business and relocating with his family for a sea change, Pete couldn't resist the opportunity to pursue further research on High Performance Teams undertaking a massive (and ongoing) transformation project in public sector education known as 'The High Performance Schools Project'.

Pete is an active and enthusiastic facilitator of development programs, keynote speaker, guest psychologist on Channel 7, executive coach and consultant. Pete is also a published researcher and author of a range of books on organisational transformation, resilience and leadership including the Australian best seller *iTeams: Why High Performance Teams 'Fit In' AND 'Stand Out'* with over 5000 copies sold.

Pete is a dedicated family man and soul surfer with an adventurous streak who is passionate about life and living. He lives in an old converted milk depot on the southern Gold Coast and spends as much time as possible at the beach whilst juggling his tribe of 5 daughters and busy work schedule.

Working With Dr Pete
Building High Performance Leaders & Teams

Keynote Presentations
- The 5 Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders
- High Performance Teams: 10 Team Insights
- Level Up: Building The Highest Performance Teams
- Leading Transformation: Fast-tracking Sustainable Change

The High Performance Schools Program
A 12 month comprehensive school transformation program combining Leadership Team, Teaching Team and Wider Staff Professional Development & School Pulse Systems

Leadership Development
- The 5 Disciplines: Foundations & Advanced 1 Day Masterclasses
- The 5 Disciplines: Leading High Performance Schools (online)
- Customised Executive Coaching and 360 Leadership Programs

High Performance Teams Programs
- High Performance Teams: Level Up 12 Month Development Program
- High Performance Teams: Team Development Program (2 Days)
- Building High Performance Teams: Train x Trainer 2 Day Masterclass

Popular Staff Professional Development Sessions
- Leveraging Diversity: How to Motivate & Inspire Everyone
- Change: Fast-tracking Sustainable Change In Your Team
- High Performance Meetings: Give Yourself An Hour of Power
- Relationship Fitness: Team Pulse & Trust Matched Teaming

Books, Workbooks & Other Resources
Check out the full catalogue of Dr Pete's books, workbooks and resources at HPTschools.com/bookstore

The 5 Disciplines of Extraordinary School Leaders

"The best book on effective school leadership yet! Demystifies what underpins extraordinary school leadership."
Judi Newman, Former Principal, Director Neuroleadership Academy

School Leadership Evolution & Confusion

The past: School leaders relied on a 'structured' approach - being subject matter experts using hierarchical systems to communicate based on their authority. The present: School leaders relying on 'relational' approaches that prioritise building empathy and shared purpose but can also leave people feeling uncertain and confused...

Resolving The School Leadership Crisis

The over-focus on relational approaches and rejection of structured approaches has created a situation where many leaders are trying to use supportive leadership 'soft skills' to plug the 'hard skills' strategy and systems gap. Relying on relational skills to address strategic issues and vice versa is like trying to put a square peg in a round hole – it just doesn't work!

Extraordinary School Leaders: Supportive & Strategic

With the pace of change in the world accelerating, it is vital that our staff and students are able to flourish in High Performance Schools led by extraordinary school leaders who have both the supportive and strategic leadership capability to enable everyone to succeed!

The 5 Disciplines: Your Back Stage Pass!

The results of our intensive research highlighted 5 disciplines that distinguish extraordinary school leaders from their peers. This book gives you the back stage pass into the insights and skills you need to build High Performance Schools!

Dr Pete Stebbins, PhD, is a workplace psychologist and executive coach. Pete has many years of research and professional practice behind him and is the project director for the High Performance Schools Program working with a large number of primary, secondary and special education schools across Australia.

Find out more at:
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ISBN 9781925497038

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