

Action Centered Leadership

Action Centered Leadership model, also called the Three Circles Model, was developed by John Adair in the 1960's. This model can be seen as a compass to help managers organizing their times to lead a high-performance team. The Action Centered Leadership model can be applied at all levels.

This model is represented as three overlapping circles and proposes that there are three fundamental components to management and leadership:

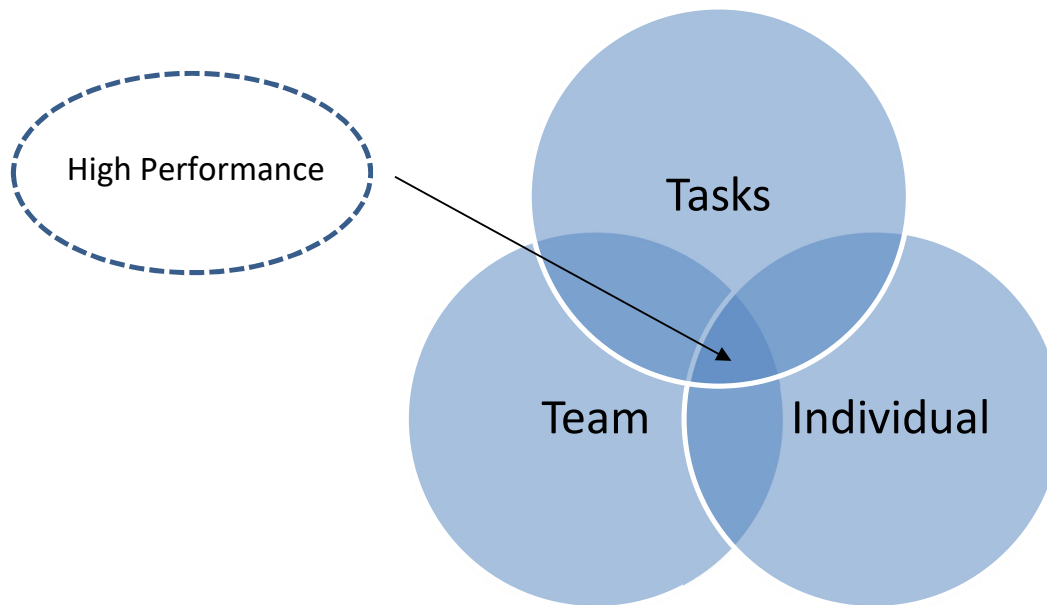
- Achieving tasks
- Managing the group which makes up the team
- Managing individuals which make up the team

These three elements overlap to one another, that means they interact. The manager should have command of and make use of the all three aspects to find a balance between them. He needs to adapt this model to its own situation, and for example, put more effort and time into individual management than into achieving tasks to make his team more performant.

Examples:

- You start in your position. You get to grip with the objectives, tasks, who is doing what, the schedule etc. (Task). You know that under your predecessor some team-members struggled to keep up, so you invest a lot in individual coaching (Individual). However, after a while you realize that deadlines have been missed and a blame culture starts existing in the team (Team).
- You have a well-performing team, but one member is not carrying his share of the workload. He/she is lacking motivation and deadlines. The entire group will start to suffer because one person drags down the productivity. This can lead to missing deadlines as a group. You have a great team and skilled individuals, but you did not clearly articulate the objectives, therefore there will be no progress towards your goal.

Adair provided a list to guide leaders and managers find a balance between these three core management elements.



Adapted from John Adair

THE TASKS

- Define the tasks - determine the vision and direction of the group.
- Identify the resources - people, process and tools - to achieve the tasks.
- Create a plan - measurements, timescales, deadlines, tactics etc.
- Establish roles and responsibilities within the team.
- Delegate work to team members.
- Set the standards the team must meet: reporting deadlines, quality expected etc.
- Monitor, control, and maintain the overall performance against the plan.
- Report on the process the team is making towards its objective.
- Assess and then recalibrate the plan and targets as necessary.

THE TEAM

- Establish, agree and communicate the standards for both behavior and performance.
- Establish key soft area aspirations for the group: style, culture, ethics etc.
- Maintain discipline and the focus on objectives.
- Watch for and then facilitate resolution of conflicts within the group, and between the group and external parties.

- Monitor the overall balance of the group. Fix gaps in the mix where appropriate.
- Develop moral, team working cooperation, and the team's spirit. Build common sense of purpose.
- Provide training to the group as appropriate.
- Build the maturity and capability of the group by slowly but steadily increasing authority and freedom. Discuss and communicate with the group as this happens.
- Identify and develop roles within the group.
- Develop communications both within the group and externally to be appropriate, timely, and effective.
- Engage with the group to give feedback to them and receive feedback from them.

THE INDIVIDUALS

- Aim to understand the people who make up your team. Understand their personal situations, ambitions, strength, weaknesses.
- Be sensitive to personal issues.
- Provide support to individuals.
- Agree and communicate an individual's level of responsibility, what they are accountable for, and their targets.
- Give recognition and praise to individuals. Do this liberally.
- Reward individuals: financial reward, increase status or responsibility.
- Work with individuals to plan how to develop their maturity and capability, through training, increased authority, increased responsibility etc.

Adapted from: <https://expertprogrammanagement.com/2011/08/action-centred-leadership-john-adair>