



**MEZZANA**  
partners



# High Performing Teams

PROGRAMME



**AZTEC**  
ACADEMY

# High Performance Myths

Mezzana Partners have a deep understanding of high performance, drawing on our own personal experience and from working with successful performers in sport and business. As we embark together on the High Performing Teams programme, we want to share our thinking about high performance by addressing some persistent myths. These are widespread and while at first glance they make sense, we believe that they hinder healthy, sustainable high performance. As you read, think about whether you recognise any of these beliefs:

## Optimal performance comes from setting big goals

Motivational speakers love quoting how President Kennedy's big, audacious goal of putting man on the moon galvanised the United States into action, motivating everyone from the NASA floor cleaner to top scientists. *Goals are certainly important, and the right ones set a clear destination and inspire commitment. But big goals alone do not lead to great performance.* Think about any sporting event, like a football match – both teams have the goal of winning. But despite having the same goal, only one team will win. In reality, high performance relies on focusing on the process as much as the outcome. Successful performers invest time and energy to build skills, consistent habits and routines, that they practice and refine every day. It's the quality of their daily activity and execution that leads to outstanding performances, not just the destination to which they are aiming. Paradoxically, too much focus on hitting targets or on winning at all costs can lead to greater anxiety and poorer performance. At worst it also compromises ethics and quality standards.

*As a leader in Aztec, you have important goals and objectives to achieve. You also need to understand WHAT you need to do and HOW you will achieve your goals, both personally and with your team.* This is the very challenge of high-performance leadership – to hone and apply these behaviours day by day, week by week, so that you and your team make progress. Goals give direction but it's your process that delivers them.

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# High performance requires natural talent

We respond with awe when we see an outstanding sporting performance, like a gymnast scoring a perfect 10, a skier descending a vertical mountain slope, or a golfer sinking a tricky putt under pressure. Certainly, having natural talent helps to reach these great heights, and being blessed with the right genetic inheritance makes a difference. *But talent alone is not enough. Ask any experienced sports coach whether they would prioritise talent or attitude, and most would pick attitude every time.* Without the right attitude, even the greatest talent will go to waste, and with the right attitude even modest talent can excel. By the right attitude, we mean a desire to constantly improve, to learn and to grow. It means actively seeking feedback and being willing to challenge yourself, your ways of working, and your team-mates. It comes from taking personal responsibility, seeking to influence and control your circumstances rather than blaming others or complaining. *It means judging your performance against your own standards of excellence rather than simply whether you win or lose.* All these attitudes can be developed, and unlike talent they are not fixed at birth. Many of the 'greats' are those who have learned the fastest - and keep on learning. Roger Federer or Andy Murray are cases in point - they are both insatiable students of their game (their 'jobs') and that desire to improve and curiosity to see how good they can be drives them on. Conversely there are plenty of examples of exceptionally talented individuals who have squandered their potential through poor attitudes – in tennis Nick Kyrgios might be an example.

*These high-performance attitudes are just as relevant to you as an Aztec leader. You need to show your team that you want to improve and to learn, and that you constantly seek out better, smarter ways of working.*

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# High performance comes from working harder than anyone else

There are no short cuts to high performance, and it is certainly true that hard work counts. Yet even the best performers have limits, limits that need to be tested but also respected. Great athletes have learned that the quality of their rest and recovery between training sessions is critical. This is the time when muscles re-build and become stronger, when neuromuscular pathways that underpin new skills are consolidated, and when energy stores are replenished. *Ignoring natural limits and pushing too hard, for too long, leads to burnout and a severe decline in performance.* The quality of training is more important than the volume of training, to ensure that the correct skills and technique are honed for delivery under pressure.

As an Aztec leader your work ethic is important too, and to sustain your own and your team's performance you must also learn how to pace yourself and build in time for recovery. This allows you to maintain high quality thinking and decision making, and to set a positive, energised emotional tone in your team.

## High performance relies on the individual

Watching the winning runner or cyclist cross the line at the end of a big race emphasises the solo grit and determination that underpins high performance. Yet no elite performer does it all alone. They will have relied on others, perhaps just a coach but more likely a support team including a physiotherapist, training partners, a nutritionist, psychologist and other sport scientists, not to forget family and friends. Sustained high performance requires engaging and co-ordinating many different talents.

*In Aztec it's the same. Your own expertise, skill, energy and client relationships are important and necessary.* But they are not sufficient without your team's efforts too. Learning to harness the power of a team, to develop other people's skills, and create a strong and supportive team culture is essential.

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### Myths and reality

- > High performance comes from setting big goals; NO, it's also executing the right behaviours and habits daily.
- > High performance requires natural talent; NO, it's making the most of your talent by cultivating the right attitudes and mindset.
- > High performance comes from working harder than anyone else; NO, work ethic matters but it's the quality of your recovery that really counts.
- > High performance relies on the individual; NO, it takes a team to succeed in the long term.

*Sustained, healthy high performance comes when you link clear goals with the right habits to direct your daily energy and execution. It comes when you develop the right mindset, focused on learning and improvement. It comes when you balance hard work with recovery, and when you harness the power of your team. We're looking forward to helping you develop these high-performance capabilities over the coming year, to benefit you, your team, your clients and Aztec.*

*The Mezzana Team*



## PROGRAMME LAUNCH



### Would you like to learn more?

We suggest 3 additional articles that will stimulate your thinking and help you get ready for the programme:

*The difference between amateurs and professionals – and for professional, read 'high performer'.* [View here >](#)

*Tony Schwartz on managing personal energy.* [View here >](#)

*Confronting insights into high performance culture.* [View here >](#)

