

*the science & soul of leadership*

Leadership can be exhilarating, stimulating and rewarding. Yet it can also be tough, complex and at times lonely. Leaders all over the world are walking the same rough road; facing the same challenging battles. And when we combine leading individuals with leading teams, the task becomes even more challenging.

*“The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say ‘I’. And that’s not because they have trained themselves not to say ‘I’. They don’t think ‘I’. They think ‘we’; they think ‘team’”.*

**Peter Drucker**

At The Service Spirit, we have read many and varied articles, blogs, research and books to try to discover the special ingredients to help leaders build high performance teams that operationalise and deliver the business strategy. What became evident after years of working with many and varied teams was that in reality building fully functional teams is a challenge for most leaders, let alone building a high performing team.

What we have learnt by working with real ‘live’ teams is that they require four foundational building blocks to be in place before they can function effectively and productively.

- 1. Team Set Up** – When a team forms, it is comprised of a group of individual people. Human beings need clarity and meaning to not only survive but to thrive and flourish. Having a clear team purpose (why the team exists), team boundaries (what they will and won’t be doing), team goals (an united view of their priorities and how they will measure success) and team behaviours (what they will say or do or not say or do) will ensure the team is set up for success
- 2. Team Meetings** – Teams spend the majority of their time together in team meetings and to our amazement the further you go up the ladder reportedly the worse they are run. Team meetings run best when the purpose and intent of the meeting as well as agenda items are clear; when the right people attend the meeting and come prepared; when the timing and environment is conducive to productive outcomes and when the key messages, actions and decisions are communicated following the meeting.
- 3. Team Processes** – Teams also need agreed processes to operate effectively and this includes how they:
  - Communicate (keep others informed and seek input from others)
  - Maximise the use of resources (through people and focusing on priorities)
  - Make decisions (that encourage constructive debate and accountability)
  - Move forward (by both challenging themselves and learning through feedback, review and from others)
- 4. Team Relationships** – As we said, teams are made up of human beings and this means the way we work with each other, and the strength of our relationships is also important for team functionality. This is all about the quality of dialogues we have, the level of consultation, the degree of support and recognition we show others as well as creating a climate where people can speak freely, feel heard and have fun.

**Jenny Vulcan & Deborah Pascoe**