

EMPATHIC CONSULTING

BUILDING UNRIVALLED LEADERSHIP

HOW TO BUILD A TEAM OF
TRUST AND CONFIDENCE
THAT POWERS REAL
PERFORMANCE



Explore the frameworks, processes and practical tools Empathic Consulting have developed to build high performing leadership teams.

empathic
CONSULTING 



AN UNRIVALLED LEADERSHIP TEAM

Leadership teams play a critical role in every business. They are the operational custodians of strategy and values in action.

Leadership teams are often a diverse group, heading up divisions that must work together to deliver consistent performance. They need to build and maintain the culture within their teams, while coordinating and collaborating with other divisions. They must balance the needs of hundreds, sometimes thousands of customers, employees and stakeholders.

Being on a leadership team is a challenging role.

What we have found working with hundreds of leaders across large organisations, small to medium businesses and with divisional teams, is the quality of the leadership team as a high performing group is critical to determining the overall results.

In this program we run coaching, training and group development to take your leadership team from being a team of rivals, competing for status, into an Unrivalled Team, confident in each others skills and challenging each other with trust to deliver incredible results.

This book is designed to provide the overarching framework and key highlights to support teams in migrating through the stages. Leadership team development is ideally built on three key factors:

- Consistent, committed work by each individual to building the team
- Common tools, rituals and language adopted and implemented by all
- Independent support and guidance through challenging times

To learn more visit empathicconsulting.com or email daniel@empathicconsulting.com

WHEN LEADERS ARE...

THEY FORM...



After more than 15 years, working with executives and leadership teams in large corporations, medium-sized businesses and not-for-profits across Australia and New Zealand, we have been able to identify four broad types of leadership team that we commonly encounter.

The Team of Rivals

When leaders are driven by ego, they see each other as competitors. Resources are scarce and hitting their personal targets is the sole focus. In this state, meetings flux between avoidance and hostility. Members are often suspicious and seek to stand out from the team. When team trust has eroded to this state, the team is destroying value and putting the business at risk.

A Collection of Opinions

Bringing a group of experts into a leadership team is often a starting point. We need the individual knowledge, experience and skills of members to manage diverse problems and operations. The challenge is, in this state, members of the team will rely on the expertise of others without question, challenge or collaboration. This leaves the team vulnerable to group think and lacking the innovation and creativity needed to succeed.

A Functional Group

Collaboration and engagement across the different areas of the organisation can only occur when it is empowered and encouraged by leaders. Leadership teams who form strong connections with their peers will open channels for increased collaboration within their teams. This provides the functional foundations for improved operational performance.

The Unrivalled Team

Within the highest performing organisations reside leadership teams that are founded on trust, commitment and a confidence in each other and the organisation. When leaders are focused on group performance, conflict is seen as a positive process to drive growth. Honesty and empathy are the hallmarks of open dialogue leading to broad understanding and individual respect. Unrivalled teams form powerful rituals to embed consistent results despite the challenges they face.

TEAM OF RIVALS

EGO vs CONFIDENCE



Sometimes ego and confidence get mistaken.

Confidence is important. Ego is dangerous. Confidence can inspire action in the face of challenge. It is a powerful tool, embraced by the greatest warriors to run head long into battle. Confidence is the fuel of the most inspiring leaders to muster certainty in an uncertain future.

Confidence is the belief in ourselves, in our cause and our future. Confidence is critical to individual success and inspirational leadership. Too often though, confidence is overshadowed by its evil brother, Ego. It is ego that obscures realities, defies logic and pushes forward with inflexible determination. Ego cements our certainty without any sense of realism. Ego ignores capability in favour of individual glory.

Today, we have never been in a more complex and uncertain world. We have never been confronted by more diversity, competition nor more challenging and interwoven ecosystems. Having confidence as a leader in the modern world is becoming increasingly difficult. Ego based leaders today are focused on ensuring they deliver the short term results that strengthen their current position. They look to have their cake, eat it too and believe it impossible that another cake won't appear tomorrow on request.

In leadership teams, ego-driven leaders see other leaders within the business as competitors. Other leaders are fighting for the favour of the boss, stealing the precious resources and taking their opportunities to win. Many ego-driven leaders fear their peers are nefariously plotting against them.

Conspiring in the shadows to win the favour of the boss and make them out to be the one dragging the chain. Some ego-driven leaders are so vehemently defensive of their people, they overlook glaring issues and defend the actions on their watch with ferocity.

They believe it is them, and only them, that can bring glory to the organisation. If only their competitors at the leadership table would give them the space, money and time.

In this stage, the most critical change is to unpack and bring awareness to the challenges of ego-based mindsets. To create positive change, our focus at this stage is on developing a clear understanding of each other's talents, contribution to the broader objective and the critical reliance on the team working together to achieve this purposeful outcome.

The operating model of every significantly sized business relies on more than the powers of one woman or man. The greatest product development will struggle without a strong sales team. The strongest sales teams rely on good marketing and reliable service delivery. The most proficient businesses require IT, Risk, Legal, Finance and Human Resources capabilities to ensure they deliver their best results.

No one team, division or business unit can deliver high performance without the support of others. Organisational excellence is a team of teams sport.

This often sounds too basic for most senior leaders to fathom. Many of our clients initially think they know enough already. They get that the other functions and divisions are helpful, but when pushed for details, their understanding is largely superficial.

The reality is, most leaders take their peers, and their teams, for granted. They don't really understand each other well enough to fully engage, embrace and excel with their peers. This is where we start.

By building greater understanding of the skills, desires and values of each member of the leadership team. Through this process, we probe the organisational operating model in greater detail to go past the high level



assumptions. We build a deep, shared understanding of the business as an operational and cultural system. This provides clarity on the need each member has on the rest of the group to be truly successful.

We encourage each leader to explore the opportunities when we leverage the unique experiences and talents of the team. We let go of ego and replace it with confidence in the team itself.

The focused sessions for this part of the program unpack:

- **Understanding the vision, strategy and objectives for the organisation in the external ecosystem**
- **Exploring functional roles, risks and capabilities needed to deliver these objective**
- **Clarifying critical points of interdependence and impact**

A COLLECTION OF OPINIONS

MOVING PAST EXPERTISE



I went to a small primary school on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. It was made up of old brick structures surrounded by concrete assembly areas and large grassy sporting ovals. It was a pretty simple place and probably not unlike the type of school many people went to for their first taste of formal education.

I remember a particular day, I was maybe 7 or 8 years old at the time, that we were given a test to complete. It was the first time I'd experienced this at school. I'm not sure how I felt during the test, but the memory of the aftermath has been burned into my mind.

When we had finished the spelling test, we went to lunch and I played as the happy child I was accustomed to being. When we returned, the teacher walked through the class with a small pile of paper. It was the exams we had completed. She handed one out to the girl in front of me and gave her a little 'well done' as she moved on.

I could see the red pen on her paper, I thought it said 10/10. She kept moving around the class handing out paper and making small comments, most of which were not audible to the rest of the class. As she approached my desk, I was excited.

I assumed we all got a good score and a nice comment, this seemed fun. As she handed me my paper, the only comment was a huffed "we've got some work to do with you". I didn't understand, I looked at my paper. The numbers on the top of the page, in bright red pen were not good. I got just 2 out of 10 in my first real spelling exam.

This experience pretty much sums up the rest of my schooling. We were given information then asked questions to test our memory or understanding. The best students got the most right answers. The low scores indicated the dumb ones.

Top of the class for lots of right answers and bottom of the class if you got them wrong.

It is really not surprising that this type of educational system has produced generations of people who overvalue knowing the right answers. If you are part of this era, you too will know the goal of many people in business is to be considered the top of your field, to have expertise.

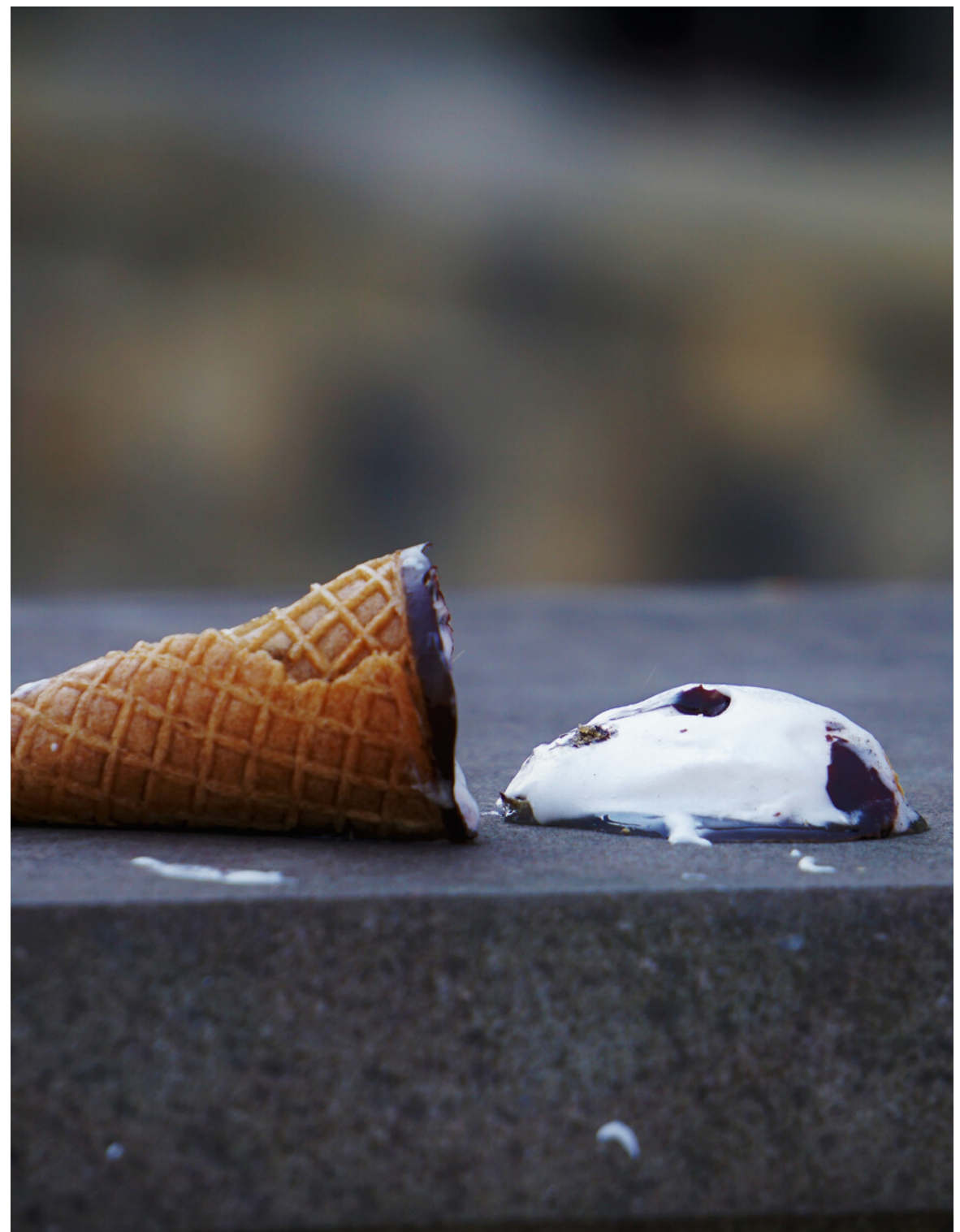
Expertise is a powerful tool. Having a deep understanding of a specific area gives you the ability to make sense of complicated situations. To be prepared with a memory full of experiences and a knowledge of how things work.

It enables efficient decisions to navigate and lead others through the tangled jungles they encounter. Experts give advice in their hitting zones and seek the guidance of others when they are out of their depth.

Experts are highly valued, particularly in cases where the issues faced are narrow but deep. Who understands the complicated nature of thermodynamics in industrial machines or the chemical reactions of substances at different temperatures?

These people are at times needed, but expertise does not always deliver leadership. This is because skills are highly valued in a complicated world, but we don't live in a complicated world, our world is complex.

This difference between complicated and complex is an important one. Complicated systems have many moving parts and knowledge is most useful to understand the rules of the machine, the powerful forces and known pitfalls. A complex world provides a whole new set of challenges.



Complex means that the interwoven forces and drivers are near impossible to fully understand. Tiny things can create a massive change, or no change at all.

Massive things can create massive change or no change at all. Everything in between is possible, it is seemingly chaotic and unpredictable. No deep well of knowledge can prepare us for the chaos of a future world.

Today, consumer trends can be totally reversed within mere minutes. One day, movies were rented from a store, the next BlockBuster became an extinct business model. One day, Almond milk is in, the next it is out. Computers kill typewriters, iPads provide beautiful digital writing options, yet Moleskin still sell paper books at incredible margins.

Expertise is not the answer to the modern world of innovation. Nor is it effective in the realm of leadership. Modern leadership faces more complexities than ever before.

MOVING PAST EXPERTISE

WHEN LEADERS ARE...

THEY FORM...



In past decades, it was often about building a homogeneous group of employees who believed in your wisdom and expertise. Find people who like me, or who revere, respect or fear me, and they can be my followers.

This approach doesn't suit the modern complex world. Today, expertise can be more of a problem than a solution. Relying on individual expertise is the opposite of leadership. When a leadership team overvalues expertise, they essentially restrict teamwork and collaboration in favour of simply accepting the opinions of 'experts'.

While this can seem respectful and harmonious, it fails to leverage the most powerful 'C' forces in any group of people; Collaboration, Conversation and Challenge. This type of disruptive and sometimes chaotic interaction is the key to the next level: Collaboration. By helping teams of leaders to really open up on their thoughts on each other's views, we can improve real communication.

We help leaders have constructive conflict and to step into challenging conversations with confidence and vulnerability. They are okay, even pleased with being challenged so they can unlock the incredibly powerful opportunity of their collective future genius.

The focused sessions for this part of the program unpack:

- **Unpacking individual areas of expertise and alignment with strategy**
- **Discussing the opportunities and threats of complex ecosystems and the expert fallacy**
- **Fostering Curious leadership skills and the power of the group to drive aligned performance**

A FUNCTIONAL GROUP

CHANNELS OF CONNECTION



"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

This old proverb is as true in business today as it was on the plains of Africa when it was first spoken. Humans are incredibly social animals, passing on the collective wisdom of thousands of years through story, song and script.

Unlike many animals who have only their instincts encoded in their DNA or at best learn the knowledge of their parents and peers, humans can benefit from the knowledge of people from different parts of the world spanning centuries.

We don't need to each learn how a combustion engine works or identify the safe ways to prepare certain foods through trial and error. Much of the amazing knowledge that has been gathered over millions of years of human history is now stored within everyday systems,

products or repositories, such as books and the vast spans of the internet.

A complete, detailed understanding of this enormous collective wisdom is impossible to expect of any one person. Indeed, many people devote a lifetime of study and research to a microscopic sliver and still they rarely are able to understand all that is to be known about a topic. The more we search, the more we find.

For example, biologists in Sydney, Australia have been studying the hearts of zebrafish. These hearts, some of which are no larger than a grain of sand, are surprisingly similar to that of human hearts. The curious feature of the zebrafish heart though is, it can regenerate heart tissue. When a human heart suffers damage from something like a heart attack, it cannot repair the damage, often leading to fatal ends. But much like a lizard regrows its tail, a zebrafish can regrow its heart tissue.



This discovery alone is interesting, but researchers at the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute believe this has the potential to save the lives of the 43,500 Australians that die each year from cardiovascular disease.

But it isn't one discipline of science, working in isolation that will provide the answers. In fact, without a funding to provide equipment, pay salaries and provide facilities, the research couldn't happen. This means to do the research well, the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute needs a marketing and fundraising team, external supporters and donors, an accounting team, cleaners, asset managers, a human resources department, communication specialists, legal support and many more interconnected roles.

Modern business is a complex web of interdependent systems. Market changes in distant countries can have heavy impacts on the local economy in ways that are hard to identify or predict. For this reason, collaboration is the fundamental element of a true team.

Without members actively working to combine

talents, challenge each other openly, explore the environment and develop shared understanding, businesses become just a bunch of individuals working in proximity.

Those organisations who don't open up the channels of collaboration will struggle to anticipate, assess and adapt as required to succeed. Teams, and especially leadership teams, must be totally clear on what they are trying to achieve and be completely open to working together to explore how they can achieve this.

Functional teams create environments where diverse and controversial ideas can be shared, discussed and debated. They are highly curious and open to new ideas. Leaders listen with wonder and suspend their beliefs or judgments to encourage more exploratory conversations. Empathy becomes a critical skill in the development of effective collaboration.

Leaders who can understand the ideas and perspectives of others are better able to collectively work on forming new, collaborative solutions to unlock unseen potential.

Collaboration becomes more than a one time process leaving rooms covered in sticky notes. It becomes a cultural norm in all situations. When we can develop the leadership team to a level of constant collaboration, we can shift from being a collection of experts to a functional team. The whole becomes much more than the sum of the parts.

The focused sessions for this part of the program unpack:

- **Building the foundations for psychological safety, connection and shared values**
- **Increasing the level of empathic leadership within individual behaviours**
- **Engaging design thinking to practice diverse collaboration**

UNRIVALLED TEAM SHARED COMMITMENT & PERFORMANCE



Amid the roaring cannons and the screams of war, Thomas Hardy entered the quarters of his Vice Admiral to pass on the news.

The brave English Navy had captured 17 of the 41 ships of their enemy and had lost none of their own. Despite their fleet being just 33 ships, the English had outsmarted, outmaneuvered and outfought their enemy. This was a crushing defeat by any measure and would become folklore in the Old Country.

As he delivered the news, the reply was simple: I want 20. It was a rather subdued reply from Lord Nelson. He lay bandaged and bloodied on his bed with his doctor at his side.

He had sustained a critical wound, a sniper's bullet through the chest while on the deck of his ship. The naval hero was now pale and weak, but still he demanded the battle continue and his men show no mercy to Napoleon's forces.

By the end of the Battle of Trafalgar, the Franco-Spanish fleet had lost 21 ships, more than half of their fleet. Around 4,000 of their men were killed and 10,000 more wounded leaving their remaining ships scattered and fleeing across the open seas.

For Nelson's forces, only 457 brave sailors had been killed, but to the horror of his men and an entire nation, he succumbed to his injuries to make it 458. Many know of the Battle of Trafalgar as the heroic Nelson crushing the forces of Napoleon, keeping the French forces from crossing the channel to threaten Great Britain as they had through much of Europe.

Most tales talk of his strategy and tactics, but the real magic of Nelson was not in his brilliance as a sailor. The English hero suffered sea sickness for much of his life and entered his last great victory with most of an arm missing and sight in only one eye, scars from previous battles.



His victory was built on the long term commitment to building an unrivalled team of trusted Captains.

Our final step for developing an Unrivalled Leadership Team is to significantly amplify the levels of trust, commitment and constructive challenge amongst team members.

The Battle of Trafalgar was only a decisive victory for the English because, unlike the Franco-Spanish and many naval fleets of the day, Nelson's subordinates did not need to wait for his instructions in the middle of battle.

Each of them understood their role in the plan, were empowered to execute and trusted in each other to deliver. They knew what to do, not by orders but by a shared instinct they had forged through time. When Nelson briefed the men, he unpacked his high level strategy and gave simple orders for each ship.

To ensure all Captains knew their ultimate role, he finished by saying "No captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside the enemy." If all else fails, take the initiative to attack with confidence. Even when their leader, whose statue still towers over the famous square in London, was mortally wounded, the team were able to focus on their roles and ensure one of the most famous naval

victories of all time.

This level of understanding, trust and commitment to the group epitomises the Unrivalled Team. They are able to adapt to challenges and overcome the odds. They are more agile and reliable to navigate the rough waters. They do not shy away from conflict, conversations or disagreement because they know they are stronger as a unit and through this transparent discussion, they find better solutions.

This level of trust and commitment is often best founded through action. By supporting the team through high conflict situations, difficult challenges and controversial elements of strategic planning, we bring awareness to the subconscious and emotional influences which are too often overlooked.

With honesty, concentration and empathy for all, teams are able to pause, reflect and find deep understanding of the thoughts and behaviours of others.

Deepening trust to forge high performance relationships is a long term process. By building leadership rituals which are aligned to the desired organisational values, our objective is to create routines for constant reinforcement. Through these routines and actions the leadership team shapes their internal culture, having profound impacts on the broader organisation.

The focused sessions for this part of the program unpack:

- **Building trust and commitment within team that impacts organisational culture**
- **Practicing honesty and empathy in high conflict situations**
- **Forging the rituals to sustain unrivalled performance and embed within systems & processes**

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

"Knowledge alone benefits no one unless the person acquiring it does something with it. And great ideas are worthless unless they are implemented."

- Brian P. Morgan

Our goal is that this guide gives you the information and inspiration to reflect on your organisation and build an Unrivalled Leadership Team. Consistent implementation is a critical ingredient to creating and sustaining high performance through your people.

At Empathic Consulting, we are passionate about supporting all businesses to develop leadership teams that are creating higher business performance, inspiring organisational cultures and better human communities for generations to come.

Your business deserves more than a team of rivals, it deserves an unrivalled team!

WHEN LEADERS ARE...

THEY FORM...



Full implementation programs can be adapted to suit most businesses and leadership team sizes. Programs include leadership team workshops, individual coaching and organisational training and presentations to engage, inform and inspire real change.

Contact us today to discuss the challenges and opportunities within your business to build a leadership team focused on trust and delivering unrivalled performance.

www.empathicconsulting.com

PAST CLIENTS

"Thought inspiring, provoking and very interesting. Took you through the emotional journey of using empathy in your business."

- Robbie Cook, CEO, Tyro Payments

"Fantastic both in content and delivery. I was looking for someone to open up other ways of approaching leadership and looking at our business environment and they delivered!-

Michaela Flanagan, Head of Branch Operations, Swiss Re

"I can honestly say it was one of the best sessions I have been a part of. The content was unique & very interactive. I highly recommend Empathic Consulting to build empathy & understanding to drive performance." - Daniel Markovski, Group Sales Manager, Nova

"They engaged people who I didn't think would ever respond, let alone take-away actions. Post this session, I observed genuine behaviour changes. This was one of the best things I have done for the team." - Rochelle Eldridge, Executive Manager, CBA



For more information on how Empathic Consulting can support with specific programs and the key steps to implementation, contact:

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