

Why Are You Pushing So Hard?

5 Mindsets That Build Teams Who Sustain Performance

If your team is producing results but it feels harder than it should, the issue usually isn't effort. It's the environment people are operating in. Here are five shifts, drawn from Lead Well by Dr. Paula Davis, that change how leaders show up and how teams perform over time.

THE FIVE MINDSETS

LESSON 01

People Need to Know Their Work Matters

Generic praise fades. **Sticky recognition** connects what someone did to the impact it had. Instead of "good job on that call," try: "The way you handled that conversation created clarity for the team and confidence for the client."

RESILIENCE: SOCIAL SUPPORT · PURPOSE

LESSON 02

Workload Shapes How Your Team Shows Up

Work expands quietly. New initiatives layer onto old expectations and everything starts to feel urgent. Sustainable performance requires deliberate prioritization, not just more capacity.

RESILIENCE: STRESS MANAGEMENT

LESSON 03

Supporting People Strengthens Performance

Only 9% of companies consistently prioritize both people and performance, and they outperform those that focus on output alone. Supported teams adapt faster when conditions shift.

RESILIENCE: CAPACITY · ADAPTABILITY

LESSON 04

Look Beneath the Surface of Team Issues

Missed deadlines or low engagement are symptoms, not the issue. Adding oversight to a team working through unclear priorities creates pressure, not progress. Diagnose first.

RESILIENCE: STRESS MANAGEMENT

LESSON 05

How You Respond to Wins Shapes Engagement

When someone shares good news, your response either multiplies the energy or steals it. Curiosity and engagement reinforce belonging. Rushed or dismissive responses do the opposite, even when unintentional. Small moments, handled with intention, shape how people experience their work over time.

RESILIENCE: SOCIAL SUPPORT · BELONGING

The DAC Framework

A simple loop for responding to team challenges with precision instead of pressure.

D

DIAGNOSE

Get out from behind the desk. Ask questions. See what's actually happening before responding to assumptions.

A

ADAPT

Adjust your leadership approach to what the situation needs. Direction, support, or autonomy, not one default style.

C

COMMUNICATE

Once the approach is clear, communication aligns with what the person or team actually needs to move forward.

"Performance is shaped by the environment people are operating in. When that environment is aligned, leaders stop feeling like they have to carry everything."

QUICK SELF-AUDIT

Check the boxes that feel true for your team right now. Gaps point to where the environment may be working against you.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My team can clearly explain how their work connects to a larger outcome. | <input type="checkbox"/> Recognition I give is specific enough that people remember it a week later. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> When new priorities are added, old ones are explicitly removed or deprioritized. | <input type="checkbox"/> Subordinate leaders are leading, not just relaying my decisions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I diagnose before I respond when performance dips. | <input type="checkbox"/> People share good news with me, and I make space for it. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My team adjusts to change without me having to push every step. | <input type="checkbox"/> I know what my team needs from me right now, not just what I expect from them. |

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- If your team is producing results but it feels harder than it should, what part of the environment might be working against you?
- Which of the five mindsets is your team's biggest strength? Which is the biggest gap?
- What is one piece of recognition you can give this week that would actually stick?
- Where are you reacting to a symptom when you should be diagnosing the root issue?

GO DEEPER

ASSESS YOUR RESILIENCE

Intentional Resilience (IRx)

Take the assessment to see how you score across Stress Management, Social Support, Purpose, and Adaptability, the domains that shape sustainable performance.

intentionalresilience.com

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Lifelong Development

More frameworks, articles, and tools for leaders building teams that perform without burning out. Read the full blog post and explore the library.

lifelongdevelopment.com

READ THE SOURCE

Lead Well by Dr. Paula Davis

126 pages. Practical. Worth the afternoon. The five mindsets in this handout are drawn from her work, with field-tested additions from leadership practice.

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