

...we strengthen the mindset needed for high performance at work.

## **The High Performance Mindset at Work Learning and Development Initiative**

### **A Guide for Implementing Leadership, Management, Coaching and Human Resource Practices**



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University of Melbourne  
CEO, The Bernard Group

Many programs focus on parts of what we offer (EQ, behavior training, resilience, confidence building). However, we have a cohesive framework that pulls all elements of a high performance mindset together. Our clear framework grants people the awareness to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth. It then identifies actions they can take to achieve work goals, maximize relationships and experience well-being.

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HPMW programs focus on different aspects of the high performance mindset, how it can be measured, coached and strengthened in face-to-face workshops and in our on-line, award-winning HPMW E-Learning course.

We provide consulting for senior executives (owners, CEOs, COOs, HR) on ways in which our programs can add value to their existing talent management and leadership programs



## Synopsis

### 1. Rationale

This document describes the High Performance Mindset initiative and how it can be flexibly implemented by organisations in order to gain competitive advantage and to become high performing organisations able to achieve higher levels of productivity-profitability, work engagement, innovation and quality of life.

### 2. Summary of Content

- The importance of a high performance mindset is presented with supporting research from the fields of positive psychology, positive organisational behaviour, emotional intelligence, rational effectiveness training and resilience.
- A strategic approach for implementation and sustainability of the high performance mindset initiative is presented covering executive, management, human resource, recruitment, learning and development, data-driven decisions, coaching and culture.
- Learning and development induction practices in the high performance mindset are described.
- Organisational practices for supporting the transfer of knowledge of the high performance to the workplace are reviewed.
- Data-driven decisions are discussed for those organisations that enrol large percentages of employees and managers in the high performance mindset e-learning course.
- Management practices are reviewed that support individual and team understanding and application of the high performance mindset to their work including how to effectively handle tough situations.
- Methods and practices for coaching individuals and teams are discussed.
- Finally, different roles and responsibilities of human resource personnel in introducing, coordinating and supporting the high performance mindset initiative are discussed.

### 3. Benefits

The High Performance Mindset at Work initiative is designed to directly improve high performing organisational goals including: (1) productivity-profitability, (2) work engagement, (3) innovation and (4) quality of life.

Specific benefits include:

- Accelerated business/organisational strategy execution.
- Greater ROI on learning and development initiatives (more people applying what they learn to produce concrete and worthwhile results).
- Development of strengths of leaders, managers and employees in organisation's competency framework.
- Increased employee positivity and capacity to cope with change.

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# I. HIGH PERFORMANCE MINDSETS DRIVE HIGH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Organisations need to germinate the right capacities in the form of people who can develop a company's products, competitive edge, strategic plan . . . It is no longer so much a matter of getting employees to do their work, but rather how to get them to do good work, or their best work. Today, companies need all of their employees to be creative, which requires employees to be motivated, and to put their all into their work.<sup>1</sup>

In the highly competitive business milieu, companies are on the search for strategies that can help take their people and organisation from good to great performing workplaces. There is now research that identifies characteristics of high (and low) performing workplaces: high performing organisations consistently reveal (a) exemplary **innovation** in creating new products and services meeting customer need and expectations; (b) consistent **productivity** and financial performance, (c) high levels of employee **engagement** and (d) a good **quality of life** (job satisfaction, well-being).<sup>2</sup>

Here's what we have learned. High performing workplaces are a by-product of two distinct forces that mutually influence one another: **positive organisations** (leadership, culture and management) and the **positive mindsets** of leaders, managers and employees.



**Figure 1.** Factors Contributing to High Performance Organisational Outcomes

## Positive Organisations

The organisational development literature indicates that the following characteristics contribute to high performance workplaces<sup>3</sup>. (1) organisational culture that embraces change with people who value transformation and innovation and who are sensitive to shifts in customer need, competition, and new business opportunities, (2) managers and employees who excel at cooperation and collaboration internally and with customers, (3) employees extensively involved in development of strategies and decision making, (4) ongoing learning and development of staff knowledge and problem solving ability, (5) expertise in information and communication technologies, and (6) utilisation of unique intellectual and personal strengths of employees.

## Positive Mindsets

Developments from the fields of positive psychology and organisational behaviour, emotional intelligence, social and emotional learning, and rational effectiveness training have revealed a range of human resource strengths and psychological capacities that are associated with performance improvement and positive organisational change and outcomes.<sup>3</sup> **Research indicates that it is the mindset of leaders, managers, and employees that determines the extent to which an organisation is a high-performing workplace.** Mindset has been found as a major contributor to positive leadership style (authentic, transformational) and people management skills (transparent, supportive).

The high performance mindset has been found to consist of **three commitments** (success, others, and self) and **five behavioural strengths** (self-management/resilience, confidence/optimism, persistence/motivation, organisation, and getting along/collaboration).<sup>4</sup>

The commitments and behavioural strengths of people enable them to handle tough situations by minimising and eliminating performance blockers that enable them to **go one better**. They lead to high levels of engagement, satisfaction, innovation and creativity, productivity, wellbeing, and quality of life including fair interpersonal relationships.

## Bottom Line: Mindset Drives High Performance

For businesses to achieve the ambitious goal of becoming high performance organisations, mindsets and beliefs need to change, awareness has to be raised, and the education curricula has to be broadened.<sup>1</sup> Along with ensuring that organisational practices (leadership, management) and culture are accountable, it is vital that senior business leaders and human resource departments provide support to ensure that a high performance mindset is embedded and sustained in organisational culture and that all employees appreciate the energising force of mindset in maximising work performance, job satisfaction and wellbeing.

## II. BACKGROUND, BASIS AND TRACK RECORD OF THE HIGH PERFORMANCE MINDSET INITIATIVE

**The High Performance Mindset at Work** (HPMW) initiative has been developed by an international expert in his field, **Michael E. Bernard**, Ph.D., psychologist, researcher and author, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne (Australia) and Emeritus Professor, College of Education, California State University, Long Beach.

It is based on the past decade of his own and international research conducted in the fields of positive psychology and organisational behaviour, rational effectiveness training, emotional intelligence, resilience and peak performance.

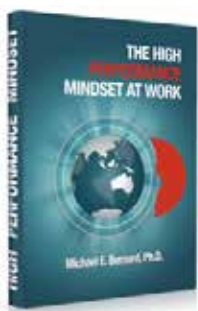
*The High Performance Mindset at Work* learning and development programs has been used with executives, senior managers, supervisors and employees across a variety of industries including insurance (AMP), sport (Collingwood Football Club), real estate (Victorian Real Estate Institute), marketing and advertising (DDB), public services (Attorney General's Office; QLD and VIC departments of education).

### About Michael E. Bernard, Ph.D.

Michael Bernard is an international consultant to universities, organisations, educational authorities and governments. He is the Founder of **You Can Do It! Education** ([www.youcandoiteducation.com](http://www.youcandoiteducation.com); [www.youcandoitparents.com](http://www.youcandoitparents.com)), a program for promoting student social-emotional well-being and achievement that is being used in over 6,000 schools in Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, England, Romania and North America.

Professor Bernard is a co-founder of the Australian Institute for Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and is the author of many books on REBT. For eight years, he was the editor-in-chief of the Journal of Rational-Emotive and Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy.

Over the past decade, he has focused on the design and conduct of high performance and resilience professional development programs.



He is the author of over 50 books, 15 book chapters, and 30 journal articles in areas associated with peak performance, resilience, parenting, mental health and school improvement.

Today, Professor Bernard consults with business and the public sector on principles of personal effectiveness, positive psychology and is Managing Director of The Bernard Group. He has just released "*The High Performance Mindset at Work*" e-learning program for business, public service and not-for-profit organisations. Based on principles of positive psychology and "best practice" research, he is involved in the development of e-learning resources

for parents including the website, [www.youcandoitparents.com](http://www.youcandoitparents.com). Professor Bernard's recent books are "Rationality and the Pursuit of Happiness" (2011, Blackwell-Wiley) and "The Strength of Self-Acceptance" (2013, Springer).

## III. WHAT IS A HIGH PERFORMANCE MINDSET?

### Discovery of a High Performance Mindset at Work

Within the past decade, researchers<sup>5,6,7</sup> studying positive organisational behaviour in the workplace have discovered that it is the mental make-up or “mindset” of high performers that determines their higher levels of productivity, engagement, innovation and quality of life.

### The High Performance Mindset at Work Training Initiative

In order for employees to work at the very highest levels of productivity and to contribute to the deliver of business strategies that achieve corporate objectives, companies need to invest in their development as people. **Michael E. Bernard**

The High Performance Mindset at Work (HPMW) is a blended and customised training program based on positive psychology and mindset development, created by Professor Michael E. Bernard, an international expert on the subject.

The High Performance Mindset at Work training initiative is designed to directly improve targeted performance and achieve high performing organisational goals such as productivity-profitability, work engagement, innovation and quality of life.

### What Does a High Performance Mindset at Work Look Like?

People who excel at work have three highly developed commitments. Commitment to Success means they regularly put into practice self-direction, optimism, a desire for growth, creativity and high frustration tolerance. Commitment to Others means they are very accepting of others, empathic, respectful, supportive and genuine in providing feedback. Commitment to Self means they have highly developed self-regard, self-acceptance, authenticity, positive focus and adopt a healthy life style.

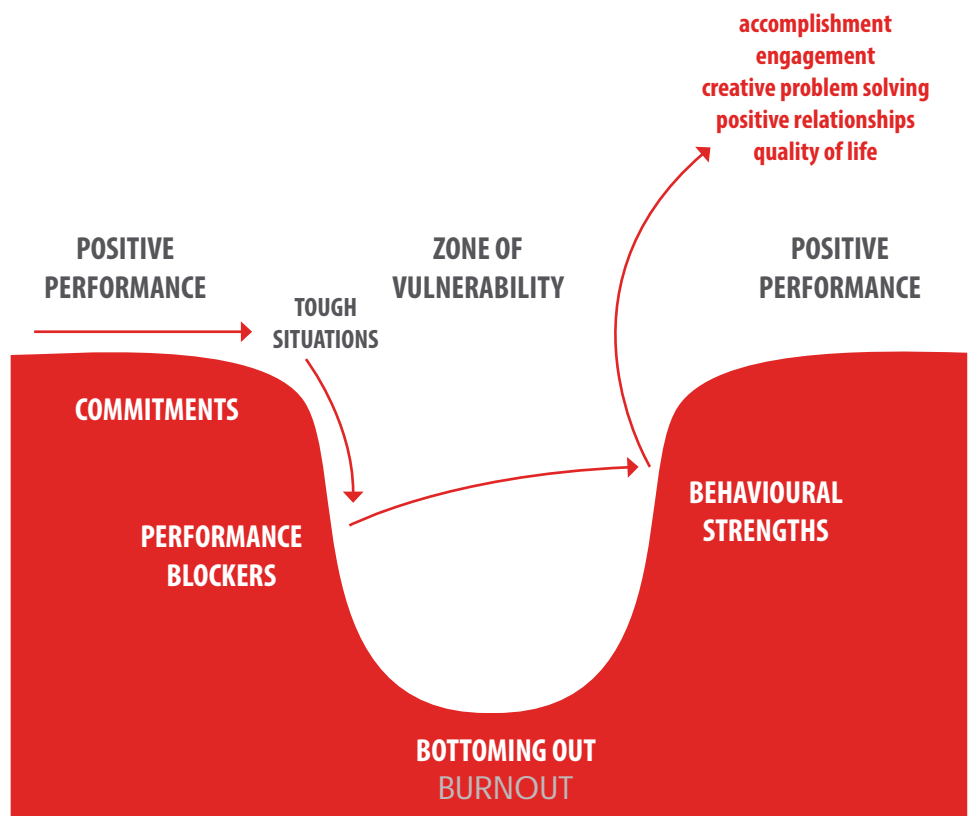




Figure 2. Architecture of the High Performance Mindset

## The High Performance Mindset Leads to Enhanced Work Performance

To highlight the expected higher performance outcomes graphically, Figure 4 shows the enhanced Work Performance Cycle of high performers. While most people strive for a positive performance, **tough situations at work** can enter their **zone of vulnerability** and exceed their capacity to cope and manage. Different **blockers** or negative work responses drive us into a downward spiral, e.g., excess anger, worry, feeling down and procrastination. A negative spiral of work performance can continue for some time until people “bottom out” becoming more self-aware and motivated to change. (Some may reach the stage of “burnout.”) At this point, people call on their behavioural strengths to more effectively manage the tough situation.

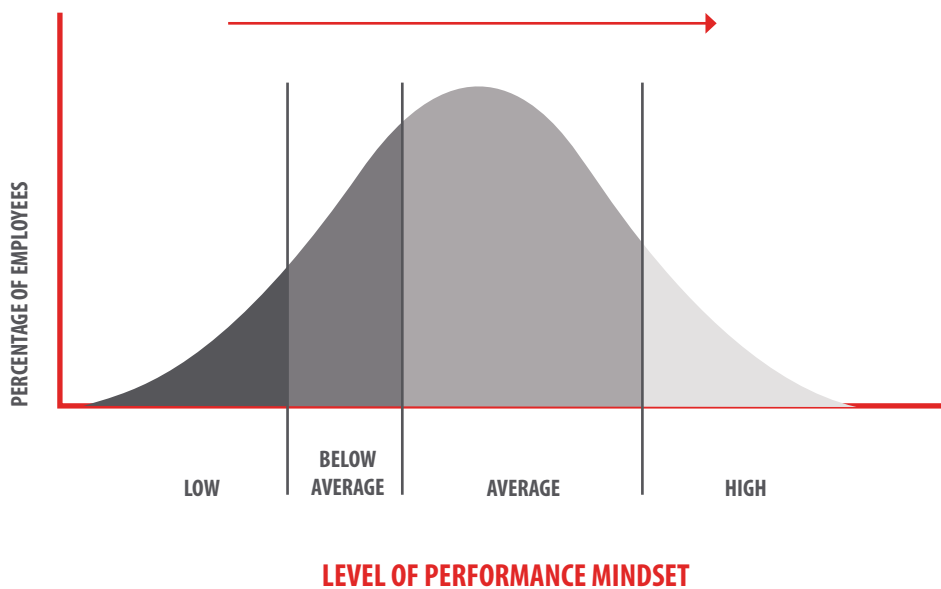


*Figure 3. The Enhanced Work Performance Cycle of High Performers*

What has been learned is that top performers have what can be described as an “Enhanced Work Performance Cycle.” Because of strong commitments and behavioural strengths, they respond more quickly and positively to tough situations avoiding a negative downward spiral of work performance, bottoming out and burnout. They are more aware of any performance blockers they experience in a tough situation and through the development of self-management (a behavioural strength), they gain control as is evidenced in Figure 4 highlighting the significant reduction in the ‘bottoming out’ effect. They are much more adept in managing the tough situation and creative problem solving leading to going one better and a host of positive work performance outcomes.

Research suggests that shifting negative emotions to a higher positive to negative emotional ratio, is not only essential to high levels of wellbeing but enables access to personal competencies and increases an employee's capacity to use social, cognitive and affective resources, vital skills particularly for 21st century leaders<sup>8</sup>.

**The High Performance Mindset** enables continuous learning and development opportunities presented by tough situations allowing employees to perform at high levels.

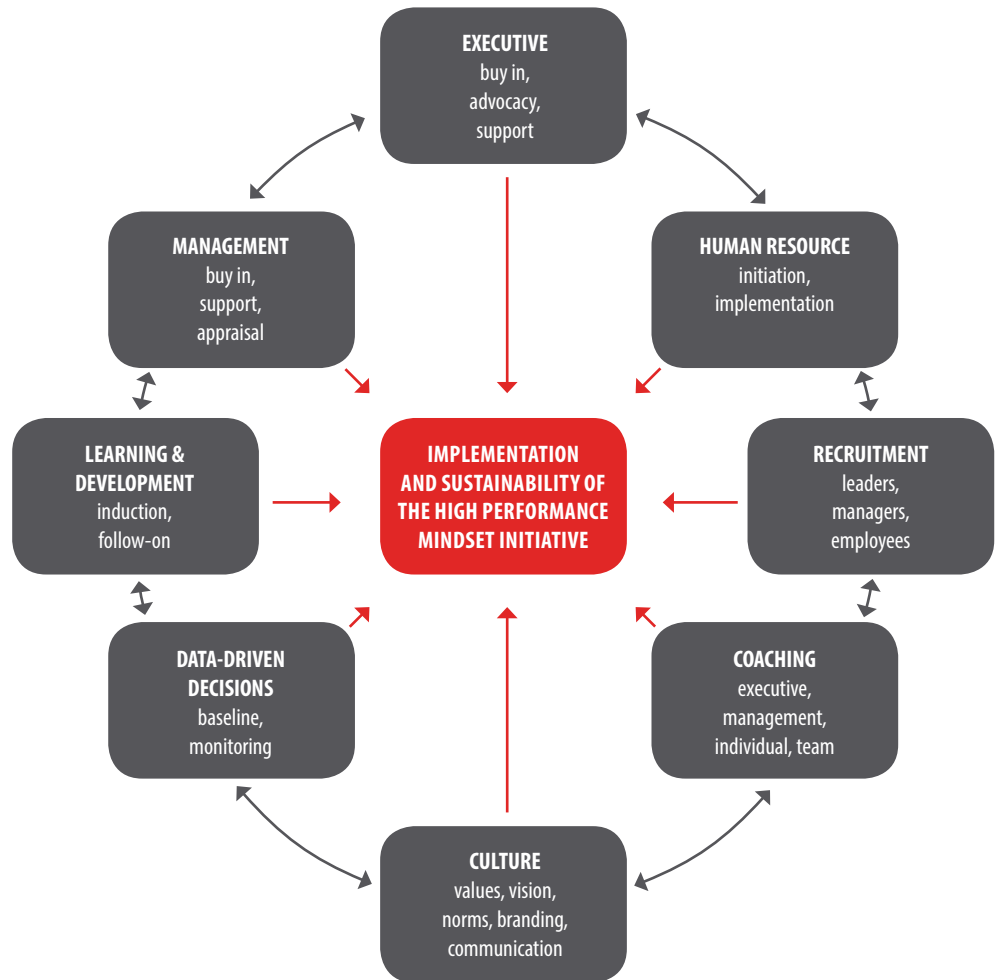


**Figure 4.** Typical Distribution Levels of the High Performance Mindset in an Organisation

Research indicates that employees in any given organisation vary in terms of the percentages demonstrating different levels of development of the high performance mindset.

**The High Performance Mindset at Work** is a learning and development initiative designed to move all employees towards achieving the mindset that enables high performance.

## IV. A STRATEGIC APPROACH FOR IMPLEMENTING THE HIGH PERFORMANCE INITIATIVE



**Figure 5.** Process Model for Implementing the High Performance at Work Initiative

For those organisations wishing to integrate the high performance mindset throughout their 'business', a general process has been identified. The process begins with an outside consultant, trainee provider or member of the in-house human resource team bringing the importance and benefit of the high performance mindset to the attention of senior executives.

A good introduction to the high performance mindset for executives, managers, and human resource personnel is to complete the e-learning course *The High Performance Mindset at Work* and to review material in this Guide.

**Executive.** A pre-requisite to effective organisational-wide implementation of the high performance mindset initiative is the buy-in of senior executives frequently beginning with the Managing Director. Buy-in is achieved from a variety of inputs and motivations including executive seeing the benefits of the initiative on raising performance levels of the organisation including higher productivity, innovation, engagement and quality of life (see Part 1 of this document *High Performance Mindset Drive High Performing Organisations*). Additionally, many organisations have an existing commitment and track record to investing in people and see the relevance of supporting management and employees on the learning and development of their mindset.

Executive support for the initiative can involve over time explicit actions and communication throughout the organisation of elements of the high performance mindset. For example, the three commitments of top performers (success, others, self) can be acknowledged and supported through different forms of staff and employee recognition (e.g., team shares fruits of their labor with upper management, peer nomination of employee of the month, staff appreciation program, increase praise, publish 'success' stories in employee newsletter, diversify employee awards), and planned activity (e.g., celebration of diversity, mindfulness classes).

Depending on need, one or more beliefs that support commitments can be identified for priority such as creativity, empathy, feedback, positive focus or self-acceptance as well as different behavioural strengths such as confidence or the importance of getting along with difficult people.

**Management.** The extent to which employees transfer to the workplace the knowledge and skill acquired through any learning and development initiative including the high performance mindset has a lot to do with the attitude and behaviour of management. From communication of high expectations to employees about the benefits of **the High Performance Mindset at Work** initiative through their ongoing discussion at team and individual elements of the HPMW, buy-in of management is key. Insofar as this is the case, time will need to be spent with management discussing the likely benefits of the HPMW initiative so that managers can see "What's in it for me and my team?" (For more information, see Part IX. *Management Practices*).

**Human Resource.** Human resource personnel with an interest and background in learning and development can play a number of very important roles in all phases and stages of the HPMW initiative including helping establish executive and management buy-in, supervision of e-learning in the high performance mindset course, using data anonymously obtained from employees who have completed the e-learning HPMW course to design learning and development follow-up and conducting individual and team coaching sessions. (For more information, see Part XI. *Human Resource Practices*).

**Recruitment.** From writing job descriptions for executives, management and employees to the conduct of interviews, those making decisions can target the high performance mindset as one of the criteria for hiring new personnel. For example, those organisations seeking to maintain or establish a strong culture of positive working relationships amongst employees and managers will hire using the criteria of socialability. However, in addition to selecting prospective employees on the basis of their people skills, it will also be important to consider their commitment to success as reflected in their attitudes as well as performance in previous jobs and their education.

**Learning and Development.** High Performance Mindset training packages (see page 16) have been developed for people at all levels in an organisation (executive, manager, employee) across all types of organisations (e.g., financial, law, pharmaceutical, engineering, mining, advertising-marketing-public relations, customer service, retail, public service-government, not-for-profits). These packages are designed to make people aware of the strengths of their mindset, areas that need further development and strategies for applying the high performance mindset to tackle tough situations at work in order to achieve individual and organisational objectives.

High Performance Mindset courses have been developed by Michael Bernard that provide people at all levels in an organisation (executive, manager, employee) across all types of organisations (e.g., financial, law, pharmaceutical, engineering, mining, advertising-marketing-public relations, customer service, retail, public service-government, not-for-profits).

**Coaching.** Individual and team coaching can be utilised as part of the ongoing learning and support of the high performance mindset initiative. Coaching in the high performance mindset can be provided by suitably trained human resource personnel, managers or outside consultants. (For more information, see Part X. *Coaching*).

**Data-driven Decisions.** A strength of the high performance mindset initiative for organisations electing to have significant numbers of employees and managers enrol in the e-learning course, is that anonymous data can be summarised before the commencement of the high performance mindset initiative (baseline). Data are obtained from the following:

- *Inventory of Tough Situations* (employee; manager) Identifies work situations that lead to a decline in work performance;
- *Survey of The High Performance Mindset at Work* Identifies a composite profile of those completing the course: (a) commitments/supporting beliefs, (b) performance blockers and (c) behavioural strengths.

Such data are invaluable for individuals completing the e-learning course as they become more aware of strengths of their high performance mindset as well as areas needing further development.

Group data can also be used to design and conduct individual and team coaching and discussions sessions after the e-learning course has been completed.

**Culture.** The high performance mindset initiative is not a one-size fits all learning and development initiative. Those organisations adopting the initiative will want to develop ownership of the initiative in many different ways including branding and the ways in which the HPMW initiative complements and integrates with existing values, norms and vision of the organisation. An important aspect of this ownership and organisational culture is to create shared assumptions and understandings about high performance amongst all members through various types of communication that connect different departments and individuals with the high performance mindset. Organisation-wide communication that showcases and acknowledges is an important part of ongoing learning and development of the high performance mindset and underpins long-term sustainability.

## V. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The mode of delivery of the high performance mindset initiative is learning and development. Customised and blended HPMW learning can be included as part of employee induction and ongoing training, talent management as well as management and leadership training.

Senior leaders will need to decide whether the high performance mindset will be made available to employees and managers with or without ongoing support from the organisation (HR) or from an outside training consultant.

A decision will need to be made as to which groups, numbers of employees, departments, managers and/or senior leaders will be inducted in the high performance mindset.

Customisation in HPMW training occurs in a number of ways including:

- The linking of elements of the HPMW initiative to a organisation's business strategy, targets and strategic objectives.
- During induction in HPMW, interactive group coaching including on-line discussions and face-to-face meetings can focus on specific issues and challenges of an organisation.
- Individual coaching helps support people in deploying elements of the high performance mindset to tackle work demands including tough work situations.

The content and skills of the high performance mindset are introduced to different people within an organisation through facilitated workshops and/or through our HPMW E-learning course with/without blended learning webinars. In more limited circumstances, the same content may be delivered on-site by a suitably-trained outside consultant or by a trained member of the in-house human resource department.

### Learning Objectives

- Acquire the latest knowledge of top performers;
- Achieve greater self-awareness of your own work mindset and those areas that need further development;
- Gain an appreciation of the commitments of top performers;
- Learn how to maximise your behavioural strengths to overcome blockers to positive work performance and to handle tough situations;
- Display increased organisational agility, creativity and resilience;
- Learn new knowledge, skills and techniques to reduce stress and to enjoy your job.

### Program Content

6. Individual action plan

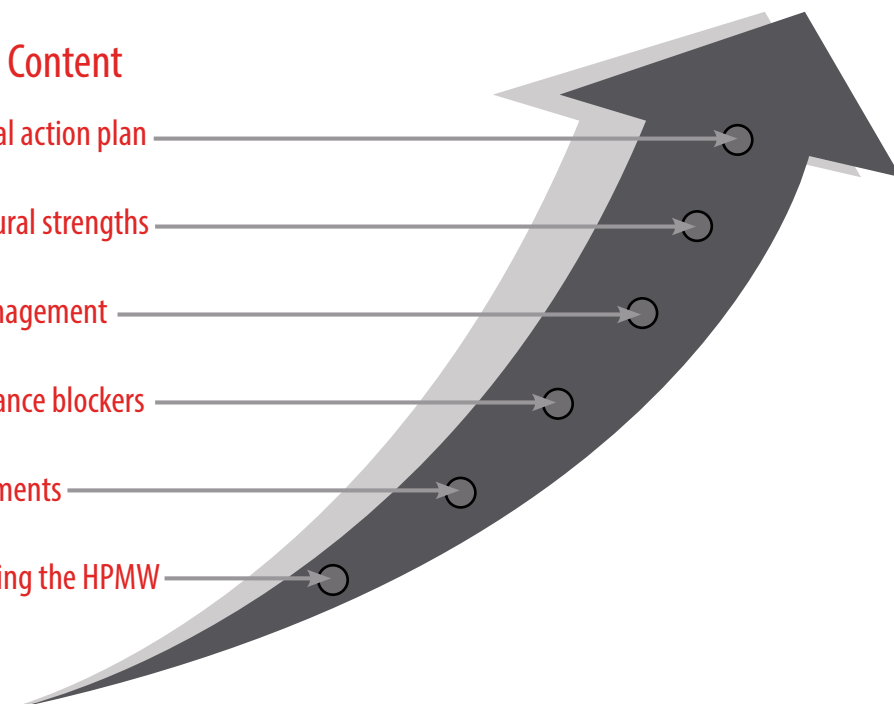
5. Behavioural strengths

4. Self-management

3. Performance blockers

2. Commitments

1. Introducing the HPMW





## Features of the e-learning course

- Designed to be completed in 60 days;
- Six self-paced learning modules that take 30-60 minutes to complete which include absorbing audio-visual presentations, interactive learning activities and personal surveys;
- Activities for applying content at work;
- Additional 30-day period of access for course review;
- Three follow-up booster emails sent over three months provide reminders and check points of progress;
- On-line, interactive course Workbook that can be downloaded at completion of the course;
- Downloadable chapters from Michael Bernard's book *The High Performance Mindset at Work*.

## Features of in-house training

- Interactive course presented to groups of 10 -15 leaders, managers or employees;
- Six training sessions between two and four hours can be scheduled to suit work schedule of those attending; alternatively three longer sessions can be scheduled;
- It is recommended that two or more weeks separate sessions during which attendees have an opportunity to apply elements of mindset being focused on in the training session
- One all-day intensive covering essential content can be presented;
- Training sessions combine individual, paired, small and large group discussion, role play and coaching;
- Individuals finish the course with a completed *Individual Action Plan*;
- In-house training is tailored to meet the needs of the organisation.

## HPMW Training Packages

Organisations wishing to license HPMW training may elect from the following five different packages.

1. **HPMW E-learning (leadership, management, employees):** six module, e-learning course
2. **HPMW Blended Learning (leadership, management, employees):** six module, e-learning course combined with interactive weekly group coaching
3. **HPMW Intensive Learning (leadership/management):** Six module, e-learning course (in-house group training also available); interactive weekly group coaching introductory/concluding group presentations in-house and/or on-line; 1:1 coaching post e-learning course; pre-post quantitative survey data on HPMW and tough work situations
4. **HPMW Coaching (leadership, management):** six to eight session 1:1 coaching covering basics of high performance mindset, strengthening self-awareness, further development of individual strengths, tackling tough work situations
5. **HPMW Consultation (leadership):** HPMW consultant meets on a regular basis with leadership, management and human resource personnel to discuss ways in which the high performance mindset can be implemented throughout organisational culture and leadership/management practice



## VI. ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT TRANSFER OF HPMW LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TO THE WORKPLACE

Globally, organisations collectively spend over 100 billion dollars (e.g., \$3.5 billion in Australia alone) on learning and development. Evidence reveals that individuals and organisations derive significant benefits from the investment. Estimates range from 10% to 34% of the skills and knowledge acquired from learning and development lead to performance improvement in the workplace.

In supporting the high performance mindset initiative, the following recommendations should be considered by the organisation's Managing Director, Senior Leadership Team and Human Resource personnel.

### Positive Organisations Support Transfer of Training

A positive organisation focuses on the dynamics within the organisation that lead to the development of human strengths, foster vitality and flourishing employees, make possible resilience and restoration and cultivate extraordinary individual and organisational performance<sup>9</sup>.

Ongoing support of the Senior Executive Team is one of the most widely recognised critical success factors in any organisational development effort. Post-training determinants for training transfer of knowledge and skills suggest the greatest inhibitor to transfer appeared to be fear of breaking cultural norms and the most important remedy, the number of other managers who receive the training. Having one's boss take the same training was strongly associated with post-training utilisation<sup>10</sup>. Collaborating with key stakeholders in the organisation at each step of the implementation process is important to provide links to strategic goals, reinforce organisational priorities, and support performance-related factors<sup>11</sup>.

The role of supportive feedback has also found to be a predictor of successful transfer of training suggesting that the number of people providing feedback and helpfulness of feedback positively related to motivation for and actual transfer of training. External coaching support for the Senior Executive Team during the first 12 months is recommended<sup>12</sup>.

It is important for managers and HR practitioners to work together on developing a positive climate and expectation about training including potential benefits<sup>13</sup>. As an example, before employees begin their induction in the high performance mindset, it is beneficial for managers to express confidence in the ability of employees to cope with the learning as well as their commitment to support employees after initial training has occurred.

### Multiple Transfer of Training Practices

For the most part, the induction stage of the high performance mindset initiative occurs through learning and development with members of the organisation participating in the *The High Performance Mindset at Work* e-learning course or professional development workshops.

As in all initiatives, it needs to be recognised that individuals who participate in the high performance mindset initiative will vary in their motivation to learn and apply the knowledge and skills to their workplace.

A number of conditions can help individuals transfer the knowledge and skills acquired during induction to the workplace and helping ensure the sustainability of the initiative.

It is vital that the learning and development objective for the high performance initiative is the transfer of learning to the workplace, not just the learning itself.

The following organisational practices have been found to increase the likelihood and amount of knowledge and skills that are transferred to the workplace and should be considered when implementing the high performance mindset initiative <sup>14</sup>.

- Choose a high quality training provider who can create a positive learning environment and expectation towards training.
- Spend time developing participant 'buy in' through discussion of likely benefits for the individual and give them some autonomy on how the program will be implemented.
- Offer the first wave of HPMW training to those staff who have strong intrinsic motivation, cognitive ability, emotional stability, conscientiousness, learning goal orientation, have high levels of self-efficacy, have a positive outlook on training and are motivated to learn. These early adopters will help engage and motivate the next level of participants.
- Pre-course briefings by supervisors and managers should provide an explanation and strong rationale for the high performance mindset learning and development course. Emphasising the support that will be provided after initial training and the expectation for individuals using elements of the high performance mindset after completion of the course will be a strong factor in initial buy-in. The first wave of staff that participates in the program should be encouraged to share what they learned with their peers.
- Post-training follow up discussions should be planned with individuals in the form of coaching and with teams where the content of the high performance mindset is reviewed including the application of behavioural strengths (e.g., confidence, persistence, organisation, getting along) to tough situations and of the different beliefs (e.g., optimism, creativity, empathy, feedback, positive focus) that when actioned will develop the commitments to success, others and self.
- Those involved in different aspects of delivery of the high performance mindset (HR practitioner, supervisor, manager, training provider) should agree on clear learning objectives and proposed outcomes of the high performance mindset initiative.
- Line managers participating should provide regular encouragement, support and reinforcement of the use of different aspects of the high performance mindset to tackle tough situations.
- Embedding the high performance mindset through learning and development to staff at different levels of the organisation (senior leadership, management, line supervisor, employee) helps ensure participant's efforts to strengthen and implement the high performance mindset and spreads the initiative to more people.
- A longer rather than shorter period of learning and development (e.g., 12 months) for the HPMW initiative should be planned moving through various stages of buy-in, induction (initial knowledge and skills), application-action learning of HPMW to workplace, ongoing support through team discussion, coaching conversations, refresher training and advanced training).

## VII. DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

The Bernard Group offers organisations an array of on-line surveys that measure high performance (click). These surveys completed by employees anonymously are designed to be to capture their views on different aspect of the performance of their organisation (e.g., productivity, innovation, teamwork) as well as their own capabilities associated with high performance (e.g., mindset; effectiveness in tough situations; leadership behaviour; values in action).

Typically, all employees in a department or division complete one of more surveys. The data they provide are summarised are in a High Performance Audit (click) that is provided to an organisation's executive or management team that contains graphs, tables and supporting descriptions of strengths and opportunities for growth of those groups completing the surveys.

These surveys have also been used to evaluate the before to after effects of high performance mindset training workshops.

Many of the surveys are tailored to include items that reflect the characteristics of the organisation including specific challenging situations, what productivity look like, an organisation's specific values in action and 'high impact' leadership behaviours.

Our flagship survey is The High Performance Mindset at Work. For the first time ever, an organisation can receive a profile of employee mindset across departments and levels (executive, management, employee) including: Commitments to Success (self-direction, growth, optimism, creativity, high frustration tolerance), Commitment to Others (acceptance of others, empathy, respect, support, feedback) and Commitment to Self (positive self-regard, self-acceptance, authenticity, positive focus, healthy living) and Behavioural Strengths (self-management, confidence, persistence, organisation, getting along). Additionally, profiles are provided of 'internal' work performance blocker: anger, anxiety, feeling down and procrastination.

Another valued survey Indicators of High Performing Organisations that allows for employee ratings of seven indicators of work performance that distinguish high- from low-performing workplaces (productivity-profitability, innovation, leadership, teamwork, employee wellbeing, fairness and customer focus).

Additional surveys include:

- Inventory of Tough Work Situations (Leadership/Management; Employee)
- Organisational Values in Action
- 'High Impact' Leadership Behaviours (Leading Teams; Managing Individuals)



Information is reported on aspects of the high performance mindset of all those completing the survey (not on individuals) in terms of areas of strength and those aspects requiring further development

## Part 1. Commitments

- |                              |                         |                        |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Commitment to Success     | 2. Commitment to Others | 3. Commitment to Self  |
| - Self-Direction             | - Acceptance of Others  | - Authenticity         |
| - Optimism                   | - Empathy               | - Self-Acceptance      |
| - Growth                     | - Respect               | - Positive Focus       |
| - High Frustration Tolerance | - Support               | - Positive Self-Regard |
| - Creativity                 | - Feedback              | - Healthy Living       |

## Part 2. Blockers to Work Performance

- a. Feeling Angry   b. Feeling Worried   c. Feeling Down   d. Procrastination

## Part 3. Behavioural Strengths

- a. Self-Management   b. Confidence   c. Persistence   d. Organisation   e. Getting Along

The information can serve as a baseline for organisations seeking to 'grow' mindset at all levels of the organisation (executive, management, employee). It can 'red flag' specific tough situations at work that can be better managed from above or more efficiently and positively handled by employees and managers including the solving of work problems. Additionally, organisations can zero in on specific beliefs that need to be more regularly actioned such as creativity, high frustration tolerance, support, feedback, positive focus, etc. as well as behavioural strengths that need to be more consistently applied to tough work situations.

## VIII. ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

In order for a high performance mindset to be developed and sustained within an organisation, the leadership group (e.g., Board of Directors, Managing Director, Senior Executive Team) need to have an awareness and understanding of the elements of a high performance mindset and have 'buy in' to the principle that a high performance mindset drives high performing organisations. There needs to be agreement within the leadership group to over time embed different learning and development practices throughout the organisation. Leadership provides the pressure and support to develop a high performance mindset throughout all levels of the organisation.

It is often the case that the high performance initiative is first introduced to the Managing Director by an outside consultant or by the in-house Human Resource Department.

Here are some points for getting the process started and agreement reached concerning the implementation of the high performance mindset.

### I. Getting Started – “Buy in” of Managing Director

It is crucial to the success of the high performance mindset initiative that the Managing Director is fully on-board and a strong advocate.

It will be advantageous for the Managing Director to review material developed that describes the high performance mindset including:

- e-learning course *The High Performance Mindset at Work*
- Michael Bernard's book *The High Performance Mindset at Work*
- *The High Performance Mindset at Work Coaching Manual* (by Michael Bernard)

Several compelling reasons should be made clear to the Managing Director for designing and implementing a **High Performance Mindset at Work** culture across the organisation.



### 2. 'Buy in' of Senior Executive Team

An outside consultant or by the in-house Human Resource Department normally has responsibility for the design of a learning and development session designed to achieve "buy in."

A strategic approach to developing a High Performance Mindset commences with recognition of its value by the Senior Executive Team followed by allocation of resources and initial/ongoing support.

### **a. What's In It for Me?**

To obtain buy-in from most employees starting with the Senior Executive Team it is important to address a very simple question, "What's in it for me (WIFM)?" Alignment to this question is critical for success. Sensitising Senior Executive Team about the benefits of the program will ensure they are internally motivated to engage with the process.

Part 1 of this document, "High Performing Mindsets Drive High Performing Organisations" makes the case that high performance organisational outcomes require the mindset of high performance to be internalised by all employees.

### **b. Mini-Course Workshop**

Senior Executive Team can complete parts of the e-learning *High Performance Mindset at Work* course. At this point, the team will come together for a debrief/progress group discussion to address the key learnings and relevance of the high performance mindset to the organisation.

It may well be the case that a decision is made that senior executives complete the full course. In this instance, more group process time will need to be allocated. Also, coaching can be made available to one or all senior executives from suitably-trained human resource personnel or an outside consultant to further their own personal learning, development and use of the high performance mindset.

### **c. Organisational and Group Data Available from High Performance On-line Surveys**

Leadership finds of great value being able to receive the statistics and data provided from on-line surveys including:

- Indicators of High Performing Organisations
- High Performance Mindset
- Organisational Values in Action
- 'High Impact' Workplace Behaviours (Leadership/Management)
- Tough Situations (Leaders/Managers; Employees)

Data harvested anonymously from individuals completing the e-learning course can help direct and structure authentic and meaningful ongoing learning and development activities (see Part VII. Data-Driven Decision-Making).

## **3. Post Buy-In, Top-Down Support**

Once the Managing Director and the senior executive team understands and advocates for the high performance mindset becoming part of the organisation's culture, discussion can take place over time with an eye to identifying ways in which leadership and managers can provide top down support for the high performance mindset initiative.

## IX. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Management practices play a key role in the success of the high performance mindset initiative. The extent to which employees transfer to the workplace the knowledge and skill acquired through any learning and development initiative including the high performance mindset has a lot to do with the attitude and behaviour of management.

Time will need to be spent with managers by senior executives and/or human resource personnel discussing the likely benefits of the **High Performance Mindset** initiative so that buy-in to the initiative is achieved. Those in management positions including line supervisors will differ in their awareness and appreciation of the importance of mindset to the achievement of key performance indicators, team and organisational goals. It will be important for leadership to display their commitment to the initiative while allowing management time to discuss and reflect.

Clearly, an important energiser of managerial motivation results from participation of leadership and management in a high performance mindset training program. With support from human resource personnel and/or outside consultants including the HPMW training provider, managers (and executives) should meet as a group mid-way through the course and at the end to raise issues and, in particular, discuss the specifics of how mindset applies to their job setting including the identification and handling of tough work situations.

Managers will need to be brought on board concerning the importance of their high expectations being communicated to employees about the benefits of the HPMW initiative through ongoing discussion at team meetings and with individuals identified to enrol in the course. Managers need to ensure that they express their confidence to employees about their ability to successfully complete the course – and to enjoy and benefit from the experience.

Once employees have completed the course, the ongoing support and reinforcement provided by managers determines to a great extent the degree to which employees apply the knowledge and skills learned in the course to their work<sup>20</sup>. Part VI. of this document reviews organisational practices that support transfer of HPMW training to the workplace.

Employees who are optimistic about their ability to identify and plan to overcome obstacles, are more likely to achieve those goals and contribute to business outcomes<sup>20,21</sup>. Managers can foster optimism through strengths-based employee development and visualisation/gratitude exercises. Management practices that seek to align employee strengths with tasks encourage greater confidence, higher perceived optimism about future task completion and increased productivity.

Employees who feel valued and supported by management and co-workers will increase an employee's optimism<sup>21</sup>. Managers can exert influence by fostering a supportive work environment that nurtures and values its employees.

The effectiveness of the course and utilisation of newly learned skills by employees is influenced by the actions of leadership in the post-training climate.

## Team Discussion, Individual Coaching and Informal Support

It is recommended that managers provide employees at the beginning of the initiative with the expectation that ongoing support for the learning and development of the high performance mindset will occur at regular team meetings and discussion at the individual level.

At team meetings, managers are free to select for follow-up discussion issues raised in the induction HPMW course. Managers may have been provided the group data from employees having completed the course (for details, see Part VII of this document Data-Driven Decisions). For example, group data obtained from the Inventory of Tough Situations will reveal specific difficult work scenarios experienced by significant numbers of employees. Team meetings are ideal for discussion of these tough work situations where goals can be set and strategies for tackling the situation including use of behavioural strengths can be reviewed. Employee confidence in being able to successfully handle a situation can be developed through such discussions and practice examples. Additionally, managers may address at team meetings and through group discussion elements of the high performance mindset that may need developing in team members; for example, creativity, respect, support, feedback, positive focus.

Managers may provide individual coaching support to employees identified as having specific needs and issues. In this document, Part X Coaching discusses different individual coaching methods associated with the high performance mindset initiative. Managers can have employees discuss the results of their behavioural strengths survey results and along with the employee, identify how those strengths can be applied to difficult situations or tasks that need to be achieved within the organisation or their teams. The Individual Action Plans that employees develop at the end of the e-learning course can also structure supportive discussions between a manager and an employee. And as a part of performance management and appraisal of individuals, positive, constructive feedback may be provided on commitments and strengths of an employee as well as use of behavioural strengths for overcoming tough situations at work.

Informally, managers can exert a very positive influence on the development of mindset. To do so, managers need to have their antenna tuned to the positive aspects of employee performance and not the negative. To state the obvious, managers need to provide employees with consistent praise when employees handle tough situations effectively. An even more powerful technique is behaviour-specific feedback where a manager catches the employee in the act of using a behavioural strength and provides acknowledgement (e.g., "You presented your position confidently." "You persisted, you didn't quit." "You really used brought your A game when dealing with that difficult person; you got him on your side." "You stayed calm under pressure.").

In 2014, The Bernard Group pioneered leadership and management training in high performance developmental conversations designed to strengthen the mindset of teams and individuals leading to high performing teams.





## X. COACHING

Today, many organisations view coaching as an essential part of their learning and development strategy with coaching of individuals (executives, managers, employees) and team coaching being the rule rather than the exception. One of the main ways in which organisations can support the implementation and sustainability of the high performance mindset is through coaching.

If an existing culture and practice of coaching exists within an organisation, the high performance coaching model and methods can be integrated with existing coaching approaches employed in an organisation.

One of the goals of the high performance mindset coaching is for people to become their own self-coaches so that they continuously learn how to strengthen their high performance mindset in order to go one better in handling tough situations and to achieve their goals.

**The High Performance Mindset at Work** coaching approach is cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused<sup>22,23</sup>. Solution-focused coaching has an emphasis on solutions, not problems, assumes that people's competencies can be strengthened and that progress and success is the norm. Here, the coach's role is not one of expert, rather it is of the facilitator and supporter of change. Simple and practical ways for handling tough situations and solving problems is the goal. Cognitive-behavioural refers to the central importance of people's beliefs and thinking including their self-talk as a major influence on people's emotions and actions they take. In part, cognitive-behavioural coaching involves coaches helping coachees develop more effective ways to think about tough situations at work to produce better results.

The following three forms of high performance mindset coaching are available to managers, human resource personnel and outside consultants who conduct coaching with individuals and with teams and are described in detail in *The Coaching of the High Performance Mindset*<sup>24</sup>. All three approaches can be used with individuals from executives, senior through junior management/supervisors and employees.

### 1. The High Performance Mindset: Coaching Conversations Model

Coaches can use their conversations to assist an individual explore and self-discover ways in which elements of the high performance mindset can be used to achieve one or more goals at work. The following steps can direct coaches and the individual they are coaching to new ways of approaching their work that pays off in positive benefits.

- Step 1** Goal Setting
- Step 2** Reflection
- Step 3** Action Planning
- Step 4** Evaluation

## 2. Individual Coaching of the High Performance Mindset

Individual HPMW coaching is based around a collaborative four-step GRAPE model that helps individuals being coached to: focus on longer-term individual performance and organisational goals, reflect on their own high performance mindset in terms of strengths and areas for further development, formulation of an action plan for managing demanding and difficult work situations, and evaluating the impact of the plan on individual and organisational goals.

**Step 1:** Goals

**Step 2:** Reflection

**Step 3:** Action Planning

**Step 4:** Evaluation

## 3. Team Coaching of the High Performance Mindset

Managers, HR personnel and consultants can use team meetings as learning and development opportunities for the high performance mindset.

Group rather than individual issues often drive team coaching. It may well be the case that a coach will have on hand summary data on the high performance mindset and tough situations of all members of a department or the organisation. This information can be made available on characteristics of the group (not on individuals) after individuals have completed the *High Performance Mindset at Work* e-learning course.

Team discussion can center around any number of issues that emerge from the data (or from group discussion) including how to deal with difficult people, the difference between assertiveness and aggression, confidence when making presentations, goal setting, time management, how to better support each others and ways that feedback on work performance can be shared in constructive, positive ways, and how to be better at achieving work-life balance.

## 4. Coaching for Senior Executive Team:

A High Performance Mindset at Work coach would be an effective support for each member of the Senior Management Team to provide opportunities for ongoing goal setting, debriefing, practice and feedback in a non threatening, confidential environment. The focus here will be not on how they are performing today but how they could perform in the future by using what they have learned in coaching to not only improve their own mindset but to learn valuable coaching techniques first hand to enable them to be confident and competent to coach their own managers.

## XI. HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES

Human Resource Management practices have been found to affect staff turnover, productivity and the financial performance of an organisation<sup>25,26</sup>. There are a variety of roles and responsibilities that human resource personnel and departments can assume in supporting the high performance mindset initiative.

1. Introducing initiative to Managing Director to establish understanding, advocacy and “buy in”.
2. Conducting learning and development sessions with senior leadership team to establish awareness, understanding and advocacy.
3. Supporting executive team in decision making on top-down support and organisational practices to sustain initiative.
4. Helping “sell” through individual and group meetings the benefits of participation in the learning and development HPMW initiative for executives, managers and employees.
5. For organisations seeking to have large numbers of employees and undertake the e-learning course *The High Performance Mindset at Work*, helping select, working with managers to identify the first wave of employees being trained -those who are most likely to enjoy and benefit from the course to become “champions.”
6. Supervising the enrolment, administration and completion by executives, managers and employees of the e-learning course *The High Performance Mindset at Work*.
7. Helping use data gathered from groups of employees who have completed the e-learning course (see “Data-Driven Decisions” below) on tough situations at work and the profile of development of the different elements of the high performance mindset (commitments; behavioural strengths) to guide ongoing learning and development priorities.
8. Conducting individual coaching sessions.
9. Conducting team coaching sessions.

In follow-on learning and development, Human Resource Managers can by using specific mini interventions including activities with individuals and groups foster the development of behavioural strengths as well as beliefs that support commitments.

Here are a few simple, examples:

### Getting Along

- Active listening training and practice in teams
- Company/team get togethers (e.g. picnics, family days, team activity days)
- Volunteering policy
- Regular employee surveying to assess attitudes and commitment
- Policy of resolving disagreements as they arise

### Confidence

- Assertive communication skills training and practice in teams
- Performance management system focused on constructive, positive feedback (active/constructive responding model)
- Weekly team meetings with policy of alternating meeting leader
- Monthly organisation updates with opportunity for employees to provide constructive feedback/ ideas
- Publicising/acknowledging exceptional performers

### Organisation

- Organisation-wide project tracking systems
- Weekly goal setting based on the SMART model at a team level, followed by goal setting with supervisor to align to individual goals
- Performance review processes

### Persistence

- Acknowledgement in teams of hard-work/effort of team members - reward
- Buddy system in teams – to keep team members on track
- Encouraging team members to work on a project from beginning to end rather than specific part of the project

### Self-Management

- Policy of work/life balance/integration – modelled by leadership
- Access of employees to EAP type services
- Open door management policy for employees to discuss tough situations they are facing at work
- In office massage services/mindfulness meditation classes/yoga
- In office gym/ offer gym memberships to encourage exercise
- Modelling self-management behaviours for all to see

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