

## Module 2. The Importance of Leadership

In the previous module, we examined the importance of developing a comprehensive launch strategy, securing executive sponsorship, and articulating a clear vision and purpose, besides investigating the external dimension of strategic plan communication.

In this module, we will explore the critical role of leadership in strategic planning and implementation, as well as the importance of fostering a culture of performance within sports organisations.

Leadership plays a fundamental role in driving the success and sustainability of sports organisations. Effective leadership provides guidance, direction, and inspiration to all stakeholders involved. In the first section of this module, we will delve into the importance of leadership in strategic planning and implementation.

The culture of performance within a sports organisation plays a pivotal role in shaping the mindset, behaviour, and overall performance of individuals within the sporting ecosystem. In the second section of this module, we will explore the concept of a culture of performance and its significance.

We will explore various strategies and best practices for developing strong leadership skills, building a culture of performance, fostering a growth mindset, and promoting a positive team culture within sports organisations. By applying these principles, sports managers can enhance strategic planning, drive performance, and create an environment conducive to success.

### Unit 2.1 Leadership in strategic planning and implementation

Leadership plays a fundamental role in driving the success and sustainability of sports organisations by providing guidance, direction, and inspiration to all stakeholders involved.

Firstly, leadership is essential in strategic planning, as it helps establish a clear vision for the organisation. A strong leader effectively communicates the organisation's purpose and goals, aligning all members towards a common objective. By setting a compelling vision, leaders inspire individuals and teams to work collaboratively, fostering a sense of unity and shared commitment. This unity is vital during the planning stage, as it ensures that all decisions and actions are in line with the organisation's strategic direction.



Secondly, leadership is critical during the implementation phase of the strategic plan. Effective leaders provide guidance, support, and motivation to individuals and teams, empowering them to execute the plan successfully. They facilitate open communication, encourage innovation, and address any challenges or obstacles that may arise. By actively leading the implementation process, leaders create a culture of accountability and ownership, ensuring that all activities and initiatives are executed in a timely and efficient manner.

Mia Hamm, one of the greatest women football players of all time, defines leadership this way: 'Leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room, but about being the one who listens, understands, and brings the team together' (Hamm and Heifetz, 1999).

Leadership is relevant in strategic planning and implementation for sports organisations, as it establishes a clear vision, fosters collaboration and commitment, and drives the successful execution of the plan. Effective leadership ensures that all stakeholders are aligned, motivated, and equipped to overcome challenges and achieve the organisation's strategic goals.

### 2.1.1 Develop a strong leadership

Developing strong leadership skills is crucial for creating a culture of performance and success. In the next table, there are some tips to help develop strong leadership.

**Table 1. Tips to help develop strong leadership**

Tip	Description
Lead by example	The actions and behaviours of a leader have a significant impact on the team. Demonstrate the qualities and behaviours you expect from others. Model integrity, professionalism, accountability, and a strong work ethic. When you lead by example, it inspires and motivates others to follow suit.
Communicate effectively	Effective communication is essential for successful leadership. Clearly articulate your vision, goals, and expectations to your team. Listen actively and attentively to the ideas, concerns, and feedback of others. Be open, transparent, and approachable in your communication style.
Build relationships	Invest time and effort into building positive relationships with your team members. Get to know them individually, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and show genuine care and support for their development. Building strong relationships fosters trust, loyalty, and collaboration. Simon



	<p>Sinek (2014), the leadership expert, expressed that leadership is not about being in charge; it is about taking care of those in your charge. This means that true leadership involves a responsibility to support and care for the well-being of those under one's guidance, rather than just asserting authority or control.</p>
Empower and delegate	<p>Give your team members opportunities to take ownership and make decisions. Delegate tasks and responsibilities, allowing individuals to develop their skills and capabilities. Empower them to problem-solve and contribute their ideas. Trust in their abilities and provide guidance and support when needed. The political activist, Ralph Nader (2002), says that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers. This means that effective leadership should empower and develop individuals to become leaders themselves, rather than simply creating many followers.</p>
Provide feedback and recognition	<p>Regularly provide feedback to your team members on their performance, both positive and constructive. Acknowledge their achievements, progress, and contributions. Recognise their efforts and express appreciation for their hard work. Feedback and recognition help individuals grow and stay motivated.</p>
Continuously learn and improve	<p>Strong leaders are committed to their own personal and professional growth. Seek out learning opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, and reading materials, to enhance your leadership skills. Reflect on your experiences, successes, and failures to identify areas for improvement. About this, the successful NCAA basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski (2009) says that leadership is not about being the best, but about making everyone else better, which means that true leadership is not about personal achievements, but rather about inspiring and empowering others to reach their full potential and excel.</p>
Foster collaboration and teamwork	<p>Encourage collaboration and teamwork within your team. Create a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and included. Promote open communication, cooperation, and the sharing of ideas and perspectives. Facilitate opportunities for team bonding and activities that build camaraderie. The NFL coach and Super Bowl champion, Pete Carroll, mentions that leadership is not about being in control; it is about creating a vision that others want to follow (Carroll <i>et al.</i>, 2011). This highlights that effective leadership is</p>



	not about exerting control, but rather about inspiring others through a compelling vision that motivates and encourages their active participation.
Make decisions and take responsibility	Leaders are responsible for making tough decisions. Practise sound judgement, gather necessary information, and consult relevant stakeholders when needed. Be decisive and take responsibility for the outcomes of your decisions. Learn from mistakes and take corrective action when necessary.
Adaptability and resilience	Leaders should be adaptable and resilient in the face of challenges and change. Embrace new ideas, technologies, and methodologies. Stay calm and composed during difficult times, and help your team navigate through uncertainties. Display resilience and inspire your team to overcome obstacles and setbacks.
Seek mentorship and feedback	Look for mentors or role models who can provide guidance and support in your leadership journey. Seek feedback from your team members, peers, and supervisors to gain different perspectives and identify areas for improvement. Actively incorporate feedback into your growth and development.

Source: own source.

Remember that leadership development is a continuous process. Practise these tips consistently, seek feedback, and remain open to learning and evolving as a leader.

## Unit 2.2 Culture of performance

The culture of performance within a sports organisation is a multifaceted concept that plays a pivotal role in shaping the mindset, behaviour, and overall performance of individuals within the sporting ecosystem. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that are deeply ingrained within the organisation's fabric and contribute to a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Pat Riley (1993), a renowned figure in the sports industry, particularly in basketball, who has achieved remarkable success as a player, coach, and even as an executive, leaving a lasting impact on the teams he has been associated with, has an insightful view of this: 'Success is not the result of a single action, but the culmination of a culture that values excellence, continuous improvement, and relentless pursuit of greatness.'

A strong culture of performance fosters an environment where athletes, coaches, and support staff are driven by a common goal of achieving optimal results. It emphasises the importance of hard work, dedication, discipline, and continuous improvement. By setting



high standards and expectations, this culture pushes individuals to constantly challenge their limits, seek personal growth, and strive for peak performance.

Furthermore, the culture of performance instils a sense of accountability and responsibility among all stakeholders. It creates a framework in which individuals take ownership of their actions, contribute to collective success, and embrace the competitive nature of sports. Through shared rituals, traditions, and rituals, this culture strengthens the bond and cohesion among team members, enhancing collaboration, communication, and trust.

Importantly, the culture of performance transcends individual efforts and permeates throughout the entire sports organisation. It influences decision-making processes, talent recruitment, coaching strategies, and the overall organisational structure. A strong culture of performance can serve as a catalyst for success, fostering an environment where individuals are motivated to give their best, overcome challenges, and achieve extraordinary outcomes.

In this context, understanding and effectively managing the culture of performance within a sports organisation becomes crucial for sports managers. By cultivating and nurturing a culture that promotes excellence, resilience, and a growth mindset, managers can create an environment that enables athletes and the organisation to thrive and reach their full potential.

### 2.2.1 Building a culture of performance

Building a culture of performance in a sports organisation requires a systematic approach that focuses on several key aspects. In the next table, there are some steps to foster a culture of performance.

**Table 2. Steps to foster a culture of performance**

Step	Description
Define and communicate clear expectations	Clearly define performance expectations and communicate them to all members of the organisation, including athletes, coaches, and staff. Make sure everyone understands the standards and goals they are expected to achieve.
Set clear goals	Establish measurable and challenging goals at both individual and team levels. These goals should be aligned with the organisation's vision and mission. Regularly review progress towards these goals and provide feedback to individuals and teams.



Develop strong leadership	Strong leadership is crucial in establishing and maintaining a culture of performance. Leaders should embody the desired performance standards and lead by example. They should be able to motivate, inspire, and provide guidance to individuals and teams.
Foster a growth mindset	Encourage a growth mindset, emphasising the belief that skills and abilities can be developed through effort and practice. Encourage athletes and staff to embrace challenges, learn from failures, and continuously improve their performance.
Provide resources and support	Ensure that athletes and staff have access to the necessary resources, including training facilities, equipment, and expert coaching. Provide ongoing support, such as sports science expertise, medical support, and mental health services, to optimise performance.
Promote accountability	Hold individuals accountable for their performance. Implement systems to track and evaluate performance regularly. Recognise and reward achievements, but also address underperformance constructively and provide necessary support and guidance.
Foster a positive team culture	Promote a positive and inclusive team culture that values teamwork, respect, and open communication. Encourage collaboration, support, and mutual accountability among team members. Develop team rituals, traditions, and shared values that foster a sense of belonging and motivation.
Continuous learning and development	Encourage continuous learning and development among athletes, coaches, and staff. Provide opportunities for ongoing education, skill development, and professional growth. Emphasise the importance of learning from successes and failures.
Data-driven approach	Use data and analytics to inform decision-making and optimise performance. Collect and analyse relevant performance metrics to identify areas of improvement and make data-driven decisions about training, tactics, and strategies.
Celebrate successes	Celebrate individual and team successes to reinforce a culture of performance. Recognise and reward exceptional achievements to motivate and inspire athletes and staff to strive for excellence.

Source: own source.



Remember that building a culture of performance is an ongoing process that requires commitment, consistency, and continuous effort. It may take time to establish and fully embed the desired culture within the organisation, but, with persistence and dedication, you can create an environment that fosters high performance and success.

## 2.2.2 How to foster a growth mindset

Fostering a growth mindset is essential for personal and professional development. Here are some tips to help cultivate and nurture a growth mindset:

- **Embrace challenges.** Encourage yourself to step outside of your comfort zone and embrace challenges as opportunities for growth. Instead of shying away from difficult tasks, see them as chances to learn, develop new skills, and expand your capabilities. Michelle Obama (2008), the former First Lady of the United States, said: 'The only limit to the height of your achievements is the reach of your dreams and your willingness to work hard for them' (para. 13). This suggests that the extent of your accomplishments is determined solely by the scope of your aspirations and your dedication to putting in the necessary effort to achieve them.

- **Shift the perspective on failure.** Embrace failure as a natural part of the learning process. Rather than viewing failure as a reflection of your abilities or worth, see it as an opportunity to learn, adjust your approach, and improve. Focus on the lessons and insights gained from failure and use them to fuel your future growth. Arianna Huffington, the co-founder of *The Huffington Post*, says: 'Failure is not the opposite of success; it is part of success' (as cited in Aitkenhead, 2013, para. 10). The quote means that failure is not a separate outcome from success, but an integral component of the overall process and journey towards achieving success.

- **Cultivate a love for learning.** Develop a passion for continuous learning and personal growth. Seek out new knowledge, explore different subjects, and engage in activities that challenge and stimulate your mind. Approach learning with curiosity and a desire to expand your understanding and skills.

- **Practice positive self-talk.** Be mindful of your self-talk and replace negative, limiting thoughts with positive and empowering ones. Instead of saying 'I cannot do it', reframe it as 'I cannot do it yet'. Encourage yourself, affirm your abilities, and remind yourself of past successes. Positive self-talk can help cultivate a belief in your capacity for growth and resilience.



- **Surround yourself with growth-minded people.** Surround yourself with individuals who have a growth mindset. Seek out mentors, peers, or colleagues who inspire and support your growth journey. Engage in discussions, collaborations, and environments that foster a growth-oriented mindset. By surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals, you can reinforce and strengthen your own growth mindset. Carol S. Dweck (2006) states: 'The growth mindset is the belief that basic qualities can be cultivated through efforts, strategies, and help from others' (p. 31). This refers to the concept of a growth mindset, which is the belief that one's fundamental qualities and abilities can be developed and improved through dedicated effort, effective strategies, and support from others. It emphasises the idea that intelligence, skills, and talents are not fixed traits, but they can be nurtured and expanded over time.

Michael Phelps is regarded as one of the greatest swimmers in the history of the sport. His unparalleled achievements and record-breaking performances have solidified his status as an Olympic legend. He understands the importance of fostering a growth mindset: 'Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth and keep pushing beyond your limits. The path to greatness lies in the relentless pursuit of improvement' (Phelps and Abrahamson, 2012).

Remember that fostering a growth mindset is an ongoing practice: it requires consistent effort, self-reflection, and a willingness to challenge your own limiting beliefs. By adopting these tips and integrating them into your daily life, you can cultivate a growth mindset and unlock your potential for continuous growth and development.

### 2.2.3 How to foster a positive team culture

Here are some concrete examples of actions to foster a positive team culture:

- **Establish team-building activities.** Organise team-building activities, such as retreats, workshops, or social events, to promote bonding and camaraderie among team members. These activities can include team challenges, problem-solving exercises, or simply socialising in a relaxed setting. This helps build trust, rapport, and a sense of belonging within the team.

- **Implement regular check-ins.** Schedule regular team check-ins or meetings to provide a platform for open communication and collaboration. During these sessions, encourage team members to share updates, challenges, and successes. Create a safe space for individuals to express their opinions, ask questions, and offer support to one another.

- **Foster cross-functional collaboration.** Encourage collaboration across different roles and departments within the team. Create opportunities for team members to work on projects or initiatives that involve diverse skill sets and perspectives. This promotes a



sense of unity, knowledge sharing, and a collective focus on team goals. Michael Jordan, the six times NBA champion and basketball legend, said: 'Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships' (Jordan and Falk, 1994). This quote emphasises that, while individual talent may lead to success in individual games, it is the combination of teamwork and intelligence that leads to long-term success and championship victories. It highlights the importance of collaboration, effective communication, and strategic thinking in achieving collective goals and achieving sustained excellence.

**- Provide continuous feedback.** Implement a culture of continuous feedback by offering regular and constructive feedback to team members. Recognise their achievements and strengths, while also providing guidance for improvement when needed. Encourage peer-to-peer feedback and create a feedback loop that supports growth and development.

**- Support personal growth and development.** Provide resources and support for the personal growth and development of team members. Offer training opportunities, workshops, or access to educational materials. Encourage individuals to set goals for their professional development and provide guidance or mentorship to help them achieve those goals.

**- Encourage collaboration tools and platforms.** Use collaboration tools and platforms that facilitate communication, information sharing, and project management within the team. These tools can streamline workflows, encourage transparency, and enhance collaboration among team members, regardless of their physical location.

**- Celebrate milestones and achievements.** Regularly celebrate milestones, achievements, and successes as a team. Recognise individual contributions and collective accomplishments through team-wide announcements, awards, or celebrations. This fosters a sense of pride, motivation, and a positive team spirit.

**- Encourage balanced work-life integration.** Promote a healthy work-life balance within the team. Encourage team members to prioritise self-care, set boundaries, and maintain a sense of well-being. Lead by example and emphasise the importance of taking breaks, fostering work-life harmony, and avoiding burnout.

Remember that the specific actions you take will depend on the nature of your team, its goals, and its dynamics. It is important to tailor these examples to suit your team's unique needs and preferences.

## 2.2.4 How to foster continuous learning and development



Fostering a culture of learning requires creating an environment that values and promotes continuous learning and development. Here are some steps to foster a culture of learning.

**Table 3. Steps to foster a culture of learning**

Step	Description
Set learning goals	Encourage individuals and teams to set learning goals aligned with their professional development and the organisation's objectives. Encourage them to identify areas for improvement and to pursue relevant learning opportunities. Regularly review progress towards these goals and provide support and resources to achieve them. Malcolm X (1964), a prominent civil rights activist and advocate for black empowerment, believed that education was a crucial tool for personal and societal advancement. He said that education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today (X, 1964). He aimed to convey the transformative power of education and its role in shaping a better future. Malcolm X (1964) emphasised that by investing in education and preparing oneself intellectually, individuals could equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the challenges of tomorrow. He believed that education was not merely a means of acquiring information, but also a passport that grants access to opportunities and enables individuals to effect positive change in their lives and communities.
Provide learning opportunities	Offer a variety of learning opportunities, such as workshops, seminars, webinars, conferences, and online courses. Provide access to resources like books, articles, and online platforms that support self-directed learning. Encourage individuals to attend relevant industry events and conferences.
Encourage knowledge sharing	Create platforms and channels for knowledge sharing within the organisation. Encourage employees to share their expertise, insights, and best practices with their colleagues. Foster a collaborative environment where individuals are encouraged to learn from each other and share their knowledge openly.
	Acknowledge and celebrate individuals or teams that demonstrate a commitment to learning. Recognise their



Recognise and reward learning	efforts and achievements by highlighting their accomplishments and sharing their success stories. Reward and incentivise continuous learning through promotions, bonuses, or other recognition programmes.
Create a learning-friendly environment	Ensure that the physical and digital work environment supports learning. Provide access to learning resources, establish a library or online repository of educational materials, and create dedicated spaces for learning and reflection. Encourage employees to allocate time for learning activities and provide flexibility to accommodate their learning needs.
Support mentorship and coaching	Foster mentorship and coaching relationships within the organisation. Encourage senior employees to mentor and share their knowledge with junior colleagues. Provide opportunities for employees to receive guidance and coaching to enhance their skills and knowledge.
Encourage feedback and reflection	Promote a culture of continuous feedback and reflection. Encourage employees to seek feedback on their performance, projects, and learning initiatives. Create opportunities for individuals to reflect on their learning experiences and identify areas for improvement.
Measure and evaluate learning outcomes	Establish mechanisms to measure and evaluate the impact of learning initiatives. Collect feedback, conduct assessments, and gather data to assess the effectiveness of the learning programmes. Use the insights gained to refine and improve future learning initiatives.

Source: own source.

By following these steps, you can foster a culture of learning where individuals are motivated, supported, and encouraged to continuously develop their skills, knowledge, and capabilities.

## Unit 2.3 Tips to celebrate success

When a team celebrates together, the taste of success becomes even sweeter. Here are some concrete actions to celebrate your team's successes:

- **Public recognition.** Recognise and publicly acknowledge the team's achievements. Share the successes through company-wide announcements, newsletters, or internal communications platforms. Highlight the team's efforts, outcomes, and the impact they



have made. This helps create a sense of pride and visibility for the team's accomplishments.

- **Team celebration.** Organise a dedicated team celebration to honour the successes. This could be a team outing, lunch or dinner gathering, or a special event. Use this opportunity to congratulate the team, express gratitude for their hard work, and create a festive atmosphere. Consider incorporating team-building activities or games to enhance camaraderie and reinforce the team's bond.

- **Individual recognition.** Take the time to individually recognise and appreciate team members' contributions. Personalise recognition by providing handwritten thank-you notes, small gifts, or certificates of achievement. Highlight specific achievements or strengths of team members and express how their efforts have positively impacted on the team's success.

- **Share success stories.** Share success stories and case studies that showcase the team's accomplishments. This can be done through presentations, videos, or articles shared internally or externally. Highlight the challenges faced, the strategies implemented, and the positive outcomes achieved. Sharing success stories not only celebrates the team's achievements, but also inspires others within the organisation.

- **Incentives and rewards.** Consider providing incentives or rewards to the team as a form of recognition. This can be in the form of financial bonuses, additional time off, or opportunities for professional development. Tailor the incentives to align with the team's preferences and motivations. This demonstrates the organisation's appreciation for the team's hard work and incentivises continued success.

- **Team reflection and appreciation.** Set aside time for the team to reflect on their success and appreciate the journey they have taken together. Conduct a team meeting or retrospective where team members can share their thoughts, lessons learned, and personal growth during the project or endeavour. Encourage open discussion and facilitate a dialogue that celebrates not only the outcomes, but also the team's collective efforts.

- **Continuous feedback loop.** Encourage ongoing feedback and recognition throughout the team's journey. Regularly communicate progress, milestones, and achievements to team members. This reinforces a culture of celebration and appreciation for both small and significant wins along the way.

Remember that celebrating team successes should be genuine, inclusive, and tailored to the team's dynamics and preferences. By taking these concrete actions, you can create a



positive and motivating environment that celebrates achievements, boosts team morale, and fosters a sense of pride and satisfaction among team members.

### **Mistakes to avoid when building a culture of excellence**

Having said all that, there are different failures leaders can make when trying to build a culture of excellence.

When promoting a culture of excellence as a leader, it is important to be mindful of certain mistakes that can hinder progress and hinder the desired outcomes. In the next table, there are some mistakes to avoid.

**Table 4. Mistakes to avoid when building a culture of excellence**

<b>Mistake</b>	<b>Description</b>
Lack of clarity	Failing to clearly define what excellence means within your organisation can lead to confusion and misalignment. Ensure that you clearly communicate your expectations and the standards of excellence to all team members. Set specific goals and provide clarity on the behaviours, actions, and outcomes that exemplify excellence.
Inconsistent expectations	Inconsistency in holding individuals accountable to excellence can create a sense of unfairness and demotivate the team. Ensure that expectations for excellence are consistently applied across the board. Treat all team members equitably and hold everyone to the same high standards.
Micromanagement	Micromanaging team members stifles their creativity, autonomy, and ownership. Avoid excessive control and trust your team to deliver excellent results. Provide guidance, support, and resources, but allow individuals the space to showcase their skills and find their own approaches to achieving excellence.
Failure to provide feedback	Lack of feedback and guidance can hinder individual growth and improvement. Regularly provide constructive feedback to help team members develop their skills and enhance their performance. Celebrate successes and acknowledge areas for improvement. Feedback is crucial for fostering a culture of excellence.
	Failing to recognise and appreciate individual and team accomplishments can dampen motivation and hinder the



Lack of recognition	culture of excellence. Regularly acknowledge and celebrate successes, both big and small. Express appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by team members. Recognise and reward excellence to foster a positive and motivating environment.
Ignoring development opportunities	Neglecting to invest in the development and growth of your team can limit their ability to reach excellence. Provide opportunities for learning, training, and skill enhancement. Support their professional development and encourage them to pursue continuous learning. By investing in their growth, you nurture a culture of excellence.
Lack of accountability	Leaders must hold themselves and others accountable for their actions and performance. Avoid turning a blind eye to underperformance or deviations from excellence. Address issues promptly and constructively. Reinforce a sense of responsibility and accountability throughout the organisation.
Failure to lead by example	Leaders set the tone for the culture of excellence. If you do not embody and exemplify the behaviours and standards you expect from others, it can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of your efforts. Model the behaviours, work ethic, and commitment to excellence you want to see in your team.

Source: own source.

By avoiding these mistakes, you can create an environment that fosters a culture of excellence, drives individual and team performance, and enables the achievement of outstanding results.

### Considerations for fostering a culture of excellence in sports

There are some unique considerations for fostering a culture of excellence in sports. In the next table, there are some additional factors to consider.

**Table 5. Mistakes to avoid when building a culture of excellence**

Factor	Description
Emphasise skill development	In sports organisations, it is essential to prioritise skill development and training. Provide resources, coaching, and opportunities for athletes to continuously improve their skills.



	Encourage a growth mindset and a commitment to ongoing learning and development within the team.
Foster team cohesion	Building strong team cohesion is crucial in sports organisations. Encourage a supportive and collaborative environment where athletes work together towards a shared goal. Promote communication, camaraderie, and trust among team members. Emphasise the importance of teamwork and the role each individual plays in the team's success.
Cultivate a competitive mindset	Sports organisations often thrive on healthy competition. Encourage a competitive mindset where athletes strive for excellence both individually and as a team. Foster a culture that values hard work, discipline, and perseverance in the pursuit of success.
Provide sports-specific feedback	In sports, providing specific feedback related to the sport itself is critical. Offer constructive feedback on techniques, strategies, and performance during practices and competitions. Tailor the feedback to address individual and team needs, helping athletes continuously improve and reach their full potential.
Balance individual and team success	In sports, it is important to strike a balance between individual achievements and team success. While recognising exceptional individual performances, emphasise the importance of teamwork and collective accomplishments. Encourage athletes to celebrate team success and support each other's growth and development.
Adaptability to change	Sports organisations often face changes in the coaching staff, team composition, competition dynamics, and strategies. Foster an environment that embraces change and encourages athletes to adapt and learn from new situations. Develop resilience and the ability to overcome challenges as a team.

Source: own source.

While the core principles of promoting a culture of excellence apply to both sports organisations and other industries, the unique dynamics of sports require specific considerations. By tailoring these principles to the sports context, leaders can create an environment that nurtures a culture of excellence, teamwork, and continuous improvement within the organisation.

## Conclusion



The culture of performance in a sports organisation is a multifaceted concept that shapes the mindset, behaviour, and overall performance of individuals within the organisation. It emphasises hard work, dedication, discipline, and continuous improvement. A strong culture of performance fosters an environment where athletes, coaches, and support staff are driven by a common goal of achieving optimal results and promotes accountability and responsibility.

To foster a culture of performance, sports managers can take several key steps. These include clearly defining and communicating expectations, setting clear goals, developing strong leadership that leads by example, fostering a growth mindset, providing necessary resources and support, promoting accountability, fostering a positive team culture, emphasising continuous learning and development, using a data-driven approach, and celebrating successes.

In addition, developing strong leadership skills is crucial for creating a culture of performance and success. Strong leaders lead by example, communicate effectively, build relationships, empower and delegate, provide feedback and recognition, continuously learn and improve, foster collaboration and teamwork, make decisions and take responsibility, and display adaptability and resilience.

Fostering a growth mindset is essential for personal and professional development. This can be achieved by embracing challenges, shifting the perspective on failure, cultivating a love for learning, practising positive self-talk, and surrounding oneself with growth-minded people.

Creating a positive team culture involves establishing team-building activities, implementing regular check-ins, fostering cross-functional collaboration, providing continuous feedback, supporting personal growth and development, encouraging collaboration tools and platforms, and celebrating milestones and achievements.

To foster continuous learning and development, leaders should lead by example, set learning goals, provide learning opportunities, encourage knowledge sharing and collaboration, support experimentation and risk-taking, recognise and reward learning, and create a safe and supportive learning environment.

Sports organisations can foster an environment that encourages outstanding performance, adaptability, ongoing education, cooperation, and a mindset focused on personal development and progress. These measures can result in elevated levels of achievement and triumph.

In the next module, we will provide you with guidance on the fundamental aspects of establishing a culture centred around data-driven practices within a sports organisation.



## Case studies

### New Zealand All Blacks

One example of a sports organisation that has successfully cultivated a culture of performance is the New Zealand All Blacks, the national rugby team of New Zealand. They are known for their exceptional performance and consistently being one of the top-ranked teams in the world. The All-Blacks' culture is centred around their core values, which include humility, teamwork, and personal excellence.

In his book *Legacy*, James Kerr (2013) explained that one aspect of their culture is their commitment to continuous learning and improvement. They have a rigorous selection process for players, focusing not only on their physical abilities, but also on their character and potential for growth. The team has a strong emphasis on mental resilience and personal development, including the use of psychologists and mental skills coaches to support players' mental well-being (Kerr, 2013).

Furthermore, the All Blacks prioritise teamwork and collaboration. They have a long-standing tradition called 'sweeping the sheds', where players, regardless of their status or seniority, are responsible for cleaning the locker room after matches. This practice reinforces the idea that no individual is above the team and promotes a culture of humility and shared responsibility.

This culture of performance has been instrumental in the All-Blacks' success, as they have consistently been one of the most successful rugby teams in history, including multiple Rugby World Cup victories.

'Legacy' serves as a compelling reference to emphasise the importance of the culture of excellence in the sports industry. It showcases how the All-Blacks' unwavering commitment to their values and culture has contributed to their sustained success, making it a valuable resource for individuals and organisations seeking to achieve greatness.



**Figure 1. All Blacks**



Source: [untitled image of the All Blacks], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/45ygogP>.

### **San Antonio Spurs**

One notable case study is the culture of performance established by the San Antonio Spurs, a professional basketball team in the National Basketball Association (NBA). The Spurs have consistently been recognised for their sustained success and strong organisational culture.

Under the leadership of head coach Gregg Popovich and general manager RC Buford, the Spurs have fostered a culture built on discipline, selflessness, and teamwork. They prioritise player development, with a focus on finding talent that fits their system and values. The organisation emphasises fundamental skills, high basketball IQ, and a team-first mentality.

Figure 2. San Antonio Spurs



Source: [untitled image of San Antonio Spurs], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/45WA1yG>.

They prioritise a 'team-first' mentality, emphasising collective success over individual accolades. The Spurs' culture of performance also extends to their player development strategies. They have a reputation for developing talent through their system and placing a strong emphasis on player character and work ethic (Duncan, 2019).

The Spurs' culture of performance has resulted in impressive achievements, including five NBA championships and numerous playoff appearances. They have also been known for their stability and consistency, with a winning record for more than two decades.

## References

**Aitkenhead, D.** (2 August 2013). Arianna Huffington: 'My mother said failure was a stepping stone to success.' *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/aug/02/arianna-huffington-success-mother-love>.

**Carroll, P., Roth, Y. and Garin, K. A.** (2011). *Win Forever: Live, Work, and Play Like a Champion*. Portfolio.

- Duncan, J.** (2019). *The Culture of Performance: A Case Study on the San Antonio Spurs*. *Open Access Journal of Sports Medicine*, 10, 55–66.
- Dweck, C. S.** (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Random House.
- Hamm, M. M. and Heifetz, A.** (1999). *Go for the Goal: A Champion's Guide to Winning in Soccer and Life*. It Books.
- Jordan, M. and Falk, S.** (1994). *Rare Air: Michael on Michael*. Harper Perennial.
- Kerr, J.** (2013). *Legacy: What the All Blacks Can Teach Us About the Business of Life*. Constable.
- Krzyzewski, M.** (2009). *The Gold Standard: Building a World-Class Team*. Business Plus.
- Nader, R.** (2002). *Crashing the Party: Taking on the Corporate Government in an Age of Surrender*. St. Martin's Press.
- Obama, M.** (2008). *Michelle Obama's Convention Speech*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=93963863>.
- Phelps, M. and Abrahamson, A.** (2012). *No Limits: The Will to Succeed*. Free Press.
- Riley, P.** (1993). *The Winner Within: A Life Plan for Team Players*. Berkley Trade.
- Sinek, S.** (2014). *Leaders Eat Last: Why some teams pull together, and others don't*. Portfolio.
- [Untitled image of San Antonio Spurs]**. (n. d.). [https://cdn.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/7HLe1xQ8bsJnKWa544i\\_Rgoj4NE=/0x0:3000x1939/1200x800/filters:focal\(1260x730:1740x1210\)/cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus\\_image/image/69594532/84574828.0.jpg](https://cdn.vox-cdn.com/thumbor/7HLe1xQ8bsJnKWa544i_Rgoj4NE=/0x0:3000x1939/1200x800/filters:focal(1260x730:1740x1210)/cdn.vox-cdn.com/uploads/chorus_image/image/69594532/84574828.0.jpg).
- [Untitled image of the All Blacks]**. (n. d.). <https://www.theplayerstribune.com/posts/dan-carter-rugby-retirement>.
- X, M.** (1964). *Speech at the Founding Rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity*. Blackpast. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/speeches-african-american-history/1964-malcolm-x-s-speech-founding-rally-organization-afro-american-unity/>.

