

# THE FIRST 90 DAYS PLAYBOOK

## FOR YOUR NEXT PEOPLE HIRE

A practical guide for organisations hiring People & Culture, Health & Well-being, People Ops, or Organisational Development roles.



# The job description *behind* the job description.

Today's People leaders sit at the intersection of culture, performance, experience, and organisational health. The role has shifted from admin/HR to strategic value creation.

## Core responsibilities of today's People Leader:

- Building an environment where people can do their best work
- Improving organisational performance through systems, culture, and capability
- Supporting managers to lead effectively
- Creating clarity around roles, expectations, and development
- Ensuring employee experience is consistent across the organisation
- Leading initiatives around wellbeing, engagement, and retention

## What great looks like in this role:

- Turning people data into insight leadership can act on
- Showcasing measurable impact on business performance
- Strengthening collaboration between other leaders and departments
- Better performance without burnout
- A clearer employee experience
- Managers who feel supported and capable
- Simple, well-communicated processes
- Reduced friction in how people work
- Visible and measurable improvements in culture

Just like in elite sport, today's People Leaders create the "environment for performance" – the clarity, routines, coaching and conditions that enable teams to thrive.

Here's how to do this in the first 90 days of the role:





# Days 0–30

## Understand the team and game plan.

In the first month, a great People Leader focuses on one thing: understanding reality — without judgement, without trying to fix too much too soon.

### Listen Widely

Manager engagement is the biggest driver of team engagement. When managers struggle, teams struggle.

### Take a Temperature Check

Are people aligned? Are decisions clear?  
Are teams able to execute?  
Make sure you understand the health of the organisation.

### Connect Quickly

Building relationships within the team is important. But it's equally important to establish relationships with other department leads.

## Desired Output:

A clear and honest picture – “Here’s where we’re strong, here’s where we’re stuck, and here’s what’s costing us time, energy and money.”

# 70%

Of team engagement can be attributed to the manager<sup>1</sup>.

# 18%

EBITDA increase in companies who improved their organisational health<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Clifton, J., & Harter, J. K. (2019). *It's the manager: Moving from boss to coach*. Gallup Press.

<sup>2</sup>Organizational health is (still) the key to long-term performance, McKinsey



# Days 30–60

## Build your strategy.

In the next month, this is where clarity starts to become strategy. In elite sports, this might be where the manager decides what to simplify or prioritise the coming season.

### Focus on 3–5 Areas

These should genuinely move the needle. For example, a comprehensive benefits review, manager capability or the onboarding process. Don't try to do everything at once.

### Create Your Game Plan

Across elite sport – football, rugby, cycling and tennis– coaches create a one-page plan that guides everything for the season. Make this as simple as possible. Its objective is to strip away noise so players and staff always know:

- What matters most right now
- Why it matters
- How we play
- How we'll know if we're winning

### Look for Marginal Gains

Small changes – referred in sport as *marginal gains* – can have a big impact. You don't have to change everything right away to see real improvements.

### Desired Output:

A written, communicated vision of where you want to make a difference, and how this ties back to your own role's objectives, as well as those of the organisation.







## Achieving marginal gains:

"The whole principle came from the idea that if you broke down everything you could think of that goes into riding a bike, and then improved it by 1%, you will get a significant increase when you put them all together."

*Dave Brailsford in Olympic lessons in high performance for organisations. David Hall, Derek James and Nick Marsden*



# Days 60-90

## Deliver early wins.

In sport, early wins build belief and set a tone. In organisations, early wins earn trust and show this hire was the right decision.

Here are some examples of what this might be:



### Support Managers

We earlier highlighted that building strategic alliance outside of your department can be a strong driver of success. Finding an actionable output for Managers is one way to do this.

Many managers know they want to coach well, but aren't always sure how to do this. A quick win might be:

- A short guide on giving feedback
- A consistent team ritual
- A simple 1-2-1 meeting structure

### Fix visible friction



As part of your understanding in days 0-30, you should have found clear friction areas - these may be small yet irritating blockers that have an impact on performance. This could be:

- Confusing communication channels
- Lack of equipment
- Too many tools doing the same job

Fixing just one of these can send a powerful signal, contributing to higher organisational health.

### Desired Output:

Quantifiable results that you can prove are the output of the work completed during days 0-60.





# Hire like an elite sports leader.

If you want a People Leader who performs, recruit like a high-performance team. Elite teams look for:

## Learners for life

As part of his success leading the 49ers, NHL Hall of Famer, Bill Walsh created a set of principles known as the “Standard of Performance.” One of these principles related to continuous learning – “be deeply committed to learning and teaching.” By hiring learners for life, you’ll be sure to keep raising the bar for what excellence looks like in the team and organisation.

## Those who improve the whole programme, not just the process

Great People Leaders lift the overall health of the organisation. Strong organisational health is one of the strongest long-term predictors of performance. In elite sport, this is the difference between a coach who tweaks drills and one who transforms how the whole team trains, communicates and competes. A high-impact People Leader shapes alignment, decision-making, capability and team habits across the organisation — ensuring the system your people operate in is as strong as they are.

## Ones who can walk the walk, as well as talk the talk

People Leaders are often promoting positive working behaviours and habits, like work-life balance and health and well-being. Hiring a successful new lead means identifying those that can practice what they preach. A strong People Leader helps embed and represent your principles.

# 18%

Increase in engagement in teams led by trained managers<sup>1</sup>.

# 3x

Returns for healthy organisations than unhealthy ones<sup>2</sup>.

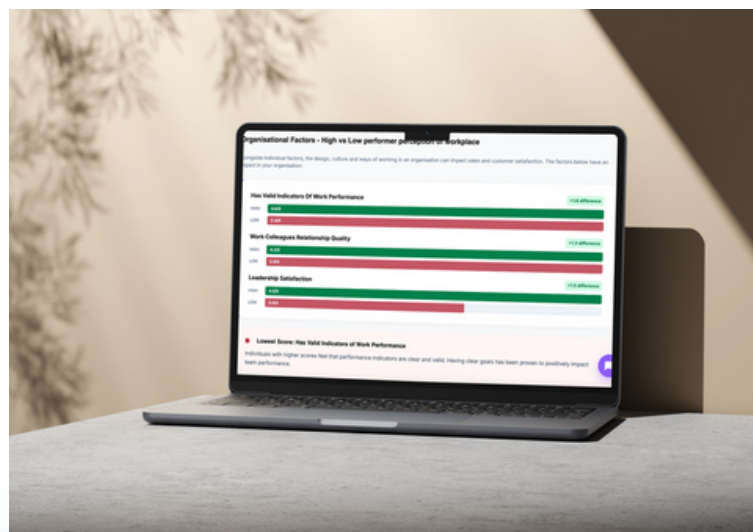
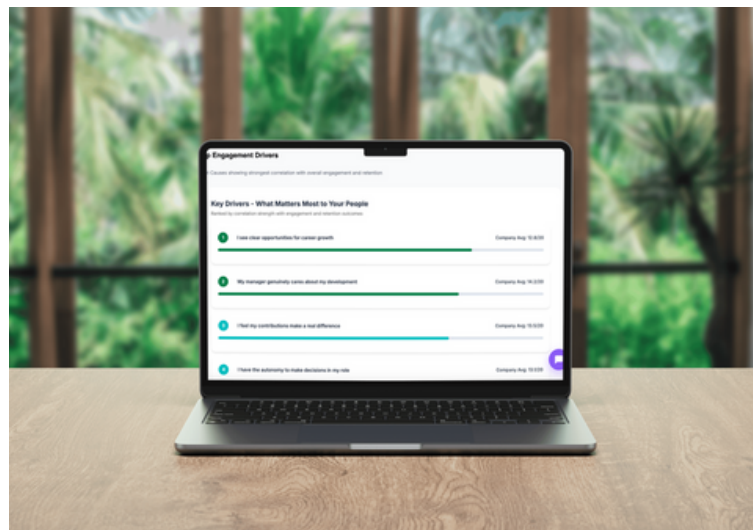
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# Make it easier to improve and act on what *really* matters.

Every People Leader wants to build high-performing, healthy, values-led teams – but most of them are missing the one thing elite athletes and elite organisations always have: **Clear, continuous insight into what's actually happening.**

That's where PowerUp's performance intelligence platform comes in.



## Show your ROI.

PowerUp integrates with your existing data and demonstrates, in real-time, the impact changes are having on business performance.

## Programmes that move the needle.

200+ data points, across People, Organisational Design and Health & Well-being reveal exactly where to focus efforts, for maximum results.

## More high-performing employees.

PowerUp's intelligence includes a platform for employees, blending psychometrics with highly personalised insights for more productive, high-performing employees.

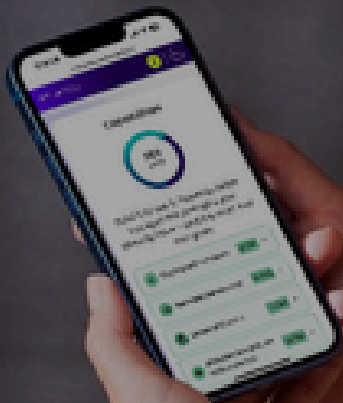
## Clear, easy next steps.

Our algorithm provides downloadable assets and templates, based on PowerUp's intelligence, for simple, effective next steps. Plus, your PowerUp AI Agent is available 24/7 for guidance and insights.





PowerUp helps more people, teams and organisations reach **elite** performance.



Let's PowerUp your workplace!



Jessica Phillips  
CEO

