

The Winning Strokes

Lessons On High Performing
Teams From The World Of Sport!

(Excerpts from the book 'The Winning Way',
by Anita Bhogle & Harsha Bhogle)



“Business is a game and winning is a total blast”

-Jack Welch.

Why do some teams win more often than others?

Why are some teams mercurial-capable of astonishing performances one day and appalling ones the next?

Is there a formula to winning that only some possess? Or is it out there for everybody to follow but only some are inclined to reach out for it?

Is there a culture to winning? If there is, why do some teams embrace it with passion while others merely look at it from a distance?

When we talk of teams, these are perhaps the most common questions that come to our mind. It is quite clear that winning is not about one single destination in itself but a series of destinations, where fresh challenges are encountered and overcome along the way. What is evident is also the fact that not everybody can do it, for winning is also exhausting and that is why the true champions stand apart.

Focusing more on team victories, the ideal situation would be to search for that often elusive cycle of winning. The good news is that it exists, maybe more than Boyle's law, with conditions attached.

A review in the Indian Express called Harsha Bhogle the voice of Indian cricket and that is a description that has stuck. He gave up a promising career in management to devote himself fully to cricket and has achieved a fairly regular



international presence on both radio and television. Apart from regular columns in leading newspapers and magazines, Harsha has also written two books: one on India's cricket tour of England and the other, the authorised biography of Mohammad Azharuddin. A new book "Out of the Box", a collection of the best of his columns has just been published. Apart from presenting several cricket programs, Harsha hosted the hugely popular School Quiz Olympiad, his own chat shows Harsha Online and Harsha Unplugged on ESPN and presented a travel show, Travel India, on BBC World.

Harsha has also won Hero Honda's Indian Television Academy award twice and the Ceat Cricket Ratings award, both awarded to the best television commentator and presenter and the ITA awarded him the Sports Personality of the Year Award for 2008. He has also been presented the Rajiv Gandhi Award for outstanding work in the media.

Anita Bhogle, an alumna of IIT-Bombay and IIM-Ahmedabad spent 16 years in advertising and qualitative research, in mainstream advertising and as an entrepreneur. Till October 2000, she was Director, Planning and Research at FCB-Ulka Advertising, one of India's top advertising agencies. Anita also has another entrepreneurial venture Bizpunditz-a digital learning content library for managers.

Harsha and Anita run a successful corporate speaking enterprise Prosearch Consultants, which does sessions for companies on lessons from sport for managers. Anita's understanding of brands and business combined with Harsha's ringside view of sport helps create "The Winning Way" which has received well over 350 invitations. The Winning Way-Learnings from sport for managers, a book that they have co-authored has become a national bestseller.

Image Source: Book 'The Winning Way'



Very often, execution is the defining element and therefore also the stumbling block. It is one thing to know what to do, quite another to actually put that into practice. To be able to do that, you need good teams with good players because quality execution often requires one set of people to help the other set to deliver.

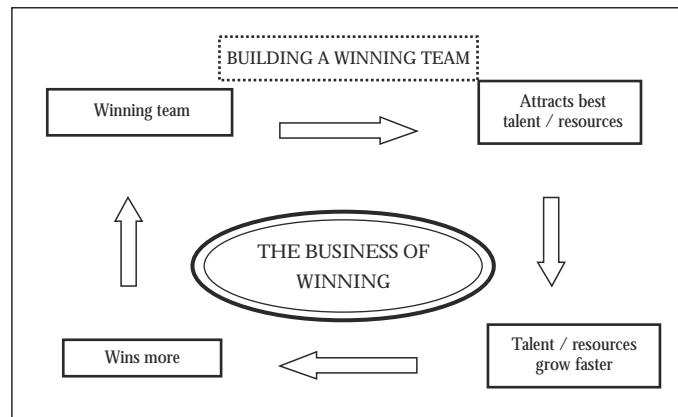
The team must possess that work ethic and the players must be happy enough to follow it. So whether you are making a film, playing a competitive sport or running a company, the same 3 things go into making a good team: great talent, healthy team climate that is conducive to performance and collective pride. Given below are 4 key insights into winning teams.

1. Surrendering “Me” For “We”:

It is amazing how much people get done if they don't worry about who gets the credit

- Swahili proverb

Attitude needs to be cultivated long term and good teams are quick to encourage and reward good attitude while nipping errant behavior in the bud. Teams inching their way up the leagues display tremendous zeal and are united by the ‘ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL’ approach. The biggest danger to the ‘US’ ironically comes with winning. The pursuit of success brings a team together but achieving it can sometimes be a



poison pill and test a leader. Success often breeds many failures. The hallmark of a good leader lies therefore not just in building a team but holding it together, especially when the call for individual glory is sounded by someone. Surrendering the ME for the WE does not in any way imply that individuals must kill their own ambition. It only implies that when individual and team goals are in conflict, team goals must take precedence. It also suggests a culture of cooperation and helping those who are falling behind in performance.

2. Holding Teams Together-Unity In Diversity:

“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack”

-Rudyard Kipling

In creating the WE, integrating individuals in the diverse group is critical. Diversity enriches teams by bringing in varied cultures and ways of approaching issues. We see that in the IPL where a Trinidadian sits in the same dressing room as a Sri Lankan

and wonder of wonder Australia and New Zealand discuss strategy together. The job of the leader is therefore to ensure that there is free mingling of players to enhance knowledge and also to build team spirit. If the stars are aloof, or worse disrespectful, it can create discord and dissent within a side.

Cooperation and togetherness, irrespective of the binding theme, makes the team more than the sum of its parts. This is when it becomes possible to achieve stretch goals by extracting maximum value out of the group. The key to trust and cooperation within a team is fairness and equality. Leaders may need to personalize their approach to suit the person. Yet when it comes to team ethics, discipline, training etc, are the same irrespective of whether you are the star player or the senior most team member. Those rules are the non negotiables.

3. Continuous Improvement

“If you give 90% in training then you will only give 90% when it matters”

- Michael Owen

Another indicator of good team climate is the desire to improve continuously-both as individuals and as a team-in all aspects of the business. Teams like Australia, which have been on the top, work very hard to stay two steps ahead at all times. The desire to excel



can only materialize if the team is willing to stretch and is open to trying out new things. Coaches and captains keep healthy competition alive by keeping the team on its toes. Competition stays healthy when members try to excel by doing the best they can and not with a view to outdo each other at any cost. Good teams make it clear to their members that their real competition is their counterparts from competing teams, not their own team mates. So an opening batsman competes not with the other opener in his team but with openers from the competing teams. At one level it may not be bad to spur competition among individual players but it can very quickly lead to situations where trying to outdo each other becomes paramount, sometimes at the cost of what the team needs.

4. Collective Pride

“Making shots counts,
but not as much as the
people who make them.”

- Mike Krzyzewski

Collective pride over the team's success is the best glue any team can wish for. Performing the Hakka, wearing the baggy green or sporting the India jersey, are priceless privileges. Reliving successful team climate and recounting the experiences and challenges of winning, reinforces the bonding, apart from generating confidence. People work not merely for salary and perks but for good companies, as more and more organizations are discovering. A good football club has a following that is loyal through its wins and losses. Loyalty that goes beyond remuneration is what insures companies against poaching from competitors and the key to this insurance is collective pride, since not all team wins make all members happy.

The disease of ME is known to make frequent visits even to good teams.

Winners Take Away Hope From The Opposition

Teams that win, and win consistently, begin acquiring an aura around them. Equally so, losing becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is one of the great truths in sport and that is why a lot of matches are won and lost before the match begins. Great teams are aware of this and that is why Australia's stated objective before the World Cup 2003 was to create awe in the dressing room. It meant that Australia would play and produce results in a manner that would allow them to focus on their game, while forcing their opponents to concentrate not on their own game as they should, but instead on Australia. It is an interesting exercise for organizations to carry out. Does your team have hope? Even on an off day, or after a poor quarter, does the team believe it can win?

Winning In All Conditions

May be it is symbolic of their attitude, their adaptability or their resourcefulness, but good teams are capable of winning in all conditions. Good companies are like that too, always creating value and putting in the most effort when market conditions are hostile. Australia showed the stuff they were made of during their outstanding World Cup campaign in 2000. They were faced with a couple of tricky matches to the start, against India and Pakistan, and were likely to miss two star players, Michael Bevan who hadn't yet recovered from injury and Darren Lehmann who was suspended. On the morning of their first game came the news that the great Shane Warne had failed a drug test conducted earlier in Australia and was due to fly back home.



Most teams would have carried that state of mind onto the ground; they might have pondered over what could have been instead of what really was. Instead Australia rallied together and produced one of their best performances ever. Teams that can dominate are often excellent in converting their plans to action. They do the small things better than the opposition can, or wants to. It is incredible how many matches are won by teams that do the simple things, the one percent things better. It is these 1% things that produce consistency and you will find that across all areas of industry. Organizations that are consistently successful have strong systems and a framework to enforce those systems. Doing the 1% things is a sign of humility, while on the other hand ignoring them would be a mark of arrogance.

What Are The Perils Of Winning?

The success blanket is probably the heart of the expression 'never change a winning combination'. It's tempting and so easy, so typical of human behavior, that we've all probably done it at some point of time in our careers. Having won, no one really wants to rock the boat. Innovation at this stage seems risky (it always is but seems riskier when you believe you've cracked the magic formula) and experimentation seems unnecessary. Why fix something when it isn't broken? The underlying assumption in the concept of a winning combination is that there is a formula that worked well for you once and that it will continue to work again irrespective of how much time has elapsed between then and now and the circumstances that it worked under. The fact is, success is always in the context of time, space and scale, of when, where and at what level. You need to look at the context in which success was achieved. It might still work, but is not necessary that it will. The 3 related perils of winning: ego, over-confidence and complacency.

Teams that win consistently can sometimes start thinking they only need to turn up to win, can look down at the opposition and not give them the respect an opposition deserves at all times. Here are teams that are ripe for the beating and that is often why you see upsets in sports, why established production houses produce duds, why otherwise prudent fund managers pick mediocre stocks. In the face of ordinary competition, teams can mistakenly start believing in their superiority and can end up offering only 50%. When this happens, a time can come when that 50% is all they can offer. That is why the key job of a manager or the captain of a team that wins all the time, is to maintain the hunger, ensure that they do not slip into auto-mode and that they keep these 3 elements of self destruction at bay.

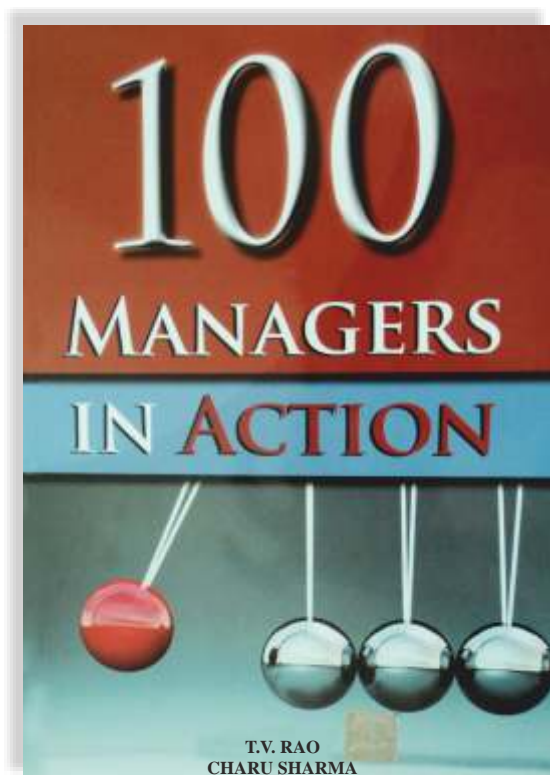
What Causes Winning Cycles To Break

Often discord can be produced by players who put individual goals ahead of what is in the interests of the team. Such players are not too difficult to spot. The forward who looks for the dramatic goal from an impossible angle rather than slide it to an unmarked team mate; the batsman who slows down in quest of a hundred in a one-day international and ends up costing his team an extra 20 runs; the publicity seeking boss who claims credit for a great product launch. While it is vital that players, medical reps, real estate sales executives anyone really, have personal goals for we would be robots without them, there are times when teams get into trouble when a collection of such strictly individual goals derails the teams ethics. Great teams need to cull with the same intensity with which they need to nurture. The best teams are those that back their players all the way, but when they find that players can no longer contribute for various reasons (becoming irrelevant is but one of those), they don't waste time in letting them go.

Image Source: <http://www.psdgraphics.com/3d/gold-trophy-cup/>



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