

The essence of teamwork is more than structure, political savvy, or talented people. Here's a probe into teamwork's mysterious fourth dimension, its symbolic and ritualistic framework.

What Makes a Team Work?

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What enables a group to push toward peak performance over an extended period of time? We hear so much about teamwork. But what makes a team work?

Every answer to this question (and there are plenty) comes with "guaranteed results" printed on its package. But reliable answers remain as elusive as a sure-fire diet for losing weight. Low-performing teams dash from fad to elixir to frustration and disappointment, and quick-fix recipes continue to substitute for deeper change in our time-honored ways of thinking about the essence of teamwork.

Teams play a vital role in the American tradition. For their participants, bowling teams, soccer teams, baseball teams, commando teams, and fund-raising teams absorb energy and provide an outlet for competitive spirit. For spectators, athletic teams provide drama, exhilaration, and a common cultural focal point. Teams also play an increasingly important role in the American corporation. Leadership teams, quality teams, design teams, and other forms of teamwork are replacing the individualistic Lone Ranger, I'll-do-my-job-myself-thank-you attitude that has crippled America's ability to compete in the global market place.

Much of the work in large organizations is now done in small groups or teams. When

those teams work badly, as they often do, they can block even the most talented individuals from realizing their potential. When they work well, they can elevate the performance of ordinary mortals to extraordinary heights. The athletic world is full of stories of underdog teams winning a championship against a collection of individuals who were better players, but not a better team.

Although the corporate world relies more and more on teamwork, it often does so without a solid grasp of what makes a team work. The prescriptions and theories that abound in the management literature often miss the deeper secrets of how effective teams or groups reach the special state of peak performance. Former Visa CEO Dee Hock captured the heart of the issue: "In the field of group endeavor, you will see incredible events in which the group performs far beyond the sum of its individual talents. It happens in the symphony, in the ballet, in the theater, in sports, and equally in business. It is easy to recognize and impossible to define. It is a mystique. It cannot be achieved without immense effort, training, and cooperation. But effort, training, and cooperation alone rarely create it" (Quoted in Len Schlesinger, Bob Eccles, and Jack Gabarro, *Managerial Behavior in Organizations*, McGraw-Hill, 1983).

Is peak performance simply a great mystery—beautiful when it happens, but no more predictable or controllable than the next earthquake in California? In this article we attempt to delve more deeply into the origins of magic by analyzing a well-documented case of a team that *did* achieve a state of transcendence. Tracy Kidder, in *The Soul of a New Machine* (Little, Brown and Company, 1981), provides a dazzling account of a small group of Data General engineers who created a new 32-bit computer in record time in the 1970s. Despite scant resources and limited support, the “Eagle Group” outperformed all other Data General Divisions to produce a new, state-of-the-art computer. Why was this group so successful? What can other teams learn from the group’s experience? The answer can be found in the way the Eagle Group’s leadership “framed” the situation at hand.

Modern organizations are full of ambiguity, complexity, turbulence, and confusion. These conditions create dilemmas for humans, who are inevitably stuck with biological limits in memory and information processing. Too much is happening too fast for managers to attend to everything. They are forced to simplify. They do this by filtering and interpreting their experience in the light of cognitive maps, or frames, that they have developed through education and experience. When frames are off-target or too simple, they distort and mislead. But frames that are too complex overwhelm our capacity to think clearly, thus making things even more confusing and overwhelming.

A manageable number of frames, each offering a window on different spheres of social complexity, provides a way out of the dilemma. The ability to use multiple frames has three advantages: (a) each frame can be coherent, parsimonious, and powerful; (b) the collection can be more comprehensive than any single frame; and (c) multiple frames enable leaders to reframe. Reframing is a conscious effort to size up a situation using multiple lenses. Leaders who cannot reframe in times of crisis and overload feel confused and overwhelmed. Sometimes they

are immobilized; other times, they plunge mindlessly into reckless and misguided action. In both the management literature and the minds of practicing managers, we have found four distinctive frames, or perspectives, in common use. The *structural* frame emphasizes rationality, efficiency, planning, and policies. Structural leaders value analysis and data, keep their eye on the bottom line, set clear directions, and hold people accountable for results. They try to solve organizational problems by developing new policies and procedures—or through restructuring. A second perspective, the *human resource* frame, focuses on the interaction between individual and organizational needs. Human resource leaders value relationships and feelings and seek to lead through facilitation and empowerment. When problems arise, they are likely to favor remedies like participation and training.

The *political* frame emphasizes conflict among different groups and interests for scarce resources. Political leaders are advocates and negotiators who spend much of their time networking, creating coalitions, building a power base, and negotiating compromises. They see conflict as a source of energy rather than a cause for alarm. The *symbolic* frame sees a chaotic world in which meaning and predictability are socially constructed, and facts are interpretative rather than objective. Symbolic leaders pay diligent attention to myth, ritual, ceremony, stories, and other symbolic forms. When things go wrong, they try to articulate a new story or revisit cherished values.

All four frames are important, because each captures a critical slice of organizational reality. An examination of the literature on effective groups shows that each frame has something to contribute. In the 1960s and 1970s, authors such as Douglas McGregor, Rensis Likert, and Chris Argyris offered a series of prescriptions for effective teamwork that focused on the human side of groups. They suggested that effective teams had such characteristics as clear goals, open communication, shared leadership, and a comfortable, informal atmosphere.



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More recently, Richard Hackman and his colleagues surveyed groups and teams in a wide range of industries and organizations (*Groups That Work—and Those That Don't*, Jossey-Bass, 1990). They found both structural and human resource variables that were critical to group effectiveness. Groups with a clear charge and clear deadlines did much better than those without. A common recipe for failure was to burden a group with a vague purpose, squishy deadlines, and fuzzy success criteria, and then instruct the team to “work out the specifics.” Other groups were crippled from the start because they lacked critical resources. Sometimes the absence of individuals with key expertise or critical organizational linkages became the sticking point. Other times, the group’s authority and mandate were unclear or insufficient. Hackman and his colleagues also found that history made a big difference. Groups that started well and achieved some early wins often triggered a self-sustaining upward spiral in performance. Groups that got off on the wrong foot often fell into a negative performance rut; their efforts to dig themselves out put them deeper in the mud.

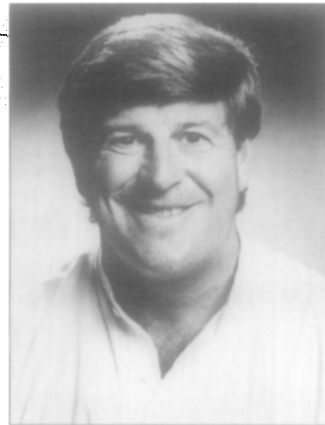
All of this important and helpful work still misses key elements in teamwork. It attends very little to issues of power and conflict that often block groups from performing at high levels. Even more notably, it rarely touches on the symbolic elements of flow, spirit, and magic that are at the core of extraordinary performance. As managers seek to get teams working better, the political and symbolic issues are the ones that most often trip them up and frustrate their efforts. Our own research shows that managers in both the public and private sectors tend to over rely on the structural and human resource perspectives, while underusing political and symbolic lenses. Such patterns of thinking often help them to be better *managers*, but not better *leaders*. In our studies, the structural frame is most often linked to effectiveness as a *manager*, but the symbolic frame is the best predictor of effective leadership. Because practicing managers so often think like managers, not like leaders, it is no surprise that many contemporary teams are overmanaged but underled.

Symbolic thinking is subtle and complex; it rests much more on intuition and artistry than on analysis and linear thinking. For this reason, it is often puzzling, elusive, or mysterious for practicing managers. But it gets to the heart of issues of meaning and faith that none of the other perspectives captures. If managers were to rely solely on the human resource, structural, or political frames to explain the Eagle Group's success, they would likely generate explanations like the following:

1. **Human relations:** Perhaps this was a group of highly talented individuals who developed high motivation through operating in an open, participative, and trusting context.
2. **Incentives:** Maybe the group was motivated by the promise of tangible rewards and recognition.
3. **Structure:** Perhaps the group's secret was that it had explicit goals, well-developed control systems, and clear job descriptions.
4. **Competition:** Maybe the group was motivated by the desire to win in a highly competitive environment.

None of these explanations really fits the case. Were the individuals of the Eagle project extraordinarily talented? Not really. While each was highly skilled, none was significantly better than engineers in other Data General projects. Were team members always treated with dignity and respect? Quite the contrary. One engineer noted that no one ever patted anyone on the back. Instead, the group experienced what they called mushroom management: "Put 'em in the dark, feed 'em s—, and watch 'em grow" (*The Soul of a New Machine*, p. 109).

Were financial rewards a motivating factor? Group members said explicitly that they did not work for money. Nor, apparently, were they motivated by fame. The company rewarded their heroic efforts with neither formal appreciation nor official applause. In fact, most members of the team later moved unrecognized to other parts of Data General—or to other companies. The group quietly dissolved shortly after the new computer was announced and shipped.



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Joining a team involves more than making a rational decision. It is a mutual choice that is marked by some special form of ritual.

Perhaps the group's formal structure accounted for its success. Were they pursuing well-defined and laudable goals? The group leader, Dan West, offered the precept that "not everything worth doing is worth doing well." Did the group have an especially clear and well-coordinated set of roles and relationships? According to Kidder, it kept no charts, graphs, or organization tables that meant anything. As one group member observed, "The whole management structure—anyone at the Harvard Business School would have barfed" (p. 116).

Perhaps competitive spirit and a passion for winning lay behind the group's phenomenal performance. They were motivated more by power than by money: "There's a big high in here somewhere for me that I don't fully understand . . . some of it's a new power trip.... The reason I work is because I win" (p. 179). They were encouraged to circumvent the formal structure to advance the group's interests: Explicit norms suggested that if you could not get what you wanted from a peer in another department, you could go directly to that person's boss. Group members were also unusually direct and confrontational:

Feeling sorely provoked, Peck one day said to this engineer, "You're an asshole." Ordered by his boss to apologize, Peck went to the man he had insulted, acting sheepish and said, "I'm sorry you're an asshole" (p. 224).

The group was highly competitive with one another and with others in the company. One example was the "tube wars." Alsing, the head of the Microkids, came back to lunch one day and went to work at his com-

puter terminal, only to find that all of his files had been turned into empty shells; the names were there, but the contents had vanished. It took him an hour to find the real files, which had been hidden elsewhere. Alsing counterattacked by creating an encrypted file and telling the team, "There's erotic writing in there and if you can find it, you can read it" (p. 107).

Here we begin to encounter the real secrets of the Eagle Group's success. The "tube wars"—and other exchanges among individual members—were more than power struggles. They were a form of play that released tensions, created bonds, and contributed to team spirit. A shared and cohesive culture, rather than a clear structure, was the real invisible force that gave the team its drive. Control was everywhere and nowhere, an elusive quality that passed from hand to hand down the hierarchy of the group so that everyone got some.

From the Eagle Group's experience we can distill several important symbolic tenets that can contribute to any team's (or organization's) success:

1 How someone becomes a team member is important.

Joining a team involves more than making a rational decision. It is a mutual choice that is marked by some special form of ritual. In the Eagle Group, the decision to become a member was called signing up. In interviewing potential members, Alsing went out of his way to emphasize that the task was virtually impossible and that the candidate's chances of being accepted were minimal because the standards were so high. The message to the

recruits was that they would be signing on to climb Mount Everest without a rope, and that it would be almost impossible to keep up with the other world-class climbers in the party. When the new recruits protested that they wanted to climb Mount Everest anyway, Alsing told them they would have to wait to find out if they were good enough. In Alsing's view, the exercise was "kind of like recruiting for a suicide mission. You're gonna die, but you're gonna die in glory" (p. 66).

This was the ritual of signing up. Through the symbolic activity, each engineer became a part of a special effort and agreed to forsake family, friends, and health to accomplish the impossible. Signing up was a sacred declaration: "I want to do this job and I'll give it my heart and soul."

2 Diversity gives a team a competitive advantage.

While nearly all the group's members were trained as engineers, each had a unique talent and style. Tom West, the group's leader, was by reputation a highly talented technical debugger. He was also aloof and unapproachable—the Prince of Darkness. Wallach, the group's computer architect, was a creative maverick. Before accepting West's invitation to join the group, he went to de Castro, the president of Data General, and asked him, "Okay, what the f--- do you want?" De Castro responded, "I want a thirty-two-bit Eclipse" (p. 75). After being reassured that de Castro would leave them alone and let them do the job, Wallach signed up. His love of literature, stories, and verse provided a literary substructure for the technical architecture of the new machine.

Alsing, the group's microcode expert, was as warm and approachable as Tom West was cold and remote. He headed the Microkids, the group of young engineers who programmed the new machine. Rasala, Alsing's counterpart, headed the Hardy Boys, the group's hardware design team. In contrast to Alsing's creative prolificacy, Rasala was a solid, hyperactive, risk-taking, technical, and detail-oriented mechanic. "I may not be the smartest designer in the world, a CPU giant, but I'm dumb enough to stick with it to the end" (p. 142).

Diversity among the group's top engineers was institutionalized in specialized team roles. West buffered the team from upper management interference and served as a group "devil." Wallach created the original design. Alsing and the Microkids created the language that was needed to fuse the computer with the programs and tell it what to do. Rasala and the Hardy Boys built the machine's circuitry. Understandably, there was tension among these diverse individuals and subcultures. Harnessing the resulting energy galvanized the different parts into a working team. One engineer, for example, was viewed as a creative genius who liked to invent an esoteric idea and then try to make it work. Another was a craftsman who enjoyed fixing things, working tirelessly until the last bug had been tracked down and eliminated.

3 Example rather than command holds a team together.

The customary elements of command and control were conspicuously absent. Wallach's design provided a degree of planned coordination among Eagle's autonomous individuals and groups, but very little was accomplished through rules. (The group had some rules, but paid little attention to them.) De Castro, Data General's CEO, was viewed as a distant God. He was never there physically, but his presence was always felt. West, the group's official leader, rarely interfered with the actual work, nor was he highly visible in the laboratory. One Sunday morning in January, however, when the team was supposed to be resting, a Hardy Boy happened to come by the lab and found West sitting in front of one of the prototypes. The next Sunday, West wasn't in the lab, and after that they rarely saw him there. For a long time he did not even hint that he might again put his own hands inside the machine.

West was a troublemaker. His contribution to the project was causing problems for the engineers to solve and making mundane events and issues appear to be special. He created an almost endless series of "brushfires" so that he could inspire his staff with the challenge of putting them out. He had a genius

for finding drama and romance in the group's everyday routines.

The other members of the group's formal leadership followed de Castro and West in creating ambiguity, encouraging inventiveness, and leading by example. Heroes of the moment provided inspiration and direction. Subtle and implicit signals rather than concrete and explicit guidelines or decisions held the group together and directed it toward a common quest.

4 A specialized language fosters cohesion and commitment.

Every team develops words, phrases, and metaphors unique to its circumstances. A specialized language both reflects and shapes a team's culture. It allows team members to communicate easily, with minimal misunderstandings. To the members of the Eagle Group, for example, a *kludge* was something to be avoided—perhaps a machine with loose wire held together with adhesive tape. A *canard* was anything false. *Fundamentals* were the source of enlightening thinking. The word *realistically* typically prefaced flights of fantasy. "Give me a *core dump*" meant tell me your thoughts. A *stack overflow* meant that an engineer's memory compartments were too full; a *one-stack-deep* mind indicated shallow thinking. "Eagle" provided a label for the project, while "Hardy Boys" and "Microkids" gave identity to the major sub-groups. The two prototype computers were named "Woodstock" and "Trixie."

A shared language bonds a team together, sets the group apart from outsiders, and reinforces unique values and beliefs. Asked about the Eagle Group's headquarters, West

observed, "It's like a cattle yard." Pressed for an explanation, he remarked, "Mmmmm . . . the language is different" (p. 50).

5 Stories carry history and values, while reinforcing team identity.

In most high-performing organizations and teams, stories keep traditions alive and provide real-life examples to guide everyday behavior. The group's lore extended and reinforced the subtle and powerful influence of Eagle's leaders—some of them distant and remote. Tom West's reputation as a "troublemaker" and "excitement-junkie" was conveyed through legends from the computer wars of the mid-1970s. Alsing said of West that he was always prepared and never raised his voice, but always conveyed intensity and the conviction that he knew the way out of whatever storm was currently battering the group. West also had the skills of the manager as politician. He knew how to develop agendas, build alliances, and negotiate with potential supporters or opponents. When he had a particular objective in mind, he would first go upstairs to get senior executives signed on. Then he went around to people one at a time, telling them that the bosses liked the idea and asking them to come on board. "They say, 'Ahhh, it sounds like you're just gonna put a bag on the side of the Eclipse,' and Tom'll give 'em his little grin and say, 'It's more than that, we're really gonna build this f—er and it's gonna be fast as greased lightning.' He tells them, 'We're gonna do it by April.' (p. 44)."

Stories of persistence, irreverence, and creativity created an atmosphere encouraging others to go beyond themselves, adding new

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exploits and tales to the Eagle's lore. For example, as the group neared completion, a debugging problem threatened the entire project. Veres, one of the engineers, worked day and night, with others, to locate the error. Holberger, one of the Hardy Boys, drove to work early one morning, pondering all the problems of the project and wondering if they would ever finish it. He was awakened from his reverie by the unexpected scene that greeted him when he entered the lab:

He shows it by smiling wryly. A great heap of paper lies on the floor, a continuous sheet of computer paper streaming out of the carriage at [the] system console. Stretched out, the sheet would run across the room and back again several times. You could fit a fairly detailed description of American history on it. Veres sits in the midst of this chaos, the picture of the scholar. He's examined it all. He turns to Holberger. "I found it," he says (p. 207).

6 Humor and play reduce tension and encourage creativity.

Work groups often focus single-mindedly on the task at hand, discouraging any unrelated activity. Seriousness replaces godliness as a desired virtue. Effective teams, on the other hand, balance seriousness with play and humor. Surgical teams, cockpit crews, and other groups learn that joking and playful banter are an essential source of invention and group spirit. Humor releases tension and resolves issues that arise from day-to-day routine or in a prevailing emergency. Among the members of the Eagle project, play was an essential part of group life.

When Alsing wanted the Microkids to learn how to manipulate Trixie (the computer), he made up a game. As the Microkids arrived, he told each of them to figure how to write a certain kind of program in Trixie's assembly language. The program had to fetch and print out the contents of a certain file, stored inside the computer. The Microkids went to work, learned their way around the computer, and felt great satisfaction until Alsing's perverse sense of humor tripped them

up at the end of the hunt. When they finally located the elusive file, they were greeted with a message that access was denied.

Through the resulting play, the Microkids learned to use the computer, coalesced into a team, and learned to negotiate their new technical environment. They also learned that they had a playful leader who cared about creativity.

Humor threaded itself throughout the group's formidable struggle, often stretching the boundaries of good taste. But that too was part of the team's identity. Throughout the year and a half it took to build the new machine, engineers of the Eagle Project learned to rely on play and humor as a source of relaxation, stimulation, enlightenment, and spiritual renewal.

7 Ritual and ceremony renew spirit and reinforce values.

Ritual and ceremony are expressive activities. As parentheses in an ordinary work day, each brackets a special form of human behavior. What transpires on the surface of such activities is not as important as the deeper communication underneath. Ritual and ceremony provide opportunities for reinforcing values, revitalizing spirit, and bonding individuals to the team and to one another. Much of what happened in the Eagle Group challenges our stereotypical concept of the engineer—a narrowly task-focused individual who has little time for anything nonrational. The Eagle Group kept a constant eye on symbolic activity, and its leadership encouraged ritual and ceremony from the project's beginning.

Rasala, head of the Hardy Boys, established a rule requiring that changes in the boards of the prototype be updated each morning. This activity provided a formal mechanism for coordination, but was also an occasion for informal communication, bantering, and gaining a sense of the whole. The engineers disliked the daily procedure, so Rasala changed it to once a week—on Saturday. He made it a point to always be there himself for the updating. He wanted his engineers to take an interest in the entire com-

puter, not just in the parts they had designed. He was convinced that only a group of engineers with a sense of the whole could ever get Eagle out the door on time. He wanted the Hardy Boys to be a team, and he was contemptuous of engineers who were reluctant to work on boards that someone else had designed, who felt comfortable only when working on their own.

Eagle's leaders met regularly, including a meeting every Friday afternoon in West's office. But their meetings dealt more with symbols, gossip, and play than substance and decisions. "'We could be in a lot of trouble here,' West might say, referring to some current problem. And Wallach or Rasala would reply, 'You mean *you* could be in a lot of trouble, right, Tom?'" (p. 132). Friday afternoon was a traditional time, for winding down and relaxing. Honoring such a tradition was all the more important for a group whose members often worked all week and then all weekend.

At Alsing's urging, West made himself available to anyone who wished to talk informally to him. Near the end of the work day, before hurrying home to his farmhouse, West would lean back in his chair with his office door open and entertain any visitor.

In addition to the recurring rituals, the Eagle Group held periodic ceremonies to raise spirits, provide individual recognition, and reinforce a common purpose and direction. Toward the end of the project, ceremonies provided a burst of renewed energy for the final push. The values of creativity, hard work, and teamwork are clearly evident in such festivities. For example, after the Microkids created "Honorary Microcoder Awards," the Hardy Boys responded by creating PAL awards. In a gathering at a local watering hole, the Cain Ridge Saloon, the first PAL was awarded to Rosemarie Seale, the group's secretary. She was commended for contributions above and beyond the call of duty and given a framed certificate, complete with an empty PAL chip socket glued in the center. At another gathering, one usually dedicated engineer was the first recipient of the All-Nighter Award, consisting of a certificate creatively inserted under the clear plastic coating of an in-

sulated coffee cup. Near the project's conclusion, all of the engineers' wives were given EAGLE (Eclipse Appreciation and Gratitude for Lonely Evening) Awards. Alsing, the primary instigator and organizer of the parties, commented, "We congratulated ourselves on finishing Eagle and then we went back and finished it" (p. 251).

8 Informal cultural players make contributions disproportionate to their formal roles.

Beyond organizing ceremonies, Alsing was also the Eagle's conscience and almost everyone's confidant. While in college, Alsing had originally planned to become a psychologist. Even though he abandoned psychology as a career, he retained it as an avocation and served as a combination therapist and social director for his team, and even for the Eclipse group. Those who reported to him sometimes complained about his tendency to go around them and talk directly to their people. Still, everyone valued his accessibility and the fact that they felt comfortable talking to him.

Every team needs a "priest"—a pastor who ministers to spiritual needs. Informally, these spiritual leaders take confession, give blessings, maintain traditions, and intercede in matters of gravest importance. Alsing did all these and, like a tribal priest, was both a counterpart and interpreter of the chief's intentions. Early on, West sometimes warned Alsing against getting too close to his people, but Alsing paid little attention and West finally gave up and let him be himself.

Rosemarie Seale's duties also expanded well beyond those of a typical secretary. If Alsing was the priest, she was the mother superior. She did all the usual secretarial chores—answering the phones, preparing documents, and working out budgets. But she found particular joy in the many opportunities to solve minor crises—which arose almost every day—and to serve as a kind of den mother for the members of the Eagle team. When new members came on, it was Rosemarie Seale who worried about finding them a desk and some pencils. When paychecks went astray, she would track them down and

get them to their intended recipients. She liked the job, she said, because she felt that she was doing something important.

In any group, a network of informal players deals with human issues outside formal channels. In the Eagle project, the essential efforts of these out-of-channel operators were encouraged, appreciated, and rewarded.

SOUL AS THE REAL SECRET OF A TEAM'S SUCCESS

The symbolic side of the Eagle Group was its real secret. Its soul, or culture, created a new machine. All of the members of the Eagle Group put something of themselves into the new computer. Individual efforts went well beyond a formal "job." The team's efforts were supported by a "way of life" that encouraged each person to commit himself to doing something of significance. Their commitment was elicited through the ritual of signing up, and then maintained and accentuated by shared diversity, exemplary leadership, a common language, stories, rituals, ceremonies, play, humor, and a network of cultural players. In the best sense of the word, the Eagle Group was a real team, their efforts knitted together by a cohesive culture. Symbolic elements were at the heart of the group's success.

The experience of the Eagle Group is not unusual. After extensive research on high-performing groups, Peter Vaill concluded that spirit was at the core of every such group he studied. The members of such groups consistently "felt the Spirit," and the feeling of spirit was essential to the meaning and value of the group's work. More organizations now realize that culture, soul, and spirit are the wellsprings of high performance. The U.S. Air Force, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, embarked on a vigorous effort to reaffirm tradition and rebuild its culture. The phrase "Cohesion is a Principle of War" was added to the list of core values. Project Warrior brought heroes—living and dead—forward as visible examples of the "right stuff." Rituals were revitalized and reinforced. Consider, for exam-

ple, the "re-blueing" ceremony held annually to encourage recommitment to Air Force values. The same attention to spirit and tradition is regularly found in legendary athletic teams such as the Boston Celtics, whose tradition of "Celtics pride" helps the team sustain one of the most extraordinary winning records in professional sports.

Many organizations have found that symbolic glue is central to business success. Facing intense foreign competition and severe problems of profitability, Ford Motor Company in the 1980s built a new culture around the principle that "Quality is job one." They were able to out-earn General Motors for the first time in sixty years. Jan Carlzon revitalized the culture of Scandinavian Air System around the precepts that every encounter between a customer and an SAS employee was a "moment of truth" and that SAS "flies people, not planes." Mitsubishi Corporation, with over 25,000 products ranging from "noodles to space satellites," used an elaborate entrance ceremony for new hires as part of its effort to reinforce a corporate culture stressing professionalism, cooperation, and entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

Symbolic perspectives challenge traditional views that building a team is mainly a problem of finding the right people, designing an appropriate structure, or negotiating political agreements. The essence of high performance is spirit. If we try to banish play, ritual, ceremony, and myth, we will destroy teamwork, not enhance it. Symbolic activities can be functional as well as expressive because of their ability to provide internal meaning and promote external faith and confidence.

In its own way, each framework (structural, human resource, or political) champions a bounded rationality. Structural views stress the deterministic forces of goals and technologies. The human resource framework calls attention to enduring human needs and motives. Political views emphasize the inescapable forces of scarce resources and

intransigent interests. Each of those perspectives is valid and important; we ignore any of them at our peril.

But the signs are everywhere that late-20th-century organizations are at a critical juncture because of a crisis of meaning and faith. Managers ask themselves questions like, "How am I supposed to build team spirit when my people feel underpaid, money is tight, turnover is increasing, and some people aren't sure they'll even have a job?" Such questions are important, but they are not the only important ones. By themselves, they can limit managerial imagination and divert attention from deeper issues of faith and purpose. Managers are inescapably accountable for budgets and bottom lines. They must also respond to individual needs, legal requirements, and economic pressures. But

they can serve a deeper, more powerful, and more durable function when they recognize that team building at its heart is a spiritual undertaking. It is the creation of a community of believers, united by shared faith and shared culture. It is a search for the spirit within. Peak performance emerges as a team discovers its soul.

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

All quotations from *The Soul of a New Machine*, © 1981 by John Tracy Kidder, are by permission of Little, Brown and Company. Our article gives only a glimpse of the many treasures to be found in this book. Readers who have not already read Kidder's full account should dash immediately to the nearest bookstore.

Our view of frames and reframing is developed in our book, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 1992), which provides a more extensive account of the structural, human resource, and political elements in effective teamwork. Bob Quinn's *Beyond Rational Management* (Jossey-Bass, 1988) also provides provocative discussions of reframing and peak performance. Peter Vaill's *Managing as a Performing Art*

(Jossey-Bass, 1989) contains a provocative discussion of spirit and high performance. *Corporate Culture* (Addison-Wesley, 1982), by Terry Deal and Allen Kennedy, discusses many of the cultural dynamics that are at the heart of high performance. A different perspective on some of the same issues appears in Ed Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 1985).

A review of some of the classic human resource views of group effectiveness can be found in Glenn Parker's *Team Players and Teamwork: The New Competitive Business Strategy* (Jossey-Bass, 1990). The important work of Richard Hackman and his colleagues can be found in *Groups That Work (and Those That Don't): Creating Conditions for Effective Teamwork* (Jossey-Bass, 1990).