



The 7 Signs of Extraordinary Leadership Teams

Public Sector Leadership: A Very Tough Job...

Public Sector Agencies in Australia are undergoing massive reform and restructure associated with changes in governance structures from centralised to decentralised models, the increasing use of a mix of activity based and allocated grant funding methodologies, a tightening regulatory framework and reporting environment, and a rapidly changing workforce profile relying heavily on information technology and use of digital solutions. To say these changes in governance, funding, workforce, compliance and systems have created significant additional challenges and changes for leadership teams in the Public Sector would be a massive understatement. The reality is that leadership in the public sector in Australia today is a very tough job indeed!

Extraordinary Leadership: Two Fundamental Truths

We believe there are two fundamental truths about Extraordinary Leadership in the Public Sector.

Firstly, *'public sector leadership is definitely a team sport'* – requiring high level team work and clear, consistent understandings among the leadership team of all the critical components needed to successfully run large and complex organisations on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly cycle.

Secondly, *'success is determined by a combination of the leadership team's relational and strategic capabilities – used at the right time and in the right way'*. Relying on relational skills to address strategic issues and vice versa is like trying to put a square peg in a round hole!

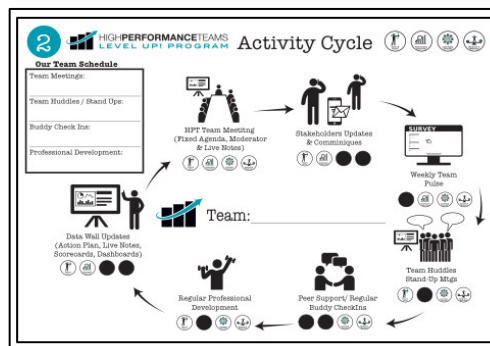
When it comes to understanding the differences between Extraordinary Leadership Teams and their peers in the public sector, we wanted to share 7 signs of success we have seen that are simple, practical and useful for every public sector leadership team. Let's unpack them now...

The 7 Signs of Extraordinary Leadership Teams:

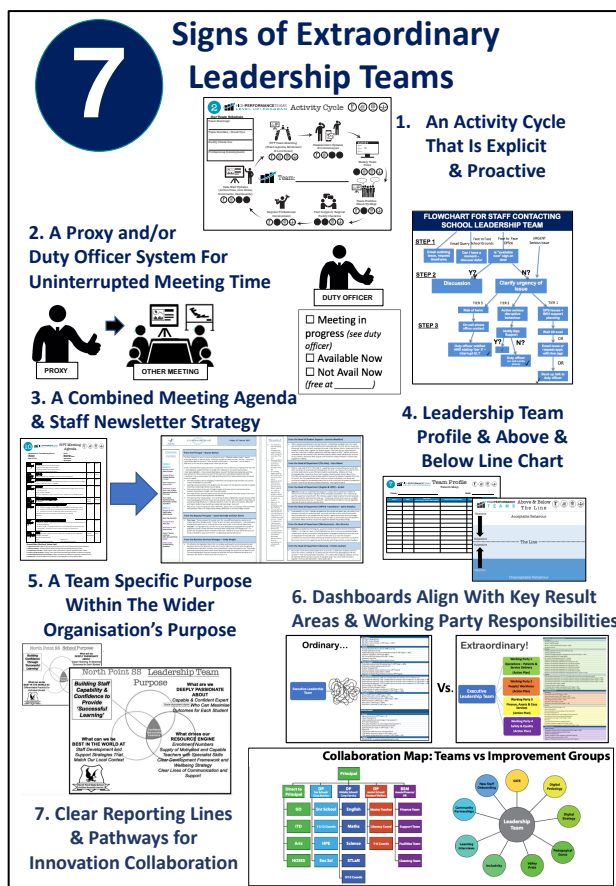
1. An Activity Cycle That Is Explicit & Proactive

Public Sector Leadership Teams often struggle to maintain a regular schedule of meetings, check-ins and professional development. The complexity of their roles and competing demands, combined with their sense of altruism and servant leadership can get unhealthily skewed towards self-sacrifice as their own team disintegrates whilst they are continuously responding to a never ending series of crises and urgent requests from administrators, advisors, stakeholders and staff.

Not so in Extraordinary Leadership Teams. They operate as High Performance Teams and develop an explicit Activity Cycle which is hardwired into calendars and diaries and adhered to as a critical priority with other urgent requests and crises (almost always!) managed around their activity cycle as opposed to disrupting it.



1. An Activity Cycle That Is Explicit & Proactive



2. A Proxy and/or Duty Officer System To Ensure Uninterrupted Meeting Time

Regular team meetings are the life force of Extraordinary Leadership Teams! There are two major problems that impact leadership team meetings in public sector agencies – something Extraordinary Leadership Teams never worry about. Firstly, leadership team meetings can be cancelled, or postponed because one member of the leadership team has to deal with an

unexpected additional meeting request and/or manage upwards and sideways. These clashing meeting requests can lead to leadership teams not meeting for weeks at a time placing enormous pressure on team relationships and complicating strategy execution. Extraordinary Leadership Teams solve this problem by developing an effective 'proxy' system when other meetings clash with their team meeting so their 'team time' is not sacrificed and effective representation in other meetings still occurs.

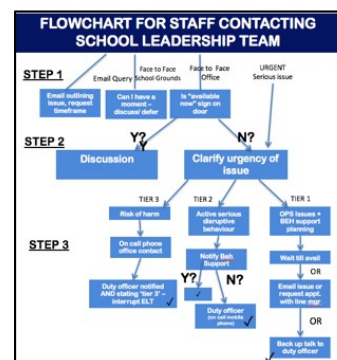
Secondly, when most leadership teams do have their meetings, they are rarely completed without knocks on the door and team members stepping out at various times to manage issues. The continuous interruption of meeting time breaks the strategic momentum of the team and derails both team relationships and team strategy with significant longer-term negative impacts on the wider organisation accordingly. Extraordinary Leadership Teams have meetings that are on time, on task and almost never interrupted. They have specified personnel

(often aspiring leaders) who are rostered on as 'Duty Officers' during leadership team meeting times and have a clearly laid out 'Duty Officer' job description and problem solving flowchart (and they carry the 'duty phone' if they're away from the office sorting out issues). All relevant staff and stakeholders are inducted into the Duty Officer strategy before it is rolled out and once fully operational, Duty Officers can solve the vast majority of issues during the times when leadership team meetings are occurring.

2. A Proxy and/or Duty Officer System For Uninterrupted Meeting Time



- ☐ Meeting in progress (see duty officer)
- ☐ Available Now
- ☐ Not Avail Now (free at _____)



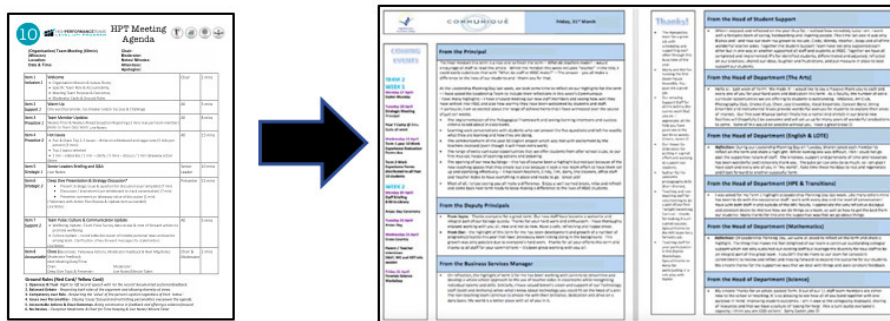
3. A Combined Meeting Agenda & Staff Update/ Newsletter Strategy

Public Sector Leadership Teams must keep their staff 'up-to-date' and 'in-the-loop' to avoid gaps in communication which then get in-filled with rumours and gossip. Many Leadership Teams often begin the year on-track with their updates, newsletters and communiques, but this quickly falls aside as they are overtaken by

all the day-to-day challenges in the organisation and various newsletter contributors from within the leadership team fail to meet deadlines.

Extraordinary Leadership Teams do not have this problem. They use specialised regular team meeting agendas and update cycles to automatically generate staff newsletters that are timely and relevant – keeping everyone up-to-date regardless of all the other demands on their time.

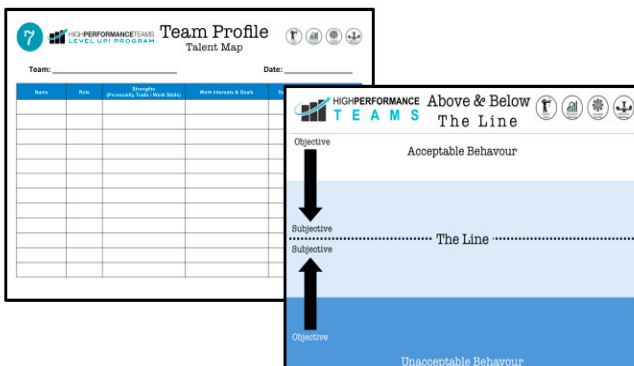
3. A Combined Meeting Agenda & Staff Newsletter Strategy



4. Leadership Team Profile and Above & Below Line Chart

Most leaders ensure that the teams they lead have clear 'ways of working' including understanding individual strengths and weaknesses, team norms, values and above and below the line behaviours. However, the leaders themselves don't always make the time to 'practice what they preach' and apply this same standard of clarity about ways of working to their own leadership team increasing the likelihood of relationship strain, tension, communication breakdowns and conflict. Extraordinary Leadership Teams 'lead from the front' prioritising clarification of their own ways of working together through team profiling and clear above and below the line behaviours before rolling out these High Performance Team strategies with other teams across their organisation.

4. Leadership Team Profile & Above & Below Line Chart



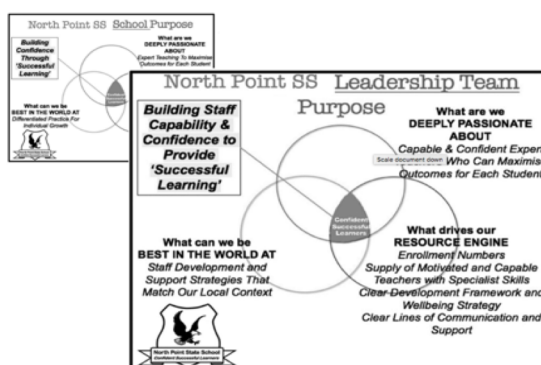
5. Clear Leadership Team Specific Purpose Within the Wider Organisation's Purpose

The purpose of an organisation is not identical to the purpose of any given team – even the Leadership Team! The phrase 'one body made up of many parts' lays the foundation for each and every team within an organisation to identify their team's specific purpose in achieving the wider organisation's purpose. Public Sector leaders often end up in unnecessary conflict with their team mates or with other teams within the organisation because they are at 'cross purposes' failing to

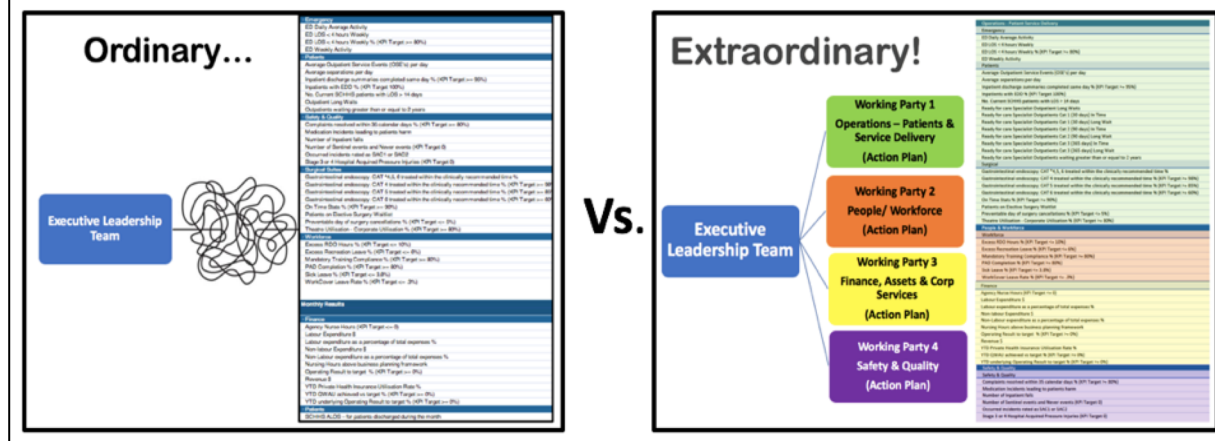
realise the boundary conflicts that are created by a lack of team specific shared purpose within each team (and shared with all other key teams across the organisation to minimise inter-team boundary clashes).

Extraordinary Leadership Teams take the time to develop a very clear purpose – recognising that they are responsible for staff capability and confidence as a precursor to staff delivering quality services to the community and/or industry. With the leadership team's core purpose clear, triaging issues and deciding on the best way to engage with staff, students and parents becomes much more sustainable and productive for everyone!

5. A Team Specific Purpose Within The Wider Organisation's Purpose



6. Dashboards Align With Key Result Areas & Working Party Responsibilities



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Many public sector agencies deliver a complex array of both facility and community based services, through a network of staff with a diverse range of qualifications and experience, funded by an often complex array of income based on state and federal payments, own source revenue and grants. Public sector leadership teams must ensure the quality and safety of services, the provision of safe workplaces for staff and compliance with all necessary reporting obligations. Needless to say this is an enormous task made even more challenging by concurrently needing to progress service improvement initiatives across their key result areas. Extraordinary leadership teams successfully tackle this enormous challenge by pursuing two fairly straightforward (yet at times very onerous) strategies.

Beyond operational management of day-to-day services (which are within scope of various leaders already) extraordinary leadership teams form subgroups or working parties to focus their teamwork on strategic initiatives to improve key result areas over the longer term. The dashboards and reporting systems are then aligned to the specific responsibility/accountability areas of the working parties




































enabling a tighter support/accountability cycle as various strategic improvement initiatives are implemented.

Low performance leadership teams have the corresponding weaknesses of not utilising the teamwork of sub groups/working parties from within the wider leadership team to drive strategic improvement in key result areas (relying on very busy individuals alone to shoulder both short-term operational leadership and longer-term strategic leadership) and/or not aligning dashboard data on key result areas to working party responsibilities, instead relying on the time consuming process of data mining to gain an objective measure of progress.

You can see in the examples above from a public sector Health leadership team the complexity of relying on a standard reporting dashboard (where key data must be extracted from a range of areas) to progress strategic improvement initiatives siloed to individual leaders versus a re-aligned dashboard where data is organised around working parties of leaders who share the scope of responsibility and oversight of various domains of strategic improvement. The realigned dashboards make data familiarisation easily accessible for each working party increasing the amount of time and energy they can focus on implementation and subsequent fine tuning of strategy to maximise the positive impact on service improvement.



The 7 Signs of Extraordinary Leadership Teams!

| | | No Performance | Low Performance | Moderate Performance | High Performance | Very High Performance |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | An Activity Cycle That Is Explicit & Proactive |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | A Proxy and/ or Duty Officer System for Uninterrupted Meeting Time |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | A Combined Meeting Agenda & Newsletter/ Update Strategy |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | Up-to-date Team Profile & Above & Below Line Chart |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | Clear Team Purpose Within The Wider Organisation Purpose |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | Dashboards Align With Key Result Areas & Working Party Responsibilities |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. | Clear Reporting Lines & Pathways for Collaboration & Innovation |  |  |  |  |  |