



LEADING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS

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The Mercedes Formula 1 team has enjoyed a season of unprecedented success. Dr. Anita Elberse has spent considerable time understanding the culture of the team and the leadership approach of Team Principal Toto Wolff. Dr. Elberse shares six lessons from Mercedes' culture and unpacks steps leaders can take to avoid complacency and create an enduring, winning culture in their own context.

Six Lessons From A Winning Culture

1. Set the highest standards—for everyone
2. Put people front and center
3. Analyze mistakes, even when winning
4. Foster an open, no-blame culture
5. Trust superstars but maintain authority
6. Relentlessly battle complacency

Connecting Everything (& Everyone) To The End Goal

Anita shares how on the racing team, no job is too small. Everything from the atmosphere of a corporate waiting room to clean bathrooms can help foster a winning culture.

In your context, what are some jobs that sometimes fall off your radar?

What could you do to connect those tasks (and those who do them) to the overall goal you are trying to achieve?



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Don't Run Cars; Run People

According to Anita, part of Mercedes' winning culture is Toto Wolff's intention to honestly connect with everyone in the organization, not only the drivers. In fact, he intentionally bonds with engineers—who represent information that he has little experience with—fostering good communication and information flow.

In your context, is there a group of people who you have difficulty connecting with?

What are the ramifications of this difficulty?

What would happen if you were able to understand their roles and challenges more deeply? What would the "win" be for your organization?

Ask "Why Did We Win?"

Mercedes has a mantra "if you can't explain what's happening on a good day, you surely won't be able to explain what's happening on a bad day."

Why do you think it's important to be able to describe why you've won?

What do debriefs look like in your context?



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What would it look like to start debriefing successes with the same focus that you debrief misses?

Resist Assigning Blame

A critical part of creating a winning culture is speaking truthfully when there is a mistake, not assigning blame, *and* making sure the leader has the back of everyone.

What's the difference between being honest about mistakes and assigning blame?

How well does this happen in your context?

In your context, how could a leader make sure that someone feels supported when they've made a mistake?

Maintain A "Hunter" Mentality

After repeated success, it can be tempting to rest on your reputation and lose the focus that helped your team achieve that success in the first place. For example, at Mercedes, everyone has a photo of their counterpart from their biggest rival, challenging them to consider their rival whenever they make decisions.

Who is your team's biggest rival?



In your context, are you “the hunted” or “the hunter”?

Adopting Leadership To Different Stakeholders

Anita relates how Toto Wolff adopts his leadership to different stakeholders—such as drivers, engineers, car owners, fans, etc.

In the space below, list some of the stakeholders around you, and describe the different approaches that you might take with them.

Stakeholder

Approach

Action: What is the one action step you will take from this talk, and when will you take it?