



# Presentation

Dr Iain McCormick: Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June

**Title of Presentation:** Positive Team Psychology: Developing Cohesive, Trusting Teams

**Presenter Name:** Dr Iain McCormick

## **Abstract:**

Teamwork as one of the 24 character strengths of positive psychology (Person and Seligman 2004). Katzenbach and Smith (2006) in the book *The Wisdom of Teams* suggests that a high performance team is “a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable”. This paper presents a single case study on the development of teamwork in the senior leadership team of a professional services firm. A detailed description of the eight one-day team development sessions held over two years, is presented. The team sessions took place every three months and were combined with the individual executive coaching of the senior team. The team development included sessions on learned optimism, a strengths-based approach to team engagement, the use of appreciative enquiry, building team cohesiveness by developing a common commitment to joint objectives and developing sound working relationships across business units. The team learned about shared leadership where everyone in the team was encouraged to step up into a leadership role rather than just leaving it to the most senior person. They received feedback on their ability to robustly debate issues, to build common enduring consensus and to hold each other accountable. Considerable time was spent on further building trust and understanding between team members. They learned about being adaptive leaders and how to build engagement and commitment from team members. To assess progress the team used the High Performance Team Inventory. This 32-item assessment covers a wide range of team factors. The results clearly show that the team rated themselves as making significant progress over the two-year period. Large gains were made in developing shared leadership and in enhancing team climate which included being positive in the way they tackled challenges, being open and honest, developing trust and having great team morale. Other areas such as being more open to innovation and change were also

shown to have made large gains. Positive psychology offers a great deal to the development of cohesive, trusting and productive teams.

**Presenter Biography:**

Iain McCormick holds a Master of Social Science with First Class Honours and a PhD in organisational psychology. Iain heads the Executive Coaching Centre Limited in New Zealand. Prior to this he held the following positions: Managing Director of Aon Human Resources Consulting, Hong Kong, Consulting Partner in the Deloitte working in Canada and New Zealand. He currently coaches and consults with a range of boards of directors, chief executives and other senior managers in New Zealand and Australia. He specialises in developing high performance teams that people love to work in.