The Reflection Model:

Get the best out of your current team and cut your dependency on recruitment.

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Introduction

Recruitment is difficult at the best of times, isn't it? As of May 2022 (as I'm writing this) employment levels are at a record high, making it even harder to find new people.

Throw into the mix a cost-of-living crisis and energy bills doubling, it's understandable why people are reluctant to leave secure jobs.

But we're not here to talk about recruitment. Quite the opposite, actually.

In this White Paper, you'll learn a NEW model, developed by me – Alison Reynolds, a freelance strategic HR consultant - to get more from your existing team.

Not in a 'get them to work more hours' way. But in a way that makes your team feel happier and more fulfilled whilst benefitting the goals of your business.

Let's get started.

Why invest in your team?

Engaged people are productive people. But how do you engage your team?

It all starts with your relationship with them. See, a common mistake people make is thinking the employer-employee relationship is any different from the relationship you have with your parents, friends or loved ones.

All relationships take effort from both sides. And look, they don't always work out.

Just like dating, it doesn't mean either party is in the wrong. The fit isn't right. It wasn't meant to be. Looking for blame helps nobody.

We also need to respond to changing employee expectations.

In a world where nothing is unique, your people can be your biggest differentiator. Failing to understand this means you get left behind by the competition.

We must adapt to the changing demands of employees. If you don't, you'll lose your best people.

Relationships. Adapting to employee demands. It all comes down to culture.

'Company culture' is one of those things people talk about generically, but how do you get a good culture? What is a good culture? Bad ones are actually easier to identify but why is that? Because we're British and love to moan?

It's hard to answer those questions because there isn't one way to have a good culture. Marks & Mirvis culture is a lot like breathing - you don't notice you're doing it, you just do it.

There is no one size fits all. We're all different. Our people are all different. Our customers are all different.

So how do we develop a company culture that's right for your business and your employees?

The Reflection Model

To help demystify this, I've developed The Reflection Model – a five-pillar strategy to get more from your existing team:

1. Authentic Leadership
2. Trust
3. Learning culture
4. Shared Purpose
5. Teamwork

This is my way of simplifying things and consolidating the research, data and best practice I've developed over my 20-year career as a senior strategic HR consultant into something accessible for busy leaders.

Something for you.

So now we'll look at each factor individually before you have a task to do at the end.

Can you get more from your existing team?

1: Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership

Jeff Bezos and Richard Branson have successful business empires but different management styles.

So who is right? You can read both of their books but you can't copy either of their leadership styles. You need to do that your way.

As a leader, you set the tone for your company culture. You determine the business strategy. You drive performance.

You can't be something you aren't. To be authentic, you need to know yourself. Self-awareness is one of the most powerful tools for any leader.

Without knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are, how can you play yourself to your strengths? Weaknesses aren't 'cool' to talk about, but if you can't accept constructive feedback, people won't give it to you (and nor will they respect you).

So how does this fit into creating a thriving company culture to get the most out of your people?

Once you know yourself, you can recruit people (or upskill your current team) who are good at the things you aren't. Diversity in thinking, backgrounds and skills breeds innovation and creativity. Having a range of inputs means your solutions will be well thought through and are more likely to be effective.

A tool like the Myers Briggs personality assessment can be really useful in helping you understand yourself. It can provide a really helpful explanation, make you feel less uncomfortable about aspects of your personality you don't like about yourself, and provide a platform for life-long learning.

Authentic Leadership

Covid has transformed ways of working. Employees now expect different things.

Ed and Peter Schein talk about a new approach to Leadership in their excellent book 'Humble Leadership'. They talk about relationships being key to this new paradigm and how making your relationships more personal than transactional will encourage employee engagement, empowerment and organisational agility. What they call 'Humble Leadership' is based on openness and trust.

When asked, Phil Neville described what high performance meant to him: "Do the best you can, where you are, with what you have got."

You can't do this by emulating someone else.

Ben Francis (founder of Gymshark) stepped down as CEO because he knew he wasn't ready: "You have to set your ego aside and ensure the business is always put first."

Sharing vulnerability is something leaders find hard, but showing your human side is essential to being authentic and has been more important than ever during Covid.

(Because let's be honest, we were all winging it!)

If you use your whole team to their strengths and empower them, they will respond.

Authentic leadership is not about being nice to everyone. It's about honesty. Sometimes that means you must make tough decisions.

Tough love can be hard to do, but people deserve to know if they have made a mistake, aren't performing, or don't fit. Carrying someone demotivates the rest of the team – unless it's temporary and they understand why they're doing it.

2: Trust

Trust

Trust is the foundation for any relationship. The relationship you have with your staff (and their relationships with each other) is no different.

Great ideas come when two things are present: diversity and trust.

People who come from a range of backgrounds and have a range of skills have the best ideas, but they'll only share them if they trust everyone enough to share their thoughts openly.

Amy Edmondson (of HBS) does great work on Psychological Safety. I wholeheartedly recommend you read both 'The Fearless Organization' and 'Teaming'.

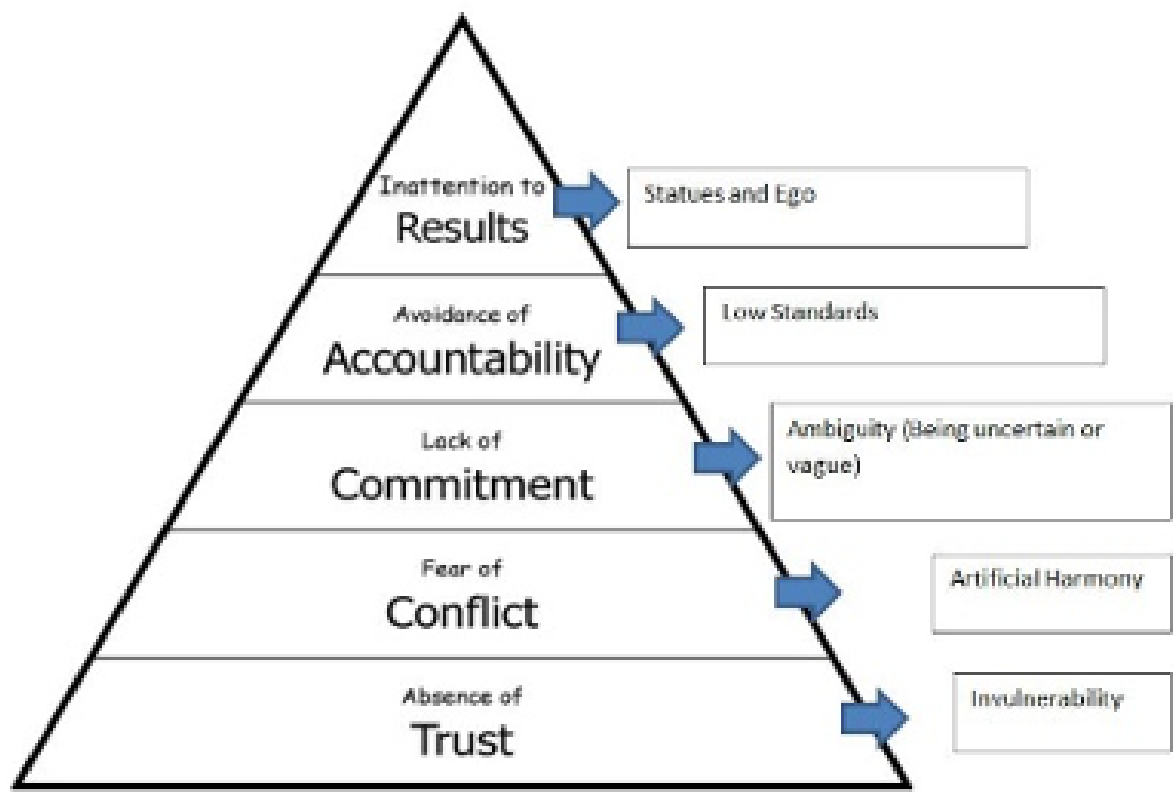(By the way, you'll find a big list of my recommended reading at the end of this paper).

'The Fearless Organization' draws on her research and explains why fear is the biggest barrier to performance. Employees need to feel safe:

- Safe to speak
- Safe to be themselves
- Safe to make a mistake

If they don't, they will cover things up, silently disagree, and won't be committed to what is trying to be achieved.

Feeling safe is a basic human need that stems from our hunter-gatherer days. Trust actually increases levels of Oxytocin (the hormone responsible for bonding) in our brains.

In the well-known management fable, Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni, trust is the first stage in making a group of individuals a team. And the CIPD put Trust central to making hybrid working a success.

Figure 1 - Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Pyramid levels (top to bottom):

- Inattention to **Results** → Statues and Ego
- Avoidance of **Accountability** → Low Standards
- Lack of **Commitment** → Ambiguity (Being uncertain or vague)
- Fear of **Conflict** → Artificial Harmony
- Absence of **Trust** → Invulnerability

Circle diagram elements:

- Communication
- Technology
- Outcomes-based performance
- Inclusion
- Energy and Wellbeing
- Meaningful face-time
- **Trust** (center)

Figure 2 – CIPD guide to hybrid working

3: Learning Culture

Learning Culture

There are three important aspects to this: mistakes, happiness and performance management.

Mistakes

Have you heard of the responsibility equation? Life + Response = Outcome.

It's empowering. It shows you have a choice in how you respond to situations.

For example: if someone makes a mistake and you give them a bollocking in front of the whole team, what message does that send? On the other hand, if you thank them for making the mistake and turn it into a learning opportunity for the whole team, is that not better?

Mistakes make the best lessons.

If it isn't OK to make a mistake (once!) then how can you harness your best learning opportunities?

It's your job to create a space where it's okay for your employees to make mistakes (so everyone can learn).

Learning Culture

Performance Management

Performance management is essential, but not an annual appraisal.

Ongoing conversations about development and growth are what people want. You need to give real-time feedback for mistakes and have regular conversations about growth. Three monthly is ideal if possible and appropriate for your business.

More frequent short sessions are better than the annual 90-minute session everyone dreads.

Happiness

Another important aspect is making sure your team is happy. For example, seeing people chatting irritates some leaders. But data suggests when people chat, they are more productive. It isn't wasted time. It's the opposite.

'The Happiness Advantage' is a great read and explains the psychology of how being happy at work precedes good performance. We tend to think that if people perform well, they become happy. But for many routine jobs, this can be a challenge. If you can make people happy, guess what? Performance follows.

4: Shared Purpose

Shared Purpose

Identity is really important – the clothes you wear, the music you listen to, the morals you live by.

Humans need to feel part of something. It's a basic psychological requirement

Your business has its own identity. So allow people to identify with it.

It's so important, Daniel Coyle and John Kotter (two heavy-hitters in the team development space) both include 'shared purpose' in their respective models.

I've only not mentioned it sooner because you can't foster a sense of shared purpose without first establishing trust and vulnerability (which we've covered).

Teams waste so much energy if they don't share the same objective. Imagine a tug of war. What would happen if members of each team turned to face the other way? Everyone would be pulling in different directions. Energy wasted. It'd be absolute chaos.

Positive cultures work. People perform better if they believe in what the business is doing.

Real motivation comes from within. Not external factors such as money.

If you can give your teams real motivation, they will be more engaged and more productive.

5: Teamwork

Teamwork

We know the benefits of a team. You see it in sports all the time.

When people work together, they have each other's backs. The sum of the parts is greater than the whole.

But a group of highly skilled individuals do not automatically evolve into a team... (look at Manchester United).

So how can you make them effective?

Amy Edmondson, in 'Teaming', argues that teaming is a verb not a noun.

She suggests that strong teams have developed trust. They know each other's strengths and boundaries and it is continuously evolving.

If a team is static, every change means you need to rebuild it. This is not possible in today's continuously changing world.

Your team need to bond.

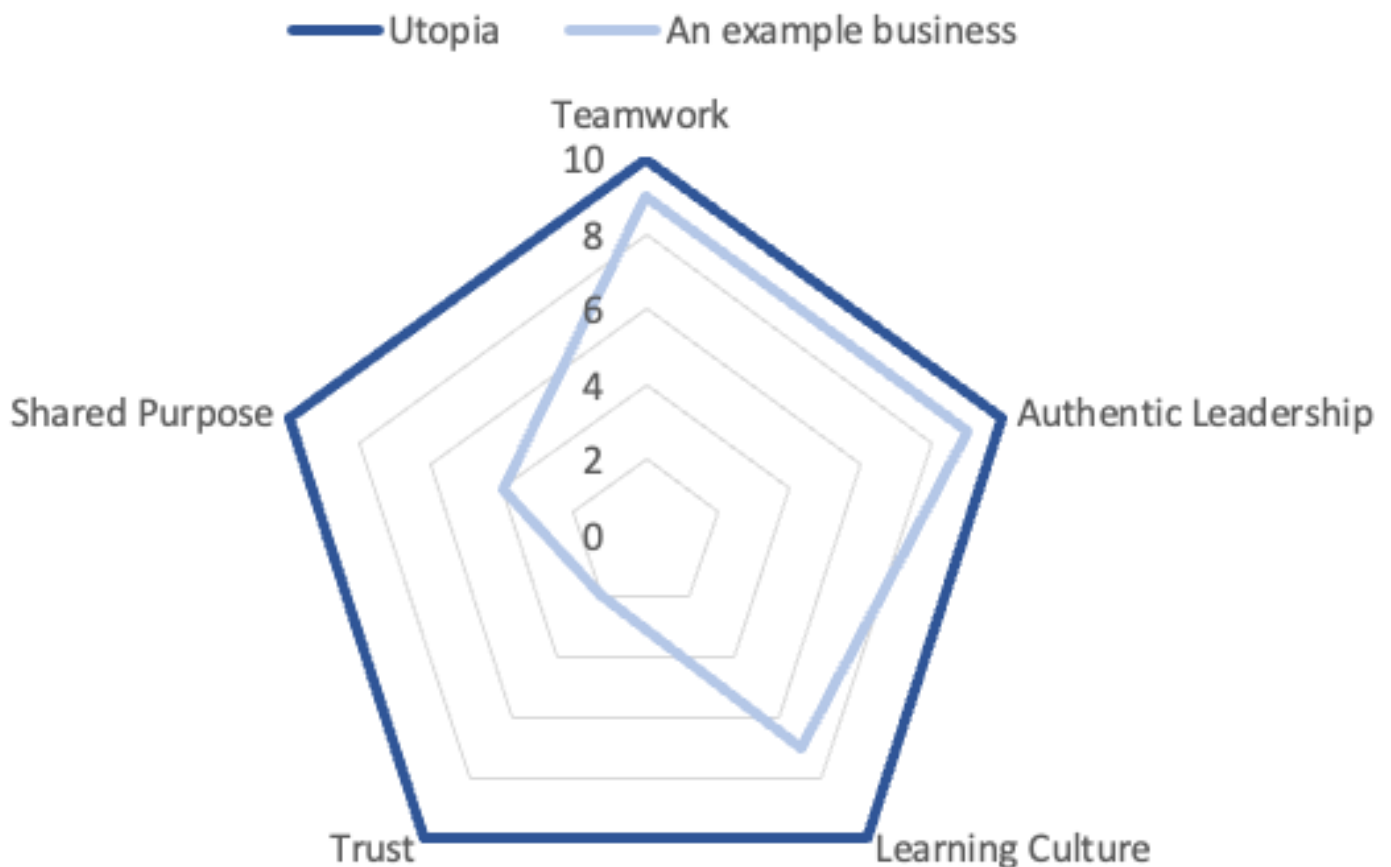Awesome communication underpins all of this. It needs to be:
· Authentic
· Open and honest
· Two way
· Regular
· Consistent internally and externally (so your employer brand matches your business brand)

It's time to do some work

Now we've looked at each area of my model, it's time for you to see how well your business does each 'thing'.

Here is The Reflection Model in all its glory:

Can you get more from your existing team?

Legend: Utopia — An example business

Axes: Teamwork, Authentic Leadership, Learning Culture, Trust, Shared Purpose (scale 0–10)

What do you need to do?

I'm going to present a list of statements to you. If you agree that the statement is true, give yourself a point. Write down your score (out of ten) after each section.

Once you've finished the statements, plot your scores on the model above. You'll see how I've mapped an example business and 'utopia' (I.E the perfect – but unachievable – score).

You must be honest. What's the point in doing it if you're not?

Yes, there is an overlap. Don't fight me on the questions – just go with it.

I know what you business owners can be like.

Ready? Let's get started.

Authentic Leadership

1. I know what I'm best at.

2. I know what I'm worst at.

3. I actively recruit to plug the gaps in my own skill set.

4. Everyone knows my behavioural expectations.

5. I invite all team members to participate.

6. I create opportunities for more introverted team members to share their thoughts.

7. I am willing to share my vulnerability.

8. I hold people to account.

9. I hold myself to account.

10. I am willing to make difficult decisions in the best interest of the whole organisation.

Your score:

Trust

1. We don't have any egos.

2. Work social events are well attended.

3. It's safe to make mistakes.

4. Our discussions can get quite heated.

5. Everyone has a voice.

6. Everyone feels safe to speak.

7. There is a great deal of respect for each other's areas of expertise.

8. Employees share difficulties they have outside work.

9. We have very few employee relations issues (discipline and grievance).

10. Employees are friends outside work.

Your score:

Learning Culture

1. Leaders set direction and don't micro manage.

2. It is OK to make a mistake.

3. We learn from our mistakes.

4. We regularly review our plans and make changes.

5. We have a good performance management routine.

6. We support employee development.

7. Employees have a voice and are listened to.

8. We invest in training for managers and leaders.

9. We recruit from within.

10. We have low employee turnover.

Your score:

Shared Purpose

1. Everyone knows the Key Business Goals.

2. Everyone wants the business to succeed.

3. Everyone believes in what we are doing.

4. People are proud to work here.

5. People want their family members to work here.

6. We have low levels of accidents.

7. People have control over their own workload.

8. We have regular discussions about personal growth.

9. We have consistent regular communication about business performance.

10. We are open with employees.
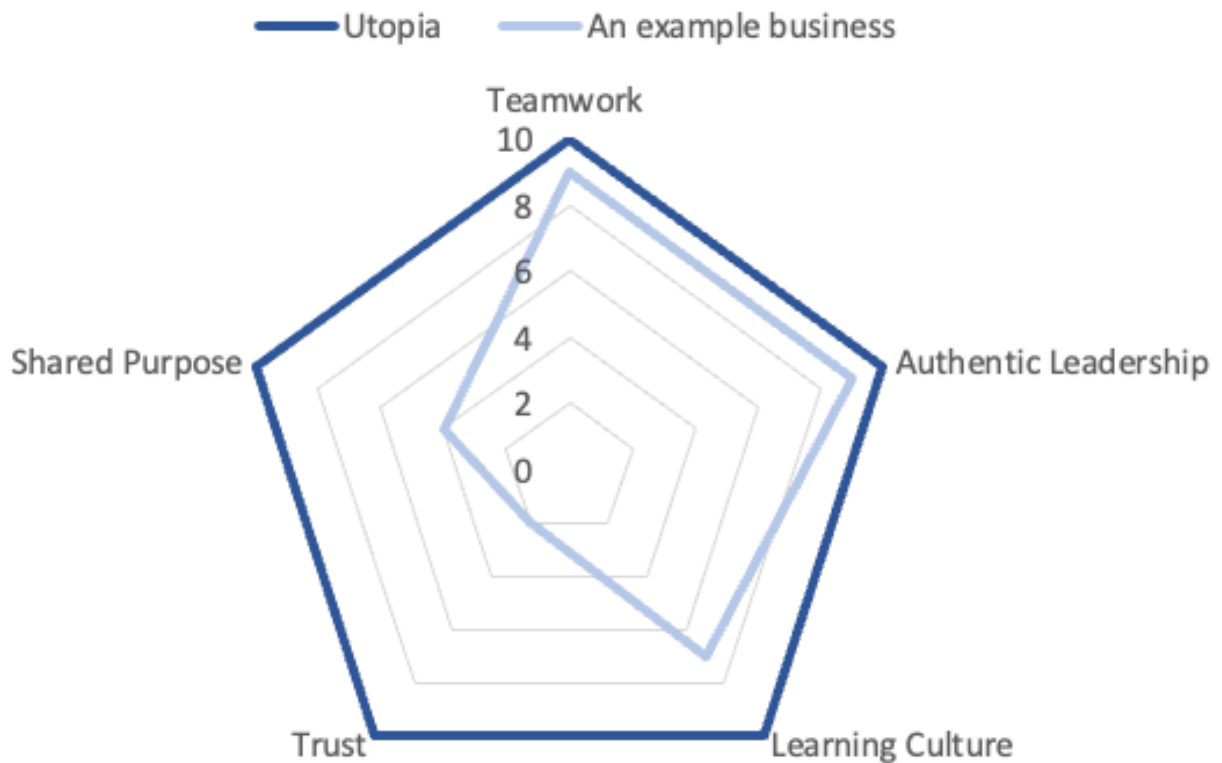

Your score:

Teamwork

1. We celebrate shared success routinely.

2. People have lunch together.

3. We give each other appreciation routinely.

4. We spend time together outside work.

5. We talk, not email.

6. We know each other's strengths.

7. We know when someone is having a rough time and have their back.

8. We take collective responsibility.

9. Internal and external PR is aligned.

10. We hold ourselves personally accountable.

Your score:

What should you do next?

Can you get more from your existing team?

Radar chart comparing "Utopia" and "An example business" across five dimensions: Teamwork, Authentic Leadership, Learning Culture, Trust, and Shared Purpose, on a scale of 0 to 10.

Share your model with me by email: alison@reynolds-hr.com

We can have a chat about your results and I'll suggest some ways you can improve the areas you need the most help with.

And if you have any questions about anything you've read in this paper, don't hesitate to get in touch too.

Reading List:

- Neuroscience for Leadership Harnessing the brain gain advantage, Tara Stewart, Kitty Chisholm & Paul Brown
- The Energy Bus, Jon Gordon
- It's the Manager from Gallup, Jim Clifton & Jim Harter
- The Culture Code, Daniel Coyle
- The Fearless Organisation, Amy Edmondson
- The Five Dysfunctions on a Team, Patrick Lecioni
- 5 Things high-performing teams do differently, Ron Friedman, Harvard Business Review October '21
- Black Box Thinking marginal gains and the secrets of high performance, Matthew Syed
- Start with Why, Simon Sinek
- Everything is fucked A book about hope, Mark Manson
- Never split the difference Negotiating as if your life depended on it, Chris Voss
- Employee Engagement a Practical Introduction, Emma Bridger
- The age of the strongman How the cult of the Leader threatens Democracy around the world, Gideon Rachman
- High Performance Lessons from the best on becoming your best, Jake Humphrey & Prof. Damian Hughes
- Leading Change, John P Kotter
- The Chimp Paradox, Steve Peters
- The happiness Advantage The seven principles that fuel success and performance at work, Shawn Achor
- Humble Leadership The Power of Relationships, Openness and Trust, Edgar Schein & Peter A Schein
- Teaming How organisations learn, innovate and compete in the knowledge economy, Amy Edmondson
- Choosing Courage The everyday guide to being brave at work, Jim Detert
- Good to Great Why some Companies make the leap... and others don't, Jim Collins
- Proof that Positive Work Cultures are More Productive, Emma Seppala & Kim Cameron, Harvard Business Review December '15
- Agile at Scale, Darrell Rigby, Jeff Sutherland & Andy Noble, Harvard Business Review May-June '18
- Flexible Working: Lessons from the pandemic, CIPD Guide https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/flexible-working/flexible-working-lessons-pandemic-guides
- Joining Forces Making One and One Equal Three in Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances, Mitchell Lee Marks & Philip H Mirvis