

Extraordinary Leadership Teams

By Campbell Macpherson

Author of the 2018 Business Book of the Year

The importance of leadership teams cannot be overstated.

The future success of your organisation hinges upon the quality of your leadership team and how well its members interact and deliver – together.

This is true at all levels of an organisation – but it is most critical at the very top. When the top team is working well; when its members trust one another; when their strengths and weaknesses complement one another; when they role model the culture the business needs; when they work together to deliver shared objectives – the business results can be extraordinary. When the top team is dysfunctional, the business will be lucky to survive.

And I have seen all manner of leadership teams from dysfunctional to extraordinary.

In my 25+ years of enabling a multitude of business leaders to lead successful and sustainable change, I have seen that extraordinary leaders possess three core, critical skills:

1. The ability to deliver sustainable results,
2. The ability to influence, motivate and empower people (Emotional Intelligence), and
3. The ability to build extraordinary leadership teams.

Poor leaders possess none of these skills. Extraordinary leaders possess all three - in abundance.

Extraordinary leaders are focused on the delivery of outcomes that are sustainable. They have honed their ability to deliver and their ability to influence across departments. They have enhanced their emotional intelligence knowing that when it comes to leadership, EQ trumps IQ hands down. And they have worked at building a leadership team that is extraordinary and delivers extraordinary results.

And they have triumphed over complacency for they know that every one of these vital leadership attributes requires continual development.

The future of their careers and their organisations depend upon it.

Extraordinary Leadership Teams

21st Century leadership is a team game, not a solo pursuit. In this paper we focus on the third critical trait of extraordinary leaders: the ability to build extraordinary leadership teams. (Visit the Downloads page of www.changeandstrategy.com for the paper on the first two aspects of individual leadership titled 'The Chequerboard of Leadership'.)

Leadership teams exist on a spectrum – from dysfunctional to extraordinary. Leadership teams exist at all levels of an organisation – and each one must be functioning as well as they can if the unit, division, department or organisation is to succeed.

Organisations with dysfunctional leadership teams never live up to their full potential; they consistently under-perform. Some are weakened so much by the actions and inactions of their leadership team that they have to be rescued or become take-over targets. Some go under.

Dysfunctional leadership teams are eventually and inevitably replaced - starting from the top. But so much damage is often done in the meantime that organisations can become shadows of their former selves. One reason is that dysfunctional leadership teams create dysfunctional cultures that mirror the tribal, warring behaviour at the top of the organisation. Another is that dysfunctional leadership teams are too busy fighting one another to appreciate what makes their business special or to recognise the opportunities, let alone seize them.

But even dysfunctional teams can be transformed – as long as the team leader is ready, willing and able to do so. They can move across the spectrum – first to 'Fragile', then onto 'Developing' and finally to 'Extraordinary'.

The Spectrum of Leadership Teams	Dysfunctional (A collection of warring individuals)	Fragile (Cease fire descends)	Developing (A new dawn)	An extraordinary leadership team (Delivering together)
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Transforming dysfunctional leadership teams is challenging, but the alternative is far worse – as so many leaders have discovered.

No transformation is easy and there will inevitably be casualties along the way, but it is critical for the success of the organisation or department, the success of every employee and, of course, for the success of the leaders themselves.

Where would you place the team you lead on the spectrum?
Where would you place the team of which you are a member on the spectrum?
Where would you place your organisation's leadership team?
Why?

Leadership teams – on the spectrum

	Dysfunctional (A collection of warring individuals)	Fragile (Cease fire descends)	Developing (A new dawn)	An extraordinary leadership team Delivering together
Strategy	Differing views of the strategy. Unclear strategic fundamentals.	Strategy clear but individuals not fully aligned.	Implications of strategy clear. Each member aligned to the strategy.	Each member committed to the strategy - with shared objectives
Personal Accountability	Be accountable for as little as possible	Clear personal accountabilities and responsibilities	Clear interdependencies	Everyone accountable for team behaviour and performance. Genuine cabinet responsibility.
Ego	I need to emerge from this looking good	Nervous about committing to the team	This team is helping me to achieve	I am proud to be part of such a winning team
Culture	Constantly blaming fellow members and highlighting weaknesses	Understanding of one another's strengths, weaknesses, drivers and motives	Respect for one another's strengths, weaknesses, drivers and motives	Gratitude for one another's strengths, weaknesses, drivers and motives – as others' strengths offset another's weaknesses
Team behaviours	Everyone for themselves. Behaviours vary from checked out, passive-aggressive to plain aggressive	Factions	We are all in this together	Trust
Results	Individual performance is paramount	Yes, the team needs to perform – but not at my expense.	Both team and individual performance are important	Team performance is paramount: we all win or no-one wins
Useful Discourse	Discussions are superficial or adversarial. Too many elephants.	Discourse can be prickly – different opinions can still be perceived as criticism	Detailed discussion but careful not to offend	Constructive conflict
Mistakes	Punish the guilty	Find out why	Implement learnings without shame	Culture of continuous improvement

Change & Strategy International (CSI) enables organisations to instigate change, embrace change and deliver a compelling strategy that is clear to everyone.

88% of change initiatives, business strategies, mergers and acquisitions fail. CSI enables leaders to be the 1 in 8 that succeeds. Its range of programmes, workshops and consulting services enable CEOs and leaders to fulfil their potential, the potential of their people and the potential of the business.

CSI's Principal, Campbell Macpherson, is an international business advisor, change expert, keynote speaker and award-winning author. He and his team of experienced associates help leaders align their people to a clear strategy, build extraordinary leadership teams, build change-ready cultures and lead successful change. He is an Executive Fellow of Henley Business School.

Companies contain a wealth of untapped potential and competitive advantage in their people, their leaders and their leadership teams. Unleashing this talent is not about systems, processes, spreadsheets, business models or balance sheets, it is about enabling people to be the best they can be; empowering them with clarity and trust – and helping them to want to change.

As well as advising organisations worldwide large and small, Campbell has held senior executive positions including Senior Advisor of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, Strategy Director of Zurich Life across Asia, ME and Latam, HR Director of the 1000-person Sesame, Marketing Director of Virgin Wines and eBusiness Head of the AMP Group. He was a change expert in Andersen Consulting (Accenture) and the founder of one of Australia's first multimedia companies. He started his career flying jets (badly) in the RAAF.



He is on the books of several keynote speaking agencies across the UK, US and Australasia, and has given speeches around the world – NYC, London, Las Vegas, Singapore, Sydney, Nice, Helsinki, Palm Beach, Frankfurt, Zurich and across UK.

Campbell is the author of three books – and runs workshops and programmes on each of them:

- 'The Change Catalyst' (Wiley 2017), which won the leadership category and Business Book of the Year at the inaugural 2018 Business Book Awards. It is about leading change.
- 'The Power to Change' (Kogan Page 2020), which was a Runner Up in the 2021 Business Book Awards. It is about embracing personal change.
- 'You: Part Two - thriving in the second half of your life' (Hachette 2021), co-authored by his yogi wife, Jane. Together, they appeared at the 2021 Cheltenham Literary Festival. They use content from the book to help organisations empower their invaluable Second Half employees and forge even closer relationships with their lucrative Second Half customers – the ones with three times as much wealth as every other segment combined.



**Business Advisor,
Facilitator, Speaker,
Lecturer, Author, NED
and Change Catalyst.**



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Strategic Change & OD:
Misys, BBC, Capital
Radio, Telewest, Sesame

Marketing Director:
Virgin Wines,
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