IT'S LONELY AT
THE TOP…
(BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE)

As a leader in your organization, do you feel somewhat alone with the weight of the world on your shoulders? If so, it's probably because you feel the pressure of having to make the final decision. And you are accountable for results. Your team members may or may not agree with or support your decisions, yet they must be made. Your success depends on the outcome of those decisions and you and your team's ability to execute and deliver on them.

There is a better way. Many leaders experience that, when reaching a certain executive level, success becomes less about their own capability and more how to galvanize and motivate others. No matter how smart, talented, or experienced *you* are, true achievement only comes with getting *others* to execute, deliver and win. Moreover, through an effective team, you can engage in a sense of shared ownership and commitment over decisions and goals. That's right; it doesn't have to be so lonely!

A case in point: Ronald is Senior Vice President of a consumer goods company. He leads a large and high-profile business unit nationally, and is responsible for several billion dollars in annual revenues. For two years, I served as Ronald's executive coach and got to know him and the issues he contends with quite well.

Ronald is tall, and his chiseled and attractive appearance enhances his gravitas. He touts an impressive pedigree, having come from a well-known business family. His Harvard MBA, commercial acumen, and successful track record with several companies contributed to his being a much sought-after talent.

Yet for all his recognized strengths, Ronald felt a degree of insecurity. An introvert, he shied away from social gatherings and felt awkward with casual interactions. He intimated that "In business discussions or meetings, I'm well prepared and my opinions are respected but I tend to be quiet, only speaking up when necessary." Ronald's personality assessment revealed him to be a perfectionist who didn't take failure easily. He admitted, "I feel enormous stress when things are not going according to plan. I tend to hold it all in, and occasionally the pent-up emotion boils over, leading to unintended outbursts with my team members."

I asked Ronald what effect this has on those around him. He replied, "My team meetings tend to focus on business and have a serious overtone. I seem to miss what is really going on, and sometimes I'm the last one to hear the news." He sighed. I probed further to learn more about his outbursts. "Even though they're few and far between, people are gun shy around me and kind of tiptoe around topics." When asked about team ambiance, Ronald confessed, "I just don't think my team members are enjoying our monthly meetings. They can hardly wait for them to end to

have a drink with each other and unwind. I kind of feel those are a waste of time so I don't usually attend. To be honest, I feel quite alone."

What we had in Ronald was a talented, and in some ways brilliant, leader who didn't display the classic charismatic, ballsy leadership common to many 'folk hero' leaders. It was a conundrum. He knew that he should engage the team more yet he felt awkward doing so. He realized that he needed to build stronger, more engaged relationships but didn't enjoy it. And he felt lonely and somewhat isolated. What was he to do?

At this point, I had to shift Ronald's paradigm. As he believed that most decisions were funneled up to him, he felt enormous responsibility. I suggested to Ronald, "What if you shifted your mindset and pushed more decision making to your leadership team? What if you got your team to take ownership over the common business-unit goals and deliverables? What if you tasked your team members to lead key initiatives, and redefined your role as supporting those initiatives?" Ronald sat up in his chair with a puzzled look. "What does that mean, and how can it be done"? I then outlined a leadership-team framework and journey to High Performance. I described how to create a sense of ownership among all members on key initiatives. Ronald grasped how, through strong team bonding and collaboration, much more could be accomplished with superior results.

Ronald was sold. Utilizing our TQ HealthCheck, we measured the current state of team. It was Mediocre at best. So we embarked on a two-year leadership team journey with several offsite sessions and lots of integration back in the office. The team began the transformation process to High Performance. It worked on bonding with deeper relationships and trust. It started collaborating and aligning with its vision. Team members took pride in 'walking their talk,' and the sense of team identity became palpable. The leadership team worked diligently to engage in effective meetings with full participation.

Then an amazing thing happened: Ronald started to relax and smile more with his leadership team. No longer feeling the pressure to lead and decide everything on his own, he could focus on what he did best—strategy and thought leadership. He could then support and encourage his team members to deliver on both individual and team goals. I was astounded to witness Ronald becoming likable and fun. He admitted, "I am still one of the quieter ones, but my team members know I am there to support them and they go the extra mile."

You might be thinking, "That's fine. It's great that Ronald became comfortable in his own boots with a transformed team. But what about results?" Yes, let's talk about results because they are one of the primary reasons you would want to develop a High Performance Team.

Ronald's business unit went on to become the top performer in the country in terms of revenue growth and profitability. Moreover, his team's 'engagement scores' skyrocketed to one of the best in the company. And remember the TQ HealthCheck? Taking it again after two years, the team attained the top tier: High Performance.

Ronald's future is bright. Through his team's transformation, Ronald himself has shifted from feeling distant, awkward and alone, to experiencing belonging, comfort and confidence. And its members are enjoying the success of being a High Performance Team.

****

Of course, there are many types of leaders and most are not as shy and introverted as Ronald. Alex heads up the medical function nationally for a large pharmaceutical company. She is well

respected as one of the best in the business. As an MD, and with a PhD in Medical Science, she is frequently invited as a keynote speaker to medical seminars and workshops. Alex enjoys good relationships with her leadership team members. She works hard to listen and shows care and concern for each of them. She is decisive, and shows up with authority in meetings.

Alex possesses some classic leadership qualities yet not all is rosy. Alex acknowledged, "I tend to dominate in meetings so sometimes people just don't talk. It's hard getting people's real thoughts out in the open. I know that some people suck up to me while others withdraw."

I asked Alex about the leadership-team dynamics. "There are three cliques in the team, and they really don't get along. I push them to cooperate, but alas, to no avail." When queried about how she felt, Alex confessed, "I just feel so much pressure to look after all of the difficult characters on this team. When there are conflicts, it always falls back on me to resolve them. Sometimes I feel like a mother hen trying to corral all her chickens!"

It became clear that Alex was operating in overdrive, trying to control everything. I asked her, "What if you could just let go and empower the team to work out their own differences. Do this by creating a framework and expectation that they collaborate and get along; it's a part of their job as team members." She protested, "But left alone they just disagree and only I can intervene to straighten them out." I retorted, "That's part of the problem. You believe you have to solve all the problems. What the team really needs is a new way to communicate with one another. First, they need to engage in safe, structured feedback with a focus on the team's welfare above their own welfare."

Alex relented. "I know that we need a true sense of 'team.' I know we need to collaborate more and be more transparent. Okay; I'm game."

After taking the TQ HealthCheck, it became clear that Alex's medical team was on the low end of Mediocre. The diagnostics revealed a need to work on trust, feedback, collaboration, bonding, and fun. We engaged in a two-day comprehensive offsite at a lovely mountain resort to allow team members to unwind, relax, and come together in a nurturing environment. Structured feedback and trust building were core aspects of the offsite. We explored and aligned on values and behaviors that everyone was expected to demonstrate back at work. With lots of practice, showing up as a 'real team' back at the office, coupled with another offsite program, Alex's medical team was clearly transforming. One year after starting the journey, they took he TQ HealthCheck again, edging very close to High Performance.

Alex's demeanor as a leader changed markedly. Still as passionate as ever about her work, she now sees herself as more of an enabler as opposed to a controller. When dust ups arise, she lets them play out with the expectation that the team will resolve their problems using the framework they have been given. Having developed her reputation as a skilled leader of teams, Alex just got promoted to a larger role. Yes, building High Performance Teams can do wonders for your career!

<p style="text-align:center">******</p>

Ronald and Alex represent just two of the myriad of leadership styles and their corresponding challenges. No matter what your challenge, your team is your ally. It can make the difference between your being considered "good" vs. "great." Leading a team is exciting because it affords you the luxury to build and manage it in any way that suits your own needs and the needs of the

organization. Teams are extraordinarily adaptable. They can move in any direction according to where you and its members want it to go.

Yes, there is a better way. You don't need to feel lonely at the top. In this book we will show you how to leverage your team to create stellar results. We will outline a proven and effective team framework within the context of a team journey. We will provide the simple yet effective TQ measurement framework to establish a baseline for the team and track its progress. All the tools and methodologies you need on the journey are contained herein.

This book is laid out in several parts:

Part I, The Imperative, highlights the "why" and "what" of TQ.

Part II, The TQ Journey, illustrates the processes and methodologies.

Part III, Building, addresses types of teams and building them out.

Part IV, The Leader's Operating Manual, is a 'how to' guide for creating your own High-TQ Team.

Enjoy the High Performance Team journey!