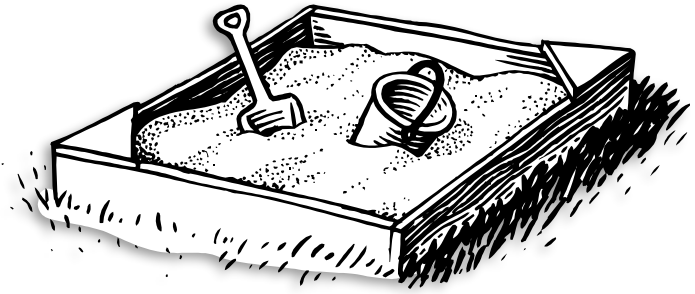
Playing in the Sandbox

A Leader's Guide to Moving Their Team Through the Good, Bad and Ugly of Cubicle Nation



By Tammy J. Bond



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Dedication

To Grandpa Archie and Grandpa Don

It wasn't until your passing that I realized the full extent of what you taught me growing up. Through your servant's hearts, I learned the value of community, the honor of serving others, the love of family, the joy of trying something new, and always having a playful spirit.

You will forever be in my heart.

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Preface

I distinctively remember the day I knew it was time to leave '*cubicle nation*.' It was a spring afternoon, and I had just received a phone call from the Governor with explicit instructions to stop the project I had been working on or he would *find me a new opportunity elsewhere.*

It didn't take much for this state employee to realize that "*new opportunity elsewhere*" did not mean promotion. He had just given me an exit strategy. I could stop or be on my way…

While that day 12 years ago still makes me smile, it was a wake-up call that I carry with me forever. It taught me that while I may be excelling in my position on a team, I can still have a perpetual bruise on my forehead from running into the same brick walls. It was the catalyst moment that propelled me from a demoralized member of a team to taking responsibility for my professional happiness.

Of course, that wasn't the first time I had heard such a sentiment about the quality of my work. Just six months prior to that call from the Governor, my office received a phone call from a certain Senator who told me, "I don't care how much your projects *really* cost, just make them look cheap."

During that season of disillusion, being pulled back

and feeling suppressed, I learned something important:

Some on your team may have a 'service with excellence' mindset, others, even your boss, may not.

If I was feeling held back or restrained from truly excelling in my current position, it was up to me to do something about it. So, I decided to pack up my successes and leave a career that I was passionate about to help other teams and leaders who also felt held back, broke, busted and disgusted with their jobs find joy once again.

Truth-be-told, it was those two distinct, abhorring moments in my career that I am most thankful for today.

If it were not for those experiences, which uprooted my comfort and tested my character, I don't believe I would be doing the work with teams and leaders that I do around the world today. It took a major shift in my perspective regarding the potential impact I could make in a career that I truly enjoyed to move me away from that proverbial brick wall called *limiting beliefs* and *unmet expectations*.

Throughout my career, I have always maintained the attitude of work as service. I learned that at a very young age from my grandfathers; two men whom I so admired growing up, who fought for our country and served their community with honor.

Through them, I saw the high value of serving others. Today, I serve at the pleasure of my clients.

When I was in *cubicle nation*, I served at the pleasure of my boss, director and yes, even the Governor. However, not all of my work brought a sense of pleasure to those around me. Why not?

Because as someone who works to serve with excellence, I quickly discovered the pain of working in an environment of mediocrity.

What I learned about myself that fateful year was that I had been avoiding looking at the writing on the wall for several previous years. The negative messages that I received from the team that I was working with were always loud and most often clear, but as an eternal optimist, I rejected them as false. Having been told by my boss to stop bringing ideas to her because they created more work for everyone should have sent me immediately running for greener pastures. But, I was not a quitter. Why should I give up because of the lack of someone else's ability to see opportunity? No, I kept pressing in.

Like many of the people I work with today who feel they are part of a dysfunctional team, I wasn't going to allow the naysayers to put me down or hold me back from serving with excellence. And yet, hold me back is exactly what happened over time.

As I persevered through growing my knowledge bank account and expanding my sphere of influence in my community, the day came when a decision had to be made: either I was going to adopt the mindset of the environment I was working within or I was going to break free of it. For some time, I just pushed to *get better* at my J.O.B. and ignored the people around me. I became a silo of one. It wasn't long before I realized that people didn't *want* to work with me. They couldn't relate to who I had become, and even I started to not recognize myself in the mirror.

Feeling oppressed in that environment by an attitude of '*just get by*' and '*because we've always done it this way*' was killing me on the inside. My heart was no longer in the game, because my autonomy was cut off at the knees. Eventually my spirit was nearly broken, and I no longer loved the work.

I hadn't sunk to the depths of an underperformer, but I had given up on my ability to make a difference. No longer was I a good servant to the mission and vision of the organization.

The writing was on the wall. I just needed to read it and take action.

All of the degrees and certifications I attained were my way of seeking to be more excellent, and yet none of them impacted my ability to be successful in that environment. The other members

of my team had made up their minds to reject what I put forward.

Was it because I scared them?
Was it because I pushed too hard?
Was it because I failed to partner with them?

Perhaps all three. Or maybe it was simply a blessing in disguise meant to propel me into a career that I truly adore, giving me the chance to make an impact on a much larger scale.

Not all failure is bad. And defeat is powerful.

"Far better is it to dare mighty things,
to win glorious triumphs,
even though checkered by failure...
than to rank with those poor spirits
who neither enjoy nor suffer much,
because they live in a gray twilight
that knows not victory nor defeat."
– Theodore Roosevelt

Planning My Exit Strategy

Taking my inner defeat in hand, I made the decision to leave my position. Interestingly, it was at a time when the leadership regime was making a major transition. And for anyone who knows a thing or two about government, regime change can be really great…or not so much. However, I found myself being courted to stay. A carrot was dangled in front of me; a nice, shiny carrot

tempting me with a new, greater opportunity. But, it wasn't enough this time.

I was not motivated by the prize of the potential challenge, because I had lost my heart for the whole lot. I knew enough about culture in organizations to know that when you lose your heart, it's time to go.

When team members reach their expiration date, it is best to let them go quietly versus trying to extend their shelf life.

I left with my awards in hand and my dignity in tow. And I have never looked back.

You may be wondering why I chose to become an expert on teams. You may be asking how I leaped from there to here. The transition was actually rather easy, but I had to first discover my compelling '*why*,' and then be relentless about modeling it to the world.

With a background in intercultural communications and organizational development, I further pursued deepening my knowledge bank in organizational psychology and got certified as an executive coach. Yes, I amassed more paper for my walls, though it all sat quietly in boxes. I use the knowledge today, but the best education came from the experience of refusing to feel stuck or demoralized by the work environment I had once succeeded in.

When my purpose became clear, my '*why*' became the driving force behind me. Today I have the distinct pleasure of helping leaders who are frustrated with their dysfunctional teams, take the groups they have and transform them into the teams they want.

For the past decade, I have collected story after story from people who were much like me; people who wanted to make a difference with their work but felt confined by the silo they were placed within. I am honored to have created a tapestry of humanity in the workplace with each thread of influence left behind in my work. My heart is to see people take a stand for their passion at work and be more than they ever thought possible.

My mission is to expose the power of possibility in teams and leaders by allowing truth-telling and revealing the soul within.

To get my transformative work out to as many teams and leaders as possible is the goal for writing this book. Try as I might, it's not physically possible to personally coach all who need help, but my hope is that this book wakes the evangelist within everyone who reads it. Take a stand for excellence and rebuke the mindset of mediocrity in the workplace!

Get Ready! Get Ready! Get Ready!
Your journey is just a page turn away!

Introduction

On a typical, rainy, Pacific Northwest day, I stood quietly listening to my Governor say these words to me, "*Stop what you are doing or you will be moved into a new opportunity*."

While my ears rang with that warning signal, the breaking of my spirit was a far louder cry. Never before during my career had I ever felt such rejection for simply doing my job with excellence. I was confident, I was a good steward with the resources I managed, and I faithfully served my team with joy.

At that moment, I realized that simply serving and good stewardship wasn't enough. It did not matter that I discovered a gaping hole in my agency's budget, which had been leaking money out like a faucet left on for decades. *Why was it an unwelcome discovery?* I couldn't understand the reaction from my leaders.

I, like many of you, had just become a demoralized team member in "*cubicle nation*."

If there was a change to be made, it was up to me to make it. I was taking back my pride and personal power. I began by breaking down the walls that confined me in a job where my talent,

passion and expertise – not to mention my good stewarding – were no longer welcome.
Since that experience 12 years ago, I have a new, single-minded mission: to help the weary employee trapped in a "*because we've always done it this way*" workplace mentality; to ***teach them how to break free of mediocrity, and to change attitudes hindering them from getting their heart's desire.***

When I work with teams around the world, I like to call it *Playing in the Sandbox*. It is a metaphor that seems to be universal; everyone understands it. *Playing in the Sandbox* evokes a picture in our minds that takes us back to a time and place when we co-created fantastic structures and first learned the power of negotiation, team-building and sharing.

Yet in today's workplace, those same skills we gained in the neighborhood sandbox are often abandoned for a '*just get by*' and '*keep it to yourself*' way of co-existing.

Today's leaders are frustrated with the lack of interest from their teams. They are spinning in circles, managing the underperformer on the team who can build the necessary *widget*, but end up costing one-third of the leader's time in clean-up mode. Meanwhile, other team members feel besieged with the extra work on their desks because of the one cog in the wheel not pulling their weight. And to top it off, they have a leader

who consistently focuses on what's *not* working instead of promoting what is.

So where did the rules of the sandbox go? What happened to co-creating fantasy with ease, using a shovel and a bucket? Why did we abandon the negotiation skills we used to succeed on the playground at 5 years old only to pick up vile attitudes and apathetic work habits as adults?

To quote a line from a great film, *Cool Hand Luke,* '**What we've got here is a failure to communicate."** A young Paul Newman, portraying a prisoner in chains, was bound by the rules and wanted to break free. While creating the life he truly wanted, his rebel spirit took the whole team down. And the prison captain was hell-bent on making sure he made an example out of the one with the spirit of rebellion.

Now, in today's world of work, the chains have become paychecks and the rebellion has been replaced with indifference. Both are destructive, tearing at the fabric of our souls and deteriorating the hope in our hearts. **What we've got here is a failure to communicate.** Sadly, the one who is causing the dissension is only spoken about at the water cooler or in the parking lot, when what is needed is a bold conversation in the boardroom.

This book is about to change that.

Over the next twelve chapters we will dive deep into the mindset and beliefs that are attacking our

teams today. Together, we will deconstruct the habits and attitudes that are fostering the dysfunction as we draft a compelling '*why*' for change. And you will begin to develop the strength and stamina for starting necessary, bold conversations of your own. You will become mission-driven to promote a healthy team environment.

In the first four chapters, we will deconstruct the team, while revisiting and redefining some of the rules of the sandbox. *There will be little to do with data and popular research statistics. I need to be clear about that: I am not giving you statistics*. I am speaking to you from my personal experience, offering powerful tools to help you be your best self at work, to change your whole life and make it completely satisfying. It is what I am *living*, and want you to live, too.

This book is also filled with stories of leaders and team members much like you and me: catalysts for transformation who have braved the winds of change.

My vision for this book is to have it be a tool guide, a resource for teams and leaders to use on a daily basis. *Playing in the Sandbox* can be that special tool used again and again in support of transforming the way you work with the people around you. We spend more time at work than we do at home, so why not make it time well spent! At the end of each chapter are powerful questions to

ask during conflicts and situations when good communication is needed.

After we demystify teams and re-engage with the rules of the sandbox, we will spend chapters five through seven on establishing the culture of a healthy team. It has much to do with the responsibility you and I have as individuals to both the success and/or failure of teams. There is no escaping or hiding. If you have heard it once, you have heard it a hundred times:

"The tide raises <u>all</u> ships in the harbor."

That means for the team to change, every single person on the team must take an honest look in the mirror and ask, "What is *my* role here to move *us* forward?"

I will never forget the day I looked at an elected official, who was completely blind to his personal impact on the team and how he negatively affected people, and told him, "*Like it or not, you became a leader of people when you had the guts to put your name on the ballot.*"

See, he was in a position for other reasons; reasons that didn't include supporting the people he managed or helping them be successful. This official resented me telling him that he *was* a leader and it was time to step up and lead the people!

Yes, this elected official really did not see himself as a leader! The staff he worked with were going to be in that job far beyond his stop along the political byway, and they deserved to be led, not patted on the head and pacified. His utter breakdown in front of me was revealing on many levels. It opened my eyes to the notion that when we take on a position without a vision for how we partner with others, it keeps our vessels tied to the shore where the tide has no impact for raising us up *together*.

You will learn more about the journey of this former politician in chapter seven. It is one of my greatest accomplishments, and saddest experiences, as a team coach. Throughout chapters eight, nine and ten, we will begin to construct a strategy for *designing* (emphasis on 'designing') a healthy team. Yes, even you, the one who may have no ambition of leading a team, will learn how each of us has a natural leadership style, and how we can all lend our expertise to designing the perfect team that we want to play with for years to come.

You will learn the 5 P's of a team and how to apply them with every decision you make. Again, let me encourage you: *Playing in the Sandbox* is not just for people who manage or lead others. It *is* for the whole team. Every member of your team will find this resource useful for their collective success. So, if you have found yourself resisting (like my friend, the former politician) leading others, my invitation for you now is to declare that you *are* a leader, and people are waiting for you to step up and

lead. Lead, even if it is simply leading *yourself* to high performance.

One of my favorite conversations to have with clients is the one that promotes the discovery of the underperformer on the team, or the under-performance factors of a team. The reason I love this part of my work is because it lights the brightest fire of change. I have found that managers today get so caught up in *over*-compensating for *under*performance, they are often left feeling depleted and disjointed, becoming immune to the core of the issue. So, in the middle of the book, we will talk about how to identify this problem and how to build an action plan to change it.

I have been told that this part of my work is where the secret weapon of every team emerges. From my perspective, I think it's simple:

Show a team how to use the tools they already have within their toolbox for success.

It can be the easy switch from using a hammer, when a Philips-head screwdriver is all that's needed.

By the time we get to chapters eleven and twelve, you will be well on your way to mastering the *team* concept. You will have a greater understanding of roles and responsibilities and new tactical skills to manage any conversation. In these final two chapters, we are going to discuss the deeper topics of *Ceiling of Complexity and Capacity*. Both

have to do with the systems we put in place to propel us forward or limit our growth, but neither one has an easy solution to uproot the depth of the problem. However, from my years of working at building systems with teams, streamlining the ones they already have, and getting companies off the round-a-bout and into the performance lane, the pain of change gives a great return on the bottom line.

I can't say it gives the *greatest* return, because opening up the dialogue with our people to uncover attitudes and expectations is what's most transforming. But, I can say that to really grow to the heights where leaders want their teams cannot happen without diving into the complexity of the team and their capacity.

We will round out the book with a resources section that includes seven suggestions for asking *powerful questions* and some of my favorite *bold conversation starters* for those times when you just need to *get real*.

So, in preparation for your journey through the *Sandbox*, here are some thoughts for you to consider:

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high), how satisfied are you with your present role on the team? (If you picked 5, take a longer look in the mirror)

What if nothing changes in your current situation? How will that impact your future performance?

What causes you the greatest pain, right now, in your team?

What resources do you have available to change those dynamics?

What is your compelling 'why' for doing the work you do? And how long do you suppose that will sustain you?

When you think about the challenges you face daily, what or who is the cause of them? (Double check where the finger is pointing)

If you could have a do-over in life, and could be or do anything you want, what would you be or do? What's stopping you from going after it now?

My hope for you, after reading this book, will be that you find a sense of purpose again. Or, if you have your purpose, you find the audacity to walk it out boldly and lead yourself and your people to their mountain-top experience.

Welcome to the *Sandbox*. It's going to be a fantastic ride!

1

The Case for Your Demoralized Team

"All meaningful and lasting change starts on the inside and works its way out." –Lou Tice

Over the years, I have seen many teams move from underperformance to excelling and hitting the targets and measures set before them. While I wish I could say the transformation was done in just a few easy steps or without hardship, you wouldn't believe me, even if I wrote that here.

The truth is, moving teams forward – teams entrenched in fear because they don't trust one another or their leader – takes serious work.

It takes stamina.
It takes commitment.
It takes breaking down the barriers of fear and addressing the core issues that are prevalent in the culture.

Transforming your team requires a commitment to looking deep within each individual and the collective culture they co-create to promote change. Any factors that impede forward progress must be exposed. It may seem that a demoralized team would be obvious to identify. As clear as we think it should be, it can actually be quite tricky. Why? *Because people have become really good at avoiding truth-telling in the office*. They become focused on self-preservation and even self-promotion, versus focusing on the results for the whole system's success.

But, before we can address the issues or even symptoms, we need to talk about the feelings that lead to the decisions every member of your team makes. What is the demoralized team member (who lacks autonomy and drive) feeling? What exactly *is* a demoralized team member? Let's start with the definition of the root word itself.

Demoralize:

1. to deprive (a person or persons) of spirit, courage, discipline, etc.; destroy the morale of: The continuous barrage demoralized the infantry.
2. to throw (a person) into disorder or confusion; bewilder: We were so demoralized by that one wrong turn that we were lost for hours.
3. to corrupt or undermine the morals of.

(Source - dictionary.com)

At this very moment, I can hear the collective rejection of that word associated with your team. You may not understand or even see these characteristics as an active expression among your team, and that could be part of the problem. Often, leaders build blind spots to the very issues that have the greatest impact against their success. And your team may also not be able to verbalize their feeling of being demoralized. It probably shows up a little differently for each person, but at the core, they all feel deprived of being able to put forth their best self at work.

Look around your office. Examine for a moment the personalities, success factors and fail points of your team. Begin to ask what propels the behavior that you see. Spend time here, even if it's uncomfortable to do so. The time you invest in understanding the members of your team is time well spent in the long run.

As Dan Pink so eloquently breaks down for us in his best-selling book, *Drive:*

Every person on your team wants, and needs at a core level, to feel they are making a difference.

They are no longer motivated by the carrot and stick: the almighty paycheck. What motivates our people to move the proverbial needle forward day in and day out is the ability to have autonomy at work. They are driven by a heart-centered purpose and motivated by making a difference first.

Every member of the team wants to know when they show up at work, the effort they put forth is contributing to a greater good. It's the job of every leader to ensure that their teams know, hear and believe they make a difference.

In the early years of my professional career, I realized over time that the work I contributed was not feeding my soul. It was not having the impact that I hoped it would, and it had absolutely nothing to do with the quality or quantity of my work. It had everything to do with the values that I held deep inside of me, at my core, and how they were in direct opposition to the values of my leaders.

This type of disconnect among leaders and the members of their team is one of the deepest issues to uproot in every organization. It is often, also, the most painful. Getting to the root requires a big shovel, digging deep into the soil of the workplace to begin cultivating change.

Leaders – so how do you know if you have a demoralized team on your hands?

First, you may notice that I refer to the whole team in that last question. The reason is that if you have one feeling demoralized, they're all feeling less than their best working under your leadership. From my experience and observation, I would nearly always be correct in making the bold claim that having a demoralized team member is a "one-size fits all" scenario, to some degree.

If we could put a recorder in the break room or parking lot at your office, we might hear some of the following comments from your team. These are actual comments from members of teams I have coached:

"Everything I try to do just keeps getting pushed back on my desk. I can't seem to do anything to please her."

"I receive little direction on how to get my project moving. He expects me to know what he wants without telling me directly."

"Did you see who just got a promotion? I can't believe they picked him - we keep fixing his mistakes and he gets the pay raise. It doesn't seem like anyone around here cares about the work."

"I am just going to sit here with my head down because I will outlast the director anyway. Why try to do it his way, he's just here for a notch in his belt. I've outlasted the last three. He is no different."

"If it's going to get done, it's up to me to do it."

Now let me be clear. We are *not* talking about office gossip or disgruntled employees. These are members of every team in America who come to work each day wondering what twists and turns will come their way. They work for leaders who know little about leading people and are prompted by moving work through at a high

velocity. However, the work won't move if the people aren't empowered to move it.

The notion that our people are paid to do a job and should *just do it* without question is ancient thinking. It's a dangerous mindset still prevalent in today's workplace. Every person who shared those comments with me believed in their heart that they could not change their environment and had become victims to the disorder and confusion that was rampant in the office.

Victim…should be a four-letter word.

Victim mentality in the workplace is actually (in my humble opinion) the most insidious disease impacting our performance and capacity as humans today.

When we address the mindset of our people, at every level, we will impact change. If we avoid understanding how people perceive one another and the work, growth will remain stagnant. We will fail.

Every healthy leader I talk with wants a team built of achievement-oriented employees. But often the reward of compensation is what's tied to the desired result or specific outcome. Relying on this to motivate our team is problematic, because it assumes that our team is motivated by the almighty dollar as a *sole* driver for behavior and performance. Interestingly, it also creates an apathetic workplace. Why? Because those folks

who aren't hitting the numbers often don't really believe they ever can, causing them to adopt for the *head down, just get by* daily way of operating. Again, claiming victim status.

There are employees everywhere that wear their victim hat like a red badge of courage, or in some cases, a scarlet letter.

They may appear as feeling demoralized, but that is just a coat with different stripes. Please do not confuse the two. A demoralized team member is often one of your greatest producers on the team. But, if not taken care of, they will leave for opportunity elsewhere.

A victim on the team, however, is someone you need to examine closely to evaluate the overall cost to the team that their attitude or their performance costs. Is their part weighted the same as every other member of your team? If *no* is your answer, then you might apply my golden rule: slow to hire – quick to fire. I encourage you to be bold!

When you take a broad look at your team, you will see the folks who are fighting to make things different. They may even be the ones that frustrate you the *most*. And you will see the ones that are simply just getting by and busily pointing fingers. It is imperative that you know the difference between *victim* and *demoralized* because the way to approach them is starkly different.

Just to help build the case for resolving the demoralized and dissolving the victim, let's take a look at the victim.

A victim is someone who believes, sincerely, that they are the center of some personal conspiracy; that the world and everyone in it are against all their endeavors. Ironically, it is this belief that results in the endless gathering of evidence by the victim to prove this is true. And so, it is often difficult for the victim to see the truth through this clouded paradigm of self-deceit and defeat.

The 10 Signs of a Victim Mentality:

1. Failure to Accept Responsibility
This person will do anything to absolve him/herself from personal responsibility for any aspect of their lives. This results in the next symptom – blaming.

2. The Serial Blamer
This person absolves themselves from responsibility by apportioning blame to any other party, other than themselves. They usually develop the following skill.

3. Rationalization
The victim is adept at drawing creatively from circumstance to apportion blame to external factors. They use all their creative energies to construct a perfect prison for themselves. This construct results in the next symptom.

4. Feeling Helpless
If you say something often enough, you start to believe it, and victims start believing fairytales their minds have designed to keep them safe from their own accountability. This results in extreme feelings of helplessness and isolation. The next symptom is a natural follow-up.

5. Self-Pity
Victims often feel sorry for themselves. This is a vicious cycle where the serial blamer and rationalizer begin to feel more self–pity. The cycle continues, creating more antagonistic forces that seemingly strip personal choice away. They often resort to:

6. Living in the Past
A failure to accept responsibility means a failure to accept things as they are in the present. This person will then either seek solace in the past, where things were "simpler," or again, resort to blaming the past for the current state of their environment. They tend to:

7. Focus on the Problems
They occupy themselves with problems and are often the people who complain any chance they get. Victims love attention and validation, relishing any opportunity to complain about their problems. During this whine fest they often say:

8. If Only/What If

This is a sure sign of a victim mentality! They do not accept things as they are, and they wear regrets like a crucifix. Then, the cycle continues by:

9. Condemning Themselves
Woe is me, I am useless, there are too many forces against me, if only things were easier, just like in the good old days…This is a summation of a victim's thought pattern, cleverly disguised by the rationalizer and the blamer.

10. Separation of Self
Victims separate themselves from anything that resembles responsibility, and as such, they are separate from the solution. They are as good at playing the waiting game as they are at playing the blame game.

But what if the leader is the one with the victim way of viewing the world? How can a team operate within *that* scenario? Sadly, many leaders do not see the impact their day to day actions have on their team or how their way of speaking to a problem or an opportunity sets the tone for the entire group. That can leave any number of people feeling unable to impact change or be successful at work.

Leaders, *you* have the single greatest ability to change the culture, mindset and success factors for your team. Yes, you! But first, examine yourself in the mirror to get a better glimpse of what actions you might be doing that cause your team to withdraw.

A great solution here is to get a board of advisors, trusted truth-tellers around you to reflect what they see you doing. These are people who *don't* work for you. If you only listen to the people on your payroll, you will never get the full reflection of your behaviors that are potentially sabotaging your team. Now, that doesn't mean you don't want feedback from your team, because it's important you take it. What it does mean is that an outsider's perspective into the problems you are facing is needed to get a fresh approach, an open-minded look into the 'why' you and your team are performing the way you are. When you hold a person's paycheck, they may feel the need to withhold the whole truth if it's ugly.

If you want to be really bold, ask my favorite member of every team for their feedback: the *newest* member. If the latest addition to the team has been there less than 6 months, they are always the *first* person on the team that I want to talk with when I start coaching for breakthrough. Why, you ask? Because they don't yet have the rose colored glasses and they see every crack in your sidewalk.

Yes, you read that correctly. The newest member of your team has the freshest perspective—that (most) people tend to reject. Why is their opinion discounted? *"Because he/she hasn't been here long enough or put in his time here yet."* And when we genuinely sit with them to explore the view from their chair, they often give the golden ticket

right up front. They can spot who the victim is and where the root of the demoralization is stemming from.

The caveat to this conversation is safety. A leader's job is to create a safe environment for the 'newbie' to share their insights. A neutral, third party person could come in to help put them at ease.

Now, please, before you go soliciting feedback from the newest member of your team, first be completely open and ready to receive it. There can be no personal attachment to the outcome other than to hear a fresh perspective.

Be prepared. The feedback might be a bit uncomfortable, and any cloudiness or blind spots you unknowingly have will show up. If you can't say, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that you're ready for the feedback, don't ask the questions.

So...now what?

It's time to ask some powerful questions of yourself. It's time to take inventory. Whether you're the leader of the team or a team member, all change happens when we examine our inner self first.

Questions to Ask Yourself

How do I fit on my team?

Where do I see myself on the team?

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) what is my ability to impact change?

Questions to Ask About Your Team

What do I see on my team? (strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats)

Who is the highest performer on the team and why?

Who is the lowest performer on the team and why?

On a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) how is the morale on the team?

If one thing could change for our team to move forward, what would it be?

Finish the Following Sentence:

If I am being totally honest about my team, I would say they....

About the Author



Since 2003, Tammy J. Bond has been helping leaders who are frustrated with their dysfunctional teams, take the group they have and transform them into the team they want!

Praised as a "Secret Weapon for Teams and Leaders," Tammy Bond has laser vision for seeing breakthrough performance opportunities and the creative ability to transform them into a big win!

Tammy is recognized from Seattle to Shanghai as an author, motivating speaker, facilitator and coach who champions for the power of transformation in leaders, teams, audiences and mastermind groups.

Her vision is to equip leaders and their teams with communication strategies and tools that help every person on the team to better play in the sandbox together.

To find out more about Tammy and her powerful programs, go to www.theteamoptimizer.com or email her today at tammy@theteamoptimizer.com.

Inspiring Team Performance Speaker



Tammy delivers keynotes, coaching and consultations for organizations, teams and leaders who want to bring their teams together to powerfully collaborate, connect and change for the better.

Top 10 Reasons to Hire Tammy:

1. Big team breakthrough success
2. Interactive, hands-on dialogue with participants
3. Insider secrets that can be implemented immediately
4. Ability to pin-point roadblocks to big ideas
5. Relevant, amazing stories
6. Internationally acclaimed leadership team coach
7. Arguably entertaining as a one-of-a-kind speaker
8. Up-to-the-minute lessons from today's leaders
9. Motivating and provocatively inspiring
10. Refreshingly insightful

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"Step up and lead – your team is waiting for you."

Ways to Engage Tammy

Tammy can help your team by delivering powerful talks. Re-frame the way you view your team to create powerful growth, collaboration and profound culture change that contributes to better bottom line with one of these keynote speaking topics:

What do Fortune 100 Leaders Know That You Don't?
Tammy shares nine practices Fortune 100 leaders have mastered to create world-class teams.

3 Reasons Teams Fail and What Every Leader Should Do About It
Tammy unveils the secret weapons your team needs to boost morale, communication and performance.

Get Off the Round-a-Bout and Into the Performance Lane
Revitalize your team with this dynamic personal power speech that gets you to clarity with an action plan for results.

How to Turn Your Problem Employee Around
Tammy helps you identify how much not dealing with an issue really costs you and your team and then how to handle it successfully.

All presentations are fully customizable to meet the specific needs of each unique audience.

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