

## McCann, Dick

### The dynamics of high-performing teams - Keynote presentation 60 mins -

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#### Abstract

The current global financial crisis has caused the failure of many teams who, a year ago, might have been labelled 'high-performing'. Is the notion of high-performing teams an illusion or are there lessons to be learned from an international string of business failures that can lead to stability and longevity of performance? People's approach to risk, combined with a values set based on individualism, featured as major players in the crisis. Unchecked, they can lead to group-think *Pollyannaism* and greed. This could be seen in the runaway creation of financially engineered vehicles which provided substantial commissions and bonuses to those involved. The unsustainable bubble was inevitable – it was just a question of when it would burst.

We have to remember that teams are comprised of people who can be hugely complex and frequently irrational. Although we live in the so-called 'real world', we don't operate directly in that world but create our own personal model. This is formed through perceptions developed by our senses of sight, sound, feeling, taste and smell. These perceptions are inputs to our cognitive function. Consequently, what seems rational to one person may be irrational to another. If a team is to reach and maintain high-performance it must understand as much as possible about each team member and the dynamics that result from the characteristics that define their different approaches to work.

Dr McCann will introduce the Pyramid of Workplace Behaviour and explain the three levels that describe team behaviour: work preferences, approach to risk, and values. These give an accurate picture of how an individual is likely to react to the variety of circumstances impacting teams.

Teams where there is a bias towards risk acceptance, individualism and the development of new ideas and products can be outstanding performers in boom times but disasters in bad times. The dynamics of group think in these teams prevents them from seeing the obstacles that lie just around the corner. High-performance quickly becomes low performance. High-performance teamwork is difficult to maintain and inherently unstable. As such, the parameters of human interaction have to be constantly refined to cater for the changes in organisational, national and international markets.

Dr McCann will explain in detail the models underpinning the Pyramid of Workplace Behaviour and give a framework that teams can use to correct any potential teamwork imbalances and maintain performance at an optimal level long term. He will also give examples from the Margerison-McCann Team Management Systems international research database showing how some of the variables in the Workplace Behaviour Pyramid vary internationally.

#### Learning outcomes for participants

- Understand how the dynamics of a team can affect its performance
- Explore a framework that teams can use to correct any potential teamwork imbalances and maintain performance at an optimal level
- Appreciate how work preferences, approach to risk, and values can vary on an international level

#### Profile

Dr Dick McCann is a Partner in Team Management Systems, with a background in science, engineering, finance and organisational behaviour. Earlier in his career he spent five years with the BP company in London. Holding a PhD in engineering, he is the author and co-author of many leading books and articles on teamwork. He is currently Managing Director of TMS Australia, and a Director of TMS Development International.