

RYP Quarterly

Excellence is an Outcome of Teamwork.

Teams Version

It is the 1%ers that creates the difference between
mediocre and excellent team performance



RYP QUARTERLY

Excellence isn't luck, it's the 1%ers. It is the small, relentless behaviours shaped by leaders that creates excellent teams. Great teams don't stumble into success; they build it daily.

Excellence is never an accident. It is a deliberate, disciplined, and consistent pursuit that separates good teams from great ones. In sport, business, and community life, the difference between a team that merely functions and one that excels always comes down to the "1%ers." These are the small, often unseen actions that accumulate to create a culture of great performance, trust, and accountability.

The 1%ers are not glamorous. They are rarely celebrated in the moment. Yet they are the glue that binds high-performing teams together and is the foundation upon which success is built. They don't emerge by chance; they require persistence, permission, and symbolism from leaders who model them relentlessly until they infect the mindsets and behaviours of every team member.

Leadership Osmosis Works. What a leader role models, endorses, and enforces is what shapes team culture. Not a rule book.

This article explores what those team 1%ers look like in practice, why they matter, and how leaders can embed them so that excellence becomes the natural outcome of teamwork.

THE MYTH OF CHANCE Vs. THE REALITY OF DISCIPLINE

Too often, we look at winning teams (whether an elite sporting club, a high-performing business unit, or a volunteer emergency response crew) and attribute their success to talent or luck. While talent matters, and luck occasionally plays a role, the truth is more prosaic: Excellence comes from discipline in the small things, repeated consistently.

Excellence is a result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, and skilful execution. Above all it requires team commitment and the desired culture to chase it. The chase for perfection happens in the tiny, unglamorous 1%ers, the details, the habits, the standards teams work to.

High-performing teams don't simply "click." They evolve because their leaders create the conditions where 1%ers become non-negotiable, where every member feels responsible not just for their own performance, but for the collective standards of the group.

"Excellence is never an accident, it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny"

Aristotle

3 LEADERSHIP QUALITIES TO CREATE TEAM 1%ERS:

Persistence, Permission, and Symbolism. Without leadership, excellence is merely a wish! For 1%ers to take root, leadership is the catalyst. Three qualities define leaders who successfully embed these behaviours:

1. **Persistence:** Leaders who understand the value of 1%ers never let them slip. They correct details. They insist on standards. They model behaviours even when inconvenient or uncomfortable. Their persistence signals to the team that small things matter, and that "good enough" is never good enough.
2. **Permission:** Empowerment requires leadership facilitation. Teams that excel thrive on peer accountability. This doesn't happen unless leaders give explicit permission for members to hold each other to account. When a leader says, "We all own the standards here," and then backs that up with action, it legitimises peer-to-peer correction and prevents mediocrity from creeping in. The most powerful form of coaching continuous improvement is peer to peer. This is what fuel excellence and the desire to do the 1%ers that matter.
3. **Symbolism:** Human beings respond to symbols and rituals. Leaders who use small symbolic acts, including walking around the workplace and checking in and catching people doing things right each day, staying back and helping others get things done, saying thank you, calling out others for their over and above efforts signal what matters. These acts are often more powerful than any speeches or strategy documents because they embody what is valued in action.

It Is a Local Leaders Responsibility To Create Their Own Team 1%ers Playbook. It Does Not Happen by Chance

THE 1% ERS TEAM PLAYBOOK

The 1%ers Playbook for High-Performing Teams. This playbook distils eight proven, research-backed team behaviours (the '1%ers') that separate good teams from truly excellent ones. Each can be adopted immediately by any team and their local leaders, helping drive sustained excellence over time.

1. Build Psychological Safety (Every Meeting): Leaders must admit when they are uncertain, ask genuine questions, and invite a divergence of views, without fear of being ignored, belittled, or persecuted. Teams who are encouraged to be curious, challenge the status quo, and open to new ideas and thoughts. This should be the desired modus operandi of any team. A team that is hyper focused on compliance have less curiosity, which impacts negatively on psychological safety.

2. Debrief Regularly (Every Day – Week): Run 10–15 min debriefs to reflect on: What was the goal? What happened? Why did it occur – root cause analysis? What's next? What is the evidence. What are our next step actions? Debriefs improve team effectiveness. Close off each meeting with a 'What went well / What could we improve / Any new ideas or suggestions discussion. This is a classic PLAN – DO – CHECK – ACT team cadence cycle. Without team reflection no improvement can occur.

3. Pre-Mortem Thinking: Start any new project or monthly goal setting with a Pre-Mortem thinking discipline. List things that may go wrong and list the reasons, so you can pre-empt them. Proactive hindsight improves ability to identify risks, help proactively predict potential problems or issues in advance. Apply this 4-pre-mortem thinking framework:

- **Foreseeability** (Predictions and assumptions of issues and likely scenarios)
- **Probability** (The likelihood of one of the scenarios arising)
- **Preventability** (How to risk mitigate the likelihood of something occurring)
- **Consequences** (What are the outcomes and actions to take if one of the scenarios actually plays out)

4. Checklists for Critical Work: Things you must get right every time, all the time, require checklists. These need to be visible, known, and enforced. These are widely used in aviation, and hazardous industries. Check-lists work, provided they are followed, endorsed, and enforced by all the team (no exceptions).

5. Set Specific, Difficult Goals: Soft goals or vague goals are useless and are never adhered to. Specific, difficult goals reveal team capability and commitment, and if these are in place, produce higher performance outcomes. Drive this team behaviour: At the start of each week, the team meets with their local leaders, reflect on last week so as to frame this week's tasks into 3 measurable outcomes.

6. Make Progress Visible Daily: Celebrate small wins, track progress publicly. Measure progress trends daily, weekly, monthly. Focus on what matters to drive mindsets. Meaningful work, and the achievement of improvement is the strongest motivator. Teams must feel their daily wins are visible, and there is a shared mechanism for leaders to acknowledge and share successes publicly.

7. Plan with "If-Then" Statements: For staff to predict and act on issues as and when they arise, they must know in advance what may happen and what is expected to be done. This not only empowers staff, but it also informs them on what the likely scenarios may be, and what to actually do. Practice and rehearse for these scenarios. Like fire drills. You hope you never need to make an emergency exit, but in the unlikely event of having to evacuate a building, having practiced and rehearsed for such an event leads to better outcomes. Long serving staff have great organisational wisdom, "if-then" statements are a great mechanism to pass on their history, wisdom, and corporate knowledge.

8. Schedule Team Reflexivity: Short, structured pauses to improve process and strategy execution over the course of a week / month, is a great mechanism to drive continuous improvement. This should be led by front-line leaders and local teams. Let them critically reflect on their performance (in real time) so they can align, adapt, and agree local actions and initiatives. Team Reflexivity is linked to stronger performance especially in dynamic industries such as manufacturing, logistics, building & construction and retail to name a few. Anyone can report problems. But is what teams do when problems arise. This is Team Reflexivity.

THE 1%ERS THAT TEAM MEMBERS DO CONSISTENTLY THAT LEAD TO EXCELLENCE

Focus on Survival V Excellence

When team members are just "surviving," their energy is directed towards managing workload and avoiding problems, rather than on innovation, strategy, and the pursuit of excellence.

So, what do these 1%ers look like in personal practice? It is about personal disciplines, mindsets and behaviours. This is what consistently differentiate high-performing teams from ordinary teams.

1. Preparation Beyond the Minimum

- Reviewing material before meetings rather than “winging it.”
- Checking equipment, data, and processes at the start of a day to ensure the team is performance ready from the outset
- Showing up on time and being mentally ready (present), not just physically present.

Team mindset of: “I respect my teammates enough to be prepared.”

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success”

Eleanor Roosevelt

2. Communication that Builds Trust

- Actively listening instead of listening to reply.
- Treating feedback as a gift, and demonstrating it is appreciated
- Clarifying rather than assuming things
- Sharing bad news quickly to prevent surprises.
- Using direct, respectful language that addresses issues, not personalities.

Team mindset of: “Respectful Conversations but Listen First.”

“Relationships are about trust. It is what bonds humans and teams together. If you must play detective with someone – then it is time to move them on”

Stephen R Covey

3. Peer Accountability

- Calling out lapses in standards, respectfully but firmly.
- Assume best intentions to foster respectful conversations
- Backing each other up, whether in workload, stress, or conflict.
- Accepting feedback with humility rather than defensiveness.
- Never justifying or laying blame onto others
- Owning the result. Things happen good and bad. Own both!

Team mindset of: “We rise or fall together, so I own the standard.”

“No institution can possibly survive if it needs to be managed by geniuses or super humans. It must be organised in such a way that it is able to get along under the composed performance delivered by average people in great teams”

Peter Drucker

4. Attention to Detail in Execution

- Double-checking numbers, names, or facts before actioning.
- Finishing tasks completely, not leaving loose ends for others.
- Adherence to policies, standards and procedures. They are there for a reason.
- Being on time, every time, as a sign of respect.

Team mindset of: "Excellence lives in the details."

"If you are going to achieve excellence you develop and adhere to the little details. Excellence is a prevailing team attitude."

Colin Powell

5. Sacrifice for the Collective

- Volunteering for jobs. Taking it in turns to do the unglamorous tasks
- Staying back to help a teammate finish, even when your work is done
- Passing credit to others while shouldering responsibility for mistakes

Team mindset of: "The team comes before me."

"Good Teamwork requires some sacrifice. Always will. People who work as a team will need to put the collective needs of the group ahead of their own individual interests"

Patrick Lencioni

6. Continuous Learning and Improvement

- Seeking feedback proactively, not waiting for formal reviews.
- Personally, reflecting on feedback and outcomes after successes and failures to capture lessons.
- Being curious and interested in others, not just themselves
- Practice key skills regularly and deliberately, to ensure they perform to high standards consistently, and not just be mediocre at them.

Team mindset of: "We never arrive at excellence; we are always improving."

"Practice the philosophy of continuous improvement. Get a little bit better as a team each and every day"

Brian Tracy

7. Respect for Rituals and Standards (Team Cadence)

- Wearing clean uniforms daily, keeping spaces tidy, following meeting protocols, adherence to good housekeeping. This signals shared pride.
- Celebrating small wins together, not just big milestones.
- Protecting and observing team traditions that bind the team's identity.
- Observe and follow the team Cadence so it is known, adopted and respected by all team members (formally & informally)

Team mindset of: "Our standards, habits, rituals, and routines are who we are. It is how we team!"

"To be a successful team, everyone in that team must have an attitude of helping each other, and for sharing knowledge, free of ego"

Bill Walsh

8. Energy and Positivity in the Everyday

- Greeting colleagues by name.
- Bringing solutions instead of just problems. Not being the vocal critic, but being vocal in solutions and ideas.
- Celebrating effort, not just outcomes.
- Choosing to come to work with the right attitude and energy is a choice everyone makes

Team mindset of: "Energy is contagious, so I choose to lift the room."

"You are either an energy giver or energy taker. You cannot be both. Your energy becomes the currency you donate to your World"

Oprah Winfrey

9. Behaviours Under Pressure

- Staying composed when things go wrong.
- Supporting teammates during stress rather than blaming.
- Returning quickly to team disciplines after setbacks.
- Supporting those who are feeling vulnerable, and adopting empathetic behaviours
- Set and support short term next step goals to bounce back, whilst creating a sense of hope and unity.

Team mindset of: "We bend but don't break."

"Never listen to the defeatist attitudes and negative crap from people who always predict doomsday outcomes, or who have never achieved anything great themselves"

Al Pacino

10. Peer Humility and Gratitude

- Thanking teammates for small contributions.
- Acknowledging the work of support staff or those outside the direct team.
- Avoiding arrogance even after success.
- Crave and appreciate recognition, but are equally willing to praise others

Team mindset: "We succeed because of each other."

"The most truly generous team members are those who give silently to the team's success without the need for praise or reward"

Dale Carnegie

WHY TEAM 1%ERS MATTER

Individually, these behaviours may look trivial. Together, they create a culture where excellence is the only outcome. The 1%ers build trust, reinforce accountability, and strengthen cohesion. They ensure that when pressure comes (whether a grand final or a business crisis) the team doesn't fracture. **Without them, cracks appear:**

- Deadlines are missed
- Trust erodes
- Finger-pointing replaces accountability
- Mediocrity creeps in not with a bang but with a whisper
- Teams meeting starts late or are skipped
- Teammates let sloppy work slide
- Leaders don't correct small lapses

The Result – Mediocrity reigns supreme! Great teams don't allow these cracks. They fix them early, not because they are obsessive, but because they understand that excellence is a habit, not an act.

A MESSAGE TO LOCAL LEADERS ON HOW TO EMBED 1%ERS

Being prescriptive, here are actions leaders can take to ensure the 1%ers become part of a team's DNA:

1. Model Relentlessly

- Never excuse yourself from the standards you expect.
- Be early, be prepared, and show gratitude.

Teams mirror image a leader's mindset, behaviour, and standards

2. Make Standards Visible

- Write down non-negotiables.
- Refer to them in meetings and decisions.
- Celebrate people who live them out.

What is acknowledged, repeated, and enforced is what gets done

3. Encourage Peer-to-Peer Accountability

- Explicitly tell the team, "It's not my job alone to uphold standards, it's everyone's." It is how we do things!
- Support those who speak up, even when uncomfortable.

The greatest impact on team culture and performance is peer to peer feedback

4. Create Symbolic Rituals

- Begin meetings on time and with recognition of unseen contributions.
- Mark small milestones (daily, weekly, monthly). They must be regular
- Use symbols like team uniforms, signage, shared team routines, repeated team culture messages to reinforce identity.

“It is the repetition of affirmations that leads to belief. And once that belief becomes a deep conviction, then things start to happen”

Muhammad Ali

5. Reward the Behaviours, Not Just Outcomes

- Praise someone for preparing diligently even if the result wasn't perfect.
- Celebrate resilience, teamwork, and sacrifice alongside wins.

Culture always precedes performance – Mindsets, Behaviours, Disciplines

6. Persist Through Fatigue and Busy Times

- Don't relax standards when busy or under pressure, that's when they matter most.
- Remind the team that *“Excellence is hardest when we are tired or under the pump, but that's when it counts.”*

A team's culture is revealed when it is under pressure in difficult circumstances. Practice for both stormy and calm seas

EXCELLENCE IS AN OUTCOME

When 1%ers become embedded, teams don't need to “chase” excellence, it emerges naturally. Workflows become smoother, trust deepens, individuals grow, and collective pride fuels performance. Excellence is not a one-off event but the by-product of consistent behaviours. **Teams that excel don't stumble into success. They create it, one detail, one ritual, one small act at a time.**

FINAL WORD

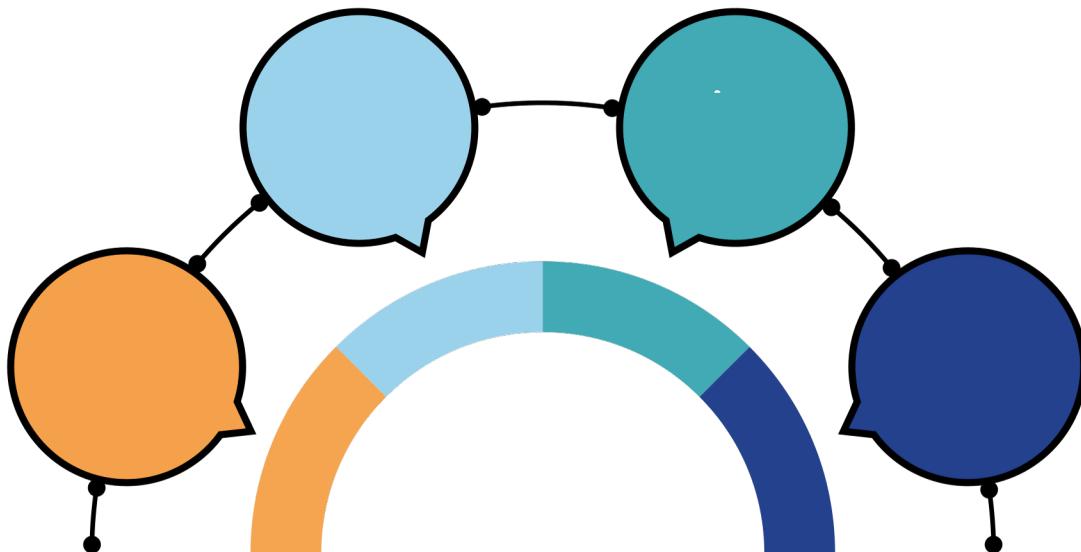
Excellence is an outcome of teamwork and the 1%ers that make the difference. The challenge for leaders is not to craft grand strategies or deliver inspirational speeches, but to persistently embed the tiny, invisible disciplines that signal what matters. By granting permission for accountability, modelling symbolic acts, and persisting when fatigue tempts compromise, leaders create cultures where the pursuit of the 1%ers is relentless. And when the 1%ers are lived daily, excellence ceases to be a goal, it becomes the inevitable outcome.

Leadership Lesson:

Encouraging teams to exceed basic expectations involves cultivating a positive team culture that inspires commitment and motivation, rather than imposing external disciplines. This approach fosters engagement and ensures individuals are driven to contribute effectively for the collective benefit. This is the role of leaders at all levels.

Facta Non-Verba – Deeds Not Words

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