

The
High-Performance
Operating System™
Activation Toolkit

*You just heard the why.
This is the how.*

A practical toolkit to activate what you just experienced. Designed for leaders and team members at every level who want to build a high-performing team.

The Big Idea

**Performance isn't a talent problem.
It's an environment problem.**

The difference between good teams and great teams isn't hiring, motivation, or even effort. It's the conditions people work in every single day, and how those conditions make them feel.

After nearly a decade of building a global business and years of studying what the best leaders do differently, one truth emerged:

When you build the right conditions, people don't just perform. They stay, they grow, and they give their best.

High-performing teams don't happen by accident.

They're *built*.

Those conditions come down to three things:



Safety

People need to feel safe before they can do their best work.



Understanding

People want to be seen for who they are, not just what they do.



Connection

People are constantly changing. Connection can't be occasional. It has to be a habit.

How to Use This Toolkit

#1

Read through each pillar

#2

Pick the one your team needs the most

#3

Choose one action. Do it this week

#4

Bring it to your team





Safety: The Foundation of *Every Great Team*

Safety is the most foundational building block of all great culture. You can pay people well and offer incredible perks. But if your people don't feel safe, they'll never do their best work.

When people feel safe, they speak up. They take risks. They bring ideas forward. They challenge the status quo. But when safety is absent, you don't just lose innovation. You build a culture of fear. One where people hold back and eventually leave.

The dangerous part? It doesn't take many moments to shift a culture. Just once. A disrespectful comment that slides, a voice that gets talked over, someone shut down for raising a concern. And suddenly you don't have the culture you built. You have the one you allowed.

And here's what's worth remembering: you may not control the macro. But every single person controls the micro. Whether a mistake becomes a moment of shame or a moment of growth, whether a voice is welcomed or dismissed, and what you choose to tolerate.

Self-Assessment

Before you can build safety for others, take an honest look at where you stand today. Check any that are true:

People on my team feel comfortable disagreeing with me (or with each other) openly.

When someone makes a mistake, my first instinct is curiosity, not blame.

I speak up when I see something that does not feel right, even when it is uncomfortable.

My teammates would say they feel safe to share a bold idea, even if it might fail.

I don't stay silent when someone else is being shut down or talked over.

If you checked all five, keep going. If you didn't, you just identified your starting point.

“What you tolerate becomes your culture. Not the values on the wall. Not the company policy. Not what's said at the all-hands.”

– From the keynote



Activate It

EXERCISE 1: The Tolerance Audit

Even on good teams, things slip through. A comment that didn't land well. A behavior that became 'just how things are.' This isn't about finding fault. It's about raising the bar. Think about the last 30 days: is there something you've been tolerating that's holding your team back?

What have I been tolerating that I could address to raise the bar?

What's one step I can take this week to address it?

EXERCISE 2: Set the Standard

Safety isn't formed through one big moment. It's formed when people hear repeatedly that they are in an environment where they can make mistakes, challenge the status quo, try new things, and speak up. Whether they've been there two weeks, two months, or two years.

This week, say it out loud. In a meeting, a 1:1, or a team chat. Make it explicit:

"I want you to know that on this team, you can speak up. You can challenge an idea. You can try something and have it not work. That's not just okay. That's how we get better."

*When and where will I say this to my team this week?
How will I reinforce it when someone takes me up on it?*

And then back it up. When someone does speak up or take a risk, acknowledge it. Reinforce it. That's how the standard becomes the culture.

EXERCISE 3: Make Sure Every Voice Is Heard

In your next meeting, pay attention to who's contributing and who isn't. Not everyone processes or communicates the same way. Some people need an invitation to share. Your job is to create the space so every voice has a chance to be heard, especially the newer or quieter ones.

Try this: before closing your next meeting, ask the room:

“Before we wrap, is there anyone who has a thought they haven't had a chance to share? Nothing is too small.”

You can also create space after the meeting by following up individually:

“Hey. I know meetings can move fast. If anything came to mind after we wrapped, I'd genuinely love to hear it. Your perspective matters.”

Team Exercise: The Safety Connection

Bring this to your next team meeting. Ten minutes. It can shift everything.

“What's one thing we could do differently to make this team feel safer for everyone?”

Ground rules: No judgment. No fixing. Just listen. Write down what comes up. Then pick one thing to commit to as a team.

What did your team say? What's the one thing you'll commit to?





Understanding: *Know Your People* Beyond the Role

Most of us think we understand our people because we know their name, their role, and a few nice things about them. But that's surface-level. And when our understanding of someone stays surface-level, assumptions naturally creep in.

We assume we know what our people need without ever asking.

Deep understanding means knowing what lights your people up, inside work and beyond. It means knowing their strengths, their goals, the projects that energize them, and the things in life that matter most. It's the difference between managing someone and deeply understanding them.

Self-Assessment

Think about three people you work closely with. For each, can you honestly answer:

I know what motivates them. Not just at work, but in life.

I know what they're working toward this year, professionally and personally.

I could name a passion, hobby, or interest they have outside of work.

I know what's weighing on them right now, or I've recently asked.

I don't assume what they need without checking first.

If there's a gap, it's not because you don't care. It's because you haven't gone deep enough yet.

“The second we choose assumption over understanding, even when we do care about our people, we send the signal that we don't.”

– From the keynote

“What matters to you... matters to me.”



Activate It

EXERCISE 1: The Deep Dive Discovery

Everyone has something that lights them up outside of their role. It could be their kids, training for a marathon, a side project, music, travel, or something you'd never guess. This week, find out what it is for at least one person on your team.

Start by going first. Share what's lighting you up right now, outside of work. When you open up, you create the space for them to follow. Then ask:

What's something you're really into right now, outside of work?

Don't interrogate. Just be curious. Start a real conversation and listen.

Who did you talk to? What did you learn about them?

EXERCISE 2: Deeper Questions

Surface-level questions get surface-level answers. If you want to truly understand your people, you have to ask deeper questions. Use these in your next 1:1, coffee chat, or team lunch:

“What matters most to you this month, at work and in life?”

“What's something I should understand about you right now?”

“Where do you hope to be a year from now?”



EXERCISE 3: Find Out How You Can Support Them

Your people are navigating more than what shows up on their calendar. Maybe they just had a baby and want to be home by 5pm for dinner and to kiss their kids goodnight. Maybe a loved one is battling something and they need a little space. Maybe they're feeling burned out and a recharge day would make all the difference. Maybe they're quietly crushing it and they feel nobody has noticed.

You won't know unless you ask. And you don't have to pry. Just open the door:

“I want to make sure I’m supporting you the best I can. Is there anything going on, at work or outside of work, where I can help or just make things a little easier?”

Then follow through. If they tell you something, act on it. That's how understanding becomes trust.

Who on my team might be navigating something right now?

Team Exercise: The Life & Work Map

In your next team meeting, invite each person to share two things:

1. One thing they're working toward professionally (a skill, a milestone, a goal)
2. One thing they're working toward personally (a hobby, a life goal, something they care about)

The point is to create a space where people are seen for who they actually are. Not just the role they fill. When you do this, you'll be surprised at how much it shifts the way your team relates to each other.

And remember: go first. Share yours before you ask for theirs. That's how you signal that this is a culture where deep understanding is the norm, not the exception.





Connection: Make It *Constant*

Most people connect when a big moment forces it. A promotion, a crisis, a resignation. But real connection can't be something you do here and there. It has to become a habit.

Here's why: your people are constantly changing. Two major forces shape how people relate to their work. Seasons of life and big life events. A 24-year-old who's hungry to climb isn't often the same person at 35 with two kids. And someone who was your all-star last quarter could be in a completely different place this quarter.

Connection Time isn't about having an agenda, checking in on a project, or an impromptu 1:1. The goal is to connect on a human-to-human level. And it doesn't have to be complicated. Even five minutes a day can transform how your people feel when they show up.

Self-Assessment

Think about your current rhythm of connection with the people around you:

I make time to connect with my people beyond work tasks and projects.

I'm aware of what season of life each person on my team is in right now.

When something big happens in a team member's life, good or bad, I reach out

I have a consistent rhythm for connection, not just when problems arise.

My team would say I know them as people, not just as employees.

If there's a gap, it's probably not effort. It's frequency.

“People changing through the seasons of life is a given. But what that change looks like is going to be different for everyone.”

– From the keynote

Activate It

EXERCISE 1: The Seasons of Life Map

Write down the names of 3–5 people you work closely with. For each, consider: what season of life are they in right now? What’s shaping their world, inside and outside of work? What might they need from you that’s different from six months ago?

Think about things like: Did they just have a baby? Are they navigating a new commute? Were they recently passed over for a promotion? Are they in a season where they’re hungry to grow, or a season where they need to recharge?

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Their Season Right Now</i> | <i>What They Might Need From Me</i> |
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EXERCISE 2: The 5-Minute Connection (Any Setting)

This works whether you’re in an office, hybrid, or fully remote.

In-person: Spend 5 minutes walking the floor. Stop. Talk to people. Not about the project. About them. How are they doing? How’s their family? What’s new?

Hybrid: On your in-office days, don’t just do the same work you could do at home. Go for a coffee. Grab lunch with someone. Use that time to connect, not just produce.

Remote: Block 5 minutes before or after a scheduled call just to check in on the person, not the project. Or send a quick message: “How are you actually doing?”

“Hey. No agenda. Just wanted to check in. How are you doing?”



EXERCISE 3: The Check-Back

Think about a conversation you had recently where someone shared something personal. A challenge they were facing, a goal they were working toward, something they were excited about. Go back to them this week and ask about it.

“Hey, you mentioned [that thing]. How’s it going?”

That’s it. This is what separates real connection from a one-time conversation. It tells someone: I was listening. I remembered. You matter to me.

Who shared something with me recently that I can follow up on this week?

Team Exercise: Connection Time

Introduce Connection Time into your team rhythm. And a note: this isn’t “go around the room and share one fun thing from your weekend.” That kind of surface-level check-in rarely leads to real connection. The goal is to go a level deeper.

Connection questions to rotate:

“What’s one personal win or challenge from your week?”

“What’s something happening in your life right now that you’re excited about?”

“What’s one thing this team could do to better support you right now?”

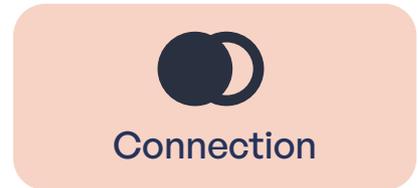
Your Activation Plan

You heard the stories. You felt the impact.
Now it's time to act.

Don't try to do everything. Do one thing. The right conditions don't require a company-wide initiative. They start with one person making one move.

Step 1: Pick Your Pillar

Which pillar does your team need most right now? Select one:



Step 2: Choose One Action

Pick the exercise from this toolkit that feels most relevant.

Step 3: Set a Deadline

When will you do it? Write the day:

Step 4: Bring It to Your Team

Share this toolkit with your team. Use one of the prompts from the exercises. Open the door to a different kind of conversation. High performance doesn't start with a company-wide initiative. It starts when someone decides to move first.

“Twenty-five years from now, when your name comes up... what will they say? That you hit your numbers? Or that you changed their life? You get to decide. Starting now.”

– Danny Goldberg





Be more for
your people.
Because you can.

If today resonated and you
want to bring this to your
organization, let's talk.

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