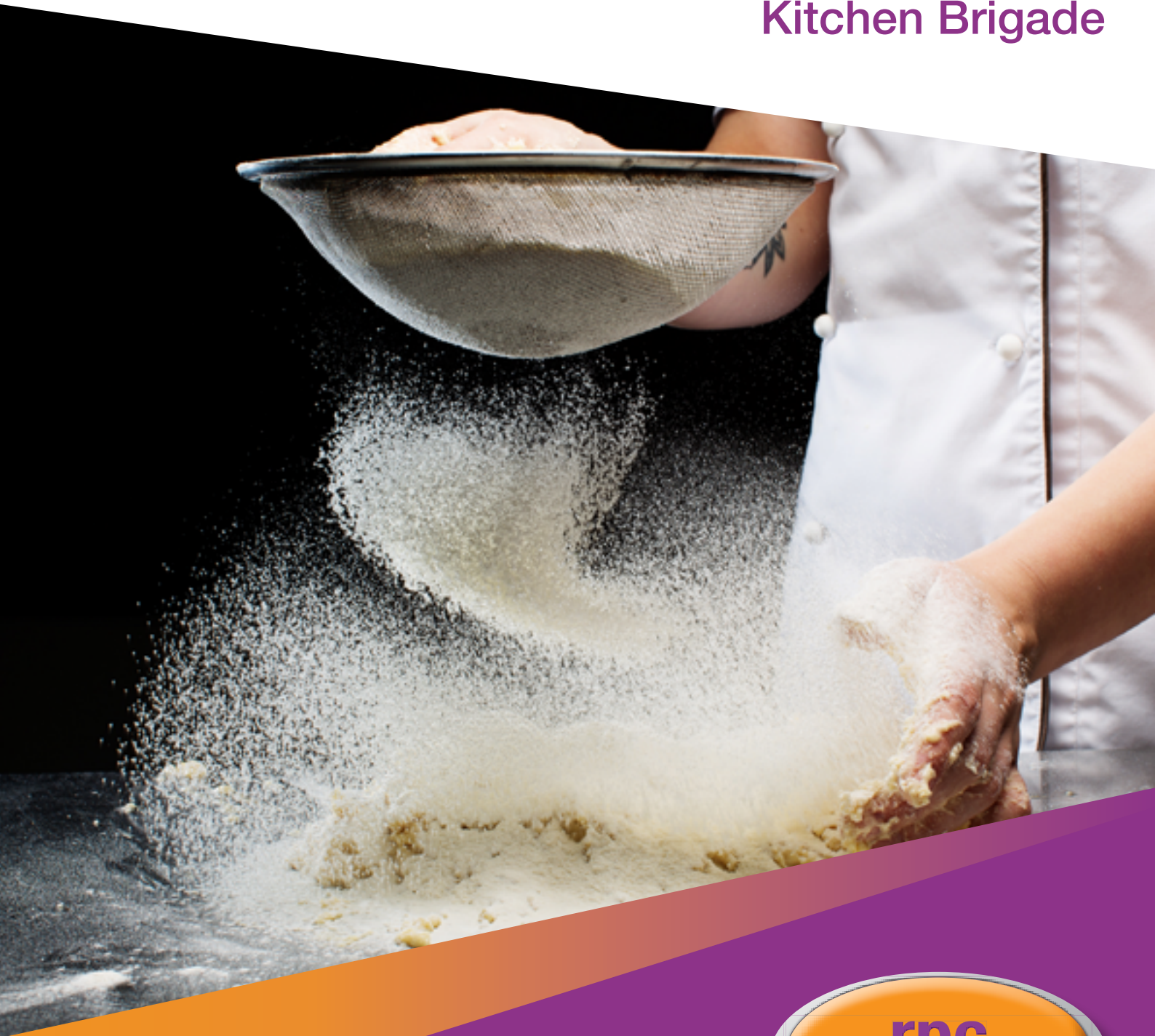


The Ultimate Guide to Building Your **High Performing** Kitchen Brigade



Most Hotel General Managers and Restaurant General Managers and Owners know that having high – performing teams are crucial to success. A high performing kitchen brigade can be critical to both their popularity with customers and a healthy profit.

Every hotel and restaurant needs the right selection of carefully- chosen members of their brigade to support their vision and business objectives. The challenge is transforming a group of individual hires and existing team members from the Executive



/ Head Chef to the Kitchen Porters and Runners into a cohesive kitchen team all dedicated to achieving the same goals.

Creating and nurturing the ideal team means starting from the beginning. A specialist catering and hospitality recruitment consultancy can support you in selecting the best kitchen staff for your positions, on boarding them seamlessly into their roles as you work with them to establish themselves into your business.

Of course, you may not be able to start from scratch if you're taking over a pre-existing kitchen, but you can still implement the strategies in this guide when you do start recruiting for your ideal kitchen brigade.

There's incredible value in building your team from the foundation up. In fact, in the book "Leading Organisations: Ten Timeless Truths" by Mary Meaney and Scott Keller, the authors suggest that there's a 1.9 times higher chance of achieving a great revenue flow when your team is working towards a shared vision.

As basketball champion Michael Jordan once said: *"Talent win games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships."*

This guide will provide you with everything you need to know to streamline the transition into building your high performing kitchen brigade.

Best Regards

David Beck

Managing Director

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A strong brand demonstrates your values...

Achieving The Right Team Composition

Creating the ideal team is essential, but it's also incredibly tough. The catering and hospitality sector, especially 3 and 4-star establishments are suffering from a significant skills shortage. Hotels and restaurants are continually competing to earn the attention of the best hospitality talent.

The fact that everyone is scrambling for skilled kitchen staff often means that when you find an ambitious and capable Sous Chef or Restaurant Manager, it's essential not to just jump straight in with an offer and overlook the importance of "composition" when crafting the right team.

Ideally, you'll need to look not only at the things someone new can bring to their specific role but also, the complementary skills and attitude they can use to supplement your existing team. The best hires feel accountable for the success of the business overall. They're natural team players, rather than individual stars that soak up the spotlight.

So, how can you make sure you attract and recruit the right candidates for an incredible kitchen brigade?

Start With Your Employer Brand

Attracting an employee that fits seamlessly into your existing culture means ensuring that your culture shines through in everything you do. A strong brand demonstrates your values and work atmosphere to potential employees, which may be why 59% of managers feel that branding is crucial to their HR strategy.

Though you may have a recognised hospitality brand to the general public who pay money to visit your establishments; your employer brand is how potential candidates see your organisation. It's how your recruitment consultancy “sells” you to the best talent in your industry too. The more magnetic your brand is, the more likely it is that you will attract the right people for your future growth.

To build an employer identity, you will need to:

- Listen to your staff to discover what existing employees like and dislike about your company. Consider using surveys and confidential meetings.
- Define your Employer Value Proposition: **The Randstad global workforce report for 2017** indicates that while 58% of candidates are looking for good salary and benefits, 43% want work/life balance and 35% want opportunities for progression. What can you offer candidates that will set you apart?
- Articulate your Vision and your Mission: Show what you want to accomplish in your restaurant or hotel, beyond making money. Give your brigade something to get behind. For instance, are you a hotel or restaurant with a green side? Do you donate some of your restaurant profits to charity?

Write a Compelling Job Description

While your employer brand will begin to signal you as ‘the’ place to work on social media platforms and review websites, it can never replace the job description.

A dynamic, relevant job specification gives your business and your recruitment consultancy the ability to ‘sell’ the opportunity working with you will bring. It also helps candidates to connect the dots between their ambitions, and the opportunities your organisation can offer.

If you're hoping to work with the best of chef talent around, to enable your establishment to stand out as the place to go, then you will need to design a description of your various roles in such a way that they stand out. This means deciding what's going to “speak” to your preferred applicant. Remember to:

- **Sell your position with useful “hooks”:** Talk about your salary and benefits, outline the skills you need for the role, the opportunity to work with an amazing kitchen brigade and show your would-be employee what’s in it for them.
- **Use appropriate keywords:** In today’s fast-paced job market, many potential hires will simply scan a description searching for the right terms. Make sure that you use the right words. As an example, it might read something like; “Sous Chef with the ability to stand in for our award-winning Head Chef”, or, “able to create rosette standard dishes”, when trying to attract new people.
- **Make sure your description aligns with your employer brand:** Use this important document as an opportunity to show what your business is all about. Highlight the nature of your establishment and what it can offer to new recruits.

Building And Developing Your Kitchen Brigade

Focusing on team composition is a great way to launch your strategy as you build your ideal kitchen brigade. However, it’s important to start as you mean to go on. This means not only hiring the right Chefs but also giving those people a clear vision of what they need to do to succeed in your establishment as you take it to the next level.

A strong vision ensures that everyone is firmly situated on the same path from the moment they start working in your kitchen for instance, ask yourself:

- Are you the kind of business that cares more about results, or food or customer service and reputation?
- Do you encourage innovation and curiosity, or prefer a focus on tried-and- tested techniques, and recipes?
- Do you have a “why” for your business beyond the quest for profits or a Rosette or Michelin Star, if so, what is it?

Your Vision and accompanying Mission Statement driving your teams can be an essential source of motivation and support. Not only can an explicit goal help your team to make critical decisions for themselves, but it can also inspire them to go

above and beyond when they feel an affinity with your goals. This is particularly true for Millennial, and Gen Z hires, who like to know that their contributions are making the world a better place.

Your Vision can even help you to put “best practice” guidelines in place for your staff to follow when they encounter a problem or need help.

For instance, do you want a new Line Chef to seek help from the Executive / Head Chef when they’re lost, or turn to a team mentor? The more guidelines you have in place, the more productive your team will be.

Create a Company Culture

According to the Head of Industry at Google, Paul Santagata, “there’s no team without trust”. Building and developing your team starts with establishing the right atmosphere in which employees can thrive and grow. For instance, in Google’s **two-year team performance study**, they found that a culture of “psychological safety” - believing you won’t be punished for small mistakes - allows for better creativity and risk-taking.

To establish a healthy culture for your team:

Establish a Common Understanding of Cultural Expectations

Research suggests that the best, most high-performing teams are often driven by a shared vision - like the ones we mentioned above. If you want your culture to thrive, then you need to make sure that everyone in your organisation has the same idea of what that culture is. Do you define yourself as a friendly and creative kitchen or business? If so, then you’ll need to establish an environment where people feel comfortable sharing ideas and offering feedback.

Make Essential Changes

Surveying your kitchen staff at every level and speaking to them about their needs will help you to get a better idea of the culture you currently have. If something isn’t right, then a change is crucial.



The most successful cultures are something that organisations work on every day.

However, studies show that it's not possible to make more than five meaningful changes at once. With that in mind, it's essential to narrow down your list of the things you want to change and start with the basics.

For instance, when the ANZ banking team tried to change their culture they started by focusing on “openness and honesty” and creating a “can-do” attitude for personal accountability. Determine which culture aspects might help your business and kitchen to grow.

Make Company Culture a Constant Consideration

One of the biggest mistakes that modern businesses make is assuming that company culture is a set-it-and-forget-it concept. The most successful cultures are something that organisations work on every day. For instance, if you want to make your team as productive and accurate as possible, then don't just tell them that those things are part of your culture. Implement training methods to help improve accuracy. Introduce group mentoring sessions for employees that struggle. Consider offering suggestions for time management to assist with productivity.

Improving The Onboarding Process

Building and developing a powerful “kitchen brigade” in your hotel also means that when you do choose new kitchen staff you onboard them properly.

Finding the right people for your company is only the first step of the hiring process. Onboarding is a critical part of welcoming someone into your organisation, introducing them to the culture you have established, and giving them the tools, they need to thrive.

Ask yourself:

- When will onboarding start?
- What impression do you want your new hires to have of your business after the first day, week, and thirty days?
- Which tools and resources will you need to supply to help them thrive in their job?
- What kind of goals will you set for your new candidates?
- How will you gather feedback and measure the success of your onboarding programme?

Once you've answered these questions, work with your recruitment team and HR function to put a plan into action to assimilate people into their new roles.

Develop Strong Team Dynamics

Now that you've got team composition and development handled you can move onto considering team "dynamics". A high-performing kitchen brigade is a group of goal-focused people with complementary skills and expertise who innovate, collaborate, and continuously produce amazing results.

According to a book called ***"The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-performance Organisation"*** by Douglas K. Smith and Jon R. Katzenbach, a team is a group of skilled people who hold themselves accountable for a shared goal.

To function well, a team needs more than just multiple people, it also needs:

- A sense of commitment and purpose
- Ambitious goals with a smart focus
- Mutual accountability and understanding
- Diverse expertise that complements the group
- Trust between members

The Tuckman Model For Team Dynamics

While there's no singular yardstick to measure team performance by, there is a commonly-accepted model available for developing team dynamics. **Dr Bruce Tuckman**, a psychology professor, conducted a significant amount of research into group dynamics and eventually came up with a four-phase model for development.

The Tuckman theory prompts companies to focus on “four” stages of development in team dynamics, including:

Forming

The initial stage when individuals are getting to know each other. This refers to the first few days when you're bringing new employees into your team. You know you have the right people on board, but they haven't formed strong bonds in your organisation yet.

Storming

In the “storming” stage, development can be complicated. Team members might challenge each other or butt heads as they get used to their new positions and as they are working out their role within the team and in the kitchen. This is the place where leadership shines by coming in and taking charge of the situation.

Leaders deal with conflict and avoid problems between kitchen staff members.

They also reinforce company expectations and the boundaries that the establishment want their kitchen staff to operate within.

This is the stage where some team members will test a leader; I am sure you have experienced this happening more than once in your kitchen. It's also where ‘blame’ is apportioned when things go wrong, generally due to a lack of trust.

Norming

Once the people in your business have worked through their conflicts and built trust and mutual respect your high-performing kitchen brigade can begin to develop.



*Every person has their strengths
and weaknesses*

Diverse members of staff will begin to appreciate each other's differences, and how the right combination of strengths and weaknesses create harmony in the company. Leaders in this stage take the role of "facilitator" offering guidance, additional support, and encouragement wherever necessary.

Performing

Finally, you'll reach a point where your team is fully-functional and ready to deliver exceptional results. Members will be able to manage their relationships themselves and communicate with each other openly and honestly. Here, the leader focuses on maintaining the status quo, delegating responsibilities appropriately, and identifying when the team starts to move in the wrong direction.

While other researchers have used alternate names for the stages of developing team dynamics, most include the same process.

High-performance teams often work in similar ways, and this four-phase model can help you to bring cohesiveness and consistency to your work enviro

Building On Team Strengths

Every person has their strengths and weaknesses. Whether you're an Executive / Head Chef or a Kitchen Porter your strengths and weaknesses will determine everything from your career plan to your performance strategies.

As someone responsible for creating an outstanding kitchen brigade it will be up to you to identify strengths and weaknesses in candidates. This is often the secret to

unlocking the true potential of your staff. When you understand a group's strengths and weaknesses, you can work to create a balanced group of people who thrive in their roles, support each other, and deliver on every task.

There are a few ways leaders can build on team strengths. For instance:

Use Competition and Gamification

Competition is a **powerful motivator**, and an excellent way to bring out the best in your people when used correctly. Holding contests across organisations can be an effective way to see who excels best in specific areas. For instance, if you're looking for someone to create a new menu or dish a contest will help you to determine the best man or woman for the job.

Competition can also encourage teamwork, which boosts productivity in the long-term too.

Introduce Opportunities for Growth

While it's vital to hire candidates who already have the kitchen skills to thrive in your organisation, you can also provide some of the skills your team needs too.

As you begin to analyse your high-performing chefs and cooks, you may notice gaps in their skill sets that you can fill with mentorship and training; both on the job and formal classroom-based workshops.

Not only will training opportunities help you to build on the existing comradery and dynamics of your staff, but it will also show your employees that you value them. Today's hires consider opportunities for development to be a crucial benefit of an engaging position.

Encourage Two-way Feedback

Most Executive / Head Chefs discuss strengths and weaknesses with their staff during regular performance reviews. A better alternative may be to encourage two-way honesty by asking your team member to offer feedback about their experiences with your kitchen, while you give feedback on their performance.

Your feedback ensures that your employee can build on their skills in the areas that matter most to your establishment. On the other hand, their opinions can give you an insight into where you need to improve your processes to support your entire kitchen team.

Prioritise Excellent Leadership

Speaking of leadership, the right guidance is crucial to any high performing team kitchen brigade.

A leader needs to be able to balance their focus successfully among different kitchen staff in their business. After all, no matter how proficient your employees might be, they'll often look to your leadership for guidance on what is acceptable behaviour.

The Adair International Institute, founded by John Adair, references the **“ACL” or Action Centred Leadership** approach for successful team building. This unique methodology indicates that leaders have three distinct levels of leadership to consider when running a company. They need to concentrate on a multi- dimensional approach to organising the team, the task, and the individual.

For the Task

When it comes to leading employees through a successful task, leaders need to start by establishing a clear vision for their group, complete with definitive aims, and a strong guiding purpose as we have previously mentioned. Once that vision is set, it's crucial to ensure that team members have milestones, and measurements to guide them from start to finish. ACL also encourages a task-level focus on:

- Giving teams access to the right systems and resources
- Outlining standards of behaviour
- Establishing responsibilities for the task
- Offering feedback and guidance
- Adjusting plans according to milestone results



...everyone needs the right level of support and guidance.

For the Team

When it comes to supporting the team, a leader needs to use the information established at the task level to determine how they can best help the team throughout the project. This means giving regular feedback and encouraging staff members to support each other. It also means building in collective disciplines and routines that push a group towards success. ACL fosters leaders to:

- Make sure the team knows how to deal with conflict
- Ensure that co-operation and morale are in a good place
- Establish work standards regarding performance, and quality of work
- Build leadership abilities in others throughout the team.

For the Individual

Finally, for a team to work seamlessly together, everyone needs the right level of support and guidance. Leaders need to dig down into the needs of each person in their group and ensure that every employee has the coaching, training, and feedback they need. This means that leaders must:

- Get to know their teams (their strengths, weaknesses, and concerns)
- Give training and recognition where necessary
- Build development plans with new candidates
- Delegate work effectively

Showing Incredible Leadership

A high-performing team starts from the top down. If employees don't have the leadership, they need to guide them to success, then they'll struggle to maintain the unified view that makes them so effective. According to the **Harvard business review**, a great leader must be able to inspire and motivate others, demonstrate integrity, and solve problems.

Behind any high-performing team is a visionary leader. A highly-engaged leader can **increase engagement by 39%**. Just some of the things you can do to demonstrate exceptional leadership include:

Setting Clear Expectations

Statistics show that only about half of most teams know what's expected of them in the workplace. If you want a unit of high-performing chefs and cooks in your organisation, then you need to make your expectations clear from day one. Highlight any key requirements or goals that you want your staff to achieve and provide them with milestones to keep them on track.

For instance, if you want to improve Trip Advisor ratings from 4 to 5 start with deciding how you're going to measure that goal and provide deadlines for when you want to achieve the target.

Providing Consistent Feedback

The only way to make sure that your team is continually improving is to provide them with consistent feedback. Many top-performing chefs and cooks in the marketplace today, despite their ego's value feedback more than other benefits or rewards. Communicating correctly with your team can help them to understand what you need most from them.

Motivate and Empower

Finally, remember that happy staff are more productive. It's important to show your employees that you value them and the effort they're making on behalf of your business.

A large amount of the current job market is made up of people searching for new positions because they don't feel appreciated by their current employer. Don't allow feelings of discontent to persist in your company. Offer rewards when you meet your project milestones, like a free meal or the chance to work from home. Even a quick "thank you" in public can be enough to inspire your team.

Remember the saying: ***"People leave Managers, not Companies"***

Managing Performance

Creating a high-performing kitchen brigade isn't an overnight process. Even when your kitchen team are working together seamlessly, without personality squabbles, you'll need to keep working on your dynamics, composition, and leadership to ensure that things don't fall off-track.

One crucial point to remember is that while building a good team spirit is essential; you'll also have to manage each person within the team. Working with your team on their objectives helps them to become more deeply ingrained in your business, creating loyalty that lasts.

As a leader, make sure you welcome each hire to the group by:

- Designing a development plan with agreed competencies, objectives, and training needs.
- Reviewing individual performance against those objectives and business goals throughout the year.
- Provide feedback and adjust plans as necessary when circumstances change.
- Help staff achieve their objectives through training and coaching
- So where do you start when managing performance?

Know How Each Individual Fits in the Team

Performance management starts with establishing a shared understanding of what your company is trying to achieve. You'll have a fundamental vision outlined in your business plan, and if you've been following this guide, you may have addressed it when building your employer brand and looking for new hires.

Once you have your vision, make sure that every member of your team is aware of it and what it means to their role. For instance, if you aim to provide a reliable customer experience to every customer how your kitchen team can contribute to this?

Embrace the Power of Conversations

When you're managing team performance, there are few things more important than communication. Great teams thrive on relationships, and great conversations are how you build that connection. From the moment you onboard someone into your kitchen engage in a conversation with them that outlines what your business needs, what they need, and how the two concepts interact.

As that employee grows and thrives in your organisation, keep coming back to that initial conversation and how you can link the development plan of each to the over-arching vision of your establishment.

Agree on S.M.A.R.T Objectives

After a careful discussion with the employees in question, choose a goal that's "SMART". That means:

Specific - Outline the desired outcome

Measurable - Ensure the employee can see when they've accomplished their goals

Achievable - Goals must be challenging, but possible

Relevant - How do these goals connect to the employee's development plan, and your business vision?

Timebound - When will the objective be achieved?

For instance, while "Improve customer satisfaction" isn't a SMART goal, the aim to "Improve customer satisfaction by 5% compared to the previous year based on the results of a questionnaire is.



...use onboarding to welcome them into your organisation...

Closing Thoughts

Ultimately, there's no way to avoid the time and energy required in building your high-performing kitchen brigade that is the envy of every diamond establishment around. It takes commitment, focus, and a plan that involves all the areas we've mentioned above. However, while high-performing teams take time, they're also worth the effort.

Fact: Research suggests that they can be up to five times more productive than the average business group.

Start by making sure that you have the composition right from day one with the help of your **specialist recruitment agency**. Look for employees that fit with your company values and have a personality profile that will support your existing culture. Once you have an idea of what kind of people you need to bring on board, use onboarding to welcome them into your organisation, and develop a strategy for strong team dynamics.

Finally, make sure that your leadership skills and development strategies are perfectly attuned to the needs of your high-performing team. This will ensure that you not only build the right unit for your company but retain it too.

PS : If you enjoyed reading this guide, why not head over to The rpc Group of Companies **Blog Page** where you can view an array of content on Recruitment, HR and Management.

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And an Instagram page **@rpcrecruitment**

If you wish to follow me personally (David Beck), my Twitter account handle is **@rpcrecruiter**.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this guide.

Best Regards

David Beck and Anita Searle

Co-Directors

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