

BECOMING A HIGH PERFORMING TEAM:

REVEALING THROUGH SYSTEMS THEORY HOW TEAMS TRANSFORM TO REACH HIGH PERFORMANCE

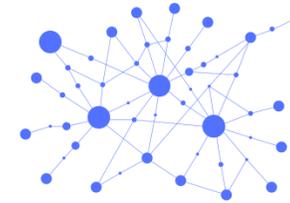
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INTRODUCTION

- While “high performing team” is a **recurring construct** in business studies and management environments, there is **no consensus** into its definition or crafting.
- Given the **complexity and interconnectedness** of modern organizations, using the **Input - Mediator - Output** framework will shed new light into the forces that turn a team into high performing.

RESEARCH QUESTION & PROBLEMATIC

Through which systemic mechanisms do teams transform over time to reach “high performance”?



Understanding the **dynamics, interactions and behaviours** that drive a team to above a certain threshold of performance is of paramount importance for modern organizations.

Considering the **complex, volatile and uncertain context** they operate in, systems theory offers a fertile ground for research, as it will help reveal how the following forces **make the team shift** and how this shift drives it towards high performance:

- ✓ INTERCONNECTIONS
- ✓ FEEDBACK LOOPS
- ✓ COMPENSATION LEVERS
- ✓ ADAPTATION MECHANISMS

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH & PRACTICE

• For research

This study will help advance the knowledge on “high performing teams”, where **more conceptual** research has been requested (Hakanen, 2015), as well as more focus on **transition processes** (Mathieu et al., 2008).

Besides, it will help enrich the knowledge at the **intersection of our two fields of study**: today less than 50 articles appear in EBSCO, Emerald Publishing, ProQuest & Google Scholar together, when looking for articles including simultaneously the keywords “high performing teams” and “systems theory”.

At a later stage, this study can also be followed by quantitative research, using **advanced statistical techniques** to reveal how the events in the model developed dynamically evolve.

• For practitioners:

This research will give insights into which **stimulus and dynamics** help a team become high performing, which answers to an ongoing request from managers in search of results and improvement of their teams’ development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

>>> **Action research, leveraging qualitative methodology:**

I aim at engaging at least one company with a sufficient level of complexity (>50 employees) to work together on solving the challenge of how to accelerate team performance, over a period of 12 months. We’ll leverage a preliminary model, based on an exhaustive literature review, and refine it as new insights emerge. I’ll prioritise multinational marketing teams, field where I’ve developed most of my career. The research will entail:



Indepth interviews with team members & key stakeholders

WHY? To grasp insights on how teams work, behave, learn and communicate



Regular surveys (one per quarter) among team members & stakeholders to describe how the shift to high performance is perceived over time

WHY? To evaluate the progress in the transformation process



Observation (meetings, use of space, informal encounters...)

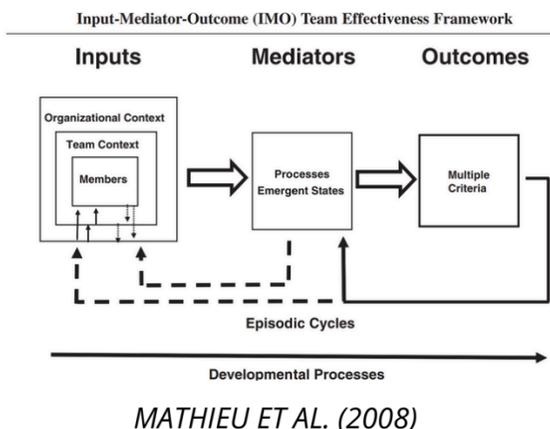
WHY? To capture insights not elicited by team members in the interviews



Team development workshops to identify and cocreate potential solutions to the challenge of accelerating performance

WHY? To engage the teams and deliver further insights

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



These are some of the key authors and concepts I’m considering to build this research:

- **Von Bertalanffy** (1972): his evaluation of general systems theory
- **Mathieu et al.** (2008): their model for “Input-Mediator-Outcome” Team Effectiveness Framework, evolving Mc Grath’s (1964) approach
- **Ilgen’s et al.** (2005), enriching the perspectives with their “Input Mediator Outcome Input” approach to insist on circularity and unpredictability
- **Vanderstraeten’s** (2019) to adopt his focus on heterogeneity, indeterminacy and uncontrollability in the distinction between system and environment.

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