



# Ritualize to Actualize

BY:

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# RITUALIZE TO ACTUALIZE

What can a sports team teach us about building a thriving multi-generational business? Consider this: Before each game, New Zealand's national rugby team, the All Blacks, performs the Haka, a ceremonial warrior dance famous for its fierce choreography. **The Haka, which originated with the ancient Maori tribe, unites the team, fosters confidence, and signifies the team's intention to defeat the enemy or die trying.**



Photo by Stefan Lehner on Unsplash

This powerful ritual plays a major role in the team's success. The All Blacks have won over 90% of their games since 1903, and despite their 2019 World Cup loss, are widely considered the best rugby team in the world.

To create a successful multigenerational team, you need rituals. Rituals are the raw material of a transformational culture. Hence the mantra in the title, "Ritualize to Actualize." As you move through problems and experiment with solutions, it's critical to create rituals that unite team members, deepen

## TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAM, YOU NEED RITUALS

trust, and strengthen business results. Your team's rituals won't be as boisterous as the Haka, but they can be just as inspiring.

Our team has its own rituals that I credit for much of our growth over the last few years. Here is one example—our weekly team meetings. **Weekly team meetings are common in most organizations, but too often they're not effective.** Many leaders use the lion's share of meeting time to dispense information that could more efficiently be delivered by email. Our team meetings are different. They are designed to enhance relationships, promote learning and tackle tough issues.

We open with a leadership message conveyed through a quote or media clip and ask the team to take a minute to meditate on the message. Below is an example we used to start a recent meeting:

*Reading is like a software update for your brain.*

*Whenever you learn a new concept or idea, the "software" improves. You download new features and fix old bugs.*

*In this way, reading a good book can give you a new way to view your life experiences. Your past is fixed, but your interpretation of it can change depending on the software you use to analyze it. -James Clear*



Next, we invite team members to give kudos to others for a job well done. This might involve praising someone for going above and beyond, helping create a delightful client experience, or reaching a professional goal such as passing a certification exam.



### Then we share a self-assessment we call a “head check”:

- To promote clarity, we each rate how we are feeling on a 1 to 10 scale. If a team member is feeling fully present and influential, they’ll rate themselves somewhere between 8 and 10. The New Zealand All Blacks call that “keeping the blue head.” On the other hand, if a team member is in “red head” mode, that is, feeling stressed and that life is influencing them, they’ll give a lower rating. Though I tend to be in an empowered blue head state most of the time, there are times when things are tough, and I make a point of being honest when I’m not feeling great about what’s going on. It’s important to our culture that team members never feel pressured to pretend everything is perfect when it’s not.
- We each share our travel schedule so everyone knows where people will be and what client visits or events are happening.
- We each summarize our workload. That’s to ensure people are not overwhelmed and can ask for help when needed.
- We believe team members need to ask permission to provide feedback to others. So, each member lets the team know whether they are in a state of mind to hear a message or accept feedback, typically outside the meeting itself. Hence the question “Is the landing dock open?” Think of an aircraft carrier where landing conditions are constrained and complicated. Like a pilot who needs to know if wind, speed, or time of day allows them to land on their home carrier, each team member needs to assess whether they

are in a frame of mind to accept feedback—in other words, whether their landing dock<sup>1</sup> is open. It’s part of our culture to feel free to declare our landing dock closed. For instance, a team member might say “Right now, my landing dock is closed. I’ve been up all night with a sick child. But give me 20 minutes to get organized and then my landing dock will be open.”

Our head check ritual happens very quickly. We go around the circle. Someone might say, for instance, “I’m a 10. I had a great time with my family this weekend. I have no travel this week, but I may be called for jury duty. I have 10 client visits in the calendar. My landing dock is open.

## FAMILY FOCUS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR FIRM’S CULTURE

After the head check, we review client personal events such as birthdays and other special occasions happening that week. Family focus is an important part of our firm’s culture, so we look for opportunities to mark special moments in the lives of our team members and clients.

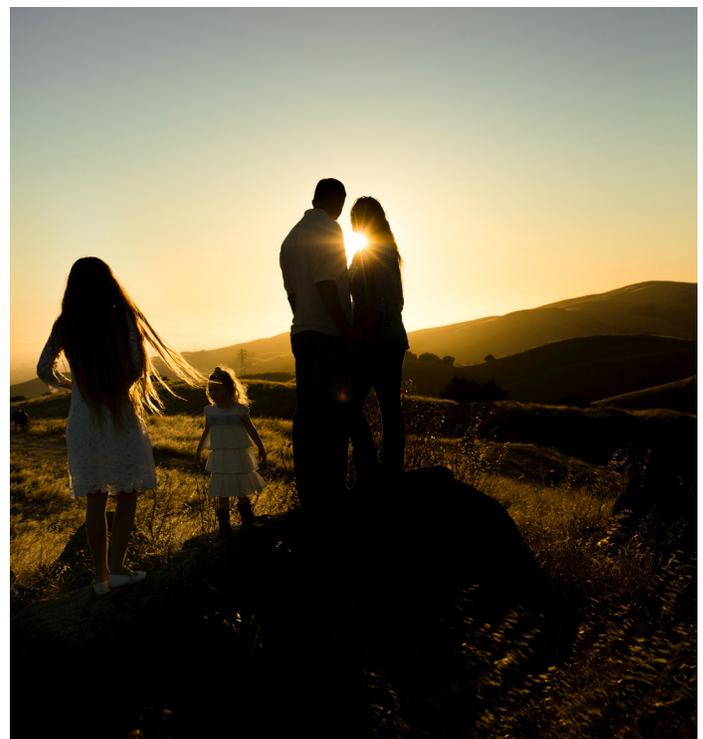


Photo by Jude Beck on Unsplash

<sup>1</sup>The term “landing dock” was created by my coach and colleague Ray Kelly.

We end our weekly team meetings with “Did You Know?” This part of our meeting is intended to share learning across the team in a variety of areas. Some weeks we might be inner-focused, such as “Did you know you need to change your network password tomorrow?” Other information-sharing has to do with national or global issues that can affect our clients and our business, such as relevant federal congressional legislation.

Covering all these topics may seem like a lot to accomplish in a weekly meeting, but for our team, it usually takes only about 30 to 35 minutes of the hour we allot. The ROI on the time we spend together each week is substantial. Younger or older, junior or senior, we feel connected.



We trust one another. We produce exceptional results for our clients and our business.  
**And that’s the stuff that keeps a business successful today and sustainable for the next generation.**



*Contact Saša Mirkovic at Inspire Network to learn more about strategies for creating transformational growth or positioning your business for a successful generational transition.*

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