



WHY IS JUMBO VISMA THE EXAMPLE OF A HIGH PERFORMING ACTION LEARNING TEAM? (PART 2)

(continued from Part 1...)

4. Learning from what goes well

Learning from what goes well is the fourth element of seven, which I describe, following the success of Jumbo Visma's cycling team.

My previous blog was about the importance of learning from what went wrong. So now the opposite. The question that immediately comes to mind is: How (or when) does a team learn more from loss or more from gain and why?

What is so strong at Jumbo Visma is that they don't look at the victory, the result. They look at little things that go well. For example, I read that last year as a team they cycled their main opponents on a mountain at a distance. This did not last long, because a few kilometers further on they were caught up again. The team then analyzed what was going well when they rode the opponent behind. And that is exactly what Jumbo Visma used to put their main opponent behind for good this year. By doing that one thing that went well even better and more often, they won the Tour.

So don't be guided by the end result, but look at parts or phases where something went well. That's usually obvious in a win. But so did Jumbo Visma when they lost.

So also ask the question: What went well in a failed consultation? Or in whatever failed activity. A shame, after all, if you don't appreciate what you did well because the end result frustrates you. That's why in Action Learning meetings we always ask

the questions: What went well and what can be improved. Regardless of whether it was a good or bad session.

What I learn from Jumbo Visma is that it does revolve around the end result. But one-sided focus on the end result also distracts from what can be improved in the process. It distracts from the sometimes many small things that a team must continue to do together especially very well.

"Let go of the result, if you play well, you will win by yourself."

What does it take in your team to continue to see, even in the face of adversity keep seeing what is going well?

My next blog, fifth of seven is about not assuming just anything. Always Inquire, Never Assume: AINA Principle

! TIP: books and articles on appreciative inquiry might be interesting to read.

5. Don't assume just anything

Not making assumptions about just anything is the fifth element of seven, which I describe, following the success of Jumbo Visma's cycling team.

The biggest mistake Jumbo Visma could make right now is to assume that they will win the tour more often for the time being. After all, they have a tour winner who is still young and can last for years to come. Fortunately, they don't.

This statement is more valid than ever before, as far as I can remember. So many unexpected situations arise in the world and in organizations. Everyone needs to stay sharp and continually learn. Someone can be perfectly happy with their job, and what happens when suddenly a recruiter comes along with a better offer.

My WIAL partner Christoph Maria often calls AINA principle. Always Inquire Never Assume. This can prevent a lot of misery. How often does it happen in your team or organization that action is taken based on faulty assumptions? That is quite unfortunate, if it is not learned from and leads to wasted energy.

I think that every organization that calls itself professional should be and remain keen on this. People in the organization should at least be aware if someone is acting on an assumption. Sometimes someone has no choice. Possibly when it comes to people. Then a wrong assumption, well-intentioned as it may be, can lead to a socially and psychologically unsafe work environment.

Four questions by Byron Katie (source The Work) I have in my tool bag for such cases. These questions potentially put assumptions on the edge. Beliefs of persons and teams of persons can be confronted with four questions:

1. Is it true?
2. How can you be absolutely sure it is true?

3. Who are you with that thought?
4. Who would you be without those thoughts?

Usually it is not true, which exposes the assumption. And towards the true problem can be worked. So it is a matter of asking.

My next blog is about not waiting for the next Dutchman who wins the tour.

! TIP: books and articles The Work of Byron Katie

6. Not waiting for the Dutchman on their team to win the tour

Not waiting for the next Dutchman to win the tour is the sixth element of seven, which I describe, following the success of Jumbo Visma's cycling team.

For a Dutch team, it would be extra nice if a Dutch rider is successful. If only for the publicity it generates in their own country. Chauvinism is not unknown to the Dutchman. To justify this, the label talent is often used. Then you suddenly hear: 'Holland has a talent!'

However, the team's leadership gives short shrift to this: "Whether someone has talent cannot be recognised so early. Thus, "Focusing the team on achieving success with one person is disastrous, even though cycling is all about individual gains.

In the WIAL NL Team Podcast S1E01, I talked about this at length with Sanne and Aik. In it it turned out that of (both once having talent status), one was comfortable with being designated as the pivot of a win. But the other did not like that at all. I don't think there is anything wrong with one person's personal contribution or achievement being given extra emphasis. That is then factually correct.

In my opinion, this is different when naming one talent, since the expected achievement is in the future and does not have to become factually correct. When people are praised for their talent it can create positive pressure. Just as well it can lead to a feeling of if it doesn't work out then apparently I don't have enough talent after all. I find that unfortunate, because effort and perseverance usually win out over talent anyway and strong teams can bring out the best in an individual. Right?

What does the word talent evoke in you?

! TIP: read more biographies these I often find very informative

7. Use scientific knowledge.

My last blog in this series is about Jumbo Visma's insight on the use of scientific knowledge. Since I can't keep it within the maximum size allowed, I've split it into two parts.

In cycling (or physics), I can perfectly imagine how scientific knowledge is used. I see cyclists pedaling against the wind in wind turbines or working on their fitness at high altitudes. In doing so, much of the physiological performance is measured. Sport and

science have made a beautiful alliance here. This was not always with the right intention, just think of the doping scandals of the past. The pursuit of success can spill over, shall we say. Fortunately, fair-play has won out and science contributes to cycling and other sports. This leads to better performance and fewer injuries. In physics, it is even clearer. What gravity is there is little doubt among ordinary citizens. But for theoretical physicists it is still not entirely clear.

I wonder how trainers and coaches have ever applied scientific knowledge in team building or motivational coaching? Perhaps it has occurred, but I rarely encounter it.

The question that has been on my mind for years is: to what extent does it make sense to improve teamwork and leadership using scientific knowledge? Isn't it more often coincidence, rather than an observable pattern?

I don't really dare make a statement about it. Especially from the knowledge, that most scientific knowledge now comes from statistical analysis, discovering precisely, what remained hidden from the normal observable. For example, I use Jung Action Typing, I am immersing myself in TMA and reach out to MBA students literature to address their challenges. All three involve static analysis. Yes and I also measure, for example, whether progress is being made in the number of questions people in a team ask each other. Can I call that scientific knowledge?

More and more often I read that scientific insights were not quite right after the fact. Just this week I read a paper about the famous marshmallow experiment. Nine hundred children were given a marshmallow. If they left it untouched for fifteen minutes they got two. If they ate it within fifteen minutes, they got one. It was later found that the children who were patient and could wait fifteen minutes for their reward were more successful later. Scientific evidence that children who can hold back and go for a better long-term outcome? That was the conclusion. Yes perfect, that seems a nice return on the experiment.

But no! Later it turned out that children who were not so well off at home were not used to getting more and ate their food quickly. So they did the same with the marshmallow. So there was probably more behind it that made them less successful! The opportunities they got because of their origin? It shows once again that context can have so many more influencing factors in it. It shows why to be very careful using the general validity of scientific insights. Personally, it helps me to change a mindset of certainty to a mindset of probability. When I look at Jumbo Visma with that, I have the insight that: science helps very well in the so-called beta aspects, in the alpha aspects in which I work I certainly don't have that yet].

What role does science play in your work?

! TIP: Find your own balance. As Rene ten Bos once said: even worse than blindly accepting everything is to ignore and disregard everything.

This was blog seven of seven about insights from a cycling team. Got any feedback? Let me know!



Twan Paes
Master Action Learning Coach, The Netherlands
info@twanpaes.nl
/January 2023

COLOFON

Author: Twan Paes
Redactie: Christoph Maria Ravesloot
Sparringpartner: Frank Campman
Editing: Jonne Paes
Translation: Christoph Maria Ravesloot
Sources: diverse journalistiek over Jumbo Visma

With thanks to all relations of WIAL Netherlands