

Preface

This past summer, with postseason play hanging in the balance, the starting pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies had a bad-arm day. In five-plus innings, he allowed six hits, four runs, two walks, and three homers. His reaction? “For the most part,” he commented, “I was happy with the way I threw the ball.”¹

This pitcher, at least on that day, was not a high-performing player. He failed to deliver in a crucial situation. Even more significantly, he failed to accept accountability for his subpar performance.

The leaders you will encounter in this book are a very different breed. They and the “players” on their teams are connected by a common thread: a set of qualities and behaviors that makes them stand apart as high performers.

Each of them has overcome a significant business challenge to deliver impressive results in clutch situations. In the process, they have put in place a radically new high-performance, horizontal organizational model. They have also learned to think differently about themselves, their colleagues, and their organizations, which has had significant implications on how they lead, make decisions, accept accountability, and confront issues—and one another—to become great players, on great teams, in great organizations.

After more than 25 years of consulting with senior executive teams throughout the world, we have discovered that there is a code for standout performance: one that applies to every organization, regardless of size, type, or industry affiliation. Cracking that code does not guarantee a perfect outcome every time you engage in competitive play. But, by changing your game, you will acquire a sustained competitive advantage and the ability to

excel in a very difficult marketplace. Make the change and you will likely join the ranks of the great leaders and teams you will meet in the pages that follow.

Great Business Teams: Cracking the Code for Standout Performance is based on our work with, and in-depth interviews of, 39 senior executives from 25 organizations. It also includes insights from a number of onsite observations of actual teams, as they traveled along the road to high performance. The fact that these executives and their organizations have allowed us to “go public” is a tribute to one quality of high-performance players that we did not mention in the book: They are generous in spirit and want others to profit from their experience.

Note

1. Zolecki, Todd. “Eaton Gets Roughed Up.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 12, 2007, E1.