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## Out for a training ride or on a mission to win *le Tour*?



Even a non-cyclist can appreciate the magnitude of winning the Tour de France. Standing in yellow on the Champs-Élysées, the winner no doubt reflects on all the work and dedication that was required to reach the ultimate success in cycling. At every opportunity, the winner appropriately acknowledges the team which has been so integral to success.

During the Tour, there is no greater display of teamwork than in a team time trial, where nine riders complete the course with seamless precision. Based on careful pre-selection and honed with intense training, the team hurtles along at speeds unsustainable by individual riders.

Unfortunately many professional practices don't display the same sense of purpose and performance as a team dedicated to winning the Tour. Instead, these firms resemble a group of friends out for a weekend training ride, where members assemble at approximately the appointed time and slowly amble off. Although the core activity is the same as high performers, in these bunches the emphasis is just as much on socialising and stopping for coffee. En route, the better riders wait for slower members, never going "full gas" for fear of causing divisions in the bunch.

So too at the office, your team members come in, do the tasks assigned and likely enjoy the banter that goes on. You may be frustrated that no one extends themselves, shows initiative or commits to taking the firm forward. Yet this sleepy situation is understandable, given you haven't told the team what the destination is, when the firm needs to get there and what route to follow.

If your team currently accepts members who don't pull their weight, it may be because you haven't set benchmarks and ignore poor performance. Perhaps your team is handicapped by outdated equipment, little training and poor communication. You may also need to recruit fresh talent to raise the capability. Starting to get the picture? Strong leadership is required to set a bold, exciting objective that captures the team's imagination. Disciplined management is essential to deliver on the mission.

Within days of climbing the pinnacle of cycling, Cadel Evans' attention had turned to winning next year's event. Good as his team was in 2011, new riders have been enlisted, in the form of a Belgian superstar and the current world champion. (Winning



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teams find it easier to attract and pay for high performers.) Prototype bikes for next season are already in production, with the mantra "*lighter, stronger, faster*".

All energies on Cadel's team are focused on achieving first place. All contributions are actively considered, debated and decided. All team members sign on knowing the overall goal and the role they are expected to fill in achieving it. Everyone commits to the vision of being at the pinnacle of their profession.



So, if you're wondering when your team will lift a gear or what it will take to get someone to take their turn at the front, it's time for you as the leader to revisit the mission. Is everyone clear on what the goal is and committed to achieving it? Or is your team just out for a training ride?

In the next article I'll discuss how to set about "winning the Tour" with your firm.