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Facing Your 2022 Team Challenges

How Robust Is Your Game Plan?

We all have them; tendencies and behaviors that come naturally, and those that we know are best for us but always seem to take effort. And get deprioritized first, or simply forgotten, when under stress. Like eating an orange in the morning as I like to do. I know it's healthy, and even enjoy it when I take the time - but starting my day these 5 precious minutes earlier, instead of taking the time to peel and eat my orange first, is always more enticing. Especially when I have deadlines or an early morning call. What's your orange? And especially for (senior) leadership teams, what can you do to focus on what you know is important - and your stakeholders are counting on you to do well - but may find difficult to prioritize when pressures take over?

Every executive and every (senior) leadership team has a full plate of important topics that are all fighting for attention - and the list only seems to grow in the extraordinary times we live in.

The demands of 2022 will force any team to continually prioritize effectively, and balance their natural focus areas with topics they may overlook when under pressure.

Common Team Challenges

Combining		With
Short-Term Execution	→	Long-Term Strategy
Novel & New Ideas	→	A Strong Foundation
Individual Talent	→	Team Effectiveness
How about ..	→	.. your team?



1. Combining both the short-term/urgent with long-term value-creation

Effective teams have 'one foot in today and one foot in tomorrow'. Yet senior teams suffering from a bias for action may end up de-prioritizing progress on their long-term agenda. Especially with the continued impacts and volatility of the pandemic; hybrid ways of working, global supply chain issues, shortage of talent and a growing number of vacancies... the list of urgent challenges can be relentless and even overwhelming.

On top of that, the often quarterly pace of reporting results can create 'short-termism', next to the inevitable pressure to deliver more, at higher quality but with less resources (what Dr. Peter Hawkins calls the 'Unholy Trinity'). Yet having only a 'little toe in tomorrow' may lead to an underdeveloped strategy, immature plans or delayed execution on long-term demands or market opportunities.

For example, the progress needed on Diversity/Equity/Inclusion, employee wellbeing and health, the environmental, social and governance (ESG) matters, and a move towards 'good stewardship' practices all take time and dedicated effort to mature and solidify in concrete plans and clear priorities. And the Future of Work is already among us, whether organizations are ready for its opportunities or not. The only question is whether you are ready enough and if you make significant progress in 2022.

Tomorrow's opportunities are building on today's choices - what does your team need to prioritize this year despite the inevitable urgencies on your plate?

“ The leadership challenge of balancing short and long-term business pressures, and doing so in an ethical way in which both a company and its stakeholders can thrive, is a challenge that is well-known to all business leaders.

”

2019, The Modern Dilemma:
Balancing Short- and Long-Term
Business Pressures.



2. Combining a focus on new and novel insights with a strong foundation

Keeping up with the latest trends and research is important to be ready for whatever the future holds - especially in light of long-term strategies and plans. There certainly is and always will be a place (and lucrative market) for inspirational sessions and speakers - but should never go at the expense of securing a strong foundation. Too often, a bias for new and novel replaces, not complements, the team's focus and energy. A team will not grow beyond the strength or weakness of its foundation, much like the game plan for a sports team: fully-developed and customized for the unique group of players who depend on each other and are prepared and ready to deliver outstanding results together.

How disciplined is your team in securing a robust game plan for what 2022 has in store? A quick story from US sports (but even rest-of-the-world readers should relate as every sport has basic routines to perfect). "Gentlemen, this is a football." These words were spoken at the start of a summer training camp in 1961 - not to a group of kids, but to world-class players who were playing (American) football at the highest level possible. Spoken by one of the greatest coaches in (American) football history, this statement typifies Vince Lombardi's relentless focus on the fundamentals of the game – even when working with professionals who were celebrated as some of best pro-players of their lifetime.

“

Gentlemen, this is a football

”

Vince Lombardi

Head Coach Green Bay Packers
(1959-1968) – National Football
League

Regardless of the players' experience, prestige and pride, he insisted on mastering the blocking, tackling, and perfecting the basic techniques – the small choices that players make every game, the daily habits and repeated actions that make or break the moments on the field that truly matter. For every leader: be Vince Lombardi for your team. Ensure all the basics are in place - no exceptions.

When teams have incomplete or even weak foundations, it's a matter of time that they get tripped up and struggle. There is no short-cut for the effort it takes to form deep and trusting relationships (especially when working remote, virtual or hybrid), to explore, discuss and agree on the team's unique purpose and mandate, that are fully anchored in their specific stakeholder landscape, and actually delivering their unique value through effective ways of working.

How ready is your team's foundation for a new year of challenges, and what can you do to strengthen it further?



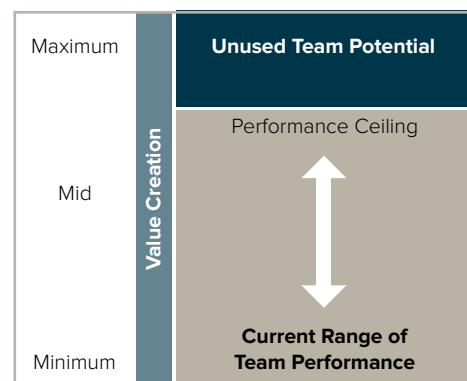
3. Combining a focus on individual talent with attention for team effectiveness

Senior teams face serious talent issues, impacted by the global war for talent and in some regions even a Great Resignation. [KennedyFitch](#) can certainly help with its world-class executive search practice for key leadership positions. At the same time, most business challenges and opportunities are multi-disciplinary in nature and require extensive collaboration between departments, leaders and experts. The 2021 [KennedyFitch “Future of HR” research report](#) states that “teamwork will only increase as a significant trend in how work gets done” that calls for team-based organizational models with “systems that encourage participation and teach people to be better, effective team members”.



With all the focus in Talent processes (recruitment, training and development, promotion, rewards) on filling and developing individual talent, it’s increasingly important to invest in mature strategies how the work gets done by all the talent you attract, develop and seek to retain. Team Effectiveness strategies are needed to enable teams at all levels to deliver their best value and deliver maximum value through intensive and complex collaboration in teams. How is your team measuring its own effectiveness, its impact on your key stakeholders and dedication to reaching its full potential - beyond the focus on individual talent spotting and development?

When working in Manhattan in one of midtown’s skyscrapers, I learned about ‘air rights’. The value of any skyscraper is not just the current structure that’s built on a particular lot, but also the maximum square footage that is allowed based on the zoning permits. In some cases, the current building structure doesn’t fully use the permissible zoning potential, and has additional ‘air rights’ that rise above its current structure. The difference between the actual building structure and the zoning potential is called ‘Unused Development Rights’. Effective teams combine a strong bias for action with the ability to ‘hit the pause button’ effectively to consider its current performance ceiling, and tap into their ‘Unused Team Potential’. Effective teams find ways to surface the dynamics and behavioral patterns that may get in the way and experiment with new ways to help the team tap into their unused team potential. Working in teams will become even more important going forward, and team effectiveness strategies should keep up.



Next to your focus on securing top talent for key roles, how is your leadership team measuring and improving its impact together?

There are many more dimensions that you and your team may face, like harmony AND constructive challenge, or control AND empowering. Whatever they are, teams that are aware of their own dynamics and effectively navigate these are typically best in long-term value creation, credibility and impact, as well as team engagement and morale.

Here are some suggestions to boost your readiness for whatever your 2022 will bring - and staying on course together.



Suggestions at the Individual level

1. **Know your own tendencies as a senior leader**, for your team is impacted by your strengths as well as your gaps. This will provide a strong basis for your own development as you help your team navigate the collective business agenda. A senior HR leader or an experienced executive coach who observes you in action can also provide valuable feedback, especially on blind spots and interactions with your team.
2. Consider your own style and potential bias for the typical dimensions in this article, and add additional ones you believe your team will face in 2022. **Discuss your assessment with your team as you discuss your business strategy and targets for the year** - what will be critical for your 2022 plans and how will you keep yourselves on track? What role can/should you play in helping the team keep their eye on the ball?
3. When you are a senior leader: **be a sponsor and role model for team effectiveness in your senior leadership team and your department**. Ask your direct reports to share their team diagnostic results and team development plans for 2022, in support of their targets and year plan. Ensure that all leaders in your organization have access to resources, tools, in-house training and expertise you believe will boost your team's impact in 2022.



Suggestions at the Team level

Teams often struggle to prioritize or execute the below steps effectively by themselves and find great value in working with an in-house HR expert or an external team coach

1. **Analyze the strengths, natural styles and development areas on your team**. Use a team diagnostic to perform a thorough check how you are delivering against your unique purpose and also surface the team's strengths and gaps. Despite the available methods, many (even senior) leadership teams are not methodical yet in using diagnostics and meaningful metrics that measures and monitors the team's effectiveness.
2. **Agree together what the non-negotiable priorities are**, and revisit constantly when new information, new developments or new requests fill your team's plate. Agree on a clear game plan for how the team will deliver its full value in 2022, which includes the team's dynamics and tendencies to watch out for.
3. **Monitor and adjust the team's game plan frequently**. Just like monthly and quarterly reporting on business results, also review progress and barriers on living the team's purpose and executing the game plan. What adjustments are needed, how is the team working together and what course-correction is needed?



Suggestions at the Organizational level

1. **Setting clear priorities at the organization and department/functional level**, and revisiting frequently to confirm their validity, will give guidance for middle and frontline leaders. Too many priorities that may not be feasible will only force the hard job of prioritization downstream, to the middle and frontline leaders with finite capacity and real-world problems to tackle. The closer senior teams can come to the monitoring execution issues, and surface

daily prioritizations that your leaders and teams need to make, the closer its impacts and strategic trade-offs can be managed.

2. **Review with the executive team, the HR leadership team and the Board if Team Effectiveness is a critical organization capability for executing your organization's strategic plans.** If so, how explicit and fit-for-purpose is your Team Effectiveness strategy compared to your Talent strategy and systems for individual talent? What data and analytics are you using to surface and report on team challenges, effectiveness and their ability to stay on course?
3. **Discuss how the executive team and Board are demonstrating a commitment to raising team effectiveness throughout all hierarchical levels.** Diagnose and discuss how each of these teams are role modeling this commitment by measuring, improving and monitoring their own team effectiveness head-on, and expect the same from all leadership teams reporting to them.
4. **Ensure that the People function itself is equipped and credible to lead the way.**
 - 4.1. Consider how your HR executive team is avoiding the “cobbler’s shoe” effect: struggling with team effectiveness issues while expected to support business leaders with theirs. How are you as an HR executive role modeling and setting the pace for your own managers?
 - 4.2. Invest in your internal capability of experts to support your leadership teams with diagnostics and team development programs, as well as building a robust Team Effectiveness strategy that matches the need and opportunity at your organization.

Some of the above may need some support or are a work in progress. At KennedyFitch, we can help to explore your unique context, what’s already working well and the unique challenges and opportunities you face in 2022 and beyond.

This can include:

- exploring Future of Work impacts for your industry and organization;
- assessing your key team challenges and opportunities that are critical for delivering your business strategy;
- assessing the strengths of your teaming approach and strategy, for example, training and internal capacity for offering team coaching at scale and
- architecting and transitioning to team-based organization models and systems.

**Wishing you and your leadership team(s)
a productive start of the year, ready to collectively conquer the
challenges you will face - this year and beyond!**

An overview of foundations for the team's game plan

Several methodologies exist that teams and organizations can leverage or even standardize and most team coaches or HR Center of Excellence will have their preferred methodology. If your organization or HR team doesn't have a standard methodology, check your team's game plan against the below overview of what you will want to have included - or reach out for help!

Heart

The strength of personal relationships and psychological safety on the team. Taking the time and personal interest to learn about the human side of colleagues and team members, their uniqueness, personality, and talent - so very basic yet not common practice. Still. We work together with fellow human beings, not resources.

WHY & Value

A collective and compelling "WHY" of the team and what value they create collectively; taking time to explore, discuss, engage with key stakeholder groups, agree and capture in a format that can be shared with the rest of the team and even key stakeholders. Immature, implicit or misaligned perceptions about its purpose and stakeholder value will trip up your team's impact.

Meetings

Meeting structure with a meeting charter for every meeting, capturing when to meet to discuss what, with what input/output, who needs to be involved and what behaviors are needed for success.

DEI

Organizing the team's Diversity of thought, representation and perspectives. What are specific gaps and opportunities to discuss and address, and what does that require for how the team's operates and organizes its Diversity, Equity & Inclusion?

Measure

Output and success measures: what will the team deliver, what does success look like and how does the team effectively monitor progress and surface challenges?

Who

A clear, aligned and holistic view of all the Stakeholders the team serves. This includes the visible and explicit stakeholder groups (e.g. employees, senior leaders, owners, shareholders, customers) and invisible yet real stakeholders (e.g. the ecology and footprint on the environment, future generations, public support/license to operate).

R&R

Roles and responsibilities - who does what and how does the team need to collaborate and partner with other teams/functions? How clear are all involved about accountabilities, involvement and decisions? What agreements on ways of working, like shared values and norms to agree on behaviors, decision-making, communication, escalations, meetings, reporting, key partnerships with internal groups or external parties etc.

What

Agreements on ways of working, like: shared values and norms to agree behaviors, decision making, communication, escalations, meetings, reporting, key partnerships with internal groups or external parties etc.

Enablers

The budget, talent and support are needed to deliver the outcomes that stakeholders are expecting. In case of budget and talent issues (and who doesn't have that these days?!), what are the priorities and trade-offs and how are they agreed and aligned with sponsors and stakeholders?

Conflict

Conflict resolution: how do you handle disagreements and resolve differences of opinion, how and when does the team escalates challenges?

Meet the author

Sander van Muijen, partner at KennedyFitch

My mission: building future-proof organizations where humans thrive and collaborate at their best, achieve break-through results that benefit all its stakeholders, with a net-positive impact on the planet. How? By helping senior leaders and HR executives increase their collective impact, lead with purpose, and unleash the human potential in their workforce. This often requires intensive work – both 1:1 and team coaching – on cultural and behavioral patterns, underlying convictions and a holistic/whole-systems view of organizational dynamics. Next to my consulting and coaching experience (see below), I bring leadership experience as I managed global teams of up to 30 senior practitioners (at Royal Dutch Shell/NL and JPMorgan Chase/NYC) and bring experience as a senior consultant/manager at Accenture Management Consulting.



Consulting

Most of today's challenges that organizations face are complex and requires a collective and multi-disciplinary approach. As executive and senior practitioner in Organization Development, I bring integrated experience across Organization Health diagnostics, Change management in large-scale business transformations, leadership and executive development, senior team effectiveness as well as strategic alignment across all leader levels. Roles I have fulfilled: Change lead for large-scale change programs, coach for senior executives and their leadership teams, delivering globally consistent leadership training programs and setting up internal CoEs for Organization Health Diagnostics, internal coaching and team effectiveness. My style is to be rigorous, straight, tailored, work in co-creation with multi-disciplinary teams, and results-focused. I also conduct research for the Executive PhD at the VU Amsterdam to better understand the conditions of successful business transformations.

Coaching

As executive coach I have over 1,000 coaching hours of helping senior leaders improve their impact, discover and better use their strengths, overcome barriers and mental blocks to achieve goals that didn't seem attainable. Combining realism with optimism, and a genuine desire to help each leader succeed, I build trust easily and don't shy away from asking hard questions. As a Team coach, I support senior leadership teams to achieve what they often struggle to achieve without expert help; having strong inclusion and diversity in their own team practices; shared understanding of their main stakeholders and what value their team(s) deliver to each; forge deeper levels of trust and collaboration; finding their collective purpose and agreeing on a strategy that they all support and cascade.

For more information, you can send an email to: sander.vanmuijen@kennedyfitch.com

About KennedyFitch

At KennedyFitch we help organizations to hire for fit for the future rather than fit for now. Through our Executive Search practice we have built a track record in search for senior HR roles and we focus on search for future leaders in different industries. Through our People & Organization practice we bring the human back into Human Resources and create truly human-centric organizations where we focus on HR Consulting, Capability Building and Coaching

Besides our Executive Search and People & Organization practices, we are also Community Builders and Knowledge Sharers. We are rapidly moving towards “consumerized careers”, whereby we will be fully in charge of our own career paths. That is why we bring together experts and professionals in a number of communities and networks, to help HR colleagues become masters of their own careers at all levels. And we not only have a stake in the future of work but we also have an opinion on it, which we share in our research-based publications, webinars and events.



Executive Search

We believe that organizations need to hire for fit for the future, to find candidates that will help challenge what is and co-create the future of your organization. We have built a track record in Executive Search for Human Resources roles and we have focus on search for future leaders for multiple industries. At KennedyFitch, we specialize in building external talent pipelines that can complement your internal talent pools.



HR Strategy Consulting

Our team in HR strategy consulting can give you advice and support to help manage your organisational and people challenges. Whether you want to improve the performance of your workforce or develop talent in your business. We have a global reach and a deep expertise for HR and the Future of Work



Coaching

At KennedyFitch we all have a never-ending positive curiosity for people. That curiosity has not only led us to become HR consultants but also coaches. In our coaching practice we focus on 4 core areas: Raising self-awareness, Understanding the context in which you operate, Connecting to the purpose and Building trusted relationships. We facilitate both individual and team coaching interventions.



Capability Building

The ability to manage yourself and collaborate with others are critical capabilities for anyone in any function. Leveraging our coaching background, we have developed a suite of (inter)personal-effectiveness workshops that can be delivered stand alone or combined into a learning journey.



Events & Communities

The new way of working is powered by networks. To that end, we are “knowledge, network and community builders”. We offer workshops and learning sessions about the future of HR, we are the founders of the BEYOND HR Forum and host webinars and engage with academics, consultants and thought leaders.



Insights & Reports

We are true believers of the motto that “sharing is caring”. On a regular basis we publish articles and reports for the global HR community. We not only have a stake in the future of HR but we also have an opinion on it.



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