The Six Dimensions of Winning Teams

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In this working paper, we present the six dimensions that are needed to manage a team for high performance. We argue that these six dimensions can be decomposed into three levels: the collective team level, a level of diverse dimensions specific to subgroups of team members, and finally, the individual team member level. We further argue that these dimensions are interdependent, and need to be managed for alignment, starting with the highest-level dimension, which pertains to the goals and objectives that lie at the heart of team management and performance. We further relate this new model of high-performance teamwork to the existing literature and illustrate its power and ease of application through a number of examples.

Key words: High-performance; High-Performance Teams; Team Dynamics; Leadership; Collaborative Management; Beckhard’s GRPI model

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1. Introduction

Groups have been extensively written about in the management, psychology, and sports literatures, motivated by the search for a good understanding of the factors leading teams to perform and outperform.

One extra-ordinary such performance was reached by the US basketball team in Barcelona, which won Olympic Gold in Barcelona in 1992, defeating its opponents by an average of 44 points. Journalists have described it as the greatest sports team ever assembled. Though several teams were later referred to as another “dream team” – they even received numbers - none ever reached the performance level or earned comparison rights with the team that won gold in Barcelona.

The coaching by Daly was remarkably light. Most was left to the talent and professionalism of the players. Daly did not even call a time-out during the Olympic final. However, he paid great attention to player selection. Magic Johnson, identified a year earlier with HIV, had not played since, and yet made the team. He described his selection as a life saver. An amateur from college basketball was added to the team to honor the Olympic tradition of amateurism that had just been abandoned. Daly also engineered an early loss to an NCAA team of university students to teach the professionals that they could be beaten.

Many opponents were more interested in taking pictures with the Dream Team than taking them on. The Croatian finalists even pleaded with the US team to limit their shooting. The book by McCallum (2013) is the definitive reference on this iconic team. One of the authors of this article has spent a major part of his life mentally coaching tennis and field hockey top athletes, with great success, and is now applying sports methods to develop “corporate athletes.”

Turning to teams in business, Katzenbach (1997) in his classic article offers a stark comment on executive teams at the corporate top: “Even in the best of companies, a so-called top team seldom functions as a real team. The fact is (that) a team’s know-how and experience inevitably lose power and focus on the top of the corporate hierarchy.” Katzenbach argues that the power structure at the top, the high time commitment required to become a team, and the sharing of goals is typically missing for an executive team to become a team. He concludes that most so-called business teams are “working groups” that assemble for certain specific tasks (like budgeting or strategizing), or for providing advice to the CEO in support of her or his decision making. Teams requiring commitment in time and focus, teamwork must be justified: expected benefits must exceed the costs of a team approach. In his view, many CEOs are of the view that strong executive leadership and true team leadership are different disciplines, requiring different skills, a reduction of personal power, and excessive commitments of time and energy.

In an earlier article, Katzenbach and Smith (1993) had summarized their conclusions of many hours of interviews of 50 teams from 30 different companies. Their foremost conclusion was that teamwork was a discipline that was intimately tied with good performance, contrary to the common beliefs of many CEOs. They also found that the “team” was a term used too loosely, motivating the follow-up
article that made the argument for real teamwork to be a discipline, being incompatible with strong executive leadership. More specifically, these two authors defined a team as “a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they call themselves mutually accountable.” They also argued for teams when work requirements are complex, and when joint work-products are expected. They suggest working groups, and not teams, when “the sum of individual bests will suffice for the performance challenge at hand.”

Hackman (2002, 2011) devoted a lifetime of scholarly work on studying teams, producing a great number of insights. He also debunked several myths of teams, such as the need for harmony (when well managed conflicts lead to more creative outcomes), for change in teams (when the longer members stay together, the better the team functions), or that bigger is better (when team size raises complexity in an exponential fashion due to the multiplicity of potential interactions inside the team). Hackman joins Katzenbach in stressing that team management is a complex discipline, one that needs perfecting over time, with plenty of dualities and tensions to manage, concluding that “great team leaders are like jazz musicians, improvising constantly as they go along” (Hackman, 2009).

Authors have proposed prescriptive models for assembling teams. Amongst these, Beckhard (1972) is one of the earliest and best-known proponents. His model is known under the acronym GRPI. The motivation in this modeling exercise was to reduce the time taken by teams to form an effective unit, and the chances of team misaligning and possibly meet conflict. Beckhard’s prescription is for teams to focus, in sequence, on 4 vital questions:

- **Goals (G):** Are team members aligned on a core mission to be pursued by the team?
- **Roles (R):** Are the roles that will be held by team members well and precisely specified, and in a way that fosters team cohesion and commitment?
- **Processes (P):** These form the third agenda item for team development and include communication and decision-making processes, as well as exploratory and conflict management processes.
- **Interpersonal relations (I):** These are the fourth and final item that effective teams ought to address from the start, and which they need to revisit regularly thereafter to avoid that dysfunctional relations take too many energies away from focusing and delivering on team goals. This requires personal integrity, attending to team members concerns, and being forthright when breaking team commitments, explaining why these commitments where broken, and apologizing when doing so.

The GRPI model is regularly attributed to Noël Tichy, Professor at the Ross School of Business of the University of Michigan, who used the model extensively in analyzing organizational development, including in his role as Director of Global Development at GE’s Crotonville (Pritchett, Tichy, and Cohen, 1998).
Tichy and his associates presented an 80:20 rule as to the origins of conflicts affecting teamwork, 80% being due to poorly or unclearly specified goals, and 20% to other reasons. Of these, again 80% (namely 16% of the total) were due to role issues, 3.2% to processes, and finally 0.8% to interpersonal issues. These statements are best understood qualitatively as follows: many conflicts at a lower level have their roots in poor specifications at higher levels. Individual agendas, for example, typically lead to role, process, or interpersonal misfunctioning, but can be traced to a lack of alignment on team goals. One of the better-known prescriptions in this regard was provided by Doran (1981) who advocated that goals ought to be written in a S.M.A.R.T. way: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

This paper proposes an extension of Beckhard’s model that add two dimensions that have proven crucial in applications, and, remarkably, are missing from the model. These concern Values on the one hand, and Rules / Procedures / Policies on the other. Both are key tools that govern the effectiveness of teamwork, and hence the addition of these dimensions fills two gaps in Beckhard’s model and completes it in the sense of referring to the six distinct ways of managing people.

2. Values and Rules of the Game: the missing dimensions in Beckhard’s Model

When examining the four dimensions identified by the GRPI model, it does not take long to realize that there are two dimensions that are missing from the model yet belong to a manager’s arsenal: values for one, and rules, policies, or procedures on the other. It is well accepted that no organization can do without. These dimensions also belong to team management. This does not need to be argued further.

Sports teams thrive on them and provide wonderful illustrations of their motivational and commitment power. The All Blacks in rugby, Real Madrid, Liverpool, and Bayern Munich in soccer, Ferrari in F1 are some of the names that quickly come to mind when one thinks of teams that are known for their extraordinary achievements in their sports over the long run, while also being associated with values of excellence, pride, and commitment to win. They have the records that attest to this conclusion. These also are teams that typically attract the greatest talent in the sport.

Military units similarly stress values, those of commitment to a team of comrades worth dying for, but also that of serving the nation and being united in being “ready to pay the ultimate price for flag and country.”

Karlgaard and Malone (2015), in their book Team Genius: The New Science of High-Performing Organizations, link the discipline of managing teams with organizational success. Mixing scientific research with compelling case studies these authors argue that high performance organizations are those that plan,
design, and manage great teams. Those organizations also are not afraid to disband great teams once their task has been accomplished.

In management, one must cite the classic treatise by O'Reilly and Pfeffer (1999) entitled *Hidden Value*. Their purpose was to show that successful organizations, rather than chasing talent and “hot” individuals that everyone seems to want, make it possible for ordinary people to achieve extra-ordinary things. These organizations place values above strategy, implementation over planning, and focus on getting the best out of all employees, and not solely out of a few stars.

Collins (2001) in one of the most popular business books ever echoes these ideas when he describes the essential role played by “level 5” leaders who transform their organizations from “good to great,” the latter also being the title of Collins’s book. Level 5 leaders are animated by a spirit (or value) of service, putting the needs of their teams and company first. These individuals also call for a cause or a purpose. One of their fundamental values is humility, in contrast to ego-driven “level 4” leaders who rely on personal traits like charisma to call on others to follow them. Pat Riley, one of the most celebrated coaches in the NBA, presents this eloquently as “the most difficult thing for individuals to do when they become part of a team is to sacrifice, it is much easier to be selfish.”

Summing up, great organizations are built on values and purpose (which falls under our Goals header). High-performance teams and leaders within the organization espouse and uphold these values and enact the organizational purpose which they become associated with. Such leaders place their team members and their organizations ahead of themselves. They are characterized by humility, and a sense of sacrificing on behalf of others.

Bob Sutton (2010) when describing “good bosses” comes to similar conclusions, stressing that the “top leader” is key in setting the tone of an organization. In other words, organizational performance relies on and requires the understanding of high-performance teams, in which the role of the team leader is critical and, hence, so are the values of the leader and of the team. Delegation and empowerment, seen as key values enabling performance, are facilitated by a boss and a team that share trust, integrity, autonomy, and transparence. McGregor (1960) had identified such leadership as corresponding to Theory Y, in contrast to Theory X behaviors which assumed that workers disliked work, lacked ambition, and were indifferent to organizational needs. Sticks and carrots are the tools of Theory X leaders. Good bosses, according to Sutton, espouse Theory Y.

However, every sports team, every organization, every nation needs rules to function effectively and efficiently. Sports, board, and card games have strict rules, allowing collaboration amongst players. When a defender in a soccer team advances, the rule is that one of the middle or offensive players moves back to cover the position the defender has just left uncovered. Any player, when substituted during the game and called off the pitch by the coach, is expected to shake the hand of the coach, stay on the bench, and root for the team even if - and also because - he might be fuming for being taken out.
In organizations, it is a good rule for salespeople to obtain the authorization of the factory before signing a contract. This ensures that what is sold can be manufactured. It avoids many subsequent dysfunctions generated by sales people too eager to meet their sales quotas. The army is full of rules, to keep coherence, and avoid chaos and unnecessary loss of life. To fight the curse of knowledge, Sutton (2010) recommends good bosses, amongst others, to practice the KISS rule; Keep it Simple, Stupid! Every pilot is supposed to follow a set of checks before flying his plane, to ensure safety. The gravest accident in aviation occurred on the Canary Islands in 1977, when two Boeing 747 collided on the runway, killing 583 people. The pilot did not wait for control-tower clearance before taking off (Ziomek, 2018). His co-pilot even asked him about it. But it was not just the pilot and the co-pilot who caused the disaster, other vulnerabilities in the overall traffic control system contributed to the disaster (Ziomek, 2018). Organizational and team safety is a systemic property, and not solely a matter for organizational and team leaders to manage.

It is interesting to note that Beckhard’s model does not mention Values, nor Rules. Our paper extends his model by integrating these key dimensions into the sequential GRPI model. The addition raises the issue as to where in the sequence Values and Rules should be placed. This is the questions we will answer in the next section.

Before we do so, we note that our extension completes Beckhard’s model by the two dimensions of the generic managerial toolkit that were missing from GRPI. Indeed, the addition of Values and Rules of the Game to Beckhard’s model renders it complete: the extended model now leverages the six ways people can be managed. We do not know of other ways to manage people. These six dimensions impact team members in different and complementary ways when the model is well applied. Goals, Values, and Rules of the Game are collective dimensions, impacting all team members, and shared and enforced by them. Roles and Processes are specific to certain individuals, but less to others. They pertain to subgroups of team members. Finally, Individual Commitment is, as its name indicates, specific to each team member.

3. GVRu/RoP/I : the enlarged team performance model

Having done the inventory of the tools applicable to managing a team, we now examine the nature of these tools, after which we turn to the question of the sequence to be followed when deploying the tools.

Some comments can immediately be made. Goals (G) are shared by all team members, while Individual Commitment (I) is specific to each team member, even though this commitment has a collective dimension. Knowing that all members in the team are highly motivated and committed can only increase my motivation and my contribution to the team. The converse is true as well: knowing that some team members may not be highly motivated will affect my own commitment to the
team. This reciprocity is a fundamental law governing human interactions (Cialdini, 2021).

**G, V, and Ru** are three distinct and complementary ways to glue the members to the team. Taken jointly, these elements build the **solidarity** needed for the members to become a team. They “form and norm” the team, according to the “form-storm-norm-perform” team performance model due to Tuckman (1965). We note that our approach eliminates, or at least reduces, the “storm” phase stated by Tuckman as unavoidable and necessary.

The next question concerns the proper order for considering the three elements in a sequential team building process. **G** is the foundational element of teams, as underlined by Katzenbach and Smith (1993). **V** and **Ru** come on board only once **G** has been determined, as values and rules depend on team goals. If one aims for innovation, creativity becomes a key team value, while rigid rules and procedures are not the way to go. But if compliance is the goal, then creativity is much less central, and indeed possibly counterproductive. So, the choice of **V** and **Ru** can only be considered once **G** has been determined, keeping **G** as the foundational team element.¹

The **GVRu** sequence has appeared to puzzle some individuals in applications of the model with management teams. Their argument is that Values typically take a long time to build and ensure, while Goals can be changed rapidly and much more easily. Indeed, religious and spiritual education can take a lifetime, whereas companies change goals in one meeting. But the main argument is that Goals are the primary, since value creation is progress on the (longer-term) goals, whereas Rules and Values are means to achieve this goal and create value more quickly and consistently. Hence, **Values and Rules** are secondary to Goals. The second argument is that it is precisely because Values take time to build that Rules are essential. And they are part of the discipline of learning and appropriating the Values.

Concerning, their relative priority, **Values** must take precedence over Rules, for it also takes the right Values to make the Rules stick. For example, if the Rule is to report all incidents of wrongdoing, then **Values** of integrity and courage will support the rule. The absence of those values in certain team members is likely to keep the latter from reporting some incidents.

Similarly, if one is playing defense in a soccer or hockey team, safe and secure interventions by defenders are critical. Hence the Rule of not making any fouls in the penalty zone, as well as substitute for a teammate that may have fallen on the pitch, creating a vulnerability in the defense. The opposite is true for the offensive players, which rely on surprise moves and are encouraged to take chances, even to risk a foul (like forcefully using one’s body to block a defender) if that increases the chances of scoring a goal. Both behaviors, defensive and offensive, are supported by **Values** of excellence and commitment to and support of the team; yet the Rules for defense and offense are distinct.

**V** are aspirational, which implies that behavior of team members regularly falls short of expectations. That is why **Ru** is needed to support behaviors that are a
must for enabling collaboration and generating trust amongst team members, as we argued earlier. Ru does not allow team or organizational members the discretion and personal choices that V allow. With the caveat that R applies to all team members, and may, in an organizational or team setting, include organizational policies and procedures. Policies distinguish themselves from rules in that they allow organizational members latitude that rules do not. Procedures consist of a sequence of steps that must be followed by team members in particular circumstances (Denham and Pierce, 1989). They guide action and allow a certain degree of discretion at each stage. When referring to Ru in this paper, we do include and do not distinguish between rules, policies, and procedures.

GVRu – shared goals, values, and rules – thus are the three distinct and complementary elements that create a team and that bring solidarity and unity in the quest. As of that moment the project has been clearly defined. Massa, Taraporevala, and Van der Heyden (2023) in a corporate context refer to this trinity as being the three elements defining the mission of the firm, a foundational element for value creation. The mission includes what other business authors refer to as the purpose (G), as well as the values (V) that will guide the organizational members, and the rules (Ru) that the organization imposes itself in its chosen quest. In other words, these three dimensions form the constitution that will guide organizational members in their endeavor. We will also refer to GVRu as the mission in the remainder of the article. This trinity is often paid insufficient attention to when forming teams, causing many team dysfunctions later.

Now that the mission has been specified, the next step is to specify how the mission will be achieved. This calls for an enumeration of tasks to be performed. The responsibility for these will typically be aggregated to one or more individuals assuming roles (Ro). To illustrate our model, the responsibility for a corporation is placed in and assumed by the Board of Directors (BoD), typically appointed by the owners (who are responsible for the appointment of the Directors, but not for the company itself). For this delegation to work effectively, the corporate mission must be clearly specified by the owners. Then, if the owners wish to be an effective owners’ team, they are well advised to develop and agree to their own GVRu/RoP/I, which then can be written down in Shareholder Agreements. The BoD delegates execution to a Management Board, typically led by a Managing Director, Director General, or Chief Executive Officer. How the leadership is distributed amongst the members of the Management Board is typically specified in the mission (Massa et al., 2023).

In most organizational settings, like the corporate setting just described, there are teams at multiple levels, leading to what General McChrystal (2015) describes as a “team of teams” setting. The general concept is that of a Russian doll or “matriochka,” where the top team is the outer doll, with its own GVRu/RoP/I, commanding other teams, each with their own GVRu/RoP/I, in a way that is coordinated and fits with the outer doll. For this the outer doll, and the inner dolls, must be able to adapt to sudden requirements made by one of the inner dolls. Shared Goals, Values, and Rules are key to creating the needed clarity and trust for such collaboration to be effective. A lack of alignment occurs can be thought
of as the situation where an inner doll no longer fits within the space provided by the upper-level dolls.

A project team is usually led by a project leader, though leadership in such setting could also be distributed amongst several project managers (PM), jointly assuming responsibility for effective execution. The GVRu/RoP/I model provides a good checklist for project managers. One such manager, having been exposed to the model, immediately observed that the model made him aware that he had too quickly agreed to the PM role, without sufficiently realizing key details of the project mission that he was invited to lead. That acceptance led him to a "set-up to fail" situation, having agreed to the PM role without having sufficiently probed for and discussed the goals to be delivered, and particularly the "rules of the game" – namely whether he might ask for additional resources when these were insufficient to meet the project’s stated goals.

In soccer, the major roles are assumed by club owners, the management, the technical staff – including coaches, trainers, handlers – and the players who in the end deliver “the play,” with major decision making by the coaching staff. Supporters contribute too of course – and often critically - but let us leave them aside for now. Players, coaches, managers, and owners interact through several processes (P). Processes guide the interactions amongst these key members and are characterized by mutual adaptations by the members, following a sequence and logic that defines the process. Team members’ actions are the “atoms” of collective action – as teams do not operate jointly, they only operate through the actions of the individual team members. A useful metaphor might be to say that Processes ensure that these atoms combine to form complex molecules.

A soccer team has many processes: first, the planning of future ambitions and goals, considering a thorough evaluation and analysis of this year’s achievements. Then come the targets for the future (long-term, medium-term, and short term), where terms are a consequence of the owners’ planning horizon. Values might be confirmed, or adapted because of new goals, as are the rules of the game (which typically include budget limits). The management, in collaboration with the head coach, then goes through a recruitment phase, including participating in scanning and bidding processes for new talent, which interacts with the exiting process of players that have become too expensive given their recent and expected contribution. Then come the intensive training sessions, which will provide input and feedback to the coaches about the capabilities of each of the player. Training provides the most valuable input for the selection of the team – and the bench – for the upcoming game. There also is, after scanning the opposing theme, the development of the strategy to be adopted for that game. There are the decisions that are made the day of the game. Finally, the debrief and the lessons to be taken from the game once the game is concluded will contribute to the team’s evolution over the season. In sum, it is the quality of all these processes that contribute to the team’s results.

We ought to briefly return to roles and procedures. Procedures and processes are similar, in that they both consist of a sequence of steps over time. The difference
lies in that procedures are common to the entire team, whereas processes have a process owner who has authority over the process, designs it and oversees its execution. Processes are greatly more effective, dynamic, and subtle when well led. A great process owner - a role - alters the process as a function of context and past results. Procedures, in contrast, do not have specific owners, except for all team members who should protest or raise alarms when procedures are violated.

Processes are key to an organization’s effectiveness. Organizations produce results that are the outcome of many interlinked and interdependent processes. They also should be well led by their respective owners. Processes will fail if their owner lacks experience or is incompetent. Conversely, talented actors, artists, managers, fraudsters, players all have developed a mastery over the core processes that define their craft.

Having specified the five “tools” that create order and effectiveness in teams, one ends this review of the team toolkit with the members, without whom the team is nothing, as individual actions and contributions collectively define the team’s output. That output can be more or less than the sum of the individual contributions. Teamwork is not a must, it is called for to deliver more than what individual members can contribute alone, as a simple sum. There is no question that teamwork requires effort and discipline, or as Pat Riley states, sacrifice. That sacrifice should be worth it in terms of the additional value produced by the team compared with the simple sum of the contributions by individual members.

The sacrifice also has another corollary: people do not wake up in the morning eager to sacrifice. Quite the contrary, only heroes do. Therein lies a key challenge of managing teams: to extract the highest value from the individual members, in a specific context. It is because the team result will greatly depend on the efforts and contributions of all team members, that great attention needs to be played to the individual members. This is the justification for what, in the American language, is referred to as “buy-in.” The term sounds excessively transactional, particularly in a team context. A better word is Individual Commitment (I). It is the last element in building and managing teams, since, when asked for their commitment, team members need to know what exactly they are committing to.

Buy-in falls more under Theory X, which is pretty much XXth century “carrot and stick” managerial thinking. So is the notion of sacrifice. Daniel Pink (2009) has elegantly summarized what behavioral science has revealed as motivating people. His summary is a frontal attack on what business often regards as key motivators, identifying them as excessively extrinsic when intrinsic rewards are more powerful. Pink relies on Self-Determination Theory, as advocated by Deci and Ryan (1985), and summarizes the key intrinsic rewards motivating individuals as autonomy, mastery, and purpose. When individuals are put in a position where these drives are activated, individuals outperform. When individuals cannot connect with these intrinsic motivators, the chances of outperformance are greatly reduced.

That then is the object of the last element of team management: garnering individual commitments of team members, possibly making the desirable and
feasible adjustments to the five previous elements so that all team members perform, and that the team hopefully outperforms. This is a delicate exercise. The danger is that the team leader excessively pays attention to the motivation of certain individuals at the expense of others. The adherence to the mission – as summarized by GVRu – should steer the discussion here, the purpose indeed being to improve the performance of the team, and not the satisfaction of “star” individuals.

Figure 1 reviews the six defining elements of our high-performance model and indicates the desirable sequence in which these elements ought to be addressed.

4. Performance and its Measurement

Business teams can learn a lot from sports teams. One of the authors, having been a tennis and field hockey player, became a tennis and field hockey coach, and is now applying and further developing the learnings gathered during this coaching journey to corporate and business teams, as well as sports teams.

One of the applications concerns the definition of success, or failure, and the mental preparation of the next game, or even the championship. Once players have been selected, the key question is to see how far the coach can lead the team to performance. The notion of performance in sports is particularly interesting for business teams, where target setting often leads to demotivation, which is just the opposite of what is sought for.

The good target setting practice is illustrated in Figure 2. It consists in defining performance as going beyond the delivery of the targeted result. Indeed, the purpose of performance is to induce the team to aim to exceed what needs to be delivered. This has a dual goal: first, to ensure victory by building a cushion against the unavoidable hazards of a competitive sports game, and second, and more importantly, to induce the team to continuously improve by consistently aiming for excellence, so as to exceed normal expectations, without any promise to achieve it. The play consists in keeping the team focused on performance, while going beyond again, aiming for high performance.

For this a double three-level performance grid is both simple, useful and sufficient for inducing high performance, and avoiding failure. Once a team can achieve performance, it continues its ambition, by shifting its sights to producing an exploit, or high performance, which typically requires special circumstances, such as luck, or bad luck on the other side. The famous 7-1 loss of the Brazilian soccer team to Germany in the 2014 World Cup played on home turf is one instance of this. Brazil had some of its better players out due to injuries or yellow cards, did not have an A-level team in any case, and lost control of the game. The German team, already superior, played superb football, scoring 4 goals in 6 minutes. The Brazilian players left the field in tears, knowing they had been part of the worst defeat in Brazilian football history.
It is precisely to avoid the outcome faced by the Brazilians that coaches, when planning the game, also ask the players to consider the possibility of ending up, during the game, “below the bar.” Again, three levels are considered: **dissatisfaction, disappointment, and failure.** When one enters the area of dissatisfaction, the attention shifts to avoid sliding further down, and returning, as soon as possible, to the positive side of the double pyramid. When preparing the game, scenarios are presented, and strategies discussed and devised to face those contrarian scenarios.

It is the repeated consideration of these alternate scenarios that build resilience and agility in a team. And the better this preparation is, the easier it becomes to avoid the negative territory.

A final word on the most critical exercise, that of “setting the bar.” The team that often ends in the performance or high-performance areas signals that the bar has been set too low, by virtue of the improvement of the team's capabilities. Conversely, the team that, notwithstanding its best efforts, too often ends up in the negative area signals that the bar has been set too high, and hence that bar should be lowered.

“Bar (or target) setting” is a truly dynamic exercise. The practice confirms that there is no truly “optimal” setting of the bar, the ideal bar depending on too many factors. The idea is to produce targets that, once considered and analyzed, ensure a greater chance of a win, while reducing the possibilities of major defeat. Theory X managers typically set the bar high, convinced that they need to use this as a stick to obtain performance. This results in “bar games” where those on the receiving end will find many reasons why the bar is set too high, and unfairly so, with negative motivational implications.

The double pyramid in Figure 2 aligns with Theory Y, which knows, following Self-Determination Theory, that the bars set by those implementing are more readily adhered to and pursued than bars set by supervisors. The resolution lies in involving the team in target setting, while recognizing and respecting the authority of the team leader. One way is to start by asking the team to define what they would regard as high-performance targets, and targets that if not achieved, represent failure. The “must deliver” falls in between these two targets – and team members might now be asked what they regard as reasonable goals, that represent an achievement but can be reasonably committed to. From there, the engagement of the team in its own targets continues by asking for performance targets – and for targets that would represent the limit below which disappointment is justified.

This conversation will inform her or himself of the views of the team – and allows the leader to engage the team in target setting, still leaving the leader with the option of increasing the target above that which the team suggests, but with some justification. But another is to accept the lower target suggested by the team, but commit the team to achieve the performance target, and possibly the high-performance target. The engagement then continues with examining the negative scenarios, where results fall short, and engaging the team on formulating
strategies that allow such outcomes to be avoided. For further details on this approach, referred to as Fair Process Leadership, we refer the interested reader to Massa et al. (2023).

We now illustrate applications of the Beckhard-Goudsmet-Van der Heyden model.

5. Illustrating the GVRu/RoP/I Model

#1 – Self Evaluations of Four Project Teams

Figure 3 shows the self-evaluations of four project teams at the end of their project. These project teams were executives in an INSEAD Company-Specific Program. They were tasked to reflect and propose solutions on specific company issues identified by senior executives and had nearly a year to do so. The executives chose which project team they wished to work. Once groups of 6 to 8 executives were formed, they were asked to structure their teamwork using the GVRu/RoP/I methodology.

The self-evaluations took place close to a year later, after projects had been delivered. Team members were also asked to evaluate the quality of delivered results, as well as the overall quality of team functioning. Figure 3 presents the numerical averages of the team and project self-evaluations by team members, in increasing order of the quality of delivered results and quality of team functioning.

The best performing teams (C and D) did better at setting up the project (GVRu). Team C was less effective in role allocations and processes, creating team functioning issues, which team D avoided. However, the latter did not obtain the full results of its higher GVRu scores due to doing a bit less well on roles and processes, leading to a relatively lower overall score on delivered results and team functioning.

Team A overcame their lower RoP scores due to individual commitments that match their GVRu scores. Team B is the most homogeneous and was nicely rewarded for that in terms of delivered results, whereas quality of team functioning was at a level that is consistent with the ratings of the individual dimensions of our model.

#2 – Self Evaluations of An Executive Committee

We here briefly describe the application of our methodology to the functioning of the Executive Committee of an international financial services company. One of the authors met the EC in 2014, and met the same team again, one year later. The initial meeting was preceded by a thorough evaluation of the EC's functioning by each of its members. The first meeting was devoted to reporting on the results from the evaluation, discussion pain points and issues, and formulating an improvement agenda of actions. The team agreed to meet again one year later to evaluate their progress.

Figure 4a presents the scoring in two successive years, and shows the overall improvement as reported by the team members. Figure 4b shows the spread of
views on the overall realized performance of the EC in each of these years. The 2014 improvement agenda led to a more homogeneous view on the team’s performance and the performance improvement is notable. Figure 4c details the energy levels of the team members, which are key to their individual contributions and hence of the team’s resulting performance. All five fundamental energy levels - SQ=(Quantity of)Spirit, EQ=Emotion, IQ=Intelligence, TQ=Time, PhQ=Action – have seen considerable improvements, resulting in improved team functioning.

The comments from individual members one year after the initial meeting attest to this. Figure 4d shares a few of these comments.

### #3 – Comments from an accomplished Everest Climber and Guide

We submitted our model to an expert climber, David Breashears, who guided many teams on Everest, including in the fateful 1996 year known for the tragedies that hit several of the climbing teams that year (Breashears et al., 2011).

Our discussion was in the context of the case that we jointly wrote. Though not aware of the model, Breashears immediately validated the usefulness of the model as a checklist. Each time he or other teams ran into trouble was indeed due to a failure in one or several of the six dimensions of the GVRu/RoP/I model. His additional comments give further credence to the model and are mentioned here as a final illustration of the model.

First, Breashears confirmed that he pays considerable attention to building the foundations for the performance of his teams (GVRu). In the IMAX film expedition described in the case, he stressed that the team was aiming for an exploit: filming Everest with an IMAX camera had never been done. Indeed, simply bringing the camera up the mountain was an achievement by itself, requiring tremendous skill, energies, and preparation. Breashears would never commit the team to go to the top, which was a dangerous goal to pursue, since, referring to the weather and other dangers, the mountain “has to allow us to climb it.” One fundamental trap for climbers is that the summit as a goal becomes ever more seductive as climbers get closer to it, particularly in what is called the “death zone”. This has caused many tragedies, and seems a hard lesson to learn.

The goal (G) pursued by the IMAX team was a very complex project, more exploration than execution. Indeed, the team was not pursuing a simple objective to be achieved at all costs. The obsessive pursuit of the wrong goal contributed to the tragedies incurred by other teams on the mountain that May. Breashears builds optionality in his projects, which are key to managing the unpredictable conditions on the mountain, and the state of the team.

Critical for him is the selection of team members on values (V) like being selfless, having respect for the mountain and teammates, sharing the values of prudent and creative daring that characterizes great mountaineers, and possessing the virtue of excellence, which allows high standards, greatly simplifies team leadership, and allows people to drive themselves for overachievement, which has its own risks, and which thus needs to be managed too.
That is precisely why Breashears insists on strict rules (Ru) such as “going up is optional, coming down is mandatory” and “we have options and slack.” This optionality is applied to leadership roles as well. Breashears insists on the project not depending on one leader, who might hurt himself or fall prey to altitude sickness. Hence, the notion of shared leadership with his two assistant guides. These practices and rules were missing or violated by the teams that met with tragedy.

Once the common team foundation or platform is built, roles (Ro) can be allocated. An interesting notion is his view that teams are built on weakness: it is the unique talent (much more than the niceness) of another team member that forms the unique glue with the other members who do not share that talent. Even novices on Everest are given roles as risk managers, being encouraged to ask simple, but potentially lifesaving questions such as “Is this really fine?” Sherpas are key members too. They know the mountain better than anyone else and their input was major in the decision to turn back on the first ascent.

The final and key ingredient, however, to sustained performance lies in processes (P) – refined over many years of experience and shared with team members in very explicit ways. The film camera was experimented with in Utah, before reaching Nepal, and its weight had been cut in half by the time it reached Everest. Plenty of time was devoted to team building, particularly with the novices. Planning included 2 attempts, and indeed they turned down on their first climb, an option that the other teams did not have (committed to 6-week expeditions, contrasting to several months for the film team). Finally, scenarios, summarizing many years of mountain climbing experience, were studied, and refined. Team members were asked to challenge them and come up with improvements. If they could not, these scenarios became the “law of the land.” Finally, every day ended with a debrief, allowing to learn the lessons from the day, and discuss issues that may have arisen.

Individual commitments (I), thanks to these practices, only increased, resulting in greater confidence and trust in the project, its foundations, its leaders, and the members, and finally the processes whose role was increasingly recognized.

The IMAX film was a great success. It gained Hollywood fame in the documentary category. The team also saved lives when they realized others were in grave trouble due to a sudden storm coming up from the valley and hitting climbers in their descent before they could find refuge in camp. A film, written to document the gradual increase in height of Everest (due to tectonic plate shifts), became a film about guiding and mountaineering, the danger that Everest represents, the selfishness and idiocy of certain climbers, and the sacrifices that others made to save those in trouble.

The danger, according to Breashears, is not just the mountain, but what Everest comes to represent in people’s minds. It is the closing line of the film.
6. Conclusions

The Purpose of this paper was to extend Beckhard’s high performance team model – often referred to as being due to Pritchett-Tichy-Cohen, or even more simply Tichy – with the introduction of two dimensions absent from the original Beckhard GRPI model. This yields the more robust GVRu/RoP/I model.

This model also is complete in terms of referring to the 6 different ways one can manage teams. These additional elements allow an easier application of the model inside organizations, which typically present “teams of teams” structures and contexts.

This updated Beckhard-Goudsmet-Van der Heyden model more clearly identifies three levels: 1) those that are common to all team members, and that provide solidarity amongst members; 2) differential elements that are specific to certain individuals or sub-groups; 3) elements that are specific to each member. They should be handled in that order.

The other change with respect to the earlier Beckhard’s model is that the final element does not only refer to interpersonal elements, but indeed to personal elements and views, which indeed are influenced by interpersonal elements such as roles or the way processes are declined, in the way other individuals show solidarity, and also in the Mission of the project. Referring to Self-Determination Theory, we did underline the importance of Individual Commitment as a major key to performance, if not outperformance, even though it is the final element in the model.

Finally, the relevance and applicability of the model was illustrated through a set of examples.
7. References


Figure 1: GVRu/RoP/I
The High-Performance Model of Beckhard-Goudsmet-Van der Heyden
Figure 2: The High-Performance Double Pyramid
Source: Alain Goudsmet (Mentally Fit Institute)
Figure 3: Self-Evaluations of Four Project Teams on GVRu/RoP/I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of variation</th>
<th>AVERAGE 2014</th>
<th>AVERAGE 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[-0.2 ↔ +0.2]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.3 ↔ 0.5]</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.6 ↔ 1]</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] ≥ 1.1</td>
<td>↑↑↑</td>
<td>↑↑↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHARED GOALS</strong></td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we have a motivating long-term corporate vision? Mid-term corporate targets and objectives? Short-term priority list of «key corporate projects»?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHARED VALUES</strong></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we have a set of corporate values that are understood, fully committed to, practiced in all Business and Corporate Units?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHARED RULES OF THE GAME</strong></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there some clear rules of the game that apply to EC members? Are these rules and principles consistently applied by all members?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are our roles as EC members well defined and understood?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROCESSSES</strong></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do we have the right processes that are key for effective EC functioning (commitment/alignment, communication, support, challenge, control)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do EC members individually fully commit to the above corporate Goals, Values, Rules/Principles, Roles &amp; Responsibilities, Processes?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4a: EC GVRu/RoP/I Scores in one year apart
**EC PERFORMANCE SCORING : 2014-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>FAILING 0 to 0.5</th>
<th>DISAPPOINTING 0.6 to 1.5</th>
<th>UNSATISFACTORY 1.6 to 2.5</th>
<th>SATISFACTORY 2.6 to 3.5</th>
<th>PERFORMING 3.6 to 4.5</th>
<th>OUTSTANDING 4.6 to 5</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.5↑↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale of variation:
- $[-0.2 \leftrightarrow +0.2]$ ≈
- $[0.3 \leftrightarrow 0.5]$ ↑
- $[0.6 \leftrightarrow 1]$ ↑↑
- $[\ldots \geq 1.1]$ ↑↑↑

Figure 4b: EC Self-Reported Performance Scores in two successive years
## EC ENERGIES: 2014-2015

(SQ=Spirit, EQ=Emotion, IQ=Intelligence, TQ=Time, PhQ=Action)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of variation</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[-0.2 ↔ 0.2]</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.3 ↔ 0.5]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0.6 ↔ 1]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[… ≥ 1.1]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### SQ
EC spirit, purpose and mission – degree to which a positive spirit prevails in EC meetings, to which purpose and mission of the EC are providing energy to the members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### EQ
EC commitment, ambition, and care in how it accomplishes its mission: how much drive is there in EC to perform and excel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IQ
The degree to which EC has the required competences, knowledge and information to dispense its mission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TQ
EC time allocation: the way in which EC discussions and decisions are timely, whether patience is applied when appropriate and, more generally, whether time allocated to EC is about right

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PHQ
EC action orientation: ability to make the right decisions, to have the courage to address difficult issues, for its members to be exemplary in their behavior and to assume the responsibilities that come with such position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### AVERAGE ENERGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Figure 4c: EC Self-Reported Energy Scores in two successive years**
QUALITATIVE COMMENTS FROM EC (2015)

EC performance improved because:
- “The EC is playing more and more its role as a decision body…”
- “Efficient body for decision making and steering a complex group”
- “More strategic topics. More share of arguments, more discussion, less detail. Everybody expresses an opinion”
- “Better level of exchanges compared with last year and more diversified agenda towards business strategic topics”
- “Processes work better, documents arrive earlier, they are more concise. The governance of the committees is better, wasting less of our time…”

However, several points prevented EC performance to achieve a higher score:
- “EC still is not the governance body where discussions take place between the decision takers. Not enough opinions are shared and it is difficult to propose another angle of view for the topics introduced by a peer…”
- “We are still discussing about solutions that seem to be already packaged with little co-construction”
- “The business orientation while improving is still limited. Too many topics on the agenda. Contribution to the final decision could be higher”
- “There is still a level of politics involved in some decisions, whenever the particular interest of one or more EC members is involved. In my opinion EC has too many members”
- “Could be more involved on strategy, business and customers. Interaction between members has improved but can still be improved”
- “EC today is very much based on the ability of CEO to steer the company. If CEO were to leave the company, we would have to rethink the role and way of work of the EC.”

Figure 4d: EC Member Comments explaining the 2015 Performance Scores
Notes

i One executive from the chemical industry challenged this argument stating that in his company, safety was always quoted as priority #1, reflecting the risk of chemical processes. The counter, consistent with the model, is that the first choice is whether one joins a chemical firm, or not. And that choice is indeed driven by that person’s goals. Concerning the firm itself, it also has its own goals. When pursuing these goals, the firm then asks its employees to consider safety as Value#1.

ii Some owners and leaders call for indiscriminate loyalty, regardless of the goals that need to be delivered, and regardless of the role distribution. This of course is risky for those that agree to be loyal. It is one of the key practices in fraudulent organizations such as the Mafia, who decline the GVRu/RoP/I in reverse order, starting with Individual Commitments.

iii Alain Goudsmet is the founder of Mentally Fit Institute, a coaching organization focused on the application of sports techniques to business, with the objective of energizing individuals, teams, and organizations. For more detail, see https://mentallyfit.global/about-us/.

iv The worst loss in Brazilian soccer history until that time was a 6-0 loss to Uruguay in 1920.

v The 1996 Everest tragedy has become widely described and commented and has become the object of several films. The INSEAD case describes both the journey of the filming team led by Breashears, and the journeys of two other teams, on the mountain that year with Breashears, which met tragedy.