Leading through Breakdowns

*Success is moving from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm*

—Winston Churchill

**A breakdown is any situation that…**

* threatens progress towards a commitment
* presents uncertainty or difficulty
* stops effective action
* presents obstacles to our commitments

**Breakdowns normally lead to…**

* minimizing or ignoring the problem
* blaming each other
* eroding teamwork, trust, and effectiveness

**Change how you approach breakdowns by recognizing that…**

* all large commitments have breakdowns
* the greater our commitment, the more and greater the breakdowns   
  (“No commitment no breakdown”)
* breakdowns, when well handled, are a major source of breakthroughs “finding a new way” to meet your commitments

**High Performance Teams handle breakdowns differently:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Typical Groups** |  | **High Performance Teams** |
| 1. are stopped by breakdowns 2. members blame one another 3. breakdowns are seen as obstacles and problems to avoid 4. breakdowns are seen as an indicator that something is wrong with the person, team, or project |  | 1. expect breakdowns 2. welcome breakdowns 3. use breakdowns to create breakthroughs 4. see breakdowns as helpful to understand what is missing to fulfill a commitment |

Breakdown Conversation Worksheet

Think of the breakdown your team has recently experienced and answer the following questions related to that breakdown.

1. **Declare that a breakdown has occurred. Briefly describe what happened.**

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1. **What were you committed to? Describe the commitment of you or your team.**

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1. **What was missing that caused the breakdown to occur?**

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1. **What did you learn?**

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1. **What actions could you take now?**

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