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ENERGIZES OTHERS TO EXECUTE WITH THE MISSION IN MIND

Definition: Ignites others to achieve organizational objectives.

Counter Behavior: Disengages from others. Saps organizational momentum. Expedient. Focuses on being busy rather than achieving key outcomes.

CYCLING AND ENERGIZING TOWARD A GOAL

Contrary to what casual observers may think, cycling is a team sport.

Although only one rider wins any given race or event segment, his or her victory is due to effective use of *team* tactics employed throughout the race. A cycling team fields a squad for a race and selects the rider on whom they are pinning their hopes for victory. The other six to eight riders work together to deploy several team tactics, including breakaway, drafting, lead-out train, and the peloton.

Breakaway

Early in a race stage, breakaways numbering two to five riders from multiple teams will attempt to separate themselves from the main field by pedaling hard for several miles. A rider making the breakaway is usually not the team's leader or may not be the strongest rider, but he strategically forces other teams to use energy or lose focus.

Drafting

As in auto racing, cyclists draft off each other to break the wind's resistance. A cycling team's director uses this race strategy, positioning the team's support riders, called *domestiques*, in front or to the side of the lead rider. This allows them to conserve from 20% to 40% of their energy throughout the race.

Lead-Out Train

Bike races that are on mostly flat terrain often end with a bunch sprint among specialists referred to as *sprinters*. They are able to accelerate quickly using powerful surges to sprint full speed to the finish line. The most successful cycling teams provide their sprinters with a well-rehearsed, lead-out train of three to four teammates sheltering the sprinter from the wind and clearing a path free of other riders. Timing within the lead-out train is essential as riders peel off one after another until, with 200–300 meters left, only the sprinter remains free to accelerate at full speed to the finish line.

Team Position within the Peloton

The main field of riders in a race, called a *peloton*, may have 180 cyclists in close quarters speeding along at 20–30 miles per hour. Therefore, a team director will likely have the riders spread throughout the peloton to ensure most survive a potential crash. Having riders sprinkled throughout the peloton will also allow the team director to cover or respond to attacks or breakaways when they occur.

TAKING ON THE SKYUKA MOUNTAIN

The roles of the domestiques are crucial, as mentioned earlier. They often ride in front of the team leader to enable him or her to draft, preserving substantial stores of energy for the lead rider when they need to breakout later in the race. In team attacks during the race, domestiques may surge ahead and force a rival team to lead a chase. As soon as the pack catches up, another domestique will surge ahead. The goal is to tire out the opposing teams and soften them up for a later run by the team leader.

One of the most accomplished domestiques in cycling is George Hincapie. Matt Tanner of Rollfast recounts a story in which George, as a friend and mentor, energized Matt to perform at a level he thought was impossible (personal communication, 2017). Matt and several others were out for a training ride, in this case an attack on Skyuka Mountain in South Carolina, which requires the cyclist to climb 550 meters over a 6.3 kilometer route. Professional riders describe the climb as brutal, painful, and quad-busting. Matt is in rare company finishing the climb in 25:37 minutes. He credits this level of performance to the encouragement of Hincapie.

George implored him to stay steady early in the climb, to not blow it up right away, but stay steady and keep energy reserves in the tank. The sprint to the top was brutal. Matt recounts his legs burning, lungs hurting, brain questioning, but he would not give up. Hincapie was there yelling into his ear, “only 200 meters further!” He was right there beside Matt; a physical presence at his side all the way. As Matt told us, “I would simply not give up; I could not give up. I would not disappoint someone who believed so strongly that I could do it. I would not disappoint myself. George’s passion spurred me to reach into energy reserves that I did not realize existed.” And as you might expect, it was several segments of “200 meters further” until he reached the top!

Matt’s speed now ranks among the top 12 fastest times for this climb — to his great personal satisfaction. But his story is more about being energized by another rider than the accomplishment itself. From this experience, and others in his riding career, Matt knows the value of having someone on the team, in your corner, beside you on the bike who can boost and inspire you at crucial times. Catalysts, like George, make everyone on the team focus more sharply and dig deeper to perform just a bit better.

On Hincapie’s part, he did several specific things that made a difference for Matt. He demonstrated the competency of energizes others by:

- Expressing his confidence in Matt’s ability.
- Connecting with Matt on a personal level by getting to know him one-on-one.
- Staying with him all the way up the mountain, never leaving his side.
- Being “in his ear” in a positive, encouraging manner.

- Setting achievable goals.
- Breaking the ultimate goal into smaller chunks that seemed less daunting and more manageable.
- Motivating Matt to reach into himself to find more energy than he believed was possible.
- Celebrating the accomplishment with him.

To this day, Hincapie continues to reinforce and encourage Matt. How can you apply an energizing style like Hincapie's in your own way? How can you *energize* others or an entire team? How can you create velocity and sustain momentum that rises to catalytic levels?

Think about the cycling team and how they create ways for others to sprint forward. How can this happen in the teams that you are a part of? How can you pave the way for others? Putting team first is an essential part of this competency, part of which entails setting others up for success — and thereby achieving overall team success. Asking and strategizing with others to create the conditions for team success doesn't happen by accident. It wasn't by happenstance that riders created an opportunity for their teammates to draft — it was planned. How can you help others sprint forward, especially at crucial times?