

INTRODUCTION: CATALYTIC TEAMWORK IN ACTION

The NBA's Houston Rockets recognized catalytic teamwork in the play of Shane Battier. The *New York Times Magazine* called him "The No-Stats All-Star" (Lewis, 2009). The article sparked our interest. We wanted to know how Battier went from being a star in high school and college, to a relatively unheralded small forward and shooting guard for the Memphis Grizzlies, to ultimately a game-changing player. It began when he was traded to the Houston Rockets. There, Battier became a human catalyst. When he was on the court, his teammates played at a higher level, their performance metrics improved, and he elevated his team's competitiveness. Everything got better. How did he do it?

In an interview for this book, Shane said his original intention was not primarily to make others better. He simply focused on doing all he could to stay on the court. The Rocket's General Manager, Daryl Morey, explained that their analytics experts discovered the team performed better with Shane on the floor rather than on the bench. He did not put up huge numbers like the team's stars, but other players and the team posted even bigger numbers when he was part of the action.

The hallmark of catalytic teamwork and leadership is unselfishly making others better and heightening the team's ability to achieve results.

Our research reveals why Battier became such a dynamic force and team leader and what he and others like him have done in sports, the arts, business, and community organizations to create similar results. It is a

phenomenon that can be replicated. It involves a unique set of competencies that can be learned and applied by those with the desire, work ethic, and discipline to do so. Effective application of Catalyst Effect competencies increases your value to the team and the organization.

MULTIPLE CATALYSTS PROPEL PERFORMANCE

Leadership and catalytic teamwork are not easily measured but Battier's impact showed up on the scoreboard and in his teammates' stats. If one would look at his individual scoring stats, you might see nothing exceptional. His impact becomes obvious only when looking at the team as a whole and analyzing the performance of others. The hallmark of catalytic teamwork and leadership *is unselfishly making others better and heightening the team's ability to achieve results*. Combined, they allow teams and organizations to rise to extraordinary levels and out-compete teams richer in superstar talent.

The authors were struck by another catalytic phenomenon — one prompted by the amazing performance of the Butler University men's basketball teams. Coach Brad Stevens filled his roster with potential catalytic players. They were team-oriented athletes with strong work ethics and positive outlooks. Stevens steeped them in a culture that put the team first and rewarded players who helped each other succeed. By collegiate basketball standards, they were undersized and, by all outward appearances, should have been dominated by highly touted blue-blood programs. Yet they kept winning, driven by their catalytic practices and belief in themselves — and what they could make possible. Ultimately, they made it to back-to-back final games in the 2010 and 2011 NCAA Championship Tournament.

In sports, Shane Battier showed the impact one catalytic leader could have on a team. Brad Stevens and the Butler Bulldogs demonstrated the multiplied impact on performance when a team is built to include several catalysts.

WHY MANAGERS NEED CATALYSTS NOW MORE THAN EVER

In sports, you can see catalytic leadership and teamwork in action during the course of a game. In business, the arts, and community organizations, it's not so easy. But it's there and we uncovered it.

We started with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. We discussed with members of a wind ensemble how it was that five people, all recognized as supremely talented on their own instruments, could come together as a unit. Without using our term, they described how they influenced each other catalytically, realizing that they had succeeded through their performance as an ensemble. We've witnessed this same phenomenon in companies and groups as diverse as a McDonald's restaurant to the Silk Road Ensemble. What's different about the people and organizations that embrace catalytic principles and skills?

Catalysts think beyond their immediate role to ensure what they do is aligned with the overall strategy.

Team members that have a catalytic impact, think and act differently. In addition to doing their jobs well, they look at the bigger picture — at the overarching goals of their organization or team. In sports, they think like a coach. In business, they think like an executive. In a music ensemble, they focus on how the entire group sounds and how each player contributes to delighting the audience. They think like a conductor.

Catalysts think beyond their immediate role to ensure what they do is aligned with the overall strategy. They mentor in key moments to help those around them maintain a similar focus. They prioritize team performance and growth over personal accolades. Catalysts relish the hard work needed to overcome obstacles to success. Their combination of optimism and grit is contagious. They seldom fear failure or, if they do, they push through it. They quickly get off the mat when they fall and persevere through tough circumstances. Their example and determination advances the team and helps make everyone around them better. Like a chemical that accelerates reactions, they ignite higher levels of performance.

Developing catalytic leaders and team members has never been more important. Organizations have flattened their structures — they have *delayed*. More people report to fewer managers. This has been the case in nearly every traditional industry from automobile manufacturing to the chemical business to the tech sector. Much of this layering took place in the middle levels and directly impacted supervisory and managerial positions. Significantly reduced layers sometimes resulted in a fivefold increase in the number of a manager's direct reports. Managers were no longer day-to-day

team leaders who monitored operational goals, worked closely with each employee, and led daily work team meetings. Employees had to step up to take on these responsibilities with much greater autonomy. They had to develop and apply a broader set of competencies suited to these new circumstances.

Tony Hsieh, founder of Zappos Incorporation, an online retailer, spearheaded the idea of *no reporting layers at all*, which is an example of holacracy (Leinbach-Reyhle, 2014). Work was achieved via teams who collaborated around specific projects and achieved clear, specific results. This required nearly everyone in the organization to step up and lead when necessary on a given project or set of tasks. There were few individuals with any authority to direct the work from the top of the organization, rather, employees were asked to *lead from the middle* to move the team forward to deliver clear results.

In a holacracy, most employees have no specific boss. In less pure forms, there is still some hierarchical structure, but firms recognize the value of removing layers. Without bosses, people are expected to pursue, as an individual or team member, those initiatives that are consistent with the organization or the team's strategic plans.

In a less formally structured environment with very limited numbers of recognized bosses, catalytic leadership skills become even more critical because greater weight is placed on individual autonomy. Those who can lead by elevating or propelling individual and team performance have an outsized impact. When they lead catalytically, the enterprise moves faster and more effectively.

Catalytic leadership and teamwork competencies enable you to lead from wherever you are within an organization.

CATALYTIC LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

In physical science, a catalyst causes a chemical transformation to develop faster. In the social sciences, a human catalyst accelerates action toward a goal. By blending the two definitions, we get to the crux of catalytic teamwork and leadership. *The Catalyst Effect phenomenon fuses leadership and teamwork into a dynamic, optimistic, and cohesive force that raises the performance of everyone involved and elevates overall team success.* Our

definition embodies the transformational and action aspects of the physical and social sciences.

Leadership is about taking an endeavor, enterprise, or organization from one point to another. A catalytic leader accelerates progress toward common goals, including stimulating higher levels of performance among those engaged in the process.

Catalytic teamwork and leadership create value and heightens performance within the scope of one's own position. It's not about assuming authority without permission or undermining the authority of others. It requires alignment with the priorities of one's boss. We do not advocate assuming supervisory or managerial authority that has not been earned or granted. That is a prescription for conflict and dysfunction.

BECOMING A CATALYST: THE 12 CATALYTIC COMPETENCIES

Twelve competencies define the behaviors of a catalytic leader or teammate. While some human catalysts are strong in all of them, you can have a significant impact by mastering a core subset. We have organized them into four cornerstones, based on how they might be most effectively applied in new circumstances:

1. *Building Credibility*: Behaviors essential for developing trust, communicating effectively, and generating belief in what can be achieved.
2. *Creating Cohesion*: Behaviors that coalesce relationships and propel mission-oriented action.
3. *Generating Momentum*: Behaviors that elevate and accelerate performance.
4. *Amplifying Impact*: Behaviors that promote excellence and encourage innovation.

Embedded in these 4 cornerstones are the 12 catalytic skills we have identified that elevate individual and team performance.

Skills

Building Credibility

Acts with Integrity and Inspires Trust

Lives authentically. Demonstrates ethical principles and values in a manner that promotes trust.

Communicates Clearly

Actively speaks and writes in clear concise messages; listens closely for understanding. Employs creative ways to convey ideas, concepts, and content that cross cultural, language, and educational boundaries.

Invigorates with Optimism

Energizes others with a confident, hope-filled outlook on the future. Conveys a can-do attitude.

Creating Cohesion

Connects Emotionally

Acknowledges the emotional signals of others and responds empathetically.

Develops Camaraderie

Establishes a positive rapport and fosters constructive interactions.

Puts the Team's Goals and the Organization's Mission before Personal Interests

Prioritizes team success and process over personal goals. Selfless; does what it takes to achieve results by focusing on overarching organizational objectives.

Generating Momentum

Energizes Others to Execute with the Mission in Mind

Ignites others to achieve organizational objectives.

Upgrades and Rejuvenates Skills and Knowledge

Seeks and acquires leading-edge knowledge and expertise. Curious about new developments and concepts and how to apply them.

Leads and Follows

Leads when best qualified to accelerate progress toward objectives. Partners with others or follows the leadership of others when their knowledge and expertise are well suited to the task. Demonstrates respect for the abilities of others.

Amplifying Impact

Pursues Excellence

Demonstrates extensive knowledge or competence. Advocates for the high-caliber performance of others.

Mentors and Coaches Others to Excel

Models exemplary behavior and supports the personal and professional development of others by providing constructive advice.

Proposes Imaginative Solutions

Presents creative, imaginative, and value-adding ideas for solving problems and achieving objectives.
