Level 2 Diploma in Team Leading

Chapter 2

Building teams and managing performance

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Building Teams and Managing Performance

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Workshop 2 and the contents of Chapter2 of this workbook are designed to provide underpinning learning for the learning outcomes 2, 3 and 5 of **Unit M&L6** (those outcome NOT greyed out below)

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Introduction

This Workbook and the various exercises within it, introduce you to the challenges of the principles of team leading and managing performance which are assessed in **Unit M&L6**. Key skills are examined that will enable you to confidently tackle these elements of your role or future role as a team leader and/or supervisor. The exercises will require you to consider theories that align with each topic but, importantly, you will be expected to make parallels with your own experience in the workplace, which will help in ensuring that you can lead your team effectively.

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Understanding Team Dynamics

What is a team?

Activity: Create in your own words a definition of a team:

One definition of a team:

> *'A team is a small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable'*

(Source: Katzenbach, 1993)

In other words: people with skills working to performance goals. There is something significant though in the definition above. Specifically, Katzenbach asserts that each member of the team is accountable for his or her performance within the team. Being accountable is fine but team members need to know what is expected of them – i.e. what standards they must meet. The responsibility for ensuring that team members know what is expected of them will largely fall to the team leader to explain and often to define.

Team Types and their Purpose

In order to consider how to get the best out of a team, the leader needs to be able to recognise what type of team he or she is working with.

Groups and Teams

Activity: Using the Internet and other sources, describe each of the following types of group or team:

Group or Team Type	Characteristics
Working Group	
Pseudo Team	
Potential Team	
Real Team	
High Performance Team	

Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith, in their 1993 book *The Wisdom of Teams,* suggested the following characteristics:

Group or Team Type	**Characteristics**
Working Group	• No need to be a team • Interactions between team members limited to information sharing • No mutual accountability
Pseudo Team	• There is a potential need for a team • Might perceive itself as a team • Not interested in sharing a vision or goals but would benefit from doing so • Can reduce organisational performance rather than enhance it
Potential Team	• Recognises need to be a team • Trying to improve • Seeks collective accountability • Requires more clarity about purpose, goals and common ways of working
Real Team	• People with complementary skills • Mutually accountable • Clear purpose, goals and ways of working • Performance exceeds that of a working group
High Performance Team	• Clear purpose, goals and ways of working • Complementary skills • Mutual accountability • Outstanding commitment to the team, including personal growth • Significantly out-performs the working group and potential and real teams

Activity: Thinking about your team, what type of team is it? What are the indicators on which you are basing your assessment? Make notes below:

Team Development

How does a team develop and grow? Realistically, there is a natural process through which any team has to go before it can achieve outstanding levels of performance. While it is fair to say that people can be thrown together on a task and work effectively for a short time to achieve a goal or several goals, most teams take time to grow and to develop.

Tuckman's Team Development Model

In the mid-1960s Dr Bruce W Tuckman, a much-respected educational psychologist published his *'Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing'* team-development model. The essence of his theory is that a team or a group has to go through a series of stages before it can be truly effective. He observed that the 4-stage process often happens without team members actually noticing or being aware of it happening! Tuckman suggests, however, that an understanding of the Model can help significantly in enabling a team to reach a higher level of performance, usually more quickly and less painfully.

Tuckman's original Model features 4 distinct stages:

- **Stage 1: Forming**. In the *Forming* Stage, team members work hard to fit into the team. People focus on the routine and try to avoid conflict and disagreement. Most people want to gather information about the team and work out where they fit in. This Stage is often perceived as a comfortable stage in team development, but it is one in which not much actually gets done.

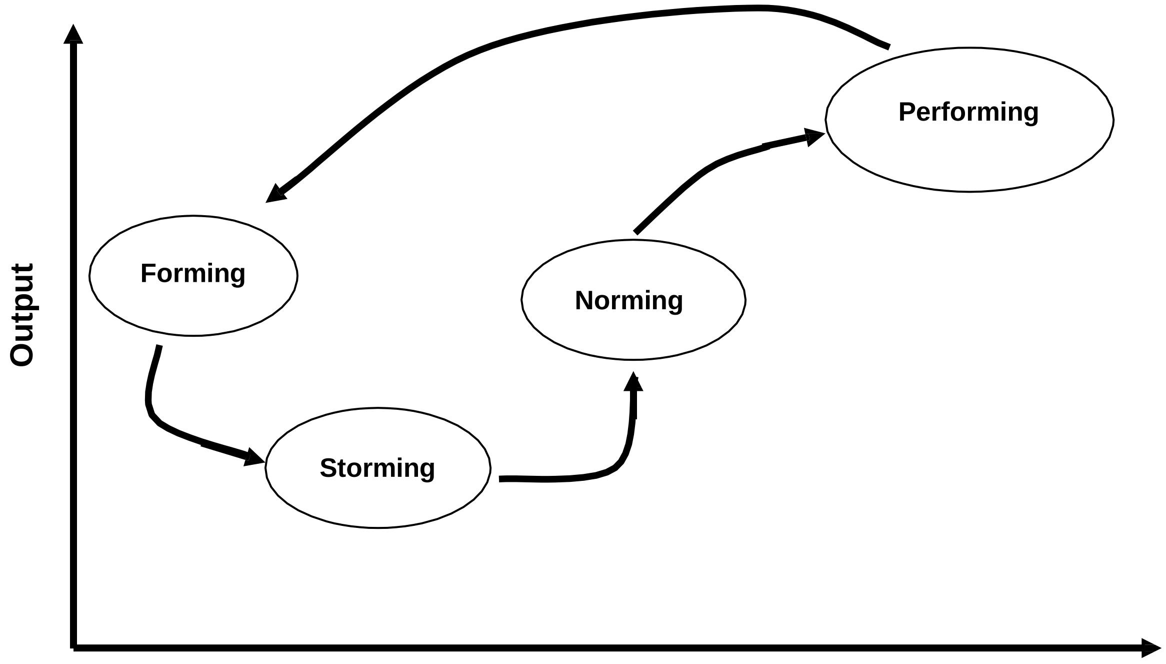
- **Stage 2: Storming.** In the *Storming* Stage, team members begin to disagree. There inevitably will be petty disagreements over minor irritations, often related to individual roles and responsibilities. People will ask *'whose job is it to do this?'* or state *'this is my job'.* While some minor confrontations will arise that are quickly and easily dealt with, it opens the door for the important issues to be addressed. The way in which the small issues are resolved will set also the tone for resolution of the more significant challenges. For some members of the team, this Stage can be extremely uncomfortable but it is essential if the team is to develop. Unless team members are prepared to address the specific issues that arise, the team can get stuck in the *Storming* Stage. Sometimes, the team moves to the *Norming* Stage without properly completing the *Storming* Stage. When this happens, there is a risk that the team will slip back into *Storming*.

- **Stage 3: Norming.** Following the turbulence of *Storming*, the resolution of disagreements and conflict enables team members to better understand what is required to achieve the task. *The Norming* Stage is where the team agrees how it will work together, establishing processes, procedures and team roles and responsibilities. *Norming* will create a cohesive, effective team, provided the team has *'stormed'* effectively.

- **Stage 4: Performing:** *Performing* is considered to be the point at which the team, and team members, are able to work both independently and together effectively. People know who is responsible for specific tasks; there is a strong sense of pride and purpose, and a high level of trust, honesty and loyalty. This is reflected in high team morale. Some teams never reach this stage.

The diagram below shows Tuckman's model of team development and highlights the iterative nature of the process – teams form and reform all the time – when the people, their roles or the organisation itself goes through some form of change.

Tuckman's Forming, Storming, Norming Performing Model



(Adapted from Tuckman, 1977)

The diagram suggests that, during the *Forming* Stage, it is likely that the team will deliver an adequate output or performance. When it moves into the *Storming* Stage, performance is likely to dip as conflict and confrontation impair team and individual effectiveness. During *Norming* team performance improves but may not reach the level of output or effectiveness achieved in Stage 1. It is only once *norming* is complete that the team begins to perform and can move toward high performance.

Team Roles

Team Roles and Responsibilities

The need for clear roles and responsibilities is a key component of the team. From a business perspective, it is important that within each team in the company or organisation there is clarity between individual roles and responsibilities. Indeed, it is both costly and inefficient if roles and responsibilities are not properly and clearly defined. That is not to say that people cannot be trained to do other roles within the team and it makes very good sense to do so. By training up (or multi-skilling) team members, we can create opportunities for people to rotate through different roles – which can be energising in itself – and, importantly, it gives the ability to cope if someone leaves the team or is off work sick for any considerable length of time.

Belbin's Team Roles Model

Dr Meredith Belbin, along with colleagues at the Henley Management Centre, first began observing team performance in the early 1970s to establish why some teams performed better than others. They were particularly keen to discover how and if the dynamics of the team affected performance positively or negatively and to determine whether those team dynamics could be controlled. Their research – the results of which were set out in Dr Belbin's book, *Management Teams: Why They Succeed Or Fail* (1981) – revealed that the difference between success and failure was predicated not upon the talents, skills or intellect of team members but rather by the behaviour of team members.

As their research progressed, Belbin and his colleagues observed and identified that there were in fact a number of specific behaviours demonstrated by team members that defined the contribution that each made. Belbin referred to these as *'Team Roles'* and defined a Team Role as *'a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way'*.

Belbin's research identified 9 Team Roles and suggested that different individuals were capable of displaying a number of the Team Roles to differing degrees. In other words, while each team member might have a particular preference (and the necessary skills) for a given role, he or she could also undertake other roles to a greater or lesser degree.

Activity: Using the Internet and other sources, identify Belbin's 9 Team Roles and, in your own words, describe the characteristics a team member might display for each role.

The Nine Team Roles

Role	Description	Team Member Characteristics
Plant	Highly effective teams need creativity. Successful teams have at least one creative person 'planted' in the Team	Unconventional, highly creative and good at problem-solving
Monitor Evaluator	The person who provides a critical eye, evaluating options and making considered decisions	Dispassionate, logical and objective decision-makers
Co-ordinator	A leadership role, requiring prioritisation and appropriate delegation of work	Objectives/goals-focused, people-oriented
Resource Investigators	Keep the team focused on the output and benefit of completion	Outward-looking, aware of the environment
Implementers	Convert the ideas of others into workable, efficient solutions	Practical, task-focused and efficient planners
Completer Finishers	Provide the 'quality' dimension of the team. Scrutinising completed work for errors, ensuring the final product achieves a high standard	High attention to detail, quality-focused
Team Workers	Multi-skilled team members who will turn their hand to any task that needs to be done: the *'oil in the cogs'*	Versatile, adaptable and flexible
Shapers	Necessary to maintain focus and momentum, the Shaper provides drive to the team	Task-focused, driven, and willing to challenge
Specialist	Provider of in-depth specialist knowledge	Specialist skills, knowledge and experience

During his research, Belbin observed that some roles were perceived by team members to be 'prized' or more 'high profile' than others. He also noted that where an individual displayed a particularly clear preference for a given role, that individual could become inward looking and focus on the specific role rather than the desired team outcome. In other words, team members who enjoyed and were satisfied by their role could lose sight of how they could contribute in other areas. From the research, Belbin concluded that a successful team was one in which each of the behaviours was able to fully contribute.

He observed, for example, that a team lacking *Completer Finishers* was unlikely to deliver a high quality product. Equally, a team with too many *Completer Finishers* was likely to spend too long striving for perfection at the expense of delivering the product on time. Similarly, the absence of a *Shaper* would mean that the team was likely to lose sight of important deadlines and milestones. The presence of too many *Shapers* would often manifest itself in 'in-fighting' as team members jostled to assert their authority.

One of the most important findings that Belbin and his research team made was recognising that an individual's strengths could also manifest themselves as 'allowable weaknesses'. It is easy to see how a balanced team – a team that has a mix of people who fit into the various Team Roles – can achieve considerable success but what happens when a particular strength becomes a weakness? For example, what happens when an *Implementer* is asked to change his or her plans? Belbin observed that the *Implementer* might be slow, or even resist, changing their plan even though the proposed change is a positive one. He concluded that this was an 'allowable weakness': the benefit of the *Implementer's* strength and contribution outweighed their potential resistance to change.

Activity: Consider each of the Team Roles and identify the likely 'allowable weakness' for each:

Role	Strengths	Allowable Weakness
Plant	Unconventional, highly creative and good at problem-solving	
Monitor Evaluator	Dispassionate, logical and objective decision-makers	
Co-ordinator	Objectives/goals-focused, people-oriented	
Resource Investigators	Outward-looking, aware of the environment	
Implementers	Practical, task-focused and efficient planners	Might be resistant to changes to plan or procedures
Completer Finishers	High attention to detail, quality-focused	
Team Workers	Versatile, adaptable and flexible	
Shapers	Task-focused, driven, and willing to challenge	
Specialist	Specialist skills, knowledge and experience	

More information on Belbin's Team Roles Model and allowable weaknesses can be found at www.belbin.com.

Using Team Role Theory for Team Building and Leadership

Having a knowledge of team roles enables you to select team members for particular tasks based on their strengths and preferences within the team, having a 'balanced team' allows the potential and productivity of the team to be maximised. Moreover, understanding each other's preferred team roles allows us to understand why our colleagues work the way they do. Allowable weaknesses help explain the frustrations that can arise when team members operate or behave differently to ourselves.

For leaders the benefits come from being able to allocate tasks according to peoples' strengths and to have a greater understanding of how to get the best from people when they work together and to avoid conflict.

Managing Conflict

Conflict: *'Friction or opposition resulting from actual or perceived differences or incompatibilities'.*

(The Business Dictionary)

Typical Sources of Conflict in Teams

Activity: List at least 6 of the typical causes of conflict in teams:

Causes of workplace conflict are potentially endless but might include:

- Poor communications;
- Autocratic leadership style;
- Not involving those impacted in decision-making;
- Not providing sufficient resources to match the demands;
- Having ‘office favourites’;
- Unfair distribution of tasks;
- Character clashes, misalignment of values;
- Failure to provide adequate job descriptions;
- Not understanding peoples roles;
- ‘Changing the goalposts’ unnecessarily;
- Lack of time spent talking to staff – seeming never to come out of the office;
- Time wasting in unnecessary meetings;
- Perceived lack of appreciation for people’s efforts;
- Being unapproachable;
- Poor planning;
- Jealousy of others;
- Taking the praise for others’ work; and/or,
- Being unresponsive to suggestions.

Handling Conflict Constructively

Handling conflict constructively is a useful management skill involving:

- Understanding the issue and its implications;
- Asking yourself ‘what it is it I don’t know yet’?
- Acting impartially;
- Making a clear distinction between ‘the individual’ and ‘the problem’;
- Examining the issue as a shared problem to be solved co-operatively;
- Not airing negative opinions;
- Being straightforward and unambiguous in communicating;
- Conveying that you care when dealing with the other person’s concerns and needs;
- Maintaining contact with the other party, always working to improve the relationship;
- Exploring alternatives and mutually acceptable ways of satisfying those needs;
- Making it easy for the other party to be constructive; and,
- Developing ability to look at the conflict from the outside.

Managing conflict requires assertive behaviour and communication, along with an ability to separate the issue from the ‘person’. Resolution of the issue will often naturally reduce the adverse behaviours that people display in conflict.

Ways in Which Leaders Can Motivate Their Teams

Activity: Create a definition of motivation.

One definition of motivation is:

'The willingness to exert high levels of effort *to reach* organizational goals*, with satisfaction of some* individual need'

(After: Stephen, 2000)

There are 3 key elements that seem to drive motivation. They are:

1. Intensity: how hard a person tries;
2. Direction: toward beneficial goal; and,
3. Persistence: how long a person tries.

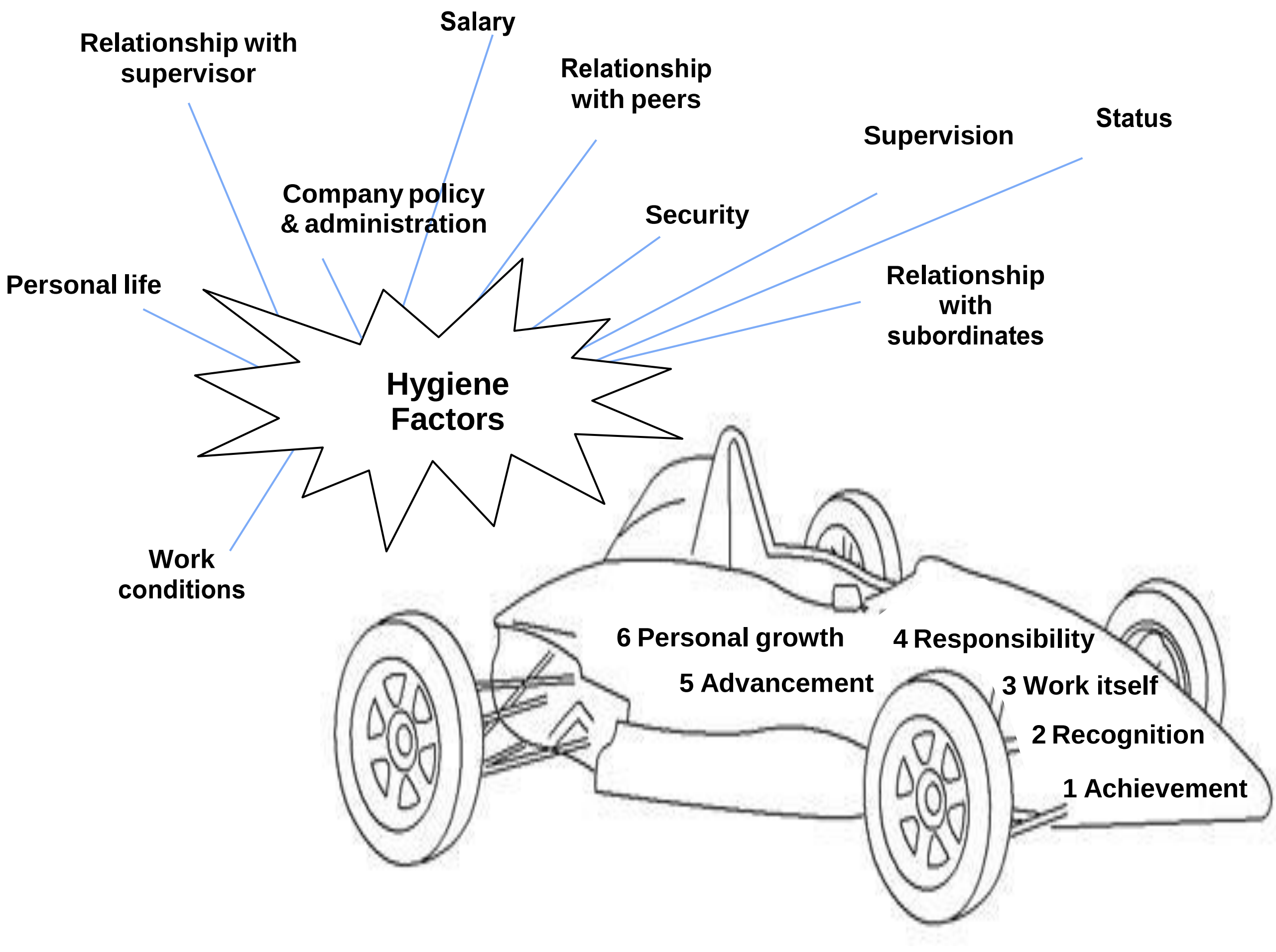
One of the most prominent and accepted theories of motivation comes from a social psychologist Frederick Herzberg, who made observations of the motivation in workers at the Ford Motor Company over a period of some 5 years. He segregated motivational factors into 2 discrete sections, which he called *'satisfiers'* (motivators) and *'hygiene factors'* (dissatisfiers/de-motivators). Often this is referred to as a 2-factor theory.

The table on the next page shows Herzberg's categorisation of the factors which he concluded were either motivators or hygiene factors

Motivators	Hygiene Factors
Recognition	Salary
Achievement	Work conditions
Work itself	Security
Responsibility	Personal life
Advancement	Company policy and administration
Personal growth	Supervision
	Relationship with peers
	Relationship with supervisor
	Relationship with subordinates
	Status
	Other benefits (health insurance, company car, etc)

(Adapted from Herzberg 1959)

The 2 motivators that were found to be most effective were *'Achievement'* and *'Recognition'*. The diagram below shows the factors represented in a way that differentiates between the motivators (inside the racing car) and the hygiene factors (outside and around the racing car).



(Adapted from: Herzberg Format: AH Raymondson, 2012)

Herzberg's key findings were that:

- People may be dissatisfied by a bad environment but they are rarely made satisfied by a good environment;
- The prevention of dissatisfaction is just as important as encouragement of satisfaction;
- Hygiene factors operate independently of motivation factors. An individual can be highly motivated in his or her work and be dissatisfied with his work environment;
- All hygiene factors are equally important, although their frequency of occurrence differs considerably;
- Hygiene improvements have short-term effects. Any improvements result in a short-term removal or prevention of dissatisfaction; and,
- Hygiene needs are cyclical and come back to a starting point. This leads to the *'what have you done for me lately?'* syndrome.

Activity: Record below, what you consider to be the implications of Herzberg's observations and analysis for motivating your team?

You may have responded with specific observations relating to your own situation. However as a general application of Herzberg, team leaders who ensure that they address Herzberg's top 2 motivational factors – recognition and achievement – will find that motivation improves. Achievement relates to objective setting and as people achieve the objectives opportunities arise to give people recognition and constructive feedback. There is a parallel here too with the old saying *'catch somebody doing something well – and tell them about it'*.

Interestingly rewards such as pay (i.e. the hygiene factors) are not supported as significant motivators as is popularly believed. Pay according to Herzberg has some but very limited motivational power. However, being under-paid (not paid at the level appropriate to the job responsibilities) would be a big de-motivator. It is often suggested, for example by sales personnel that they are motivated by rewards such as bonuses. In 2-factor theory, bonuses would not be the motivator rather they are recognition of achievement of the targets that earned them the bonus.

Medal and Mission

Petty in his book Teaching Today (1998) offers an approach that enables both recognition and achievement to be part of an on-going technique for motivating your team. When someone has achieved, you give them the ‘medal’: that is a ‘well done’ with an explanation of why and what they have done well and then set the next mission (the new task or developmental objective(s)). The new objective(s) in turn give more opportunity to apply the medal and mission approach.

Understanding Techniques Used to Manage the Work of Teams

Setting Objectives and Targets

The words objectives and targets are often used interchangeably despite being subtly different.

Objectives relate to a defined endpoint of achievement and the preferred direction of change. Objectives, and for that matter Targets, can be precisely defined using the SMART acronym. The 'SMART' acronym has become universal as a framework for setting effective objectives; SMART stands for:

Specific
Measurable
Agreed/Achievable
Realistic
Timed (or Time-bounded)

The characteristics of each element of SMART are defined and amplified below:

Specific

Is the objective clear and precise?
What exactly has to be achieved?

Measurable

Do you know how to measure it (think quality, cost, time, quantity)?
Is it possible to easily ascertain whether the objective has been achieved?

Agreed/Achievable

Agreement with the person undertaking the work leads to greater commitment. Is it achievable? Does the person undertaking the tasks involved see it as achievable too?

Realistic

Do you (and the person undertaking the task) think that the target is sufficiently challenging but also deliverable?

Timed

Have clear timescales for the achievement of the objective been set?

Targets

Targets are effectively aims and tend to be more vague than objectives, but they are often made more specific by being used with other terms such as target sales, delivery target, production target, efficiency target and combined with a suitable measure. For example, a production target might be to produce 15 units per day.

Targets differ slightly from objectives in that when they are set there is likely to be much less known about how or whether the target will be achieved, or what the costs will be in achieving the target. For example, a target could be to increase sales by 45%.

Target-setting is useful in driving performance but care needs to be taken that the targets are not too extreme as they can become demoralising if they are completely unachievable.

Factors to consider when setting targets:

- Do you have a good understanding of the demands on the person(s) that will need to deliver the target?
- What are the competing priorities for the team?
- Have you considered historical performance and whether that performance can realistically be exceeded?
- Are the resources including time, budgets and materials and equipment required to achieve the target(s) sufficient to match the demands?
- Are the targets sufficiently stretching to give challenge but not excessive stress and can they be clearly understood?
- Do individual members of staff have the appropriate capability and competence?
- Is there sufficient and appropriate IT where appropriate?
- What are the key threats that may derail progress towards achievement of targets and how can they be lessened?
- Do you have a plan for monitoring progress towards achieving the target(s)?
- Do you have clear measures of performance?

Workflow and Workflow Patterns

Workflow is a concept that describes the tasks, procedures, sequence, people, tooling etc. involved in a business process. Workflow patterns are logically defined patterns of work. Simply put, if *x* happens then *y* is the pattern that needs to follow. Most routine tasks will follow a typical if not identical work pattern. A workflow approach to evaluating and managing a process would be concerned with ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the processes and their consistency.

In highly complex manufacturing processes, patterns can be identified and programmed into software that drives automated systems so that it can solve problems and iron out any potential blockages in production.

Activity: In what ways might you monitor the work-flow of your team?

There are a variety of possible responses that might have included:

- Independent quality inspections or audits;
- Team quality monitoring/sampling;
- Observations by team leader or others;
- Production/operation records (for example, recording daily output); and,
- Progress reports – including production graphs, etc.

Ensuring Staff Understand Monitoring Systems

In monitoring performance, staff will need to know what standards are expected and how they will be measured against those standards. This will often be communicated via organisational policies and procedures but that alone is unlikely to be sufficient. The team leader's role will include responsibility to disseminate task requirements, including standards, and ensure that they are understood, implemented and achieved. Ultimately it is an on-going communication process.

Quality Standards and Their Purpose

A quality standard is a *'concise statement describing the expected level of service performance or product quality'* (AH Raymondson, 2012). One widely applied definition of quality is *'fit for purpose'* (PRINCE2). It is worth noting that fit for purpose is effectively 'adequate' – that is just right for the job in hand. It is not 'high quality' – which is often taken as the meaning of 'quality' in everyday conversation.

Much of a manager's time will be concerned with ensuring that products and services are undertaken and delivered to the requisite standard (quality), at the expected cost and in the timescales required. Your manager will expect you to ensure, therefore, that your Team achieves the required levels of quality. To enable this to happen we need to understand what standards are to be applied and how to control performance in team production and/or service delivery.

Activity: What do you consider to be the purpose of quality standards?

In a nutshell, the main reason organisations have quality standards is to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer requirements, thereby retaining customers. Customer standards provide benchmarks for performance.

Key Performance Indicators

There are numerous systems used in organisations for measuring performance and work flow. At supervisory level, the focus is more on measuring work performance, output and quality in fairly narrow, but clearly defined areas. To achieve this we need to be able to have an 'indicator' of performance against which we can measure the work performance, output and quality. These measures are often referred to as key performance indicators (KPIs).

Key performance indicators come in three main types:

- **Input KPIs** measure assets and resources used (purchases made) to achieve business results. Examples might include:
    - Funding for training;
    - Raw materials; and
    - Quality of raw materials (e.g. grade 1, 2, 3 etc).
- **Process KPIs** measure the efficiency or productivity of a business process. Examples might include:
    - Production time;
    - Days to deliver a completed order;
    - Number of days to reply to customer requests;
    - Number of personnel trained in use of a piece of equipment; and,
    - Days taken to fill vacancies.
- **Output KPIs** measure the financial and non-financial results of business activities. Examples might include:
    - Sales revenue;
    - Number of new customers;
    - Increase in full-time employees;
    - Return on investment; and,
    - Customer satisfaction.

A mix of the three types of KPIs – process, input, and output – would be applied to give a broad picture of your team or organisational performance. Any variances then need to be investigated and appropriate action needs to be undertaken.

Activity: List at least 2 examples of KPIs that are, or could be, applied in your monitoring of workplace performance:

Identifying and Solving Problems

Problem:

> *'A matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome; a thing that is difficult to achieve.'*

Oxford Dictionary

Recognising Problems

Activity:

In what ways do you become aware of problems at work? List at least 10 ways:

Your answers could be many and varied but may have included, for example:

- Passed to you by your managers;
- Brought to you by your team;
- From outside the organisation – e.g. via complaints;
- Through observation – e.g. misconduct, poor relationships;
- Though failing to meet targets and measures set – e.g. production targets, sales targets, etc;
- Through an unexpected occurrence – e.g. flood, mechanical breakdown, theft;
- From product returns;
- From feedback systems – e.g. computer monitoring of processes, etc;
- From dissatisfaction surveys;
- From analysis of the external environment – e.g. a change in the law;
- From analysis of the internal environment – e.g. insufficient staff; and/or,
- From quality audits.

Defining Problems

To have any chance of resolving problems we need to be able to define what exactly the problem is. The solution will need to address either the root cause or the symptoms or both. For example, if we appease a complainant presenting a defect problem with a product by giving them a replacement, we would probably be addressing the symptoms. In making sure that the cause of the defect was eradicated, we would be addressing the root of the problem.

Some problems are relatively straightforward, such as an employee wanting time off to visit the dentist, while some problems are highly complex and difficult to define and resolve. Problem classifications include:

- **Well-defined Problems**. These problems have a limited set of inputs that have a definite answer and a specific solution is relatively easily achieved.

- **Fuzzy or Messy Problems.** These complex problems have a large set of inputs and operations involved with no obvious definite solution or best answer.

Problem Solving Approaches

The 2 main approaches to problem solving are:

- Rational problem solving; and,
- Creative problem solving.

Rational problem solving involves looking at the problem and finding a solution in a logical and organised way. Whereas creative problem solving seeks to break conventions associated with logical and traditional problem solving by applying creative thinking and random ideas generation to establish innovative solutions.

Root Cause Analysis – Rational Problem Solving

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is an approach to understand fully why something has occurred or why there has been a problem. Things do go wrong, and unwanted incidents and outcomes can occur. If we understand the '*root causes'* of an incident or outcome, corrective measures can be put in place to prevent recurrence of the problem.

By directing corrective measures at the *root cause* of a problem as opposed to the *'symptom'* of the problem, the likelihood of the problem recurring will be reduced. In this way we can get sustainable improvements in output or performance.

There are many different methods and ways to undertake RCA. At its simplest, it is a process for examining an outcome in a systematic way to find out why the situation occurred, and to put in place measures to prevent it from happening again. By considering a range of possible contributory factors in a systematic way with a logical, analytical and enquiring approach, all the relevant root causes of an incident can be identified.

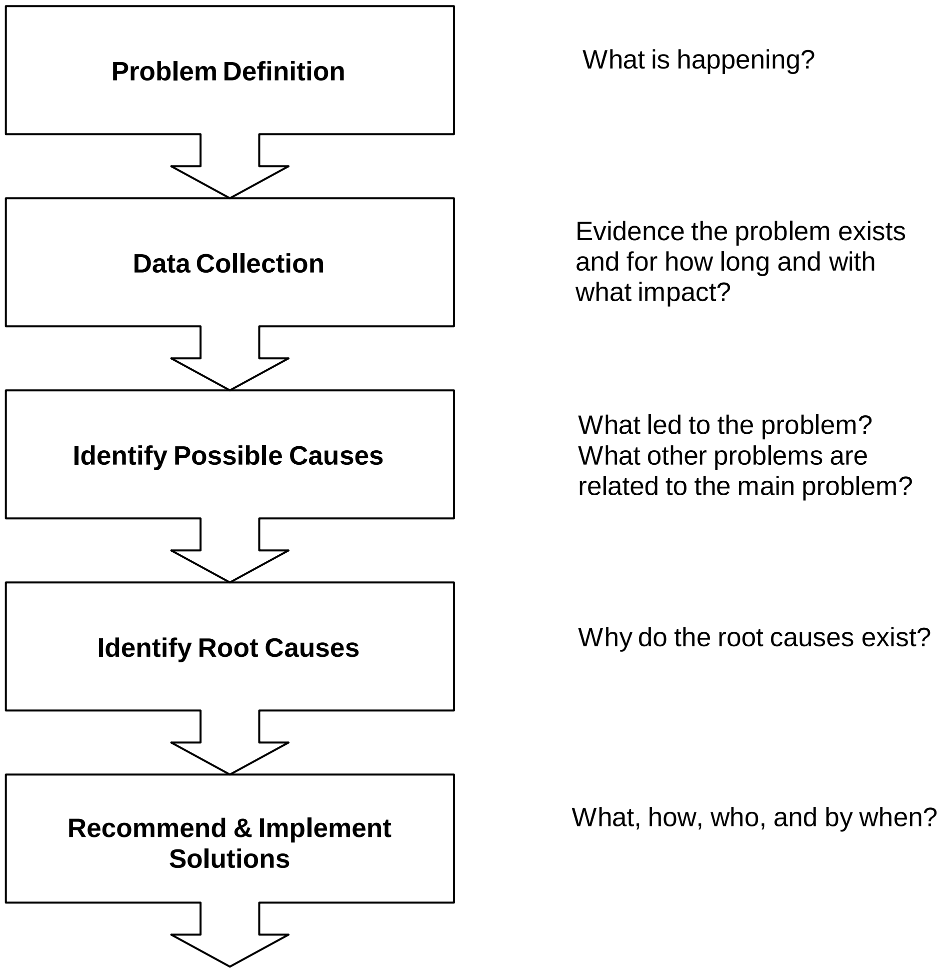
General Principles of Root Cause Analysis

RCA provides a mechanism to ensure that you have sufficient information to make effective decisions. General principles of RCA include:

- RCA is based on the belief that problems are best solved by attempting to correct or eliminate root causes;
- To be effective, RCA must be performed systematically, with conclusions and causes backed up by evidence;
- There is usually more than one potential root cause for a problem; and,
- RCA can transform an old culture that reacts to problems with a new culture that looks to understand and learn from problems. This leads to a culture that is open and seeks to identify and solve problems before they escalate.

Root Cause Analysis – Processes

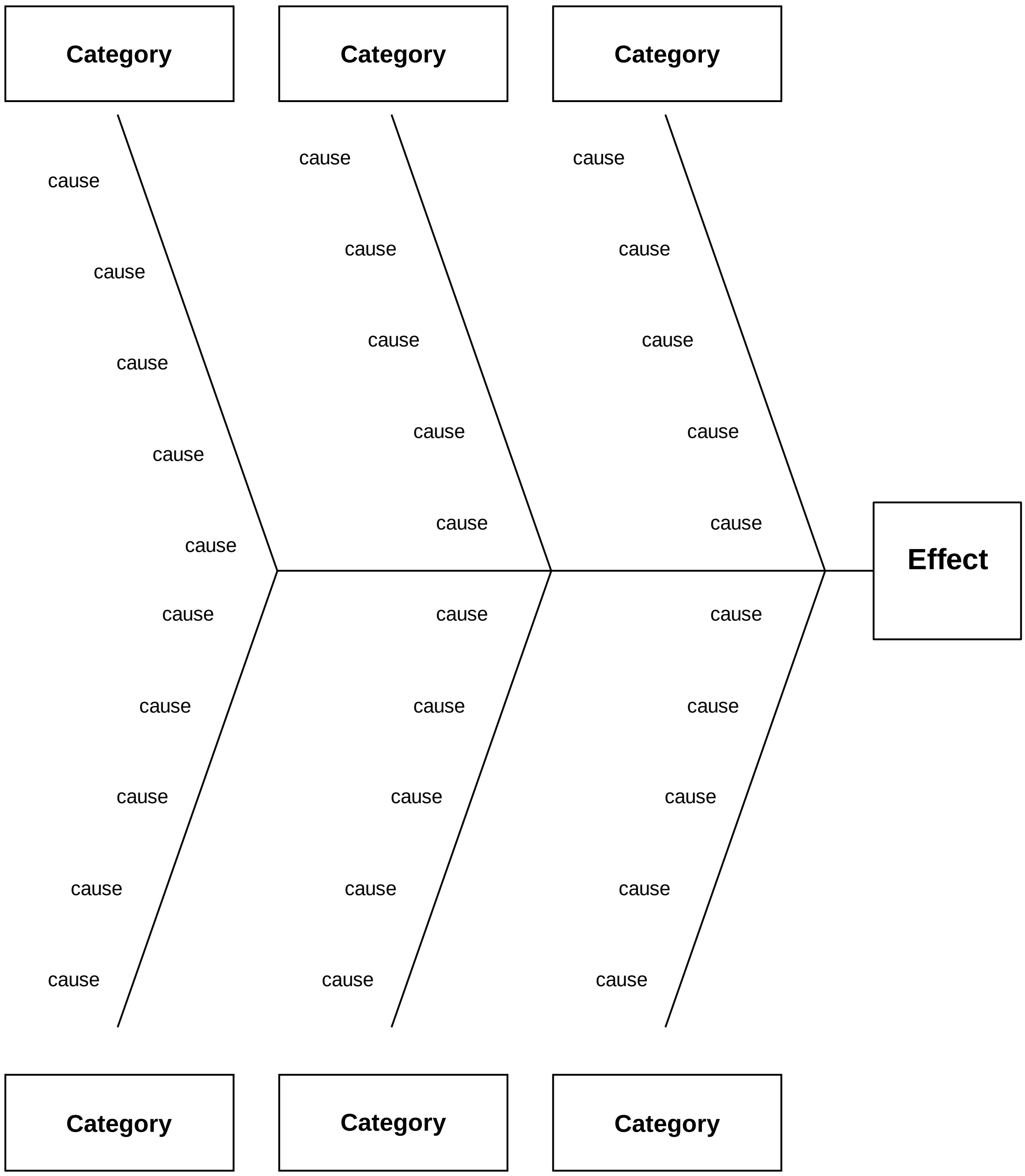
The process for getting to the root of issues is outlined in the following model:



The Root Cause - Problem Solving Process Format: Raymondson (2009)

Root Cause Diagramming

Root cause or ‘fishbone’ diagrams are a useful tool for working through the causes of a problem typified by an unexpected or unwanted effect or outcome: poor performance, for example. The diagram below is an example of a fishbone diagram. The effect or issue would be defined; the main causes would feature at the head of each ‘bone’ and the sub-causes within each category would be placed on the ‘bones’.



Example outline of a ‘Root Cause’ or ‘Fishbone’ diagram

Activity: Consider a problem at work. Define the effect of the issue at the right hand side of the box below. Undertake an analysis of the root causes.

Use the following headings to classify the causes:

- Methods
- Materials
- Environment
- People
- Equipment
- Managerial issues

Identify the causes as branches of each of the headings. As you do so, think about why these causes influence and exacerbate the problem. Are there any sub-causes of the causes that turn into other branches?

Activity: Working with your observations from the previous activity, consider how you might resolve the identified issues:

Issues relating to:	**Options for resolution**	**Implications of proposed resolution**
Methods:		
Materials:		
Environment:		
People:		
Equipment:		
Managerial issues:		

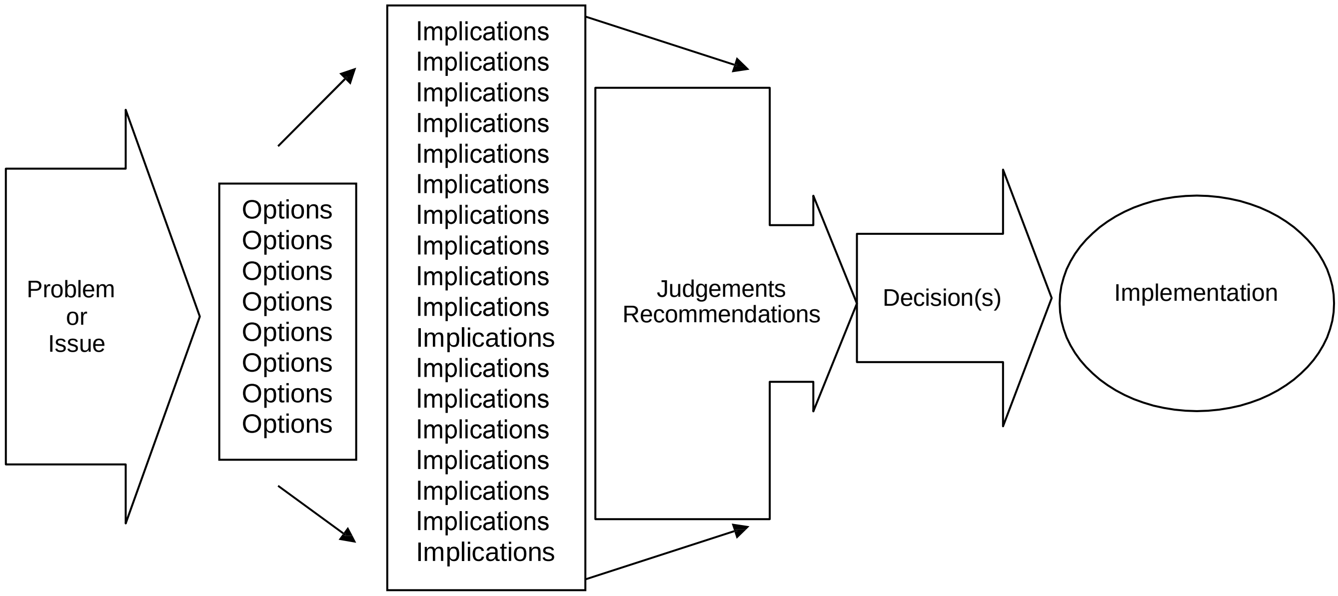
Analysing the Problem Situation

The following table outlines example questions that can be framed against the '5 Ws + H' in identifying, investigating and analysing the problem:

What?	• What is the problem? • What are the facts? • What do I need to do, or have to do, to develop a solution? • What is the best case solution? • What is the worst case solution? • What would I really like to do? • What similarities are there with situations and problems I have seen before? • What have I missed?
Why?	• Why has this situation arisen? • Why did we get the impact we did form the situation? • Why should we implement solution a, b, c…?
How?	• How can I get the information I need to understand the problem and make a decision? • How does this problem impact on people? • How did the situation arise? • How will option a, b, c … resolve the situation? • How can I get to the root of the issue? • How can I engage people to contribute to the resolution of the situation?
Where?	• Where did the problem occur? • Where could I find answers? • Where might we need to promote the issue and the solution?
When?	• When did the problem occur? • When do we need a solution by? • When do we need to start/finish? • When, if at all, has this happened before?
Who?	• Who is responsible for the various stages of finding and impementing a solution? • Who does the situation impact upon? • Who has the skills and experience necessary that could be utilised in finding and implementing a solution? • Who needs to be informed and kept in the picture?

Identifying and Evaluating Options

It is often surprising how difficult it can be to identify and develop a range of options for solving an identified problem. By using the model (below) as a framework for identifying and developing options, you can increase confidence that you will not miss anything!



What? Why? When? Where? How?

Pathways to Change Model (AH Raymondson, 2009)

One option that always should be considered is the ‘Do Nothing’ Option: that is, maintaining the ‘status quo’. While this might seem strange in the context of a need or problem that has been identified as requiring resolution, it is possible that, for example, the cost of the solution might be disproportionate to the benefit to be derived from implementing the solution. Consequently, a value judgement regarding the benefit must be made.

Implications Analysis

In considering the implications arising from each option, it is useful to structure your thinking to ensure that you get as full a picture of the implications as possible. A table such as the example below could be adapted to suit most requirements.

Problem:						
Option	**Implications**					
	Advantages	Disadvantages	Costs	Benefits	Timescale	Impact
1						
2						
3						
4						

<u>Example Implications Analysis Table</u>

Evaluating Solutions

Once all the options have been fully considered, each potential solution needs to be evaluated to determine which is the most viable. There are a number of ways of doing this. At this stage you may only have developed ‘rough-order’ costings for each option and will most likely develop a more robust financial analysis once a preferred option has presented itself.

Creative Problem Solving

The main difference between rational decision-making and creative decision-making lies in the approach to generation and evaluation of ideas; that is, the ways of establishing options to solve the problem are very different.

Rational v Creative Thinking

Traditional, rational thinking is …	**Creative, lateral thinking is …**
• Selective • Analytical • Correct at each step • Judgemental • Linear • Requires proof at each stage • Operates with strict rules Experience is considered important	• Generative • Provocative • Imaginative • Open-minded • Lateral • Belief without evidence • Cheating encouraged (!) • Freshness important

The following are some of the issues to consider in establishing a creative approach at work to solving problems:

- **Stress the importance of creativity.** Ensure all your staff know that you want to hear their ideas in relation to the problem;

- **Allocate time for new ideas to emerge.** For example, set aside a slot at the end of meetings for brainstorming;

- **Actively solicit ideas.** Place suggestion boxes around the workplace, appeal for new ideas to solve particular problems and, quite literally, keep your door open to new ideas;

- **Be supportive.** Respond enthusiastically to all ideas and never make someone offering an idea, however hopeless, feel foolish;

- **Train staff in innovation techniques.** Your staff may be able to bounce an idea around, but be unfamiliar with the skills involved in creative problem solving. You may find training sessions in formal techniques such as brainstorming, lateral thinking and mind-mapping worthwhile;

- **Cross-fertilise.** Broadening people's experiences can be a great way to spark ideas. Short-term job swaps and shadowing in-house can introduce fresh perspective to roles. Encourage people to look at how other businesses do things and consider how they can be adapted or improved;

- **Tolerate mistakes.** A certain amount of risk-taking is inevitable with creative thinking. Allow people to make and learn from mistakes. Never put off the creative flow by penalising those whose ideas do not work out; and,

- **Reward creativity.** Motivate individuals or teams who come up with ideas by recognising creativity, for example through an awards scheme.

Provision of Support to Team Members Facing Difficulties

Team members may face a range of difficulties related to work which generally fall into the areas of performance difficulties and welfare difficulties.

With welfare difficulties, you will often need to ‘signpost’ people to relevant specialists for help. Although difficulties which are not deliberate and which manifest as under-performance at work may be addressed through a range of options, including:

- Further job skills training – internal or externally delivered;
- On-the-job coaching/support;
- Allocation of a mentor;
- Off the job learning – for generic skills such as writing skills, team skills, etc;
- Changing or rotating responsibilities within the Team;
- Changing roles or task allocation within the Team;
- Increasing or decreasing the size of the Team; and,
- Problem solving meetings with individuals or Team facilitated by yourself or others.

Dealing with under-performance can be challenging but it does need to be addressed promptly and appropriately. Employees are often unaware they are not performing well. Therefore, they are unlikely to overcome the difficulty without intervention. Line managers need courage and willingness to address the issues.

At line manger level, there will usually be a limit to what you are expected to deal with. Often, difficulties that lead to unsatisfactory performance will be addressed in combination with HR specialists. This is especially the case where warnings and ultimately dismissal become necessary. There is a recognised process that any Employment Tribunal will expect an organisation to have followed in cases brought before them. So it is important that when you have a performance issue which is starting to escalate you seek specialist HR help.

For dealing with under-performance issues the process would typically be:

- Identify the problem;
- Assess the problem;
- Meet with the employee to discuss the problem at the earliest opportunity;
- Jointly develop and agree a solution to the problem, setting clear objectives for improvement; ideally resolving the problem on an informal basis;
- Monitor performance; and
- Review performance – you will need to invest time and effort in helping the employee achieve the improvement objectives, including provision of regular informal feedback and coaching, along with regular appraisal reviews to discuss any help or training needed or any problems related to achieving the objectives.

It is important to keep a record of discussions and actions; they will be required if improvement does not happen and more serious action needs to be taken. Sometimes performance management and disciplinary processes may overlap.

Consider, in discussion with HR specialists, more serious action if the employee’s performance does not improve. Action that is more serious could include counselling, informal verbal/written warnings, formal written warnings and ultimately dismissal. The escalating process towards more serious action needs to be very carefully followed, as adherence to the relevant ACAS Code of Practice will be considered in any Employment Tribunal arising from the situation.

Bibliography/Further Reading

Author	Title	Publisher
Barner and Barner	*Building Better Teams: 70 Tools and Techniques for Strengthening Performance Within and Across Teams*	Pfeiffer
Forgas, Williams & Wheeler	*The Social Mind: Cognitive and Motivational Aspects of Interpersonal Behaviour*	Cambridge University Press
Gallagher & Costal	The Self-Aware Leader	ASTD Press
Chip and Dan Heath	*How to Change Things When Change is Hard*	Random House Business Books
Dr Spencer Johnson	*Who Moved My Cheese?*	Vermillion
John P Kotter	*Leading Change*	Harvard Business School Press
Neil Russell-Jones	*Managing Change Pocketbook*	Management Pocketbooks Ltd
Ken Blanchard	*Leadership and the One Minute Manager*	Harper Collins
Fiona Elsa Dent	*Leadership Pocketbook*	Management Pocketbooks Ltd

Notes

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