

# MAGDALENA BAK·MAIER

## MAKE TIME COUNT

**A case study in the use and effectiveness of the Get Productive Wheel: How clear and systemic thinking makes a difference for a leader and his/her team.**

### Introduction

Leadership and management as well as effective teamwork are key to organizational effectiveness. However, most leaders and teams work sub-optimally. Research shows that effective leaders can facilitate employee motivation, raise productivity and help foster strong, effective teams. A way to do this is to learn to combine thinking with genuine relatedness. Connecting heart and mind is one of the biggest challenge and opportunity for a better world, effective leadership and good self-management. Lack of leadership skills often puts results in jeopardy, fails to capitalize on existing talent and ideas and leaves latent potential buried. It also contributes to conflict.

Managers and leaders play a pivotal role in in the work place by modelling effective behaviour (personal leadership), getting things done through and with others. The Get Productive Wheel is a framework that facilitates personal and group effectiveness by supporting clear and systematic thinking helping people work in alignment with what is.

Get Productive Wheel helps connects rational and emotional perspectives leading to wiser consideration of critical success factors, well explored ideas, greater engagement and transparent way of working and being.

The value of Get Productive Wheel for both individuals and organizations stems from bringing together simple and general strategies using neuroscience, psychology and business insight to create an intuitive and easy to understand framework that can be used for wide range of applications. Get Productive Wheel has been tried and effectively used in personal empowerment, coaching, conflict resolution, idea generation, improving productivity, teamwork development, leadership development, productive conversations about work and performance and supporting change implementation. Its magic lies in high level organisation of critical components of effective working and being that the user can apply to specific situations.

This case study showcases the use of Get Productive Wheel in supporting leader development and the productivity of their team. Training, materials and on-going support through 1:1 and team coaching are on offer to managers and leaders to support its use.

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## Leadership in 21Centry and the need for tools like the Get Productive Wheel

According to the Institute for the Future in US, all organization are now having to operate in a VUCA world: a world that is inherently volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. Ten VUCA leadership qualities<sup>1</sup> have been advanced that leaders need to develop to be effective in this context.

1. Clarity – *clear thinking and communicating*
2. Maker instinct – *being pro-active and stepping into leadership readily at all levels*
3. Dilemma Flipping – *cultivating a solution-focused mindset*
4. Learning Ability – *willingness to continue to learn*
5. Constructive Depolarizing – *ability to dissolve conflict*
6. Quiet Transparency – *sharing information openly to ensure best use of everyone's talents*
7. Rapid Prototyping – *developing quick models to test ideas and refine them*
8. Smart Mob Organizing – *being able to tap into and use social networks*
9. Commons Creating – *being able to engage others*
10. Bio-Empathy – *sense of responsibility for long-term sustainability and respect for nature*

These characteristics put a great deal of emphasis on thinking quality, ability to catalyze the energy of others and adopting a systemic perspective that reflects the need for long-term view of what's needed for life to go on for generations beyond the present.

Creative thinking paradigms and models continue to be sought within business but time to think continues to diminish as people get ever more busy. Over the years many thinking frameworks such as De Bono 6 Thinking Hats, TRIZ, Time to Think, Solution Focused Approach and many others<sup>2</sup> have been developed to assist individuals, groups, teams and organizations. Get Productive Wheel focuses on creating a framework for personal and group productivity that reflects the pressures and requirements of the modern world as outlined above, incorporates insights from neuroscience, positive psychology of peak performance and puts them into a coherent framework.

Much has been said in leadership literature about the need for integrity, honesty and authenticity in leader's ability to influence and engage people in high-level performance. This means that leaders have to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. They must have great degree of self-awareness, be willing to learn and model good practice to earn the respect and trust of their followers and engender same in others. To engage and tap into the true potential within self and others requires heart and mind connection. The Get Productive Wheel embeds this way of working and being one step at a time.

### Get Productive Wheel origins and basic premise

As the creator of the Get Productive Wheel, I have been developing talent for close to fifteen years. Working with champions I have been fascinated with peak performers and productivity that can be sustained and taught to others. I have coined the term holistic productivity based on the idea that top performers are those who can deliver results on a *consistent* basis. The Get Productive Wheel arose from analysis of over 2000 people and working with many leaders one-to-one. The thirteen sectors in this model dramatically improve the way people think and behave as a result when time is of the essence. Get Productive Wheel™ promotes effective thinking by sending thoughts along specific pathways in a similar way brains think when people feel empowered, resourceful and kind. By using the Get Productive Wheel's structured approach one saves time, generates enriched and deeper thinking, and develop more effective, resonant

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<sup>1</sup> Leaders make the Future: ten new leadership skills for an uncertain world by Bob Martinhansen, Berrett-Koehler Publishers 2012.

<sup>2</sup> 101 Creative problem solving techniques by James M. Higgins New Management Publishing Company 2006.

approaches.

The Get Productive Wheel advances the argument that our lives and our organisations demand a more systemic thinking approach to allow us to tap into the richness of our brains and our inner wisdom. To learn to think resourcefully and fast, we must override our brains' natural preference to think analytically through short cuts and learn to think along the Get Productive Wheel routes. Mastering this process will transform anyone's thinking and the results one obtains as well as help the person assist others in thinking more effectively. This of course translates into how the person shows up and there is not better way to affect change than by modelling wisdom and genuine consideration.

Whether used individually or in groups, Get Productive Wheel employs thinking that is grounded in mindful attention to what is, what is desired and what everyone needs to work in harmony and balance.

The Get Productive Wheel recognized that effective teams and indeed organizations rest of effective and productive individuals and that in this way, everyone is able to exercises leadership within their sphere of influence. The model is based on few simple principles:

- Effective thinking is fundamental to good action and results
- Effective teamwork is based on shared thinking and admission of true feelings
- Effective leaders are those who model what they teach others
- Productivity is the ability to create results alone as well as with others
- The brain is not keeping up with the pace of technology and our ability to focus (attention span) is decreasing
- In the need to conserve energy the mind takes certain shortcuts that can adversely affect performance and simple frameworks can effectively circumvent this
- We can learn from best performers and build tools to support others in a similar way of working and thinking.

Larger principles of heart and mind work that the Get Productive Wheel sits within and supports are:

1. Human beings are not 'replaceable'. Everyone is a unique artist and potential artisan whose core mission is to be of service and value to others and the world.
2. Heart and mind are two critical partners that guide individuals and the collective towards full realisation.
3. The greatest suffering within a person comes when the heart and mind fail to align.
4. To continuously evolve and lead deeply satisfying lives we need to nurture our hearts and minds and help others nurture theirs.
5. Lasting transformation is only possible through conscious, regular practice of living the integrity of heart and mind alignment.

## CASE STUDY

### Meet Martin – a senior manager

Martin is a senior manager of a function. He leads a large size team of 20 staff. The team is diverse in age, professional backgrounds, lengths of service and seniority. Half of Martin's team members are outward facing and their motivation, engagement and performance impacts how the organisation is perceived, talent recruitment as well as individual and team performance. According to an interview with Martin, things are okay on the surface but Martin suspects there's hidden issues within the team including unnecessary conflict, personal agendas and low morale from lack of empowerment.

### Get Productive Wheel Self Assessment

In a one-to-one, Martin performs a self-assessment using the Get Productive Wheel tool. Each strategy is explained to Martin in turn and Martin is asked to assess the extent to which he currently uses each strategy consciously (purposefully). This 45min session reveals that Martin indeed excels at having, setting and communicating high standards and that he is also good at completing tasks. Martin also excels at having clear milestones ensuring that his team generally brings him results. He achieves these by pushing his team members.

The interview however also reveals that Martin has a weakness in how he utilizes the ideas and energy others bring within the team, that he often makes no time to share his plans creating lack of vital transparency, and that his own high energy and drive risk exhausting others. Some of these findings square up with Martin's intuition. But the instrument also reveals things Martin has not considered at all. For example, his own lack of courage to challenge the organisational culture at his level of authority and leadership is causing his staff to waste time in unnecessary bureaucracy, ineffective working groups and working practices that endanger their wellbeing. Continuing on this track may well support his leadership career, but puts his team in danger of being stressed, unwell and far from optimal performance. Further exploration of this makes Martin admit that he is scared of rocking the boat and so his risky reluctance at changing things in his sphere of influence are contributing to things being not as he would like.

As a leader, Martin admits this needs to change. The tool also shows a number of areas where Martin does okay but where he can certainly 'sharpen up'. Having explored the wheel, Martin's key realization is that much can be done to make things better and he feels optimistic and empowered to take steps to make this happen.

The awareness the Get Productive Wheel session created for Martin, helps kick start the process of greater connection with his team, their needs and effective problem solving to create results on healthy terms for all concerned. Apart from a personal plan to help Martin improve his own productivity, Martin's key action is to have an off-site with the team where everyone can be taken through the Get Productive Wheel and self-assess in a similar way and for the team to score the team as a unit.

### Off Site Team Development with Get Productive Wheel

Individual assessments with the team result in many "aha moments" and realizations that improve morale, motivation and provide specific actions for team members. As people acknowledge what works and what needs to change, ideas flow and team members step into responsibility for new working practices. All walk away believing with small tweaks they can improve their individual performance, stronger sense of being a team and most of all they feel Martin truly cares for them.

Group assessment reveals clear areas where the team struggles, which mirror Martin's, own wheel. To deliver their ambitious plans, the group will require changes. Team members focus on three specific areas:

*Helping hearts think and minds feel*

(1) How they relate to one another, (2) How they share information, (3) Career management for everyone feeling safe and in integrity with their work. The group explores each of these questions at different tables using the Get Productive Wheel framework to come up with ideas and action plans. The wheel ensures that each person contributes and explores the same terrain creating richer, deeper thinking as well as connection.

Revisiting the team in six months shows individual members of the team have improved their productivity noticeably. The team has grown and new arrivals are positive about their experience of working here. The group is positively surprised at the transformation that occurred in their meetings as people share ideas more openly, colleagues offer ideas and genuine support and two festering conflicts dissolve.

### Learning points:

A number of learning points emerge from this work:

- It all starts with the *Heart* (one of the thirteen strategies). Speaking the heart creates trust and honesty that elevates the team's thinking and problem solving. This also ensures that people can name difficulties and feel safe to perform at their best.
- Specific focus and plans support progress and regular communication and sharing of them with everyone engages all members in the work as they can see their own and others contributions to the whole. This creates a better balance between personal achievement and what the group is creating together. Team culture shifts into celebrating successes more and deconstructing them into lessons learned as well as more collective problem solving.
- Time is saved and people are working more smartly on their own and with each other. Conversations have been transformed from problem focused to solution-focused approaches.
- There is a greater sense of satisfaction within the team in terms of their future strategy and their confidence to deliver on it.
- External partnerships are strengthened as the team develops clearer strategy about their future work plans and collective agreement about what they need and how to create it. As they feel safe in knowing their own role and future, their energy is now effectively channelled into creating good impression with external stakeholders.

### Conclusion

Working effectively in today's busy, multi-cultural and remote team culture requires more connectedness and trust. By learning to be more present and in full integrity to what is needed for all concerned, everyone can step into their leadership piece and help deliver best result. In a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world where everyone's to-do list grows exponentially, and time to think is a precious commodity, tools that adopt a systemic approach grounded in genuine respect for others and self are essential to supporting top performance. Some people do this naturally, but many get bugged down. The Get Productive Wheel helps elevate thinking. Through matching problems with appropriate combinations of potential solutions a person or a group increase their resourcefulness.

## About Dr. Magdalena Bak-Maier

The core essence of Magdalena's work is to encourage individuals and organisations to embrace a heart and mind blended approach as means for thriving personally and professionally. A neuroscientist, bestselling author and integrative coach-therapist, many have called Magdalena the "Physician of the soul". Heart and mind fusion work - the hallmark of Magdalena's approach - is touching the lives of individuals and progressive workplaces across the globe. Clients span people that get us into space at NASA, those saving lives and developing latest medical breakthroughs, top coaches, global change makers, and those ready to say Yes! to a life where they enrich others and create healthy, vibrant personal lives.

Magdalena is a regular contributor to international press (Forbes, Times, Independent, Coaching at Work and Psychologies Magazine) and BBC Radio on productivity, leadership and wellbeing, and teaches how to make work-time count at the School of Life London. She has been a mentor and coach to Ashoka UK social entrepreneurship global fellows (2010-2015) and, in 2015 she was Life Coach of the Year Finalist. She recently finished creating the 30-day online goal-setting course in collaboration with Psychologies Magazine, and for the last three years she runs an international culture experiment to test the triple benefit of investing in talent (individual, institutional brand, and culture). She advises institutions on leadership development and runs a 1:1 private coaching practice. She is deeply committed to eradicating discrimination and ensuring all who wish to succeed can and do!

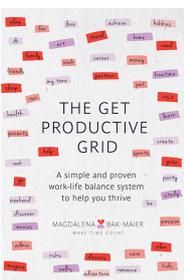
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Get Productive: Boosting your Productivity and Getting Things Done, Capstone 2013

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Get Productive Grid, Createspace 2015

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