

Achieve Tough Targets Faster

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Yes! And



A Model to Enable Your Team to Achieve Tough Targets

**Encourage people to state
constructively what they want.**

People who work on a team that is not working effectively can become frustrated, irritated and may experience many other emotions. As a leader, ignoring such emotions risks them erupting. However, to elicit them in a group situation can also trigger outbursts, or lead to a very demoralised team.

I learned this the hard way in a workshop many years ago. An engineer, having listened to lots of people complaining, leapt up, vented all his frustrations and burst out of the room. Fortunately, I learned the Solution Focus approach very soon after this and it has never happened since.

How can you make it safe for people to air their views? A tool I use frequently is the Constructive Rant. Discover how to use it [here](#) [or search for "129" at www.yesand.eu].

Alternatively, you can ask individuals to note their responses to this very constructive question, "What do we have to get right to ensure that our team members work well together?"

(Suggested by Mark McKergow of SF Work in "What Do We Have to Get Right?" a chapter in "57 SF activities" edited by Peter Rohrig and Jenny Clarke).

Leaders in organisations today have to achieve ever more challenging targets. They need their teams to step up to the challenge, to form a clear and shared direction, engage and collaborate within the team, with other teams and with clients. Does this describe your situation?

In this article, I provide eight Actions you can take to achieve this, to give your team impetus and let them "fly". Together, these Actions form a model known as Team Impetus or "the Ski Jump" Model, which I illustrate on Page 4.

This Model is based on the principles of Solution Focus; an incisive and human approach to complex change that is effective in making progress quickly.

[Click [here](#) for an explanation of Solution Focused work or click on "SF Clues" in the Fast Link box at <http://www.asfct.org>].

Impetus:

"A force that moves something [a team] along."

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You can ask this question in a team meeting or in a one to one meeting with each member of the team. However, in a poorly performing team it is valuable for people to hear that other people share their concerns and that they are not isolated.

EXAMPLES

Here are examples of what people on one team wanted:

- I want a clear view/goals
- To have more informal meetings (not necessarily business meetings)
- For people to exchange more information openly and constructively.

2. Enable people to establish how the team will behave when working very well.

Have them describe in some way (a model, a drawing, an article etc.) the future when the team is working brilliantly well and achieving its targets.

[Discover how to use Rich Pictures here or search for Rich Pictures at www.yesand.eu].

This description provides them with a more hopeful future that they have “designed”. You can suggest categories before they start, e.g. communication, decision making, planning etc. Better still, let them work it out. Have them consider the future from the client perspective too,

to avoid too much internal focus.

Mark McKergow builds on the question asked at Action 1 by asking, “Suppose we do get all these things right? What would that be like?” An alternative question might be, “Suppose you come in tomorrow and a miracle has occurred, everything is working really well. What is happening?”

The more detail the team produces, the better. If the team is large, it is best to have people work in teams of 3 – 4 so that all can contribute and share the results.

EXAMPLES

Here are examples from the same team, explaining their pictures in bullet points:

- The team is part of a larger structure (the company metaphor is a hive)
- The company vision is translated into team goals
- All resources are available to help each other and maintain the structure.

If the team uses a picture or a model, have them write a short description or statement of their future, based on this. An interesting way to do this is to have them write an advertisement to explain the future to clients.

3. Have them identify what is key to make that future happen.

Have teams identify Key Enablers (KE); what absolutely must happen if they are to become an effective team? This gives them a point to focus on and importantly, to measure progress against.

There are different views on what enablers make a high performing team. In my experience, teams identify the enablers that are important to them at the time. People and situations are different and the enablers might change over time as the environment changes or new people come on board.

Limit the team to 5 – 8 enablers. Any more and it is questionable whether they are critical.

EXAMPLES

Here are examples of KE:

- Everybody is involved
- Goals are aligned to the company vision
- We communicate more face to face.

As you see, these enablers can be described in quite a general way (what does “communicate” really mean in this context?). Therefore, it is helpful to have the team do this exercise: “Imagine a scale of 1 – 10 where 10 is the ideal. Describe 10 for each enabler.” From the example “everybody is involved”, here is the description of “10”:

“We have an annual business planning meeting that all team members attend and contribute to decisions affecting their role.”

4. Encourage them to measure where they are today.

It is valuable for a team to understand how far they have progressed already in relation to each Key Enabler so that they can measure progress over time.

Have them measure this on a scale of 1 – 10, based on the exercise in Part 1 of this article. There is no need to average out the scores; it adds little value, as one person’s “4” might be equivalent to another’s “5”. Simply record each rating.

If you rate today and again in the future, you can easily show progress over time, which provides a sense of movement and achievement. People have been known to increase their rating after Action 5!

Take Action 5 immediately after Action 4, to elicit the reason for the rating each person has given.



5. Have them identify what is working and what the team's strengths are.

In Action 5, encourage people to seek clues that the future is already happening, no matter how small. In doing this, you focus them on the constructive and begin to build motivation. Teams of three can quickly state what has brought them up to the rating they gave at "Action 4" and share these reasons with the rest of the team.

Two negative things can occur at this point, which you should look out for. Either people will try to say what stops them reaching "10", (that is a lot if they are at "3"!) or they will say that they see no clues whatsoever.

Both of these occurrences can quickly reinforce a sense of hopelessness. If the former happens, explain they will have the opportunity in the next Action to state what they want to change. If the latter happens, ask Solution Focused questions to elicit clues, e.g. *"Can you think of anyone who has ever shown positive behaviour or a time when it happened?"*

If they struggle to find any clues on this team, have them think about when they have worked on other teams and relate these back to the present.

I used this tactic with a team of ninety engineers who were

convinced that no clues existed on their team. Instead, they identified what had worked well on other teams that they could apply to this team. This exercise produced great results.

Although there are small risks with Action 5, you will find people usually surprise and energise themselves with a long list of clues.

EXAMPLES

From our team, here are some example statements about communication:

- Based on my experience I know whom to contact
- Experience leads me to the information I need
- There are comprehensive monthly reports.

Another useful exercise is to have people state three (for simplicity and impact) strengths they can offer to add value to the team. These need not be related exclusively to their work. For example, someone might offer that they organize great social outings.

6. Give them the opportunity to define what will move them forward one step.

Having identified what is moving the team forward, you want people to build on this and look to what will move them forward one step further from their current rating for each KE. Note, this is progress in small steps not, "What would move you to 10?"

A typical response here is for people to identify what other people must do to move things forward, "If they do this, I can do that." If you sense this, nip it in the bud by asking an additional question, *"What can you do to move this team forward one step?"* It is a simple question that helps people to accept responsibility.

EXAMPLES

- Share more information

- Hold a quick call to share team issues and successes
- Share a summary of a project (to learn process)

Another way to move people forward is to have individuals note three positive actions other team members can take to produce the best response from them. Write each one on an A4 sheet and have the team review them.

EXAMPLES

- Give me time (to think, make decisions, generate ideas etc.)
- Be serious without being formal
- Be honest with me.

7. Encourage them to help others to achieve.

Have individuals explain what they would most like help with, e.g. "I would like help with the new order system." This begins to create collaboration. In response, have people state how they can support other people to move forward, e.g. "I can help you to use the order system." Encourage people to have a conversation about it and look for other mutual ways to help each other.

8. Ask them to identify the next steps they will take as individuals to move forward.

A tool I adapted from Agile software development is the "sprint" or in this Model, "Sprint Actions". This is an action people can guarantee to take in the ensuing one or two weeks (or days if possible) that will help move the team forward. [Find an article to explain Sprint Actions [here](http://www.yesand.eu) or search for Sprint Actions at www.yesand.eu]

Once the period is up, the team meets (in person or virtually) to discuss what they have achieved and to agree more Sprint Actions. Often, people will have already taken additional actions.

To start these follow up meetings, a good Solution Focused question to



ask is, “What’s worked well since we last met?” To move forward, set more Sprint Actions. These meetings can be kept very short and positive.

Two Additional Actions

Two more actions you should take are to: a. Acknowledge that people have opinions that are valid and should be listened to and:

b: Encourage people through recognition of their strengths, capabilities and successes etc.

You take both these actions at any time when you use the Model, hence why they are written on the skis in the diagram.

Team Impetus Model

A Model you can use to summarise the actions and create a cohesive whole is Yes! And’s, Team Impetus or Ski Jump Model illustrated below. Why a ski jump?

Frequently, models have steps going up, because “up” is a classic metaphor for “good”. However, it is much easier to go down and even easier and quicker (in terms of physical movement) to go down a ski jump rather than steps. In addition, the shape of the jump provides the lift to take off and literally “fly”

As with all metaphors, you can find positive and negative aspects of the ski jump; however it works well for

many people.

The ski jumper metaphorically represents the successful team, fused together to fly. See [You Tube](#) for a video experience.

To Close

These actions are well proven in my ten years of working with a Solution Focus approach.

However, you should treat every situation as different. People are different, team roles vary and the environment for each team may not be the same.

Therefore you might need to vary the tools you use, or adjust the order of the actions when you use the model. For example, if a team is very demotivated you might seek to “source energy” before “sensing the future”. Yet the approach shown in the model works very well most times.

Take the jump and use these actions with your team.

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If you work in an organisation, this article has provoked interest and you would like to discuss how we might help your team achieve tough targets, please download a brochure from our [site](#) at Achieve Targets.

If you are an independent facilitator or work in an organisation and would like to know about our two-day development programme on how to use this Model, please see [here](#) for a brochure.



Figure 1 - Team Impetus Model