



High Performance Leaders

*How to build engaged, productive
and collaborative teams*

By Michael Licenblat



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About the Author: Michael Licenblat

In the world of business, sales and education, no matter how confident, competent or experienced you are – **pressure is a part of every process**. How well you handle those challenges, changes, and problems will often determine how successful you are going to be.

Michael Licenblat is a **resilience expert** who teaches people how to **achieve more in high-pressure environments** by bouncing back from pressures, setbacks, and rejections.

Born into a family of entrepreneurial parents, Michael grew up working inside the numerous family businesses and quickly learnt that success often came to those who can ride the bumps, get up, and keep going.



Drawing on his background in Psychology, Shiatsu therapy, and over 25 years of Martial Arts experience, Michael has helped countless companies become '*pressure proof*' and learn how to bounce back from the setbacks and challenges so they can out perform their competition.

In Michael's high energy, interactive and practical presentations, he demystifies what people need to do to become resilient to pressure in today's business world, and keep a clear head when dealing with difficult, demanding and stressful situations – without burning yourself out.

Michael is the author of the book '*Pressure Proof – how to thrive in times of disruption, change and pressure*'. His articles are regularly published in several journals, and he has delivered presentations to organizations such as Toyota, REIV, Smartline Mortgage Group, MLC Insurance, St George, Coles Myer Ltd., Pitcher Partners, SEEK, Caterpillar, Maurice Blackburn, Maunsell, Salesforce, and Victorian Parliament.

High Performance leadership requires people skill as much as process skill

Team leaders today are finding themselves more often in situations and scenarios that require them to motivate staff, resolve issues, be accountable to multiple and simultaneous projects, manage staff workflow, build engagement, and relate to personalities different to their own.

The emerging leaders of today need to move beyond process efficiency and effective task management and be able to engage, relate, motivate and inspire their team to perform at their best in all conditions and circumstances.

Some people find themselves in leadership positions due to career progression, or a leadership position has become available. They quickly discover, however, that being efficient at getting things done, leading a team, and managing people dynamics require very different skill sets. Without developing all these abilities can leave the team fragmented, disengaged, or unproductive.

When leaders over help or micro-motivate others, it trains their team to become dependent on them for support and solutions, and not take initiatives or ownership for their deliverables. Again, this results in leaders investing more time and energy into activities that should be managed by other people.

“The fact is, very few managers use their time as effectively as they could. They think they’re attending to pressing matters, but they’re really just spinning their wheel.”

(Harvard Business Review)



Building an engaged team requires a sensitivity of communicating and connecting with different personality types.

Process driven individuals are not always as aware of the people dynamics of their team, and non-cohesive issues can arise that they either do not detect early or, more commonly, did not know what to do to resolve them.

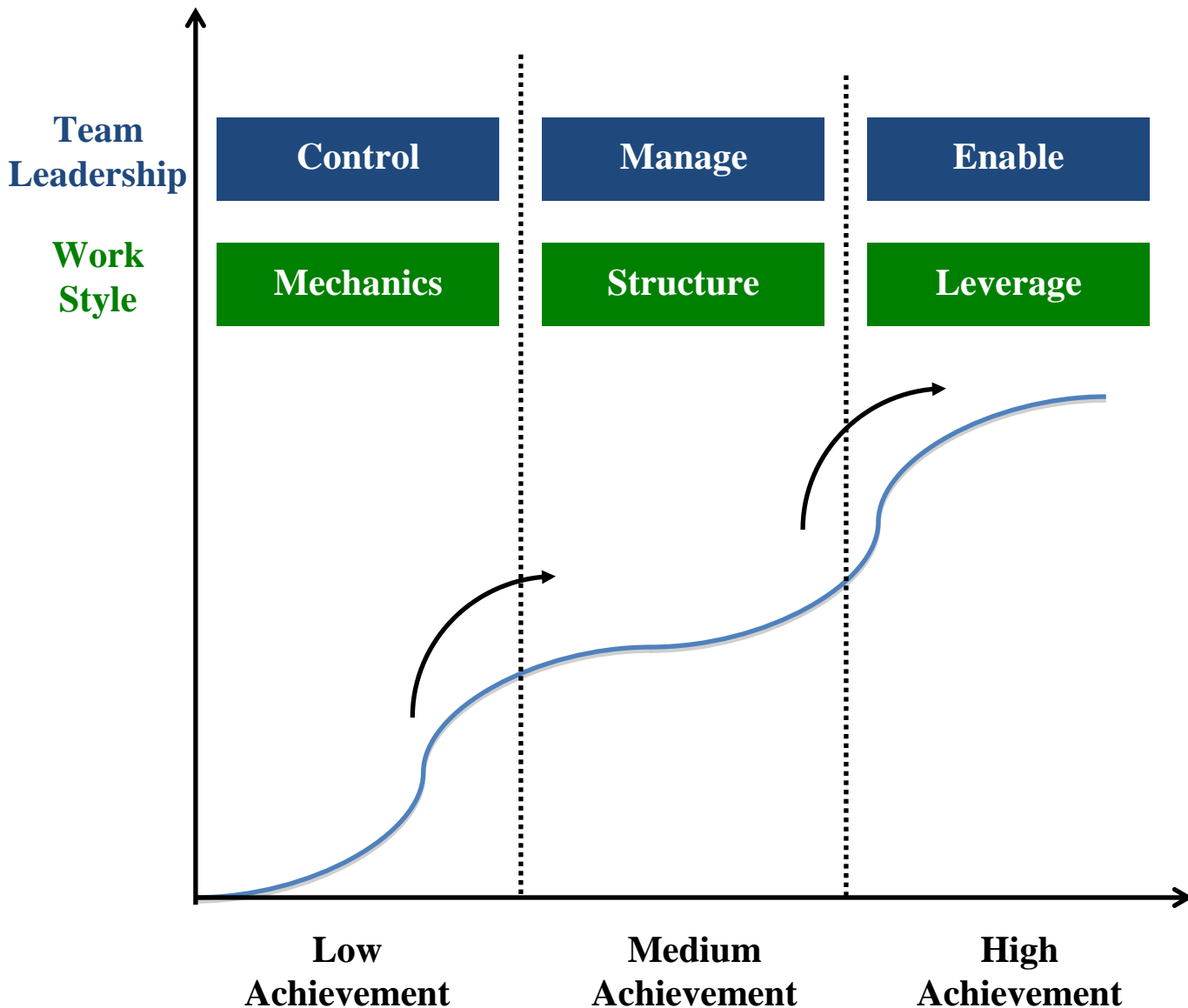
Some leaders dive in their role by working longer hours, taking on greater responsibilities, and getting more involved in every problem, question and issue around them just to try and keep up with the workload and expectations. Unfortunately, this approach results in leaders getting overloaded, worn out, and not achieving their short-term goals or strategic outcomes.

Whilst a good work ethic and the willingness to help are important traits, for a leader to achieve their goals they need to be time effective problem solvers when dealing with overload, and be able to lead *through* their team instead of over compensate or over manage them.

Equally, when leaders don't allow their team to support them, they end up doing unnecessary work that is not dollar productive. This results in leaders falling behind on their deliverables because they invest too much time into activities that should be managed by other people.

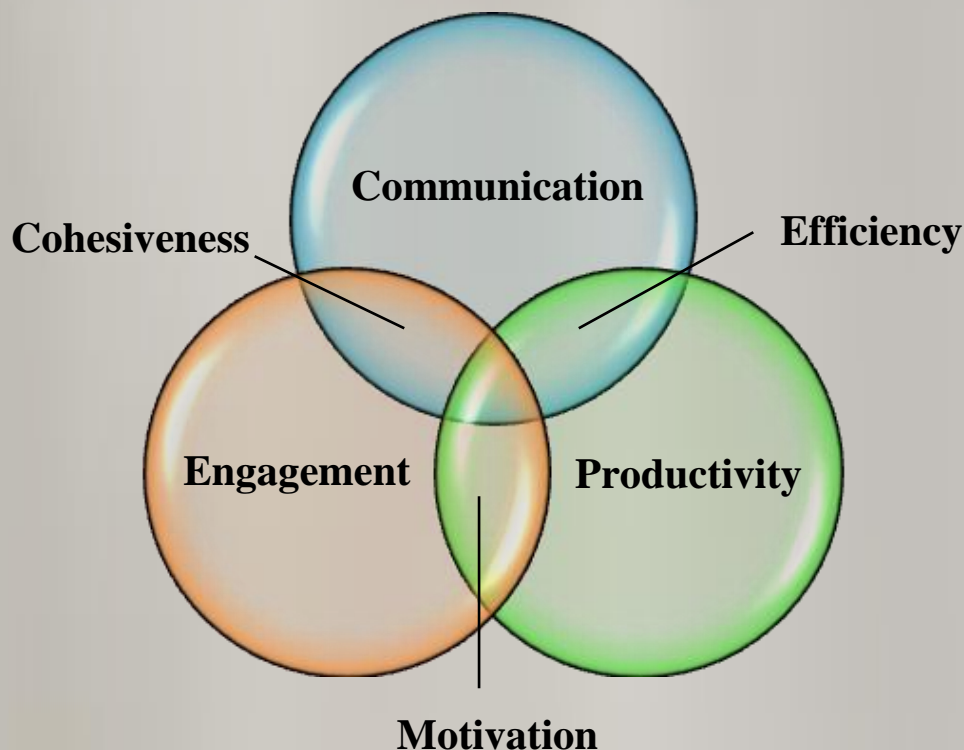


High Performance S-Curve





*High Performance Leadership is built on the strength of one's personal **efficiency**, their ability to inspire and **motivate** their team, and be a master communicator to create **cohesiveness***



Leaders don't make 'feel good' decisions

Leaders today are getting smashed with work. There is more to do than time available, everyone wants a piece of you, and time seems to evaporate into thin air. For a leader to navigate through overload and execute strategy is not simply a question of time management, but rather their ability to discern between logical and emotional decision making.

In the 1980s and 1990s multitasking was the top time-management tip. You were taught to chunk your work into timed blocks and order your day like a military operation. In 1984, Steven Covey inspired us to do 'first things first' and decipher between the urgent and important tasks, followed by Brian Tracey (in 2001) who explained that we should 'eat that frog' and do the most difficult things first as the best way to stop procrastination and get more done. In 2007, Tim Ferriss published the game changing philosophy of the '4 hour work week' challenging us to outsource, streamline and muse our way to success.

Whilst all these philosophies have sold thousands of books, courses and speeches, and extoll practical advice that has saved people so much time, cut down stress, and increased productivity, you are probably still sitting there, even as you read this article, wondering how you are going to get everything done without burning yourself out?

The underlying problem here is not the shuffling of time, but rather the allocation of attention. Decisions determine where your attention goes, for how long, and what tasks you will do. A good decision making philosophy is like having an experienced captain at the helm of a ship who is able to navigate the ocean and arrive at the destination with minimal exertion and disruption.

Creel Price launched his first business at age 11 selling strawberries in rural New South Wales. In fact, he launched a total of eight businesses by the time he left school and a further two at university, and, at age 25, he co-founded Blueprint Management Group with just \$5,000 in capital, without any follow on investment, until they exited a decade later for \$109 million. Creel and his business partner built one of Australia's fastest growing companies (BRW Fast 100) in the marketing, e-commerce, call centre and data analytics sectors. Creel credits a major contributor of his success to the art of 'Decisionship'. He feels that 'the ability to make better, faster decisions without the angst, is key to success' [1].





When you are being bombarded with volumes of work, your decisions are influenced by time urgency, personal standards, management expectation, and team time frames. Your decisions are now tainted by these pressures and stresses which drive you to make more emotionally based decisions, instead of logical ones.

When your decisions are driven by emotion (such as stress, anxiety, or adrenaline), then you are more likely to create short term solutions, handle too much yourself (instead of delegating) and react to whatever is the most urgent emergency to fix.

To be time effective, especially in a leadership role, you need to be ruthless about where you give your attention. You need to value your attention like a drowning man would treat oxygen.

This will require you to instill the resilience value of disciplined thinking. That is, determining whether you are making decisions from a hedonistic, emotionally driven, 'what will feel good' or 'how can I get rid of this stress' point of view, or whether you are thinking from a logical, values based, big picture and clear minded viewpoint.

It is the wrestle between focusing on what I need to do in this situation versus focusing on what will make me feel good/better in this situation.

In Detroit, Michigan, at the 'Cave of Adullam Transformational Training Academy' [2], Sharath Jason Wilson uses martial arts to teach boys how to be mentally strong and hold high standards of behaviour, values and morals when life around them is tough. Jason provides an environment where boys can experience the value of using perseverance and tenacity to guide their decision making process in training and in life.

Watch this video of a training session of how Jason guides a young boy when he is confronted with emotion and resistance: <http://youtu.be/Et8XcwP0Yjw>

It's a tough lesson and it hurts to see the boy cry, but if the boy would have made a hedonistic decision, he would never learn the value of pushing through when things get tough. By learning the process of disciplined decision making, it helped this boy develop a resilient mindset that drives him into action, as opposed to doing only what feels good right now.

When you step up into any leadership role, you will be confronted with tough decisions that will shake your emotions and drive up your stress. You will need to quickly get into the practice of deciding who is driving your ship - your emotions or your logic.

Sustainable Motivation is Multi-Layered

Leaders are constantly looking for effective ways to motivate their teams to remain engaged and inspired in the face of dealing with endless challenges and unplanned setbacks. They now face a dilemma - will support and nurture accelerate team productivity, or is providing continual rewards and compliments making people less resilient and more reliant on external motivation to succeed? Actually, leaders need to be diverse and agile in their approach, and not anchored in just one way, in order to motivate their teams.

In her book 'Mindset', Carol Dweck explores how support and self-belief influence effort and achievement. Her research finds that when you focus and acknowledge a child's efforts more than their results, they are more likely to extend themselves and try to achieve more, than focusing on their results alone. [3]

Integrating this principle of 'acknowledging effort' into teams would likely create a supportive and productive environment. Making each person in a team feel valued and respected no doubt creates positive ripples into team dynamics, project management, and group cohesion.

This principle is now being applied to address drug addiction. The number of Australians using methamphetamines (crystal methamphetamine or ice) has tripled over the past five years according to the estimates of the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. A new study published in the Medical Journal of Australia shows there are 268,000 regular and dependent methamphetamine users in Australia. Just five years ago that number was about 90,000. [4]

A new scheme was announced at the Melbourne drug court that rewards drug users who test clean over a period of time, with incentives like football tickets, supermarket vouchers, etc. [5]. GP David Outridge said the program has been very successful in the United States [6].

However, when my 11 year old daughter read this article she was a little confused and asked me "Why are they giving rewards to people for doing things that everyone else does anyway? Why are only the drug people getting football tickets?".

Fair question.





Opposition attorney-general, John Pesutto, slammed the program and said “People should abide by the law because it’s the right thing to do, not because there’s something in it for them. If addicts who have broken the law need to be bribed with free footy tickets before they’ll comply with their drug treatment orders, they shouldn’t be on the program.” [7]

So this brings us back to my original question, ‘does support and nurture accelerate team productivity, or is providing continual rewards and compliments making people less resilient and more reliant on external motivation to succeed?’.

Many schools have extended their sports day ribbons of first, second, and third to also include ‘well done’, and ‘good effort’ ribbons so that everyone gets a prize. Some junior sports have abandoned scoring so that no-one loses and everyone feels good at the end.

The last time I checked, if you miss a mortgage payment, the bank doesn’t send you a letter of encouragement saying ‘that’s OK, keep trying’. If you made a mistake on a project that added costs, lost a sale and missed your target, or didn’t complete an order by the deadline, the client doesn’t usually come to the office, give you a supportive cuddle and tell you ‘don’t worry, keep trying - that’s all that matters’.

Not everyone gets a trophy!

Simon Sinek, author of ‘Find Your Why’ and ‘Leaders Eat Last’, explains that parents who overly support and help their children don’t allow them to develop the grit and resilience to succeed in the real world. The younger generations are not exposed to enough failure, so they have unrealistic expectations of life because they are overly rewarded for doing the things you should do anyway. We are producing a generation of people who are not familiar with failure and not conditioned to bounce back fast. [8]

“It’s fine to celebrate success, but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.” – Bill Gates

For teams to thrive under pressure, there needs to be a healthy balance between supporting effort and individuals stepping up and taking ownership to get it done.

In life, no-one is there to be your cheer squad, but it’s sure nice when someone is. External motivation should be used like a speedy customer service in a bank - it’s nice when it happens, but don’t rely on it to be there. Leaders have to dance the line between encouraging their teams and challenging them. Ultimately, teams perform better under pressure when leadership make them feel supported and they have individually developed the resilience to bounce back on their own merit.

Smart Communication Creates Impact

The way you process pressure often determines how productive you can be.

Some keep their tension inside and rethink things over and over until they have an answer. Others end up talking, yelling, crying, or debating their way to a resolution. To be more personally productive is not a question of which process is better, but when and how to use each process.

One particular piece of research found that when men, under stress, looked at angry faces, they seemed to disengage (according to brain scans showing lower activity in brain areas responsible for processing other people's emotions), whilst stressed-out women showed more activity in those brain regions. [9]

Psychologists have long noted that stress and pressure affects men and women differently. Women tend to seek out social support, while men are more likely to withdraw. It seems that when women are stressed, social and emotional areas of the brain go on alert, perhaps reflecting a tendency to reach out. The same areas in men's brains seem to disengage. [9]

Whilst the research does reaffirm the stereotype that women are more likely to share their feelings and talk through their issues than males do, it does highlight two communication processes that are useful to both men and women. That is, Reflective-Refractive communication.

Reflective communication is like an internal conversation that you have with yourself. When you need to remove the noise, distraction, and clutter from your thinking and get clear about your values, opinions and decisions. Reflective communicators like to withdraw and consider issues before committing to a decision.

Advantages of Reflective Communication:

- * Non impulsive, logic-based decisions
- * Decisions are self generated, and less externally influenced
- * Big picture is usually considered





Disadvantages of Reflective Communication:

- * Time consuming
- * No point of reference except for yourself
- * Can lead to pensiveness, worry, and complaining.

Refractive communication is like playing cards with an open hand where everyone can see what you are holding. It helps with bouncing ideas off other people, clarify issues, and expressing how you feel. Refractive communicators like to include you in their decision making process so they can get clearer about what they want to do.

Advantages of Refractive Communication:

- * It allows an inclusion of new ideas and points of view
- * Faster resolution of conflict or interpersonal issues
- * Expedient communication channel

Disadvantages of Refractive Communication:

- * Can lead to a battle of attack verses defense
- * Impulsive decisions can be generated in a group setting
- * Needs to be with other Refractive communicators

Each communication process will work well in different settings, with different people. Find out the communication process that your team, clients, and colleagues prefer so that you can communicate issues quickly and increase your personal productivity without feeling that others are holding you back or getting off task...it may just be their communication process that is getting in the way.

When leading a team, or building a client relationship, practice trying to read their communication process. Then, get clear on what your communication process is, and be adaptable enough to find a way that allows the two to work together.

Your Next Steps...

STEP 1: Watch the Program video

There is a short video about the *Maximise Your Influence* program/conference presentation that gives you an overview of the key benefits, who the program is for, and what will be covered.



[Click here to watch the video](#)

STEP 2: Let's have a conversation

If the principles in this white paper resonate with you then let's have a conversation to see how we can help you get started.

You can send me an email from
<http://www.bouncebackfast.com>





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