CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE

The ART, SCIENCE, and GRIT of HIGH PERFORMANCE in BUSINESS

DARRYL CROSS

with WILLIAM CROSS

Why and how do world-class leaders and great performers consistently beat their competition?

They realize they cannot go it alone. They use teams and coaches to amplify their results. Many performers who have already surmounted exceptional tests and challenges and have succeeded in business, sports, the military, or the arts well beyond their peers think performance is only up to the individual. Many become frustrated when hours of hard work, years of experience, and expensive educations don't lead them to the top of their domain. They are already among the best, but they want to be *the* best.

The elite realize there is only so much they can do on their own to achieve that status. They understand they need coaches, colleagues, and competitors to provide the collaboration and competition that serve as a constant push to keep forward momentum going toward attaining that next level.

In *Cultivating Excellence*, Darryl Cross uses thirty years of experience to show top performers that the key to continued enhancement of performance and success is an exceptional coach and team. They guide the elite performers to see situations and challenges in new ways (art), to perfect their craft to the *n*th degree (science), and to commit to deliberate practice that eliminates performance gaps (grit) and puts the summit within reach.

DARRYL W. CROSS is an internationally known expert on the art, science, and grit of high performance and the chief performance officer and founder of HighPer Teams, a high-performance training company. Darryl has addressed more than 10,000 executives, professionals, and athletes from more than 100 countries about how to continuously maximize performance and results.

WILLIAM V. CROSS enjoyed a career in the US Navy and retired as a two-star rear admiral after serving as a fighter pilot and commanding officer of a nuclear aircraft carrier. Bill's philosophy on success and high performance is based on the principles of hard work, personal responsibility and accountability, constructive competition, innovation and creativity, and compassionate leadership.

CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE

The ART, SCIENCE, *and* GRIT

of HIGH PERFORMANCE

in BUSINESS

———

DARRYL W. CROSS, MBA
with
REAR ADMIRAL
WILLIAM V. CROSS, USN, RETIRED

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher and author are not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

I dedicate this book to my family. My father has always been my model for achievement, integrity, and humility. My mother was my first coach and instilled in me my character. My sister, Melanie, is the artist who inspires my creative side. Most importantly, my daughter, Kelsey, keeps me striving to be the best man I can be in the hopes that she is as proud of me as I am of her.

—DARRYL W. CROSS

CONTENTS

AUTHORS' NOTE

Nothing is more inspiring than seeing those who excel at their craft. It doesn't matter if it is music, art, sports, business, or writing code. Watching people who are great at what they do makes us happy. However, we were fascinated by why some people entered the ranks of the elite in their domain while other performers who appeared to have similar education, experience, and drive did not. Perhaps it was the luck of being in the right place at the right time. It could've been where they were trained and what schools they attended. Maybe some simply had divine gifts that others could never emulate. However, we had a feeling there was more to it.

In addition to having been a vice president of performance development and coaching for an international, publicly traded corporation, I, Darryl, am the head coach of a rugby union team and a certified master personal trainer. Through my experiences in sports and business, I started to notice similar patterns in both domains that illustrated why some people continuously improved no matter the challenges while others' progression stalled. We needed to know why. We decided to talk to elite performers in multiple domains to learn what accounted for the differences.

We talked extensively to a US Navy fighter pilot, a former commandant of the Marine Corps, a Navy SEAL and astronaut, a metropolitan police chief, and a professional athlete to get their perspectives. What all of them told us was truly surprising. They were extremely insistent that they were not unique. All of them had natural abilities, training, education, experience, and strong work ethics; however, everyone else they were competing against did too. It was HOW they were developed that made the difference.

Through these interviews and years of academic research, we discovered that exceptional coaching, delivered in a team-centric model, develops high-performance individuals. Through reflection with the performers, coaches develop individual plans that emphasize simulation, situational planning, and mastering fundamentals. Exceptional coaches also know that team members collaborate, challenge, and compete with each other, which brings out the best in each individual. The coach's ultimate performance tool is the team.

If you examine any domain or activity that has binary, or terminal, consequences, this is how participants must plan, prepare, and perform. When the margin of error is zero and the consequences of failure are severe, this is the only acceptable way.

Exceptional coaching produces performers with a balanced ability to see things in new ways, perfect their craft, and engage in deliberate practice to continuously improve their performance. We came to define this as the "Art, Science, and Grit of High Performance." We contend that all domains can benefit from this approach. If you want multiple high performers, use the methods that have already been proven and are non-negotiable.

In the end, we learned it was less about the people who excelled and more about their willingness to let others help them excel. The higher the tier, the more important this concept was.

We may not reach the pinnacle of our domain, but we have learned that each of us can unleash our full potential through the right model of development.

Let's get to work.

INTRODUCTION

"Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention,
sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of
many alternatives—choice, not chance, determines your destiny."
—ARISTOTLE

Why and how do world-class leaders and great performers consistently beat their competition?

There is no shortage of high performers in the world. In every discipline, field, industry, and enterprise, proven experts at the top of their game are trying every trick in the book to squeeze one more challenge and one more percentage of improvement out of one more year. Other leaders, who want to win just as badly, and possess similar levels of experience, ability, and work ethic, test them. The next generation of performers jockey to take their positions and start erasing their records and replacing those memories with their own achievements.

However, all of them cannot be the best. Despite the fact that any given high performer might be in the top 1 percent of the top 1 percent in terms of success, most fields are still dominated by a handful of performers year after year. They all want to excel. They all think they can. However, many of them become frustrated when thousands of hours of hard work, years of experience, and an expensive education do not lead to the winner's podium as often as they think they should. Thus, you hear this familiar signal of acquiescence from "the best" who are not actually doing the best they *could*:

"Some people just have a divine gift that I could never hope to achieve." They are wrong. The common thread of outstanding accomplishment in any domain—from business to sports—involves what we term the art, science, and grit of high performance.

There are certainly great differences in natural abilities, access to training and education, connections, and the luck of the draw between people in the general population. But we're not discussing the general population; we're referring to people who have already succeeded beyond most tests and challenges. They are already among the best. But only a few of the best will be known as elite. The elite see situations and challenges in new ways. They perfect their craft to the *n*th degree. They put in countless hours of deliberate practice to eliminate performance gaps and realize that reaching the summit in one domain does not necessarily mean leaping to the summit of another. All high performers quickly realize there is only so much they can do on their own. Those who believe they can self-manage their drive and progress find the tendency is to default into areas of strength, ignoring weaknesses and reinforcing their current level of mastery.

High-performing leaders and other elites need someone with an external perspective and the expertise and patience to provide feedback, guidance, and a constant push to keep forward momentum toward attaining the next level. If art, science, and grit are the common threads, the needle pulling these components together is an exceptional coach.

The very best performers rely on expert coaching for plans that continually enhance their performance. Properly coaching elite performers involves a collaborative relationship between professionals, where discovery-based questioning and real-world application lead to solutions identified by the performer. These leaders see their coaches as partners who help them find answers and waste no time listening to endless advice and platitudes about theory.

High-performance coaches and their elite clients rely on simulations and managed competition to demonstrate competency and identify fundamental

abilities. This allows coaches to develop preparatory scenarios for situations their clients might encounter. Together, they eliminate performance gaps, tackling them head-on, instead of ignoring or working around weaknesses. Then, they do it again—and again, and again.

Good performers tend to rely on their natural ability, previous education, and past experience. They look backward—mostly through self-reflection—for guidance. In contrast, those who are the absolute best envision new approaches to challenges. Guided by expert coaches who help them get better at what they do every day, they advance and perfect technique, and practice deliberately. They look forward to how things could (and will) be, and they do so with the counsel of others.

While the difference between the good and the best may be only a few percentage points, those extra points become logarithmic in terms of rewards. This is why coaching is so very important to high performers. Coaching is the force multiplier that takes talent to an advanced level beyond that of their peers—peers who may have almost identical abilities, backgrounds, and environments. *The only difference between being good and the best is if—and how—performers are coached.* If high performance is to be translated into future, sustained performance, the act of coaching is the catalyst.

Sports records never stand for long. Business superstars are always looking over their shoulder at the new up-and-comers who want their offices and their titles. Astronaut Gordon Cooper once famously said to reports, "Who is the best pilot I ever saw? You're looking at him." However, someone is always the new "best pilot you ever saw"; the only sure thing is that yesterday's success will not be enough to stay on top tomorrow. Great coaching, therefore, depends upon our understanding of individual successes and the application of research- and results-proven principles, methods, and approaches to the future.

The key to high performance is domain agnostic. Whether coaching an athlete, astronaut, pilot, doctor, lawyer, CEO, butcher, baker, or candlestick

maker, there is a way to prepare. There is a way to instruct. And there is a way to win. It is the coaching method that determines if—and how—you'll get to the win.

The purpose of our book is to help coaches get the most out of an individual's or an organization's performance. Once it is understood how and why some individuals excel, processes can be repeated, and success replicated.

You may have heard of some of these principles before, and you may even already agree that they should be a coaching priority. Though many organizations understand what they *should* do, they often do not understand *how*. The plan is simple, but admittedly, not so simple to do.

We will show you how.

THE POTATO KING OF MARS AND THE RISE OF MAVERICK

"An ounce of performance is worth pounds of promises."
—MAE WEST

"The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand."
—VINCE LOMBARDI

"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose."
—BILL GATES

It seems counterintuitive, but the types of organizations that have the most trouble developing high performers are the ones already flooded with them. Successful corporations, agencies, teams, firms, and units rest on soft, cushy laurels in relative comfort—for the time being. Full of great people, outstanding products and services, winning strategies, sound tactics, and a great deal of momentum, they keep rolling forward. Why, then, is there need for concern? Ask any leader and you will hear these responses:

"Clients are asking for new, sometimes unreasonable, things."

"Our competitors are catching up."

"Our enemies have thought of new ways to beat us."

"We have to do more with less; we get less from doing more."

"Everything has changed. The world is completely different."

Successful individuals, teams, coaches, and leaders share a common perception: that conditions affecting their status are changing at an exponential rate. While this may be true in some cases, it is not necessarily the world that is changing rapidly—it is the number of high performers competing for the spoils. To illustrate, here's an extremely fictional, yet also very real, example.

BEST IN HIS WORLD

In *The Martian*, an Academy Award-nominated movie about the Ares III expedition to Mars, the protagonist (astronaut Mark Watney, played by actor Matt Damon) is presumed dead during a freak storm and left behind when the rest of the crew makes an emergency evacuation. The crew does not realize their mistake until they are long gone, and so Watney becomes Mars' sole resident. On the plus side, he is a botanist. On the minus side, things that humans eat don't grow on Mars—that is, not without extreme ingenuity, arduous work, and a whole lot of luck.

Watney, naturally, was quite motivated. He could have complained about the unfairness of that unexpected storm. He could have bemoaned his lack of tools and supplies. He could have decided to sit back and watch old videos until his food ran out. No spoilers here, but he doesn't do any of these things. He gets to work, eventually figuring out how to grow potatoes. Potatoes, on the surface of Mars! One of Watney's most memorable lines is this

proclamation: "I don't want to come off as arrogant here, but I'm the greatest botanist on this planet."

While Watney mightn't win any *Iron Chef* cooking competitions with the resulting cuisine, it kept him alive, buying time for the astronaut to figure a way out of his predicament. (If you want to know how things turn out for Watney, you'll need to see the movie, but this short recounting demonstrates a number of lessons about performance and success under extreme circumstances that we'll come back to later.)

Mark Watney was right; he *was* the greatest botanist on Mars. In fact, even including the six-person crew of the Ares III, he was still the best botanist on the planet. And when he was left behind on Mars, he also became the best football player, singer, and artist. Lack of competitors elevated his every level of performance. However, let's alter the story.

What if another botanist were to show up? Ignoring the feasibility, suppose that each trained at NASA, studied botany at the University of Chicago, and desired to keep eating on a regular basis. Who would be the best botanist now? Would there be that much of a difference? Potatoes are potatoes, and these two Martian neighbors would just need to produce enough to survive.

Let's add ten more botanists. Mars would become a regular hotbed of botanists; they'd establish infrastructure and industry on the red planet. Perhaps they'd vary the crops and try new techniques. At first, survival is the goal. Add one hundred more botanists, and the survivors are now a colony. Botanists might not be the most exciting bunch of people, but now there's a vibrant Martian community. And, pretty soon, something else is naturally introduced: competition.

On Mars, with its limited resources, Spartan habitats, and few luxuries, there is a finite supply of rewards to go around. This breeds more competition. When struggling to survive, little things—an extra twenty-five square feet of living space or a living pod with a window—don't matter. Once you are no longer just scraping by, however, people with talent and skills want more.

At this point, somebody on Mars is going to create an ever so slightly better tasting potato. This new unique skill will allow them to trade or barter for the bigger living pod. Other colonists will try to match or outdo the new Potato King of Mars, and the race is on.

Watney was surely the best botanist on Mars when alone, but now he is one of over a hundred. His skills are the same. Mars is the same. What has changed is the number of viable competitors for the "Best Botanist" trophy and their competitive desire for resources, comforts, and pride. You could, though, group them all together and claim they're the best botanists on any planet in the entire solar system! (Well, unless you included Earth.)

Should that disparity count? This depends on the market for potatoes. If markets and potato buyers on Mars and Earth can be separated, different sets of winners and high performers will exist. The worry is about size—do these sets form a small playing field? When rewards are abundant and everyone does well, the level of competition decreases. However, when the scope of the playing field is expanded and there's a finite number of desirable rewards, competition emerges and amplifies. In the real world, each of us deals with this every day.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

At the height of the Vietnam War in 1969, the US Navy grudgingly recognized an inconvenient truth: The kill ratio of Vietnamese MIGs (a type of Russian-built fighter aircraft) to American fighter jets in air-to-air combat was only 7:1. That is, seven MIGs were being shot down in aerial dogfights for every one of the navy's fighters. At first glance, this might appear to be a good exchange, but it wasn't. A nearly inexhaustible supply of cheap yet highly maneuverable MIGs was being supplied by Russia and China; a relatively small number of much more expensive US fighters was stationed on aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin and at air force bases in South Vietnam and

Thailand. Therefore, the kill ratio needed to be at least 20:1 for the United States to win the strategic battle in the skies over Vietnam.

The navy and air force's frontline fighter at the time was the F-4 Phantom II, manufactured by the then-McDonnell Douglas Corporation. The airplane was designed at the height of the Cold War in the 1950s primarily as a supersonic interceptor of Russian bombers. Close-in air-to-air combat was no longer considered likely in the world of supersonic fighters and long-range, radar-guided missiles. Vietnam proved this assumption totally wrong.

Close-in dogfights between MIGs and Phantoms were commonplace, though sporadic. Since the Phantom was not designed for maneuverability, the smaller, more agile MIGs had a distinct advantage in dogfights. Only individual pilot skill and aggressiveness produced the initial 7:1 US advantage. However, North Vietnamese pilots learned and improved quickly, and something had to be done to improve the kill ratio. That "something" was the Navy Fighter Weapons School (commonly known as Top Gun), established to teach pilots new tactics for applying the Phantoms' speed and power to counter the MIGs' agility and stealth. The best of the best needed to get better.

The foremost task for 1969's nascent Top Gun was the selection process for both instructors and students. The navy realized that the value of the program would only be as good as the professional skill and reputation of the participants. Instructors were carefully screened and chosen as the navy's most experienced and capable Phantom pilots. They would teach new tactics in the classroom and fly as adversaries, or red teams, in specially designed airplanes made to look and perform like MIGs. The students were similarly screened as the best of the navy's junior fighter pilots and radar operators (RO): one pilot and one RO from each Phantom squadron.

Imagine the level of competition for selection to Top Gun within each squadron! Navy fighter pilots were already at the top of their peer group in multiple schools and screening tests. But only a handful of the best pilots in

the world were qualified for and selected to Top Gun. There were rivalries, hard-nosed competitions, and the occasional heated exchange of words.

The experienced instructors won most of the initial fights in the training syllabus, but surprisingly not many of the later ones! When the Top Gun syllabus had been completed, graduated students became their squadron's tactical experts, responsible for teaching the rest of the squadron the tactics and techniques they had learned to win against the MIGs.

While those pilots and operators not chosen for this elite training were clearly disappointed, they remained totally supportive of the selectees. Top Gun graduates formed a band of brothers who fought together and forged strong bonds of trust and mutual respect. Most importantly, competition for Top Gun slots improved the knowledge and skill of junior officers in every squadron. The results speak for themselves—within three years, the kill ratio had increased to 22:1!

Competition, combined with teamwork, trust, and mutual respect, brought out the best in every pilot and RO, and created a sea change in performance against the MIGs. In the end, they were all on the same team, and this method of training, coaching, and testing made *all* navy pilots better. To this day, Top Gun is widely acknowledged as the ultimate model for success in training fighter aircrews.

❧

Both of these stories illustrate a key point: Performance is always relative to the competition. This doesn't matter as much if an individual is pursuing a hobby for personal gratification or checking something off a bucket list. However, when keeping score, or the consequences of winning and losing are severe, *self-perception* and assessment of current level of performance becomes irrelevant.

It's why the best pilots in the world had to go back to school to deal with

a new reality. It's why Olympic champions have to work harder *after* winning medals to win them again. It's why business executives, lawyers, and doctors must constantly improve and update their skills as practitioners and acumen as client service providers.

EVERYONE NEEDS A COACH

High-performance coaches know that in business, sport, the military, protective services, and every other segment of society, top performers exhibit three key characteristics that allow year after year wins, no matter what conditions or competitors emerge. They coach mastery of the principles we call the *art, science, and grit of high performance.*

High performers constantly work on perfecting these principles, and they learn how to balance all of the elements required to reach the top and stay there. They don't rely on past experience, diplomas hung on walls, or titles on a business card to insulate them from reality. They relish the arena, ask their coaches for help, and compete over and over again. All of them.

It may seem a strange dichotomy that performers who wish to excel and unleash their potential must be so dependent on others for help. From a young age, many of us are taught to only depend on ourselves and that success is up to the individual. In fact, you will be hard pressed to find world-class performers who have not relied on a coach and coaching to get where they are today. Individual protégés in music, sports, or the arts might be viewed as exceptions and may give pause about whether anyone can achieve high performance alone. But parents, teachers, peers, partners, and trusted mentors all had a hand in their achievement. Those individuals may not have worn a shirt with the word *Coach* stenciled on the front or been dedicated to what they were doing full time, but they were "coaching" throughout their protégé's development. The performer may take home the trophies, but the team comprised of those who "coach" them makes those trophies possible.

THE BINARY CONSEQUENCES OF PERFORMANCE

Can coaches apply these same principles of art, science, and grit in all other domains so that leaders can achieve greater success and market advantage? The answer, we submit, is absolutely *yes*!

Today's top performers live in a world where competition increasingly has *binary consequences.* One wins, and everyone else loses. One business gets the deal, and the others get nothing. Industries have dominant players, and the rest are absorbed. At the individual and organizational level, the world has become a much harder place. More educated, skilled, driven people exist in the market than at any other time in human history. They work for some of the most innovative, successful, and robust organizations ever. And many of them will be left behind.

This concept of binary consequences is not new. In sports, winners take all while losers, who finish just one hundredth of a second behind, fade from memory. Navy SEALs do not compete for second place on the sea, air, and land. No one tells an airline pilot, "Nice attempt at keeping that plane in the air. Better luck next time." In these examples, the individuals' performance—despite the fact that they train and prepare as teams led by exceptional coaches—is the focus. Society rewards and encourages individual performance, and this will not change in the foreseeable future. However, this should not be mistaken to mean that the development of individual greatness comes from solitary toil and effort. In all elite domains, leaders have a methodology for getting the best out of people. The primary reason for this—there is no other choice.

Disciplines such as the military, police, firefighting, and space exploration often deal with binary consequences, better known in these lines of work as *terminal consequences.* The penalty for substandard performance is, well, quite high. Therefore, individuals in these disciplines train differently. Their demeanor relating to skills development and retention is more serious. They obsess with planning for every situation and pressure testing through

simulation. They compete with each other to prepare. They are tremendously dependent on coaching as a constant factor in their development and integration with teams of other high performers. This is why they are so prepared and able to constantly take on new, increasingly difficult challenges.

Your performers may not be running into burning buildings or dealing with killer space debris hurtling at 22,000 miles per hour. However, when you are coaching top performers, teams, and their organizations, you are dealing with increasingly high-stakes issues in their areas of operation. There are businesses that attract the most profitable work and grow unremittingly, and those that get just enough scraps to keep the lights on. There are firms that lose over and over and over again to seemingly equally matched competitors. There are individual performers who attended the best schools, spent twenty years learning their craft, and still underperform their peers.

Why is that? Is it luck? Is it a matter of being in the right place at the right time? Do some performers have a divine gift that cannot be replicated? Perhaps it is something else. Perhaps high performers should be preparing for a more competitive world in the same ways that groups who live with the threat of terminal consequences do every day. The consequences may not be as severe, but they are just as binary. It's a lot to ask someone to self-manage their way to realizing their full potential when they are already overburdened with actual performance. They need an alternative perspective, one that provides an honest look at what needs to change and improve. This is where coaching comes in.

HIGH PERFORMANCE DEMANDS CONSTANT VIGILANCE

Some self-proclaimed high performers think they no longer need to develop skills and challenge abilities. The summit of their careers, they believe, has been achieved and now they'll spend the years until retirement repeating

those winning ways. In most cases, if they were honest with themselves, these self-determined summiteers would admit that ascension was due less to a unique ability and more to unique circumstances. Through luck, random choices, or rare environmental forces, they have reached the top without much assistance from others. However, it is the highest performers who have already made it into the top tier who need the most training, coaching, and ongoing competition to stay there. Only a fool expects lightning to strike twice and then, when standing in the exact same spot, bemoans that it doesn't.

Experience, expertise, and wisdom can be great strengths for some performers. For others, these characteristics serve as their greatest sources of weakness. It's clear from research and experience that leveraging competition and training under duress play a huge role in developing better people and better organizations. However, despite displayed bravado and confidence, some performers shy away from further difficult challenges or appearing on a public scoreboard once they've reached the upper tier of their domain.

A coach's role includes creating situations where teammates prepare, plan, perform, and compete against each other. But high performers must be able to come together and operate as a team when the real competition against actual competitors begins. Great coaching involves encouraging performers to compete against other, slightly better leaders, as well as the ultimate competition—a better version of themselves.

People at the top of their field must also balance creativity, perfection, and hard work. Some performers constantly search for a shortcut or unique approach to getting an edge. Some may try to incessantly perfect their craft in antiquated or less effective ways, still obsessed with those processes that first made them a star. Other hard driving performers will work themselves into the ground, counting those long hours as guarantee of a next big win just ahead.

All performers tend to favor one of the following behaviors:

1. Pioneers always seek a better way, but they do not put in the time and practice necessary to learn and perfect their approach.
2. Purists refuse to look up to see what has changed, and they are overly concerned with fine-tuning performance to the nth degree.
3. Plow pushers work until they drop, whether or not their approach actually works.

Under duress, all performers default to their comfort zone.

High performers who, year after year and despite changing conditions and competitors, succeed in any one arena are able to balance and shift fluidly between all three of the following behaviors:

1. They look up occasionally to see how things could be different or who is doing things differently.
2. They perfect their craft.
3. They work hard.

These behaviors define the art, science, and grit of high performance and are a high predictor of those who will always be on top of their tier.

THE ART OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

"What is art but a way of seeing?"
—SAUL BELLOW

"He who works with his hands is a laborer. He who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman. He who works with his hands and his head and his heart is an artist."
—LOUIS NIZER

"I adapted an antiquated style and modernized it to something that was efficient. I didn't know anyone else in the world would be able to use it and I never imagined it would revolutionize the event."
—DICK FOSBURY

"Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty, because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things."
—STEVE JOBS

Imagine you'd managed to mistakenly find your way into a pasture and had upset the local bull that had proclaimed that grassland to be his. Your primary goal would be to simply run faster than the bull. If you were alone and

without help, there would only be one option: run to the fence before the bull reaches you. Let's assume you got to the barbed wire or electric fence first, but the fence is five feet tall. Could you scale it? What about without touching any part of it with your body? Even with all the adrenaline in the world flowing through your veins, this sounds impossible!

When Dick Fosbury was sixteen years old, he challenged this idea. Now, to be clear, he wasn't chased by a bull. He wanted to make the Medford High School track team. In Oregon, back in the 1960s, 1.5 meters (approximately five feet) was the minimum qualifying height for the high jump in high school track meets.

Fosbury was a tall, lanky guy. He played basketball and ran track in addition to trying to clear that bar. However, those long legs and arms so advantageous in other sports were a bit of a liability while trying to defy gravity by going over a high bar.

There are not many rules for performing the jump. You must not dislodge the bar, and you must take off on one foot. Thus, methods to clear the bar proliferated over the years. The dominant techniques of the time had colorful names, such as the western roll, upright scissors, eastern cut-off, and straddle method. Each was a time-tested, standard method of accomplishing this relatively unnatural task. However, Fosbury had little success with any of the traditional ways. He could have spent years studying and perfecting one of the methods that wasn't ideal for his body and ability. He could have stayed well into the night, practicing over and over again each day until he finally improved. Or, he could experiment with getting over that bar in a new way. That is exactly what he did.

Starting in 1964, Fosbury started using his own technique: head first and backwards. Many of his coaches, teammates, and local sports media were quick to ridicule—but that did not last for long. As he perfected his technique, Fosbury began to win, breaking long-standing high school records. He continued to perfect his style while at Oregon State University, despite his

coach's encouragement to use a more traditional style during meets. However, once Fosbury returned to his preferred method for clearing the bar, he broke collegiate records. Not only did his collegiate coach become a believer, but he then taught Fosbury's method to others.

By 1968, Fosbury had gained national attention, become the country's No. 1 college high jumper, and qualified for the US Olympic team. He continued to find ways to perfect his unique technique, which became widely known by the name we use today: the Fosbury Flop. In the end, his innovative streak, quest for perfection, and hard work paid off. Fosbury won the gold medal in the high jump with a mark of 7 feet 4¼ inches, a new Olympic and American record. Since then, the flop has become the dominant method used in the event. One day, there might be a new innovation that changes how high jumpers soar over the bar, but for now, the art of high performance as demonstrated by Dick Fosbury is the standard. It took him seeing things in a new way to make it possible.

What really made his technique feasible? Was Fosbury smarter than everyone else, more creative, or just lucky? Success might have resulted from a combination of these things, but other variables and factors played a role. First was the advent of the modern landing pad, made of soft foam and elevated three feet off the ground. Before the early 1960s, jumpers cushioned their fall by landing in sawdust or wood chips. A high jumper in those days could have tried Fosbury's technique—once. At that time, the flop was not a replicable approach due to the unforgiving effects of gravity and solid ground.

Second, Fosbury was not built like many other high jumpers. He was tall, long limbed, and generally lanky. Other high jumpers had compact bodies and tended to be built like sprinters with powerful legs. To help him clear the bar, Fosbury's new approach provided as much crucial time with his center of gravity under the bar as possible.

Third, Fosbury's coaches allowed him to experiment—partly due to his determination in perfecting his technique. He was working hard and hitting

the heights, so why not let him try? All coaches, however, would not have been so accommodating.

When Fosbury first started his unorthodox approach, the head coach at his high school was trying to move him from one traditional technique (the scissor) to the western roll, the approach all of his other athletes were using. However, the coach could see that Fosbury was having troubles, and he saw he had an athlete willing to put in the time for experimentation. This was a critical moment in Fosbury's evolution. A misguided coaching technique, one that demanded compliance, obedience, or unending repetition, would have stifled Fosbury (and been the end of this story). However, his coach encouraged experimentation, allowing Fosbury to use one technique in practice and a different one during meets. As long as his results improved, Fosbury would be given latitude to try different approaches. Luckily, this latitude continued into Fosbury's collegiate years. Fosbury had an empathetic and visionary coach at Oregon State, and when he beat the school record in his first meet using the Fosbury Flop, his coach had seen enough. From then on, the flop became Fosbury's coach's primary method, which he continued to study and taught to others. Fosbury benefited from exceptional coaching—a partnership, not the authoritarian approach often brought to mind when most think of coaching.[1]

Fosbury changed his perspective due to changing conditions of the sport, available technology, and his own particular limitations. This response allowed him to devise a new way of overcoming a common challenge. By adapting and innovating, Fosbury became the best at what he did and set the standard for others to follow.

This is the art of high performance.

Innovation in the high jump, however, did not cease in 1968, nor was it defined solely by Fosbury. While Fosbury kept his hands to his side as he cleared the bar, others stretched out their arms. He ran a "J curve" in his approach, but others utilized a "C curve." A Canadian athlete named Debbie

Brill had even developed a similar technique (the Brill Bend), but she did not win Olympic gold; as a result, her innovation didn't capture the media's attention and remained little known. Innovation, we see, never stops when competition is involved. The biggest limiting factors affecting achievement, however, are often found in the competitors' own minds.

When high performers reach a limit of vision, it is sometimes because they are too close to the problem. Exceptional drive and work ethic have them so focused on performance that seeing things from a different point of view may be difficult.

However, a coach is more detached and able to see their current performance as it compares to past performance, other's performance, and upcoming environmental changes. Sometimes the performer is the innovator; sometimes the coach has the new approach.

> **In most cases, the partnership between performer
> and coach changes an idea or aspiration into action
> and technique that can be perfected.**

In case you were wondering, the new minimum qualifying height for the high jump at Fosbury's high school is now *six* feet.[2] His art is now everyone else's science.

WHAT IS ART, AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO HIGH PERFORMERS AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE COACHING?

Ask a hundred people to define the word *art,* and you will get almost as many definitions. In fact, the phrase "I know it when I see it" is part of American cultural lexicon based on an interesting case, *Jacobellis v. Ohio* (1964), decided by the U.S. Supreme Court (review at your own risk).[3]

Art is a challenging concept to define, and it is made more complex

depending on who's defining it. A non-artist may define it as a creation such as a picture, sculpture, or musical composition. A philosopher may define it as the process of creation itself. Artists may bristle at the thought of anyone trying to constrain the concept into a simple definition that trivializes creation, production, and the greater meaning of expression.

Art is also very dependent on the eye, ear, or mind of the beholder. To some people, the song "Welcome to the Jungle" by Guns N' Roses revolutionized the music scene. To lovers of classical music, or for example, Panamanian dictator General Manuel Noriega (who was chased out of an embassy after ten days of hearing it at deafening levels[4]), the song is garbage.

One definition of art could be "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination." In this context, the definition does not require a person to be an artist as a profession in their particular area of influence. It simply requires someone (under the same conditions, resources, and constraints governing others) to see things in new ways and be able to produce something original that creates a new source of direction, value, or advantage for themselves and others. For the purposes of this book, however, we need a solid definition, and so we do our best to encapsulate it into a useable concept (though surely we'll offend many a scholar or artist in the process):

> *Creation or construction of an innovative product, process, idea, or application through seeing things in new ways and from new perspectives to yield unique results for appreciation, adaptation, or advancement.*

Let's break down those words and concepts into some manageable pieces for discussion.

First, "creation and construction" are meant to imply *action*. While the word *art* might be sometimes used as a noun when considering the results of creativity, we refer to *art* as a verb, designating the act of creativity.

Second, this action must produce something. The results might be a new

idea, one that influences how we look at things or address everyday situations. It might be new ways to use common tools, components, and resources in business or to tackle challenges. Perhaps the action simply changes the order of steps or approach to problem solving. Of course, what is produced can also be something tangible, like a painting, piece of music, or technological gadget.

Third, and critical, is the idea that art sees things in new ways and from new perspectives. Art is most often the result of an individual or group having an "Aha!" moment once they are removed from an issue and consider someone's else's point of view or a different angle without self-imposed limitations (i.e., how things have been done in the past). From great painters to athletes and entrepreneurs, this change is a key part of creativity that liberates the creator's ability to produce something new.

Fourth, the result must be unique. Specific variations might be very slight, but art is not something that is mass reproduced. While that might make those who find comfort in numbers and efficiency uncomfortable, numbers and efficiencies are the antithesis of true art. Perhaps the ability to capitalize on a new idea might be an issue based on reality, scalability, and economics in the future. During the process of creating art, however, that thought is a constraint to be avoided.

Fifth and finally, the result must have a reason for being. Appreciation by the public (and perhaps by the artists themselves) may be the reason a beautiful sculpture or musical composition was created. Think of the "artwork" created by a three-year-old child that is a unique representation of the family dog. It may look like a Picasso, but it won't sell like one. However, it is still art, and its value is based on the audience. Other types of art might help us adapt to a new reality or a change in the environment. Reacting to rule changes in sport, new government regulations in business, or the sudden availability of broadband Internet access to the general public are examples of how art can be created to adapt to challenges and opportunities. Advancement benefits

individuals, groups, organizations, or society as a whole. Architecture in a metropolitan city is a great example: Beautiful, energy-efficient buildings full of natural light are works of art that benefit countless others. The designers used steel, glass and rivets, components available to anyone, but they created something unique.

In terms of sight, sound, and touch, art is not always traditionally beautiful. However, it is always unique, expressing different perspectives and visions of what could be and—until that very moment—had never before existed.

ART IS HARD TO DEFINE, BUT YOU KNOW IT WHEN YOU SEE IT

Art solves complex problems. For businesses, how a company takes raw materials, financial investments, and people to create new products that will be accepted by the market and fit realities of the *next* ten years as opposed to the *last*, is art. For painters, it is taking a blank canvas and, using only brushes and standard colors, creating something never before painted. For athletes, it is looking down a swimming pool's lanes and finding ways to refine their specific tool (their body) to beat new competitors who are trying to do the same thing.

Another thing to keep in mind: art appeals to emotions and the heart, not necessarily to logic and the mind. That is why art is so hard to define and so dependent on the beholder as well as the point in history in which it is introduced. Business artists, such as Steve Jobs, have numerous failures and false starts because they introduced a product at the wrong time or the product failed to resonate with consumers. Grunge metal had its moment, but it is unlikely that musical moment would have been the same in the 1500s. Fosbury's artistic flop was perfect in the early 1960s, but it would have been disastrous before the invention of elevated landing pads.

Coaching can act as a governor and catalyst when managing the art of high

performance. If a leader is constantly churning out ideas and approaches that never see action, the coach's job is to rein in the leader. If coaches notice there are no more gains being made with an existing approach, their role is to help the performer move on to another. The coach's role, though, is not to have all the answers. Reflection and collaboration between coach and performer might uncover new ideas and approaches. In the end, coaching provides the extra perspective as to what can be achieved next, whether by focusing on mastery or experimentation. If a performer is fixated on the tiny details, the coach's job is to find the bigger picture. Let's look to business for an example of how extra perspective—or lack thereof—can make the difference between success and failure.

THE GREAT SMARTPHONE WARS

Remember the smartphone wars that started in the mid-2000s? At that time, Blackberry, developed by Research in Motion (RIM), was the market leader with more than 50 percent market share. Its primary rivals were Motorola and Nokia. All were fighting to take the basic mobile phone concept and add email communication, a benefit that would extend the desktop computer to the palm of users' hands. This new product would be a communication device, and each business proclaimed their networks were more reliable, communications more secure, and devices the most advanced on the market. Then everything changed.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs appeared at the January 2007 Macworld conference and announced a neat little gadget: the iPhone. Certainly, Apple was not new in the innovation game; they introduced the first iPod (2002) and eventually dominated the portable music device market. Keep in mind, however, that Apple did not invent the category. Sony, maker of the Walkman, had been around for years and many companies pioneered digital music devices based on the MP_3 format long before the idea of the iPod crossed Cupertino's design

desks. However, Apple did have a reputation for forward thinking and mak-ing improvements through creativity, design, and functionality. They not only had an idea where the market was going, Apple intended to drive the market in the very direction they wanted. The world didn't know it "needed" a device like the iPad or the iPhone until Jobs and Apple showed that it did.

We all know how this story ends. In just the first quarter of 2016, Apple sold *74.8 million iPhones.* RIM now owns less than 1 percent market share and continues to trend downwards. Realistically, RIM is no longer a competitor in this market; it has its fans, but the Blackberry is loved only by a cult of users—much as RIM once characterized Apple users. Many business analysts now refer to iPhone, with an initial development cost of around $150 million, as the most profitable product in history. How did this happen?

RIM founder Mike Lazaridis was in denial from the moment the product was unveiled. The iPhone had a terrible battery life; it was a network band-width hog; there was no traditional clickable keyboard; and the device didn't come with the encryption security that the Blackberry did. In Lazaridis's eyes, the iPhone was a toy for people addicted to watching cat videos on YouTube. Lazaridis reasoned that RIM's users would not be interested in such triviality, and most of RIMs internal advisors backed that thinking. They would stick to their approach and strengths. People did not want access to the Internet from their phones; they just needed to get email when they weren't at their desks!

Admit it: That's hard to read when you consider how everyone uses smartphones nowadays. Remember, this was the leader of the largest com-pany in the world, in its domain, expressing his opinions on what the market wanted. RIM's pillars of success were built on ease of typing (like users did on a QWERTY keyboard, not a silly glass screen), low network usage, long bat-tery life, and rock-solid encryption. Adherence to these pillars, they claimed, would protect RIM from this invasive new competitor. This proves how little they understood about the art of high performance. Not only was RIM relying on their customers to make the most logical decision, they failed to notice

what was happening in their business environment—how Apple was changing the commercial landscape and customers' hearts.

Apple made exclusive marketing deals with AT&T to sell their product; additionally, they worked a technological deal to incorporate a full web browser and access to the entire scope of the Internet into their product. They developed an app store and used their iTunes service to further tie consumers to communications and entertainment offerings. Apple also embraced beautiful, intuitive design, building their product with only a single button on its face and creating an instruction manual from a few simple drawings and sentences. All of these innovations had nothing to do with what RIM viewed as the Blackberry's strengths. They eventually tried to counter with products such as their Storm device and alignments with phone service carriers, but it was too late; Apple had destroyed RIM. However, the war is not over.

Samsung, with its Android operating system, was 2016's leading smartphone manufacturer until fourth quarter's iPhone 7 release helped catapult Apple into the top spot. This continuing skirmish shows that battles between any industry's top manufacturers will continue to rage, and none can afford to be overly fixed on a single rival. The other three manufacturers in the top five, all Chinese companies, are taking advantage of the adoption of smartphones in new markets by new consumers. What will those customers want? What makes those markets different? How will laws, languages, and customs dictate how those markets evolve? Now it is Apple and Samsung's turn to remain relevant.

Some accept that art is a constant state of problem solving. Others think they can insulate themselves from change by overreliance on technical details and hard work. In time, most artists win and, although some artists don't, the concept of art is always victorious. *Staying* on top takes more than art, but art is the key to passing competitors on the way there. We will return to this concept in future chapters as we discuss how art must be complemented by science and grit if an idea, product, or application is to take hold.

❧

Many performers claim to have great vision or a respect for the "art" of their domain. Whether it is in sports, business, science, or any other area of expertise, very few people claim they are automatons going through familiar motions over the course of a career—no matter how complex those motions might be. Instead, they call themselves visionaries, innovators, or strategic thinkers. All of those terms assure the world (and themselves) that these performers are more than a hard-working machine. They think and see how things *could* be.

However, is that true? Why do certain people (who are immersed in identical circumstances as their peers) see clearly how things could be better, while others—with the exact same sets of data, resources, and experiences—cannot? If performers keep missing changes around them despite their identical immersion, they are most likely acting alone and not training in a team environment. They are not using a coach as a partner to help them see changes. They only see competitors when playing for keeps. Leaders at the top of their domains naturally miss changes in the world because they have their heads down. A coach's role is to keep those heads up and thinking through "what if?" scenarios—in other words, to encourage performers to think more like artists. But becoming an artist doesn't occur at the flip of a switch; that transformation takes time, effort, and a willingness to change.

True artists actually *do* see things differently; non-artists cannot see things from other perspectives without the proper training and identification of what is obscuring their view. Try this experiment to differentiate how artists and non-artists see the world. Submit the following challenge to a group of smart people: "Draw me a picture of a tree. You have twenty seconds."

You will get a wide variety of submissions due to various factors: the age of the people, skill level in drawing, what part of the world they are from, and their memories and activities—even from the moments before you asked

them to put pen to paper. Imagine a possible picture in your head right now. Got it? Remember that image.

If you took a representative sample of the trees drawn by people close to where you live, from similar backgrounds and between five and fifty-five years old, you would probably get something like this:
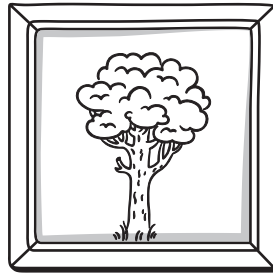
Some variations will occur. Some people might have used green for the top of the tree. Some might have added more or less detail. A few might have taken the "art" term a little too seriously and drawn a frame to prepare for its proper place in the Louvre. However, it's amazing that, without any limiting instructions, non-artists from similar backgrounds and experiences almost always draw this same tree if they are given a short amount of time to produce the image. Why is that? Is it a lack of artistic skill, or is there something else?

We could cite many reasons for the mass production of similar tree images by different people. Some reasons are based on the conditions of the request. Some are based on the skills and experience of the artist. Some are based on our reliance on the familiar as a starting point to begin solving a challenge. Let's take a look at these issues as they pertain to this example:

- Conditions of the request
  - Short time frame
  - Lack of direction
  - Limited access to materials or resources

- ◦ Unclear reason for request
- ◦ Unclear meaning of value assigned to what is ultimately produced

- • Skills and experience of artists (or the performer or leader)
  - ◦ Varied and unknown skills and experience level
  - ◦ Lack of preparation time
  - ◦ No reference point or model
  - ◦ Varying levels of participation
  - ◦ Varied underlying primary strengths (other than artistic endeavors)

- • Reliance on the familiar
  - ◦ Comfort level with simple design
  - ◦ Need to conform
  - ◦ No express permission of liberation of ideas
  - ◦ No definition of importance of the task

Of course, if you gave your group twenty minutes instead of twenty seconds to complete the task, the results would be different. There might be more detail in the branches, lines in the trunk, or even a bird's nest in one of the branches. If you told the participants to draw a big tree or specified a particular type of tree, the pictures might vary more. If you supplied a wide palate of colors to choose from, art supplies, and space to work, you might get an even wider spectrum. You might even tell people there was a contest with a $100 prize for the winner! But in the end, the trees would—for the most part and for most people—still look the same, despite any differences in the request conditions.

Changing the variables related to the skills and experience of the artists might have a greater effect on producing a higher quality of tree art. If only the best sketch artists in the room participate, the samples might be worthy of a wall (somewhere). If a tree outside the window provided a model that everyone could see, the results might look less like a blob on paper. Also, if you allow advance preparation for the exercise, you could counteract

the effects of a rushed time frame on the outcomes. While you might have improved the quality of mass production, the variation in output has not changed within the group.

The first two groups of reasons for tree art cloning are what we commonly refer to in sophisticated, scientific terms as "excuses." You might hear one or more of these from the participants:

"Well, I'm not an artist. What do you expect?"

"I would do better if we had more time. The conditions make it impossible to do anything of substance."

"I had no idea that this was so important. If I had, I would have put more thought into it."

"I didn't know you wanted anything except a basic tree. You never said that was important. You asked for a tree, and I drew you a tree."

"Why am I doing this? Aren't there experts that can handle this, so I can get back to my work?"

While we call the above statements "excuses," the participants do have a point. There *are* natural limitations placed upon them due to the nature of the exercise. It is the job of the leader of an exercise to set parameters, manage resources and participants, and direct efforts toward the desired goal. This illustrates how a coach can construct a great moment with monumental effect on the leaders that supports the value of the coaching. Leaders' performances are limited by how they see things. Leaders and conditions may have created limitations and boundaries in which leaders can operate. But effective coaching will show performers how to think through challenges differently and, while still respecting the limitations, improve. Thus, performers move from frustration and complaining to continuous betterment. Without

coaching, people may throw up their hands and go back to the approach they know best . . . even when it yields no better results.

So why do people keep drawing only slightly better versions of the same tree?

This phenomenon is most likely due to the third group of conditions, *reliance on the familiar*. There is nothing wrong with the challenge; you asked for a tree, so people drew a tree. It is a simple task, so the non-artists rely on iconic imagery of the object to produce something quickly that is readily identified and not easily ridiculed by their peers. Non-artists may even resort to drawing a tree as they would've at age five, and you probably will not see much difference between that drawing from a business setting and what is hanging on the home refrigerator. However, true artists see things differently. They do not try to identify and classify objects. They look at their component parts and visualize how to use them in new ways.

Untrained artists, many of whom claim to be visionary and strategic, see icons or representations of objects. If you ask them to draw a hat, a car, or a tree, they produce similar styles and reproductions. This is very helpful when making signs that anyone can understand, describing how to accomplish a task, or quickly summarizing a position. However, falling back on the familiar is exceptionally self-limiting when creating art. The non-artists see a tree as a representation of what has already been seen. They identify the object and recreate it, making variations in the slightest of degrees.

When artists look at a picture, they see shadows, contours, colors, and much more. By seeing things as an unlimited collection of variables and components, there is no limit to what can be created. In fact, studies have shown that when artists and non-artists view the same picture, they focus on different things. Non-artists spend 40 percent of the time looking at familiar objects. They scan for faces, common items, and symbols. They seek images

that make them feel comfortable, and then they re-create them. Artists, on the other hand, spend less time looking at any one spot in a picture; they scan all of it. They give equal attention to all aspects, even rotating the picture in their hands to achieve different angles. These two groups of people see the same thing very differently.[5] We should expect that those two groups of people would also have different suggestions of how to create something new and truly unique.

Whether coaching, leading an individual performer, or performing, you are probably not in the business of drawing trees. You do, however, make decisions that involve your personal achievements, the future of your enterprise, well-being of your team, and possibly an overall impact on society. Those decisions can be monumental, and the "trees" you are asking people to draw are actually thought-based exercises such as these:

- Methods learned over the last twenty years are having less and less of an impact. What should be done differently?

- Should so much be risked by trying a new idea or approach? What if we are wrong?

- How do we deal with losing key talent and clients to competitors?

- How do we address operational problems within our business that, if ignored, will bring us to an end in less than a year?

Of course, some people are naturally inclined to be artistic. Keep in mind that it would be insulting to attribute profound expertise in art as something that comes easily to some people. There are art schools, art professors, and artists (whose first famous work came after twenty years of effort) who would take great offense at that assumption. The eye, mind, and heart must be trained to ignore the familiar, to see the whole landscape, and to create a new vision of what only some of us can view.

In all domains, leaders can be trained to see like artists. But they must also be provided with an environment and culture that welcomes and rewards creative thinking. This might seem like common sense to those who claim they want their performers to gain a competitive advantage through creative thinking, but this is not always the case. Individuals, teams, and organizations frequently run into friction that stops them in their tracks.

ART IN THE BOARDROOM

Think of the last really important meeting you attended, one where a great deal was at stake. Try to visualize who attended and conditions in the room, down to the palpable stress in the air and any scuttlebutt or chatter in the days before the meeting. As the meeting got started, imagine that someone in charge asked the following questions:

> *"How do we address the fact that we charge 20 percent more for our service than our lower cost competitor? Our clients are demanding discounts, and this will be the end of us in less than a year if we don't fix it. We've got the next three hours to figure it out. I want solutions, and I want them now."*

In most cases, you are stuck with a certain set of people, products, services, facilities, and market conditions. There is no magic wand or knight on a white horse to gallop into the room. The "they" who must fix this problem are actually a collective "you." So, what happened next?

You might have experienced these results:

- Engineering people produced engineering ideas. Finance people brought finance ideas. Marketing people had marketing ideas.
- A parade of charts, PowerPoint decks, fancy graphs, and pictures of arrows going up and to the right.
- Fine-tuning existing offerings and pricing to jump-start an existing product and service line.

- ◦ Promises to work harder and imperatives for managers to turn the screws to create a "performance culture."
- ◦ Cutting expenses, especially those that are particularly costly and hard to manage—people.

If this sounds a little too familiar, do not despair. That's the point. These results are exceptionally common and based on one of the reasons for low performance defined earlier: reliance on the familiar.

Yes, the timelines are unrealistically limited. Yes, we are stuck with what we have on hand. But the true inhibitor of performance is the inability to see how what we have, under conditions similar to those experienced by our competitors, can be used in new ways to change the outcome and create instantaneous competitive advantages.

You could offer a 20 percent discount, but at what cost to quality and your people? You could tell everyone to work harder to find more clients who can pay higher fees, but where are they? Maybe a new strategy, brand, or service offering could be the answer. Perhaps you could even go study the problem a little more and find a way to massage the numbers into showing that everything will be fine (eventually).

Or, maybe, the performance inhibitor is trying to find a new way to jump over the same bar at the same height using the same rules that constrain everyone else.

ART HAS AN ENEMY, AND IT IS US

High-performing organizations need high-performing teams comprised of high-performing individuals to be able to improve at a rate faster than their competitors—and faster than the rate at which the environment changes.

Everyone is expected to work hard and have the expertise and experience required to be a valuable member of the team. Expertise and experience are easy to measure, compare, and manage and, therefore, they tend to be the first places leaders turn to for help improving. When things aren't going well, leaders shout for more hours, higher goals, and better people.

However, it may only take *one* person, in a moment of brilliance, who sees a problem in a new way to change everything. That moment is hard to predict or replicate. Therefore, the challenge is to create the conditions and culture to allow artistic and creative solutions to happen as often as possible. This means that the conditions and culture inhibiting such a setting must be addressed.

For example, much research and numerous books have been published about the dangers of "groupthink." Groupthink applies to people with similar backgrounds, motives, and insular perspectives who arrive at irrational or ineffective decisions. The term implies that each person comes to the given decision in a natural way and all voice the decision in unison, sign off on it, and send it out the door.

But groupthink is more than the simple act of everyone backing the same idea or decision. In 1952, urbanologist William Whyte said that *rationalized conformity* is the real issue within organizations making large-scale decisions about their future.[6] A group may use a thoughtful, academic, data-backed process to arrive at the "right" decision. However, this is an illusion of their own creation if that decision, and the process to reach it, was constrained and influenced by the desire to conform within established cultural norms. This practice has been justified through a flawed process, hampered by what researcher Irving Janis defined as groupthink's antecedents: high group cohesiveness, structural faults within the group, and stressful situation context.[7]

Groupthink destroys art by driving away those who would introduce new ideas. At the very least, it silences the majority from future creative input. Groupthink provides a false comfort of agreement under a nice warm blanket of precedent and past success. And that trait spreads like wildfire.

From a bigger perspective, groupthink is a symptom of a self-managed, performer-centric culture. It happens when collections of experts, who have a deeply rooted view of the world, get together and reinforce each other's beliefs—which happen to be remarkably similar to their own. There is no one to step outside the circle of belief. However, in a culture where coaching is valued, performers have better perspectives about alternative solutions to bring to the discussion; shared conversation is, after all, how they interact with those trying to improve their outcomes. Thus, being exposed to coaching as an external influence on performance can affect how individuals, groups, teams, and organizations arrive at answers. Coaching is a way of seeing the world from multiple perspectives, not just your own.

❧

Many organizations claim to be innovative. However, think back to the last large planning meeting you had when many very smart, accomplished people started offering unorthodox solutions to a critical problem. You might have heard rebuttal statements such as—

"That may work for someone selling cars, but this is the XYZ industry."

"Our customers will not stand for that for one minute."

"That is not how we do things here. We are different."

"Oh, boy. Here comes Jane with her 'change the world' ideas again."

"I appreciate your enthusiasm, but we need something more realistic and short term."

"There is no way that will work with our current pricing systems. Are you suggesting we get rid of all our current programs and do this instead?"

Statements like these are not only symptomatic of a team influenced by

groupthink but also illuminate how this issue has become a deeply ingrained part of organizational culture. Not only is the single idea being dismissed, the very concept of having new ideas is being challenged. To become a high-performance organization, leaders and coaches must work together to deliver results. Coaches can improve performance, but they must also have institutional support regarding direction. Leadership's responsibility is to make the key decisions and set the course; otherwise, organizations wind up with extremely well-trained and well-coached performers who are going the wrong way exceptionally well.

LEADERSHIP AS THE ULTIMATE ART FORM

Leadership could be called one of the ultimate art forms. A recent study by IBM of more than 1,500 CEOs emphasized that, in a world of great complexity and change, the ability to innovate, adapt, and see things in new ways was paramount to success.

> "CEOs now realize that creativity trumps other leadership characteristics. Creative leaders are comfortable with ambiguity and experimentation. To connect with and inspire a new generation, they lead and interact in entirely new ways . . . Creativity is the most important leadership quality. Standout CEOs practice and encourage experimentation and innovation throughout their organizations. Creative leaders expect to make deeper business model changes to realize their strategies. To succeed, they take more calculated risks, find new ideas, and keep innovating in how they lead and communicate."[8]

People change, times change, opportunities and challenges change. Some believe that leadership potential is something people are born with, and that it can be taught, or will emerge under the right set of circumstances. We, however, believe that great leadership—in any domain—is dominated by artists.

Leaders may have operational, financial, and human resource experts to get things done, but their ultimate job is to see things in new ways and bring the proper resources to bear. If coaches, performers, teams, and organizations are to flourish, art must flourish. And, it must start at the very top. Famous American artist Jackson Pollock illustrates this top-down concept.

A METHOD TO ART'S MADNESS

Anyone who has ever seen a Jackson Pollock painting immediately recognizes the style and frenzied imagery typical of his creations. Some might think the painter never did the same thing twice, and the fact he didn't was the essence of his brilliance and unmatched creativity.

While it would be correct to say that each of his paintings was unique, depicting concepts in ways never before done, his method and technique were actually quite regimented. Pollock started by laying his canvas out on the floor instead of placing it on a wall or easel.[9] This was one of the practices he used to create original works. However, Pollock became a legend because he successfully used this method again and again.

Pollock's product was always different. His inspiration came from who knows where. Predicting what he would produce next was almost impossible. One thing was for certain: most critics knew the work would be great. But what if Pollock had gotten bored with his famous drip-painting technique and then switched to making watercolors, using a traditional brush and easel, for the next couple of months? What if he then decided to try painting with the wooden end of the brush? After getting bored with that, he might have tried to go the mashed potato sculpture route.

While it is almost guaranteed that his resulting artistic creations would have been sights to see, would any of us know the name Jackson Pollock if he had adopted those other methods? Would he have become the master he was if he *always* employed a new way of doing things? Probably not. A good

coach must always be diplomatic and careful not to stifle the artistic process. Eventually, however, they may need to say, "There are lots of amazing ideas here. We need to pick one and become great at it." A coach is a catalyst for execution, helping performers and leaders unleash potential. Art cannot express itself unless it is created, reworked, and refined.

<p style="text-align: center;">❧</p>

There is a downside to becoming a person or organization in touch with and encouraging its artistic side. You can't *always* be looking for a new way to see things; eventually, work has to get done. Skills must be acquired to become proficient at key tasks. Work must be replicated or produced at scale. Even creative types need to become better at being creative, and that requires thousands of hours of practice. This is where the importance of coaching is key: the coach's role is to notice when it is time to create and when it is time to work. No matter what the approach, performers perpetually living in the creation phase will never improve. If they are always experimenting, they will never find the "next best way." This is not to be confused with *the* best way. Coaching manages the fine balance between thinking and doing. It's easy for performers to get lost in the process of creation and obsess over finding the perfect solution. Coaches manage this phenomenon from the outside, looking in, thus keeping the "artist" moving forward without restricting creativity.

<p style="text-align: center;">❧</p>

What constitutes art is sometimes hard to describe. Often, quantifying its value and showing specific returns on investment is hard, and friction naturally exists between experts in "hard skills," where numbers and charts rule the day, and artists whose "soft skills" (perceptions, ideas, and experimentation) are the currency of value. This friction is actually a positive thing

because it encourages a balance between what can be done and what could be done.

Creativity can also be inherently destructive, since it challenges—and sometimes validates—the status quo. Some citizens of the status quo often will resist, ridicule, and dismiss artists in any field as threatening and disruptive. If artists are right, everyone must change, or everyone must at least admit that their way of seeing the world is not absolute.

This is why true art is so rare. True art is based on individual perceptions, circumstances, and situations that are difficult to duplicate or explain to others. Even fresh revisions of true art are sometimes fought with great tenacity. However, leaders and performers who are artists—even if just occasionally—change the world around them. Their creations either become new standards of performance or cause everyone to adapt to these artists' performance. Thus, you can either become an artist or react to those who are. Your call.

ASSESSING THE ART OF HIGH PERFORMANCE

When assessing the art of performance, there are some areas to think about and questions to ask:

- When is the last time I stopped to consider how things have changed that might require me to adapt?

- Is my path the best approach for my unique circumstances, or is it simply the only way I know how to do what I do?

- Am I playing "catch up," adopting the standards and best practices of competitors?

- Am I getting better at predicting unforeseen circumstances by utilizing different perspectives?

- Do my colleagues, coaches, and organization encourage creative and innovative thinking, or do they see it as frivolous and flighty?

- Could I use my experience, education, and talent in ways that guarantee my future success even if all the circumstances around me change?

- If my craft had truly terminal consequences (lives and safety on the line), would I be more artistic in my approach?

❧

Art is to be encouraged. It is essential to reinvigorate performance in response to new conditions or opportunities. It is not something to be left unconstrained and unmanaged. Thus, the support of art, innovation, and creativity must come from the top, and leadership must become one of the ultimate art forms. Think about true leadership—it is difficult to define, hard to quantify, and challenging to show an immediate return on investing in it. This sounds like art, and perhaps that is why there are thousands of books on the subject, each with a slightly different take. From our research and interviews with great leaders, art becomes a major differentiator in creating that sustainable, competitive advantage manifested in high-performing organizations, teams, and individuals. In any organization, environment, and domain, the ability to change perspective, see things differently, adapt, and innovate is what makes some people great. It is art that makes leaders, coaches, and individual performers consistently excel, even when the ground rapidly shifts under their feet.

Eventually, however, performers must execute and improve. Think back to Dick Fosbury and his high jump. What if he'd become obsessed with finding an even better technique every six months to get over that elusive bar? One day, some athlete or coach *would* probably figure out another new way.

But Fosbury was not in the "jump technique discovery" business. His business was winning medals, and once he'd found the advantage he needed, he perfected that medal-winning technique by spending countless hours practicing it.

The art of high performance is just one of the three essential components of creating sustained, exponential wins. *Perfecting the ideas created* and then relentlessly *doing the repetitions required to create momentum* are equally important components, which will be addressed in the next two chapters.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

If we had a working, dependable time machine, we could host one hell of a race. Think back to all of the Olympic gold medal winners since 1896 in the premier speed event: the 100-meter sprint. We could pick the most advanced stadium and track in the world to host it (it would need to be a really wide track). We would pack the stands with screaming fans from all over the world. And it would be the most anticlimactic race in the world. We already know who the winner would be. In fact, many of the gold medalists from yesteryear should consider themselves to be very lucky to attend because they wouldn't even have qualified for today's high school state track meet.

The current world record holder for fifteen- or sixteen-year-olds would have beaten Jesse Owens, the 1936 Olympic gold medalist. Carl Lewis's gold medal performance in the 1984 games would have put him in seventh place, behind Usain Bolt, in the 2012 final (and narrowly in front of Jamaican runner Asafa Powell, who suffered a groin injury mid-race). In the most extreme example, the fastest man in the world in 1896 could have had a *twenty meter head start* and still lost to Bolt.

We have already talked about the prowess and superhuman ability of the current world record holder, Usain Bolt. However, depending on when you are reading this, he may have been (or will be) surpassed by yet another set of fleet feet. *That is the nature of performance. As long as there are competitors, there will be new champions.* In fact, it is safe to say that we can never call someone "the best that ever was." It is more accurate to call current champions "the best of their time."

That rules applies to all of us and in all domains. Whether your arena is sport, combat, flight, technology, business, law, or music, resting on your past achievements and experience only guarantees that, in the future, you will have a great view of your competitors' backs as they run ahead. That is why the last component of effective coaching for high performance is *continuous improvement.* Each day, you are either moving ahead or falling behind. If it matters, it must be measured. If it is measured, it must improve.

Continuous improvement can be defined in many ways, but for our purposes we will use the following definition:

> *Continuous Improvement is the ongoing, never-ending process of incrementally enhancing a performer's skills, abilities, achievement, and results through the highly disciplined use of cumulative gains, which serve as the new foundation for further development.*

Once you see it written on paper, it makes a great deal of sense why continuous improvement is so important to both coach and performer. It also might look very similar to other things you have read about improvement (including in this book's previous chapters).

We have already talked about the incremental gains experienced by British cycling teams, Turkish weightlifters, and Jamaican sprinters. Sports are a simple way to express improvement concepts because the variables are controlled and definitions of winning are relatively straightforward: If you want to win a race, go faster.

However, throughout this book we have discussed how that simplistic attitude is a fallacy. Desire, experience, ability, and hard work will only take you so far because they only create *eligibility* to compete at the highest level. *Once you reach the top tiers of a domain, everyone around you is one of the best.* Only those who continue to improve every aspect of their performance will reach and maintain elite status.

Continuous improvement is what made it possible for the space program to progress in just ten years from launching a 3,000-pound Mercury capsule into a single Earth orbit to sending three men on a trip to the moon (and back). Continuous improvement allows medical professionals to go from using crude instruments more suited to a carpenter's workshop to robotic, laser surgery in just a few decades. It is what allowed a time-sharing network of computers called ARPANET to evolve into the ubiquitous Internet that impacts so many of our aspects of modern daily life.

One common theme that you may have noticed from the earlier examples is that they represent constant forward motion. That does not mean that mistakes, disappointments, and frustrations didn't happen along the way. However, seeing things in new ways, perfecting the craft, and pushing beyond current knowledge and ability, has propelled scientists forward. Achievement does not move backward. The latest achievement becomes the new minimum standard. Thus, we move on.

The Japanese term *kaizen* describes this process, and it has been adopted into multiple fields and industries. Kaizen is a loose translation of the words "change" and "good" and has become synonymous all over the world with the concept of improvement. It can mean incremental or breakthrough changes in performance, but the idea is to constantly collect the incremental gains necessary in every aspect of an enterprise—as opposed to massive reinventions that could prove too costly or risky.

In fact, the concept of kaizen was developed and introduced in Japan by American business executives and trainers after World War II to help rebuild the devastated Japanese manufacturing base. This approach sought small-gain improvements and was influenced by the realities of the US business demands to support the war effort back home—where major investments in time, resources, and radical innovation were not possible. There was a war on!

Ironically, these exported practices were behind the remarkable ascension of the Japanese industrial model throughout the post–war period. The Toyota

Motor Company was one of the biggest proponents of the kaizen philosophy, stating in their management principles, "We improve our business operations continuously, always driving for innovation and evolution."

Too often, performers search for a magic pill or shortcut to success. They want to find an easier or faster way to the top. Some think that they can move from novice to expert with a couple of brilliant training sessions. Some believe success in one area will automatically translate to another. Others are so concerned about looking foolish that while they become proficient at each new level, they become obsessed with the aspect of high performance that deals with art (seeing things in new ways) and do nothing but contemplate what could be at the expense of forward movement. Their quest for perfection has become the enemy of "good enough to keep moving."

While there are breakthroughs and prodigies to distract us from the concept of incremental improvement, they are exceptionally rare. Whether a person is learning to play the piano, swimming the backstroke, practicing law, performing heart surgery, or selling a product or service into the market, there are a progressive number of steps and achievements they must attain before moving on.

The next time you think this might not apply to your domain, try to picture getting on an airline flight with your family and overhearing the pilot say, "No, I have never flown a 757 before. But I have been flying Cessna prop planes for years! How different could it be?"

Do you get on that plane?

THE COACH'S ROLE IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

But let's get back to the coach. Continuous improvement is the primary metric that should influence a coach's approaches and plans for improving high performer's progress. Goals are helpful, of course, but they only address wants and needs. Behaviors and activity are important to monitor, but they

are merely a means to an end. Remember—coaching is the art, science, and grit of repetitively helping others become better than they were yesterday. If, despite hard work, talent, and experience, a performer is not improving, there is a strong argument to be made that it is not their fault. *It is the coach's fault.*

Continuous improvement is not a stage or point in a pipeline. It is the core of the entire coaching process; everything revolves around it. An opening scrimmage followed by immediate reflection establishes an original baseline for a skill or ability. Work on fundamental skill development and the ability to apply those skills in situational plans prepares performers for the next simulation or actual event. Further reflection after simulations and events allows the performer and coach to agree upon fundamentals, situational plans, and future simulations—the next steps in addressing current performance gaps.

However, it is continuous improvement that allows us to verify if all of this is actually working.

If an elite performer is improving, the fundamentals should become more challenging; situations should be getting more complex, and simulations and real-life contests getting harder. If performers are not improving, it means coaches are only reinforcing their current level of performance. And we know from earlier discussions that reinforcing current performance is a recipe for being left behind in any competitive environment.

THE DENSE CORE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Imagine the Octane HighPer Coaching model as a spinning system with continuous improvement as its core. At first, the core is small and doesn't have a great deal of "gravity" to support extremely the advanced concepts of reflection, fundamentals, situational planning, simulations, and war games. At an early stage of performance development, the coach must manage the process to make sure that the level of difficulty is not above the ability of the system to support.
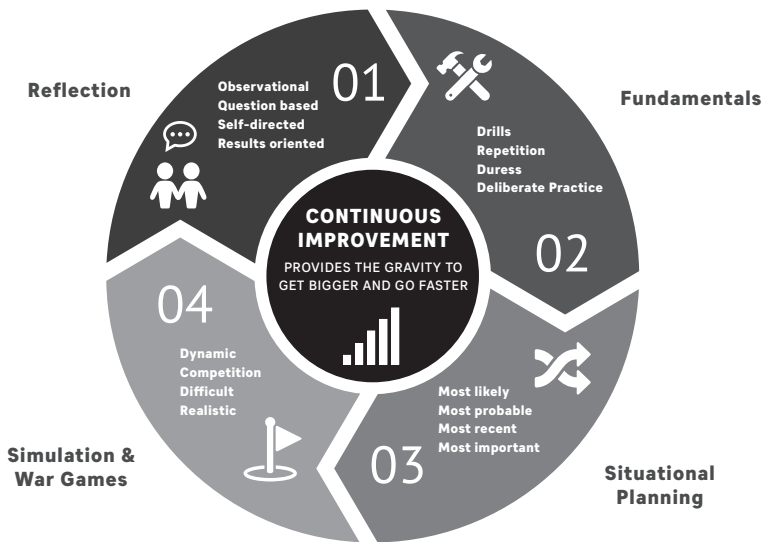
For example, if you were to take novice piano players and have them start working on Mozart's *Piano Sonata No. 18 in D major*, the center wouldn't hold. They have not progressed enough to build to such a level of performance, and thus, no amount of coaching or desire could help them attain it. The argument "if they can play this, they can play anything" may be ambitious and idealistic, but it has no basis in fact or research as effective. The efforts of both coach and performer would go spinning off into space and accomplish nothing.

However, if coaches were able to test those piano players to see their current level of ability, they could prescribe scales and drills to work on. They would have the pianists play sections of music in keys and styles common to many sonatas. They would make sure players engage in continual and deliberate practice to master their current level and push to the next. At this point, with demonstrated improvement, the coach can move to a more advanced
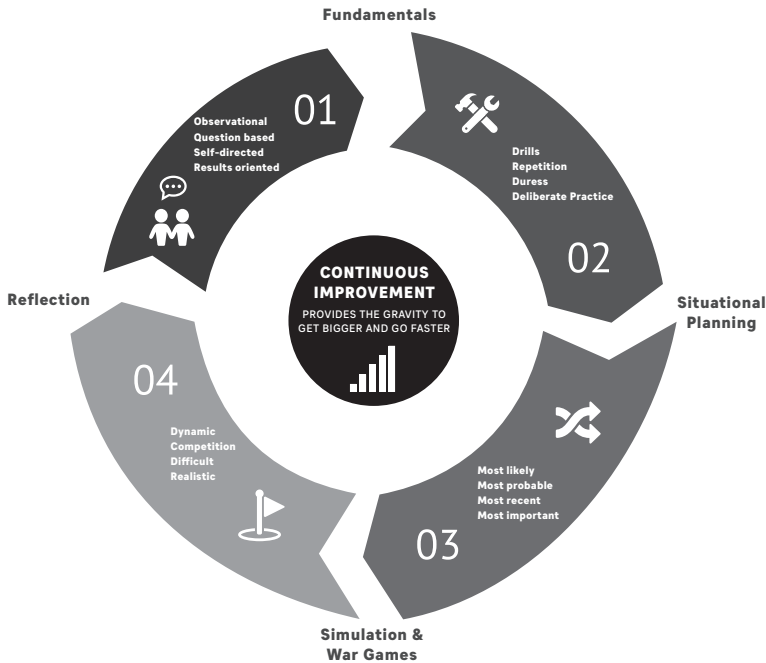
level of development. The center has more gravity, and the pianists can move to a higher "orbit."

Think about a business example. Let's say you take new employees with great education, ambition, and promise and put them straight into advanced negotiation skills training during their first week on the job. Keep in mind, they are also trying to learn how to log in to their computer, discover the best place to get coffee, and navigate office politics. Saddle them with advanced negotiation training without the proper progression of fundamentals, situational planning, and simulations, and they will certainly fail. Their potential will never be realized because you have tried to make them leap across too far of a performance gap.

This concept also applies to accomplished professionals who are learning a new skill outside their domain of expertise. Picture an exceptionally talented lawyer, accountant, or investment banker with fifteen years experience working on complex deals and matters. However, the market is changing due to client demands and competitive threats, so these professionals no longer spend their careers in their offices churning out work product. They have to start selling. Businesses often make a major mistake in addressing this new demand by placing executives in a few hours of training, showing them the tips and tricks of complex business development and sales, and then putting a big "certified" stamp on their forehead. The leadership of the organization may think, "These are smart people. They are the best in the world at what they do. How hard could a little sales training be?" Ask twenty-year sales veterans what they think of this approach and the idea that all their skills and knowledge can be mastered after a few hours of watching someone present PowerPoint slides.

Like the pianist, business performers must be coached to their present level on the specific skill they are trying to develop. Their mastery of other skills is irrelevant. While there might be some traits to help them master others (communication, reasoning, mathematical forecasting, etc.), they have

to start at a basic level with the new skill and progress toward proficiency and excellence. At an early stage of learning, the density of their continuous improvement core is weak. The center will not hold with the rate of intensity, speed, and difficulty of the subject matter applied to the process.

Fundamentals

01
Observational
Question based
Self-directed
Results oriented

02
Drills
Repetition
Duress
Deliberate Practice

Situational Planning

03
Most likely
Most probable
Most recent
Most important

Simulation & War Games

04
Dynamic
Competition
Difficult
Realistic

Reflection

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
PROVIDES THE GRAVITY TO GET BIGGER AND GO FASTER

As performers develop, so does their ability to handle more advanced methods of development. This is represented by the larger motion arrows in the diagram above. However, keep in mind that some variables never change. We cannot create more hours in the day, perform beyond our mental and physical capacity as human beings, or truly concentrate on unlimited areas at one time. When it comes to newer employees, organizations may be tempted to ignore these challenges of time, capacity, and concentration, and it is understandable why they might do so. The new employee's primary job for the first few days or weeks might be to go through training. There is a demand

to get them up to speed as quickly as possible, so they can begin having an impact. The employees themselves may demand to move faster by dispensing with all of the formalities and getting to the work at hand. It is a coach's job to manage the process of continuous improvement and make sure the intensity, speed, and difficulty of a performer's development is appropriate.

However, for more experienced professionals with other responsibilities, the intensity, speed, and difficulty must increase greatly. Their expectations are higher and potential impact is larger, yet they have less time in which to develop new skills while still maintaining, or improving, existing ones.

For example, such an established professional might only have a few hours a week hours to work on new fundamentals, plans, and simulations. This may be limited for a number of reasons (client demands, schedule, priorities, fatigue, to name a few), *so more must be gotten out of those few hours*. The coach's expertise must rise when dealing with more accomplished and time-constrained performers. If it doesn't, performers who do not suffer fools will surely let the coach know what they think.

Thus, the same rules of progression on the components of coaching apply to the coach as well. Remember, coaching is also a skill! It follows the same rules of continuous improvement as the performers served. A busy coach, with perhaps multiple performers to support, must create powerful drills, map the most impactful situations, and create realistic simulations that have the most impact in the shortest amount of time. This means they also must build systems and templates that best serve their individual performers and not waste time re-creating the wheel for everyone.

The coaches' role requires them to make sure that the performer is using time wisely and not engaging in efforts that are too advanced to maintain progressive improvement or are so simple that performers begin to regress. This is what makes the role of the coach so difficult and so important. Good coaches must come up with plans based on the individual performer and the specific leader, *and* those plans must be refined to fit the individual's

exact stage of development at any particular moment. Once again, we are reminded of the need and importance of a true partnership between coach and performer at all times.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOALS AND MEASUREMENT

There is one last thing for the coach to consider in continuous improvement: how to measure it. Obviously, every leader, performer, team, or organization wants to win. Winning—however we define it in any unique setting—is the goal and manifestation of the art, science, and grit of high performance that the high-performance coach has been applying over the course of training. In business, a win might look one way; in sports, another. However, no one can compete every day because mental, emotional, or physical fatigue naturally occur during high-intensity training and development.

Therefore, a high-performance coach must and will find other ways to monitor progression and improvement. Coaches have an unlimited number of metrics they can use to measure improvement. They bear full responsibility in finding and employing the most appropriate ones for the coaching program that are most directly related to the desired performance result. A good high-performance coach will always share some metrics and expectations with the performers, but good coaching does not overburden performers with so many details that they cannot maintain focus on their task: performing.

For example, if running coaches want to have a sprinter come out of the blocks at a lower angle, they should say, "Come out of the blocks at a lower angle and try to stay low for the first few strides." It does no good to say, "The ideal angle is 44 degrees coming out of the blocks, and you are at 60 degrees. Bring it down 16 degrees." There is no way for the performer to process this kind of fine-tuned adjustment, so it does nothing more than occupy

much-needed mental space. The good coaches fine-tune and deal with the details. They share the concepts in the performer's language, not their own.

It is very common to see this kind of overuse of detail and analysis in business. Especially at large companies and firms, departments full of people charged with efficiency and productivity experts who live for running reports and creating spreadsheets. It may be vital to the future of the company to make sure these metrics are measured and managed. However, they have their limitations in business performance coaching. A great coach will take metrics from other sources, such as their own evaluations, and turn them into simple adjustments that can be communicated to the performer.

For example, if you were to say to someone responsible for generating more sales that they needed to increase their successful closing percentage from 21.3 percent to 22.4 percent, how would this help? How would they make that adjustment? What is its practical application? It is the coach's job to translate data and say, "We need to do a better job closing business once we get a proposal in front of the client. From what you said, it sounds like making sure we are talking to the real decision maker from the start is the issue. Do you agree? Let's work on that."

Another example might be that the head of a department or practice might be asked to raise their financial realization rates from 87 percent to 88 percent, which represents millions in additional cash flow to the organization. This might be true, but what is the performer as the head of a department to do with that information? Once again, it is the duty of the coach to ask, "Why do you think our typical clients are not paying full price on our invoices? What could we do to improve that? Do you agree that we should perhaps get our invoices to them sooner and with more detail? Let's try that."

However, measurement is only relevant when it is attached to a goal, and it has to be the right goal. This might seem like common sense, but it is surprising how many organizations track statistics and activity for tracking's

sake. For example, a business might track (and reward) employees for how many appointments they have with potential clients in a month. However, if the goal is to generate new business, having one hundred appointments a month and no sales is an indicator of *poor* performance.

Coaches need to understand the performers' state of mind as they set goals and help them set the proper ones with the highest chance of driving success. This is the difference between *goal orientation* and *goal setting*.

Goal orientation refers to the performer's predisposition to goal setting and their general approach to achievement. According to research, most people default to one goal orientation or the other: performance or mastery. A performance goal is simply about achieving a result, whereas the mastery goal is about reaching a level where those results can be reproduced at will. There has been much debate over the years over which types of goals are most effective, producing lasting effects on acquisition of skills, abilities, and knowledge. Performance and mastery are two separate constructs with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Performance goals are aspirations to demonstrate competence or ability to others. Recognition of achievement is key and may come from coaches, peers, teachers, competitors, clients, and anyone else who may extrinsically motivate the performer. Their performance defines their level of achievement, and passing the test is the end game. This type of goal can also have two sides: performance approach and performance avoidance.

When individuals follow the *performance approach* orientation, they want and strive to be high performers for the potential rewards offered. They crave feedback, recognition, and praise. In fact, they may do whatever it takes to "win," including taking shortcuts or finding the minimum way to complete a challenge. An example of this would be a student who is focused on achieving a certain GPA rather than mastering a subject. As long as the grade is excellent, it doesn't matter how it was achieved.

Performers who have a *performance avoidance* orientation shun any

situation that may *disprove* their competence in a domain or activity. This may be because their skills are undeveloped, declining, or no longer effective. However, it also may be that they are high achievers in one domain, and they are accustomed to being held in high regard. Think of the brilliant business executives, doctors, or lawyers who are asked to use new technology or approaches and dismiss them as being unnecessary or irrelevant to the way they work. They may be right, but they may also be highly accomplished professionals who are used to being regarded as experts their whole life. They are avoiding performance in an area that may label them as novices or make them look stupid.

MASTERY GOALS

Mastery goals are aspirations that have a learning orientation. They are identified by the "desire to develop the self by acquiring new skills, mastering new situations, and improving one's competence" and are not necessarily concerned with comparisons or outside approval.[1] This is the traditional "student" approach, where seeking knowledge is the objective. Setting mastery goals is highly correlated with intrinsic motivation and long-term success in a domain. It is learning for the sake of learning without promise of reward.

Mastery goals are set by performers who wish to become the absolute best they can be in a particular field or domain. They immerse themselves in learning and constantly seek new challenges to test ability. This is very common in people with advanced degrees or many years of experience in a specific field. The goal is not to pass a test; the goal is to be a virtuoso.

However, this orientation can have its downside. Performers who have a mastery orientation may feel that everything they do has to be perfect when

they should be simply seeking proficiency. For example, business executives, doctors, or lawyers who have a deep rooted love for the profession and its mastery might try to apply that standard to everything. If they play a musical instrument, they have to be the best before they will perform in front of people. The end result is that they never end up performing because they are permanently engaged in seeking mastery, despite the fact that they do not have the time to devote to becoming a great musician. Perhaps they should learn a few chords and a couple of songs instead! This may seem like an innocent problem, but this can have detrimental effects when these people must learn something that relates to a major change in their profession. If they can't master it, they will resist it.

The coach's job is to notice a performer's tendency toward goal orientation and address it directly. However, an individual's goal orientation can vary based on the situation. "State versus trait" is something a good coach has to consider. *State* refers to the task or situation at hand for the performer. *Trait* refers to the predominant way a performer's goal orientation preferences are typically applied.[2]

Research has shown that individuals can have different goal orientations depending on whether they are in an academic or work domain. When it comes to their professions, those in fields with a highly formalized academic process are likely very learning-goal oriented. Mastery of the subject is necessary, and it is highly stimulating for the performers who chose to pursue it. Think of doctors who go to medical school, pilots attending flight school, or accountants enrolled in business school. While there are performance components to their educations, mastery of the subject matter is the paramount goal. No patient or passenger wants to have a surgeon or pilot who crammed for each test and then forgot the material the next day! In all likelihood, this is a performer trait that influences their tendencies toward progressive achievement.

If you ask those same professionals to do something new—like learn how

to run a clinic, generate new clients, or practice public speaking—they may switch to a performance-goal orientation. When they need to learn a new skill, they hire a coach, and they perform. That is their current state, so the goal becomes getting to a level of proficiency that allows them to get back to what they enjoy. Pass the test and move on.

Research also shows that performers in unfamiliar situations with few reference points revert to their natural goal orientation—also known as their trait.[3] Whether mastery or performance goals, that is where they will find comfort. We've seen this before with performers who revert to their art, science, and grit tendencies.

Thus, good coaches are always watching for two things: a performer's natural tendencies and stage of development. The coach uses performance as a method of measurement and a way to push performers beyond what they thought possible. However, if it is important to future success, what coaches truly want their performers to develop is *mastery*.

ACHIEVING MASTERY USING GOAL SETTING

Achieving mastery is a challenging undertaking for high-performace coaches. They make sure the performer is using *performance-based goals* to keep moving forward through managed competition, simulation, and training under duress. However, they are also making sure that the performer is using *mastery goals* for key skills and abilities through an emphasis on fundamentals, deliberate practice, and situational planning. First-rate coaches cannot allow the performer to superficially learn a new aspect of a domain, "check the box," and move on. They will also discourage performers from being so consumed with learning every last detail of a domain that they will never go out into the real world to perform because they never feel they are ready. No one said being a coach is easy!

If you are reading this book, you are probably a high performer and/or

coaching high performers. You are used to being around people with a strong need for achievement and successful track record. Keep in mind two last points.

First, how people act when they are presented with performance goals is very illuminating as to how they really feel. If performers avoid or seek performance goals that are so high their chance of achieving them becomes an excuse in itself, the real problem may be a high fear of failure. The best coaches make great efforts to develop self-efficacy in that specific area of expertise. As confidence improves, so will the effort and willingness to engage in more difficult tasks. It also encourages a learning-goal orientation, which leads to what every good elite coach wants: mastery.

Second, performers who have high ability need to use metacognitive awareness (also known as "thinking about thinking"). This relates back to the concept of reflective coaching, where the performer is pressed to recount what happened, compare it to desired outcomes, and come up with solutions for improvement. Metacognition is directly related to skill retention and application in future events—thus, it is critical for those who will be performing in more challenging, unpredictable scenarios.

In the end, if the performer is not improving despite possessing the right abilities, experience, and resources, there is very likely a coaching problem. Continuous improvement is *the* core for coaches and performers. It is where both parties need to focus, although they have different roles. The performer must balance art, science, and grit and be receptive to coaching. The coach must evaluate simulated and actual events to identify performance gaps to customize programs and plans that address those gaps.

The core of continuous improvement must grow stronger to allow for more advanced development of skills and abilities. Otherwise, all the efforts of everyone involved are simply activities with high opportunity costs that become less and less effective with the passage of time. Performers deserve better than that. It is up to their coaches to make it happen.

Coaches also need to help performers manage the types of goals they

set to make sure that results become permanent and can be the foundation of the next level of achievement. While some people may debate which goals should be set, research has shown that the efficacy of goal setting as a performance enhancement strategy is not up for debate. Analysis of more than five hundred studies on goal setting has shown a direct correlation on improved performance in all populations and activities with improved results of as much as 16 percent from simply using goal setting![4] This is a great example of how using better strategies to tap into a performer's functional reserve leads to improved results without the need for retooling or major investment of time and resources. Goals must be specific, difficult, measurable, and achievable.

Highly ambitious performers focus on outcomes. Winning, scoring points, and putting trophies on the mantel (real and figuratively) are what matter in the end. The challenge is that anyone can set a goal to become the best in the world at what they do. It is how you will get there that is the difference. That is why it is important to know the difference between outcome, performance, and process goals.

This approach has been studied in sports, an excellent environment for goal theory. Unlike many other domains, sports have consistent rules, relatively little politics, and (in ideal circumstances) are a true meritocracy. *Outcome goals* deal with the end result, such as being the best in your field, winning a gold medal in sprinting, or closing $1,000,000 in annual new business. *Performance goals* deal with the milestones along the way, such as winning awards and competitive situations, breaking a specific time on the track, or closing $100,000 of deals during March. *Process goals* are concerned with tasks and steps, such as reading competitive intelligence every day to know more about industry trends, getting up at 5:30 a.m. every day to run at the track for ninety minutes, or committing to make thirty phone calls a day to set appointments with qualified prospects. Of these types of goals, most people tend to focus on outcome goals: what they want to achieve. The elite have

these ambitions and dreams as well, but they concentrate more on how they will get there (process goals).

One of the reasons that process goals are so effective is that, for the most part, they are completely controlled by the performer. They can adjust them at will and show direct ties to progress, which encourages a further commitment to the goal. With the proper use of process goals guided by a coach, the performance goals and outcome goals will be achieved. An outcome goal is the destination; a performance goal is how to make sure you are on track, but the process goal designates how to get there in a realistic, methodical manner. The integration of the efficacy of goals as a performance tool, goal orientation, goal setting is known as the Competitive Goal-Setting (CGS) model.[5]

The CGS addresses another aspect that coaches should consider: Is the person they are helping to improve *performance*, *success,* or *failure* oriented? Performance-oriented individuals tend to prioritize process, performance, and outcome goals (in that order). They tend to be positive and patient in their development but may spend endless hours working on their craft—to the point where they don't notice they may not be doing as well as they think they are. Failure-oriented performers may set high outcome goals but avoid performance goals that lead to competition. They also may have poor process goals because they take on easily achievable tasks to check things off the "to do" list. They also tend to see things as out of their control and have a generally pessimistic view of their potential. Success-oriented performers also emphasize outcome, performance, and process goals (in that order), but they are extremely competitive and seek social reinforcement of their achievements. They have extremely high confidence in their ability, but this can lead them to impulsive behavior or under preparedness. They are used to winning and just want the next chance to get on the field to show what they can do.

All of these orientations provide challenges for the coach. For failure-oriented performers, you must build up their confidence and make them

stretch themselves. If performers are success oriented, focus them on process and doing the work required to reach mastery. For performance-oriented individuals, encourage their use of process goals while making sure they do not become someone who insists on incessantly pushing a boulder uphill when it is not contributing toward performance and outcome goals.

One last thing for the coach to keep in mind: Mastery of all skills and tasks is not always necessary. Do world-class sprinters need to perfect their shoe-tying skills? Technically, it's part of preparing to run. But the fastest people in the world just need a basic level of proficiency in shoe tying; perfecting this skill would waste valuable effort. Focusing on mastering everything related to a domain can lead to failure, and can be a symptom of performance avoidance. A performer spending too much time on things that don't matter might be trying to stall for time or completely sidestep an upcoming demonstration of ability.

High performers use process goals to achieve performance goals that lead to outcome goals. This is the way to win, and the coach's job is to help them do so.

REVIEW OF THE OCTANE HIGHPER COACHING MODEL AND PHILOSOPHY

We all remember our bad coaches and our great coaches for the same reason: They impact on our performance and leave lasting memories. Ineffective, mediocre, or nonexistent coaches have no impact and leave no memories. Even though bad coaches can be detrimental, at least having a bad coach shows what *not* to do! People who want to perform at a high level need impactful coaches. We would argue that having mediocre coaches is the same as having no coach at all. An unexceptional coach wastes time, offers no perspective, and lends no guidance. Thus, one way or another, individuals, teams, and organizations need to cultivate great coaches, improve bad ones, and eliminate coaches who just go through the motions.

Holding a whistle and being the person in charge does not make you a coach. You may be leading, managing, yelling, documenting, or telling stories from yesteryear, but that does not mean coaching is taking place. Remember our definition of coaching:

> **Coaching is the art, science, and grit of repetitively**
> **helping others become better than they were yesterday.**

If your performers are not getting better at what they do (even if they are already very good at some things), there is a problem that might include coaching.

This assumes that the performer has the ability, education, experience, attitude, and a high degree of coachability. If all of these factors are in place, the coach can use a systematic way to determine the causes of performance gaps. This is part of their detective and analyst role; coaches diagnose root causes, whether mental, physical, or external, that, despite the coaches' efforts otherwise, cause persistent performance gaps.

One of the coaches' primary analytical tools is the Octane HighPer Coaching Model, which is built on the whole-part-whole philosophy of evaluating actual or simulated performance and then breaking the needed skills and abilities into their component parts before periodic retesting and reevaluation.

The scrimmage starts the process (whole). After reflection, the coach and performer identify performance gaps. The coach then recommends fundamentals to work on, situational practice (parts), and a process for retesting and reflection (whole).

At every stage of the model, and as part of an ongoing relationship, coaches engage in reflective coaching to elicit solutions and courses of action from the performer. It is a simple series of questions that should not be used as a canned script but as a guide for discussions that become a familiar part of the coaching relationship. Keep in mind that coaching occurs all of the

time. It is not an activity meant to happen during a specific time or day of the week. Coaching is constant, whether a two-minute chat or conversations spanning days of training events. Eventually, this way of interacting with performers becomes embedded in the coach's day-to-day parlance.

However, none of this matters unless both performer and coach are highly focused on continuous improvement. It is the core around which all of the HighPer Coaching activities orbit. If it matters, it must be measured. If it is measured, it must improve. The growing density and gravity of continuous improvement allows the coach to prescribe more difficult challenges and situations. Performers must move to the next level and respect the need for balancing art, science, and grit as they continue to progress.

In working with top performers and coaches over the past three decades, we are periodically asked a pointed question from even the most dedicated individuals: "When are we done?"

Since competitors, peers, and changing conditions constantly influence who's on the winner's podium, we always answer by saying, "Only when *you* are done competing. Until then, keep going."

HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS, TRIBES, AND COMMUNITIES

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."
—ANDREW CARNEGIE

"Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story."
—CASEY STENGEL

We have spent a great deal of time focused on individual performers and the coaches who help them. We've shown some examples about how teams come together to help improve individual performance through managed competition and impactful coaching. While high-performance individuals may be the output that coaches seek, keep in mind that, in almost all cases, people depend on high-performing teams to unleash potential.

You will be hard pressed to find a single exception to this statement in ANY domain.

You may be an Olympic sprinter (a solo event), but you also have a training partner, and you may work with a coach who also manages three or four other athletes. You may have come from a university track team; perhaps you

hope to win a spot on Team USA and represent your country. Though your entire career may boil down to less than ten seconds on a track, that brief time is the culmination of years and years of team involvement and participation.

This same notion applies to members of a sales team, a group of software coders, or a collection of lawyers at a firm. If you are truly an independent, free agent with a dedicated coach and singular purpose, teams might not matter to you. However, that is a rare instance. Almost all of us belong to a tribe or a community, and we crave these connections to give achievements meaning. Human beings are social animals that need individual fulfillment in addition to the pleasure of communal contribution.

To be the best at what they do, individuals, teams, and organizations are often codependent. Individual excellence creates great potential for the organization; on the other hand, organizational and team dysfunction limits potential. Thus, whether individuals and coaches are members of a company, law firm, sports team, or orchestra, their ability to be the best will depend on those around them. Members of teams collaborate, challenge, and compete with each other. They push each other beyond self-imposed limits, which raises the team's performance and showcases individual members. Individual performance is maximized by preparing, planning, competing, and performing on a team. Why, then, do people insist on going it alone, when research and practical experience show the importance of teamwork in reaching potential?

In a landmark article published in *Harvard Business Review*, McKinsey & Company partners Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith argue that teams can be the most important performance unit inside companies and other organizations. They define teams in the following way:

> "A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable."[1]

The authors take great care to distinguish teams from working groups, which are mere collections of similar people working on a common task within a traditional vertical hierarchy. Teams differ from working groups in that they are a collection of people with different skill sets who work together in a largely self-managed style.

There is another major difference: Groups may produce a fine work product, but high-performing teams deliver great work AND develop great performers.

An ideal team consists of three to nine people. Such a small group rarely requires outside management and monitoring. Leadership roles are shared, team members depend on each other, and there is pressure to perform. The primary motivation—don't let your teammates down or hold the team back.

Does this sound familiar? Every single high performer in domains with terminal consequences develops mastery. Navy SEALs and sports stars train as a team. Corporations with breakthrough success and lasting market dominance utilize team training in aspects such as product development, key accounts, and software coding. These teams become tribes and communities, safe (and competitive) environments in which performers can thrive.

Human beings naturally seek out others like themselves. As social animals, we have an affinity for others and need to feel connected to them. Sometimes, these preferences are rational; sometimes, personal connections are irrational or even random. If you are a fan of a particular sports team, seeing that familiar jersey invokes an instant sense of connection to the stranger wearing it. Likewise, a rival team's jersey provokes an instant disdain.

During filming of *Planet of the Apes* (1968), this desire to form tribes and communities was surprisingly illustrated. The iconic movie is set in a futuristic world, where man has become enslaved and apes are the dominant species. Three types of apes form the new society: chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans. Live actors played these apes, and the make-up artistry involved to transform dozens and dozens of cast members into apes each day was

simply amazing. Once these actors were in costume, something curious happened. Every day at mealtime, the actors playing chimpanzees ate exclusively with other "chimpanzees." The same curious behavior was repeated with gorillas and orangutans. Almost no mixing between groups occurred after the first few days of filming. The actors naturally bonded with their fellow "apes" even though their identities were no more defined than the costume and makeup they were wearing.[2]

The same type of behavior is found on football teams. Defensive players tend to associate with others who play defense. Linemen associate with linemen and not lanky wide receivers. The kickers are off by themselves doing whatever kickers do. All are on the same team, but each finds a tribe.

This sorting behavior occurs among the pilots on board an aircraft carrier. Fighter jocks make fun of bomber pilots. Helicopter pilots bind together instead of hanging out with the fixed wing aviators. And, the C2-A COD pilots who just visit the ship periodically for key supply deliveries? They may stay a night or two, but let's just say it is best they head back to the other COD pilots as soon as possible. Their tribe is back on shore, and these pilots are in "unfriendly" territory while at sea.

Innovative corporations, where speed to market and momentum are critical, promote these tribes and communities. Software and social media giants use specific design teams that are attached to individual features to churn out new ideas; each team takes great pride in working on the next big thing, even when doing so requires extreme overtime. Automobile manufacturers employ teams that specialize in various aspects of new car design . . . and the workers that then build these new cars form teams . . . and then those workers responsible for producing a specific PART of the vehicle form teams.

In all of these examples, individuals on the same team share a common goal. Whether they are filming a movie, winning a championship, conducting flight operations, or building a great company, their ultimate success is measured as a group. However, individuals perform better as subsets of the

greater organization. These tribes and communities are self-governed, setting their own standards of performance, expectations, and work ethic. In addition to the team, specific coaches who specialize in the details and typical challenges and characteristics support performers in their role. These organizational communities have a sense of pride in what they do, which fosters healthy internal and external competition between groups. When managed properly, these high-performance teams accomplish exceptional things as an organization.

On the other hand, it is not hard to see how tribes could become detrimental. We do not have to think too hard to picture examples of how "those people over there aren't like us" can have negative or even tragic consequences. In corporations, rivalries between sales, finance, or marketing are natural. In business, clannishness can quickly turn into a dysfunctional culture of finger pointing and blaming. Sales complains that marketing doesn't provide enough leads; finance complains that sales discounts prices too much (and plays golf while they do the hard work); marketing never gets the budget they want, and sales blows the opportunities they are given. In professional service firms, practice groups may segregate themselves. At hospitals, doctors and nurses form tribes governed by their experiences and points of view. When subgroups cause rifts between practice areas, departments, and divisions, that dysfunction can lead to losses in profits, opportunities, and even lives (depending on the case and discipline). These are warning signs that teams and tribes are becoming toxic to the organization's overall mission. In addition, such dysfunction may limit individual development; with no hope of progressing, employees develop a hunker-down mentality to preserve the status quo.

Performers need training, coaching, and leadership to succeed, and they need teams. Weaken any one part of that equation and the results are unacceptable. That is why the elite in any domain don't go it alone. They get better as a member of a team. And it's a leader's role to make sure teams become the ultimate performance tool.

WORKING THE MOST DANGEROUS 4½ ACRES ON EARTH

The "business end" of a navy aircraft carrier is the most dangerous 4½ acres on earth. Made of HY 80/100-grade alloy steel and covered with a hard, non-skid coating, this is the flight deck, home to more than seventy-five combat aircraft capable of inflicting devastating damage to an enemy.

Four powerful steam and electromagnetic catapults are built into the deck, each one capable of accelerating a 60,000-pound jet fighter from zero to 160 mph in 2.5 seconds. Stretched across the aft part of the deck are four large steel cables ("arresting wires") that bring these jets to a jolting stop within 150 feet of touchdown. Four huge elevators, each capable of lifting two fully loaded fighters, transfer aircraft between the flight deck and the hangar deck, where major maintenance work is done.

Also on deck: four ammunition elevators that bring bombs, bullets, rockets, torpedoes, and other ammunition to be loaded on aircraft from the ordnance magazines far below decks. Numerous high-speed fueling stations quickly deliver thousands of gallons of jet fuel to thirsty aircraft. Fire on any sea-based platform is the most dangerous hazard, so dozens of high-pressure nozzles able to dispense fire-retardant foam with the push of a button, are located on deck. However, this complex machinery and advanced technology is not what makes these 4½ acres work. It's the people!

Flight operations on an aircraft carrier are a carefully managed execution of precise teamwork. The operational tempo is astounding. At the height of combat, two hundred or more daily aircraft sorties may be conducted, with about twenty-five aircraft launched and recovered every 105 minutes. After landing, each of the twenty-five has to be repositioned, refueled, re-armed, and resupplied within a thirty-minute period. There's no time to spare; each of the 250 or so

people working on the flight deck must be at the exact right place, at the right time, with the right equipment to make it work. And the crew must do their work among turning jet engines, helicopter blades, and propellers!

To safely and effectively pull this off, each person on the flight deck is assigned to a team, and each team is identified by its jersey color:

- Yellow: flight directors

- Red: ordnance handlers and crash responders

- Purple: fueling operators

- White: medical personnel and safety observers

- Green: equipment technicians

- Blue: aircraft movers

- Brown: plane captains

A quick look around reveals who's responsible for what and allows crews to coordinate their efforts accordingly.

Each team member puts in hours of required study and practice, followed by more hours of apprenticeship with an experienced flight deck operator. Dozens of drills test the mettle of each team, certifying their readiness to work well internally and with other flight deck teams wearing different jerseys. Storytelling also plays an important role in this teaching and learning process, when recounting the deadly deck fires on the USS *Forrestal* and USS *Enterprise* or accounts of aircraft crashes during landing.

To first time observers, flight deck operations look like total chaos. In reality, what they're seeing is an extraordinary display of efficiency and effectiveness made possible by high-performing teamwork and self-discipline.

Let's go deeper into life on an aircraft carrier's flight deck. Imagine a fueling operator (purple shirt) who we'll call Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel), 3rd Class, Williams. Williams is highly proficient; he had great training and coaching to get him right where he is. Williams might be the absolute best at what he does on his particular fueling team. However, *all of his colleagues must be highly proficient.* All purple shirts must reach a certain level of competency or none of them can do their job.

Each purple shirt team must be highly proficient. When Williams's specific team leaves the deck, one that's just as good must take its place; otherwise, flight operations can't continue without readjustment. Don't forget the blue shirt team! They move the aircraft around. Are planes in the proper, safe position for refueling? Is each blue-shirted individual competent? If not, the purple shirts can't do their job and Williams, the best purple shirt in the fleet, can only relay frustrations to his superiors.

REVIEW OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS, TRIBES, AND COMMUNITIES

It is the natural state of things for people to form connections and rely on each other. It is completely artificial to make them work by themselves to better themselves or their condition. This is a fact that is hardwired into our DNA since the time we have been chasing mammoths for our next meal. The creation of cubicles and corner offices does not change this fact.

Teams are the ultimate performance tool. If you were to take nothing else from this book, using teams to develop high-performance individuals and amplify their results is the most important lesson. The simple act of placing individuals into three-person "performance pods" where they can collaborate, encourage, and compete with other will dramatically improve each of the individual skills in which they are being trained. Three-person teams are ideal for self-management and progress on basic tasks and activities. An

individual or two-person team can convince themselves to take a break or fight the system, but a three-person team always has someone keeping the team honest. Larger teams need guidance and logistical support, so they require more effort and management. Larger teams can handle more complex solutions as well as develop more performers at the same time. There are uses for both.

All well-defined teams have advantages for their members, but they do have to be monitored by leaders, coaches, and managers. A team can evolve into a tribe or community that is opposed to the overall strategic direction of an organization, and their collective power generates momentum that requires great force to stop. This is a testament to the power of great teams: They can work for you or against you. Exceptional organizations know that they must harness this power to continue to compete.

It is often said that people are an organization's most important asset. The individual performer is who makes things happen and achieves greatness through their personal effort. However, teams may be an organization's most UNIQUE asset. The blend of people, skills, situations, infrastructure, support, methodologies, and organizational strategy is a combination of variables that can never be truly duplicated. Even if a star performer leaves an organization or team, they will have completely different currents to navigate. They may be a star at their new home, but it will not be instantaneous or in the same way as before. Thus, the organization should take great care to build, leverage, and cultivate teams. Performers can leave, competitors can change, and approaches can be copied at a moment's notice. It is an organization's collection of high-performing teams that are their true differentiating factor.

As we defined earlier, teams are collections of performers with complementary skills, common purposes, goals, and approaches that hold each other accountable. They help each other be the best they can be. They depend on each other to be an expert in what they do, which allows them to be an expert

at what they themselves do. They also push each other to keep up through managed competition with each other.

There is a great pride and camaraderie in a well-run team. The incentive does not need to be in the form of monetary rewards or prizes. A high-performance team wins for the joy of winning and not letting each other down. It creates exceptional performers along the way.

Do not make your performers go it alone. The team is the ULTIMATE performance tool.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DARRYL W. CROSS
CHIEF PERFORMANCE OFFICER, HIGHPER TEAMS

Darryl is the Chief Performance Officer and founder of HighPer Teams, a high-performance training company that unleashes the incredible potential and amplifies the results of the world's top individuals and organizations by leveraging team-centric performance development and culture.

Darryl combines thirty years of experience with research on proven scientific methods to offer a unique approach to improving performance. He is a *business* coach who has worked with organizations in dozens of countries, a USA Rugby-certified *athletic* head coach for the Virginia Rugby Football Club, and one of only 100 Master Fitness Trainers in the world certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine.

He holds a master's degree in business administration and is a graduate of the George Washington University's Law Firm Management program. He also has numerous certifications in change management, human performance improvement, and performance enhancement.

As Vice President of Performance Development and Coaching at Lexis-Nexis, Darryl developed, coached, and trained the world's largest, full-time sales force of lawyers. The 1,500 lawyers and executives under his instruction generated over $2 billion in annual sales in the legal, corporate, and government sectors in North America, Asia, Australia, and Europe.

Darryl also served as the chief marketing officer and member of the

executive committee of an international law firm, where he was awarded the most prestigious national award in legal marketing, the Marketing Partner Forum's Excellence in Marketing Award, for "creating a sales culture at a law firm."

Darryl is currently on the international board of directors of the Legal Marketing Association. He is a past board member for the Association of Talent Development's AG Forum, a collection of the top fifty training executives from companies such as Facebook, Intel, Delta Airlines, Hilton International, IBM, and Accenture.

An internationally known expert on the art, science, and grit of high performance, Darryl has spoken to more than 10,000 executives, professionals, and athletes from more than one hundred countries on four continents about how to continuously maximize performance and results.

REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM V. CROSS, US NAVY (RETIRED) PERFORMANCE COACH AND OPERATIONAL EXPERT

Bill Cross enjoyed an active-duty US Naval career for thirty-three years, retiring as a two-star rear admiral. His military experience included combat tours in Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm and four operational commands, including an F-14 fighter squadron, amphibious assault ship, nuclear aircraft carrier (CVN-69, USS *Eisenhower*), and an aircraft carrier striking group.

He was the navy's first Program Executive Officer for Aircraft Carriers; as such, Bill led the initial design of the advanced command and control system for the navy's newest class of aircraft carriers. His other military positions include navy test pilot, test pilot school flight instructor, engineering manager (US Navy's F-14 programs), director of plans and policy (US Transportation Command), and director of operations (US European Command).

Following his retirement from the navy, Bill worked for eleven years in the corporate world (Vice President of Engineering Systems and Navy Business

Development for CACI International, Director of Global Defense Sales and Chairman of the Defense Advisory Board for BearingPoint Consulting, and Defense Leader for Deloitte Consulting). He is currently a member of the Board of Advisors for Electronic Warfare Associates.

Continuing education has played an important role in Bill's life and career. He holds a master's degree in management and is a graduate with highest distinction from the Naval War College, Naval Nuclear Propulsion School, Navy Test Pilot School, and Defense Acquisition Management College.

Bill has extensive knowledge of the art and science of military and business war gaming and has broad experience as a participant, Red Team leader, and sponsor in numerous strategic and tactical games. His philosophy on success and high performance is based on the principles of hard work, personal responsibility and accountability, constructive competition, innovation and creativity, and compassionate leadership.