BUD TO BOSS

Bonus Byte

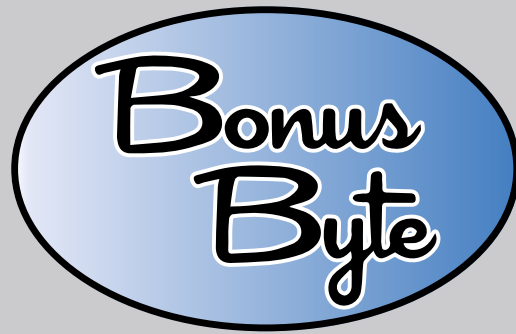## Using the CARB Model to Improve Team Success

# USING THE CARB MODEL
TO IMPROVE TEAM SUCCESS

by Kevin Eikenberry

Two notes/points of information before we jump right in:

1. This Bonus Byte comes from a ChangeThis Manifesto I wrote several years ago.
    You can learn more about this great service here.
    (Link to: **porchlightbooks.com/blog/changethis/2019/the-changethis-manifesto**)

2. This is longer than your average Bonus Byte. That's OK. Creating and nurturing effective teams is one
    of the most important things you can do as a leader.

Dr. Robert Atkins made a living and created a cultural phenomenon teaching people to reduce their intake
of carbs. In a strange way, team building efforts have taken this advice unknowingly, and this professional
diet is ill-advised.

CARB is an acrostic representing the four major dimensions ultimately responsible
for a team's effectiveness:
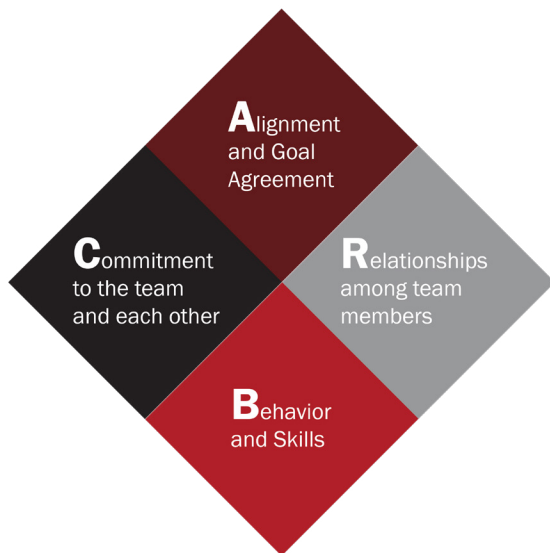
- Commitment to the team and each other

- Alignment and goal agreement

- Relationships among team members

- Behaviors and skills

This Bonus Byte then could be described as the anti-Atkins
diet for teams – it takes more CARBs (or more of each of the
CARB components) for teams to be successful.

Commitment to the Team and Each Other

Commitment is a very powerful thing. Without it the work of teams won't be as successful as possible.

Why?

Because people are busy. They have many tasks and priorities. The work of the team likely will just fall into that long list of priorities unless team members find a reason to be truly committed to the team and its goals. With only so much focus and energy to spread around, without commitment they won't be fully participative and effective on the team.

There are two parts to this commitment.
* Commitment to the team and its purpose
* Commitment to the individuals on the team

Thinking about commitment in this dual way helps undermine the earlier assumption that people that know and like each other will make a great team. There is a difference between liking people and liking the team. And there is a huge difference between being committed to the people on the team and being committed to the work and purpose of the team itself.

Both are required.

Ignore this fact at your own risk.

Of course commitment can (and often will need to) be built – it won't pre-exist when you put people on a team. Since team formation, development and success is a complex thing, several of our other CARB factors will aid in the development of this commitment. But recognizing its importance is a good first step.

How will you know you have built a level of commitment or what are the factors that will build that commitment? High levels of commitment correlate with several factors, including:

* **Belief** – People will believe in each other. Individual motivations are clear and generally understood. People are able to believe in the team, its individual members and the work of the team.
* **Agreements** – People have mutually agreed to a set of behaviors that are acceptable to the team. By building a set of agreements on performance, behavior and "how things are done," productivity is greatly improved because effort and energy aren't spent on these distractions. Effort can be directed to the work at hand.
* **Trust** – A major underpinning for team performance is trust; trust in team members and trust in leadership. It is clearly necessary for the levels of commitment required for high performing teams.
* **Support** – Support is a critical factor, but it is also a bellwether for the rest of these factors. If people are supporting team decisions, commitment is likely present. If people are supporting each other

Is it possible for a team to get results with low commitment? Sure, you can get some results. But you will never approach the results that could be achieved with people who are committed to the team and each other.

Alignment and Goal Agreement

Teams can't succeed in a vacuum, but far too often that is what organizations expect them to do. Sometimes this vacuum is created by omission – leaders just aren't thinking about it or are "too busy" to set context for team success. Other times the reason is optimism – leaders believe in their team members and their skills. After all they hired bright people – and bright people will figure it all out. Assumptions like these can frustrate or burn-out talented people and kill teams.

Sometimes the vacuum is caused by a far more pervasive problem – no clear organizational goals, objectives or strategies exist. Leaders must create clear strategies. And, they must create a clear line of sight throughout the organization, so people (and teams) can connect their work to the important strategies of the organization.

It takes effort to get a team in alignment with the organization's goals and strategies. However, it is impossible if organizational goals and strategies don't exist.

Yes, strategies and goals may exist. And yes, they may have been communicated. This is a good start, but isn't enough. Teams can't gain the clear direction they need without conversation. It is the responsibility of leadership to provide that opportunity for conversation. This conversation provides the understanding and context the team needs to clarify its goals and make the decisions that come along during their work.

If you want to build stronger alignment between the team's work and the organization's goals, consider the following:

- **Start at the beginning.** Make sure the organization's goals and strategies are set. If not, there isn't much chance of the team being highly successful. At a minimum the team needs to understand, from the start, why its work product matters in the bigger picture and how the team can make a positive impact.

- **Generate conversation.** Don't deliver the goals in the email when you ask people to join the team. Don't put them in the packet of materials people get when being hired. Make the time for conversation. The alignment we are searching for needs to be deep – almost visceral. Help individuals and the team develop meaning and purpose. Help them understand how they can create work that matters

- **Get the team's help.** Get their input. Remember that you are trying to create alignment and agreement. When people have the chance to shape the goals of the team, when they have the opportunity to have input into those decisions, they will have greater agreement with the goals.

- **Provide a connection.** Teams need someone in leadership "above" them who can provide support and resources – someone who can answer questions and keep them on track. Some people call this a team sponsor. The sponsor doesn't need to be on the team, rather he/she provides leadership, support and connection. The sponsor keeps the team from feeling like it is all alone.
- **Make them accountable.** If the alignment is clear and the goals set, then the team needs to be held accountable for results. In organizations where accountability has been lax in the past, this may seem like a jolt, but it won't be long before this accountability not only drives results but improves team dynamics too.

I hope it's easy to see how these steps will help a team succeed. But more than helping them deliver a desired result, the sense of clarity, meaning and direction that these steps create help teams get over many other hurdles.

Why?

Because people want to belong to something that matters; they want things to believe in. When you give them those things, collectively they will work through many personal issues and challenges and they will also become more committed to the end product.

A non-aligned team could enjoy each other and their work. They could accomplish much, and all of that could be completely counter to what the organization really needs. Even if not completely counter – but only off-course by 10 degrees – serious problems can occur. Can you see this happening?

It isn't just a fantasy, I've seen it.

And unfortunately, these are often the situations when a leader might look for some "team building," because "the team just isn't getting the results we need."

Relationships
among team
members

Relationships Among Team Members

Ah yes, the Holy Grail of effective teams – relationships.

The concern is often voiced this way: "We need people to get to know each other better.
Once we have done that we will be fine."

As previously mentioned, this is a terrible and dangerously limiting view of teams. This isn't to say that the relationships between team members don't matter, they do. Teams that have good relationships also typically have the other CARB factors in large amounts, look out – team performance can soar.

Traditional team building events can be helpful. They can help people get to know each other, and they can help people find common ground. They also, at least in the short term, build a sense of camaraderie. And

while all of these things are important, they aren't the things that cause lasting improvement – they only set the stage for that improvement.

The best designed relationship-focused team building events do more than create laughs – they create learning. These events help people do more than get to know each other, they provide opportunities for team members to:

- **Learn each other's strengths.** Strong teams not only like each other, they know each other's strengths. They are collectively able to tap into the strengths and experience of all the members of the team.
- **Find ways to capitalize on those strengths.** The best teambuilding activities give people a chance to be themselves, without all the structure and trappings of the workplace. And when people are themselves, others will see them in new, and often flattering, ways. This gives their strengths a chance to shine, and helps others see how those strengths can be tapped by the team.
- **Get comfortable with asking for help.** Highly effective team members are willing to ask for help, regardless of their role on the team. Teambuilding activities can help raise people's comfort with asking.

There are other factors about team relationships that matter, that might not get addressed in traditional team building, but they are quite important. Again, these require effort and time spent to develop processes – and most likely support from leaders outside of the team. Some options include:

- **Initiation processes.** How new team members are added to a team; how they become oriented and acquainted with team members, norms and expectations is something typically left to chance or a quick meet and greet. Organizations that develop processes and plans for this will have greater success with teams that change membership frequently.
- **Role definition.** Team members need to understand where they fit in and what their roles are. When new teams are chartered or started there needs to be a format and plan for discussion of team member roles and expectations.

As you can see, even the Relationship component of this CARB model is about more then just "liking one another." So why is it that people always feel the relationships are the key to more effective teams?

Along with popular opinion and habit, sadly the most prevalent reason is because it is completely inwardly team focused. Leaders can invest in a team building session so people get to know each other, but they don't have to invest themselves or look at the systems they have created as a part of the problem.

Behavior
and Skills

Behaviors and Skills

Being a successful team member requires different behaviors and skills than are required of an individual contributor. Therefore, when you put people together on teams they will perform more confidently and successfully if they have the right skills.

While the list of skills and behaviors that support team successes is long, here is a short list to get you thinking about the types of behaviors and skills to look for when creating a team or to develop in an existing team.

- **Strong technical skills and competence.** Having the subject matter knowledge, industry perspective or specific skills the team needs is critical. Of course not everyone should bring a cloned set of skills, but it is important to identify the subject matter needs of the team, and make sure that each team member contributes to one or more of these skills.

- **Able and willing to collaborate and share credit.** Working alone allows people to feel the spotlight and glory when things go well. It also means those individuals will be accountable when they aren't as successful. Highly effective team members recognize that the team success will reflect on them most when they focus on team success rather than individual accolades. The best team members are willing to collaborate.

- **Able to trust others.** Trust is something that is developed between people over time. In fact, as relationships are built trust can blossom. The best team members though are willing to start from a position of basic trust in their team mates. Certainly this trust can deepen and grow, but the most effective team members are willing to assume the best and work together more effectively from the beginning. This behavior becomes more important as the makeup of individual teams changes.

- **Able to participate and lead effective meetings.** Meetings are an important component of team success. Whether the team meets everyday, on remote conference calls or only quarterly, the ability to contribute ideas and insights, to help the team move towards the desired results, to provide feedback when needed and the ability to, and willingness, to stay focused are critical skills for effective teams.

- **Comfortable and competent at group problem solving.** Some problems a team faces can be solved by individuals. Sometimes a sub team will tackle a problem. Sometimes it requires the entire team. In every case, effective team members know how to work together to solve problems, how to listen to the ideas of others, how to ask questions without being condescending and how to make sure the strengths, experiences and insights of each team member are taken into account in the problem solving process.

- **Willing to continuously learn.** The work of today is more complex and demanding than it has ever been. This means that for teams to succeed each individual on the team needs to continuously improve his/her individual skills.

The success of a team is a complex thing, and like many complex things, most people try to find easy answers or to isolate one factor that can make the difference. For most people the one factor they have simplified team building into is getting people together to have some fun and giving people a common experience.

In the real world, this is just one way to improve team performance.

I've had the honor of working with one organization for nearly 17 years. This organization is committed to building teams that can make a difference in how they reach their organizational goals. The leaders strive to understand the workings, dynamics and skills needed by teams. They walk their talk. And while they do have team retreats, they recognize two important factors that lead to great success for those retreats:

- The retreats are more than just fun. They take time to consciously work on each of the components of the CARB model, strengthening them through dialogue and shared experiences.

- The retreats aren't seen as an event. Yes, the retreat is an event, but they work hard to integrate these events into the culture, lore and expectations in the organization. This means that events become an ongoing, planned part of the team development process of the organization as a whole.

So please, before you call HR, a training group, us or any team building consultant to ask for a team building event, think more about the team, the organization it is a part of and what the team's makeup and goals are first. Then, when you make that call, encourage your consultant to give you options and approaches that will help your team where it really needs help the most.

Use the CARB Model to remind you of the components that support highly effective teams. Use the CARB Model to help you identify the best fits with consultants that you might use. And most of all, please use the CARB Model to remind you that highly effective teambuilding requires more than a recreational retreat.

ABOUT BUD TO BOSS

Bud to Boss provides new leaders and organizations looking to develop new leaders with insight, resources and powerful learning opportunities designed to specifically address the challenges of successfully transitioning from peer to leader.

To speak with someone about how we can help you or your organization, send a note to **info@BudtoBoss.com** or call the number on this page.

You can learn more about us at:

BudtoBoss.com

Our products and services include:

- Books & Learning Resources, including the best-selling book From Bud to Boss

- Classroom & Virtual Workshops

- The Bud to Boss Toolkit eLearning Course

- A Variety of Enterprise Solutions including Onsite Training and Certification
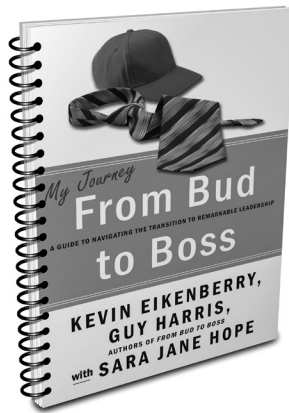
@BudtoBoss

@FromBudtoBoss

/ BudtoBossOfficial

The Kevin Eikenberry Group
8021 Westover Drive
**Indianapolis, IN 46268**

(317) 387-1424

My Journey From Bud to Boss

A companion volume to the From Bud to Boss book, the Journey is a workbook designed to help you apply the knowledge gained to actual work experiences. It includes activities, questions, and exercises designed to take you beyond the concepts introduced to you during the Workshop or the book. And while this book is completely designed to be written in, all of the templates and tools are available in both PDF and Word document form so that you can use them over and over.

Remarkable Leadership

is a practical handbook written for anyone who wants to hone the skills needed to become a remarkable leader. This book outlines a framework and a mechanism for both learning new things and applying current knowledge in a thoughtful and practical way. It explores real-world concerns such as focus, limited time, incremental improvement, and how we learn.
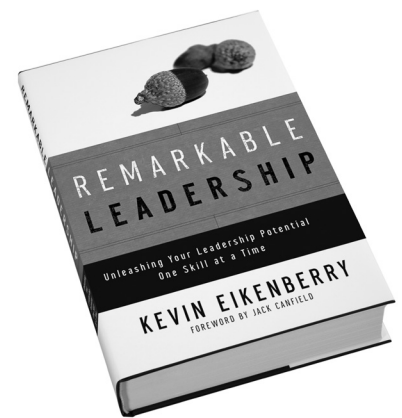
The Long-Distance Leader

is a practical, candid look at what it takes to lead people, projects and teams in today's dispersed workplace. The book showcases 19 rules for being a remarkable remote leader, and offers practical models, tools, and best practices to tackle the real-world challenges from how we work and communicate virtually.
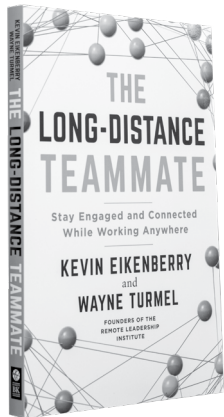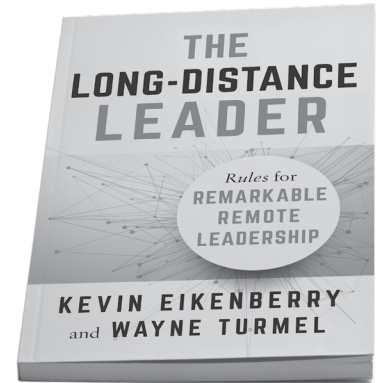
The Long-Distance Teammate

Written by the founders of the Remote Leadership Institute, this book is the most authoritative single resource for helping remote workers get work done effectively, build relationships that are both productive and satisfying, and maintain a career trajectory when they are not in constant close contact with their leader, coworkers, or the organization in general.

Check out our website for additional leadership resources including our free video training series, blogs, newsletters, podcast and more!

BudtoBoss.com/resources