

# TEAMTHINK: TEAM NEW ZEALAND

## *The “Black Magic” of Management Behind the 1995 America’s Cup Success*

PETE MAZANY

### MAIN IDEA

The “Vision-Driven” model for successful project management was exemplified by the success of Team New Zealand in winning the 1995 America’s Cup.

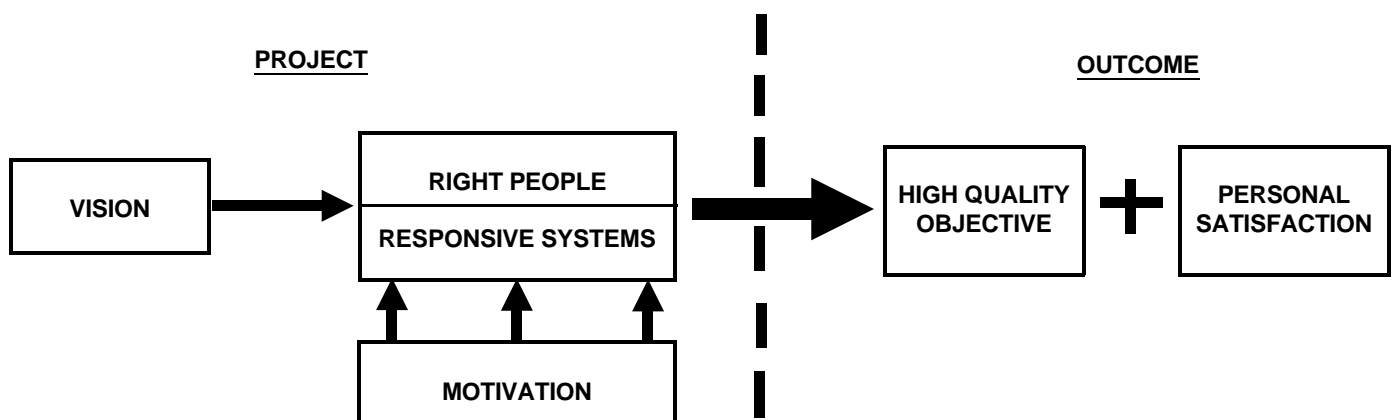
The components of this project model are:

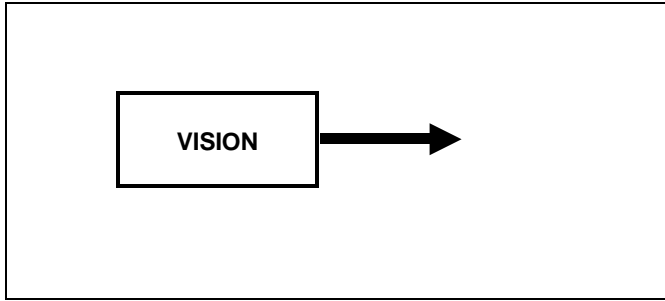
1. An extraordinary project always begin with a strong and compelling vision that something significant can be achieved.
2. To achieve that vision, a highly compatible team of people with the exact skills required must be assembled and managed.
3. The team must have flexible processes and systems which enable them to learn new skills and adapt the system as they learn.
4. The team’s motivation is the ongoing driving force and must be supported by trust between team members and financial rewards.

Once each of those components is in place, high-quality outcomes can be achieved:

1. The successful team will accomplish a specific task-oriented goal within the specified time-frame and resources.
2. Each team member will gain significant amounts of personal satisfaction from participation in the project.

In summary, the project leader must effectively blend the technical and human aspects of the project by organizing the appropriate personnel and resources and then focusing a coordinated team effort. Working by this model, extraordinary objectives normally considered to be unattainable can be accomplished anywhere anytime.





Main Idea

A vision is the driving force behind an entire organization. Once it is set in place and adopted by each member of the team, it creates the context for the very existence of the project.

Supporting Ideas

In May 1993, 15 people gathered for a 3-day strategy session to plan how New Zealand could win the 1995 America's Cup. The first session at that meeting was spent developing a statement of the project's vision, which was written down and signed by each person present:

**Our Vision**  
***For the Team New Zealand America's Cup Challenge***

Our aim is to build a challenge that can win for New Zealand and that we can be proud of - to succeed in all aspects!

We want a small informed and fully motivated team that:

- works in an environment which encourages every member to make a meaningful contribution;
- has a high degree of personal integrity and group honesty;
- recognizes personal goals but not hidden agendas;
- continuously monitors and improves its performance;
- is fun to be in.

Those initial statements then became part and parcel of the team's culture, and the vision statement which guided every aspect of the operation from selecting staff through to management systems. Interestingly, the project actually excelled at converting those words into actions which is usually the most difficult aspect of having a vision statement.

Once the vision statement had been articulated, the team next developed a set of rules of operation which were also designed to reinforce and specify the direction the project would take.

The rules of operation developed by Team New Zealand were:

**Rules of Operation**

- Fairness and honesty - "Play nicely together."
- Openness - "Share your toys."
- Emphasize simplicity.
- Focus - Remember the big picture.
- We will encourage creativity and emphasize follow-through.

In addition to the vision and rules, the team also developed a detailed product specification which outlined the type of boat that would be required to win the America's Cup. These specifications focused on upwind and downwind speed, acceleration, maneuverability, construction, body, keel, sails, mast and team-work between helm and trim.

The specifications provided each member of the team with a detailed and clear vision of the end product so that every person's ideas could be brought to bear on the design process at hand.

There are several aspects in which the Team New Zealand vision statement, rules of operation and product specifications can be applicable to many other organizations:

1. **Pride**  
Pride in the work is emphasized as a key motivator. Most projects which have resulted in significant achievement have been started with an objective of being able to look back on the project, irrespective of results achieved, with pride that it was an honest effort.
2. **The development of trust**  
Two factors which are absolutely essential for the development of trust within the team are integrity and honesty. Trust and openness are highly motivational factors.
3. **Absence of hidden agendas**  
The fact that people work on a project for different reasons (personal goals) is quite acceptable and should be encouraged. However, hidden agendas may be counter-productive and should be avoided at all times.
4. **Learning faster than everyone else**  
The ability to learn from past experiences (even mistakes) faster than a competitor learns is an important characteristic to be developed in any project.
5. **Fun**  
Having fun is a great motivator. Most of the team will be there for the journey, not the destination.
6. **Openness**  
Encouraging the free flow of information within the team is highly productive and desirable.
7. **Focus**  
Most teams work very hard at keeping things simple - that is, at focusing on those things that will help the team win or lose. Anything else is ignored in the very best performing teams.
8. **Creativity**  
By encouraging creativity, the team placed itself in a situation where the manager was not required to carry the entire team. Every person feels important, and is important.
9. **The best possible foundation**  
Once the right foundation has been laid, it is much easier to add the best infrastructure later. However, if the right principles are not specified at the commencement of the project, it is easy to become side-tracked and diverted.

While most commentators on the success or failure of projects tend to work on the premise that teams will only succeed if they have sufficient resources and control procedures, Team New Zealand adopted a strong values-based leadership culture.

In the values-based model, the success of a project depends on the trust of the team members in themselves, in the team leaders, in their technology and in the nature of the motivation that drives them to greater and greater heights. Values-based leadership focuses on the development of trust between team members.

The role of the team leader is to develop a vision which embodies the correct values.

