'This book is for you if you are a CEO, aspiring CEO or just want to boost your impact as a leader. Scott is a great communicator and this book is both enjoyable and full of actionable insights.'

NICK ABRAHAMS, Global Head of Technology and Innovation, Norton Rose Fulbright

Hack your leadership and make room for clear and innovative thinking

Leadership Hacks is the smart leader's guide for achieving more in less time. As the evolving business environment leaves many leaders struggling to achieve outcomes against constantly shifting priorities, competitors and deadlines, this book shows you how to sort through the madness and get back to obtaining results.

Author Scott Stein has helped thousands of business leaders—from CEOs to front-line managers to small-business owners—identify ways to make a difference to the people they manage and the tasks they undertake. Here, he details hacks at a personal, one-on-one and team level, to give you the tips, tricks and advice you need to rise above the daily deluge and make real progress. Learn how to:

- **identify what distractions slow you down**
- **fast-track your productivity to do more in less time**
- **streamline delegation so your people perform faster**
- **re-route meetings into productive outcomes**
- **learn the communication and technology shortcuts that get faster results.**

Leadership Hacks shows you how to hack your day, shift your approach and boost your communication to start leading in a more effective and efficient way.

SCOTT STEIN MA, CSP, has helped thousands of leaders implement fast-track strategies that improve results. He is a leading international speaker and an expert on leadership and influence who helps many of the world's best-known brands and government agencies to mobilise their leaders and their people.

LEADERSHIP

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LEADERSHIP HACKS

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Clever Shortcuts to Boost Your Impact and Results

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LEADERSHIP HACKS

LEADERSHIP HACKS

Clever Shortcuts to Boost Your Impact and Results

SCOTT STEIN

Being the managing director of a fast-paced advertising agency, I found *Leadership Hacks* the most practical and easy-read book I've read in years. If you are a CEO, manager or team leader, this book is a must-read, and an investment in your business's future.

—**James Fitzgerald,** managing director, Media Merchants

Scott has spent the best part of three decades sharing his innate wisdom with thousands of leaders all around the world. In this book he shares all the best leadership hacks he's observed from the most effective of those leaders. *Leadership Hacks* is full of practical advice that you can implement immediately to get more done in less time and improve the performance of yourself, your team and your organisation.

—**Peter Cook**, CEO, Thought Leaders

Scott talks about leadership in a very practical approach, suitable to today's fast paced social-media driven world. With ever-shrinking time-frames available for leaders to produce transformational results, a book on leadership 'hacks' is really handy!

—**Amit Chanan,** Director of Projects & Planning, City of Sydney

Leadership Hacks is a powerful tool for those planning to take their business to the next level. This work is another example of Scott's brilliance in identifying key drivers to performance improvement and achieving sustained results in a short time frame.

—**Jan Metcalfe,** founder and executive director, Advocacy—Collaborative leadership development, former Assistant Director General, QLD Statewide Services, Department of Communities

Leadership Hacks provides practical insights, tools and techniques on how to work smarter, faster and more efficiently. It offers hacks and strategies to fast-track communication, delegation and coaching to improve personal effectiveness and get more done in less time.

—**Simon Oaten,** Organisational Change Manager

In a fast-paced context where traditional approaches to performance and productivity management are being challenged, Scott Stein's insights to a refreshed leadership approach are empowering to any contemporary business or community leader.

—**John Percudani,** principal and managing director, Realmark

What I love about Scott is his 'street wisdom'—he's low on jargon and BS and high on experience and practical strategy. In other words, his stuff just works. I can think of few people better qualified to hack your leadership approach, mindset and impact.

—**Dan Gregory,** CEO, The Impossible Institute

Scott is an exceptional motivational speaker and leadership coach. This book will provide a wider audience with the opportunity to share Scott's clever insights and ambition for leaders to be the best they can be.

—**Simon Karlik,** director, Cheeki Holdings

Leading in the decade of disruption requires agility. A speed born by shortcuts and measured by its effectiveness. *Leadership Hacks* is practical in its style and impactful in its message.

—**Matt Church,** founder, Thought Leaders Global, author of *Amplifiers*

Scott has been an exceptional coach who has provided great insights into helping us 'hack' our leadership, both within our company and within the brewing industry. He provides practical solutions to improve effectiveness that allow you to make things happen faster.

—**Jaideep Chandrasekharan,** Chief Brewer,
Carlton & United Breweries/SABMiller

I have known Scott Stein for over 10 years. From his keynotes to books, Scott delivers his insights with a passion and energy to challenge you. Challenge how we as leaders lead, motivate and build winning teams. *Leadership Hacks* provides ideas, concepts and the tools to make you a better leader in today's fast-paced, disruptive and digital world, that makes being a leader today in business very different to even only 10 years ago. I encourage any leader to read Scott's book to boost the way you through your actions and attitude lead your people.

—**Michael Jackson,** CEO, NARTA

LEADERSHIP HACKS

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Clever Shortcuts to Boost Your Impact and Results

SCOTT STEIN MA, CSP

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About the author

Scott Stein has worked with thousands of leaders from around the world helping them to become better leaders by fast-tracking their thinking and their approach with their people. Scott is a highly sought after international speaker and mentor who has worked with a range of global and Australian businesses including including American Express, Carlton & United Breweries, McDonalds, REA Group, City of Sydney, Westpac, Graincorp, Mazda and Habitat for Humanity, to name a few.

He is based in Sydney, Australia and travels the globe to help leaders identify and implement strategies that inspire their people to do the things that matter in less time to achieve greater success. As the CEO of an international learning and development company, Scott understands the challenges that leaders face when trying to juggle multiple projects and multiple people across multiple time zones. In addition he is a Thought Leaders Global Partner, assisting the community to help clever people become commercially smart by improving the capturing and communication of their ideas.

His previous roles included Operations Manager for a national leadership development company based out of Atlanta, Georgia, that used the outdoors to accelerate learning. He was also the Learning & Development Manager for five manufacturing plants in Detroit, Michigan. Both of these roles gave him an opportunity to hone his practical business skills as he assisted in turning leaders and businesses around by improving communication and lifting performance.

Scott has a Master's Degree in Communication and taught Communication and Public Speaking at Central Michigan University. He has also received the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation from the Professional Speakers Association, which recognises him as one of the top speakers across the globe.

He is an author of four books including *The Order: Doing the right things at the right time, in the right way*, which blends his native American training with how leaders can learn from ancient wisdom.

Scott believes successful leaders need to build community and give back. He is a founding board member of Hands Across the Water, an Australian charity established after the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami that has raised over $20 million and cares for more than 600 children across seven homes in Thailand. Supporting Scott's philosophy of hacking ways to boost impact, 100 per cent of donations the charity receives go directly to the Thai projects without any funds being spent on administration staff or marketing in Australia.

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Over the years I have been fortunate enough to work with amazing clients and colleagues, who have inspired me and allowed me to see firsthand how leadership hacks can boost results for leaders and their people. Thank you.

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To my incredible children: Jazzy, your wonderful smile always lights up a room and your quiet determination impresses me; Bella, your passion and commitment to push yourself to new heights inspire me; Luca, your cheeky laughter and wonderful hugs remind me to appreciate the important things in life. I would also like to thank my parents, Larry and Lorene, for inspiring me and telling me that I could do or be anything.

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My awesome business manager, Katrina Welch, also needs to be recognised. Year after year you keep me organised, make incredible things happen behind the scenes (through lots of hacks!) and can switch directions at a moment's notice. Thank you for your patience, friendship and commitment.

I would also like to thank you, the reader, for following your intuition and picking up this book. My wish for you is that you can use these leadership hacks to boost your impact and results.

Introduction

The leadership dilemma—too much to do in too little time

Are leaders born or are they made? This is an age-old question many academics and researchers have struggled with. It's a question that has wasted millions of dollars—not to mention the millions of days lost sending sceptical employees to old-school leadership-development programs. CEOs, managing directors, divisional directors, vice-presidents and frontline managers can all repeat the theories that have been crammed down their throats by their HR departments. Many leaders I have worked with shared with me their frustration over the latest complex leadership competency model created to show them how they and their leadership teams are screwing things up—regardless of how their business is performing or how challenging the competitive environment is.

Leaders do not want to be perfect; they want to motivate their staff to do the best job possible in the shortest time possible. They're looking for practical approaches or techniques that they can use to improve their performance. They don't have time to attend intensive leadership programs that regurgitate leadership theory from the 1980s or 1990s. Much of what has been written about leadership tends to be overly complicated and so confusing that you need a PhD to understand it. Many people — including university lecturers — are good at theory.

When I was working as an instructor at a university, I was amazed at how few of the professors had real-life experiences in what they were teaching. Many of them had never been in the 'real world' because they had spent their time collecting degrees and completing reviews of other researchers' articles.

Leadership has changed. In the past, the pace of life and business was very different from today. Leaders used to have time. They had the luxury of spending their evenings and weekends thinking, and recharging their batteries, knowing that the rest of the business world was also on hold until the next business day. They didn't have competitors leveraging new forms of technology to disrupt traditional markets. Leaders are now playing a different game and some of them aren't even aware of it! Gone are the days of 5–10-year strategic plans, predictable operations and long-term employee loyalty. These are being replaced by short-horizon strategies, flexible operations that adapt based on the changing competitive landscape, and fighting to attract and keep the top talent. Some leaders are winning, while others are not.

Over the past 25 years I have observed and worked with a range of business leaders in the United States, Asia–Pacific and Europe across corporate industries, the government and the military, as well as frontline managers and small-business owners looking for strategies for improving their performance. Some have created incredible cultures and attained amazing results; others have stumbled. I've watched as businesses and governments wasted millions and millions of dollars trying to get their leaders and staff to lift their performance results using engagement surveys, statistical analyses, competency metrics and complex models.

I'm constantly looking for leadership approaches that work and can be used in multiple environments and businesses. So what is the secret formula — the silver bullet — to achieving more as a leader? I don't think there's one simple answer to this question. In fact, I often think this is the wrong question to be asking. We should be asking, 'What are the leaders who are achieving more doing?' and more importantly, 'How do they do it?' That is the purpose of this book. My goal is to share with you the strategies and pathways that actual leaders are using to achieve increased results in less time.

The leadership dilemma is having too much to do in too little time. This challenge is not new to leaders. What is new is the speed with which they have to accomplish things—they need to get many more things done in much less time. They need to 'hack' their approach: to find methods and processes they can use to fast-track their approach to thinking, communicating and delegating.

Leadership hacks: a faster approach for a faster world

The amount of information available nowadays for planning, executing and tracking tasks is mind-boggling. It's difficult to keep up with the speed at which information and business are moving in our technology-driven world. Let's have a look at just some of the changes that have affected businesses, employees and traditional players. As you read through the scenarios below, consider the difficulties CEOs face when trying to create and execute a traditional business plan in these fast-paced environments.

The business environment has changed …

- In 1910 the 10 largest businesses in the world were involved in constructing and selling products large enough for human beings to stand on (cars, aeroplanes and the like). In 2010 the largest businesses were predominantly associated with the creation and sale of invisible, intangible and handheld products.
- Although ride-sharing company Uber was only started in 2010, it's estimated that today it's worth $70 billion—and it has very few employees and doesn't own the vehicles that the drivers use. More importantly, the owners and leaders of traditional taxi companies didn't see them coming until it was too late.
- Airbnb uses a technology platform that offers accommodation at over 3 million locations in 65 000 cities in 191 countries—all managed through its user-friendly website, and all without

owning a single property, hotel room or any of the overheads that come with them. Not bad for a company started in 2007 and now worth $31 billion! This has changed the marketplace, with a 2017 Morgan Stanley report estimating that Airbnb will take 191 million hotel stays away from traditional hotels. This has changed the game for leaders in the hotel and leisure industries.

Employee dynamics have shifted …

- Once again employees are disillusioned at work, with 87 per cent of employees worldwide either not engaged or actively disengaged at work according to Gallup's 2017 'State of the Global Workforce Report'. To keep this in perspective, this trend has continued since Gallup started its engagement surveys in 1997, showing that leaders continue to struggle with how to motivate and retain their workforce.
- In 2013, *Forbes* magazine published the results of a survey about who wastes the most time at work. It found that 64 per cent of employees visit non–work related websites each day. It also reported that more than 60 per cent of these employees admitted to wasting at least one hour per day on these websites—with Facebook contributing to over 50 per cent of this time loss. Even more surprising was the feedback received about the reasons for wasting time, which ranged from not being challenged enough to being unsatisfied or bored at work.
- The 2015 Future Leaders Index tells us that the next generation entering the workforce is already showing early signs of burnout with 82 per cent reporting they suffer from one or more physical health issues when they get busy and 76 per cent reporting one or more mind or emotional health issues when they feel overworked. This is leading to increased amounts of employee stress leave, resulting in millions of dollars in medical support being spent, as well as lost productivity and fewer people available to complete departmental tasks.

Technological advances are disrupting traditional players …

- When Google was started in 1998 it could search 10 000 queries per day. At the time of Google's 2004 IPO announcement, it was registering over 200 million queries per day. Now Google processes over 4.4 billion searches every day — or more than 50 000 searches per second. This has massively disrupted traditional print publishers, as well as anyone else who used to sell information (when was the last time you saw an encyclopedia?). An entire industry gone.

- According to the November 2017 Ericsson Mobility Report, 55 per cent of all traffic on mobile devices is in video format. They estimate that this will increase to 75 per cent by 2023 as a result of increased consumer demand. How many businesses are ready to move their content and communications to mobile video format in a quick time frame at low cost?
- Traditional automotive companies, which have in the past been leaders in transportation, have found themselves behind in the race to innovate, with Tesla proving that electric cars are more responsive and better handling than combustion engines, and they integrate the technology that consumers want, such as hands-free driving and increased safety. This has created a shift in the market that has automotive manufacturers scrambling, with many anticipated to struggle (just look at the value of their stock). According to a 2016 *Business Insider* article, by 2021, 82 per cent of all new cars built globally will be shipped with connected car technology.
- Morgan Stanley's recent 'Rise of the Machines' report analysed the automation of tasks across industries. The results led them to estimate that 45 per cent of workforce positions have at least a 70 per cent chance of being automated using robotics. This means shifts in business processes, technology platforms and the way staff operate. The report also estimates a cost savings of as much as 30–50 per cent once these computer programs or robots develop more cognitive abilities and perform more complex tasks. Which industries or tasks could this affect? Almost every industry, including data entry, customer service interaction, process improvement and back office tasks in industries such as manufacturing, IT, finance, insurance, legal, health care, government and utilities/energy. The better question is which industries will it not affect?

This is just a small glimpse at how things have changed. The tsunami of information and new technology is flowing in 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And, as research shows, it's getting faster and faster. Leaders need to re-wire and hack their approach to leading their teams, to keep up with this new world.

Gone are the days when leaders had the time to analyse a year's worth of data and spend six months preparing a five-year strategic plan. The days of slow thinking and slow execution are gone.

So what is a leadership hack?

The word 'hack' has changed meaning over time. Initially, the *Oxford Dictionary* defined the verb 'hack' as 'to cut with rough or heavy blows'. According to Ben Yagoda of *The New Yorker* magazine, the noun 'hack' was first used at MIT in the 1950s to describe the act of adjusting machines (primarily electrical systems) in ways that were not common. This morphed into a sense of working on a tech problem in a unique or creative way. In the 1980s the word 'hacker' had a negative connotation, describing computer programmers who illegally gained access to early computer systems. Steven Levy's book *Hackers* described the positive and negative activity of these innovators in the field of technology. This promoted the term 'hacker' and brought it into more common language.

It wasn't long before the meaning of 'hacker' started to gain more positive connotations. Before the launch of Facebook's 2012 IPO, Mark Zuckerberg published a manifesto titled 'The Hacker Way', which provided a unique insight into the meaning of hacking. In this document he says, 'In reality, hacking just means building something quickly or testing the boundaries of what can be done'. He added more around his belief that The Hacker Way is about continuous improvement and finding ways to get things done better and faster — often by moving projects around people who are too comfortable with the status quo and unwilling to change. Given the importance of this approach, Facebook continues to run internal hack competitions to encourage employees to find shortcuts and improvements in their systems. Facebook takes pride in finding shortcuts that can be identified and shared with others so everyone benefits.

More recently, the word 'hack' morphed even further when technology writer Danny O'Brien coined the term 'life hack' to describe how computer programmers were creating shortcuts to make their lives easier. This, combined with the explosion of videos on YouTube, enabled anyone with a smartphone to share their hacks or shortcuts with others who could benefit from them. This has led to the sharing of a plethora of hacks, including life hacks, parent hacks, game hacks, political hacks, happiness hacks and—my personal favourite—a potato hack (which is actually based on a diet from 1849 that focuses on eating mostly potatoes to lose weight!).

Dictionary.com defines a hack as 'a tip, trick or efficient method for doing or managing something'. It adds the expanded definition 'to handle or cope with a situation or an assignment adequately and calmly'.

A leadership hack is anything that helps you accomplish more in less time. This can include:

- shortcuts that may not be commonly known
- simplified steps that make a task easier to do
- fast-track processes that speed things up
- any approach that simplifies and speeds up a task.

Simply put, leadership hacks are about identifying ways leaders can make a difference to the people around them and the tasks they're confronted with. They are about being a leader who is admired by other leaders because of their ability to work smarter and more efficiently and by inspiring and empowering others.

Critical keys to hacking your leadership

So what does it take to be a leader admired by other leaders? What do incredible leaders do that inspires and motivates others to take action? And by 'inspire' I don't mean getting people to do things because they report to you (and have to because of the organisational chart), but making them want to follow you because of who you are and your leadership approach.

As you can see in figure 1, to become the leader of leaders, the ultimate hack involves three main keys: mindset, approach and impact.

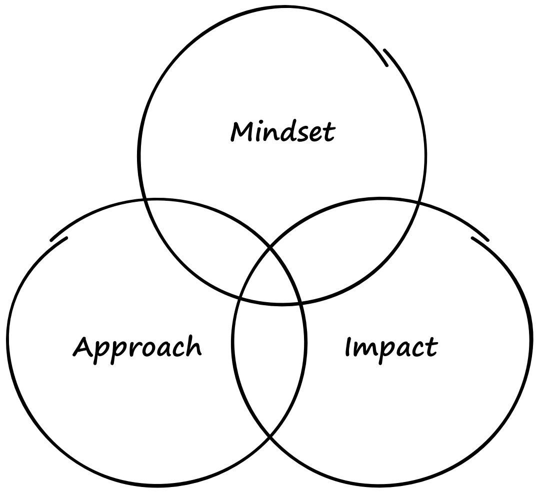

Figure 1: the keys to hacking leadership

Mindset

Your mindset is how you view yourself and the world around you. It's also about your beliefs and the values that guide you on a daily basis. This is your internal monologue and the moral compass that guides you as a leader and will influence your ability to hack your current leadership.

Now more than ever leaders need to be very clear and intentional about their mindset. In the past, leaders had plenty of time to think through different approaches to ensure they had a clear mindset on what needed to happen and how it should or shouldn't be done. Today this process has become more challenging.

In *Mindset: The new psychology of success*, Carol Dweck provides a brilliant insight into the importance of mindset. Her research has found that the views people adopt for themselves profoundly affect the way they lead their life. She identified two distinct mindsets that determine whether or not people are successful in adapting to the world around them. The first is the Fixed Mindset: the belief that your traits are set for life. This includes the idea that people are born with a certain amount of intellect, personality and character that doesn't change. Dweck found these people felt the need to constantly prove their ability. The alternative is the Growth Mindset, which is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts. This is all about learning from your mistakes and using those insights to grow to the next level. Dweck's research shows that people (especially leaders) who have a Growth Mindset are generally more fulfilled than those who don't because they are able to learn to fulfil their potential.

By examining your mindset (and sometimes challenging it) you can start to identify what may be limiting your ability to complete things that you want to achieve. In essence you may need to 'hack' your mindset to enable you to move forward and improve your effectiveness as a leader.

Approach

Approach is about what you actually do. It's about the steps you take as a leader to make things happen. This may include the action you take to improve your own productivity and save yourself time, or it may include the approach you take with your team to achieve business objectives.

As a leader you need to be proactive in your approach and the methods you use to achieve an objective. Imagine if we filmed you for a full week at work. The filming only focused on you: what you said, what you did and the tasks you completed. This would clearly show us the approaches you're taking—both positive and negative.

Leaders need to 'hack' their approach. They need to identify the shortcuts and strategies they can use to do more things in less time.

Impact

A leader's impact on the people around them is what separates the typical leader from the great leader. Anyone in a position of authority and power can boss around employees in an attempt to achieve results. However, incredible leaders have the ability to motivate and inspire their staff in a way that truly mobilises them.

The trick is to identify ways to 'hack' your impact on people. It's about adapting your leadership to create a culture where your staff want to make things happen — not for money, but because they believe they're making a difference and that their contribution matters. Regardless of the organisation, a good culture creates this feeling of unification. In looking at the research, it's clear that it's the leaders who set the tone of an organisation or office and the impact that this has on the staff. By 'hacking' your impact on others you can become a leader others admire and will follow.

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I have yet to work with the perfect leader. Nobody is perfect. However, from years and years of working with leaders, I have observed that when they get their mindset, approach and impact in perfect alignment, amazing things start to happen. The purpose of this book is to help you 'hack' your leadership so you can achieve greater things in less time. This book is full of ideas and practical tasks that you can use to make things happen more quickly and easily. On reading this book, some leaders will realise they need to 'hack' their mindset. Others will realise that it's about 'hacking' their approach or their impact on others. Regardless of where you as a leader find yourself, there will be a number of practical strategies or hacks you can take to improve your impact and your results.

To keep things simple, I've divided the book into three types of leadership hack.

Part I reveals personal hacks that you can use to boost your leadership as an individual. This includes hacking your productivity, use of technology and communication platforms.

Part II discusses one-to-one hacks that you can use to increase your leadership performance when working with individual staff members. These include communication, delegation and coaching hacks.

Part III identifies a number of team hacks that you can use to increase your leadership performance with others, most commonly in an organisation, department or team. These include hacking team meetings and a range of team mobilisation shortcuts.

Spread throughout these three parts I have included a range of case studies on various incredible leaders. I have worked with many of these
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leaders and had the pleasure of seeing firsthand the brilliance in their approach and how they deal with their people.

I have also included self-hack exercises that you can use to help integrate the concepts and hacks described in the chapters.

The way you adapt your leadership will open up new realms of opportunity. Use this book as a fast-track guide to help you identify smarter ways to improve your impact and your results by hacking your leadership.

PART I
PERSONAL HACKS

Part I is filled with strategies you can use to improve your individual performance as a leader. The information is designed to assist you in hacking your leadership and the personal approach you adopt to get things done in less time.

But first, in chapter 1 we're going to explore some of the distractions that could prevent leaders from using hacks to become more efficient.

Chapter 1
Distractions and productivity

Before jumping into examining leadership hacks, it's important to talk about the distractions that slow leaders down or stop them from looking for ways to hack their leadership approach. Over the 25 years I've been working with leaders, I've noticed a number of emerging patterns and trends that stop leaders from being more efficient.

By understanding these trends and patterns you can make a conscious choice to start changing the traditional way you operate in relation to your mindset, approach or impact. This will enable you to be more effective and to have a more positive impact on your work and the people you work with.

There are five common distractions, or obstacles, you need to overcome to ensure you don't get sidetracked from using shortcuts and hacks that can benefit you. Three of these are internal — that is, they're within your control — and two are external — that is, they're environmental and harder to control.

Internal distractions

Internal distractions are fully within your control to manage. If you have self-awareness, you have the ability to do something to reduce or eliminate these internal distractions. If you don't have this higher level of operating you may lose traction and not have enough energy or time to achieve as much as you could if you removed or controlled these distractions.

Lack of energy

With business moving as fast as it does today, most leaders have a very busy schedule. Many of my CEO and director clients spend their days on tasks that fit into a number of critical categories. I worked with the CEO of a large multinational who was so busy that he had to have two full-time personal assistants just to keep up with all of the activities, events and communications he was required to stay across in his role. This also meant that most of the time his calendar was filled with activities as varied as role tasks, organisational activities, board and stakeholder events, government and industry events, innovation and R&D events. In addition, he was travelling all the time and spending nights in hotels after dinners or other events to continue positioning himself as an accessible leader. I worked with another CEO who hadn't slept in his own bed for 55 days in a row due to global travel commitments and activities. When I checked in with him on how he was feeling, the only word that came to his mind was 'exhausted'.

I can remember spending over 100 nights in hotels myself in a very busy year of work. I was in the top per cent of flyers for Qantas (earning almost 400 000 frequent flyer miles in a year) and achieved top loyalty status at a number of hotels. As a road warrior I had reached a new level of rhythm — travelling quickly and being very focused with my time in the air and on the ground. The challenge was, of course, maintaining this pace. After so much time in the air and on the road, and being exposed to many different people in closed conditions, my immune system crashed. I ended up getting a terrible cough that went into my chest and turned into walking pneumonia, forcing me to stay in bed. It took me almost a week to get back on my feet and a couple of weeks to get my energy back to where it needed to be. The only way to maintain a faster pace is by finding a way to sustain your energy and health.

The flurry of constant activity and the need to be switched on all the time takes a lot of energy—and this is what limits many leaders from achieving as much as they could. When you're constantly physically and mentally taxed, your energy drains and your effectiveness diminishes.

The Huffington Post's Anne Loehr reported in 2014 that the Johnson & Johnson Human Performance Institute (HPI) had been researching what leaders can do to gain an edge. Over the past 30 years HPI has identified strategies for improving the performance of leaders based on how they manage their energy. They viewed and compared today's leaders to elite professional athletes. A professional athlete may have a career span of seven to 10 years, work four to six hours a day and spend 90 per cent of their time training before a game. In contrast, the HPI views a 'corporate athlete' as having a career span of 30 years, typically working eight to 12 hours a day and spending 10 per cent of their time training, which means they have very little time to recover and revitalise their energy. The HPI looked at a framework for developing the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of leaders with a view of them maintaining optimum performance. Without having a method for maintaining their energy, they believed many leaders were starting to lose their edge.

There is no set way to maintain or recharge your energy because it's a personal thing. I know of one CEO who schedules fortnightly massages to help her relax and recharge. When I asked her how she makes this happen she said that she has her executive assistant block out the time as if it was any other meeting. She finds taking this time for herself allows her to recharge and keep her energy maintained.

Former Apple CEO Steve Jobs was almost obsessive with walking. He used this as a form of stress management and he often held meetings while going for a long walk. Personally, I enjoy going to the cinema to help me recharge. I started using this as a hack when I spent a lot of time travelling. After a full day of work with a client and then continuing to work at my hotel for two or three hours afterwards I needed a break and going to watch a movie really helps me. When the lights are turned down and mobile phones switched off, I can escape the pressures and constant communication. When I emerge two hours later, my energy is often much more positive than it was when I started.

You have to reclaim energy and time to ensure you don't burn out because without energy, everything else begins to falter. So any hacks that give you more time to recharge your batteries will assist you in maintaining higher performance levels.

Wrong mindset and self-doubt

As we've already seen, it's essential to be aware of your mindset (and it's something that continually needs to be hacked). Being in a growth mindset is important because it ensures you recognise the need to be flexible and to keep learning even when you make mistakes.

Too often, self-doubt gets in the way and starts to stall your progress. This can show up as an inner dialogue guiding you when you're in your leadership role. If these voices start creating doubt, it's easy to start second-guessing what needs to be done. This in itself creates a distraction that can take you off track. Rather than making decisions that are the best for the business, you may allow fear to get in the way, and this can delay important actions that should be taken.

There's a famous quote by Henry Ford that helps me be more aware of the thoughts that are going through my mind—both positive and negative: 'Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right.' This quote succinctly defines what can happen internally when you get distracted by the opposing voices in your head.

I remember working with a young manager who was struggling with her sense of self-worth and value. She was one of the most talented and gifted experts in media and communications and some of the projects she had worked on and coordinated from start to finish were very impressive given her young age. While she was in the midst of a role reassignment, we worked together to help her start looking at what her future career prospects might be. In one of our first coaching sessions, I remember her struggling to identify the value and benefit that her leadership was providing to her team as well as the rest of the financial services company that she was marketing communications manager of at the time.

She could not see the amazing talent she had because the voices in her head were questioning her abilities. We created a list of the projects she had initiated that had been successful over the past six months. As she started recalling all of the initiatives she'd created, coordinated, executed or managed, the list started to spill over two full pages. I was even surprised by some of the new projects she was overseeing, which were cutting-edge for her industry and country at the time.

In discussing where these doubts were coming from, we started identifying some common themes. Unfortunately, one of them was the lack of support from her boss, who was too busy with his entire division to give her any direction or feedback. After a few one-on-one coaching sessions she was off and flying at even greater speed and started to get noticed by the CEO as well as visiting executives from other regions. This led to her being headhunted and transferred to the company's world headquarters in Europe to oversee the global marketing and communications strategy … all from a moment in time where she took control of her mindset and stopped letting it control her.

This is a common trend among many CEOs I work with. When you reach a senior level it can be a very isolating and lonely place because everyone is looking to you to have all the answers and make the right decisions. If your mindset isn't kept in check it can start distracting you from the great things you can accomplish.

Time fillers and the biological need to be busy

We seem to be wired to believe that if we're not constantly doing something we're wasting our time. We've become so highly strung that we need to be busy all the time. And worse still, leaders get caught on a treadmill where it doesn't matter what they're doing—as long as they're busy at it.

This is the 'busy syndrome', a widely held belief that by being overly mentally and physically active we're moving in the right direction and accomplishing more.

In the 1970s and 1980s many people had a bucket list—a list of things they wanted to do before they died. Often, it would include three or four big items they hoped they'd be able to do one day. This may have included a big overseas trip to somewhere they always wanted to visit, seeing their children married, or finally paying off their mortgage and being debt free.

Over the past 20-odd years the number of items on the bucket list has changed. It's no longer enough to have three or four items—many people have up to 100 items on their list. This rush to experience what life has to offer is linked to the psyche of human beings, who feel they need to get busy or they'll miss out.

Across the workplace, both leaders and staff will tell you they're 'very busy'. The list of tasks to be accomplished continues to grow and people feel the pressure to keep up. The 2015 Australian Future Leaders Index created by BDO and the Co-op identifies this new culture of busyness. It describes it as a modern-day phenomenon within developed societies whereby individuals have a sense of having too much to do, being overcommitted, constantly rushed and possibly overwhelmed as a result.

Their research shows that 65 per cent of future leaders aged 18–29 feel busy either all the time, very often or quite often. Even more interesting is that 61 per cent of those surveyed like being very busy. This report also brings in social commentator Tim Kreider's views that busyness is a personal choice and that many people are addicted to busyness because they dread what they may have to face in its absence.

As human beings, we have natural psychological and biological habits or addictions, and being busy can be one of them. We get a buzz out of getting things done, regardless of the importance of the activity—and this can become an addictive response that leaders crave.

Every time we complete a task such as sending an email, we naturally feel a sense of accomplishment. However, we know there's more to this. As human beings, our brain is wired to stay focused and active. The challenge can be when dopamine, one of our key neurotransmitters, starts leading to addiction.

In a way, doing trivial tasks becomes a way of self-medicating, allowing us to feel a sense of accomplishment. In a famous experiment completed in the mid 1950s, brain researchers James Olds and Peter Milner placed small electrodes in the brains of rats to stimulate the part of the brain that released dopamine whenever the rats pressed a lever in their cage. The rats became so addicted to this stimulation that they eventually ignored everything else—including food. They continued to press the lever—up to 700 times an hour—until many of them collapsed or died from exhaustion or starvation.

Essentially, we—as human beings—are wired the same way. So, leaders need to ensure they don't fall into a pattern of just being busy at completely random tasks that are actually distracting them from important activities. Regardless of your level as a leader within an organisation, a key skill is the ability to manage your time and productivity on the necessary activities at the right time.

External distractions

External distractions are ones that you can't control. For many leaders this is a fact of life. Part of the role of any leader is to deal with internal and external situations and be able to effectively assess them to identify a successful way forward.

Technology and how it overwhelms

Focusing on what's important is becoming harder due to the constant barrage of digital information and technological overload. Leaders are being distracted by things that are not relevant or important. It's estimated that, on average, we have 4000 thoughts per day flying in and out of our minds. This makes it extremely challenging to focus on any one thought for a period of time before technology introduces another random thought to distract you.

In his book *Focus: The hidden driver of excellence*, Daniel Goleman calls this the era of unstoppable distractions and argues that we must learn to sharpen our focus if we're to contend with, let alone thrive in, a complex world. The revolutions in the internet world—both physical and digital—aren't the real distraction. The real distraction for leaders is the unending access to multiple choices that these platforms offer. The human mind works best when it has a manageable number of decisions to make at any given time.

When we're provided with too many choices—too many options at the same time—it starts to overwhelm our brain. Multiple choices become multiple distractions and make it harder to focus on what's important.

Neuroscientists agree that the decision-making network in our brain is not always effective and doesn't prioritise when overloaded. This means we're even more open to distractions as new interruptions and information start overloading our brain. Human brains do have the ability to process this information — it just makes it more challenging to sort the trivial from the important information, which takes energy and can increase frustration.

In *The Organized Mind: Thinking straight in the age of information overload*, Daniel Levitin looks at the processing capability of the conscious mind. It's believed that physiologically we have the ability to process 120 bits of information per second. It takes 60 bits of information per second for us to understand a person talking to us. This makes it very challenging for our brains to process information if another person is talking to us at the same time. As Levitin describes it, the challenge is that the bandwidth in our mind limits the amount of information we can pay conscious attention to.

So how can we get our brain to cope with this digital overload of distraction? We either have to find a way to limit or reduce the interference, or we need to find a way to increase our effectiveness. We need hacks to shortcut and manage technological distractions.

Interruptions that steal your time

Another common distraction is interruptions because they take away precious time. These include interruptions from staff and work colleagues, as well as suppliers, customers and any other area that may distract your flow and use of time and slow you down as a leader.

In the 1970s and 1980s leaders had closed-door offices so they were able to reduce any interruptions and external interference that may have stopped them from getting things done. This changed in the 1990s when companies started moving to the open-plan office. Suddenly, everyone was sitting next to and across from numerous other people who were also busily completing their tasks, or trying to have a discussion with you, or bringing their burnt lunch back to their desk to fill the air with annoying smells, and apologising for pushing their numerous three-ring binders off their half-wall shelf only to land on your keyboard while you're typing.

If you analyse these external distractions, they fall into the common categories of what we can see, what we can hear and what we can touch — or more accurately how the surrounding environment can affect a leader's focus.

The most obvious external distraction is what we can see. When a staff member walks into your office space or someone rushes past you and it catches your eye, you subconsciously take a look to see what or who they are. This can be useful if it's your boss and they want to have a conversation with you; however, activities and movement in other parts of the open-plan office can have a negative impact on some people's ability to concentrate.

What we hear can also be a distraction. The ringing of a phone, the slamming of the photocopier drawer or the loud conversation of the person in the next cubicle can all make it difficult to think critically and work efficiently.

The third external distraction involves how we touch or feel the environment around us. I once had a co-worker who was always cold because her desk was not located near any windows and was positioned directly under the air-conditioning vent. To compensate, she constantly turned the office thermostat to a warmer setting to feel more comfortable. This resulted in most of her colleagues sweating and having to constantly drink water because they were seated next to the windows, which let warm sunlight flood across their desks.

Any of these external distractions, although quite trivial, can slow you down and start to create issues.

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With the faster pace of business, any distractions — including the simple ones — can combine to magnify their effect. And all of these trends are taking leaders off path. Overwhelming distractions limit their ability to get things done. But there are practices that can be implemented to change this pattern. The key for any leader is to be aware of these common distractions and to develop strategies for eliminating or managing them. Once the distractions are out of the way, it's time to hack your productivity.
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Productivity hacks

In order to accomplish more in less time you'll need work on your productivity. There are numerous books and resources available that provide techniques for increasing your productivity and improving your time management.

Dr Stephen Covey is one of the founding fathers of the personal productivity movement. His book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was revolutionary: it offers people a way of becoming more effective by identifying and following seven simple practices. Dr Covey emphasises that this can be achieved by using desire, skills and knowledge to change your behavioural patterns.

Ken Blanchard's bestseller *The One Minute Manager* also offers a range of easy strategies that managers can use to be more productive with their staff. It received a very strong following because it identified three simple secrets managers can use to be more effective:

- *one-minute goals:* these are goals that you write down so they are clear and memorable. They should take only one minute to read
- *one-minute praising:* this is about praising a staff member when you 'catch them doing something right'. The aim is to praise them, in one minute, at the moment when what they do meets your expectations
- *one-minute reprimands:* these involve managers letting staff know immediately when they make mistakes — focusing any criticism on the work, not the doer — and within the same minute telling them that you value their skills.

These are very powerful strategies for improving productivity among your staff.

Analysing your approach to time management

Many leaders ask me how they can improve the management of their diary or calendar. Often, there's no one-size-fits-all approach.

In my years of working with leaders I've found that how you manage your time and productivity depends on whether you have a left-brain or right-brain dominance. 'Brain dominance' refers to the fact that people have a natural preference for processing information on one side of the brain.

LEFT-BRAIN DOMINANCE

People with a left-brain dominance are logical and linear. They write lists and prioritise their time using diaries and other resources.

One of the leading left-brain, time-management strategies to gain worldwide recognition was the Franklin Planner. Initially based on the advice of Benjamin Franklin and developed by Hyrum Smith, the Franklin Planner focuses around using planners to manage day-to-day activities and scheduling.

The Franklin Planner is a very simple, yet effective, way to help people organise their day. It originally consisted of drilled, loose-leaf pages in different sizes — but, of course, these days there are apps for it. First, you list the number of tasks you have to accomplish, to ensure that nothing is forgotten. Next, you prioritise these tasks using a ranking system. The ranking system divides tasks into categories depending on their importance. The most important tasks are labelled 'A' tasks. The next category is labelled 'B' tasks, and the final category is labelled 'C' tasks. Within these three categories, it is also recommended that you prioritise individual tasks numerically. So, you organise the A category of tasks by number one, then number two, and so on, in the order you completed the tasks.

This is a good system if you're a left-brain, analytical leader who is organised and functions around lists and linear tasks.

RIGHT-BRAIN DOMINANCE

The alternative approach to time management is using more of a right-brain or creative approach. This approach is used by individuals who are more flexible about how to get things done. I find that these leaders will quite often leave blocks of time open for creatively thinking about new trends, solutions and initiatives they can follow without using a formalised list and prioritisation process.

In fact, I know of a number of managers who have tried using lists and more formal prioritisation methods only to find that they frustrated them and reduced their effectiveness. Instead, these managers use their intuition or instincts to stay abreast of the tasks to be completed and they keep track of them in their head or they use their diary to assist

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them. Rather than using lists, a number of them will schedule blocks of time during which they can catch up on the projects or tasks that they need to complete in a more organic way. Although this is not as structured as making lists, I have found that managers use this method very effectively.

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Selecting which bias you have can assist you in identifying which productivity methods you should use to increase your efficiency.

Improving your productivity

Leading productivity expert Dermot Crowley wrote one of the best books on productivity I have come across: *Smart Work*. In this excellent book he looks at how to improve your productivity by managing your inputs—your incoming work; your actions—what you spend your time on each working day; and your outcomes—what you want to achieve. To be more productive, he suggests a range of activities that you can use to centralise your actions (which generally involves an electronic calendar and a task system), organise your inputs (which looks at how work arrives at your desk and how you can allocate your time and attention) and realise your outcomes (which ensures you're keeping your activity in alignment with the bigger goals and objectives). If you'd like specific strategies on how to increase your productivity from a time-effectiveness lens, I highly recommend the methodologies that Dermot provides.

As we have already seen, one of the most important methods for becoming more productive involves monitoring your use of time and ensuring you're not getting led astray by distractions. One of the best methods for examining your effectiveness is to look at your current leadership approach.

Mind mapping

Mind mapping is a technique that can be used to capture the thoughts in your mind and transfer them onto paper so the information can be easily seen. This enables you to start identifying patterns and hierarchies that you can use to help organise your thoughts.
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Tony Buzan is credited as the inventor of mind mapping and is an expert on the brain and memory. He is the author of over 100 books including *Use Your Head: Innovative learning and thinking techniques to fulfil your mental potential* and *The Power of Creative Intelligence*. Buzan believes that this process accurately mirrors how the brain shifts from one idea to the next. I'm now going to show you how you can use mind mapping to help you hack your productivity, using the example of a young executive I coached.

Hacking your activity

I once worked with an up-and-coming young executive, Jan, who was being groomed for a future role as CEO. In one of our regular coaching sessions she mentioned how she was starting to feel overwhelmed in her new role, and that the tasks that were coming across her desk were starting to slip away from her. I remember the look on her face when I asked her about her current use of time. 'I'm not someone who wastes time. That's why I'm in this role and have received praise over the past six months—because of my ability to get things done.' She was clearly not impressed with me asking about her use of time!

HACKING PRODUCTIVITY USING AN ACTIVITY MIND MAP

With the use of a mind map, I took Jan through the steps that would help her hack her productivity.

1. Map your current activity

I started by asking Jan to share with me the activities and tasks she had focused on over the past week. I then wrote a description of her current role on a sheet of paper and circled it. Next, I drew lines radiating out from the circle and labelled them with the main activities and tasks she had identified (see figure 1.1, overleaf). It was immediately clear that she was incredibly busy and was taking the new role very seriously.

Some of the activities were subtasks of other main tasks, so we grouped them into common areas. Other activities were spread out

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HACKING PRODUCTIVITY USING AN ACTIVITY MIND MAP (*CONT'D*)

a bit more broadly and included items such as ensuring more office supplies were ordered, as well as organising and attending various team meetings with her staff. (I find that the more senior the leader, the broader the activities tend to be.)

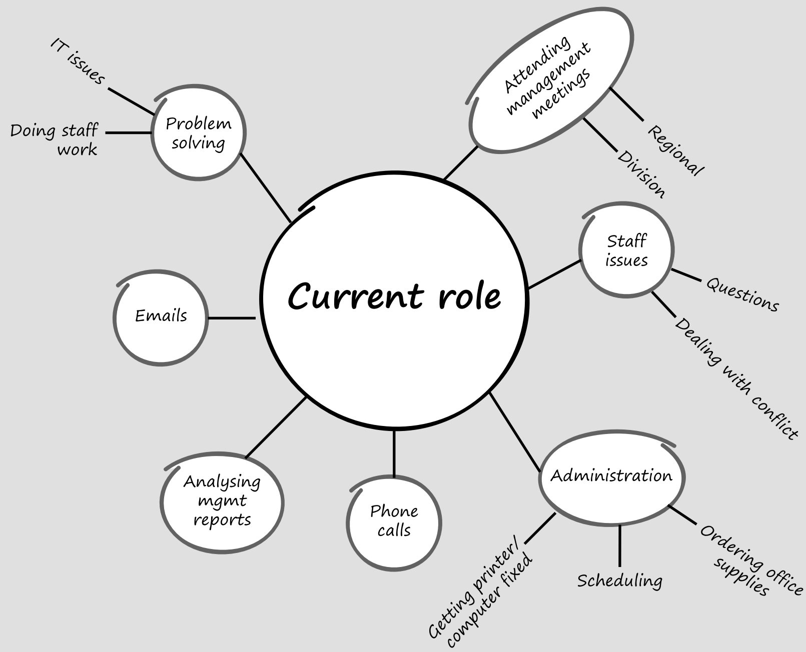

Figure 1.1: a sample activity mind map

2. Estimate the amount of time spent on each activity

I asked Jan to estimate the amount of time she had spent on each activity or task over the past week (shown in figure 1.2 as percentages). This was a bit of a challenge for her because she was unsure how long she had spent on each activity—which was part of the problem! She also found that there were different levels of activity, with some actually being smaller subtasks to help her complete a larger part of her role.

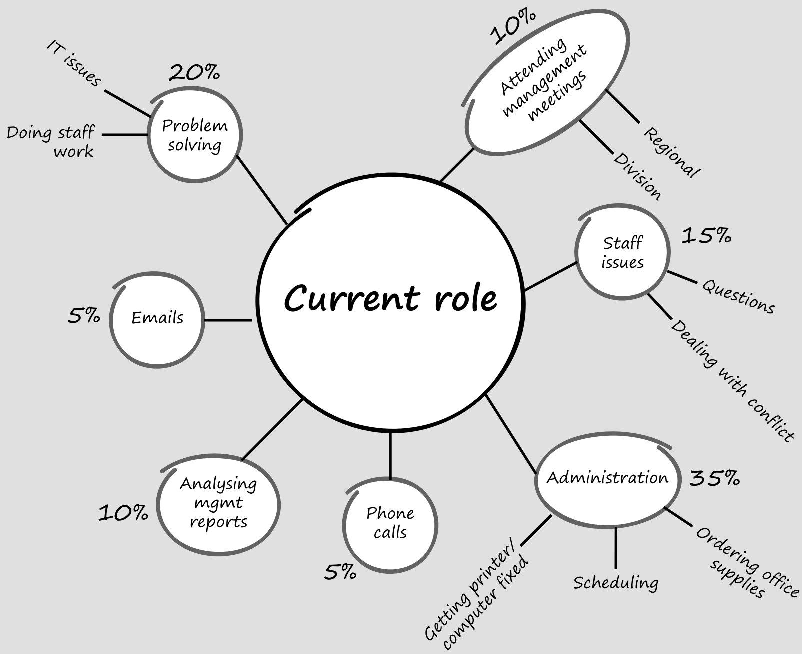

Figure 1.2: activity mind map with times shown in percentages

3. Identify the amount of time you work 'on the business' versus 'in the business'

The next step was to get Jan to categorise the areas of current activity. Rather than just grouping them under her main responsibilities, we used a smarter approach that looked at the types of activity based on a concept from Michael Gerber's best-selling book, *The E-Myth Revisited*. The concept that Gerber made popular — and that has been embedded into the psyche of many people in business — is, 'You need to work on your business, not just in your business'.

Simply put, 'working *in* the business' includes activities and tasks that relate to the everyday operations and function of any business. These are the things that need to be done on a regular basis to ensure things are running properly. They include the day-to-day firefighting and problem solving required to keep a business operating — such as answering customer phone calls, processing orders and ensuring that stock on the selves of a retail store is organised in an easy way for customers to find.

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HACKING PRODUCTIVITY USING AN ACTIVITY MIND MAP (*CONT'D*)

'Working *on* the business' involves the strategic activities that need to be performed. These are activities that help set you and your staff up for future success and they can include having one-on-one coaching sessions to help develop your staff's skills, working with your staff to develop a strategic plan, and anything else that will benefit you and your organisation in the future, as well as predicting future market or consumer trends, and research and development of new products.

To help Jan understand the tasks she had performed over the past week even better, I asked her to add the label 'on' or 'in' next to each task, depending on whether it was something that needed to be attended to immediately or something related to setting up her department and her staff for success in the future (see figure 1.3).

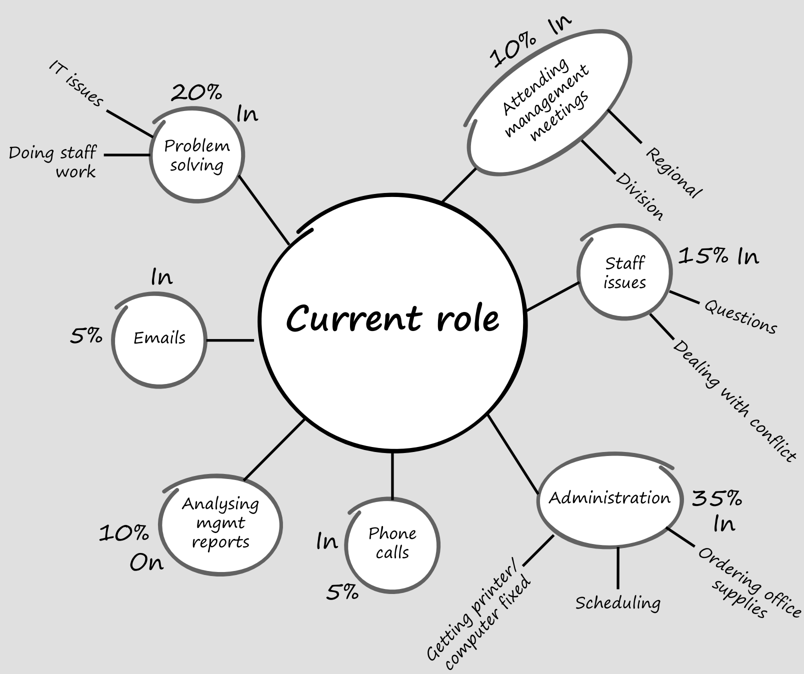

Figure 1.3: activity mind map showing time and business focus

At this point Jan could clearly see the pattern she was falling into. Of all of the tasks that she had worked on in the past week almost 90 per cent were '*in* the business' activities. She realised that many of these tasks were quite trivial and could easily be completed by her staff. She was only doing them herself because she wanted to be in control and was so focused on being busy that she wasn't aware of which tasks she should and should not have been doing. (Jan also didn't know how to effectively delegate — we'll discuss delegation in chapter 4.) This also meant that the important, but non-urgent, activities that needed to be addressed were being ignored because she was so busy firefighting things that should have been fixed or improved in the past.

4. Map your ideal activity

To refocus on the activities Jan should be focusing on, we mapped her ideal role activity on another piece of paper. She identified a number of areas she had not focused on recently that she believed were critical to her role, and we added these. We also removed several trivial tasks she was currently doing. This time Jan estimated the percentage of time that she should be focusing on each task to be more effective in her role. She also reallocated the percentage of time that she wanted to spend working on the business, with most of the related activities involving the coaching and development of her staff, as shown in figure 1.4 (overleaf).

Often, the activities relating to your current and your ideal roles will be the same and only the ideal percentage or amount of time spent on each activity needs to change. This is often a good reminder that you need to dedicate more or less time to certain activities to start hacking your approach. By double checking the amount of time you as a leader are spending on the business, you ensure that your focus is in the right area. As a general rule of thumb the more senior the leader, the more time should be spent 'working on the business'. It's not uncommon for a CEO to spend 75 per cent of their time in this area given the largest part of their role is generally about setting things up for growth and opportunity in the future, and trusting their leadership team to oversee the 'working in the business' activities.

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HACKING PRODUCTIVITY USING AN ACTIVITY MIND MAP (*CONT'D*)

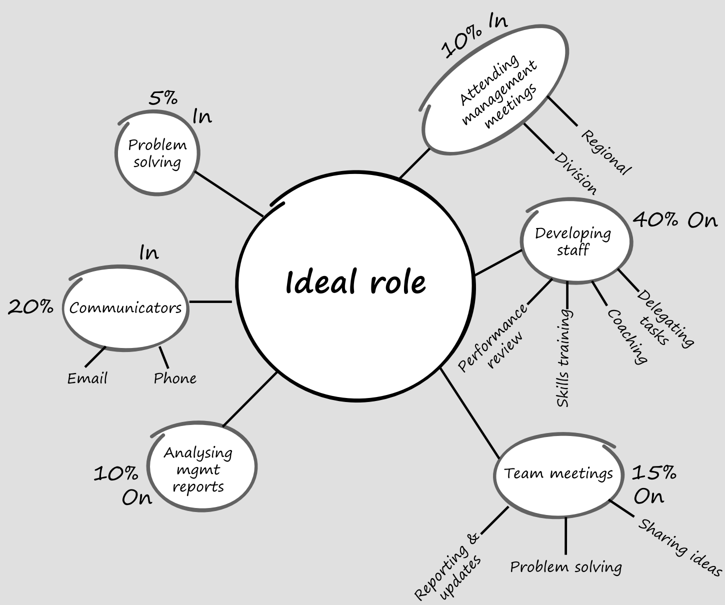

Figure 1.4: an ideal activity mind map showing time and focus

5. Create a transition plan

The final step in understanding where Jan was losing time was to place the current activity role map and the ideal activity role map side by side to identify the areas that needed change. This made it very easy for her to see what she needed to do. To complete the experience, we created a transition plan (as shown in table 1.1), that included a list of the tasks she was going to delegate to staff as well as how she was going to allocate time in her diary to ensure she started working on the tasks she needed to attend to. This plan also included the steps Jan would take to ensure that her staff would pick up these responsibilities and were provided with the skills to complete them.

Table 1.1: transition strategy table

Task	How	Who	When
Ordering office supplies	1. Create supplier list 2. Create process 3. Delegate	John	1 May
Fixing IT equipment	1. Identify internal IT fix process 2. Clarify how to communicate 3. Delegate	Sue	5 May
Scheduling	1. Write process 2. Train 3. Assist for three weeks	Bruce	1 June

Over the next couple of weeks of working her transition strategy, Jan started to achieve a new work rhythm and to feel on top of her role. She had just completed a big step in 'hacking' her time — being aware of where she was losing time and using a process to reallocate her focus.

At first glance, mapping your activity and use of time seems very simple. Taking the time to map the activities that you should be doing and the time allocation is also straightforward. The challenge for most leaders is that they don't take the time to step back from their day-to-day activities to look objectively at whether they are being as efficient with their time as they could be.

CASE STUDY

Leanne Coddington

CEO, Tourism and Events Queensland

After finishing high school, Leanne Coddington decided that she wanted to get into the world of hospitality. The opportunity to

(continued)

CASE STUDY

travel and work across a range of hotels was so appealing that she went to university to earn a degree in Hospitality Management and started her career with a small hotel in Canberra that went on to be the first of the Rydges Hotel Group. After completing her traineeship, she moved to the pre-opening team of the Hyatt Hotel group in Canberra commencing in the role of Materials Manager — the first female ever to hold that position in the company.

After a time in Canberra, Leanne was intrigued by Human Resource Management and moved into a junior role at the Hyatt on Collins. This allowed her to start learning strategies that she could use to help work with staff as well as starting to motivate and lift the performance of others. She was also fortunate to be involved in the transformation of Melbourne's Hyatt on Collins to the Grand Hyatt, which was a major redevelopment and tested her skills and abilities to manage a workforce that was going through change.

Shortly after completing this major hotel transformation, Leanne decided to start a family and moved back to Queensland. Very quickly she yearned to continue her involvement in hospitality and she was hired as Hospitality Instructor at a private training college helping to prepare the workforce of the future.

Leanne then joined Tourism and Events Queensland (formerly Tourist and Travel Corporation and Tourism Queensland), which is a state government body that is responsible for lead marketing, destination and experience development and major events agency. It is responsible for developing strategy and commercial partnerships with industry operators to showcase and deliver Queensland experiences, packages and products to key target markets across Queensland, Australia and the world with a goal of achieving $30 billion in annual overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

It is also known for its worldwide 'Best Job in the World' project, which it launched in 2009. This is widely regarded as one of the most successful tourism campaigns of its kind. It broke new ground for social media and offered one lucky candidate a six-month dream job as a caretaker for the islands of the Great Barrier Reef. It was so successful that it generated 35 000 applications from over 200 different countries and is estimated to have generated more than A$430 million in global public relations value. The campaign made Queensland an international destination and showcased the Great Barrier Reef as a topic of discussion—and a desirable holiday location for people around the world. It generated 8.6 million website visits with over 55 million pages visited—and more than 200 000 website hits within the first 24 hours!

During this Leanne was overseeing partnerships with industry and was one of the judges for this hugely successful program. This role required her to increase her productivity and actively build relationships with various industries to identify what they could do to assist them, which ultimately led to Leanne being appointed as CEO.

During her time as acting CEO and then as CEO, a range of major issues have hit Queensland and she and her leadership team needed to get creative and move fast to remedy these. The 2010–11 Brisbane floods and Cyclone Yasi in 2011 had to be countered with proactive global campaigns reassuring the world that Queensland was still open for business to allow a quick recovery based on tourism dollars, which were critical in getting things turned around. Leanne and her team have worked to host 'mega-famil', which are large events that host media from all around the world to let them see (and report on) the wonderful locations across Queensland that are open for tourism. As a true leader, Leanne reinforces that it was a total team effort that allowed them to turn around a potentially disastrous situation in an extremely short time frame.

To enable Tourism and Events Queensland to remain proactive in numerous markets around the world, they have over 150 staff located in 13 different locations around the world, including Brisbane London, Los Angeles, Munich, Auckland, Beijing,

(*continued*)

CASE STUDY

Shanghai, Taipei, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Seoul and Singapore. This also requires Leanne to be productive and efficient with her time as she spends quite a lot of time travelling around the world to support these partnerships in numerous locations. To enable her to get more done, she stacks her trips back to back to allow her to concentrate this time away in one time frame. She also has a solid philosophy of trusting her people on the ground in the different markets to understand and plan the events. When she visits, she always ensures that there's a 'cheap and cheerful' local dinner event with her team for her to reconnect and touch base in person and also to acclimatise to different environments before the scheduled events and partnership meetings begin.

To stay productive when she returns home, Leanne also tries to find ways to unwind and relax by taking time for herself (and her family) in simple ways that recharge her energy. This often includes some family time on the verandah having quality conversations as well as walking to help manage stress and the pressure from travel and office activities. Regardless of her travel and business schedule, Leanne has found a range of productivity hacks that she uses to keep her feet firmly on the ground.

SELF-HACK
Activity mapping to increase productivity

To stay effective and efficient, leaders need to regularly 'self-hack' their approach to their work, in order to ensure that they're focusing on the things they should be doing, rather than being distracted. Here's a summary of the hacks you can use to achieve this.

Hack 1: Map your current activity

- Write your current activity in the middle of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
- Write down the activities you've been focusing on over the past week (or two weeks if that's easier). Don't simply write a list of tasks from the top of the page to the bottom — this can tempt you to think linearly and not fully visualise the range of activities. Create a mind map by drawing lines away from the circle containing your job title and writing one task or activity at the end of each line, in a circle.
- As you draw your activity mind map, you'll find that some tasks are subsets of a category. For example, these activities could all be combined under the heading 'Departmental meetings':
    - meeting with sales
    - meeting with marketing
    - meeting with operations.

Hack 2: Estimate the amount of time spent on each activity

- Estimate how much time you spent on each activity or task by either counting the hours or working out the percentage of time you spent on it. Remember: you can only have 100 per cent of time or 40–50 hours per week (or more depending on your role!).

Hack 3: Identify the amount of time you work 'on the business' versus 'in the business'

- Label each activity as 'in' for 'working in the business' or 'on' for 'working on the business'.

Hack 4: Map your ideal activity

- On another piece of paper, write your ideal activity in the centre and draw a circle around it. Next, draw a mind map with lines radiating outwards from the circle and write the activities that you *should be* focusing on. Make sure you remember to capture the 'working on the business' activities. If possible, try not to look at the mind map of your current activities. You want to be able to step away from what you've been doing and be objective about where your focus should be.
- Now estimate the amount of time you should ideally be spending on each activity.

Hack 5: Create a transition plan

- Now that you have identified what needs hacking, you need to establish how you're going to do it and who can help you. Write down all the activities and tasks you're currently doing but shouldn't be and identify who you can delegate these tasks to.
- Make sure you use a process to effectively delegate. Take the time to communicate what's needed, how to perform the task and how you can assist your staff member to complete it. If you find you have a large number of tasks that need to be handed off, don't give all of them to the same person at once as this could overwhelm them. Map when you're going to delegate each task using a transition strategy like the one in table 1.1.
- Hacking your activity is something you should do at least a couple of times per year to ensure you're being as productive as possible. For senior leaders this is also a good exercise to do with your direct reports to help ensure they're focusing on the important aspects of their role.

Chapter 2
Technology and email

Throughout history, society has evolved from one level to the next. Major shifts in eras are generally connected to a significant advancement in technology. Leaders need to be across these shifts and identify ways to leverage technology.

Technology

Many civilisations (and businesses) have risen and fallen based on their use — or lack of — technology and the new forms it has taken. One of the first advancements in technology on a global scale was the printing press. According to *Live Science* it was initially credited as being pioneered around 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg, who created adjustable metal letters (or movable type). However, there are examples from Chinese monks up to 600 years earlier who used carved wooden blocks pressed onto sheets of paper. This allowed information to be captured and shared with the masses so people could be informed of current events (and opinions).

The next big advancement in technology was the Industrial Revolution, which took place between 1760 and 1840. Instead of being made individually, goods could now be mass produced using new

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manufacturing processes in a much faster time frame. This led to an explosion of new products and machines that could be used across all walks of life.

The next main technological advancement was the Information Revolution. Using computers, we're able to capture information and manipulate it as we choose. We can use a computer program to run a statistical analysis or a word processor to quickly and easily create, modify and share electronic documents. In addition, this started a shift in globalisation that Thomas Friedman captured in his ground-breaking book *The World Is Flat: The globalized world in the twenty-first century,* which shares how these new advancements in technology have enabled people from around the world to easily connect and do business together across geographical boundaries. He identified 10 forces that he believes have made the world seem a much smaller place, including computer software, uploading, outsourcing, offshoring and supply chaining. Friedman more specifically predicted that the real change occurred in the convergence of three specific events. The first was the creation of technology, which allowed for communication and collaboration across geographical borders. The second was the use of new technological products that allowed for the integration of hardware and software. And the third was the opening of new, previously communist, markets, which resulted in access to a massive, enthusiastic workforce of more than three billion people ready to embrace these new technologies to achieve benefits similar to the US free market economy.

How the mobile device changed everything

When Apple launched the iPhone in 2007 it did more than bring a new product to the market. It completely transformed and revolutionised the entire mobile platform and put most of its competitors out of the mobile phone market within 10 years. Before Apple entered the market, Nokia, BlackBerry and Motorola dominated the mobile phone industry and were considered untouchable giants. Their phones were also starting to allow emails to be sent, although this was at a slow speed and with a non-graphic interface.

The iPhone was a breakthrough internet communications and connection device—a true 'smart' phone. Its touchscreen immediately responded to provide multiple items at once with an easy-to-use graphic interface. It's hard to imagine what life was like before Google Maps, integrated calendars, FaceTime (for free), web browsers and the App Store, which provides every type of software program imaginable.

When this revolutionary tool was first released, it provided a tremendous number of hacks that leaders could use to save time. It also drove the entire industry to start looking at smarter ways of using this technology so people could do more in less time across multiple platforms.

The four types of technology tool

Table 2.1 shows a range of different technology software programs that leaders can use to help them hack their performance and time. They range from computer-based programs, to smartphone applications, to real-time internet tools (they're not your standard 1990s Microsoft Office programs). Although I'm not a technology expert—and it's challenging to zero in on the ones that offer the best hacks for leaders because they're forever evolving—I have organised them into four areas: organisation, communication, collaboration and tracking and project management. In the following section I'll provide a description of the tools as well as a number of examples of these technology software programs that you may want to explore further to help you leverage your effectiveness (shown in table 2.1). One note of caution: these new technology programs are changing so rapidly that they will very quickly be out of date, so ensure you do a Google search to identify the most current ones.

Table 2.1: four types of software tools

Organisation	Communication	Collaboration	Tracking and project management
OneNote Evernote Calendar 5 by Readdle SimpleMind	Slack Basecamp HipChat Memo Mailer	Dropbox Podio G Suite	Microsoft Project Asana Trello Shoeboxed / Squirrel Street

Organisation

These technology software tools assist you in organising things. Most commonly they are calendars or applications that help organise your time and your meetings by fast-tracking these processes. Some of the current organisation platforms for computer or smartphone are:

- *OneNote*. This is a Microsoft Office program that captures notes, agendas and ideas in a range of notebook folders that can be shared with others.
- *Evernote*. With this app you can capture notes and tag relevant files for quick and easy access later on. It enables all of this data to be synched across multiple devices and you can share notes with others.
- *Calendar 5 by Readdle*. This app is designed for use on mobile phones and allows you to view, complete or reschedule tasks on the run. It also shows your meeting workload and your task workload across the week and synchs across your calendar and reminders.
- *SimpleMind*. This is a mind-mapping program that you can use to brainstorm your ideas and organise them into mind maps with colours and pictures, as well as exporting them for presentations.

Communication

Given that many leaders need to communicate to specific groups of people, a number of communication platforms can be used to help streamline this process and allow conversations to be easily followed. Some currently available and popular communication programs are:

- *Slack*. This is a collaboration tool. You can use it to send direct messages and files to individuals or groups of people and to organise conversations into different channels as well as creating a Google Hangout video meeting from within a chat room.
- *Basecamp*. This is a go-to program for team communication. It makes it easy for teams to stay in touch on projects and clients.
- *HipChat*. This app brings people and teams together in rooms for ad-hoc conversations and one-on-one messaging.

- *Memo Mailer.* This app allows you to touch one button and record a verbal message that you can instantly email to yourself or to your PA. This is a great time-saving tool.

Collaboration

With the shift from individual computers to closed networks to the World Wide Web there's been an explosion of collaboration technology platforms that can assist you in working collectively with people in other parts of the world. Current collaboration programs include:

- *Dropbox.* This is an in-the-cloud storage platform for keeping files, documents, photos and videos in one place. You can also use it to share access to these files with other people and create a copy of each of these items on your device that mirrors the cloud so you always have access.
- *Podio.* This collaboration program provides a flexible online platform for work and communication across teams and allows delegation of tasks among employees. You can share files, see the progress of ongoing projects and get feedback from others on what you're presently working on.
- *G Suite.* These are productivity and collaboration tools, software and products produced by Google that enable sharing of documents, worksheets, slides and more.

Tracking and project management

These technology programs allow you to track and measure any number of items. This can include the tracking of time, activity or information. The majority are for tracking time and you can use them to improve your productivity or project management. Some current programs are:

- *Microsoft Project.* This is a traditional software program for complex projects.
- *Asana.* This tool is used by Intel, Uber and Pinterest and has been designed to achieve the best results by tracking employees' work and setting deadline reminders, establishing ongoing projects, and automating requests to colleagues.

- *Trello*. This platform offers shared boards or lists that can be organised by team or task. You can also delegate tasks to staff and assign comments to cards.
- *Shoeboxed / Squirrel Street*. With this app you can use your smartphone camera to take photos of receipts and store digital copies of them for printing out automatically at a later date if a physical copy is required. The app also integrates these receipts into the leading accounting software packages.

There's a range of apps you can use to help you 'hack' your leadership in various areas. My advice is to explore these and see which ones will work for you and to keep a look out for new ones that other leaders are using.

Email

There has been a significant increase in digital communication and email since the beginning of the new millennium, creating a drastic impact on leaders and their productivity. Many leaders I've worked with over the years have made the observation that they can't keep up with their email communications. Inboxes are constantly full of new information: as you're reading one email, a new one is already coming in. For many leaders there's not enough time to manage their email.

I remember talking to a director of sales and marketing for a large international automotive company about how busy he was trying to respond to all the emails he was receiving. When we looked at them, we found he had a team of 12 direct reports, with many of them spread around the country; over 100 dealerships with dealer principals (owners) regularly asking him questions; numerous suppliers and strategic partnerships; and international affiliates and global headquarters that were also asking questions and sharing information with him. He was easily averaging more than 200 emails per day, with many of these requiring a response from him. As soon as he cleared a handful of emails, the next batch came in. To add to his frustration, he was receiving emails around the clock because the company was pushing its global businesses to increase its share of good or creative ideas across geographic markets.

How did we go from a business world with manageable information and communication levels to one that bombards us with so much information that we can't keep up? In a word: email. We'll look at how to hack your inbox shortly. First let's look at how emails have crept into our lives and then identify the email challenges we face.

Why emails overload leaders

In the past an employee would automatically follow the orders of leaders or managers of a company. With the title of CEO or director came instant authority, and maintaining this power involved enforcing rigid communication structures. The traditional pyramid hierarchy mandated that people communicated directly to their supervisor when they needed some information or resources. It was considered a career-limiting move to go outside the 'chain of command' and try to communicate directly with other departments.

Internal computer servers and email quickly tore down these traditional lines of communication and the hierarchical power they embodied. In the early days of this technology, it was not uncommon for an employee who was not familiar with the email system to accidentally copy in the entire staff list. This mistake could not be taken back, resulting in many private communications accidentally being broadcast across the entire company.

In the past, a leader's power lay in the information that they may have kept tightly controlled. Nowadays, everyone can access information from numerous sources and can quickly and easily share it with others.

Initially, the internet was set up to allow access to, and sharing of, information. The concept and initial design of the internet was led by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) in the United States in the 1960s with the creation of the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET). The first public demonstration of email took place at the International Computer Communications Conference (ICCC) in 1972. Over time this loosely connected network was enhanced until the World Wide Web was created to standardise protocols by MIT's Laboratory for Computer Science professors, Tim Berners-Lee and Al Vezza.

Initially, the speed of the internet was slow, with a processing speed of 50 kbps via phone lines in 1993. To put this in perspective, it would take 10 minutes to download a single song (or 30 minutes at slow speed!). A full-length movie took 28 hours at full speed (or up to three days at slow speed) to download.

Broadband technology and faster speed were introduced in the late 1990s and started to become mainstream in the mid 2000s. The speed was initially 1.5 Mbps and more recently 5 Mbps as technology has improved. This means a single song takes four to five seconds and a full-length movie 18–24 minutes (now you can watch the movie via streaming while it is being downloaded).

The new 5G (fifth generation) technology has the capability to reach speeds of more than 100 Mbps. According to Akamai Technologies' 2014 'State of the Internet' report, mobile device connectivity is also increasing, with speeds reaching more than 100 Mbps—which means the time needed to download a full-length movie will be reduced to seven to eight minutes.

What does this all mean? It means that leaders need to find new hacks for dealing with the large volumes of communication that will be coming their way. The primary tool for sending and receiving specific communications is still email. The challenge is that the increase in internet speeds has led to an increase in the number of emails sent and received every day.

The Radicati Group is a marketing research company that has been tracking email and digital communications since the early days of the internet. Their 'Email Statistics Report, 2015–2019' shows that email will continue to grow to more than 2.9 billion email users by the end of 2019. The business world consumes the majority of these emails, with more than 120 billion sent and received each day. On average, business users will send 121 emails a day by 2019. This figure only includes the number of emails that make it into your inbox, not the additional emails caught in your spam filter! No wonder leaders are having a more challenging time of keeping up with their inboxes.

Identifying the challenges

There are three main challenges that need to be managed to deal more efficiently with emails:

- *The volume of emails received.* Leaders tend to receive more emails than many frontline or middle-level managers. This is because they're often copied in to 'keep them in the loop'. This also creates a distraction if you're working on a task and new, unrelated emails come in.

- *Time to read through emails received—and when to check for new emails*. Once the emails come in it takes time to read through them and identify what it is you need to know. This in itself creates a challenge because unnecessarily reading through some emails can take up time that could be better spent reading and actioning other, more important emails.
- *What to do with emails once you've read them*. It may be that you've been copied in to receive ongoing information or updates, in which case you don't need to do anything with the email. Alternatively, you may need to respond with a decision or answer, or take further action. Regardless, viewing emails only takes up a portion of time—the majority of time is generally spent analysing and responding to the emails.

According to a July 2012 McKinsey Global Institute report, leaders and employees spend an average of 2.6 hours per day reading and answering emails, which is an average of 13 hours per week of lost time. This is a massive amount of time that needs to be hacked! In looking at ways to improve your approach to email communications, there are two hack areas you should consider:

- 'inbox' email hacks
- 'sending' email hacks.

Given this prediction of email numbers increasing year after year, it's important to have a number of strategies for hacking your inbox.

HACKING YOUR INBOX

How often do you check your email inbox per day? If you're not sure, play a little game: every time you look for new email write it down. Once you've done this for a full day, total up the number of times you checked for new messages. I'm sure the result is alarming so let's look at some ways of hacking this time-consuming task.

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HACKING YOUR INBOX (*CONT'D*)

1. The 321-Zero approach

As human beings we're wired for constant gratification and satisfaction. We also look for ways to distract us from doing challenging or difficult tasks. *New York Times* best-selling author Kevin Kruse, in his book *15 Secrets Successful People Know about Time Management,* studied the time-management habits of billionaires, entrepreneurs and Olympic athletes. Kruse recommends checking your email inbox using what he calls the 321-Zero system. He advocates scheduling three times per day to check your email (morning, noon and night) and setting your phone timer to 21 minutes as a game to get your inbox to zero. Although this will usually not be enough time to get through all your emails, this approach is designed to keep you focused because you won't have time for distractions. This will reduce the amount of time you spend checking and rechecking to see if an email has come in, which can ultimately distract you even further.

2. The four-step email inbox hack

There are many complex systems and methods for staying on top of your inbox, but there are some simple approaches that will save you time. One of the most effective hacks is the four-step process shown in figure 2.1: scan, delete, sort and respond.

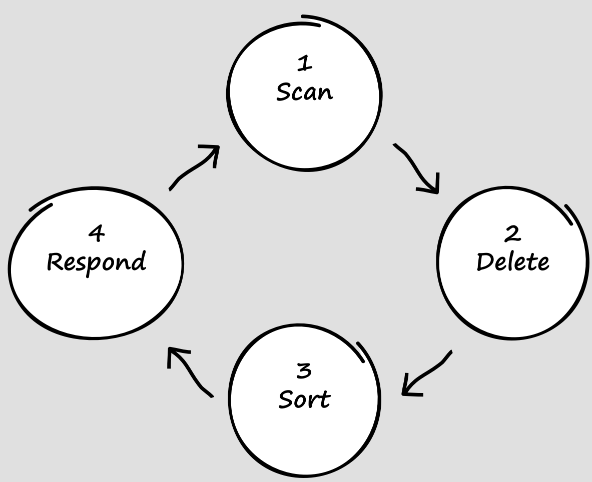

Figure 2.1: four-step email inbox hack model

Step 1: scan

Rather than taking the time to read through and respond to each individual email, start by scanning your inbox. Take a quick look through the emails that you haven't read and get a sense of what they involve, who they're from and whether or not you need them. This will help you get a quick overview of the task ahead—and get your mindset focused in a short period of time.

Step 2: delete

Delete emails that have no benefit or are irrelevant. This way you eliminate the visual clutter in your inbox, which will allow you to more easily identify and deal with the remaining, more important emails. This step helps make the final two steps faster, saving you more time in the long run.

Step 3: sort

Once you've deleted irrelevant emails, the next step is to sort the remaining emails based on their level of importance. Most email programs will automatically display your emails according to the time they were sent. They can also be sorted in the following ways:

- *by header.* One of the easiest ways to quickly organise your emails is by sorting them based who sent them (From) or by subject. If you're a Gmail user, you simply type the name of the person, or the subject of the email into the 'Search' bar and a list will automatically be generated showing the most recently dated emails first. In Outlook you can do the same by clicking on the header categories (From, Subject, Date).
- *by folder.* Another strategy is to create folders—with labels—that you can drag emails into. You can reconfigure Outlook using Rules & Alerts settings to automatically move specific incoming emails into particular folders. Outlook also has a function that will allow you to flag the priority status of each email. It can be useful to create folders labelled Action today, Inform, Waiting for, and Done.
- *using Automatic Sort.* Email programs such as Gmail enable you to automatically split emails into three categories when they arrive: Primary, Social and Promotions. You can also add folders and split them further.

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HACKING YOUR INBOX (*CONT'D*)

For specific steps on how to set up these functions, do a quick Google search. There are a number of different ways to sort your inbox — try a couple of approaches to see which one works for you.

Step 4: respond

The final step is to respond. Rather than just hit reply and start typing, if you want to 'hack' your approach you need to know what the main message of your response will be. Specifically, this is what you want the receiver to do with your email response. Generally, when you respond to an email it will fall into one of five categories: FYI, share/gather information, decide, take action or meet.

To make it easier for the people you are responding to, make sure you let them know which of these categories your email is offering or requesting. This will help save them time and reduce the clutter of emails that results when people just hit reply without being specific about what they want others to do.

When you start hacking your inbox you'll notice how much time you save. Rather than rechecking your inbox and glancing over the emails that are still there, you'll have a simple process you can use to quickly stay in front.

Sending emails

One of the biggest challenges of sending emails is ensuring that other people understand what it is you're trying to say and what you want them to do. Have a look through the emails that are in your inbox right now. How many of them clearly identify what action you need to take? The vast majority probably don't spell this out.

Email communication can be confusing because very few people know how to send an effective email — many just blindly type a message without thinking much about it and then click 'send'.

5 EMAIL 'SEND' HACKS THAT GET FAST RESULTS

Here are five hacks you can use to ensure others understand your emails and can take action quickly.

1. Subject line

One of the most important things is to have a succinct subject line. This is what other people will look at when scanning their messages to determine what do with them. Make your subject line relevant and clear. One leader I worked with adds a few code words into his subject line. For example, he ends the subject line with 'decision', 'action', 'FYI' or 'thoughts'. These simple words help give the receiver a quick clue about the importance of the email before they start reading it.

2. Message length

I can remember receiving an email from a staff member that was more than five pages long. After reading through the first five paragraphs, I gave up (mainly because I was reading it on my smartphone)! If you want your emails to be read and responded to quickly you need to keep them brief and to the point (think: user-friendly). It's estimated that more people access their email on their mobile device than on a laptop or desktop computer — another reason to aim for 'short and sweet'.

3. Visual texture and impact

One of the issues with email is that visually, on the screen of someone's computer, they look very bland and plain. When people receive hundreds of emails per day this makes all of them look the same. Blocks of text that are listed without any formatting can be difficult to read, as shown in figure 2.2 (overleaf).

(*continued*)

5 EMAIL 'SEND' HACKS THAT GET FAST RESULTS (*CONT'D*)

Subject: New Market Analysis

Greetings

I wanted to bring your attention to a number of issues that we may be having in the way that we are entering into a new market. This could create an issue for us due to a number of emerging issues and trends that we need to be aware of.

The first is that we need to find out more about one of our competitor's new products and the product specifications as well as the pricing that they are planning. This could create a range of issues for a number of our products.

In addition we have had a large turnover of employees in our sales force in this market. We will need to adjust our current plan to take this into consideration. We believe that we will be able to have the new people recruited and selected in the next thirty days with another thirty days to get them trained.

I am also aware that we need to make a decision on the pricing structure and strategy for this new market that we also need to discuss and identify how to make this new launch successful. I recommend that we get the Executive Team together for a meeting to discuss further.

Regards,
John

Figure 2.2: a typical, bland email message

To make your email message stand out and have more impact, alter the visual texture. For example, if you have a number of points to make, use bullets to visually shift the text on the screen. In addition, make any headers bold so the receiver can immediately identify them. See figure 2.3.

Subject: Exec Team Meeting — New Market, Staffing & Pricing Decision

Greetings

I recommend that we get the Executive Team together for a meeting to discuss entering the new market due to a number of emerging issues and trends including:

New Competitor Product — Unknown impact
The first is that we need to find out more about one of our competitor's new products and the product specifications as well as the pricing that they are planning. This could create a range of issues for a number of our products.

Potential Delay by 60 Days Due to Employee Turnover
In addition we have had a large turnover of employees in our sales force in this market.

- **We will need to adjust our current plan to take this into consideration.**
- **To recruit new staff and train them will take 60 days (30 R&S and 30 training).**

Pricing Strategy — To Be Clarified & Decided
In this meeting we will need to make a decision on the pricing structure and strategy for this new market that will allow the launch to be successful.

Regards,
John

Figure 2.3: a visually formatted email message

Why do you think newspapers and web pages are designed the way they are? It's because the mind doesn't just work in a linear, left-to-right, top-to-bottom, orderly fashion. When you read a newspaper, the first features your eyes go to are the pictures or main headlines. Then they go to the bolded section headlines and then to the actual article text.

By giving your emails visual texture you will make it easier for people to understand the information you're sharing as well as establish

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5 EMAIL 'SEND' HACKS THAT GET FAST RESULTS (*CONT'D*)

yourself as a leader who's different from everyone else — one who captures their ideas in a way that's more effective and efficient.

4. Specific outcome

Emails are usually sent for a particular reason. The trick is to identify your desired outcome within your email so that recipients can easily come up with a relevant response.

Most emails are written with one of these five outcomes in mind:

- *FYI.* You want them to be aware of some information — which often is an FYI (for your information) message. It may or may not be directly in their area of responsibility; however, it's beneficial for them to be across it.
- *Share/gather information.* You want them to read through the information, think about what's being shared and share or gather additional insights or details. Often, you're looking for their thoughts or opinions on a particular issue.
- *Decide.* You want them to choose from a number of alternatives.
- *Act.* You want them to take specific action based on the message communicated in the email.
- *Meet.* You'd like to meet to discuss a topic further (often because using email is not the most effective method of communication and being face to face can cover more ground).

Effective leaders will be clear with others about what they want them to do with their email message. By including an outcome you can save time and achieve what you both want effectively. It's a good idea to type the outcome that you're looking for at the very beginning of the email so your recipient can immediately see exactly what you want them to do.

5. Time frames

Another important and simple detail that's important to include in emails is a time frame. If you're setting up a meeting it's easy, in most email programs, to add in a meeting request. If you need a decision, some information or some action to be taken put in a requested time frame. This allows the receiver to understand your expectation and will also help them prioritise their activity based on the multiple tasks they're focusing on at the time.

By using these five simple 'hacks' when sending emails you're making it easier for other people to understand the information you're sharing, and you're clarifying what they need to do with it and by when. If you can get more of your staff to use these same techniques everyone can save time reading through the random emails that get sent and quickly take the necessary action. In addition, as a leader your communication will become easier to comprehend and will have more impact because it stands out and offers value.

CASE STUDY

Tricia Velthuizen

CEO, Churchill Education

Tricia Velthuizen had a modest upbringing by parents who valued education. This, combined with an extraordinary teacher who inspired her to reach for new heights, encouraged her to be the first person in her family to go to university. While she was studying law, she decided to take the Queensland State Public Service exam — for which she achieved a score of just under 100 per cent — and started working in data entry while studying.

Shortly after earning her law degree, Tricia became Crown Prosecutor with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Queensland. For the next 10 years she was involved in statewide circuiting, which saw her travel to numerous cities, primarily to prosecute child sex offences. Although this was a very challenging role, prosecuting sex offenders and dealing on a daily basis with child abuse cases forced her to learn new ways of asking questions and investigate at an entirely different level. She also learned that she could achieve more by asking people questions to create a connection and common understanding — something that she would use in her next role as a business leader.

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CASE STUDY

After 10 years of prosecuting cases, Tricia was ready for a change. In 2006, she co-founded Churchill Education with her husband, Randall, when he resigned from the police force after 16 years due to post traumatic stress disorder. Although Randall's experience was substantial, he realised that other industries would not recognise them without any formal qualifications. When Randall set about obtaining qualifications through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) he found it a very frustrating and time-consuming process. Tricia and Randall started Churchill Education to assist people in taking their work experience and turning it into governmentally recognised qualifications. Their goal has always been to help people improve their career prospects and future opportunities. Their vision remains 'Educating to change lives for the better'.

As Churchill Education grew, Tricia and Randall focused on learning as much as they could about business and leading, including studying at the Disney Institute to identify how they could build and develop their staff, as their team had grown to over 60 people. To create more leverage, they hired staff in Australia and the Philippines and used technology to streamline operations and close the geographical gap between the office locations.

Since opening its doors, Churchill Education has assisted thousands of students in studying and attaining further accreditation, with over 1400 qualifications awarded last year. They offer 77 different courses across a range of fields and industries from youth work to accounting and everywhere in between. To assist students in far-reaching locations, in 2017 they converted a bus into a movable classroom. 'Matilda' the bus now travels across Queensland to secondary schools to give high-school kids the chance to gain qualifications in Hospitality and Tourism, Outdoor Education and Horticulture while they're still at school.

In recognition of her leadership, Tricia was awarded the Churchill Fellowship by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and in 2016 she was honoured with the Achieve Forum Australia HR Champion CEO of the Year Award in recognition of her innovation and inspiring leadership philosophy and practice as CEO of Churchill Education.

Not one to rest on her laurels, Tricia continues to grow and use technology and new processes to find ways to be more efficient. With the increase in success, the number of email communications started to become a bigger challenge. To stay on top of these she created a process that allows her to reduce or hack the time needed to respond. First, she started sorting the emails in her inbox by sender. This was so she could easily identify the important emails she needed to respond to and save time. Next, she deleted irrelevant emails and then responded to the important remaining ones. This hack has allowed her to stay on top of her emails and be more effective in her use of time.

More recently Tricia and her team have hacked this further by using the Slack app for internal communications. Slack is a platform that enables staff to post a communication that other staff can see and easily respond to. In addition, Slack allows staff to follow the communication thread in a clean visual way. Since using Slack, rather than email, for internal communications, the number of internal emails has reduced. As a leader, Tricia has found a way to hack not only her approach to emails, but also that of her entire team.

SELF-HACK
Hacking your email

Every leader is bombarded with numerous emails on a daily basis. It's important to take time to assess whether you could be hacking your email to enable you to spend more time on other leadership tasks.

Inbox hacks

Use the following hacks to start looking at ways to conquer your inbox.

Hack 1: The 321-Zero approach

- For one day, commit to only checking your emails once in the morning, once in the middle of the day and once in the late afternoon.
- When you start checking your emails, set your phone timer to 21 minutes and see if you can get through all of your email messages. Remember, the aim is to get your inbox to zero within this time frame. It can be a fun game to play—but if you find it impossible to win at this game, you'll definitely want to use the next inbox hack.

Hack 2: The four-step email inbox hack

Step 1: scan

- Quickly glance through all the emails in your inbox to identify which ones are important and which ones are junk. The goal is to get through your inbox quickly to gain a sense of how many emails require a response.

Step 2: delete

- While you're scanning your emails, delete the irrelevant ones to de-clutter your inbox. And no, you don't need to keep the Domino's Pizza deal of the day—you can always go to their website if you want to access these details later!

Step 3: sort

- Organise the remaining emails in a way so you know the ones that are higher priority that you need to respond to immediately, with the others given a lower priority. You can use the settings in your email program to sort by sender, topic or keyword as well as move them into folders to allow for easy reference later.

Step 4: respond

- Respond to the highest priority emails first. Because you scanned them earlier you have an idea of what you may need to do, which will save you time when you respond.

Send hacks

Hack 1: Subject line

- Ensure your subject line is succinct.
- Make your subject line relevant and clear.
- Use code words to give the receiver a quick clue about the importance of the email.

Hack 2: Message length

- Keep your email messages brief and to the point.

Hack 3: Visual texture and impact

- Alter the visual texture of your email message by making headers bold and inserting bullets for lists so that the important features stand out immediately.

Hack 4: Specific outcome

- Identify your desired outcome within your email by making it clear to the recipient whether the purpose of the email:
  - is FYI
  - is for gathering information
  - needs a decision
  - needs an action
  - is setting up a meeting.

Hack 5: Time frames

- Make sure the recipient knows by when you need the email to be acted on.

PART II

ONE-ON-ONE HACKS

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Part II is filled with strategies you can use to improve your performance and interactions with individuals, often in a one-on-one setting.

The information is designed to assist you in hacking your leadership approach and improving your impact with individuals.

Chapter 3
Communication

A leader's ability to communicate is critical to their success and that of their business. This is common sense: everyone knows that communication is a critical tool for anyone in business.

A number of years ago I worked with a leadership team for a large international franchise organisation. They had achieved fairly modest growth. However, it appeared that they had plateaued and the CEO wanted us to work with his leadership team to improve their impact on their employees to enable the organisation to reach the next level of strategic targets.

During the first session of the year-long leadership program, we looked at how the leadership team viewed an ideal leader versus a completely ineffective leader. Using the results of this session, we provided the leadership team with 360-degree feedback about the impact their leadership had on the people around them. When the CEO received his feedback he was a bit confused. It showed that his leadership style affected people in a very negative way, similar to what he and the leadership team had just identified as ineffective leadership.

While reflecting on his feedback, the CEO walked around the office and approached four of his direct reports individually. Looking them straight in the eye and holding up his feedback form, he said, 'This says I don't listen and I just bark orders at people. I don't do that, do I!' The way he said it was a statement, not a question. Each of his direct reports responded in a similar way, saying, 'There are times when you are really direct and aggressive, and lose your temper, but I don't remember filling out the feedback that way'.

He then walked over to me and told me that the feedback was wrong — none of his people thought he was aggressive or bossy. I remember asking him if I could demonstrate the approach he had just taken with his individual reports. With his permission, I mimicked exactly how he had stood looking down on each of them individually and essentially bullied them into agreement. As he watched me, his face — which was previously red because of his frustration — turned white as he realised what he'd done: he'd demonstrated behaviour that was exactly what the leaders didn't want in their organisation. Rather than inspiring them to share ideas and motivating them, he'd used pressure to force them to agree with him and ignore their own ideas out of fear of retribution.

The problem with ineffective communication

The issue for many leaders is that their style of communication is confusing, sending mixed messages to their staff. Effective communication is imperative if you want to avoid your message having one or more of the following effects on your team.

Confusion about what action to take

Everyone has sat in meetings where a CEO or senior manager gives a disorganised, boring speech about goals and plans for the year ahead. Usually, people just walk out after the meeting, go back to work and continue doing what they've always done. Why? Because the leader didn't clarify what they wanted them to do. They provided no example of what needed to change or what this should look like, and most likely the way they delivered their message was uninspiring. When communication is not clear, people become confused about what they should or could be doing differently. This results in inactivity and waiting to be told the specifics, which means valuable time has been lost in getting people to take action.

Perception that you lack the ability to lead effectively

Poor communication can make people question your ability to lead. Ask anyone to describe how effective their manager is and they'll be quick to give you their opinion. Generally they'll respond in one of three ways:

- *that their manager is ineffective.* This is generally followed by a comment about their communication ability (or lack thereof), as well as the way they treat others
- *that their manager is 'okay'*. This generally means they're in the role and going through the motions; however, they're generally not doing it in a way that inspires others
- *that their manager is a great leader.* This is generally followed by a list of things they do that demonstrate clear communication and fair treatment that inspires their team.

If a leader can't communicate effectively, the perception of their entire ability to lead and motivate others is often questioned.

Resistance to the way forward

A number of years ago I was asked to work as a mentor for the leader of one of the top financial institutions in Australia. Before I started my one-on-one session I asked the senior executive why they wanted me to work with this particular leader. The response was, unfortunately, one that I've heard often: 'He's very smart and knows the role inside and out. The issue is his inability to work with other people. He just doesn't know how to communicate with or treat people—in fact, more employees have left or requested transfers from his area than any other part of the bank'.

After further analysis, I found out that while the ideas and strategies he developed were fine, the way he delivered information to his team made them feel as if they were expendable and belittled them in front of others.

This resulted in a very proactive resistance against him and his department. To his face, his staff would say 'yes' when he asked them to do something and then they would go back to business as usual.

When he confronted them about it at a later date, they would bring up the multiple tasks and competing deadlines that they were facing as the reason for not acting on his request. It even spread beyond his department, with other leaders actively going out of their way to avoid dealing with him because of the way he communicated to them.

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The way a leader communicates determines whether or not people will want to take action. Unfortunately, the wrong approach often results in confusion and active resistance, which makes goals harder to achieve and can delay timelines. So how can leaders communicate in a way that's clear and inspires others?

The Tell-Show-Ask strategy

For almost 20 years I have facilitated sessions that involve feedback processes to enable leaders to gain a better understanding of their approach and the way they affect their teams, both positively and negatively. Unfortunately, as we've seen, leaders regularly receive honest feedback from their peers telling them they're not communicating in the most effective way possible. This generally leads to a range of emotions where some leaders deny they have a weakness (because taking that aggressive, intimidating and impersonal approach worked in the past) or blame the challenging business conditions for their method of approach. But there are better ways to communicate in any situation — it's simply a matter of adjusting your delivery style.

I was fortunate to work with thought leaders Matt Church and Michael Henderson, and together we wrote a book called *Thought Leaders: How to capture, package and deliver your ideas for greater commercial success*. In this book we looked at ways leaders can become thought leaders by effectively sharing ideas using their unique ability to identify and deliver them in a way that positions them as the 'go to' expert. When analysing communication techniques we found they commonly fall into one of three key areas: tell, show or ask. A leader delivers their message using one of the three approaches shown in figure 3.1.
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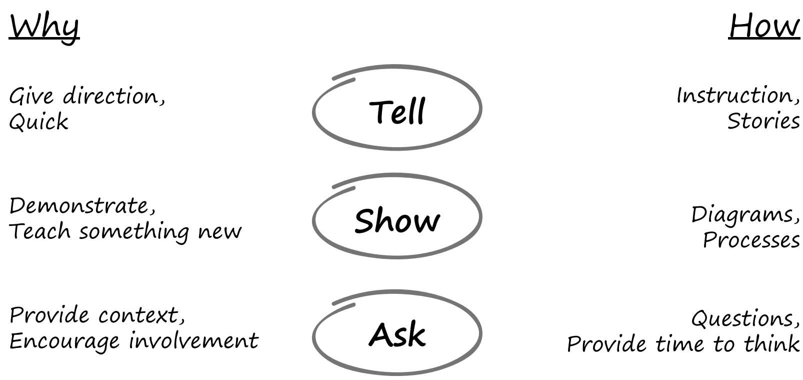

Figure 3.1: the Tell-Show-Ask model

Tell

The first communication technique is the Tell mode. This is the most common form of communication used by leaders. You tell someone what to do by giving them a specific instruction or action to follow. The intention is to be clear in your communication so that others (generally subordinates) will do what you want them to do. It's generally a one-way communication method where the leader speaks and the other person listens. This is one of the quickest ways to communicate what's on your mind to others.

The challenge for many leaders is that the way they deliver the message can be traditional and dictatorial, which makes people feel like objects rather than valued employees. This can often defeat the purpose of empowering people to want to go above and beyond to get the job done, which is what most leaders wish for!

Many leaders get stuck in the Tell mode — they go about their day telling people what to do:

'Get this done before the close of business today.'

'Fix this by doing x, y and z.'

'You need to get your team to perform at a higher level.'

'I don't care what you do — just make the project succeed on time and on budget.'

When you hear instructions such as these, what comes to mind? Do they tell you that your leader is there to support and encourage you, or do they tell you something else? This is one of the challenges of leaders defaulting to the Tell mode. If you look back through time, this was traditionally the preferred method of communicating to staff. One of the leading thinkers or management consultants during the Industrial Revolution was Fredrick Taylor, who in 1911 wrote the book *The Principles of Scientific Management*. Taylor advocated training the workforce via detailed instruction and supervision of each worker. This became a leading management textbook and it shaped many businesses for the next 50 years, with managers doing the thinking and telling and workers doing the working.

To be clear, though, telling is an approach that leaders can use to effectively communicate. They just need to find a way to deliver their message so that it turns people on rather than off. To do this, there are five common hacks for using the Tell mode.

5 HACKS FOR EFFECTIVE TELLING

Here are a few shortcuts to help improve your approach to delivering messages using the Tell mode.

1. Tell, don't yell

When you're under pressure to perform, it's easy to yell instructions at people. Everyone knows this isn't the best approach; however, in stressful situations emotional energy can result in leaders raising their voice. Keep calm and don't let the stress you're feeling override the message you want to convey.

2. Telling is not interrogating

Saying something directly to someone can be like an interrogation. This is because the way the message is communicated may be supported by accusations that can make an individual feel defensive, which is the last thing you want if you're trying to get someone to take action. Make sure you tell in a way that motivates people.

3. Tell to save time

Of the three communication modes, Tell is generally the quickest. If you're in a situation where people need to clearly understand what to do in an urgent time frame, telling can be the best approach. Be careful not to fall into the habit of telling all the time by justifying that it saves time because if used incorrectly it can damage relationships.

4. Tell from their perspective

When you're communicating a message that you want someone to understand and act on, make sure you're delivering it from their perspective. To do this, include practical examples from their current situation that they can understand and relate to. The goal is to tell them as if you were in their role, not talk down to them as someone who doesn't understand the challenges they're facing would. It's also a good idea to tell them the benefits of what they will be doing so they understand why you've asked them to do it. This helps gather a person's support because they can see how this action will assist them, rather than just being talked at.

5. Tell a story or your vision

A leader who can tell a story as a way of getting their message across can be inspirational. Sharing something personal before telling others what they need to do can inspire and motivate others into action.

WHEN SHOULD YOU TELL?

The telling mode is an appropriate way to communicate with people, especially in a one-on-one situation. There are a number of instances when you should use the Tell mode:

- when you have very limited time and the individual you're communicating to already knows how to do what needs to be done
- when you have an individual or a group of people who are inspired and motivated to act most effectively by hearing a relevant a story
- when you're communicating a specific set of instructions that need to be followed in the face of disastrous consequences.

Show

Showing is the ideal way of communicating an instruction when you understand what needs to be done, but you want to communicate this visually to increase the other person's understanding, rather than just telling them what to do. This can be a more gentle approach than telling someone what to do because you're seen as trying to teach them or working beside them and not just barking an order.

I once attended a board meeting where a CEO and one of his senior managers were having a heated discussion about a business matter. They both had strong but differing views and were verbally pleading their case in front of the other senior managers. To end the cycle, the CEO decided to pull rank and said something about having the final decision because the authority rested with him. Rather than just agreeing, his senior manager grabbed a whiteboard marker and took a few minutes to draw what he had tried to express verbally. Very quickly everyone (including the CEO) understood the message he was trying to communicate. As soon as they saw it, it made sense. In addition, they quickly verbalised their own viewpoints, which were added to the diagram, allowing them to feel as if they were contributing. This shifted the entire energy of the meeting from one of debate and a dictatorial standoff, to one where everyone was quickly aligned because they could 'see' the message.

'SHOWING' AND THE VAK LEARNING STYLE

When communicating using the Show mode, you enable people to engage their sight and hearing to obtain a bigger picture of the point you're trying to get across. Research shows that people have different learning and thinking strategies. Walter Barbe, Raymond Swassing and Michael Milone challenged traditional learning methods in their book *Teaching through Modality Strengths: Concepts and practices*. This is considered the precursor to what's now commonly referred to as the VAK (Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic) method of learning or understanding:

- 'Visual' involves the use of pictures, shapes, diagrams, images and colours.
- 'Auditory' uses listening, tone and rhythm.
- 'Kinaesthetic' uses body movement, tactile or touching experiences, and gestures.

While blending all three styles is the best way to increase understanding and comprehension, it's believed that the largest percentage of the population has a bias towards learning and understanding visually. This is one of the reasons why using a Show approach can help increase the message you're trying to get across.

5 HACKS FOR EFFECTIVE SHOWING

Here are a few shortcuts to help improve your approach to delivering messages using the Show mode.

1. Visually map the step

When you want to show someone the steps or actions that can be taken, fast-track their understanding by visually mapping them down on a piece of paper, whiteboard or tablet. This will make it easier for them to see what to do and the action sequence you recommend.

2. Map with colour and texture

To enhance your visual mapping of a concept or message, emphasise particular points by using different-coloured ink or whiteboard markers so others can visually identify things that are similar or different.

3. Create a model or diagram

A model is a visual representation of your key message and usually includes shapes such as squares, circles and triangles. The model can be labelled so others can follow the key points. Common models include pyramids, overlapping circles or two-box by two-box quadrants.

4. Demonstrate what you mean

Depending on the message and the situation, sometimes it's better to physically show people what you want them to do. Performing the task while they watch makes it easier for them to replicate it. An added benefit of rolling up your sleeves and demonstrating what to do is that it shows you're able to complete the task yourself and you don't mind doing it.

5. Observe someone else

Getting a third party to show how a specific task is done is a common method used in the workplace. Alternatively, you can access thousands of videos on the internet (or internal server).

WHEN SHOULD YOU SHOW?

The Show mode helps to improve communication through visual means. There are a number of instances when you should use the Show mode:

- when you're teaching someone something new, showing them or drawing the steps helps them learn the process more easily
- when you demonstrate how to do something, it's easier for people to understand it than only being told
- when you're explaining something that's difficult to understand or complex in nature, a visual explanation can help get the message across.

Ask

Using the Ask approach shifts the communication dynamics from you to the person you're asking. This is a very different approach from telling or showing because the focus shifts from the leader to the individual they're communicating with.

Asking enables a leader to engage the other person in a way that invites open discussion and the mutual sharing of ideas. It also demonstrates that the leader values the other person's ideas and perspective, which strengthens the relationship even further.

So how do you Ask? You simply shift the attention to the other person by first asking a question. There are two types of question that you can use to solicit an honest discussion: open and closed.

OPEN QUESTIONS

When you ask an open question, you're seeking information from the individual's perspective to allow them the opportunity to get involved. Open questions encourage people to respond from their point of view and to provide more of a response than a typical 'yes' or 'no' answer. Open questions generally start with one of the following words:

- *What:* 'What steps do you think we need to put in place to allow us to take advantage of the current situation?'
- *Who:* 'Who do you believe needs to be on the team to have the right mix of skills and experience to ensure the project is successful?'

- *Where:* 'Where do you believe we need to allocate the most resources to start fixing the decrease in market share?'
- *When:* 'When do you think we can start executing the plan?'
- *How:* 'How do you think we should increase our market share?'
- *Why:* 'Why do you think our competitors changed their strategy from value to price?'

Although it's a simple approach, asking someone any of these open questions — and getting them to think about their response and provide their thoughts and perspective — enables you to identify the level of understanding that they currently have around a particular issue, which is another way to assess people's expertise and contextual capabilities.

CLOSED QUESTIONS

When you ask a closed question you're confirming an assumption. Most of the time this ends in a one-word response (typically 'yes' or 'no') and consequently ends the conversation. While this is still an Ask technique, it's generally limited in its effectiveness because it can result in someone feeling as if they're being interrogated or on a witness stand. Closed questions generally start with one of the following words:

- *Do:* 'Do you think you used the right approach when you executed that plan?'
- *Could:* 'Could you do it better?'
- *Have:* 'Have you got it right?'
- *If:* 'If this doesn't work, your team is screwed, isn't it?'
- *Are:* 'Are you ready to do something differently?'

Closed questions can put people on the defence — and if you use the wrong tone of voice, they can feel like they're being attacked. There may be times when you need to ask a closed question to get confirmation of something. However, if you want to empower people it's best to ask more open questions than closed questions.

5 HACKS FOR EFFECTIVE ASKING

Here are a few shortcuts to help improve your approach to delivering messages using the Ask mode.

1. Ask without judgement

When asking someone for their viewpoint or thoughts, suspend judgement. As Stephen Covey states in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood'. Avoid making a judgement (or comment) until you have allowed them to share their perspective. They may know something that you're not yet aware of.

2. Ask in a supportive way

It can be challenging for someone to share their ideas honestly if they feel they're being interrogated.

3. Ask open questions

Encourage people to share what they're thinking without fear of repercussions by using open questions. This demonstrates that you value their input and you don't feel you have to be doing all of the talking.

4. Share wisdom

When someone is asked an open question it provides them with an opportunity to share their perspective and their wisdom about something. This is also a chance for a leader to assess how well someone has grasped the full perspective of certain situations, as well as the depth of their problem-solving ability.

5. Demonstrate that you're willing to listen

When you ask an open question, it demonstrates that you're willing to listen and even learn. It shows that you don't have all of the answers and increases the sphere of influence by encouraging others to share.

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WHEN SHOULD YOU ASK?

The Ask mode is one of the most effective approaches for encouraging and mentoring individuals. There are a number of instances when you should use the Ask mode:

- when you want to get an individual's perspective and demonstrate that you value their input
- when you need additional information that you may not be aware of
- when you want to assess the current capabilities of an individual. By asking them specific questions you can often identify whether they have any knowledge around the specific area.

Hacking your communication sequence

To be a truly effective leader you should use all three approaches when you communicate—and you need to know when to Tell, when to Show and when to Ask. Many leaders fall into the habit of just telling when things get challenging. Resist this temptation. Although telling can be viewed as easier and is often justified as being the most time efficient, it doesn't build or strengthen relationships or capabilities, which are requirements for longer term success and are critical when working with a team.

I worked with one leader who realised she wasn't starting off her conversations the correct way and often defaulted to telling her team what they needed to do. After becoming more aware of this default approach she started recording her conversations. Before the conversation she would hit the record app on her iPhone. Afterwards she would listen to the recording and assess how she started the communication. Although this is a drastic step, she was quickly able to identify where she was going wrong, which made it easier for her to hear what she could do differently (she never shared the recordings and she deleted them afterwards).

Many times we have a one-on-one conversation where we believe everything went well. However, in reviewing their approach many leaders realise they could have taken a slightly different approach that would have been more effective.

Take the time to hack your approach. When working with individuals, start with the Ask approach to get their perspective. Then shift to a Show approach where you can contribute your thoughts. You can finish by telling them the specific way forward, which will incorporate a number of their ideas.

CASE STUDY

Matt Church

Founder and Chairman, Thought Leaders Global

In today's fast-paced world it can be difficult to stand out from the norm and be known as a thought leader. Matt Church is the exception. As a prolific author of eight books including *Amplifiers* and, more recently, *NEXT*, Matt has an ability to inspire people to think by expertly delivering key messages and weaving them together in a way that motivates them to take action. Because of his unique ability to communicate with deep focus and commercial clarity, he has become known as the experts' expert, helping many of the best thinkers in the world become the best in the world.

Matt is the founder of Thought Leaders, which runs the extremely successful Thought Leaders Business School (TLBS). Although they offer a range of educational programs, their most popular is a 12-month program that assists individual consultants to capture, package and deliver their unique ideas to their clients following a curriculum that Matt developed over the past 25 years. Essentially, Matt teaches experts how to be commercially smart. Over the years more than 1000 people have participated in the curriculum and the combined income of the current 150 TLBS students is more than $72 million — and is projected to reach $100 million in the near future.

Matt studied sports science at the University of New South Wales and in 1993 was voted Australian Fitness Leader of the Year and was the Asia–Pacific Master Trainer for Step Reebok — initiating the step aerobics global phenomenon. In 2000, ABC published his Chemistry of Success series and his book *Adrenalin Junkies* became a national bestseller and was published in five countries. Because of his innate ability to capture ideas and communicate them in unique ways, Matt moved from corporate wellness to conference speaking and quickly rose to the top of the profession. He is known for his ability to blend inspiration, education and entertainment to create world-class presentations.

Because of his success as a professional speaker and the large number of people who sought him out to teach them what he'd achieved, in 2001 Matt founded Thought Leaders. He views his role as being the leader of this tribe, which enables people to change the way they communicate so clients can understand their message and use it to improve their approach.

In 2014 Matt was inducted into the Professional Speaker Hall of Fame and was globally recognised by the International Federation of Professional Speakers as one of the top 21 most influential people in the industry around the world. In addition, his teaching around communication and the delivery of ideas has created over 100 published authors who were influenced by Matt and the Thought Leaders tribe in providing insights into the way they communicate.

Matt challenges the traditional perspective of communication by turning typical methods on their head and offering a range of solutions that people can use to get their ideas communicated in an effective way. He has created a communication method that captures the essence of an idea, which he calls an Intellectual Property (IP) Snapshot. A range of ideas are identified and captured, enabling leaders to ensure their message is understood.

(*continued*)

CASE STUDY

The IP Snapshot has five key components that are used to craft a message:

1) a visual model that provides perspective
2) a metaphor that people can relate to
3) a key point or concept that is being made
4) a case study that provides content
5) a story that allows listeners to connect to the message.

This simple format allows leaders to take a message and deliver it in either a Tell, Show or Ask mode that Matt has expanded so it can be adapted and used by authors, trainers, mentors, facilitators and coaches. In addition, he teaches others how to craft keynote presentations that are full of stories and metaphors, develop visual models using geometric shapes, and find ways to ask questions to draw the best out of people and provide them with insights that they had not considered. Matt has found a way to hack communication to a new level—and to inspire thousands and thousands of others to do the same.

SELF-HACK
Tell, Show or Ask?

Use the Tell-Show-Ask strategy to hack how you communicate in the workplace so you ensure you're communicating to your team clearly.

Hack 1: Tell

- Tell, don't yell.
- Telling is *not* interrogating.
- Tell to save time.
- Tell from their perspective.
- Tell a story or your vision.

Hack 2: Show

- Visually map the steps.
- Map with colour and texture.
- Create a model or diagram.
- Demonstrate what you mean.
- Observe someone else.

Hack 3: Ask

- Ask without judgement.
- Ask in a supportive way.
- Ask open questions.
- Share wisdom.
- Demonstrate that you're willing to listen.

Hack 4: Use the Tell-Show-Ask strategy

- Think about the most recent interactions you had with two or three workplace individuals where you asked them to do something. How did you start the conversation? Did you start by telling them, showing them or asking them what you needed?
- Reflect on their initial response. What did their facial expressions and body language say to you? Were they open and receptive or cautious and defensive?

- If I had interviewed these people afterwards, what would they have said about the way you approached them: that you empowered them to want to achieve even better results or that they felt you didn't trust them?
- If you realise you could have improved your communication with these people, take a few minutes to write down what you could have done differently and more effectively.
  - If you'd started with a Show approach, what could you have mapped out with them?
  - If you'd started with an Ask approach, identify the specific questions you could have asked to increase their understanding.
- Track the number of times you start directing someone to do something using a Tell approach. Compare this with the number of times you use the Show or Ask approach. Make it a game: see what your tally is at the end of one week. The goal for any leader who wants to be more effective is to have more asking and showing interactions and fewer telling interactions.
- If you want to truly build your leadership and strengthen your relationships with your direct reports, ask them about the interactions you have with them. Ask them how you could improve your approach and how they would like to interact with you. This can be another way to strengthen your bond.

Chapter 4

Delegation

Most leaders don't know how to delegate effectively. They think that telling someone to do something will achieve the results they're looking for, and as a result they're often disappointed. Have you ever delegated a specific task or project to someone and they didn't complete it? Or did you delegate a task to someone and the result was so poor that you had to do it again yourself?

We've seen how previous generations of managers bought into Fredrick Taylor's philosophy that staff should not do any thinking, but wait to be told what to do and how to do it. This is completely out of step with the way things need to be done today.

In the digital age, with all information accessible to all staff at any time, the traditional authority of people in leadership positions is being questioned. In fact, many of the younger generation look at a person in a leadership role and ask the questions (in their head or directly): 'What are you going to do for me as my manager?'; 'What can you offer me to keep me motivated and excited to be here?'; and 'You are not one of those old-school leaders who thinks they still know everything and is going to micromanage me are you?'

They believe leaders should earn their title by demonstrating their skills and capabilities and the ability to teach and mentor staff to do the same. The traditional corporate ladder where the next person in line for a leader's job was the one with the highest seniority is no longer accepted as an effective way to do business.

I remember working with a sales manager who was complaining about his younger sales consultants. 'They just don't want to follow instructions. When I was in their position, when my manager asked me to do something I didn't question him; I just did it.'

He was living in the past when a person's job title demanded blind respect. What he missed is that his sales staff wanted to know why they were doing what he wanted them to do. They wanted to understand the reasoning behind it and have a chance to be involved and actively contribute to the plan, rather than following orders in a robotic manner. They became de-motivated when he didn't provide this information.

His sales staff had lost all respect for him as their manager because what they experienced from him was a series of orders barked at them. The environment they walked into every morning put them face to face with a dictator who treated them as if they were dispensable. They didn't feel informed, included or valued by him. No wonder his staff turnover was almost 70 per cent and he couldn't keep a sales consultant for longer than four weeks. The unfortunate thing was that he was blaming all of the poor sales performance issues on his 'younger staff' rather than recognising that he was the problem. Because he couldn't delegate or connect with his staff he wasn't a leader worth following and his sales staff let him know that by leaving.

Why leaders don't delegate

Everyone knows that a leader can't possibly complete all the tasks required of their department by themselves, but this doesn't stop many from trying. A 2012 *Harvard Business Review* article on time management titled 'Why aren't you delegating?' found that almost 50 per cent of the 332 companies surveyed were concerned about their employees' delegation skills and most of them didn't offer any training on how to delegate. Too often, experienced leaders don't delegate to others for two main reasons:

- *time:* they falsely believe they can do the task more quickly themselves, rather than taking the time to explain to one of their staff what they want done and how they want it done. This may be true at first, but if the task needs to be repeated, the leader will again have to invest this time. When this happens, the staff member is also missing out on an opportunity to grow and be challenged with new initiatives, which would keep them fulfilled and engaged in their role

- *control:* many are afraid of putting their reputation, their KPIs and their performance objectives in the hands of someone else. This is especially true with leaders who have a tendency to be perfectionists and believe that no-one can do things as well as they can. This delusion often results in the leader being overwhelmed and isolated from their staff as they scramble to complete tasks they shouldn't be doing because they're working on those tasks instead of doing the important things that need to be done.

The delegation model

So how do you ensure when you delegate a task to someone that they will fully commit and own it?

The delegation model shown in figure 4.1 provides a framework you can use to hack your approach so that you clearly and effectively delegate tasks and empower staff to achieve results.

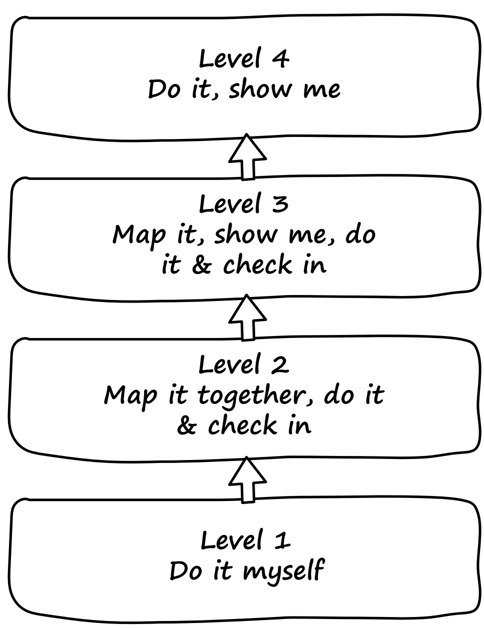

Figure 4.1: the delegation model

It's easy not to take the time to choose the right person to delegate a task to. Before you take any action you need to identify the task that you want to delegate and identify the best person to delegate the task to. You can select the candidate based on their knowledge, skills or experience. You can also make a selection based on their motivation and willingness to be challenged and stretched.

The most common mistake

The most common mistake made when delegating a task is to start at the highest level of delegation, which is level 4: handing off a task, leaving it with the person you've delegated it to and waiting to see the results. This is what most leaders do, and it's the reason why many of them end up taking more time and fixing more problems than they anticipated.

I worked with a young leader who was in one of her first management positions and had eight direct reports working for her, and a total team size of 50 staff. She was one of the top performers in her previous role and was extremely skilled at the team leader role; however, management was a big step up for her. Because she had previously been one of the team leaders, she wanted to make sure she made the transition from peer to boss as smoothly as possible.

So when it came to a specific task that needed to be delegated, she went to one of her staff and asked them to complete it—classic level 4 delegation. Then she waited to see the results.

After waiting a couple of days she went back to the person she had delegated to and asked to see the result. The response was a common one: 'I haven't had time to complete it'. Given that she was new to the role she decided to give the person a second chance and asked him to make sure that he completed the task in the next two days. When she checked in with him again, he came up with another reason why he hadn't completed it. Given that she was now behind schedule to have this task completed, she took the task back from the staff member and spent the next two hours completing it herself in order to submit it to her leadership team—which meant the other tasks on her to-do list were pushed back.

When I started working with her she had given up on delegating anything to this staff member. When I asked her why, she replied that she couldn't risk her reputation on his inability to get things done. She also justified that she could have saved all of the headaches and hassle — not to mention the time lost — if she'd just chosen to complete the task herself instead of delegating it. She'd made the common mistake of going from level 4 to level 1 delegation. After spending time with me learning about the four levels of delegation, she discovered a better way of delegating — one that worked and was a win–win for her and her staff.

The four delegation levels

So exactly what are the four delegation levels?

Level 1: Do it myself

Level 1 delegation is about delegating the task to yourself as the leader, which at its core is not delegating the task at all. This is a common knee-jerk pattern that I see when a leader delegates at the wrong level — especially those who are in a new management role — and end up taking the task back off the staff member. Generally they delegate the task with good intentions, often wanting to be seen as being on the same side as their staff and not wanting to come across as being overly pushy or micromanaging them. They commonly give a staff member one or two chances to complete a task, then they take it back from them. This is usually because they're not happy with the quality of the work or the time frame could not be met.

The problem with this pattern is that it establishes a new norm or routine for the relationship. It sets up the dynamic that if a staff member is very busy, they can choose not to do the additional tasks requested because they know that their leader will complete the task anyway. So, in a way, the staff member starts to manage the manager. To be clear, level 1 delegation is the lowest level and should be avoided. It generally ends up in a leader who is resentful of their staff, or staff who feel the leader holds on to things so tightly that they never get the opportunity to be involved.

Level 2: Map it together, do it and check in

The first Australian business I owned was a conference and team-building company. Part of our strategy was to partner with a number of five-star resorts located in different regions around Sydney to develop an onsite team-building program that they could offer to their conference organisers. The aim was to break up the typical 'death by PowerPoint' presentations—which are all too common at two- to three-day conferences and which put delegates to sleep with information overload. The main reason I wanted to partner with them was to quickly grow our sales force. When we started, the business consisted of me, my business partner and one other person and we didn't want to adopt the traditional approach of starting up a business by taking out a loan to pay for a number of staff salaries.

After a few months we had an expanded sales force of almost 25 conference sales staff selling our conference programs—none of which we had to pay salaries for because they were all resort staff! This was so successful that to keep up with demand we had to hire and train staff to run our conference programs at multiple locations.

One of these new staff members was a manager named Claire, who had been running a number of small team-building programs at a site that was now one of our locations. Given she had experience running similar programs, after a brief orientation of our programs and operations I took a step back to allow her to take charge of her new role. Claire was an incredible, enthusiastic, can-do manager who would act quickly to make things happen. Her challenge was that she had never experienced working on so many team-building programs in such a tight time frame with so many different clients. Although her strength was in getting things done and charming the customers, her organisational skills and ability to plan were virtually nonexistent. We were starting to get comments from clients and staff that things were not as organised as they expected and as the CEO it was my responsibility to do something about it.

I remember setting up our first one-on-one meeting to discuss what needed to be rectified in relation to her approach. When Claire came into my office, before I could say anything, she started the conversation by informing me that she was struggling with the large number of programs being delivered, and with her staff, and was not sure how to turn things around. She was completely committed to making it happen but she admitted that she wasn't sure what to do. Wow, was I happy (or lucky!) that I didn't have to raise the issue.

Rather than using the Tell approach, I asked her a question: 'Do you think we need to map a strategy to help you get back on top of everything?' To help capture her reply, I grabbed a piece of paper and a pen and began drawing a mind map of the areas she identified. I also added a couple of other ideas to the mind map (see figure 4.2) and we very quickly created a plan together. There was no debate, no moment of defensiveness, and afterwards we both felt even more committed to working together and to making the plan work.

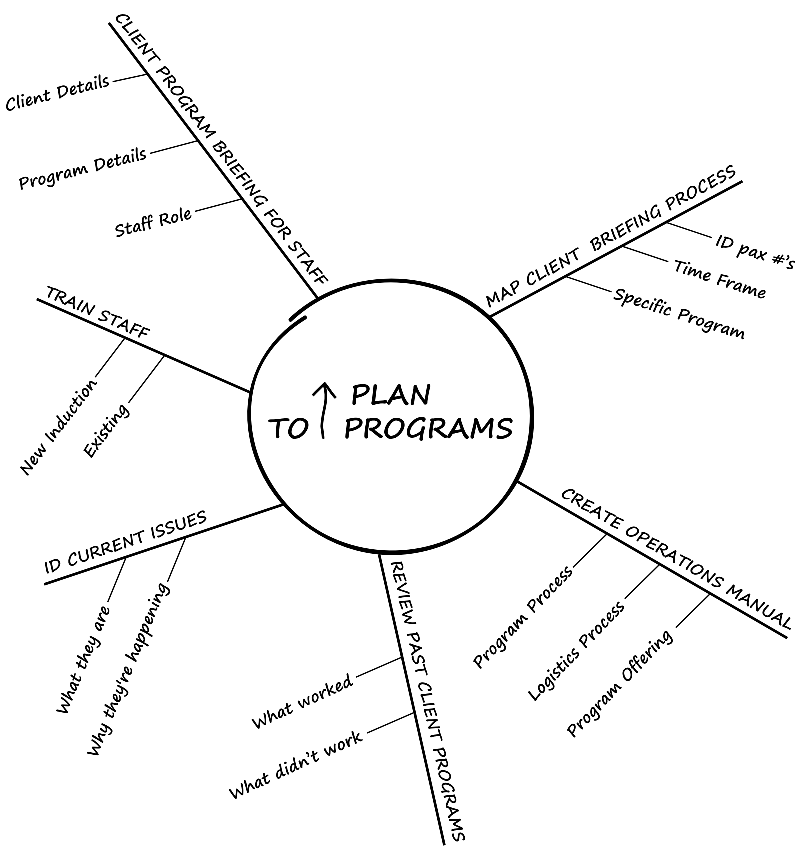

Figure 4.2: a level 2 mind map

A LEVEL 2 DELEGATION PROCEDURE

Here's a procedure you can follow during a level 2 delegation meeting.

1. Map the actions or ideas together

Level 2 delegation starts with mapping the actions together. It's not about you, the leader, telling a staff member to take notes and write down the actions you want them to follow. It's about grabbing a sheet of paper, a whiteboard or an iPad and working together to identify actions that can be taken to complete the task or solve the problem. The best way to start this mapping is by asking the staff member to identify these steps. This empowers them to share their ideas and allows you to mentor or coach them along the way by adding actions that they may have overlooked.

2. Sequence the activities numerically

Once you've mapped out the actions or ideas that will help complete the task or project, you can identify together the most effective and efficient order in which these actions should be completed. The easiest way to do this is for you to ask the staff member what action they think they should take first, then second and so on. To make it clear, write the numbers next to each action on the mind map so both of you can see the way forward (see figure 4.3). You can also guide them by sharing some of your insights and experience.

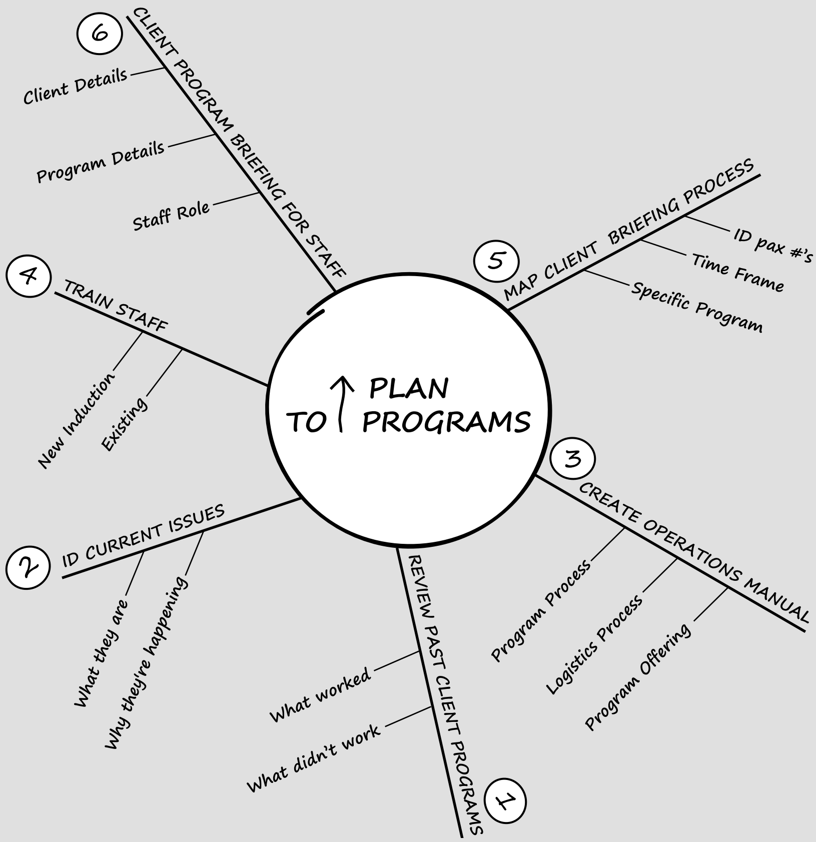

Figure 4.3: a level 2 mind map with numbered sequence

3. Identify the time frame and check-in dates

After you've identified the sequence and numbered the actions to be taken, discuss the time frames associated with the task. Generally, the simplest way is to start with the last action that needs to be taken and write the date deadline next to it. Then select one or two other actions as check-ins between yourself and your staff member. Write these check-in dates on the mind map as well (see figure 4.4, overleaf). These dates are when you will get an update from your staff member as to where they are at. This is an important step to add because it allows you both to discuss any unforeseen circumstances or whether the time frame needs to be adjusted (or not adjusted, depending on the situation).

(*continued*)

A LEVEL 2 DELEGATION PROCEDURE (*CONT'D*)

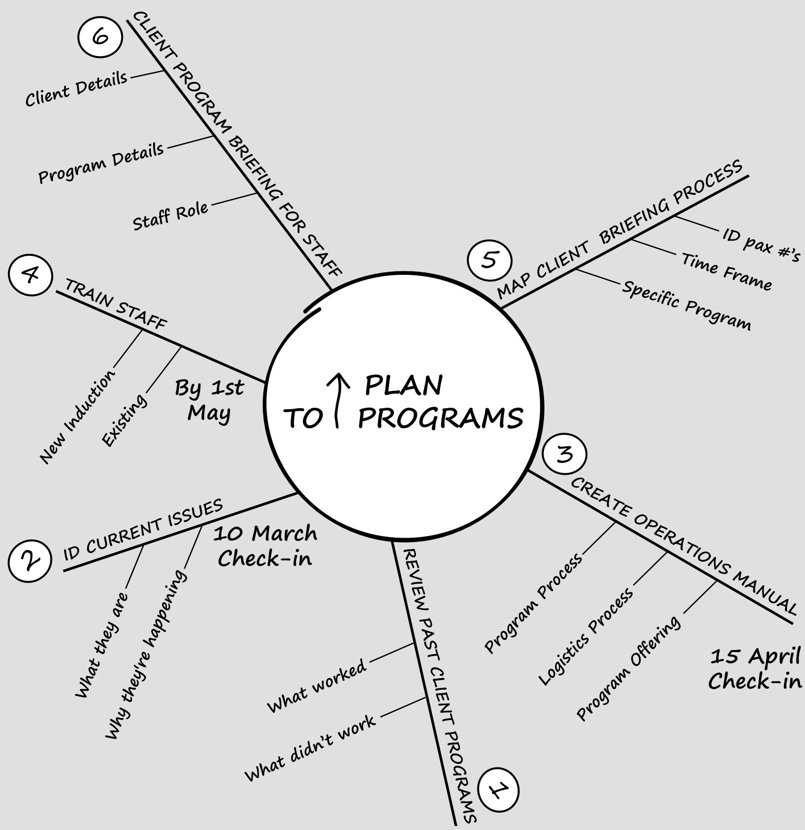

Figure 4.4: a level 2 mind map with sequence, time frame and check-in

4. Take a photo

The next part of level 2 is to take a photo (or scan) of the finished mind map with the agreed steps, sequence and time frames so both of you have a record of the plan to refer to.

5. Check in on the agreed dates

During the check-ins, it's useful to have and refer back to your mind-map plan. If for some reason the staff member hasn't taken action as agreed, you have a record of your agreement and can ask them why they're not on track. Your choice of words when asking them this

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question is important because it reminds them that you developed the plan together and they made a choice to not follow it. Suitable wording would be, 'Why did you choose to do something different from what we agreed to?' There may be a valid reason for them not following the plan. However, if there isn't one, this is an effective way to remind them of what they agreed to.

THE BENEFITS OF LEVEL 2 DELEGATION

There are several benefits of delegating tasks to staff at level 2.

- *Relationships are strengthened.* Level 2 delegation strengthens relationships. This is because rather than taking a typical top-down approach, you're working with and supporting your staff member to identify their plan. When you guide them, they respond in a positive way because it was a collaborative effort.
- *Skill gaps and capabilities are identified sooner.* I recommend you start delegating at level 2 regardless of how long your staff members have been in a role or industry. Many leaders have commented to me that their HR team hired someone with many years of experience who would be a great addition to their team. However, when these leaders worked with the new staff members and asked them to map a number of tasks or identify ways to solve problems they realised that they didn't have experience in identifying activities for addressing issues. By spending time with their staff at level 2, these leaders were able to understand their capabilities sooner and then train them further. This is a much more effective approach than just handing off tasks at level 4 to an experienced person and being disappointed because you expected them to develop a plan similar to what you had in mind. More importantly, it allows you to coach and develop them to identify activities and solve problems using a common process that can benefit an entire team.

- *Over time it will save you time.* One very experienced leader who started using level 2 delegation realised that it took more of his time than if he delegated at level 4 or did the task himself. However, over time he started noticing that by using level 2 delegation he improved the capabilities of his people and they started to problem solve a range of tasks and projects in a similar way. This led to an overall increase in efficiency and what he viewed as a reduction in the amount of time his staff needed to identify options and map a pathway to move forward.

When you reach level 3 delegation you'll save even more time.

Level 3: Map it, show me, do it and check in

This level of delegation is often a natural progression for a leader to use with an individual with whom they've been delegating at level 2. Rather than suggesting for the leader and the individual to work on mapping the actions required to complete a task, the leader asks the individual to map the actions on their own. They still use a piece of paper, whiteboard or tablet; however, the individual takes the time to map out what they understand to be the actions, the sequence and a time frame that they can work to.

Once they have mapped out their actions, they show them to the leader. This allows the leader to add any new aspects or even updates that they may have just received that can assist the individual. This also ensures that both people are across the plan and agree to the sequence and time frames, with time frames often being a discussion point, depending on current workload. As with level 2 delegation, the leader takes a photo of the plan for future reference, the staff member retains the original plan and they both check in to ensure things are on track and that there are no issues.

THE BENEFITS OF LEVEL 3 DELEGATION

Once a leader trains their staff to delegate at level 3, wonderful things start to happen. There are a number of benefits of level 3 delegation.

- *It encourages others to step up to be leaders.* One of the long-term goals of any leader is to develop their staff to step up and become leaders themselves. This is what starts happening when you use level 3 delegation. Individuals start feeling as if they are being trusted and empowered to use their own abilities to identify actions and solutions. They enjoy the opportunity to think at a higher level as well as contribute in a more meaningful way.

- *It saves you time*. When you get people to proactively map out tasks and solutions to everyday issues, things start to get easier. With level 3 delegation a leader can see the activities and the process and still contribute, without having to take the time to sit down and guide the individual through the process as happens in level 2 delegation.
- *Individuals start using the process with others*. A middle-level leader I worked with who had developed her staff up to level 3 delegation noticed after a while that they started using the same delegation process with their direct reports. This resulted in an increase in efficiency as well as a more empowered culture because people felt they were contributing above and beyond their normal job tasks.

Level 4: Do it, show me

This is the highest level of delegation. It's usually where most leaders start and, as we've already seen, often fail in the way they delegate because they attempt this level too early. However, if a leader starts an individual at level 2, then develops them to level 3, the transition to level 4 delegation becomes easy. If you trained someone at levels 2 and 3, when they start taking action on their own at level 4 you will be familiar with how they are planning and solving tasks and less concerned about their ability to identify, map, sequence and execute.

I have worked with a number of CEOs who have left one company and gone to another. Almost instantaneously, they often take two to three staff members with them to this next posting. When I ask them why, one of the most common responses is that they can trust the staff to do the things that need to be done because they have worked together in the past at developing plans and getting others to execute on them. In essence, these CEOs have spent enough time with these senior leaders that they can delegate at level 4 and know how their staff will approach the task, and they trust their ability to see it through.

When leaders get their staff to level 4, the highest level of delegation, everyone's lives become easier. More importantly, these leaders have more time to work 'on' the business and trust their staff to keep everything else on track.

More delegation hacks

There are a few variations to the delegation model that are important for a leader to be aware of. In sharing the delegation model hacks, I've had the opportunity to hear firsthand how leaders have adapted (or hacked) this model to work in different situations.

Delegating to peers

A number of leaders have used the delegation model to delegate to peers. Because the model uses the Ask approach it can be used to create a collaborative method that can assist both of you. The leader will generally start by asking their peer if they can assist them in helping to solve an issue or fix a problem. This can also be a good strategy to help identify any issues that are occurring between departments, or if one department is not completing tasks that are necessary for the other department to function. Working together and starting to map the issues at level 2 can be a more effective approach than telling others they need to fix or do something differently.

Together the leader and their peer identify the activities that need to be actioned and they also label who will take that action. Some actions will require both parties to be involved to solve the issue. Regardless of who needs to take the action, this approach allows a leader and their peer to work together towards a win-win outcome.

Delegating to a team

I've worked with leaders who adapted the delegation model with their teams. They used a similar approach to map out areas that needed to be overhauled and improved. They used a whiteboard to capture everyone's ideas and also passed the whiteboard markers around to allow everyone a chance to add their ideas. Rather than having a typical group problem-solving debate, with the loudest person in the room taking control, they found by mapping the ideas and concepts onto the whiteboard they reached common ground in less time.

For the more complex issues, they would start with a new space on the whiteboard and map that area in more detail. They also collectively identified the sequence of the actions they were going to take, who was going to take them, the time frames they would use to check in and how they would check in. Because they had mapped it together on a whiteboard, everyone could visualise the actions, which allowed the group to walk out with a sense of accomplishment because everyone could contribute and it was the team's plan, not an individual manager's plan.

Delegating upwards

A few years ago I worked with a director general who was employed by the government. I remember meeting with her and listening to her frustration about a political minister who was not very supportive of some projects that her department needed to get approved. She had prepared a number of 75–100-page ministerial reports that provided very detailed, step-by-step recommendations, a budget and methodology to implement the project successfully. The challenge that she was having was in getting the very busy minister, who had many competing priorities, to allocate the necessary time to look at her department's submissions.

The strategy that we created was to adapt the delegation model to enable her to engage this particular minister. She worked at level 3 and created a mind map of the specific program that she wanted to pitch. This allowed her to visually identify what she wanted to put onto the page, the sequence and the budget for each of the main steps. She also added the three main benefits for the community and how this could be linked back to the minister. She didn't follow this by going to the minister and showing him the mind map as this would have been counterproductive because the best way to influence someone is to involve them in the creation of the idea, not just give them the details of what could be done.

In the next meeting, the director general mentioned that she needed the minister's help and expertise to map out a program that would massively benefit the community and, given his ability to get things done, she wanted his ideas. She mapped out the program framework visually on a piece of paper and the minister even added a few ideas that she hadn't thought of. After about 15 minutes the minister said it looked like a great program and asked how soon she thought she could put together a ministerial report so he could view the details and sign off on the program. Because the minister was involved with the initial brainstorming for the program, everything shifted. He viewed the project as something that he had created and therefore was fully behind it. She was also pleased because she had a $10 million program concept green lighted and supported faster than normal. A great hack on the delegation model!

CASE STUDY

Kay Spencer

Chairperson and former CEO, NARTA

Imagine being the first woman to be appointed a director of a very traditional, male-oriented Japanese company. On top of that, imagine that this was in the field of consumer electronics, which is also a very male-dominated industry. This is one of Kay Spencer's many achievements over her leadership career.

When Kay joined Sharp Corporation Australia as Microwave Oven Coordinator, she quickly demonstrated her ability to train and develop others and was eventually promoted to National Sales Manager, overseeing all categories. In 1996 the Japanese Managing Director in Australia lobbied for her appointment as a director back in Japan — a first for their company and all because of her ability to lead a team and achieve results.

Kay is current Chairperson and former CEO for NARTA, the National Australian Retail Traders Association, which has a combined buying power of over $4 billion, positioning it at over 25 per cent of the retail market. NARTA is a conduit between members and suppliers that enables them to leverage their buying power and efficiencies. It helps combine members' buying power in media, advertising, finance, IT and a number of other areas. In the early days, it was dominated by small, independent retailers. However, under

Kay's leadership it has grown to now include major corporations such as Myer, David Jones, JB Hi-Fi, Bing Lee and others.

Kay's leadership style includes an open-door policy, which creates a culture of staff who are engaged and committed to making things happen. One of her main philosophies is encouraging and developing her team to allow them to step up to the next level. When she delegates projects, she ensures her team knows what is expected of them and that they are held accountable. Timelines are identified and one-on-one check-ins are a regular part of the process she uses to help her team develop to the next level. Staff regularly seek her out for advice and update her along the way because they value her insights, which emanate from the dedication she gave to building NARTA into what it has become — a major player in the industry.

Growing up on a farm in rural New Zealand, Kay knew she wanted to explore the world but wasn't sure how she would start. She travelled to Australia where she applied for a position at a Waltons department store. In the interview Kay was asked if she had sold before. 'All my life', she replied confidently — and with that she landed her first job. She was interested in, and talented at, selling electronics, which required her to have a thick skin, being the only woman in the department. Kay was a natural at selling and influencing others and she was quickly identified for the management training program. In addition, she showed a unique ability to understand the technical differences between products, which saw her promoted to a buyer's role, identifying and selecting products that would be sold throughout the stores. While implementing training sessions to allow staff to learn about new products and sell them more effectively Kay's leadership skills developed.

One of the things Kay learned early on — and that she continues to encourage in her executive leadership team — is to get the facts and talk about them. In addition, she encourages her team to be unique and keep their own identity. As a woman in a primarily male-dominated industry, she has always been committed to

(continued)

CASE STUDY

maintaining her values to guide her along the way. She also views mentoring as one of the keys that leaders need to continue developing to enable progress. Kay's ability to delegate and develop her team has allowed NARTA to grow its buying power from $320 million to over $4 billion, an inspiring result from a leader who is admired by the NARTA staff, members and suppliers.

Kay recently stepped aside as day-to-day CEO and continues as Chairperson. When asked about what prompted the shift she once again demonstrates her depth as a leader: 'I had a team of leaders that needed to take the next step. They were ready and I didn't want to stand in their way; there was too much talent to lose'. Even as she moved into her new role, Kay was finding ways to hack her leadership and prepare the next generation of leaders.

SELF-HACK
Delegating tasks

An effective leader needs to delegate tasks to others in a way that inspires, develops and empowers them. Here are the hacks you can use to delegate more effectively.

Hack 1: Identify the tasks to delegate

- Make a list of tasks that you currently action yourself and that you could delegate to someone else.
- There are generally two types of task that you can delegate:
  - *administrative:* an administrative task is something that is operational and that someone else could be doing, especially if it is part of their role or function
  - *project:* a specific project task could be used as a way to develop or engage one of your staff in a new way.

Hack 2: Identify who to delegate the task to

- Think about who would be the best person to delegate the task to.
- If it's an administrative task, your staff member may be familiar with it already and getting them to do it may be easy because it's an extension of their current role.
- If the task is one that will develop or engage someone further, consider why you would select that person and what current knowledge, skills and expertise they may have to assist them to complete the task. Also think about how this will further develop their skills and capabilities and what it may be able to achieve overall for you and your organisation.

Hack 3: Delegate at level 2

- Once you've selected someone to perform a particular task, hand it over to them by following the steps in level 2 of the delegation model.

1. Map the actions or ideas together

- Organise a meeting with the relevant staff member to discuss the project or task.

- Write the task in the middle of a piece of paper or a tablet (or on a whiteboard) with a circle around it (see figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: starting an activity mind map

- Ask the staff member what they think needs to be done to accomplish the task. (Resist the urge to tell them what this is!) As they share their ideas, map them down in the shape of a mind map with lines that radiate out from the centre task (as shown in figure 4.6). Feel free to add a few ideas if they miss them as this will allow you to coach them and ensure that everything has been identified. You may also notice that some of the things that are raised are actually subsections or components of other activities. Feel free to add them underneath the relevant activity as a group.

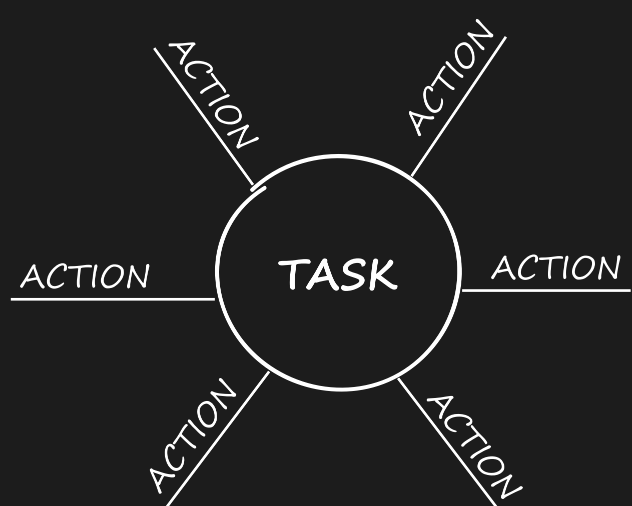

Figure 4.6: an activity mind map showing activities

2. Sequence the actions numerically

- Ask the staff member to identify the order in which they think the actions should be completed. Number the actions on the mind map in the order that they suggest, but ensure that you coach them as to the correct sequence as this could be an area they may not have knowledge around. See figure 4.7 as an example.

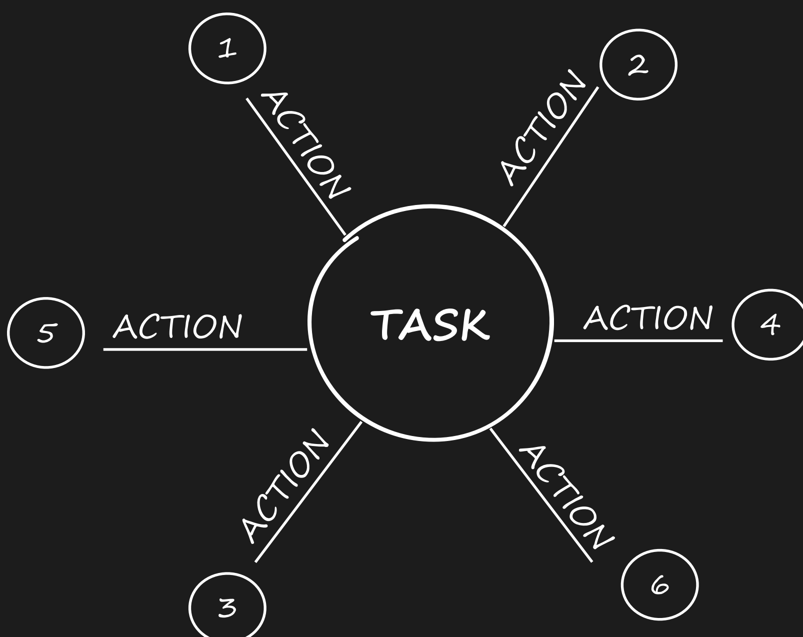

Figure 4.7: an activity mind map with number sequence

3. Identify the time frame and check-in dates

- Add a deadline for each action to the mind map to establish time frames.
- Ask your staff member which actions they want to check in with you on to show you what they have accomplished at each stage. Depending on the complexity of the task there may be four or five check-ins with dates, or for simple tasks there may only be a check-in halfway through the actions. Write the time frames next to the actions to signify the check-ins (see figure 4.8, overleaf).

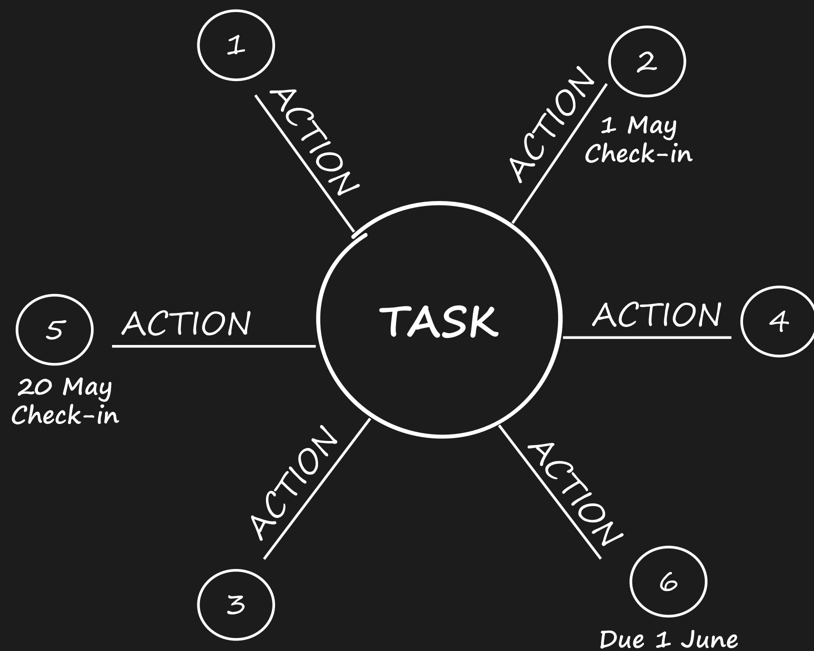

Figure 4.8: an activity mind map with number sequence, time frames and check-ins

4. Take a photo

- Take a photo of the mind map. This will remind you to follow up. If you take a photo (example shown in figure 4.9), you have a back-up of the plan just in case your staff member misplaces theirs. They should retain the original. This is important because it symbolises the ownership of this task to the individual and thus the accountability that goes with it.

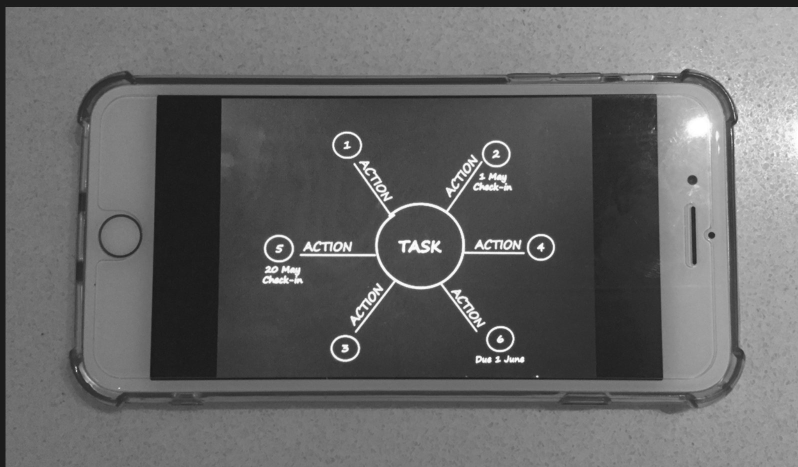

Figure 4.9: photo of a visual diagram

5. Check in on the agreed dates

- When an agreed check-in date comes along, ask the staff member to show you their plan and provide you with an update of what they have accomplished. Let them know that you want to see what they have done so you can fully understand it. If for some reason they didn't follow the agreed plan, ask them why. They may have been challenged along the way or they may have let the deadline slide due to workload.

Chapter 5
Coaching

One important skill all leaders should possess is the ability to coach their staff. The challenge is finding the time, given how busy most leaders are with competing priorities pulling them in multiple directions. But coaching has changed over time. In the 1960s and early 1970s when someone started a new job, they were quite often mentored by their boss, who took them under their wing for the first 90 days to help them integrate into the role. This used to be normal business practice because business moved much slower back then. There are three main reasons why leaders had — or had to have — more time in the past.

- *It used to take longer to learn a new job.* Before the days of personal computers and the internet, most tasks had to be performed manually, which was much slower and meant it took longer for people to learn new skills. In addition, systems and procedures varied greatly from one company to another, so when a new person started, they would have to learn everything from scratch.
- *Leaders' workloads were not as constant as they are today.* In the past, at 5 pm people would go home and leave work at work. Leaders didn't have email or mobile phones that swamped them at work or followed them home. Essentially they could 'turn off' when they left work to focus on the other important things in their lives, which reduced their overall stress. From a coaching perspective, this meant leaders had more headspace to coach staff at work.

- *Staff numbers have reduced.* As new technology entered the marketplace, work tasks became more streamlined and quicker to complete, meaning fewer staff were needed. I remember talking to a CFO who fondly recalled what it was like when he started in accounting. Everything was written and reported by hand in ledgers, and calculated using manual calculators. It took a tremendous amount of time and a large number of junior accountants to complete these transactions. When this CFO started working over 35 years ago there were 25 people in the accounting department calculating manually. With computer programs, electronic reporting and electronic money transfers, these functions are now overseen by seven people. However, the role of this CFO has become much more complex because he needs to be across more areas himself, reducing his available time and providing less time for coaching.

Regardless of the changes that have taken place in business, leaders need to identify ways to coach their staff.

How coaching differs from delegation

It's worth mentioning the difference between delegation and coaching. When a leader delegates, it usually involves handing over a task to someone else or adding to their role or responsibilities. Delegation is also about empowering the individual to start taking ownership of these tasks so the leader doesn't have to.

Coaching is about a leader providing feedback to someone about their performance. Coaching on individual performance can involve discussing areas of weakness, skills development, behavioural development or, in many instances, career development. Like delegation, coaching also uses the 'ask' communication approach as the primary method for assisting individuals in gaining insights and helping them to see things from a new perspective or influence them in a particular direction. While some of the strategies used in delegation are also used when coaching, coaching follows a different process to reach a different outcome.

Why does coaching work?

There are a number of reasons why coaching is a powerful tool for leaders to use with their staff.

- *Individual focus and tailored individual skills.* By taking the time to work one on one with an individual the importance and focus is on them, unlike in group training programs, which are generic. Coaching conversations can also be very personal and often will cover the strengths and weaknesses of the individual being coached. Coaching is often mindset and skills focused to allow the individual to feel supported by the leader in improving any areas they are still learning about.
- *Accountability.* With the numerous tasks and projects that continually bombard staff it can be easy for some of them to slide. Coaching provides a powerful accountability process, as the leader will continually follow up to get progress updates as well as provide guidance along the way.
- *Constructive feedback.* Leaders who effectively coach their direct reports will often provide feedback as to the current limitations or address mistakes that they have been making. A constructive leader will take the time to support their staff as well as challenge them to improve their approach and results. Individuals usually look forward to the next session if they know their leader will work with them to develop their capabilities.

These are some of the main reasons why coaching works. Many leaders know this intuitively; the challenge is making the time to coach an individual as well as how to coach them in a shorter amount of time and being clear on why they need coaching.

Reasons for coaching staff

There are several reasons why leaders should coach their staff. It's difficult to clarify what each individual coaching session should focus on because of the hundreds, if not thousands, of possible variables. However, there are three main reasons why leaders should coach their staff: to expand or shift mindsets, to address performance issues or for their career development. See the model shown in table 5.1.

Table 5.1: coaching an individual

Expands mindset	Individual needs to look at something in a new way to open their mind
Addresses performance issues	1. Behavioural/approach — the way they are doing things negatively affecting others 2. Capability/skills — they don't know how to complete a task in the most effective or efficient way
Offers career development	Opportunity to develop skills to assist staff in future roles

Mindset

There are times when a leader may need to shift the mindset of a direct report — maybe to open their mind to new possibilities or approaches, or to shift their mindset around a particular situation or view.

In one of my first full-time roles I worked for a national training and development company based in Atlanta, Georgia. This was in the 1990s and team building using the outdoors to facilitate quicker relationship development was all the rage. I was excited about the role because I had my master's degree in Communication and had previously researched and taught Communication — and my master's thesis at Central Michigan University was on teams. In addition, I had experience in the outdoors as an adventure guide so I was fortunate to have a broad range of skillsets to bring to the role. I was expecting to start facilitating corporate groups from day one. However, when I started, they asked if I would be operations manager for the company. They appreciated that I had the conceptual knowledge and had facilitated a number of leadership and team programs; however, they wanted me to learn their approach. The company had about 200 facilitators based around the country and we operated seven permanent team-building sites and had the capability to deliver portable team-building programs to a client's location of choice. It was an incredible opportunity because I learned the operational side of the business and, more importantly, a range of approaches from 200 different facilitators while they worked with leaders and teams.

Although I spent a number of years learning and facilitating corporate leadership and team programs with many Fortune 500 clients, one of my biggest learning curves came from a coaching session with Andy, my boss at the time. We were in the middle of one of the biggest portable team-building programs that we had ever organised, with almost 500 participants taking part. Because I had never worked on a program of this magnitude I made the mistake of sending some wrong equipment to a program on the other side of the country, which meant my team and I would have to scramble and work crazy hours to build new equipment on location beforehand.

When I returned to the office I wasn't happy about this mistake and was quite hard on myself because of the situation I'd put the team in. Andy was aware of the issues we had and noticed how my mindset had changed from being overly optimistic and can-do to doubt and questioning my abilities. One day, as he walked past my office he sat down in the chair across my desk and asked me how I was doing. I said 'fine', but he wasn't convinced. He mentioned that he'd noticed a change in my approach since I'd returned and asked me what had changed. This gave me the opportunity to share how I really felt and how disappointed I was that I'd made such a stupid mistake that cost the staff time and the company money. Then he did something that I was surprised about: he asked me some questions that I didn't expect, such as whether it caused the event to fail, whether it negatively affected the client's experience, and whether I intentionally went out of my way to make the staff work through the night to fix the problem.

I was lucky that the mistake hadn't affected the client (they were not aware of it) and that I didn't do it intentionally. He then said something to me that has stuck with me for many years: 'Keep this in perspective. Although you're worrying about this mistake now, in one year's time you won't even remember it'. He also let me know that nobody is perfect and that everyone makes mistakes, and he shared some that he'd made and pointed out some of the accomplishments I'd made that had impressed him. This conversation was a powerful one for me as a newer executive. In one quick coaching session Andy helped me turn my mindset around.

More importantly, he demonstrated what incredible leadership looked like because he created a connection with me when I needed it and helped to realign me to what was important.

Performance

Coaching may be needed to address a person's performance. Performance issues generally fall into two categories: behavioural or capability.

BEHAVIOURAL OR APPROACH ISSUES

Behavioural performance issues are often about how people approach tasks. Some people are not aware of the impact their performance has on others, which can lead to disagreements with other staff members. These behavioural issues are usually not about what the person is doing, but rather the way they're going about it. Leaders can't afford to ignore staff members who are achieving brilliant results but in the process are upsetting, isolating, belittling or bullying other staff.

CAPABILITY OR SKILL ISSUES

Capability performance issues relate to a person's current skill level when performing a particular task. It may be that they lack a specific skill because they weren't trained properly or they may know how to demonstrate the skill, but may not perform it consistently. Each of these capability issues needs to be addressed because organisations are so thin on staff that they can't afford to have anyone not performing at their best.

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So, coaching provides a process to address behavioural issues and encourage individuals to improve.

Career development

Many leaders also use coaching as a tool for career development. Rather than waiting for the annual performance review, they take the time to coach their staff towards future roles, including the skills needed and the tasks they would need to take on. Coaching processes can be used to create a personal development plan with individual staff members to map out the specific areas of training and new initiatives they could get
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involved in to build the skills they need to move into their next role. This empowers staff to want to step up, creates a more skilled workforce and enables leaders to delegate more of their tasks to others.

Critical coaching components

When effective leaders coach, they often ensure that they blend three key areas into a coaching session: motivation, goals and actions. Consider figure 5.1.

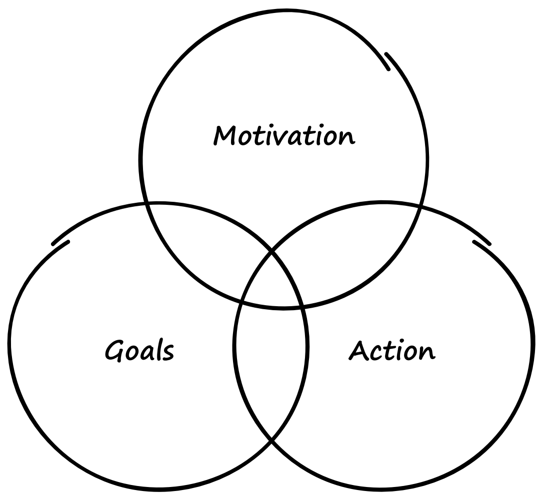

Figure 5.1: critical coaching components

Motivation: the 'why'

One of the most important components of coaching is the 'why'. This involves the mindset and motivational influencers that all human beings have. Best-selling author Simon Sinek wrote a book titled *Start with Why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. One of the main premises of his book is that great leaders have the ability to inspire people to act because they provide them with a sense of belonging or purpose that has little to do with the typical external incentives and manipulation that traditional management believed in. These leaders tap into the motivation of their team when encouraging them to take action. From a coaching perspective, a leader needs to start with the 'why': why would this person want to take this action or improve their approach? Great leaders have the ability to make individuals feel special and inspire them because they tap into their motivation and help reinforce this during the coaching process. For coaching to work, this is one of the most important components, and it's often one that leaders skip because they're so busy that they go straight to the other two key areas: goals and actions.

Goals: the 'what'

Another key ingredient of coaching is the ability of leaders to work with staff to identify the goals they *want* to accomplish. These goals can be part of a large strategic initiative or they can be small skill improvements that staff may need to make to improve their approach. Examples of goal coaching discussions include how the person being coached can improve their approach towards other people; what their mindset is in relation to a particular situation; or what they could do differently around a specific skillset that's critical to their role. Through coaching, leaders can work with staff members to identify and clarify their specific goals or initiatives.

Actions: the 'how'

The challenge for many leaders is to not just tell their staff exactly what they need to do differently but also to assist them in identifying the specific steps they need to take. The art of coaching is about having the ability to ask questions that guide staff to gain insights about what they need to change or start doing. One way is to adopt a similar approach to delegation — using paper or a tablet and visual mapping — to help them see the steps and to also ask leading questions that will identify the areas that need action.

The coaching hack model: keep it REAL

For coaching to be effective you need to take into account what motivates people, what they need to accomplish or do differently, and what specific actions they need to take. However, in reality the coaching process doesn't always follow these three steps in a linear fashion. It's often useful to start a coaching conversation with 'what' and then lead into the more powerful discussion of 'why' to enable an individual to embrace the key learning to be implemented.

One simple approach is what I call the REAL fast-track coaching model (shown in figure 5.2). It uses a practical, easy approach that's fast to follow and can be used in almost any coaching situation. Let's have a look at the four steps of this model in detail.

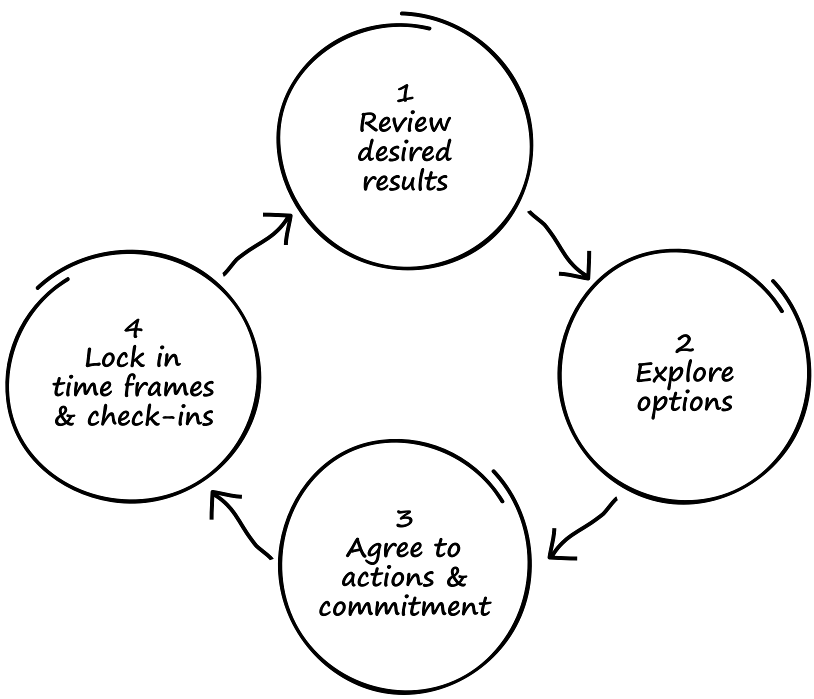

Figure 5.2: the REAL model

Step 1: review desired results

The first step in this coaching process has two parts: identifying the goal or objective and clarifying the motivation behind it. To set the scene, give your staff member an overview of what you want to discuss by asking a series of questions to help them identify what result or outcome needs to be addressed. Begin the conversation with questions that will build trust and reduce defensiveness. Here are some examples.

- *Ask broad starting questions:*

  'In this session I wanted to get your thoughts around x — what do you think needs to change or stay the same?'
  'The last time we met we discussed your approach around x. I wanted to find out from you how you're going in implementing these actions. So how did you go?' 'Did you notice anything in particular when you started implementing your plan? What was it?'

- *Ask mindset shift starting questions:*

  'I wanted to check in with you and learn what your intention was when you did x.' 'Why do you think you took that approach?' 'Did it get you the result you wanted or could you have done something differently?' 'What do you think are two or three areas you need to focus on over the next 30 days?'
  'Just curious about what was going through your mind when you noticed x. Any particular reason why you were thinking that?'
  'How would you describe your mindset while you were taking that action: open? closed? unsure? intimidated?' 'Why do you think you had those thoughts or feelings going on during that time?' 'What goals do you want to commit to so you can get the result you're after?'

- *Ask performance issue starting questions:*

  'What do you think you're doing well in your approach to your people?' 'What do you think you could be doing better or differently in your approach to your people?' 'If I had your most challenging staff member sitting with me what would they say about your current approach towards them?' 'What two or three goals would you like to set to allow you to be the best leader you can be with your people?'

- *Ask career-development starting questions:*

  'In looking to the future, in what role or areas would you like to be working in two to three years' time?' 'What is it about these areas that you've identified that gets you excited or motivated?' 'What are some of the areas you'd like to develop now to allow you to position yourself for this future role?'

It's important to start with an Ask approach, to allow the individual to share their view, and use additional questions to help guide them. It's also important to find a way to weave in and clarify the motivation

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underneath these goals or desired results as this is an important driver for the individual to shift or improve their approach.

Step 2: explore options

After opening up the discussion, work with the individual to identify their options for moving towards their goals. This can include sharing ideas and brainstorming. Once again, don't just tell them the options; ask them questions that allow them to identify these options.

The mind-mapping process identified in chapter 4 can be used as a visual process to capture the possible options or actions available. Discuss the pros and cons of each option and write them down. Try to identify at least three different actions that can be taken to explore a broader range of possibilities rather than just selecting the obvious ones, which may not be the best options.

Step 3: agree to actions and commitment

Once you've explored and identified the actions together ensure that the individual commits to implementing them. This plan needs to be crystal clear to avoid inefficiency and confusion. This is a critical step and it's essential to ask the right questions, such as:

- 'Now that you've identified what you want to do differently, what are two or three obstacles you have to overcome to implement your plan?'
- 'What will you need to do to ensure you stay committed to these actions?'
- 'How can you set yourself up for success with this plan and what two or three things should you put in place to hold yourself accountable?'

This step is a way to reconnect with a person's motivation and the conversation needs to be more about what mindset and approach they need than focusing on the actions themselves. This vital step is often overlooked, which is a mistake because most people are motivated based on emotional thoughts and feelings and not on reconnecting with actions.

Step 4: lock in time frames and check-ins

The final step in the coaching process is to make the individual accountable for being the best staff member or manager they can be by locking in agreed accountability for the actions or behavioural change that has been agreed to. This includes agreeing to time frames, committing to implementing actions by a particular date or locking in the next one-on-one coaching check-in to discuss and analyse how they have been performing in comparison to the agreed plan. It's important to write these dates down in paper or digital format to remind you both of when you need to reconnect.

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One important thing to note is that coaching is an ongoing process. Once you've been through these four steps, in the next coaching session you'll need to start with step 1 again. Begin the next coaching session by asking how they have performed the agreed actions and then apply the four-step coaching process again. This coaching process will strengthen the relationship you have with your staff and, more importantly, your staff's performance levels will improve because they will look forward to the guidance they receive and most of them respect the process because it supports them by stretching them to the next level.

When should you coach?

Understandably, one of the biggest challenges for many leaders is finding time for coaching. Coaching sessions can take the form of a scheduled formal coaching session or what I call a 'coaching moment'.

Schedule coaching sessions

Plan individual coaching sessions with your staff well ahead of time—I suggest having them on a monthly basis and allowing 30–60 minutes. Block out the time and remove any distractions so you can focus on your staff member (which includes not looking at your phone or email during the coaching session!). Staff members should be familiar with the one-on-one coaching procedure and come prepared to share their ideas. That
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way they will look forward to the coaching, value your insights and wisdom and walk away from the session feeling even more empowered to make things happen.

Planning ahead for a coaching session sounds simple in theory because you're entering something into your diary that doesn't create an immediate pressure. However, as the coaching session gets closer, it can be challenging to honour the commitment and resist the temptation of addressing other immediate issues that often creep into the day—so try not to let this happen as you don't want to lose your staff's respect by being unreliable.

Look for 'coaching moments'

A number of years ago I was working with a middle-level leader who had 15 direct reports spread over a large geographical territory. We were reviewing his one-on-one coaching with this team. He was finding it challenging scheduling time for coaching sessions, so they weren't happening.

I asked him if he was 'coaching on the fly', so to speak. Before he could respond one of his direct reports walked into the office because he was having trouble dealing with a particular situation. The leader sat down with him, discussed the issues and gave him a few suggestions. When they had finished, I looked at the leader and asked him how he might have turned this interaction into a mini coaching session. After thinking about it, he replied, 'I could have asked him to come up with some of the solutions, rather than telling him what to do. I also could have clarified the distractions or obstacles that he may have to manage and I didn't set down any time frames, which may have helped him'. I remember smiling because he'd realised he could have turned the interaction into a coaching moment.

'Coaching moments' are when you don't schedule a formal coaching session, but you look for coaching opportunities. For example, when one of your staff asks you a question, or they're not sure how to complete a specific task, or they may have encountered a situation that they need your advice about. Any of these scenarios can become a powerful 'coaching moment'.

5 COACHING HACKS

Here are five hacks that can help you get better results in less time when coaching your staff.

1. Clarify the purpose

Given how busy many leaders are, it's important to ensure you clarify the purpose of the coaching session. Identify what type of coaching session it will be (mindset, performance or career) as well as the outcome you're aiming for. It's important to do this before you start the coaching session.

2. Be aware of your mindset

Leaders are often under immense pressure to get more done in less time. Before you start coaching someone, take the time to check your own state of mind and emotions. To be more effective in a coaching session you need to ensure that none of the pressure and negative stress you might be experiencing transfers to the individual you're coaching. It's quite common for staff to experience an intimidating personal attack during what was supposed to be a coaching session because their manager had not properly dealt with their stress, wasn't focused or didn't have the mindset at the time. If you're emotionally charged about something that may limit your ability to coach and connect with your staff you may want to delay the coaching session.

3. Identify people's motivation

Take the time to identify what could be motivating the individual you're coaching beforehand. This will allow you to prepare the questions to ask them. In addition, during the coaching session, ensure you ask them what will motivate them or why they would be willing to change, modify or do something differently and how you can help them with this. Remember the 'why' they do something is as important as the 'how' they will do it.

4. Prepare some leading questions

It can be useful to prepare a few leading questions to begin the coaching session and to guide the discussion. This is even more important if the session is likely to be about performance or behavioural issues, which could make the staff member closed-minded, defensive or resistant. Also, remember that coaching is about asking, not telling. Resist the temptation to just tell the staff member what they're doing wrongly without setting up the interaction, with their input, beforehand.

5. Document the outcome

Before finishing a coaching session make sure you document what has been agreed to. Don't just discuss it. Commit it to paper or a digital system to allow it to be referred back to and tracked over time. As with delegation, this step is often skipped, which leads to confusion around what, specifically, has been agreed to and what the time frame is for checking in and implementing it.

For a leader to be effective today they need to invest the time to coach their teams. Using the strategies and hacks in this chapter will help you improve your impact and approach towards your staff and assist all of you in performing at a higher level.

CASE STUDY

Paul Sadler

Founder, Paul Sadler Swimland

When Paul Sadler was growing up he used to ride his bicycle past the local swimming club in summer and watch the kids swimming. One day as he rode past, Paul watched another 14-year-old boy win the swimming championship. Afterwards he started a conversation with the boy who'd won and they ended up in an impromptu swimming race, which Paul won. With renewed self-confidence, Paul persuaded his family to let him join the swimming club.

(*continued*)

CASE STUDY

He was fortunate that a swimming coach took an interest and started teaching him. His swimming continued and he reached state level as a competitive swimmer; however, due to family commitments he didn't pursue competitive swimming further.

After leaving school to help bring in funds for the family, Paul had a brief stint as a phone technician, before deciding he wanted to be a teacher and attending Teachers' College in Ballarat, Victoria. From here he worked for the education department, teaching physical education classes, and then swimming, to people with physical and intellectual disabilities.

In the 1970s, Australia was in a housing boom and people everywhere were having swimming pools built in their backyards. As a result the incidence of toddler drownings skyrocketed. While still teaching at the Department of Education, Paul opened his first swimming school in 1972, renting the pool at Moorabbin West Special School in what was one of the first ever public–private partnerships of its kind. He asked himself, 'What is the most important skill parents would want their children to learn?' The answer was teaching children of all ages, in a stress-free way, how to avoid drowning.

In a very short time his lessons became so popular that he had a waiting list of over 600 kids whose parents wanted them to learn how to be safe in the water. Paul produced a list of key concepts around teaching survival in a stress-free way, such as 'tension inhibits coordination'. This is a phrase that helped his swimming teachers remember that if a child is stressed in the water, it makes it difficult for them to think and keep themselves safe. Paul's key concepts became known as 'Paul's Points', and his swimming teachers were expected to learn them as part of their training.

Paul then started to coach others to teach kids to survive and swim. He found that the best way to coach them was for them to be in the pool next to kids and observe them. Afterwards, he would ask them a series of questions to find out what they observed, which was a successful way for them to learn faster.

In 1980 Paul identified the need to share information and techniques with swimming schools across Australia to further decrease the needless drownings that were still occurring in pools, so he co-founded the Swim School Owners Association, which grew to 46 members. This was the forebear for Swim Australia, which is now the peak body for over 1000 swimming schools nationwide and has been responsible for a 40 per cent decrease in the number of deaths in swimming pools. Because of his efforts, Paul was inducted into the Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association Hall of Fame—becoming legend number three behind the great Forbes Carlile and Laurie Lawrence.

The mid 1990s saw much growth and Paul realised he could 'duplicate' himself by teaching and coaching others to ensure that his methodology was consistent across his centres. Today Paul Sadler Swimland is a $25 million business that teaches over 30 000 swimming lessons per week and has more than 650 staff located at 14 locations in Australia and Canada. Along the way Paul has created a very loyal following, with many of his swimming-centre leaders becoming franchisee shareholders, giving them the chance to change their financial future. Paul's leadership hack has turned those initial coaching sessions with some of these future leaders into an opportunity for a financial stake in something they believe has made a big difference to the country: creating a safe and fun environment in which to learn to swim and saving countless lives.

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SELF-HACK
Coaching

Coaching can deepen your working relationship with your staff as well as assist them in their ongoing development. By taking a few minutes to prepare for your next coaching session you can increase your opportunity for success.

Hack 1: Identify who to coach and why

- Identify a staff member you would like to coach. You could select someone with potential to step up to the next level or someone you need to have a performance coaching session with based on recent feedback from others.

Hack 2: Select your reason for coaching

- Once you've identified who you're going to coach, determine the reason and type of coaching session you're going to have with them.
- Remember the three main reasons for coaching: to shift a mindset, to address a performance issue or to provide career development. Select the one you believe would best assist your staff member.

Hack 3: Map your REAL coaching process

- To assist you in achieving an effective coaching session, prepare a list of questions to refer to.
- Remember that the coaching process uses an 'ask' approach, which means that you as the leader need to ask relevant questions that allow the individual to come up with some of the insights, rather than you just telling them. Refer to figure 5.2: the REAL coaching process.

Hack 4: Review results desired and why

- Write down how you're going to start the conversation. What questions are you going to ask to get the person to start thinking with an open mind? Try to use open questions that encourage them to think and respond, as opposed to closed questions, which can make people feel like they're being interrogated.

- Once you've identified these questions, make sure you also think about how you're going to ask them why they want to achieve a particular goal.

Hack 5: Explore options

- To accomplish the desired outcome clarify the questions and the process to follow to explore a range of options and actions that your staff member could take, using paper or a tablet and visual mapping.
- Remember that they will often need to identify what they need to do as well as planning the actions they need to take to accomplish their goal.

Hack 6: Agree to actions and commitment

- Once you've identified what needs to be done, the next step is to ensure that they agree to taking action. Write down the actions that they have agreed to, and ensure they have a copy of them.
- Ask them to identify any obstacles they may have to manage while taking this action and how they will hold themselves accountable.

Hack 7: Lock in time frames and check-in dates

- The final step is to get them to identify time frames that they will commit to and to confirm when your next coaching session for checking in on their progress will be.
- By preparing a template for this ahead of time you can remind yourself of this last step.

PART III
TEAM HACKS

This final section is filled with strategies you can use to improve your influence with a team of people. The information is designed to assist you in hacking your leadership approach to enable a team to get more things done in less time.

Chapter 6
Team meetings

One of the biggest workplace challenges is completing your work *and* finding time for meetings. With the increase in digital technology and the use of email for communicating information and collaborating, you'd expect that the number of face-to-face meetings would have decreased. Research shows the opposite.

According to a 2017 *Harvard Business Review* article by Leslie Perlow, Constance Noonan Hadley and Eunice Eun, many executives are now spending as many as 23 hours per week in meetings and *65 per cent* of managers said meetings kept them from completing their own work. This is a shocking statistic—and the trend is growing.

So why has the number of meetings increased? I believe there are several reasons.

- *A broader perspective.* Almost everyone would agree that having more minds working on a particular issue provides a broader viewpoint in less time. Face-to-face meetings gather the collective knowledge of numerous people simultaneously, which gives the person tasked with solving a problem or making a decision many insights. This can increase the depth of understanding around a specific issue, tapping into specific expertise rather than a frustrating Google search that often leads to dead ends.

- *Email overload and lack of response.* Ever-increasing workloads mean people often don't take the time to read or fully understand what's being asked for in an email, resulting in emails not being answered. This is particularly the case when challenging or unpopular issues have been raised and people are cautious about responding electronically. It's sometimes easier to bring everyone together to encourage (or force) perspectives to be shared quickly.
- *Saving time.* It's more efficient and less time-consuming for a leader to ask a group of people to come to them than to visit each one individually—as long as the meeting is effective and productive and everyone is able to make up the valuable time that can be lost in meetings. The fact that many people don't like meetings and dread time lost in itself creates an issue around performance. This is why it's essential for leaders to know how to run team meetings efficiently and effectively and be familiar with the different types of meeting and their purpose so that staff members aren't turned off and frustrated.

Why most meetings are a waste of time

Recently I was talking to a mid-level manager who was concerned about the number of spontaneous meetings he was being forced to attend when he had so many tight deadlines to meet and he complained that he was staying back until eight o'clock at night to try and catch up on his work. When I asked him how important and valuable these meetings were he responded in a very loud voice, 'The majority are complete rubbish because we talk in circles and nothing really gets decided—or worse yet, I keep getting nominated to do more work because others say they're too busy'.

A 2012 survey by salary.com found that *47 per cent* of staff agree that the biggest waste of time at work is attending too many meetings. Let me ask you, of the last five meetings you attended, how many were valuable and effective? How many did you receive an agenda for that provided you with details about the purpose of the meeting, the type of meeting process and supporting information you needed to be across before the meeting? Unfortunately the response—especially from middle managers—is that almost half of all meetings dragged on too long and could have been completed in half the time.

So how can you, as a leader, hack your team meetings and be more effective and efficient? To start off, leaders need to be aware of the importance of the agenda, the purpose of the meeting and the type of meeting needed to achieve the desired outcomes.

Meeting requirements: purpose and agenda

Not having a meeting agenda leads to a tremendous amount of confusion and wasted time. When employees don't get an agenda before a meeting they don't know what the purpose of the meeting is or what procedure will be followed. Even worse, if they're not informed about the information or data they should look at before the meeting, precious meeting time will be lost updating everyone during the meeting—not to mention the frustration of the people who did prepare for it!

Purpose

The desired outcome of the meeting needs to be identified. This is often the true purpose of the meeting and it should be communicated beforehand by being included in a written agenda circulated before the meeting. Most meetings are given a title identifying the general content, such as 'Sales Forecasting Meeting' or 'Quarterly Reporting Meeting'. These are fine for types of meetings that people are familiar with. However, other types of meeting need to have a clear purpose. Examples include:

> 'Identify a strategy to increase our quarterly sales performance'
>
> 'Create a business case to address x issues with the board'
>
> 'Provide marketing with assistance for a new product launch'

Although these examples are quite simple, they give attendees a context for the meeting and an indication of what they're being expected to contribute towards. Preparing people by giving them all the useful information they need before the meeting can save everyone a lot of time.

Agenda

I know of a senior executive who will not attend a meeting if he isn't provided with an agenda beforehand. When I asked him why, he explained that not having a meeting agenda leaves people in the dark around the contextual details. This is because a meeting agenda provides an overview of the meeting, the process or order of the meeting, the time and place of the meeting and also details of who will be attending.

MEETING AGENDA COMPONENTS

There are a number of valuable details that every meeting agenda should include:

- title and purpose of meeting
- start and finish time of meeting
- location of meeting
- participants attending meeting
- order of topics to be discussed and format or type of meeting process
- any required or recommended reading before the meeting.

By providing this information in a clear format team members can prepare and participate in an informed way. In addition, it gives them a context as to what the desired outcome of the meeting is as well as the process or type of meeting.

Types of meeting

At a weekly team meeting that I attended for an organisation, there was a new manager who had previously worked for a competitor that had consistently grown its market share and sales performance. This was his first meeting at the new company. As the CEO discussed a range of topics, the new manager started asking questions. The reactions of many of his new colleagues was to shoot him negative looks and even the CEO became a bit defensive and at one stage shut him down by saying something that suggested that he didn't know how things were done 'around here'.

After the meeting I met with the new manager to find out how he was going and to ask him some questions about what differences he noticed between the two companies. He described how this executive meeting had been run compared to the ones he was used to. He was very surprised that everyone just listened and agreed with the CEO. At his previous workplace he was used to meetings being full of discussions and robust debates that allowed everyone to contribute towards identifying the best outcome, which may have been one of the reasons his former company was the market leader.

One of the biggest challenges when it comes to meetings is clarifying beforehand what the purpose of the meeting is. When the purpose of a meeting is not clear, it can lead to confusion, frustration and people feeling that they wasted their time. In addition, different types of meeting follow different formats or processes. When people know the purpose of a meeting, they can also understand the meeting process, which helps them prepare as well as get more out of the meeting.

There are four types of team meeting (see figure 6.1), and we'll look at each of them in detail now.

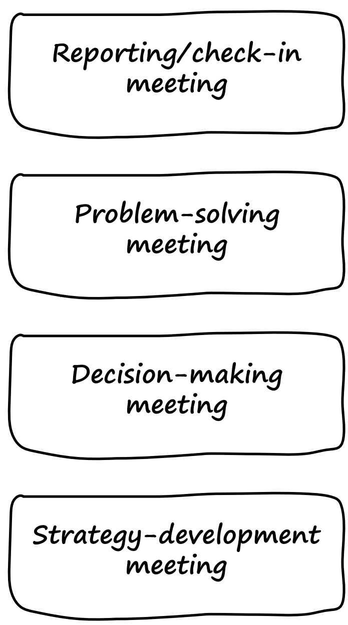

Figure 6.1: the four types of team meeting

Reporting/check-in meetings

Reporting meetings are one of the most common meeting formats. They often start with managers providing an update on their department. This can be useful if the format is tight and those doing the reporting are clear and organised in what they communicate. The challenge is to be prepared and know how to communicate succinctly.

THE THREE-STEP REPORTING MEETING PROCESS

A useful format for conducting reporting meetings is for each team member in turn to follow the simple three-step process illustrated in figure 6.2.

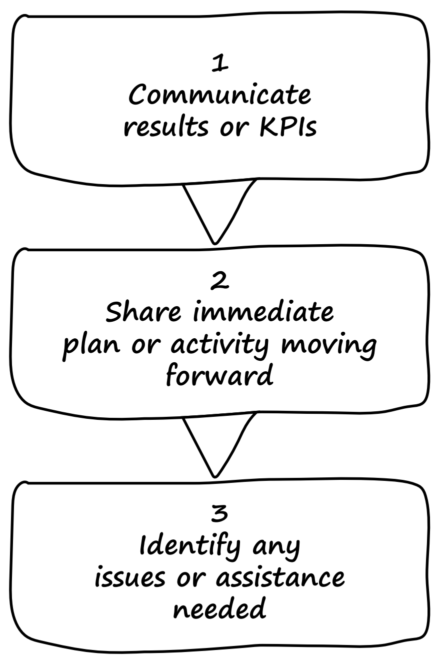

Figure 6.2: the three-step reporting meeting hack

1 *Communicate results or KPIs.* The first step is for the team member to provide an update of their department's performance. This can be communicated in the KPI format that the business uses to measure activity towards targets, which may include sales, volume, units, efficiencies, and so on.

2 *Share immediate plan or activity moving forward.* Next, the department's immediate activity or plan moving forward should be communicated. This allows others to easily understand what the immediate focus is (as well as reminding them that when they present their departmental report they need to be clear on their activity moving forward). This also provides anyone who may be affected by or may have to support this department with an understanding of what they may need to do to execute these plans.

3 *Identify any issues or assistance needed.* The final step is to identify any issues or problems the department is facing (or will be facing in the near future) and ask for assistance. Without this final step, reporting meetings could be eliminated and replaced with an email report that shows results and planned activities. By allowing individuals to voice any concerns and ask for help, the team can harness these creative ideas in the reporting meeting. Ideally, if someone has further ideas to share they can provide a few of these ideas and schedule a separate individual meeting so they don't waste everyone's time.

This process enables the reporting to be completed quickly, so that valuable time can be spent on providing assistance or ideas to those who have requested it. Remember, staff should spend less time in meetings and more time getting things done.

One leader I worked with replaced the weekly face-to-face reporting meeting with a weekly email. Because everyone was proactive about providing their reports for the team email and reaching out to help as needed, reporting meetings only had to be held on a quarterly basis.

Problem-solving meetings

Problem-solving meetings are held to bring together a team of people to share ideas for solving a particular problem or challenge. These meetings involve more than just someone asking for assistance with something and are effective as long as everyone stays focused on the problem.

I once ran a conference for an engineering client during which its legal team was scheduled to discuss some problems with their engineers' contract negotiation process. It started off in typical meeting fashion with the legal director explaining what the problems were. After listening to many detailed examples of mistakes for 20 minutes, the group started to switch off, with many checking and sending emails—a sure sign that this meeting was wasting people's time! Clearly this meeting wasn't working. The purpose of the meeting wasn't obvious and the presenter didn't have a useful format for collecting people's ideas.

Rather than allowing the meeting to drag on, the leader stopped the presenter and asked him a brilliant question: 'Could you help us understand the problem you need fixed today?' The presenter thought about it and then communicated what the problem was. The leader wrote it down on a flipchart in the meeting room and asked for solutions. The meeting's tone quickly shifted from sharing dull information to discussing active solutions.

I assisted the group by mapping on the flipchart a simple model showing the steps they should follow to assist the legal team with contracts (figure 6.3 demonstrates this process). After the meeting I saw the legal director take the flipchart with the model drawn on it. He turned to me and said, 'If I had had this model for the other five meetings I've already had on this issue I would have saved myself and others a lot of time and frustration'.

For a successful problem-solving meeting everyone needs to be clear on what the issue or problem is in advance and encouraged to participate and share their ideas for solving the problem.

THE FIVE-STEP PROBLEM-SOLVING MEETING PROCESS

There are many ways to run a problem-solving meeting but there are five common steps that can hack any problem-solving meeting (see figure 6.3).

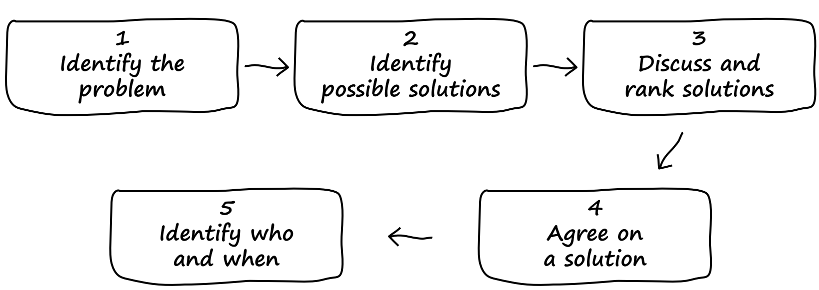

Figure 6.3: the five-step problem-solving meeting hack

1 *Identify the problem.* This may include someone gathering data or facts before the meeting that can be shared so everyone is aware of the context of the problem. This should include asking five questions, which I call 'the 5 Ws':

   – What is the problem?
   – Why is it a problem?
   – Where is it causing issues?
   – Who is affected or creating the problem?
   – When or how often is the problem occurring?

   The answers to these questions provide a thorough and fast understanding of the problem, which can help solve it quickly. Visually capturing the answers on a whiteboard or flipchart during the meeting leads to a more productive meeting and avoids distractions about issues that have already been discussed.

2 *Identify possible solutions.* Once everyone fully understands the problem, they can begin presenting possible solutions. Ideally, these solutions should include some of the actions that need to be taken to implement the solution. This allows the team to clarify exactly what needs to be done.

   It's also important to not just look at one obvious solution, but rather to identify three or four possible solutions including some that may not be the most favourable at first glance. Once again, by capturing possible solutions visually everyone can see what they are, which will help the group stay focused and save time.

3 *Discuss and rank solutions.* After the possible solutions have been identified, rank them to find the most ideal one. Unfortunately, what often occurs at this step is the loudest individual tells everyone else what should be done based on their viewpoint. Resist this pattern and use a process to score or rank the options. There are two common methods used to rank solutions.

   – *The whip-around vote approach.* This is the more common method, with the leader asking each individual team member to share what they feel is the most ideal solution moving forward. This can be useful as it provides the view of the majority and also allows individuals to share their different views, which may influence others' views on potential solutions.

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- *The score-ranking approach.* For this approach everyone ranks a number of possible solutions using a numerical scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best solution and 1 being the least favoured solution. By having every team member give each option a numerical score, the leader can identify the average for each solution and pick the one that the team feels has the best possibility of succeeding. This may sound a bit detailed as an approach and is not used very often. However, it can be very useful when there is no clear preferred solution.

4. *Agree on a solution.* Once everyone has provided their recommendations, clarify which solution has been agreed on. This is an important step that's sometimes overlooked because everyone assumes that they heard one another and all understood which solution was chosen. To ensure that the team meeting is effective the leader needs to verbally confirm the final solution so that there is no confusion over which option is being implemented.
5. *Identify who and when.* The final step is to identify who will be responsible for overseeing and implementing the solution that was agreed on. This may be an individual or a group of people, depending on how complex the problem is. In addition it can be useful to identify time frames of when plans will be finalised and executed to keep everyone informed of the progress.

Decision-making meetings

Decision-making meetings take place after the facts and figures about a particular issue have been circulated and people have had time to understand and identify the decision they are being asked to make.

For this type of meeting, it needs to be clear what the topic is that a decision has to be made about; every team member has to communicate whether they agree or disagree with a potential decision. It's also useful for the leader to say whether they agree or disagree after everyone else has so they don't influence other people's views. In some situations the leader may be the tie breaker needed as to whether a decision is agreed to or not.

Some meetings require a formal decision to be made, with the decision recorded for future reference. For senior executives and directors, this method is often used when passing corporation bylaws, which require a formal decision-making meeting with minutes recorded for legal reasons.

Strategy-development meetings

These are usually complex types of meeting because they involve the setting of a company or department's future direction—as well as the strategy or initiatives required to achieve the desired objectives. Because of this complexity these meetings are often held over several days and many executives and staff dread attending them. If there's no clear and efficient process in place the meeting can turn into a massive talkfest with those who are the loudest getting their ideas pushed forward while others keep their ideas to themselves because they don't believe it's worth the effort to contribute.

Strategy-development meetings often involve engaging an external facilitator who acts as an objective guide so that the leader can focus on participating to ensure the meeting moves forward and no-one gets sidetracked.

Unfortunately there isn't enough space within the pages of this book to detail the numerous methodologies that can be used for strategy meetings. However, I will provide a quick insight into one approach that I have used successfully with many clients over the years called compression planning.

COMPRESSION PLANNING

One of the most valuable team planning training programs I have ever attended was by Jerry McNellis, who taught a creative form of planning for teams called compression planning. I facilitate using this strategic planning process with many leadership teams every year and have found it to be one of the most effective and efficient ways to run a strategic planning meeting. I've used this planning methodology to assist large multinationals to decide how to plan their way forward, develop business plans for military organisations and assist medium-sized companies that needed to identify how to split up $100 million budgets across departments in a collaborative way. Regardless of the group, compression planning can take a strategy planning meeting that normally takes two to four days and reduce it to half the time or less.

HOW COMPRESSION PLANNING WORKS

When Walt Disney was brainstorming ideas for his movies he would often pin sketches and drawings to large storyboards that were positioned around his head office. When teams met to work on a particular movie they would gather around the images on these storyboards and brainstorm ideas. This was one of the early forms of planning using visuals to assist in the planning process.

Compression planning involves capturing ideas shared by team members on individual index cards. These cards are pinned to a number of storyboards that are placed around the room so everyone can see the ideas. Once these ideas are viewed, the group uses a voting process to agree on the most important ideas that need to be explored further and the process is repeated until all the components of the plan have been identified. To encourage the team to stay focused and be time-efficient, a timer is used to let the group know when to move on to the next storyboard. In addition, the team creates a written action plan of who will do what activity by when, and identifies a communication plan that includes who will communicate what message, in what way, to which person.

THE FIVE STEPS OF COMPRESSION PLANNING

There are five steps to running a compression planning meeting, as illustrated in figure 6.4. By using these steps you can fast-track a meeting that covers more ground and reaches agreement in less time.

1 *Design.* The design involves the leader or facilitator taking the time to identify the specific questions that need to be asked and explored by the group. This may involve the strategic plan or the business plan or some other area that the team needs to collaborate and agree on.

  The design also involves ensuring that the storyboards, easels, pins, index cards, writing pens and timer are all prepared to allow for a smooth and efficient planning session.

2 *Brainstorm or explore ideas.* In this stage the facilitator shares the purpose of the session, provides some guidelines around how the planning session will be run and writes the first idea on an index card. This first idea could be as simple as 'What are our strengths?' Or it may be something more specific such as, 'What

can we do to increase market share?' The group then provides ideas, with each idea written on an individual index card that the facilitator pins to the storyboard underneath a header. This encourages participation and allows individuals to build on previous ideas. The facilitator uses a timer to limit the discussion and enable the group to move on to the next topic.

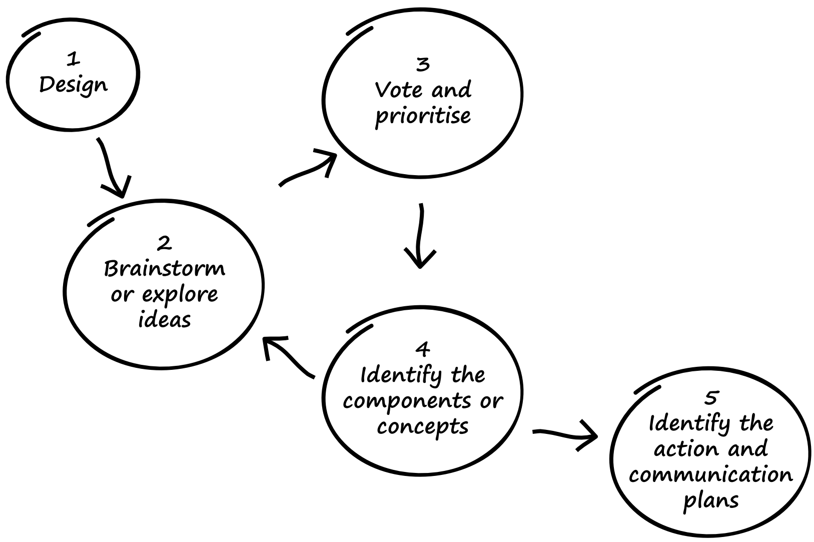

Figure 6.4: the five compression planning steps

3 *Vote and prioritise*. After a number of topics have been explored, index cards are pinned up in columns under the topic headings. The next stage is for the group to vote on whether the ideas generated are worth exploring further. Each person is given a number of small sticky dots to stick onto the topic cards they have 'voted' for. For some topic areas individuals may only get one vote. However, for others the facilitator may allow two to six votes. The number of votes is determined by the number of ideas shared, with larger numbers of ideas shared often needing a number of votes across a few ideas.

Once everyone has had a chance to vote, the index cards are rearranged so that the idea cards with the highest votes get moved to the very top, showing their importance (see the example in figure 6.5, overleaf). The top two to five ideas underneath each of these main topics will usually be transferred to the next step for further analysis.

Figure 6.5: compression planning topic cards with votes

4 *Identify the components or concepts.* Next, the top ideas are selected, their components are identified and the ideas are explored further using the same voting process as before. So, each chosen idea card becomes a topic card and the group is asked to share ideas about the topic and then to vote on the ideas. These ideas are once again written on index cards and pinned beneath the relevant topic card and again the top areas that need to be addressed are identified.
The top ideas are then integrated into the strategic plan framework.

5 *Identify the action and communication plans.* The final step is to identify who will take what action. The easiest way to do this is to take the main areas that have been identified as important and assign an individual or group of individuals to fully complete the plan. Once again, topic index cards can be used to identify what the action is, who will take it and by when.
Another component that's useful to identify in strategic planning is the communication plan. This can help a team identify people not involved in the planning meeting who need to be

communicated to. Common components to include are who needs to be communicated to, what needs to be communicated, how it will be communicated, who will communicate it to them and by when.

There is a range of other planning processes and methods that can be used for strategy development meetings. If you would like information about these, please go to www.leadershiphacks.com. Methods can involve something as simple as using a flipchart to capture a discussion, to complex methods that involve digital software packages and touch-screen devices. For a leader, the important thing to consider is whether you are confident in facilitating the strategic development meeting or whether it would be more beneficial to use an independent internal or external facilitator.

5 HACKS FOR IMPROVING YOUR TEAM MEETINGS

In addition to the strategies shared above, here are a number of meeting hacks to help you fast-track your next team meeting.

1. Communicate the purpose and type of meeting

One of the main reasons why meetings don't work is because the purpose of the meeting isn't clear. This results in people not knowing what the outcome should be or what process will be used. To eliminate this confusion a leader needs to communicate in advance the purpose and type of meeting that will be used.

2. Segment the agenda

Preparing an agenda and circulating it before a team meeting is also important. When people don't have an agenda they have nothing to prepare for, which means time may be spent in the meeting sharing information to bring everyone up to speed. A more efficient approach is to provide the background information or data to people with the agenda so they have a chance to review and become familiar with it before the meeting. In addition, segment or organise the agenda in a way that will assist you and your team to get through all of the items.

(*continued*)

5 HACKS FOR IMPROVING YOUR TEAM MEETINGS (*CONT'D*)

It's worth considering dividing the meeting into two parts: the first for easy matters that can be discussed quickly and moved on from; and the second for the more challenging matters that involve more time. Getting the easy matters out of the way early ensures they're dealt with and not overlooked due to challenging issues taking up all of the meeting time.

3. Use visuals to capture and explain the concept

Using visuals including diagrams, models and figures on a whiteboard or flipchart can allow a team meeting to move quickly because individuals can see what's being discussed. These visuals can also be used as a point of reference. If someone starts going over any area that has already been explored, the visual will immediately remind everyone of this.

4. Track actions and time

As a meeting progresses and individuals agree to take specific actions it's important to capture this information. It can be very challenging to remember who agreed to do what 30 minutes earlier. By capturing each agreed action on the whiteboard or flipchart, who is going to do it and in what time frame while discussing a particular topic you can save time and future confusion.

In addition to tracking actions it can be useful to have someone keeping track of the time spent on each topic during the meeting so that each topic is given enough time and is covered.

5. Mix up meeting locations

Changing the environment and setting for meetings can make people look at things from different perspectives. I know of one leader who had their managers' meeting at the Ritz-Carlton so they could experience the exceptional customer service that it provided. The impact of this experience on the managers was very apparent. It completely shifted the discussions they were having about customer mystery shop feedback results. Because of what they had experienced firsthand the managers were much less defensive in accepting negative feedback.

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Virtual team meetings

Given that many leaders now have teams spread over geographical locations it's important to provide insights on virtual team meetings. After selling my first business in Australia, I started a training and development company that provided custom learning and development programs on leadership, sales, customer service and team effectiveness. Almost immediately I was involved in a large national and international training rollout that required us to recruit and train a team of facilitators who could deliver the training programs we were creating for clients.

As the business started to expand I had to make a decision. Did I take the traditional approach and lease a large office space somewhere in Sydney or should I do something different? The contracts we had were substantial and we could see ourselves quickly growing to deliver almost 300 days of training per year, which would easily justify a traditional office set-up. However, when I started analysing the way our staff would work and our operations I questioned the benefit of a traditional full-time office. Our clients almost always asked our facilitators to deliver the training sessions at their location or at a conference centre. In addition, our staff were located in different states and we didn't want to disrupt their lives by asking them to move to Sydney.

So we created a virtual team with almost 20 staff based across the country who would deliver to clients wherever they wanted. Rather than having a centralised office I converted the lower level of my home into my head office and we started using virtual team meetings to get things done. Our administration manager lived a few suburbs away and initially we would have meetings face to face to assist in coordinating projects. However, over time these meetings took place more and more over the phone as we started to streamline our operations and shift to a more flexible and effective approach to business.

Back in 1999 the internet was not as common as it is today so our virtual team meetings were held via phone and conference calls. Email was in use although in the beginning we were limited to sending 1MB at a time until the internet speed increased and we were able to send larger files and use the numerous digital platforms that we discussed in part I of the book.

Nowadays there are numerous web-based conference systems including GoToMeeting, Skype, WebEx and Zoom. All of these platforms enable team meetings where everyone can talk and view multiple people in multiple locations as well as share files simultaneously. With the continuing increase in internet speed we find that the video feeds are clear to see and the sound is very good.

This virtual team meeting trend has shifted from small, start-up businesses that were bootstrapping their operations to larger corporate companies that offer flexible positions that allow for telecommuting. One of the largest banks in Australia redesigned its purpose-built new headquarters to allow for staff to 'hot desk'. Essentially this means they don't have a set office or desk assigned to them like traditional companies do. They're provided with a laptop and when they're in the building they can connect to the company's wi-fi, which enables them to access the internet as well as print documents from the printer closest to where they're sitting. It's not uncommon for executives nowadays to work out of a centralised office a couple days and spend the remainder of their time at flexible work locations in regional offices or working from home.

The benefits of virtual meetings

Initially there was a belief that if meetings were not conducted in person, those who were in a different location wouldn't be able to effectively participate. This perception has significantly changed over the past five to 10 years. There are two main benefits that virtual meetings provide over traditional face-to-face meetings: lower budget and time saving.

BUDGET

The cost of travel can add up for a business if interstate or overseas staff have to be flown in for meetings, especially if these are held regularly. One large international client of mine was hit particularly hard during the Global Financial Crisis in 2008. Because of the uncertainty in the market and resulting downturn in business it put a blanket freeze on all

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business travel. Managers were instructed to not approve any spending on travel for meetings. The result was surprising. Not only did they save millions of dollars, but when the market conditions improved approximately 18 months later and they removed the travel restrictions they found that many of their staff chose not to travel for meetings as often as they previously had because they had adapted to virtual meetings and found creative new ways to make these work. After a while this became the new norm and unless it was something that warranted a face-to-face meeting, they continued to meet virtually.

TIME

Virtual team meetings save travel time, which means people can focus on their job tasks rather than the hassles of travel-related tasks. I know of one manager who used to have to travel from Perth to Melbourne every two weeks for a regional managers' meeting that usually lasted two to three hours. In addition to the meeting time he would also lose five hours in flight and airport time each way, as well as overnight stays, which also meant time away from his family. His company has now changed the meeting to a virtual one and he participates via a digital conference software platform that allows the others in the meeting to view and discuss topics with him.

5 HACKS FOR IMPROVING YOUR VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS

Here are some hacks to help you fast-track virtual meetings.

1. Test the conference or web platform beforehand

Technology can be an incredible asset for saving time and getting more done. However, if a presenter isn't familiar with the technology, precious meeting time can be wasted. If you're having a virtual meeting using an unfamiliar platform, take the time to practise using it beforehand. If you're facilitating the meeting, ensure that you know how to use the functionality of the platform, including mute buttons, raising of hands, how to shift between people speaking as well as how to share files or documents.

(*continued*)

5 HACKS FOR IMPROVING YOUR VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS (*CONT'D*)

2. Reduce outside interference

When you use a web-based video platform for a virtual meeting, everyone can see and hear everyone else. So, to maximise everyone's time, ensure there are no interruptions and that everyone's mobile phone is turned to silent.

3. Use camera view

One of the biggest advantages of today's web-based platforms is that they can provide video, which enables all attendees to read the body language of others even if they're not in the same room. This ensures that everyone stays involved and that you can read the energy of others by watching their non-verbals. It also reduces the temptation for attendees to try to multitask because they know that others are watching them in real time.

4. Share files and draw diagrams

Many technological platforms contain a whiteboard so that visuals can be shared during virtual meetings. This has the same benefit as face-to-face meetings, where concepts being discussed can be shared visually to make it easier for everyone to understand and contribute.

5. Record the meeting

Just as face-to-face meetings are better when someone takes notes and documents agreed actions, virtual meetings should also end with key areas discussed and agreements being recorded. One benefit of many virtual meeting platforms is that you can record both a video that captures what the participants saw on the screen (including each other and any diagrams drawn on a virtual whiteboard) and the discussion. This can be useful for someone who could not attend the virtual meeting or if anyone needs to go back and review the discussion at a later date.

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CASE STUDY

Mike Azbell

Vice President & Controller, Kimberly-Clark Corporation

Imagine the number of meetings you'd have to attend as Global Financial Controller of a Fortune 150 company. Mike Azbell has worked with Kimberly-Clark Corporation for over 25 years. When he initially joined as an internal auditor he was identified as one of the up-and-coming future leaders and they allowed him to have a very broad and varied career.

Based on his skills and abilities to run a team, he was quickly promoted through the ranks and moved from a local focus to running a team that reported on global results based in Kimberly-Clark's global headquarters in Dallas, Texas.

Because of his ability to streamline financial processes as well as build teams, Mike was selected to work in overseas postings, initially in Sydney overseeing internal control for Australia and New Zealand and being involved in some of the larger mergers and acquisitions, including the Scott Paper merger. As a rising leader his international experience was further broadened while he was based in Bangkok, Thailand, to assist in mergers and acquisitions for Kimberly-Clark's rapidly expanding Asia–Pacific region. Mike was then allowed to 'roll his sleeves up' and was promoted back to the United States to oversee the financials for a number of manufacturing plants producing a range of products from sterilisation wrap to surgical gowns in Mexico, Central America and eastern Europe.

It was during this time as a leader climbing the ranks that Mike started looking at how to get his teams to be more effective and find a way to have team meetings that worked. He's not big

(continued)

CASE STUDY

on having meetings just to have a talk and has continuously challenged his people to find ways to improve their results and hack their team meetings. He believes being honest and working with his people to enable them to perform at their best is the key—which can be a challenge with the financial reporting of a global company that is taking data from over 175 countries and 100 manufacturing locations and needs to be done accurately within tight time frames.

Because of this he doesn't run typical monthly team meetings. He views these as something that can slow down progress. Together with his team, he identified that the best solution was to have a 15-minute working meeting at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day, with everyone standing up. They use visual management systems so the team can identify and track projects and timelines on dashboards on the wall as well as in digital format. They find they are much more effective when meeting together in the hallway to discuss the project boards. They also ensure that each meeting is run by a different person to allow them to develop their skills in facilitating a project meeting—which is a career development step that many of them appreciate.

Mike's current role is as Vice President and Controller overseeing the financials, government reporting and auditing for the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, which has dominated the marketplace for the past 20 years. Kimberly-Clark has $18 billion in annual sales with 42 000 employees in 175 countries—with many of their products holding the number one or number two position in market share in the majority of those locations. He also goes against the stereotypical view that accountants cannot be creative. One of the biggest challenges of a company this size is getting all of the reporting completed in a timely fashion and ensuring that it's accurate and auditable—not a simple task. In 2013 they noticed that the amount of time taken to complete government reporting was starting to creep up to 60 days. Rather than just accepting this, Mike and his team decided to do something that they had not done before: accomplish the report in 40 days. To enable the entire finance team to head towards this goal, they came up with 'The Road to 40'. This became their mantra for achieving something that hadn't been accomplished before. After a number of problem-solving sessions they came up with a strategy to create the forward momentum. They reworked processes to 'hack' their current approach and created banners, signage and other materials in addition to publicising the initiative on the company's global website.

The result was impressive. They had achieved a new benchmark, which they maintain to this day. In addition, Mike's staff morale increased and in the Kimberly-Clark global staff survey that team achieved a staff enablement and engagement score of over 90 per cent. This is an incredible result for the high-stress environment of a global finance department, especially when the company normally averages a 78–80 per cent result, which is much higher than most. Mike shows his true ability as a leader by saying, 'It was great to achieve this result and maintain it. However the real benefit was that my staff, who normally had to work insane hours to get these reports completed, can now complete them faster and spend more time with their families'.

SELF-HACK
Team meeting hacks

Hopefully the strategies and hacks in this chapter will allow you to show up to your next team meeting ready to cover more ground in less time. Try these simple self-hack exercises and questions to get you started.

Analyse your last team meeting

Hack 1: Think about your last team meeting

- If you were to sit down and interview one of your staff who attended the meeting, what would their response be to these questions:
  - Was the purpose of the meeting distributed in writing?
  - Did the group accomplish the desired objective in the most efficient and effective way or would people say it took too long or didn't offer enough people a chance to talk?
  - Was there a meeting agenda? Did it have the five main components that help people prepare and streamline meetings (title/purpose, start and finish time, location, details of attendees and order of topics/meeting format) and any required reading before the meeting?
  - What type of meeting was it (reporting, problem solving, decision making or strategy development)? Was everyone made aware in advance that this was the type of meeting?
  - Did everyone walk away with a written action plan that clarified who was going to take which specific actions within a specific time frame to remind them of their commitments?

Hack 2: Capture your plan for your next team meeting

- Think about an upcoming meeting that you have planned. Take a few minutes to capture what your plan will be to make it effective and efficient using some of the hacks discussed in this chapter. Use the following template as a guide.

Title of meeting: ________________________________

Purpose of meeting: ____________________________

Meeting agenda

Start & finish time: ___________________

Location: ________________

Order of topics/meeting format: ___________________________

Required preparatory reading: ____________________________

Hack 3: Additional steps you can take

- Identify how you can use visuals to increase understanding.
- Consider what you might do differently depending on the type of meeting you're having.
- Nominate who will keep track of time and record actions.

Improve your virtual team meetings

Hack 1: Test the conference or web platform beforehand

- Make sure you familiarise yourself with the technology you'll be using — such as the functionality of a web-based video platform — before the meeting.

Hack 2: Reduce outside interference

- To ensure everyone can hear and see well make sure there will be no interruptions and that everyone's mobile phone is turned to silent.

Hack 3: Use camera view

- Make use of video equipment so that all attendees can see each other and read each other's body language to keep everyone engaged.

Hack 4: Share files and draw diagrams

- Create and share visuals by using a whiteboard to draw a model or diagram that the group can refer to during the virtual meeting.

Hack 5: Record the meeting

- Make a video recording to capture what the participants saw on the screen as well as the discussion.

Chapter 7

Team mobilisation

The ultimate objective for any leader is to mobilise their team towards a particular vision or goal, regardless of the type of organisation they work in. Think of the leaders of great companies who have created cult-like organisations that are viewed as industry leaders as well as great places to work. They may be new, up-and-coming businesses or household names. Many are found in the Fortune 100 Best Companies To Work For list year after year—including Apple, Goldman Sachs, Kimberly-Clark, Google (Alphabet), Coca-Cola, Facebook, Nike, IBM, Walt Disney, General Electric and Nestlé. The leaders of these companies have a broad range of personalities and skills—Mark Zuckerberg, Warren Buffett, Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Jack Welch. Most of these leaders are known for their success in mobilising a group of people to achieve more. And the list isn't limited to the Fortune 100 companies: there are thousands and thousands of incredible leaders of smaller businesses mobilising their teams towards success. The challenge, of course, is to find a formula that can be used to start this momentum and create or build a culture that allows a collective group of people to take action towards the same goal.

Why leaders fail to mobilise their staff

If everyone is aware that people need to be inspired and motivated in a way that allows them to create more than what was thought possible, why isn't it happening across every organisation? Human beings are complex creatures with a broad range of unique personalities, motivations and desires. This can create a daunting task for any leader who wants to get their people motivated at the best of times, especially in the face of adversity when it can be easier for some staff to just jump ship to another employer.

There are three reasons why leaders fail to mobilise their staff:

- *It's safer and easier to stick with the status quo.* Trying to motivate people to change, especially when things are going well and performance seems to be moving along at a good pace, takes an incredible amount of energy. It means thinking differently, acting differently and constantly talking about the way forward.
- *They're not sure how to start.* Given the rapid pace of change, new players and competition in traditional markets, and quick-start technology disrupting traditional processes, moving to the next level presents challenges and many leaders aren't sure how to start. Looking for the 'secret formula' is difficult when the current immediate and continuous issues of the business need constant time and attention.
- *They focus on the wrong things.* Traditional mindsets look for traditional ways of thinking to motivate people with one-sided, outdated models. In his best-selling book *Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us*, Daniel Pink exposes some of these common myths. He found research that shows the traditional carrot and stick method of reward can work in some job functions, but that in many others it can demotivate people because many are intrinsically motivated — not just financially motivated — to show up to work in a different way.

Creating your mobilisation code

There's no fixed formula for getting a team to achieve more. If there were it would be easy and every leader would be able to make this happen! However, there are a number of common themes and strategies you can use to start mobilising your team.

In the early 1990s one of my roles was as a learning and development manager with a company based in Detroit, Michigan. The company had five manufacturing plants that supplied steel parts to the big three US car manufacturers. At the time, the challenge was that all of these car manufacturers were embarking on a rationalisation program to reduce their suppliers by more than half, which meant the very existence of the company was in jeopardy if they didn't meet the new, lean manufacturing requirements. My role was initially funded by a grant to assist this company in making these cuts while at the same time keeping the almost 600 employees in their jobs given the devastating impact it would have on the local community if they were unemployed.

I was fortunate to work under a visionary CEO who wanted to change the way the business operated and improve the culture. Popular at that time was a radical new book by Kiyoshi Suzaki titled *The New Shop Floor Management*, which pushed for flipping the current operations from a top-down, traditional management style to one that had the workers on the floor running the machines without thinking, to one that had them taking ownership and improving the process along the way. I was tasked with shifting the culture using the new shop floor management concept and mobilising the shop floor employees, supervisors and managers at a range of different manufacturing plants to start operating differently. I was very fortunate to have the CEO's as well as the executive team's guidance and support to start this initiative as well as a number of other initiatives that were kickstarted after the initial launch to help speed up the momentum and the process.

The results we were able to achieve were nothing short of incredible. Not only did the company increase its staff engagement and participation, it also shifted the culture to one that was much more autonomous and cutting edge for that time.

The five steps of the mobilisation hack model

Over the past 25 years I've worked alongside, and been fortunate to watch, many leaders who have hacked the way their teams did things and mobilised them towards a better way successfully by implementing the steps I'm about to share with you. I've also seen the frustration of other leaders who stumbled in implementing these steps. Although I didn't know it at the time, when I was working in the manufacturing plants, we were mobilising staff to change the way they operated and in effect changed the culture. We didn't start with a strategy that had specifically identified these key areas; however, the CEO and the leadership team were fortunate (and talented) enough to integrate these into their approach.

Regardless of the industry, the five common, critical areas in the mobilisation hack model shown in figure 7.1 need to be targeted and implemented to enable teams or total organisations to shift to a higher level of performance. A range of specific strategies can also be implemented within each step. While I won't go into detail about these, I will provide some examples. To help you quickly see how this was implemented within a business, I'll continue sharing the success we had in the manufacturing company.

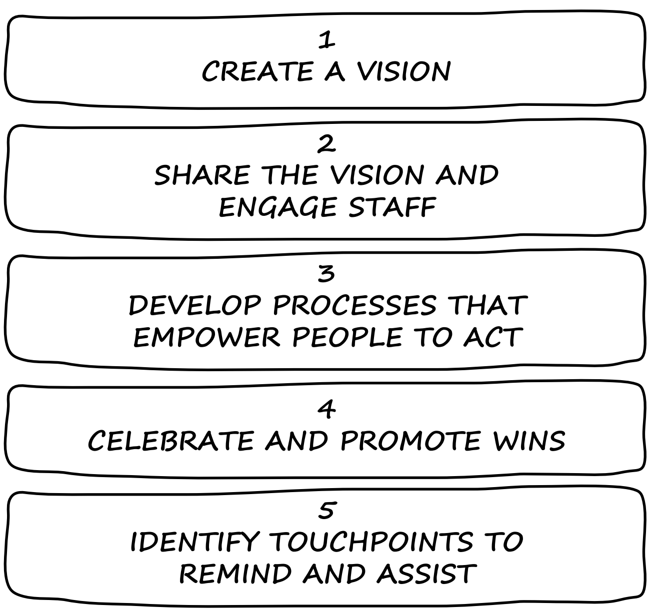

Figure 7.1: the mobilisation hack model

1. Create a vision

The first step is for you and your immediate direct reports to identify what you believe could be achieved if you changed the way things were done. This involves in part dreaming about what's possible and in part imagining what could be left behind. If this can be defined in the form of a mantra or a story that talks to the hearts and minds of your staff, it's on track. Leaders must be 100 per cent committed to making this vision a reality by following the steps shown in table 7.1.

Table 7.1: the critical components of a vision

Clear and elevating vision	Needs to be easily identifiable and must be a stretch to achieve
Compelling and authentic story	Need to engage the minds, hearts and spirits of your people with the vision
Willing to burn the ships	Leadership team needs to be 100% committed to moving forward, without hesitation
Commit without a comprehensive plan	Draft a framework; however, allow your people to be involved in developing the plan — important given they will be the ones making it happen

HAVE A CLEAR AND ELEVATING VISION

My master's thesis focused on the different communication and activities that occurred between what successful and unsuccessful teams did. In my research I came across an insightful team excellence model developed by Carl Larson and Frank LaFasto that identified eight common characteristics of effectively functioning teams. One of the main characteristics that determined why teams failed or succeeded was whether they had a clear elevating goal. This goal or vision needs to be easily identified and understood and staff need to believe that the goal is worthwhile and can be achieved. Leaders need to also ensure that the goal or vision is elevating. What this means is that the vision must be challenging or stretch the leaders, individual staff and collective teams and it needs to contain a sense of urgency. If the vision or goal for a team is something that's so far into the future that no-one can grasp it, it's hard to get people motivated to take action now.

HAVE A COMPELLING AND AUTHENTIC STORY

When you begin to identify the vision forward you need to find a way to verbalise what it is you're trying to get people to achieve — a method of talking to the minds, hearts and souls of your team so they will be willing to commit to this way forward. This means you need to craft what you're going to say and how you're going to say it so it resonates and spreads to the entire team or organisation, regardless of the geographical borders they may be spread across.

Gabrielle Dolan is an expert in storytelling and a fellow Thought Leaders Global business partner. She flies around the world and works with leaders and their teams to teach them how they can tell a story that connects with people. In her book *Stories for Work: The essential guide to business storytelling* she finds that for storytelling to be effective there are three key ingredients. The first is that the leaders need to have created a culture where it's alright for them to show vulnerability and emotion; the second is that the CEO and senior leaders need to role model both storytelling and listening; and the third key is the need to skill up key leaders across the organisation who can continue sharing the story and vision in a compelling way so that it's not easily forgotten. In other words, the typical death-by-PowerPoint presentation stating a new vision will not get the result a leader is looking for.

BE 100 PER CENT COMMITTED AND WILLING TO BURN THE SHIPS

To be a successful team or organisation leader you need to be 100 per cent committed to shifting the culture and not be afraid to step away from the current safe procedures and approaches. You and your team must be unified in your belief that the new vision is the direction the company needs to take without hesitation. You also need to recognise that the minute you communicate this to your team you'll have no choice but to see it through.

The 1500s explorer Hernan Cortez was one of the first Spanish explorers looking for riches and opportunities in the new world. As he and his crew landed, a number of them discussed a mutiny that would involve stealing a few ships and fleeing rather than facing the unknown journey ahead. Famously, Cortez learned of this plot and burned his ships to let his soldiers know there was no turning back. This was to ensure that his men were 100 per cent committed to their cause. While I don't recommend burning things to the ground, the commitment he demonstrated as a leader in a difficult situation is now legendary.

My point is that leaders must be willing to put everything into their vision and to stake their success on it as well. Don't underestimate how difficult this can be for some people. Many leaders and senior managers achieved their positions using traditional approaches. It can be very confronting for someone who has been leading people for over 20 years to accept that they have to learn new ways of behaving and operating. I believe this is the main reason why many teams and organisations don't become mobilised to the next level of performance.

COMMIT WITHOUT A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Committing to the new way forward without fully developing a detailed strategy of specifically how to achieve your new dream is not uncommon. Many leaders who have successfully mobilised their team committed to their new reality without having a finalised plan. You don't have to have all the answers — allow your team to help you identify the way forward and you'll get there faster.

2. Share the vision and engage staff

Once you've identified your vision and committed to it, the next step is to share the vision in a way that will engage staff so they want to take action. Don't make the mistake of going away on a leadership retreat, then coming back and telling your staff all about the new vision they have to work towards. This approach often backfires because the staff resent the fact that they weren't involved in the vision and aren't emotionally connected to it. There needs to be a story and a compelling reason that's shared to hook staff into wanting to be part of the solution for turning things around. Human beings are instinctively wired to be connected to groups of people. This is why for millions of years bands of people around the world would form tribes that worked together for the common good.

Author Seth Godin has written 18 books, most of them bestsellers. His book *Tribes: We need you to lead us* describes the need for leaders to step up and create a tribe of like-minded people who do amazing things. In his book he looks at how tribes are everywhere and many people who make up these groups are hungry for connection, meaning and change — and most importantly something to belong to. From my perspective leaders are the ones who need to create the story and connect their tribe of staff in a way that starts action towards something more.

TARGETING CRITICAL MASS: THE CORE 30 AND THE FENCE 50

Through experience I've identified that you need to get a core group of about 30 per cent of your staff to agree with the new shared vision and willingly start doing things differently in order for the movement to spread across the team and hopefully the rest of the organisation. Once this core buy-in percentage is created, the fence-sitters who thought the new shared message was a good idea, but were playing it safe to see if anything really changed or not, start to take action — they usually make up about 50 per cent of the total staff. If you can get the 30 per cent core and the 50 per cent fence-sitters — that is, the critical mass — to start making small as well as bigger shifts towards the new shared vision, the momentum takes care of itself. The negative resisters get squeezed out, with some of them leaving because they preferred the old approach and others making very small shifts or none at all.

In the manufacturing company I was working for we designed and delivered a series of workshops that almost every employee from every plant attended. The first workshop was a three-hour session delivered to a mix of employees from machine operators to executive managers that showed the story of why things needed to change and, more importantly, how we needed everyone to identify how to change. Because our machined parts had to be delivered in a lean manufacturing way to our external customers, the machines operated 24 hours a day. This meant there were three shifts of staff running the machines: a morning shift, an afternoon shift and an evening or graveyard shift. To make it easier for the staff, we ran sessions early in the morning, as late as midnight and everywhere in between. If we wanted to influence them that things were going to be different we knew we had to get this vision out to everyone.

In one workshop, I drew a model showing how the traditional company pyramid would need to be flipped on its head, with staff making decisions and leading the way. As I was explaining this, I noticed most of the frontline employees looking directly at their managers to see if they agreed with my message as it was going against the previous management approach (which would commonly shoot down unsolicited ideas from staff). It was as if they were looking for signs of support and commitment from the managers that they would follow through on this message. After this incident, the CEO and I agreed that managers needed to be present at every workshop. When some of the managers showed up and actively participated in four or five workshops, word quickly got out that the managers were on board!

The buzz that circulated around the various plants after we'd finished rolling out the new vision was inspiring. We made a point of walking around the plants during different shifts to listen and talk with staff. Many managers noticed a lift in productivity and efficiency after the workshops, with one commenting that it was starting to feel like a new business. Because we'd gained momentum and staff were talking about it, we knew we'd started it off the right way—now we just needed to keep it moving.

3. Develop processes that empower people to act

Once your staff are aware of and have started engaging in the vision and the way forward, the next step is to develop a structure or process that allows people to start taking action in new ways. Various approaches can be taken to accomplish this. For example, individual responsibilities can be shifted around so staff have time to focus on the areas that need improvement. Google is well known for having its engineers commit time during their work week towards special projects that they believe will help them in the future. They changed their structure and the roles of the engineers to allow them to take action. Many of these projects are not related to the engineers' particular areas of responsibility; however, the engineers have an interest in them and are willing to commit energy and activity to them. This is how one of their most successful products, Gmail, was developed.

Not only teams, but whole organisations need to challenge their status quo and identify ways of getting people involved in streamlining operations and doing things 'smarter' so that the forward momentum isn't stalled.

At the manufacturing company we did this by quickly following up our workshops with another round of sessions for gathering feedback to identify new ways of operating. It wasn't always easy: many of the staff were stuck in old mindsets and there were some heated debates about how to move forward. However, having the commitment of the leaders and managers who attended these sessions made it possible to implement and integrate the new business practices, which turned the typical assembly line into many self-managed business units. The operational KPIs were shared with the teams, and staff became involved in the scheduling of work hours, workflow planning and continuous improvement.

4. Celebrate and promote wins

The more staff are engaged and empowered to mobilise, the more things start to change, resulting in small and large wins. As new goals are achieved, it's important to recognise and celebrate these wins: putting up signs that show the improvement, providing team lunches or giving staff movie vouchers that they can use with their family outside of work.

Showing appreciation is another way of gaining further traction and maintaining the momentum. If a team member stays back late to complete a work project, order their favourite food for them or work alongside them to help complete the work. This shows you're present and mobilises a team to the next level.

In the manufacturing company, the leadership team started tracking waste as well as how the improvements being made helped the bottom line of the business. They even implemented a program called 'gain sharing', which allowed business units that achieved higher targets and reduced costs to be rewarded financially. Although most research shows that financial incentives alone don't work, when I watched workers in one of the tool and die factories that made special tooling receive their gain sharing bonus it was a proud moment. Some managers' bonuses were also tied to the success of their teams, which encouraged them to work with their people to continuously improve their culture and approach.

5. Identify touchpoints to remind and assist

The final step of the mobilisation model is to identify and develop touchpoints for checking in with individual staff members and reminding them of the shared vision.

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Creating internal touchpoints will ensure staff see leaders on a more regular basis and are regularly reminded of the shared vision forward and the achievements being made in other areas of the team or business. This helps to maintain the momentum over time, which allows the team to get closer to achieving what they set out to do.

INTERNAL PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

Internal promotion campaigns are about developing ways to capture the great things people are doing and share them across the team and other parts of the organisation to reinforce the shared vision so that more people start taking action. Create a framework for an internal communication campaign that includes a range of initiatives and activities to give staff opportunities to come together and appreciate what has been achieved.

AWARD PROGRAMS

Setting up an award program to formally recognise staff in a unique manner is another way to create touchpoints. This could be a formal company awards evening or a company picnic where you promote the good work of staff to their colleagues and reinforce the shared vision in the process.

The manufacturing company initiated an annual company picnic for staff and their families to celebrate the successes of the previous year and to recognise staff who had achieved outstanding results. The managers cooked and served their staff, who were able to connect on an entirely different level. This was a way to reinforce the commitment and success of the shared vision and the journey that every employee was on.

EXTERNAL PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

Another option is to create external marketing campaigns in the form of case studies, how-to book series, videos, and so on. This gives the organisation traction in its industry and with its customers. It also gives staff a sense of pride hearing about some of the great feats the organisation has achieved. If the company has a sales force, they can also proudly refer to these internal initiatives, which can help distinguish their products and service offerings from their competition.

5 HACKS FOR IMPROVING TEAM MOBILISATION

Leaders need the ability to mobilise their team or organisation to new heights and in new directions. In addition to the strategies discussed above, here are a few hacks you can use to fast-track the way you get your people moving.

1. Be willing to risk change

For a team to be inspired enough to be mobilised the leaders must be willing to change. This means they must be willing to risk their reputation on the success of a new initiative and not be afraid to make mistakes along the way. This conviction is often what determines whether or not they're successful. Leaders need to step up and learn while they lead.

2. Talk to your staff's heads and hearts

The vision and the story about why change is necessary must be scripted and delivered in a way that talks to people's souls. There should be enough rational understanding of the vision's importance and it needs to touch people at an emotional level. Leaders need to share their vulnerability and allow staff to be involved in the solutions and changes to be identified and integrated. A typical PowerPoint presentation will not cut it.

3. Be present and visible everywhere

Once the story of the vision and the need for change have been communicated and staff are starting to get engaged, leaders need to be visible across the team and the organisation. They should be listening and continually repeating with passion their commitment to helping staff make the necessary shifts. They also need to be authentic and present to ensure that their words and actions are in alignment in order to satisfy their teams that they are leaders worth following.

4. Get out of your staff's way

Once the staff have committed, leaders need to stay out of their way and allow the people closest to the new way of operating start generating ideas and methods to integrate the new approach. Leaders should reduce and eliminate as many obstacles as possible that could slow their people down and possibly jeopardise their forward momentum.

5. Promote wins to anyone and everyone

As teams start to have wins, leaders need to become the evangelical preachers who will share the good word of what they've done and how they've done it across the team and every part of the company. In addition, the leadership team needs to create an internal and external promotion strategy that will help keep the momentum going and give it an edge in the marketplace.

A key skill for any leader is the ability to mobilise their staff and lift performance to the next level. My wish is that some of the insights provided will give you a framework or a fast hack that you can further develop to make great things happen.

CASE STUDY

Peter Baines, OAM

Founder & Managing Director, Hands Across the Water

When Peter Baines stepped onto a beach in Thailand following the devastation of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, he had to pull on all of his training from the past 20 years in the New South Wales police force to lead the Australian forensic investigation. Although he had been on response teams in the past, including the 2002 Bali bombings, he found himself confronted by one of the largest victim identification projects in the world. Because of his leadership and

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CASE STUDY

ability to get people moving, he led the international disaster victim identification response, overseeing teams from 36 countries over three months.

This was a very unique challenge due to the range of customs and approaches of the various responders. In addition, he noticed that the Thai soldiers, whose sole job was to carry decomposing bodies out of storage to the forensics teams, were starting to see the 16-hour days as a chore. Rather than just accepting the status quo, Peter and a teammate decided to learn the Thai national anthem, in Thai.

Every morning the Thai soldiers would sing the national anthem with passion and patriotism at the flag ceremony, then bow their heads and start their day. One morning, to their surprise, Peter and the Australian contingent joined in with them, singing with pride. This led to a shift in the way the Thai soldiers viewed Peter and his team, which led to a shift in their performance, even in the midst of the death that surrounded them.

When Peter's tour was up, he returned to Sydney and was promoted to work on a global counterterrorism project with Interpol. Little did he know that the tsunami experience would change his life and the lives of so many others in such a positive way. Before he left Thailand he had struck up a friendship with one of the local Thai non-government partners who had put together a makeshift orphanage to house 32 children who had lost their entire families in the tsunami and were still homeless eight months later. Peter and some of his colleagues started talking about these kids and their situation, and people made donations to build a home for them to live in. Upon the home being completed with room for 40 children, they found there were actually 60 children, and rather than turning them away, Peter continued to raise awareness and funding was secured for a second building.

This was the start of the charity that Peter founded called Hands Across the Water. Rather than building a charity in the typical way, he decided to challenge the way it operated by communicating his vision that 100 per cent of donors' funds would go directly to the projects on the ground in Thailand, without any money being spent in Australia for staff, marketing or administration. This was an incredible step given that charities often spend up to 40 per cent of the funds raised on overheads. He also decided that Hands Across the Water was in it for the long haul for these children and other Thai children who were in serious need of help.

At the time Peter was still with the New South Wales police force and loved the forensic work that he was doing; however, he was now being sought out by companies to share with them strategies that could be used to mobilise their people. In 2008 he resigned from the police force and focused on speaking at conferences around the world to share his insights into leadership and continue the story of Hands Across the Water. He was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) for his efforts in international humanitarian work.

The challenge to raise funds was one of the biggest obstacles that Peter faced given that over time the tsunami disaster would start to fade from people's memories. He had to identify new ways to keep people connected with what the charity was doing and so began the Hands Across the Water annual Thai Charity Bike Rides. When a key supporter brought up the idea that she was thinking about riding 800 kilometres over eight days in Thailand and wanted to raise $10 000 along the way, it sounded like a huge idea, but he was willing to give it a try. This has led to a series of charity bike rides in Thailand since 2009 that have seen over 500 people participate and collectively raise almost $10 million dollars, with the rides continuing today.

Today Peter is Managing Director of the Hands Group. This is the organisation that oversees the charity as well as an events

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CASE STUDY

business tasked with raising awareness and funding for the charity through a range of commercial events and conferences across the Asia–Pacific. Donors' funds are still protected and the events company allocates staff time to assist with the charity. All profits of this company go back to the charity. The charity now supports over 600 children located across seven homes and centres in Thailand. Under Peter's leadership they provide over 325 000 meals per year and have raised more than $20 million. Hands Across the Water also supports 46 children who have entered university to improve their future opportunities.

In looking at what allowed people to be mobilised to take part, Peter recognised that it was the 'shared experience'. When people have a clear vision and it stretches them — raising $10 000, for example — he found that they get very clear on what they need to do and why. This is also why he has a very high return of past bike riders who continue coming back to participate in the ride, bringing their family and friends. For many of them it's for the children and the chance to make a difference beyond themselves, while for others it's just knowing that they're making a difference in a way that, as Peter says, provides 'food for the soul'. Because of the way Peter hacked his leadership, the world is a better place.

SELF-HACK
Mobilising your team

Leaders are so busy they often don't take the time to stop and analyse whether they're operating in the most efficient and effective way possible when it comes to mobilising their team.

Take a few minutes to reflect on a project your team may be working on currently. It can be something simple such as an isolated project, or it could be a large-scale organisational change project to lift overall performance.

If the project has been going for a period of time, start analysing the approach you took as a leader to get it started. The following hacks, which are in the form of questions, are designed to test what your approach was and how committed you and your team were, so a few of your responses may be a bit uncomfortable if you took a more traditional approach. Don't despair. Just write down your reflections on how you went about mobilising your people and use these as a basis for learning and changing how you'll do it next time.

Hack 1: Have commitment and clarity of elevating goal or vision

- What was the vision or goal and how did you share it with your team?
- Did it have personal stories that were authentic and moving or was it typical?
- Were you and any other leaders fully committed and willing to risk your reputation to ensure that it was successful?
- What specific evidence are you able to recall to back this up?

Hack 2: Share your vision and engage staff

- If we were to ask your staff about the way your vision or goal was shared to them, what would they say?
- Would they reflect on how it engaged everyone and created a sense of urgency and commitment? Or would they say it was a typical PowerPoint presentation that showed what management wanted people to do?

Hack 3: Develop a process that enables people to act

- What systems or structural changes did you make to enable your team to do things differently to accomplish the goal?
- How did you involve them in the process to empower them to take action because they were actively participating in the solution and execution?

Hack 4: Celebrate and promote wins

- How did you identify and share the wins and achievements that people made? Did you use the typical dashboard approach that gets brushed over in team meetings or did you do something different?
- How did you ensure people who were making an effort and achieving results were recognised and appreciated?
- What would your staff say about the way they were recognised and appreciated?
- Would they say it was genuine and heartfelt or impersonal?

Hack 5: Develop touchpoints to remind and assist

- What framework did you create to ensure you and your leaders continued your internal touchpoints to remind and inspire people of the agreed vision or goal?
- What were the main components of your internal promotion campaign that spread the good word about the positive deeds of your staff?
- How did you turn this into an external promotion campaign so other areas of the business, as well as your customers and the marketplace, could appreciate what your team was doing differently?

Although these are just a sample of questions, as you start capturing your reflections on what you did you'll identify potential areas that you could still integrate or focus on next time. If you're a leader who's about to embark on mobilising your team, this will give you a good framework that you can use to hack your approach to lifting performance and hopefully saving some hassles and time along the way.

Final words

I wrote this book because I was regularly asked by leaders and clients I've worked with to capture the incredible leadership hacks that I've come across. They asked for them to be put together in one place as a resource that can be shared and integrated across any organisation looking to find faster ways to get more things done.

I'm finding that as technology becomes more advanced we'll need more highly skilled leaders to become beacons of light that others can follow. We need more amazing leaders who will break the old-school management practices and create incredible cultures filled with staff who are committed and want to perform at the next level.

Given you've exposed yourself to a range of ideas on how to hack your approach, now is the time to step up and become the leader others want to follow. My wish is that you take the concepts in this book and hack them in lots of different ways to help you and your teams have a stronger connection that prepares you to be more agile and prepared for the future ahead. Enjoy the ride!

Join the Leadership Hacks community

This book is about leadership hacks that can be used to help boost impact and performance. If you would like to join our community to share some of your hacks or learn about others' please join us.

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Scott works directly with leaders and organisations to integrate leadership hack strategies into reality. He provides a range of powerful insights, advice and programs including Leadership Hack programs, one-on-one mentoring and fast-hack training sessions.

If you are organising a conference and are looking for a speaker who can inspire, inform and mobilise your leaders, please contact Scott at scott@scottstein.com. Scott is known for his inspirational style, which encourages people to boost their impact and results and take action at work—and at home.

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