

What Is Team Advantage?

TEAM ADVANTAGE IS a structured process for coaching teams to achieve an extraordinary goal while also becoming more cohesive. Your team will be asked to identify a big goal and take full ownership of playing a game to achieve it—one that is worthy of the team's precious time and energy!

Some teams have played for obvious goals during Team Advantage. Examples of obvious goals include the following:

- Move a sales team's revenue ranking up to a new level within an organization
- Launch a new product successfully
- Successfully complete an organizational redesign
- Launch a global initiative to include members and input from many cultures
- Reconfigure a complex compensation plan
- Bring the human resources team together to create a new leadership framework
- Create a new curriculum for an academic or educational division
- Launch a new business/entrepreneurial endeavor
- Boost a nonprofit's revenue/donations plan

Others have played for goals that have been awe-inspiring. For example, one team set out to “put a plan in place to eradicate a disease state within the next 2 years.”

Some goals have been designed to offer an innovative level of service, such as “making our sports events the best entertainment value in our area.” This involved changing business strategy to focus on treating each ticket holder as someone to be thoroughly entertained from their seats to the concession stand.

All the goals have one thing in common—they stretch teams to imagine how they might produce an “Oh wow!” experience and to achieve something they had previously just imagined.

So how is this different from other team-building experiences? Team coaching provides the missing link often associated with training and team-building events. Just as in sports, by having a coach to work with you and your team to set a game plan and think differently about your approach while holding you accountable, you can accomplish more than you thought possible.

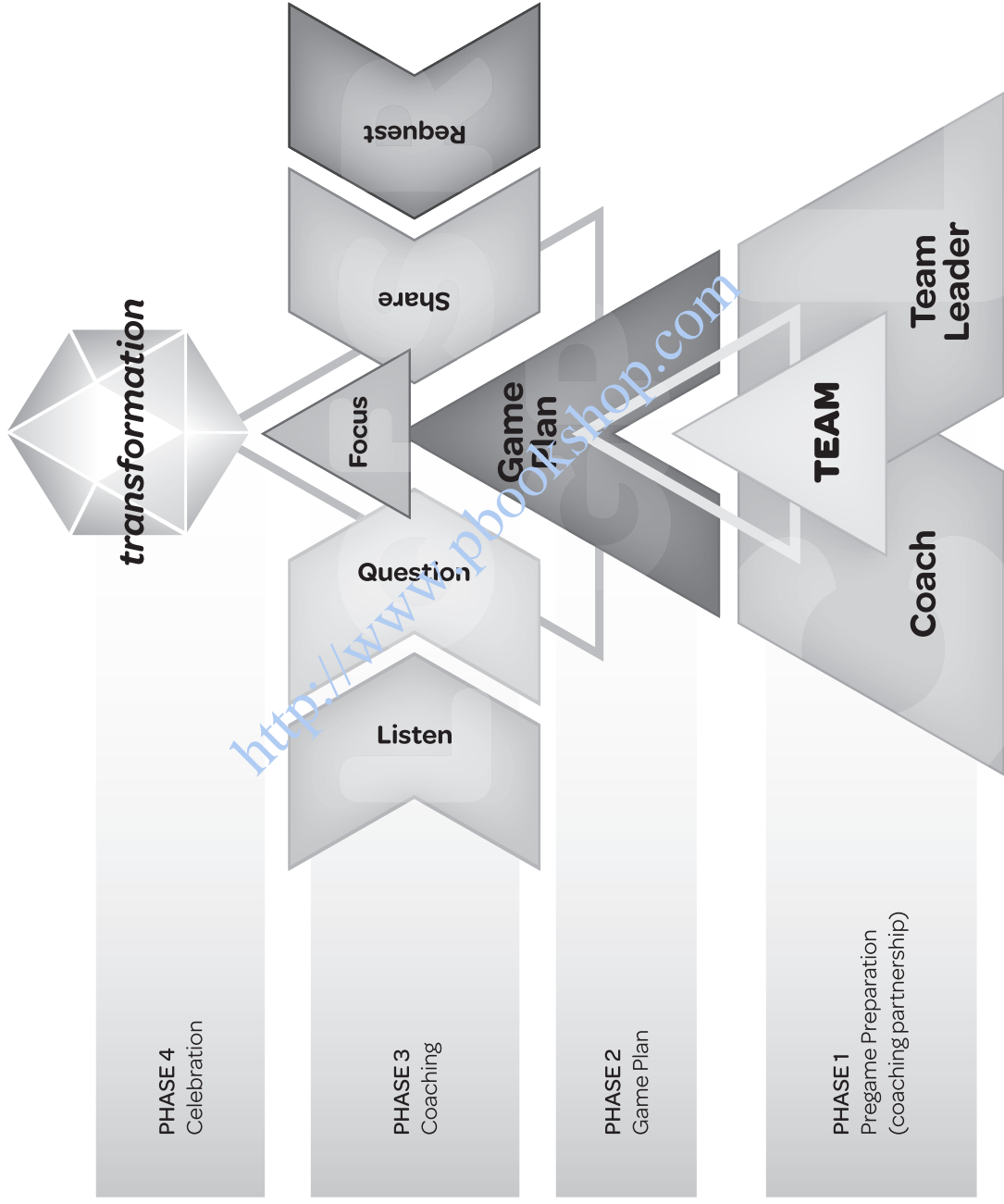
Team Advantage is unique in the following ways:

- The team-building process evolves over time, building on a workshop event designed to create a compelling game plan that your team creates.
- Your team will have a coach to hold the process of the game execution in place. The coach will facilitate the workshop, host the conference calls, and work with you on a regular basis before the Kickoff Workshop and during the coaching process.
- The coach will also work with individual team members as needed throughout the program. Team members will have

access to confidential coaching conversations throughout the game. They will be instructed to make requests for an offline time-out with the coach whenever they:

- Have a question about process.
 - Make a request for specific action or conversation—such as the team member feels a need to say “ouch, coach—you stepped on my toes,” or “I need to clear up something I might have misinterpreted today.”
 - Want to work through a miscommunication with a teammate.
 - Need to work through a needed change being made by the team.
 - Make a decision that in any way impacts the team leader or the team’s potential attainment of the goal.
 - Want to make sure the team is aligned with the team charter, or check in if something is not aligned.
- The team-building process incorporates a business focus with meaningful goals and objectives designed to help you attain something amazing. This will not be a simulation, though you will experience some simulated games during the Kickoff Workshop to establish how games can help you learn. You are going to play for something very real.
 - It is a game centered in the notion of “playing” and the focus is to go for an extraordinary goal—to achieve something that is above and beyond expectations. Although the stakes are high, there are typically no consequences for not winning. This makes it safe for your team to take risks that are critical for the game’s success!

FIGURE 1
Phases of Team Advantage



Team Advantage consists of four phases, as shown in Figure 1.

You will learn more about your role in each phase of Team Advantage in the following sections.

The key to the success of Team Advantage is that you and your team must be coachable and willing to give 100% effort in playing the game you create. You will be working with an experienced coach who will guide you through this process. Achieving that goal should result in additional benefits to you, your team, and your organization.

The following quick checklist will help you determine whether you are ready to take part in Team Advantage. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being completely ready and 1 being not at all ready, respond to each of the following statements:

- _____ I am open and will consider new views about my leadership style and skills.
- _____ I am willing to reveal insights about what I am learning.
- _____ I can help maintain the team's focus and attention during the game.
- _____ I am willing to create safety for the team to take more risks.
- _____ I am able to manage my personal time, energy, and commitments and will attend all the scheduled conference sessions, and in other ways show up for the coaching.
- _____ I am strategic and practical.

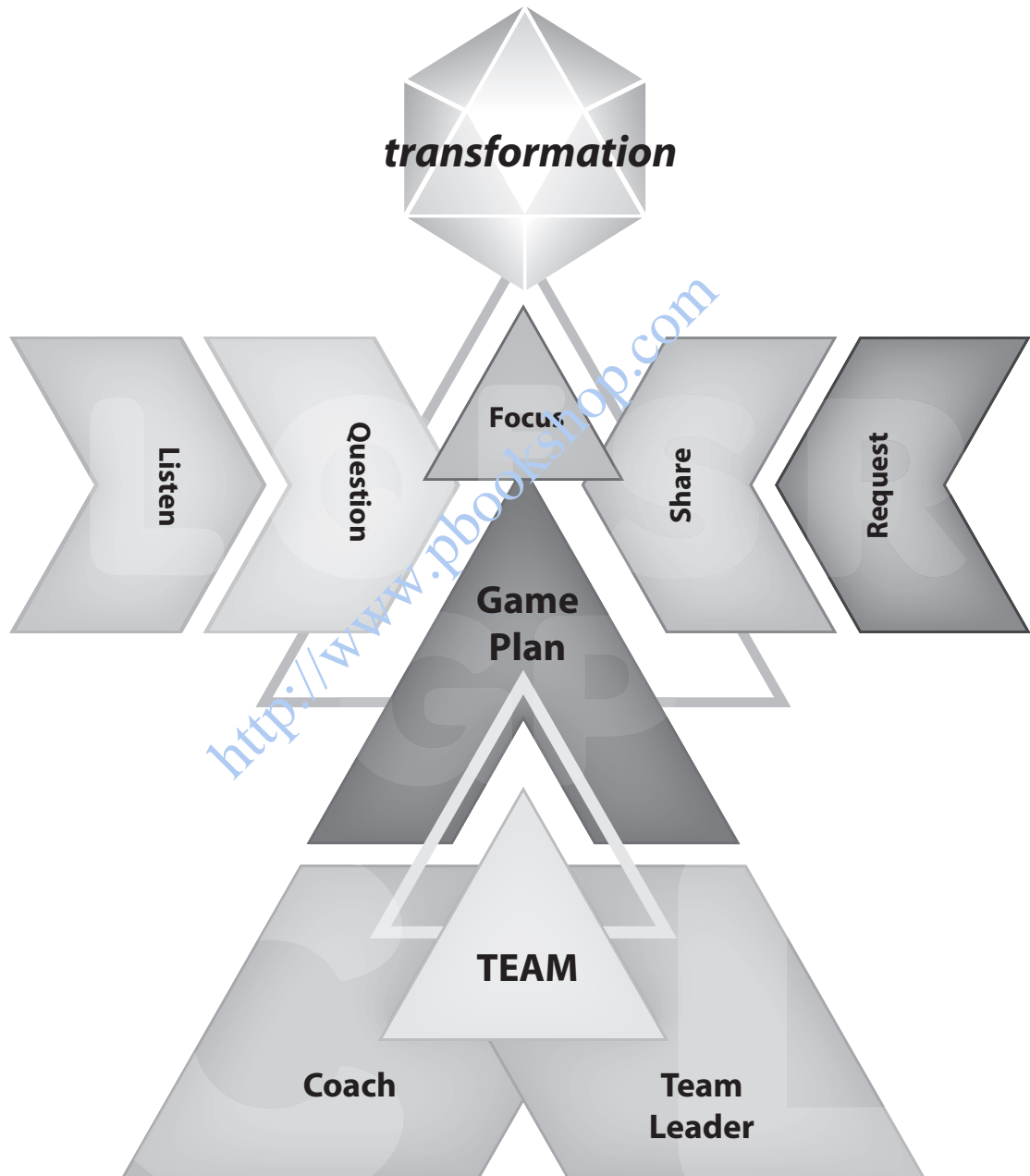
- _____ I am visionary (able to convey my vision simply and directly).
- _____ I am capable of setting boundaries for the team when there are competing priorities and demands.
- _____ I am aligned with the organization's mission.
- _____ I am a strong communicator.
- _____ I am willing to suspend my "experience" in order to learn.
- _____ I am willing to share power and authority with all the team members.
- _____ I am willing to be objective about what is or is not working with the team.

If you scored 3 or less for any of these statements, discuss your thoughts and feelings with your coach. Use the coaching sessions prior to Team Advantage as a way to strengthen your readiness for the team process.

Figure 2 is a schematic of the Team Advantage "transformation." This figure depicts how the process unfolds, starting with the partnership formed by you and the coach, moving toward inclusion of team members, creating the game plan, and then using coaching as the impetus to move the team toward goal attainment and transformation.

FIGURE 2

The Team Advantage Transformation



Why a Game?

TEAM ADVANTAGE REVOLVES around a game plan that is created by the team to foster ownership and action learning in the context—or circumstance—of playing.

It is human nature to play and we have learned most of the important lessons in our lives from playing—communicating concisely with others, building partnerships, depending on others' strengths, following rules, celebrating wins, “punting” when the plan isn't working or we miss the mark, and working within a time constraint to win.

We have found that people enjoy working within the context of a game. Everyone knows what's expected and how to win. This makes the work meaningful and fun. So even though there may be tension and pressure to perform each day, there is alignment and power in the team's ownership of the direction of the team. Even those who are watching from the “sidelines”—other colleagues, senior managers, and even friends and family—pay attention to the activity and momentum of a game. They will see more engagement and a new conversation about how the team is performing that inspires others to become involved.

Experts have also found that when teams move out of fear-based, survival-based conversations and learn to articulate self-awareness and emotions, they can move into the creative functions of their brain with more ease. The more awareness we build about how to overcome limitations, the easier it is to access the parts of the brain that allow us to problem-solve and create. People have the experience of “freedom and fun” when they feel they are contributing to the greater good.

Your Role in Team Advantage

AS THE TEAM leader, you play a critical role in Team Advantage. Here is what you can expect at each stage of the process.

Phase 1—Pregame Preparation

The most important activity in Phase 1 for you as the team leader is the initiation of the coaching process. You and your coach will meet regularly and engage in a coaching relationship. After an initial face-to-face meeting, you will establish a schedule of telephone coaching calls. These calls will be very important in developing rapport with the coach, experiencing what coaching is all about, and preparing for the bigger game to come.

Also during Phase 1, you and the coach will work on preparing for the overall Team Advantage program. You will help the coach learn about the team's day-to-day business and will also help the coach develop a list of questions that will be used in interviews with each member of the team.

After the coach completes the interviews, he or she will create a theme report based on all the responses. The coach will review this report with you as part of planning the Kickoff Workshop.

Phase 2—Kickoff Workshop

The Kickoff Workshop is typically a 2-day event at an off-site location. Teams with fewer than six members can sometimes

accomplish the goals of the workshop in 1 day, but 2-day programs are the norm.

The goal of the Kickoff Workshop is for the team to establish an extraordinary goal that will be the team's focus over a 4-month period. The team will also establish strategic drivers, game goals, and other action items to reach that goal. Team members will create a game plan that will be tracked on a weekly basis. Points will be assigned to each activity to bring some fun into the process. Remember, it's a game!

As the team leader, your role in the Kickoff Workshop will be primarily as an observer and assistant to the coach. It is important that you give your team the space to be creative while at the same time advising the coach behind the scenes of any developments that might not be in alignment with company goals and objectives or even outside company guidelines. You want to allow the team to think freely, but within reasonable boundaries.

Phase 3—Coaching the Game

Phase 3 will consist of 12 conference calls over a 16-week period. Prior to each call, team members will be asked to submit a Call Prep Form that will allow them to provide input for the call. The conference calls will be facilitated by the coach.

You and the coach will meet prior to each call to review the agenda and discuss any issues that may have arisen between calls. You will also debrief after each call to share observations from the interaction of the team.

Each call will have an agenda created by the coach with input from the team and with your guidance. Typically, time is spent on each call to update the game plan and track the points that

have been scored by the team. Team members who have specific responsibility for action items in the game will be asked to report to the team on the success or challenges in meeting those commitments during the coaching phase of the game.

The use of a conference call in lieu of a live meeting makes the Team Advantage process more convenient and accessible for teams whose members travel, are located in many cities, or work virtually from a home office.

There are only a few disadvantages of using conference calls for the coaching phase. First, it is easy to multitask while you are on a conference call. It is very important that everyone is fully present for the conversation and participating with complete focus.

Second, not being able to see each other can be difficult for team members while having conversations about building on the strengths of the team or while team members are in the midst of learning to challenge each other.

Third, there can be many distractions or interruptions when conversing on the phone, particularly if someone is calling in from home or a public place. Everyone has to be mindful to mute their phone if there is a lot of background noise where they are or if they must have another conversation.

The team will be provided with the conference call information immediately after the Kickoff Workshop, along with a list of dates and times to add to their calendar. The coach will coordinate these logistical requirements with you.

As the team leader, it is important for you to attend every call. The conference-call format makes it possible for you to attend from anywhere, even if you are on a business trip or taking a vacation day.

Phase 4—Celebration

Phase 4 is the Celebration Phase. You and the coach will plan some type of a celebration event following the conclusion of Team Advantage. You will establish a prize to play for, which can take many forms, including a celebratory gathering at a restaurant or other location.

TABLE 1

Expectations of the Team Leader

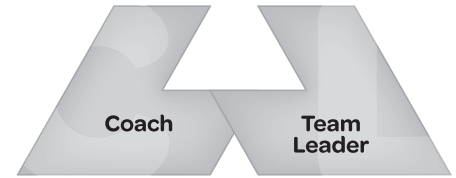
Phase	Expectations of Team Leader
1—Pregame Preparation	Provide information to help assess the team. Be open for feedback. Honor coaching commitments. Experience the power of coaching and gaining personal insights. Tell the team how coaching is working for you.
2—Kickoff Workshop	Observe and participate. Check in with the coach and provide offline feedback on the process. Keep group actions in alignment with corporate strategy and policy. Play both as the leader and someone who models action learning.
3—Coaching the Game	Honor coaching commitments. Use the coaching prep calls to gain valuable insights into the team's needs, and be available for debriefing conversations that follow the team call. Trust the process. Trust your coach. Ask questions for clarity. Make requests of the team and of your coach so the partnership functions at a high level.
4—Celebration	Look for the victories, initiate the celebrations, and fully appreciate the team's accomplishments. Be specific in acknowledgments of small daily and weekly wins. Share with enthusiasm!

Celebration will also be encouraged throughout the process. Your coach will be sure to recognize even the smallest achievements by the team and team members and you will also be encouraged to acknowledge team members often during the process.

Table 1 summarizes the expectations of the team leader.

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Phase 1—Pregame Preparation



THERE ARE TWO primary activities for the Team Leader during Phase 1:

- Begin working with the coach
- Help the coach prepare for the Kickoff Workshop and coaching the team

Working with the Coach

This process is designed as a partnership between the coach and the client. Your coach will become an integral part of the team during the next 4 months. As the team leader, you will have the added benefit of having a personal coach for the duration of the program. You will begin the process by having a face-to-face meeting with your coach to start creating the “playing field” for you and your team.

The first step is to set a date and time to meet. Be sure to connect with the coach as soon as possible and establish the starting date. This initial meeting is the first activity in the Team Advantage program.

Your coach will want to know a lot about you so that you can establish rapport and develop a comfortable working relationship. Use Worksheet 1 to organize information about yourself and to begin thinking about what you want out of the coaching relationship.

WORKSHEET 1**Information for Your Coach****My Contact Information**

Name

Address

Phone

Fax

E-mail

Mobile

Birthday

Other celebration dates

Hobbies

Kids/Family

Recent book read

What do you expect from coaching?

Your Life Story: Use the space provided to do a quick "bullet point" biography of your life that includes the most important milestones for you professionally and personally.

Your work story: What drives you to do what you do?

Your team: What do you want *for* the team?

What do you want to see happen over the next 4 months?

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At the conclusion of your initial meeting with the coach, you will want to establish dates and times for subsequent coaching sessions leading up to the Kickoff Workshop.

Preparing for Team Advantage

The second activity in Phase 1 for you as the team leader is to help the coach prepare for the Kickoff Workshop and subsequent coaching of the team.

Here is a checklist of items that you and the coach will want to do at your initial meeting:

- Review the contents of this *Team Leader's Guide*.
- Review the contents of the *Team Member's Guide*.
- Review all phases of the Team Advantage process.
- Discuss the organization's rationale for choosing Team Advantage.
- Set up dates and times for your coaching sessions over the next 2 months.
- Discuss the organization's vision, mission, and mandates.
- Discuss potential roadblocks to success.
- Discuss each team member from your perspective.
- Review sample interview questions and customize for the team.
- Review the sample memo and customize for the team.
- Schedule the date and location for the Kickoff Workshop.
- Review the purpose of coaching.

- Discuss the payoff and/or Celebration Event.
- Summarize any decisions and actions from the meeting.

A brief explanation of each of these checklist items follows.

- Review the contents of the *Team Leader's Guide*.

You should read this *Team Leader's Guide* prior to your first meeting with the coach, but at that meeting you'll take some time to review its contents with the coach and ask any questions you might have.

- Review the contents of the *Team Member's Guide*.

The coach will be sending copies of the *Team Member's Guide* either directly to each team member or to you for you to distribute. Page through the *Team Member's Guide* so that you are familiar with the contents.

- Review all phases of the Team Advantage process.

This is your opportunity to ask questions about any part of the Team Advantage program. It is important that you understand each phase of the program, your role, and the roles of the team members. The coach will be able to provide his or her perspective and share experiences from other teams.

- Discuss the organization's rationale for choosing Team Advantage.

Your coach will want to know any behind-the-scenes thinking as to why your company selected Team

Advantage. This will help the coach to understand company expectations and needs for the initiative.

- Set up dates and times for your coaching sessions over the next 2 months.

Get your calendars out and reserve time for your coaching sessions. This time will be sacred; it is important for you to set boundaries that allow you to spend productive time with your coach.

- Discuss the organization's vision, mission, and mandates.

Make sure the coach has a grasp of these key driving factors in your organization. If helpful, provide some written documentation about these items.

- Discuss potential roadblocks to success.

What do you think will be the challenges that you and the coach will face in implementing Team Advantage? Discussing these issues early in the process may help you to develop a strategy to overcome the potential roadblocks.

- Discuss each team member from your perspective.

Go down the team roster one by one. Provide the coach with your perspective on each team member. Talk about his or her strengths, weaknesses, job duties, relationships with other team members, and any other useful information.

- Review sample interview questions and customize for the team.

The coach will interview each member of the team. Exhibit 1 is a sample list of questions. Work with the coach to customize this list for your team.

- Review the sample memo and customize for the team.

Effective communication with the team will help set expectations about Team Advantage and lay the foundation for the coach to develop rapport quickly. The first communication with the team will be a memo alerting them to the upcoming interviews with the coach. Exhibit 2 is a sample memo. Review this with the coach and make any appropriate changes.

- Schedule the date and location for the Kickoff Workshop.

Take out your calendar and look for dates for the Kickoff Workshop. Discuss appropriate locations for the meeting as well.

- Review the purpose of coaching.

Coaching is the key to the success of Team Advantage. Briefly review how the coaching process will be used for the team leader and for the team.

- Discuss the payoff and/or Celebration Event.

Team Advantage is more fun when team members have some tangible prize to win when they achieve their goal. Although you do not have to finalize this decision, start to discuss possibilities with the coach.

- Summarize any decisions and actions from the meeting.

Finish the meeting by making sure you and the coach are in agreement about any decisions and/or action items that need to be addressed before your first coaching session.

EXHIBIT 1**Sample Questions for the Assessment Interview**

1. What are the current challenges for your team/division/organization that need to be addressed in the next 4 to 5 months?
2. What personal value do you think all members of this team share? High sense of mission? Contribution? Adventure? Balance in personal lives? Leadership?
3. What are your biggest concerns about the current productivity of your team?
4. If you were given a magic wand to wave over your organization, what would have to change today?
5. If you were to play a game related to the productivity of your organization, what kind of goals would you play for? Which one is big for you?
6. What are the two top outcomes you wish to see as a result of the Kickoff Workshop?
7. How would you define a great team leader?
8. What do you need from your leadership that you aren't currently getting?
9. How willing are you to play a game to address some of the issues you discussed? Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being you'll play hard and 1 indicating you don't like games.
10. What can others from your team count on from you? "Who" are you for others and what can you do for them?

EXHIBIT 2**Sample Memo for Team Leader to Send Prior to the Team Interviews**

Date: [date memo is sent]
To: Staff [Managers, World Class Sales Reps, etc.]
From: [Team Leader's Name]
Re: Team Advantage

We have engaged [coach's name], a professional coach, to work with the team to accomplish some of the goals we have been discussing recently. We'll be using a process called "Team Advantage."

The goal of Team Advantage is to achieve an extraordinary result through a highly participative process that will include a live workshop and a series of conference calls.

This team-building process is different from others that we have tried in that we will be coached through the process to overcome obstacles and implement the plan without the typical "I am too busy" excuse becoming a reason for not accomplishing what we set out to do.

I am expecting this to be a fun event and to really energize the group beyond the off-site meeting that we have scheduled for [time and date and location].

As a start, [coach's name] will be setting up a 20- to 30-minute phone conversation with each team member to assess our team's needs. [She/He] will be sharing the information with me in the form of a generalized theme report, so the specific conversations you have will be confidential. You will see this report at the Kickoff Workshop.

I encourage you to share freely, and to be specific about the changes you want to see and the things you think we need to address as a team. This will help us get off to a strong start.

Enclosed is a copy of *Team Advantage: Team Member's Guide*. This is the tool that you'll be using throughout the Kickoff Workshop and coaching sessions. Please take some time to review the *Guide* prior to the interview process. Refer to page 15 in the *Guide* to help you prepare for the interview. Also be sure to bring the *Guide* with you to the kickoff session.

Thanks for participating in this program. I look forward to a successful meeting and to having some fun as we launch Team Advantage.

Phase 2—Kickoff Workshop



THE AGENDA FOR the Kickoff Workshop will be generated by you and the coach. Although the workshop can be customized, certain elements must be included in every Team Advantage program. A sample agenda for the workshop is provided below. Use this example as a starting point in creating the agenda with your coach.

Sample 2-Day Agenda

Day 1

- 8:00 Breakfast/Social Time
- 8:30 Introductions and Objectives
- 9:00 Team-Building Game
- 9:40 Share the Theme Report
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 Create a Team Charter
- 11:45 Ordinary vs. Extraordinary
- 12:15 Lunch

Ask the question, “What would be an extraordinary accomplishment for this team?” Challenge the team to discuss this question over the lunch break.

(Continued)

- 1:00 Creativity Activity (optional)
- 1:15 Create the Game Plan
- 2:45 Break
- 3:00 Create the Game Plan (continued)
- 4:00 The Extraordinary Goal
- 4:15 Wrap-up

Day 2

- 8:30 Group Exercise
- 9:00 Continue to Synthesize
- 10:00 Break
- 10:15 Small-Group Presentations
- 11:15 Name the Game
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Individual Game Plans
- 1:15 Fast-Forward Focus
- 1:45 Role of the Coach
- 2:15 Break
- 2:30 Agreements and Logistics
- 3:00 Who are you for others, and what can you for them?
- 3:30 Wrap-up

The key workshop elements are listed in this section, with a brief description of how these will unfold during the meeting. Worksheets are provided as appropriate for each section of the workshop.

Establishing Objectives

The first thing the coach will do is establish the objectives for the workshop. You and the coach will have discussed these objectives prior to the workshop. Use the space below to record the objectives you agreed on.

Team-Building Exercise

There will be a short exercise that has been carefully selected for your team. As the team leader, you may be asked to participate in the exercise or be an observer. Regardless of your participation, record your observations in the space below.

What did you learn about your team?

What did you learn about yourself?

What is the key message from the exercise?

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Review the Theme Report

The coach shared the theme report with you prior to the workshop. This will be the first time that team members will have the opportunity to view the compiled results. Use the space below to note any comments from the team that you find compelling.

Strengths of the team

Challenges for the team

What should be the focus of Team Advantage?

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What were the key needs identified by members of the team?

1.

2.

3.

4.

Do you have an idea about an Extraordinary Game Goal the team could consider? If so write it here:

Other thoughts or requests:

Create a Team Charter

Creating a team charter is one of the most important exercises the team will do during the workshop. The team charter will state the agreements team members have with each other and how the members will function as a team. The team charter will be referred to often during Team Advantage.

As the team leader, you will serve as an observer during this exercise. But feel free to speak up if the team generates any agreements that you know are not realistic or conflict with company policies.

Here is a sample team charter:

We. . .

- Speak directly and respectfully, saying what we mean in a way that it can be heard and accepted.
- Create an inclusive culture within the larger organization that fosters collaboration.
- Are open to new possibilities and are willing to explore opportunities.
- Actively listen to others, assuming positive intent.
- Are intentional about recognizing the people who contribute to innovative thinking and our unique stakeholder partnerships.
- Create an environment that cultivates sharing best practices and supports those seeking guidance on opportunities and challenges.
- Contribute in a manner that makes our collective success more important than our individual successes.
- Keep the customer at the center of all our discussions and decisions.

Use the space below to take notes during the creation of the team charter.

Our Team Charter

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Ordinary vs. Extraordinary

It is important to make the distinction between *ordinary* and *extraordinary*. Your coach will facilitate this discussion and this will hopefully begin your team's venture into outside-the-box thinking that will truly stretch your goal-setting activities. As team leader, stay in the observer's role for this exercise and use the space below to take notes.

Notes from the discussion:

Ordinary	Extraordinary
From the status quo (not bad, but expected): Example: From reacting to customer complaints	To something miraculous, beyond expected, way better than ordinary: To responding more fully to customers by building a customer response center

Create the Game Plan

The creation of the game plan is a messy process. Rely on the coach to guide the team through this exercise and resist the desire to step in when things may seem to be going awry. This is where the coach will need you to show support and demonstrate your commitment to the process. The coach will consult with you during breaks to get your input and make adjustments that are appropriate.

The first step is the game-creation process, or creative “CHAOS.”

CHAOS is shorthand for:



Create the Extraordinary Goal

The team will be challenged to stretch their thinking during Team Advantage. Team members will create one extraordinary goal, which will be the focus of the game plan. This is a thematic goal, one that requires the team to accomplish something beyond expectations or the “ordinary” performance—even if ordinary or status quo for your team is really good.

The extraordinary goal will be followed by what we refer to as “strategic drivers,” which will be broken down into game goals or action items according to your team or organizational needs. Examples of these game-goals categories are revenue goals, communication plans, market development plans, and creative reporting and tracking systems.

During the creation, the coach will challenge the team to think outside the box or into new boxes of possibilities. Consider the power of potential. What would the team want to do if it knew it couldn't fail? What if money was no concern? What if the team could just do this one thing as a legacy action? What is that goal? This is what the team will be asked to consider.

Use the space provided to record your thoughts as the team creates the extraordinary goal.

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Creating the Extraordinary Goal

What do you really want to accomplish?

What would be meaningful and worthwhile for you and the team?

What can't wait to emerge?

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Hone the Strategic Drivers and Game Goals

The team will begin a process of stating and writing game goals and specific action items designed to help clarify the strategic drivers and the reasons why the team needs to take on these new ideas or actions.

The game goals need to be:

- S** Specific and clearly defined
- M** Measurable; the team will know when the goal has been achieved
- A** Agreed on by everyone on the team and Achievable
- R** Reasonable and realistic
- T** Time-bound

As the team lists the game goals, review to see whether these are the realistic objectives that will drive the game. As the leader you may want to consider these questions about each goal and check in with the coach during the process to understand whether the team is on track and aligned with your vision:

1. Is this game goal meaningful?
2. Does this stretch us as a team?
3. Will this goal impact the extraordinary goal, or help drive our bigger game?

4. How will I support this goal to those above me in the organization?
5. What's at stake for us to accomplish this goal?

Use the space below to record your thoughts on this exercise.

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Add

Now the team will start thinking about scoring the game. They will review each game goal and action item that has been created and determine how many points should be assigned to each one.

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Organize the Plan

In this step, the team will be working in small groups. The coach will assign to each small group one of the strategic drivers recorded on the flip charts in the Hone stage. For each item/task associated with a strategic driver, the subgroups will need to determine specific game goals or action items to be taken, who will take them, by when, and how many points each action is worth.

A sample of how this information might be organized follows.

Strategic Driver: Improve reporting and tracking data to support the sales effort.

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Game Goals/Action Items	Who Manages?	Goal Date	Points Assigned	Points Scored
1. Identify a new software platform to monitor sales.	Mary	1/31	5	
2. Receive team input before making a final decision on purchase.	Mary	2/15	5	
3. Finalize contract for the new system.	Gene	2/27	5	
4. Enter all data into the new platform.	Bill	3/20	5	
5. Full implementation of system.	Sarah	3/27	5	
6. Identify top 100 customers by sales volume.	Sarah	3/31	5	
7. Reassign territories based on the revised tracking data.	Gene	4/15	5	

Synthesize and Score

The team will continue to fine-tune the plan as needed during this workshop and in the first one or two coaching calls. Scoring gives the team a guideline to follow, a way of realizing and celebrating things that are working. Putting the score down—even if a game goal, action item, or the points assigned change at some point in the early stages—is important to determine what the critical accomplishments and game goals will be as the team drives to the extraordinary goal.

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Small-Group Presentations

Each group will present the outcome of its goal-planning process. After each presentation, the whole group will provide input, with the outcome being to achieve full buy-in for the plan.

Use the space provided below to take notes during the presentations.

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Name the Extraordinary Game

Team Advantage revolves around a game and just as in any great game, there needs to be a rallying cry—a name for the game! The coach will lead the team through a quick brainstorming session to come up with a name. Usually, someone will make a suggestion that will ring true for the rest of the team and everyone will agree on the name fairly quickly.

Here are some game names from past groups:

- A management team wanted to raise its region to the top-performing region in the country. They wanted to go to the next level. Their region was known in the company as the Potomac Region, since they are based in the Washington, D.C., area. The name of their game was “Raising the Potomac.”
- A professional baseball team was working on communication and organizational challenges, with the game being played in the fall. Following the baseball theme, their game became the “Fall Classic.”
- A sales team wanted to reach higher-level decision makers and land bigger accounts. They were “hunting for big game.” So their game became a “Big Game Safari.”

Team Advantage needs to be fun. Your team will need to give the process a name that will have meaning, be a rallying cry, or just add some levity.

Here are some brainstorming prompts to help you come up with a fun name.

Names related to our product/service? [size, shape, color, sound, efficiency]

Names related to our region/geography? [North, South, East, West, coastal, mountain]

Honors and measures related to our extraordinary outcome? [top tier, number 1, president's club]

Names related to our team leader? [Scott's High Scorers, Pat's Powered Up Crew, Haley's Comets, Art's Artists, Joe's Jesters, etc.]

What words relate to the prize we are playing for? [new rank and recognition, competitive victory, bonuses, added vacation days, plane tickets, party, dinner cooked by the boss, or other gifts aligned with the company's values and resources]

Action words related to the game—[compete, crush, lap, pass, dominate, land, take, play, fly, seal, trump, dive, hit, etc.]

Notes on ideas created by the team:

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Individual Game Plan

While the overall goal is to become *interdevelopmental* (everyone learns together) with this project, much of the daily activity will be *independent* and some of it *interdependent* (relying on others inside and outside this team).

As team leader, there will be some specific tasks that you might want to take on for the team. Use the space below to note your individual activities around the game plan.

My personal goal for completing Team Advantage is:

My partners during this process will be:

Value to the organization:

Value to me:

Narrative Lead-in

Imagine you are sitting in your favorite place in the world, a place where you are clear and can reflect for a time—on a beach, on a big rock in a stream, on your back porch, in your favorite part of the house, on a horse, in a golf cart—somewhere that feels special to you. Once you have that feeling of being centered, capture how you are feeling *as if* you have already accomplished this extraordinary game goal. You have scored all the points. Your team has been elevated to new heights. You are swimming in money. OK, you are excited beyond belief that all of this has manifested itself. Now, write a one-paragraph accomplishment narrative—in first person, as if it has come to pass. Project yourself out 6 months and write from that viewpoint.

Sample Accomplishment Narrative (present tense)

I am on vacation with my family, preparing a fabulous meal. I am most excited about the recognition of my contributions during this process. When we began, I was the newest member of the team but now I feel I really fit in and that I am respected. Because we were able to achieve so much in such a short time, the company president has offered us a trip on the private jet to Bermuda. Now, I know that in the past few years, these trips have become taboo, but this was such a significant undertaking, the president offered to send a note to Washington if needed to let everyone know about our significant new Green program, how much money we will be saving our customers, and how little energy and environmental impact this new plan will take. I think I am being considered for the leader's position and that she will be moving up to new ranks in the boardroom as a result of our achievements! All I can say is WOW!

As the leader, this is an important exercise to make time for and to complete.

My Accomplishment Narrative

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Now, post this in a very visible place—home, auto, office—anywhere you will see it often. This represents your personal stake in the game!

Fast-Forward Focus

The Fast-Forward Focus is designed to project potential barriers that might occur over the next 4 months. The key to this exercise is that the team already knows what could get in the way of accomplishing something. Considering the potential blocks to success will help the team address the issues that could stop the team from attaining its extraordinary goal.

As the team discusses the Fast-Forward Focus, feel free to add possible barriers that you may be aware of or comment on some of their ideas if they are not consistent with organizational reality as you know it to be.

Use the space below to make any notes during the discussion.

Example: Motivation is lost

(So what do you already know you could do to address this?)

- Commit to staying engaged and communicating regularly.
- Show up for each coaching conference call and report on all the actions we drive.
- Take full ownership of the process.

Your ideas:

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Role of the Coach

By observing world class sports coaches such as Joe Paterno, Phil Jackson, Mike Krzyzewski, Joe Torre, and Pat Summit, we get a common definition of what makes an outstanding coach. A great coach in team sports is the person who brings out the extraordinary personal effort and consistent performance of his or her players. Great coaches focus not just on the player's activity, but also on how they play the game and who they are becoming as an athlete.

Team coaching in organizations is a similar process. The Team Advantage coach works on how people play together and who they are becoming for each other. This process creates an action learning culture and engages team members to have courageous conversations as they play to achieve their extraordinary goal—something they have imagined together.

During Team Advantage, your coach will celebrate the wins, give frequent feedback about what is and is not working, give perspective about potential choices, and request the team self-manage around a team charter.

The table below provides distinctions between mentoring, consulting, and coaching.

	Mentoring	Consulting	Coaching
Focus of work	Deals mostly with succession training	Deals mostly with problems, and seeks to provide expertise	Deals with the present
Relationship	Mentor has the answers	Consultant has answers	Coach helps client discover own answers
Process	The mentor observes and provides guidance and wisdom	The consultant evaluates a situation and advises	The coach and client work together; the client is held accountable

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Obtaining Agreements

After the game plan is complete, each team member will be asked to sign and submit the agreement shown below.

Agreement for Coaching

Name _____

Project: _____

Session day: _____

Session time: _____

Phone bridge number _____

Call duration _____ 55–60 minutes

Ground rules

1. I will call the coach/conference number at the scheduled time.
2. I will prepare for the coaching session by sending the coach an update of my work 2 days in advance of our session.
3. I will participate in a spirit of contribution and deliver messages, not excuses or long stories.
4. I will be accountable to my team for all actions that I have agreed to.
5. I will tell the truth about what's going on and note any discoveries or insights.

Date: _____

Your signature: _____

Phase 3—Coaching the Game



The Process of Coaching

Team + Game + Coaching = Team Advantage

Engaging in a process of team coaching will accelerate the team's development.

Team coaching is a transformational process in which the coach partners with the entire team to enroll everyone in an action learning culture. The coach engages the team to have courageous conversations as team members work to achieve a specific result—their game goal.

Coaching is what makes Team Advantage different from other team-building exercises. The coach works with the team over the course of 4 months with regular teleconferences and meetings with the team leader. Phase 3 of the Team Advantage process ensures that the team moves toward this extraordinary goal and experiences profound changes in communication and teamwork.

Coaching is the missing link in accelerating team development. Many team-building programs have great immediate impact. But it is difficult to sustain the changes in dynamic organizational environments that may include leadership shifts, realignment of

responsibilities, and pressures to deliver the results even when available market opportunities have changed.

Each member of the team will be asked to commit to the following:

- Mark their calendar for every scheduled call.
- Submit a Call Prep Form as agreed or at least 24 hours prior to the call.
- Participate actively on every call.
- Find a quiet spot to call in to the telephone conference.
- Quiet their mind (and any tendency to multitask)
- Honor commitments to the team

A sample of the Call Prep Form is on the following page. The coach may alter this form for your team or even change it during the process. The coach will provide an electronic form prior to each call.

There are also pages for you to make notes before, during, and after each of the scheduled calls. Use this space to record your thoughts and refer to these notes during the follow-up calls with the coach.

Finally, there is a worksheet for you to use in evaluating your coaching experience during Team Advantage. You will have regular coaching sessions with the coach. Use the questions on the worksheet to ponder the impacts of coaching on your personal and professional development.

Sample Call Prep Form

Name:

Date:

What I accomplished and want to celebrate:

My biggest single challenge right now:

What I am learning/discovering:

A teammate I wish to recognize:

Name:

Contribution (what he/she did):

I want to use the coach during the call to:

My next commitment or action:

Notes

Use the space below to record notes from the calls.

Coaching Session 1 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 2 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

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Coaching Session 3 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 4 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

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Coaching Session 5 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 6 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

<http://www.ebookshop.com>

Coaching Session 7 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 8 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

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Coaching Session 9 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 10 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

<http://www.ebookshop.com>

Coaching Session 11 / Date _____

My Next Actions/Commitments

Coaching Session 12 / Date _____ (Final Coaching Session!)

My Next Actions/Commitments

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Phase 4—Celebration



RECOGNITION FOR A job well done is essential to the momentum of the game. A celebration taps into both the mind and spirit of each member of the team. It broadens their experiences and shifts the energy. In many ways, it fills them up at times when the energy spent could feel depleting.

Celebration is not just a compliment for a thing well done. Rather, it is a creation of context that something has meaning and is worthwhile. As the team leader you will set the tone for giving generously and giving first. This creates a model for others to follow. When you declare something is worth celebrating, you will set new standards for the team.

Honor the Contributions of Team Members

The first step in creating a context for celebration is to honor the extraordinary goal attainment. You will be encouraged by the coach to celebrate the incremental wins and the attainment of the game goals each week on the coaching teleconference.

Be specific in your recognition. Instead of saying “Great job team,” endorse the individuals who did something that noticeably advanced the team. The coach will supply you with some of the items the team has taken pride in accomplishing by summarizing the Call Prep Forms. These statements of endorsement might sound something like this:

“Beth, your proposal for the Standard client was on target and captured the values we wanted to convey. This will serve as a model for new proposals going forward.”

“Tom, you truly entertained the team last week with your spark of humor in an otherwise tense situation between the two marketing teams. You were funny, yet respectful and totally shifted the conversation to become creative again. I am giving a bonus point to the team in your name this week! It’s the bonus point for Tom’s team-turning point.”

Find a way to acknowledge at least one item per team member each week, even if you do this offline in private conversations. If you need to address a performance concern, do that as a separate conversation. You are retraining people to hear good things about how they contribute and perform. Acknowledging the things you want to see repeated is a great way to sustain the positive changes that occur during this process.

The Big Party Celebration

We recommend that you bring the team together at the end of the process for a celebration. The celebration helps the team lay claim to the changes, the growth, the learning, and the accomplishments. It helps affirm that all the actions they have taken and their shifts in energy and perspective have given way to a transformation. Even with virtual teams, it is important to have some sort of celebration.

“Transformation” means to go beyond what existed before and create something new. A transformed team literally takes on a new form, feels different, and behaves in new ways that express a new understanding. Changes need to be acknowledged. In coaching teams, we have found that people aren’t really resistant to change. In fact, they embrace it if they have a sense of safety in the partnerships and clarity of direction.

In this celebration phase, we have found people love—yes, *love*—having a ritual that can be replicated at the end of any major project or initiative and make it one of learning and becoming.

The end of game celebration can include any of the following components:

The Certificate

It is fun to award certificates to each team member at the end of the game. The coach can provide you with a template for the certificate, or you can create your own.

Consider each person's performance and give them an award for what you personally saw as their major contribution. Touch base with the coach to help you get started. Have fun with this, yet be mindful that humor sometimes doesn't translate to writing and can sometimes upset those who feel sarcasm instead of the light touch you might intend. Where you have an understanding or cultural permission, then have some fun with your awards! Exercise your creativity here; one team called their certificates the "Frigerator Awards," realizing that they were likely to end up with the kid's art on the refrigerator. Some examples could be:

- Extraordinary Effort—Carpe Diem showing us all how to enjoy even the smallest victories!
- The Little Engine That Always Can—"I Think I Can Award" for finding ways to do things we have never thought of before, and said at first were impossible.
- The 'Frigerator Award for finding the most bonus points, going above and beyond what was expected.

Once completed, hold these certificates to the last item on the agenda at your celebration party.

The Event

Here is a sample agenda for a live celebration event:

6:00 P.M. Gathering

6:15 P.M. Celebration of the Game

10–15 min—Acknowledge the team’s contributions—what you as the leader have witnessed the entire group learning to do in new ways or accomplishing. Save the individual acknowledgments until the last thing. (*Note:* We often see senior leaders invited to these functions to help with the celebrations and acknowledgments. This is a good place for them to speak about how the team’s game has changed something about the culture or the success of the company.)

20–30 min—Ask these questions to facilitate a ritual of owning the changes and capture these on flip charts:

1. What were the biggest changes that took place during the game?
2. Who did you become, or how did you change and grow in this process?
3. Beyond the attainment of our game goals and the points to win, what are you most proud of accomplishing?
4. How will we keep this alive going forward?
5. What is your commitment to fostering a culture in which we sustain this type of learning in process?

6. If you pulled out your accomplishment narrative and read it, how does it compare with your actual feeling right now?
7. What, if anything is left unsaid, or undone?

30 min—Distribute the certificates and personally acknowledge each team member. Start by recognizing the contribution you thought each person made. You can go alphabetically or by district or function—whatever feels fair to you.

After you have said what you think a person has contributed, ask this question of other team members: “What would you like to recognize in [person’s name] and about how they contributed to you personally as a teammate during this process?” (Have some facial tissues handy! This is an experience of *love*.)

Take your time and be generous, and note what has changed in your leadership as a result of this process.

Finally, summarize next action and how the team will continue to use the concepts.

7:30 P.M. Dinner

What’s Next?

One client said to me after completing a second game, “Each time you guys deliver this game, you work yourselves out of a job!”

What has happened at the end is that the team has learned a team process that is replicable and has set a new standard for performance and for teamwork.

When you complete the celebration, you will have new information about action learning. Take that information, the team charter,

and the Fast-Forward sheets to your next team meeting. Ask the team what, if anything, should change about these items? Then set the stage for starting a new game.

You should now have all the tools to start again, or keep the elements that worked well for your team—the frequent check-ins, the game planning, and the deeper conversations. Just notice what stays and what evolves and what seems to fall away.

Remember, we were designed to be creative and to play as well as work!

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