

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

How Teams Become Brilliant Together



Christine Comaford

Author of the *New York Times* Bestseller

Rules for Renegades

Dear Reader,

How would your business grow if you could become smarter overnight? What would the impact be if you could tap into more parts of your brain to increase innovation, creativity, emotional engagement, vision, feelings of safety, belonging, and mattering? And what would the impact be if you could guide your entire company to do this too?

You are about to find out.

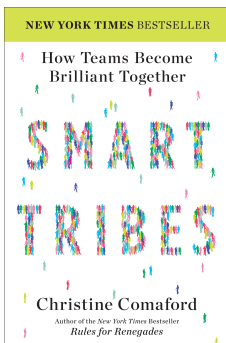
Over my three decades of building businesses and helping to cultivate leaders and their teams, I have found that certain specific neuroscience techniques enable one to make swift, positive, and sustained change. We can change our and our teams' ability to learn, to get unstuck and stay that way, to be more intrinsically motivated at their core. These techniques are easy to learn, gentle, beneficial, and tremendously helpful in all human interactions.

This excerpt of *SmartTribes* will get you started on tapping into all of your inherent brilliance. Please feel free to share it with your colleagues, team, strategic partners, friends, loved ones, and human beings in general. **The book will be released in May 2013.**

Everyone deserves the opportunity to have access to the most brilliant parts of who they are.

Thanks for the opportunity to be of service to you,

Christine Comaford
Christine Comaford Associates, LLC



To order
SmartTribes,
please visit
www.SmartTribesBook.com

To book Christine for your next corporate event, or to inquire about executive coaching and leadership development services, please call 415-320-6580 or e-mail ops@ChristineComaford.com.

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Like an elevator that passes through floors, businesses pass through inflection points. At least we hope they pass through. You are either moving forward or sliding backward. Where is your business headed and what's at stake? We'll show you the surprising truth about how great companies get stuck and stop growing.

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Human brains are wired up to seek safety, belonging, and mattering. Many scientific management practices from the Industrial Age, as well as our own unconscious safety patterning, can inadvertently push our people into acting out of fear, crush our culture, and stifle innovation and growth.

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Foreword

SmartTribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together is dynamic, fast-paced, and full of insights that are incredibly valuable to executives who are looking to create positive and lasting cultural change in their organizations.

In this high-octane and insightful book, Christine Comaford gives us a systematic approach to creating what she calls a SmartTribe—a company culture that will “outperform, outsell, and outinnovate” the competition. Christine’s approach is unique in that it is from the inside out. It helps us change our company’s and culture’s ecosystem and as such generates results for the long term.

Recently recognized as the #1 leadership thinker in the world by Thinkers50 (sponsored by *Harvard Business Review*), I can say that I know a thing or two about leadership, behavioral change, and executive coaching. And Christine is spot on in her discussion of emotional triggers! She calls them “emotional hijacks,” those little interruptions throughout your day that remind you of a person, a relationship, a relative, or a situation at work. These codes that were written into our psyches when we were very young play out in our adult life. They can keep successful people from being even more successful.

In fact, any human being will tend to repeat behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement. And the more successful we become, or the more positive reinforcement we get, the more likely we are to experience the success delusion: I behave this way. I am successful. Therefore, I must be successful because I behave this way. Not so!

The method for change that Christine puts forth in *SmartTribes* will help you change your repeated behavior, especially when it no longer serves you, to that which will take you to the highest peaks of performing. Even better, it will help you as a leader assist your people to get the results they would like too. Christine’s goal is to help you increase your own and your team’s performance, innovation, and engagement. And, if you do as she suggests in the pages that follow, it will happen!

So, get ready to launch into a new dimension of performance. With Christine as your guide you will be amazed with the results!

Life is good.

Marshall Goldsmith

Author of New York Times bestsellers *MOJO* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*
and #1 executive coach

Chapter 0

My Promise: The ROI of a SmartTribe

When leaders call me, they want three things from their teams: increased performance, increased innovation, and increased emotional engagement. They're heading toward the next level of revenue and what worked in the past just isn't working anymore.

They're stymied.

They're stuck.

They aren't getting the results they want.

Sound familiar?

What you need isn't more tactical advice. What you need is a systematic approach that changes your company culture from the inside out and generates results all on its own. So in this book, I'm going to teach you how to create a SmartTribe, a company culture that will consistently outperform, outsell, and outinnovate your competition.

Why "smart"? Because the proactive, innovative part of their brain is consistently in the driver's seat. Why "tribe"? There's a reason why "tribe" has become the new buzzword: the latest neuroscience shows that our very sense of survival depends upon a sense of belonging. When that sense of belonging isn't there, even at the workplace, fear kicks in. And our "fight/flight/freeze" brain takes the driver's seat and kicks our innovative brain to the curb.

Yet as leaders we often unintentionally send our teams into the part of their brain where optimal performance is tremendously compromised. This can happen when a company:

- Is navigating rapid growth where internal priorities are frequently shifting and the team is challenged to quickly adapt and stretch
- Has unclear directives
- Has inconsistent accountability structures and communication rhythms
- Has a culture where the blind spots and challenging behaviors of the leaders are not being addressed

- Has unresolved conflict and/or low alignment among the leadership of the company
- Is changing their business model or executing a complete company turnaround

All of the above are common in growth scenarios. And all of the above can put our teams into fight/flight/freeze, or what in this book we'll call the Critter State, with no access to our greatest resources.

In contrast, the Smart State is where we have full access to creativity, problem-solving, innovation, higher consciousness, and emotional engagement. We all want our companies to grow, and change is always a part of growth. So we all need to learn techniques to avoid sending our teams into their Critter State and to help them shift into, and stay in, their Smart State. If your entire culture is consistently operating in its Smart State, then you've got a SmartTribe.

So what does this SmartTribe culture look like? Even in the face of change and growth, SmartTribes are focused and communicate clearly and directly. They are unusually accountable to their promises and powerfully influential. And they have the energy and enthusiasm to do what needs to be done—consistently.

If you don't have a SmartTribe and want one, or you want to make your SmartTribe even smarter, this book will show you how you got where you are, how to get clear on where you want to go, and how to use potent neuroscience techniques to get you there. These techniques are easy to learn, practical to use, and will ensure you and your team move forward, reach the next revenue inflection point, and do so with energy, engagement, and innovation.

They'll also give you the power to leave your competitors in the dust. Sound intriguing?

Here are some minimum results from the SmartTribes we've helped create. Note the ranges can be quite wide based on company size and the length of time the team has been operating as a SmartTribe:

- Individuals become 35–50% more productive.
- Marketing demand generation increases 31–237%.
- Sales are closed 22–50% faster, and sales close rate is increased by 44% or more.
- Marketing messages are 37–301% more effective.
- Revenues increase by 30–110% annually.
- Profits increase by 17–200% annually.
- Individuals are 67–100% more emotionally engaged, loyal, accountable, and ownership-focused.
- New products and services are created 29–48% faster.

Here are a few more results from team members in a SmartTribe:

- 97% tangibly contributed to increasing key executive strategic/high value time by 5–15 hours per week.
- 63% received a promotion to a role with increased responsibility and management of others within 6 months of applying our techniques via coaching and training.
- 100% increased their ability to significantly influence others and outcomes.
- 86% reported getting more done in less time due to the accountability techniques they learned.
- 100% reported the ability to apply our communication techniques and thinking styles both at home and at work, resulting in an increase in personal fulfillment.

Here’s the bigger picture, thanks to Harvard Business School’s eleven-year study on the impact of performance-enhancing cultures:

	Average Increase for Twelve Firms with Performance-Enhancing Cultures	Average Increase for Twenty Firms without Performance-Enhancing Cultures
Revenue Growth	682%	166%
Employment Growth	282%	36%
Stock Price Growth	901%	74%
Net Income Growth	756%	1%

Source: James Heskett and John Kotter, *Corporate Culture and Performance* (Free Press, 1992), validated by clients of Christine Comaford Associates, LLC.¹

This groundbreaking research in 1992 by Harvard Business School professor James Heskett detailed the corporate cultures of two hundred companies and how each company’s culture affected its long-term economic performance. Heskett and John Kotter published a book, *Corporate Culture and Performance*, which detailed the study and demonstrated the value of investing in culture. A lot has happened since this research was released: there have been are countless discoveries in applying neuroscience techniques to increase leadership, emotional engagement, and performance even more profoundly. The key is to have the tools and techniques to replicate the above results in your own culture. Hence this book.

¹ For table, see <http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkotter/2011/02/10/does-corporate-culture-drive-financial-performance/>.

Having a SmartTribe becomes essential if you want to:

- Navigate rapid growth where internal priorities are frequently shifting and the team is challenged to quickly adapt and stretch
- Increase accountability, communication, and execution among team members, resulting in profound revenue, profit, and market position growth
- Resolve conflict or improve alignment of business partners, teams, and board members
- Improve the leadership and communication skills of C- and VP-level executives by helping them overcome their blind spots and challenging behaviors, and expand their vision
- Execute a new business model or complete company turnaround with executive and cultural support

My combination of 30+ years of operational experience, plus 35+ years of expertise in behavioral modification, human potential, and organizational change, is the secret behind creating SmartTribes.

And now the secret is yours.

How to Get the Most from This Book

See this book as your field guide. I'm your scout. I have run ahead of where you are and I'm here, machete in hand, to show you the most efficient and effective path. Did you see the movie *The King's Speech*? If so, think of me as Lionel, the speech therapist. Like Lionel, I am not a medical doctor, therapist, or neuroscientist. I'm a business builder in the trenches who applies a wide variety of techniques in order to generate meaningful real-world results.

Read chapters as you need them, do the Assess, Act, and ROI exercises at the end of each chapter, apply the Resources, and you'll be amazed by your results.

We all have stuck spots—those blind spots where we ache to move forward but somehow can't. What if you could see ahead, and either move through potential stuck spots or navigate around them? What if you could see into the stuck spots of your key team members and help them through or around these treacherous time and energy wasters? With this level of vision, you could also see where the market is going, and get there first—or at least arrive better prepared than your competition. That's one reason you're reading this book: to see the present more clearly, and to intentionally create the future you want.

In this book you'll get the tools to improve your vision, create a culture where you and your team can fully access your best resources, and improve performance constantly and naturally as your company grows. You'll get the tools to get and stay Smart.

Ready? It's time for lift off.

Chapter 1

How Great Companies Get Stuck

Leaders often assume their company's growth depends on finding and fixing problems. They want their salespeople to sell more, their engineers to innovate faster and with greater ingenuity, their client-care people to better service accounts, and on and on. And in the rare cases where growing revenue isn't the priority, growing profit is.

Hey, who wouldn't want to solve all these problems? Yet these are not the real problems. They are merely symptoms of underlying structural problems, indications of people getting stuck in their Critter State—in fight, flight, or freeze. And leaders often put their teams exactly there, albeit unintentionally.

When companies grow, they come to certain places where the things that used to work, the things that created that level of success, don't work anymore. We call these *inflection points*. And these crucial points are tied to revenue and company growth.

Here's the trouble with inflection points: at each one you have a whole new company. At each inflection point, a company must reinvent itself in order to reach it and move through it. If it doesn't, it will become stuck and ultimately decline into a parabolic upside-down curve, rather than an undulation back into growth mode. (See Figure 1-1 below.)

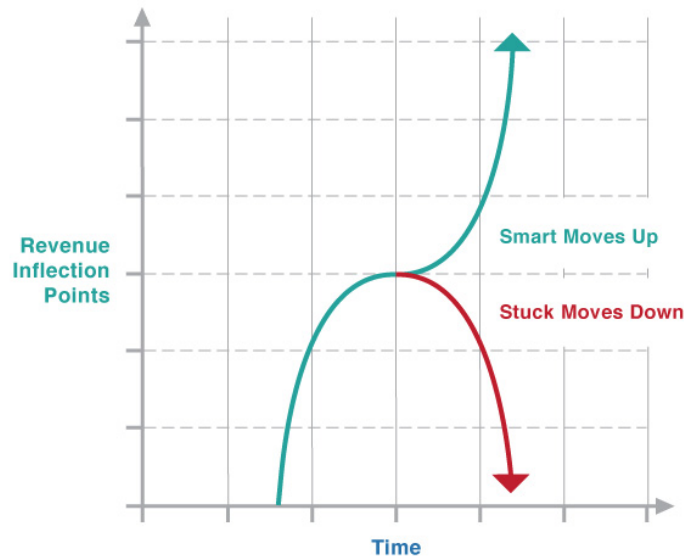


Figure 1-1. What Happens at Revenue Inflection Points

How do you navigate between inflection points? How do you maintain and increase your momentum to avoid organizational *stuck spots*—the spots of stasis usually found between inflection points where the company stops growing and swirls around at approximately the same level of annual revenue before sliding precipitously backward? How do you get into the *Smart State*—the place that will get you to the next inflection point, when the game reaches the next level?

To reach that next inflection point, you will need to intentionally map out a plan to get there, and then execute that plan like a banshee. Either you swirl around the stuck spot, barely maintaining the same revenue year after year, or you slide back down to the previous inflection point, or you move forward with tremendous intentionality. The world is full of “living dead” companies that reached an inflection point and couldn’t grow to the next one. Remember: you’re either moving forward or moving back. Stasis is not sustainable.

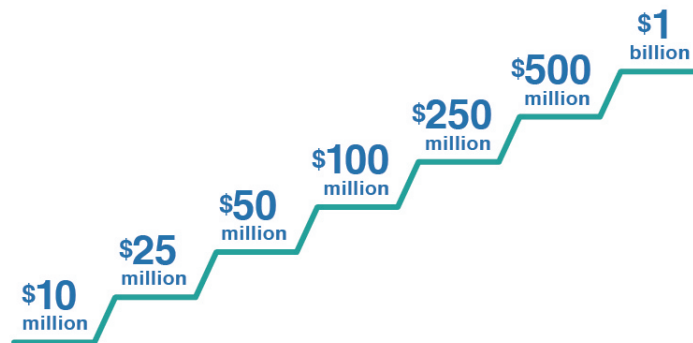


Figure 1-2. Some Common Company Growth Inflection Points

What Has to Change?

To continue to grow, to undulate upwards at an inflection point, a company needs to make changes in one or more of the following areas: *people*, *money*, and *model*.

People. Some of your team members may need to develop profound new skill sets, behaviors, capabilities, beliefs, or identities. Regardless they'll likely need to become more emotionally engaged and have their lights turned up to shine brighter. As the company passes the higher revenue inflection points, the CEO will need to step back more and more, empowering their executive team to take more responsibility, and in the extreme this can mean a large-scale organizational and/or cultural overhaul.

The only way to break the endless cycles of an organizational stuck spot is to start treating the system instead of individual symptoms. But here's the hitch: Organizations (systems) tend to be reflections of all of the people who work there—especially the leaders. And that means that in order for your organization to change, everyone has to be involved. Starting at the very top of the organization and working all the way down the organizational chart to the people on the front lines. It also means leaders must work on themselves.

Money. At each inflection point you'll want to ask a number of money-related questions. How is the business funded? Do you need expansion capital? How are departmental budgets created (or not)? How are costs accounted for and what is the discipline in reporting? Financial systems must be looked into and explicitly altered to fit the next inflection point.

How efficient are your operations? Have you streamlined all expenses? Do you track ROI on all projects—internal and external? How are your sales? What's the process of creating and converting new business? Are your incentive programs working? Are sales commissions tied to profit per sale? What are your sales channels? Both your top and bottom lines must be aligned with your growth goal.

To grow to the next inflection point, your systems must be aligned and your funding model must be appropriate. Don't forget strategic partners, industry influencers, and key alliances, as well as liquidity event planning. Outsourcing or sale of non-performing or low-margin business lines need to be considered here too.

Model. What's your business model? How will the company grow—organically or via acquisition? As a company grows, core competencies shift, markets (customers, competitors, environment, distribution channels, and technology) evolve, and some opportunities are more leverage-able than others. What is today's product line? Tomorrow's? How is our product path working and how can we scale our relationships with clients, strategic alliances, and key influencers? How effective is our marketing?

To grow to the next inflection point, we need a strategic plan. What is yours? Does it include growing through new products, fewer products, acquisitions, or consolidation of your industry or market sector? Do you need to spin off or outsource a non-performing division? Does it make sense to shift your business model to streamline profit potential?

Are You Approaching an Inflection Point?

Just in case you're about to dive into your Critter State, let me throw you a line. One thing that's reassuring about inflection points is that they are relatively predictable. You already know what you're going to have to work on (people, money, or model). Here are some common inflection points and what to look for, so that you can determine how urgently you need to get to work.



Figure 1-3. How to Move Through Some Common Revenue Inflection Points

In my thirty-plus years of helping clients build market-leading businesses, evolving and optimizing one's *people*—the company's culture—is always the hardest. So in this book, we're going to spend our time together focusing on your people—on developing a SmartTribe to ensure we can navigate the above inflection points with great momentum and as much ease and fun as possible. Let's get started.

Get into High Gear: SmartTribe Accelerators

In the Industrial Revolution, scientific management principles emerged to cope with the need to produce more, better, faster. In the Information Age, some of these principles and practices are still sound—hey, let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater—but some feel as obsolete as the Ford Edsel they were designed to produce.

I have noticed that leaders who are able to grow their organizations rapidly in the face of accelerating technological and societal change—the people who create and foster innovation—exhibit certain characteristics. I call these characteristics “SmartTribe Accelerators.”

And the leaders who use them are the ones who pull their companies to and through inflection points.

You see, people are essentially unmanageable. Most attempts to control and manipulate people will ultimately fail, and as we look at the American workforce where 71 percent of workers are emotionally disengaged and simply working for the money,² we know it’s essential to fix our state of so-called leadership.

“Old School” management is synonymous with what many people think is leadership. This model operates on fear: the team member must perform or we’ll remove their ability to pay their mortgage, kids’ educational expenses, etc. Fear pushes people to take action.

However, when driven by fear, human beings generally go to one of three places:

- 1) They get stuck.
- 2) They solve problems that don’t exist.
- 3) They focus on the wrong problem, which is low leverage and doesn’t deliver the result they want.

Instead, we're going to teach you the five practices called SmartTribe Accelerators that will help you get what you want when you want it. (See Figure 1-4 below.)

² “Majority of American Workers Not Engaged in Their Jobs,” 2011 Gallup Employee Engagement Index, October 28, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/150383/majority-american-workers-not-engaged-jobs.aspx>.

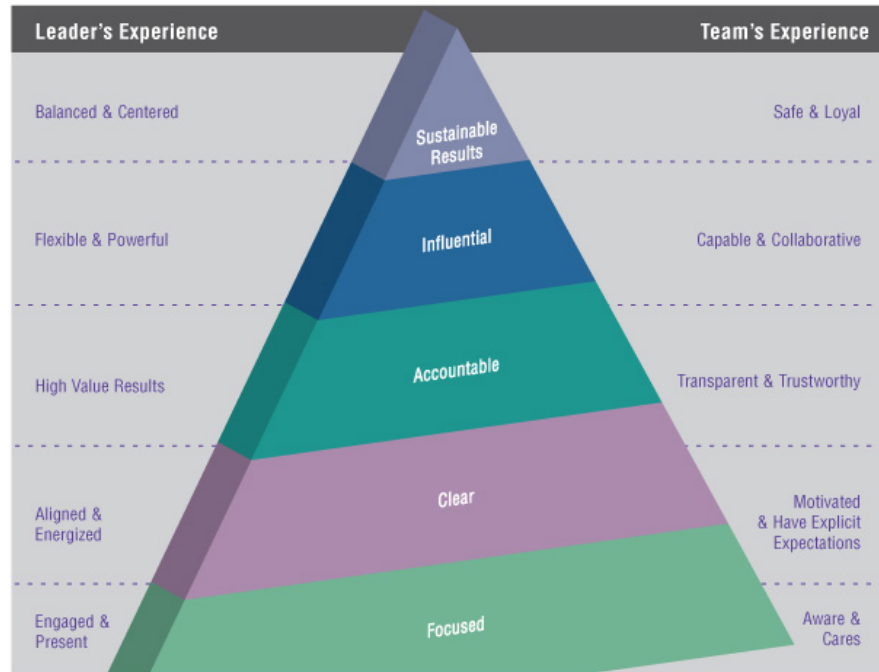


Figure 1-4. The Five SmartTribe Accelerators

These SmartTribe Accelerators—focus, clarity, accountability, influence, and sustainable results—foster emotional engagement. We know that leaders elevate and cultivate others, so they don't have to resort to primeval methods of control and manipulation—which misses our desired outcome anyway. We also know that as a leader cultivates these Accelerators, their experience of personal fulfillment at work increases—as does that of their team members. True leadership inspires people with vision. Vision pulls people not only to take action, but to care about the outcome, to take personal ownership of it, and to bring their “A game” every day.

So in Part One, you're going to learn why creating a SmartTribe is the key to outperforming, outselling, and outinnovating the competition. Part Two will cover the key characteristics of SmartTribes: focus, clarity, accountability, influence, and sustainable results. And Part Three will put it all together and show you some real-life case studies that prep you for the process of change and show you exactly how to create a SmartTribe in your own company.

After each chapter, I want you to hit the ground running. (Remember, I'm your scout and your coach—not your professor.) So for each chapter, I'm going to sum up what we covered in four sections. The Net-Net will be a quick culling of the key points and takeaways. The Assess section will enable you to quickly assess where you stand vis-à-vis what you just learned. The Act section will prescribe some actions to take in order to reap the benefits of the ROI section, which will share the results and return on investment our clients have experienced by working through the Assess and Act steps. This format will provide instant opportunities to try these techniques out, fail fast when needed, and reach results and ROI quickly. And finally, we'll close each chapter with Resources that will help you to implement our techniques.

To build and lead a SmartTribe, we need to make sure our people shift from their fear- and safety-driven Critter State to their innovation and possibility-driven Smart State. How? By ensuring their survival needs are met: that they know they belong and are valued. That's the first step in creating a SmartTribe, and the topic of the next chapter. But first, let's take stock of your company's inflection point status in the sections below.

Net-Net

- Companies travel through relatively predictable revenue inflection points.
- You are either moving up through inflection points, or sliding downward and losing momentum. Swirling in place is not sustainable.
- The culture of a company is a product of its leadership.

Assess

Take our Inflection Point Assessment below to determine how ready you are to reach your next revenue inflection point.

Rate yourself on the following questions. Answer each with Yes or No, and total your answers at the end.

1. Is your revenue growing as quickly as you want it to?
2. Is your profit growing as quickly as you want it to?
3. Do you have the right people in the right roles doing the right things?
4. Are you retaining your superstar employees?
5. Are you intentionally helping your executive team look into their blind spots, overcome challenging behaviors, and expand their vision and ability to elevate others?
6. Have you identified your next generation of leaders?
7. If so, are you following a specific, proven process to cultivate them?
8. Would you like to get more accountability, communication, and execution from your team?
9. Are you navigating rapid growth or turnaround where internal priorities are frequently shifting and the team is challenged to quickly adapt and stretch?
10. Do you rarely have conflict/backstabbing/silos between departments and/or team members?

11. Does your culture focus more on positive outcomes instead of negative outcomes?
12. Do you know how to scale and allocate your human resources to get more done with fewer people?
13. Are you keeping your finger on the pulse of the culture and implementing programs to increase emotional equity?

If you have five or more No answers, you're at risk of getting stuck between inflection points.

Look at your score above. What are the key areas where you have the greatest opportunity for growth? Is it in cultivating your culture and team? Increasing or optimizing your revenue? Streamlining your operations?

What inflection point are you headed toward? See Figure 1-3, "How to Move Through Some Common Revenue Inflection Points." Do you have all of the "People" components from all previous inflection points, plus those for your targeted inflection point, in place?

Act

- Based on your answers above, what three People components can you put in place to ensure you reach your next inflection point?
- What single step can you take toward putting one of these components in place this week?
- Now schedule and complete this action step.

ROI

- If you could add three or more Yes answers to the above assessment, what would it be worth to you?
- What results did you get in the first ninety days of implementing your People plan?
- What are they worth to you?

Resources

Go to www.ChristineComaford.com/resources and download the kits that will be most helpful for you. We think the Accountability, Team Performance, Sales, and Optimizing Operations Kits are a good start.

Chapter 2

The Connection Between Your Brain and Your Culture

So there you are, when suddenly you hear *that song* that reminds you of *that person*. And you're emotionally hijacked—just like that. Good or bad, the song interacts with your neural net and triggers the emotions you have associated with it. Emotional hijacks happen every day, often unconsciously, often with debilitating results.

An expression on a team member's face subconsciously reminds you of Mom at her most critical, yet you have no idea why you dislike speaking with her. But the team member actually has chronic indigestion, her facial expression has nothing to do with you, and she wonders why you haven't shown her the report, or invited her to the meeting, or told her what's up, or smiled on the way to the coffee machine.

And so it goes. Trigger—response. Trigger—response. Trigger—response. All day, every day. Human beings are meaning-making machines. The trouble is we often assign meaning where it doesn't exist.

Now most of these internal programs—the neural connections and associations we make that give experience meaning—are programs we “wrote” between the ages of zero and three years old. Many of our programs either were provided for us by our parents, or were coded by our very young and inexperienced reaction to what we perceived as threatening people or situations. Even the most wonderful, well-intentioned parents are going to make a few coding errors. I know I have.

Now that we are adults, the question becomes, how can we rewrite our own programs to set the meaning and get the results we want? Further, as leaders, how can we assist others to get the results and experiences they would like? How can we use this knowledge to increase our own and our team's performance, innovation, and engagement?

In the coming chapters you're going to learn how to deactivate your own and your team members' fear triggers, and to assign appropriate meaning. You're going to learn exactly what to do to create a team that acts as a team, one that supports each other to outperform, outsell, and outinnovate the competition. A tribe whose culture you created. A SmartTribe of whom you are justifiably proud.

How the Brain Blocks Progress and Performance

Our brains do an amazing and wonderful job, but they don't usually like change very much. You may like the *idea* of change. Heck, parts of you may be very interested in change theory, talking about change, managing change—and especially describing how *other* people should change. However, actual change involving ourselves is scary to certain parts of our brain. The parts that exist to keep us safe have created elegant patterning based on one-trial learning.

Let's take a closer look.

Your brain has three essential parts. The first part—the brain stem—sits at the base of your skull. This part is commonly called the reptilian brain, because it's exactly like the brain of a reptile. It's the oldest and most primitive part of the brain, and it controls balance, temperature regulation, and breathing. It acts out of instinct and is primarily a stimulus-response machine with survival as its focus.

Layered on top of the brain stem is the mammalian brain, so called because, yep, all the other mammals have this kind of brain too. The mammalian brain controls and expresses emotion, short-term memory, and the body's response to danger. The key player we're going to be talking about in this book is the limbic system, which is the emotional center of the brain where the fight/flight/freeze response is. Its primary focus is also survival, though it is also the seat of anger, frustration, happiness, and love.

Let's combine the limbic system with the survival mechanism in the reptilian brain. This creates the powerful combo pack we'll call the "critter brain," as my mentor Carl Buchheit of NLP Marin³ terms it. Once our critter brain has equated a particular phenomenon with safety or with survival, it will continue to carry out that program. And it will do so as long as we are not dead, because it really doesn't care about our quality of life—it cares about survival. And speaking of staying alive, one key component of staying alive is *belonging*, or being like the other critters in the environment.

Safety and survival are definitely good things, but here's the catch: since our critter brain doesn't care about quality of life, it often will choose behaviors that keep us safe first and foremost. So if we learn that we can survive by feeling worthless, by becoming invisible, by procrastinating until the last minute and then doing "good enough" work, or even by chronically doing a less-than-stellar job, then that program is the one our critter brain is going to associate with survival. It's going to keep running that program ad infinitum because it knows we can survive it. Again, survival here means continued breathing. Those old programs are going to run as long as we keep breathing until and unless we can intervene and teach ourselves that something else—maybe even excellence—is not only survivable *but safer*. This is why there are more negative than positive words in a language. Detecting threat is more important than being happy from a survival perspective.

Safety, belonging, and mattering are essential to your brain and your ability to perform at work, at home, and in your life overall. The greater the feeling of safety, both mental and physical; the

³ Carl Buchheit has been a wonderful teacher to me. Find out more about his transformative Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques at <http://nlpmarin.com/>.

greater the feeling of connection with others, or the feeling that we're in this together and we belong together; the greater the feeling that we personally matter and make a difference and are contributing to the greater good; and the greater the success of the company, the relationship, the team, and the individual.

Let's move on to the third part of the brain: the neocortex. This part of the brain is most evolved in human beings, and the area of it we are most concerned with is the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex enables us to plan, to innovate, to solve complex problems, to think abstract thoughts, and to have visionary ideas. It allows us to measure the quality of our experience, to compare it to an abstract ideal, and to yearn for change. The prefrontal cortex has enabled us to have a number of advanced behaviors, including social behavior, tool making, language, and higher-level consciousness.

Scientists don't really know all the things this part of the brain is capable of doing, but everyone from quantum physicists to voodoo doctors know that there is huge untapped potential in the neocortex overall. So we'll leave it at that.

For the purposes of simplicity we'll distill the above down to two states: the Critter State, where we don't have access to all parts of our brain and thus are reactive in fight/flight/freeze, running safety programs; and the Smart State, where we have easy access to all of our resources and can respond from choice. (See Figures 2-1 and 2-2 below.)

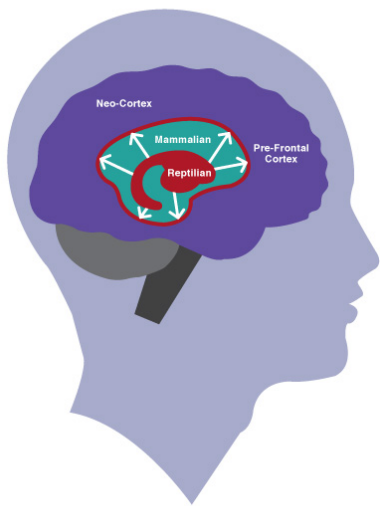


Figure 2-1. Critter State: Limited Access to Resources

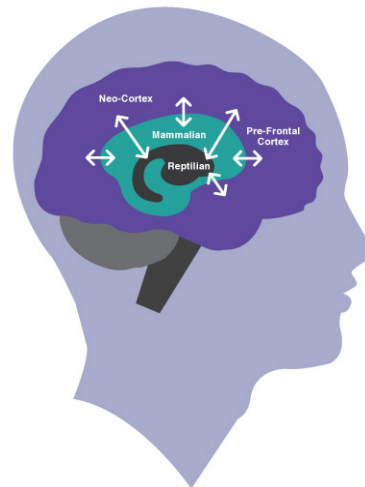


Figure 2-2. Smart State: Full Access to Resources

Today, innovation and growth through the next revenue inflection point depends on making sure the Smart State, not the Critter State, is driving management decisions and behavior in relationships. Management practices that rely on fear to enforce compliance keep people in their Critter State, or in old safety and survival patterns, and reduce innovation. Or as Brené Brown puts it in her book *Daring Greatly*, "If we want to reignite innovation and passion, we have to rehumanize work. When shame becomes a management style, engagement dies. When failure is not an option

we can forget about learning, innovation, and creativity.”⁴ The management practice of keeping people in their Critter State has grown not only increasingly obsolete, but ineffective.

Now the Critter State is still useful, of course, and we want it to take over if a car is careening out of control and heading for us. We also will use it to engage emotionally. We simply want to make sure that we have full access to all parts of our brain so we are in positive emotion and positive momentum.

SmartTribe Stuck Spot: The Invisible Advisor

Let’s look at a common case of the Critter State winning over the Smart State: the performance hijack. Performance hijacks happen when people lose their access to resources in clutch situations. For example, a high-potential manager walks into a senior manager’s office and can’t speak in coherent sentences although he knows the material. Or a seasoned executive babbles at the board meeting when she is known for her clear thinking. Or the manager who just saved the company has been asked to present what he did and flounders through the presentation. All these are examples of a critter brain that has hijacked the prefrontal cortex.

Alex is a client of ours who works for a prestigious worldwide consulting group. The problem was that he had been promoted from a junior role to one that involved far more presenting to and persuading key clients, and he was freezing, stumbling, and losing clients. This high performer had become a liability. What was happening to Alex?

We all have patterning that at one time in our lives was vital for survival and/or belonging. In Alex’s case, his patterning was to be as invisible as possible—this had been wired in childhood to avoid a parent with a rage problem. Invisibility was equivalent to safety for young Alex. The current-day trigger of high visibility kept plunging him into his Critter State, where he had learned to shrink from the world in order to survive. His Critter State was running the show to ensure his survival while his Smart State was shut down.

I am using Alex’s case here to illustrate what can happen when neural wiring starts running amok. All behaviors and behavior patterns have some kind of intended positive outcome at the time they were created; they are useful in some way to help the individual get the positive outcome they seek. The trouble is that as we grow and change some behavior patterns no longer serve us—they either need to be updated for the well-being of our current selves, or in Alex’s case, they need to be released entirely. Adult Alex was no longer under daily physical threat, so it was essential to teach his brain that he would be safer being visible.

Our Critter State hijacks our Smart State often—and usually within one twelfth of a second! Another client panicked when asked to speak in front of a group (“group” being defined as more than one person). Another client inexplicably age-regressed and took on the behavior of a young child in front of a new board member. Another client wanted new financing but consistently sabotaged new opportunities. Performance hijacks, all—and more common than you may think.

⁴ Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (Gotham, 2012), 16.

I am happy to report that the tools you'll learn about in Part Two of this book work extremely well in allowing your tribe to access their resourceful Smart State in most business situations. In Alex's case, we also applied a Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) technique called Re-Imprinting, which allowed him to have choice about his behaviors in the formerly triggering high-visibility situations.⁵ He has now been promoted to partner and capably persuades clients to follow new strategies and buy more of his company's services.

When performance hijacks happen, our Critter State is trying to keep us safe by running an old program that worked once—meaning that we survived that original situation. Cases of hijack include anything that triggers an automatic reaction that we would not consciously choose.

The Critter State will always trump the Smart State. Survival will always be coded as paramount. The trick is to increase safety, belonging, and mattering. When we do that, when we even make it safe for our team to recognize when they are triggered and to step back from it, we increase choice, we allow change, and we promote innovation. When we do that as a group—as a company—we become a SmartTribe.

Let's apply the above to your company.

What's Fear Got to Do with It?

First let's use your hand to model your brain, with a technique learned from the brilliant Dr. Daniel J. Siegel.⁶

Hold one of your hands up, palm out, and cross your thumb over it. Like this:



The base of your palm represents your brain stem, or your reptilian brain. Your palm represents your mammalian brain, with your thumb representing your limbic system. Now fold your fingers over your thumb and make a fist. The back of your hand and fingers represent your neocortex, with your knuckles to fingertips representing your prefrontal cortex. This is where we want to hang out—

⁵ See www.ChristineComaford.com/coaching to learn about how NLP techniques help change behavior.

⁶ Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson, *The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind* (Delacorte Press, 2011), 62-63. See also Dr. Siegel's phenomenal books *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (Bantam, 2010) and *Parenting from the Inside Out* (Tarcher, 2004).

Photo credits: thanks to Rick Thompson of Rising Medical Solutions.

in the prefrontal cortex, or the Smart State—where we have great choice; we’re present, engaged, creative, and ready to roll.



Now think of the last time you “flipped your lid”—you had a tough day, you got triggered, and you dove into your critter brain and were in fight/flight/freeze. This is where you were:



Your Smart State was hijacked and your Critter State was running the show. In this case your undesired (by your conscious decision making) safety patterns were in charge and you didn’t have access to resourceful states. Your frontal lobes were flapping in the breeze, using their time and pattern-matching capabilities to trigger Critter State activity and access to “negative” states like anxiety. We don’t really like to judge these states as positive or negative, because every state has a use in some context, but these states are undesirable when you don’t have access to the resources you need to solve a problem or move forward.

Now, once again, close your fingers over your thumb—like the victory punch people throw in the air when they are successful. Like this:



This is going to symbolize full access to the resources in your frontal lobes. Remember, access to the frontal lobes’ resources allows you to plan, innovate, solve complex problems, think abstract

thoughts, have visionary ideas, experience higher consciousness, and love—to be in your Smart State.

Be sure to teach these hand signals to your team, as they are super helpful to use at work. When I am really stressed out, I'll show the “flip your lid” signal above. When I'm in a meeting and want everyone to be in their “creative zone,” I'll show the closed hand symbol. One other benefit is that the closed fist represents the Rock in the game “Rock, Paper, Scissors”—it connotes strength, power, and protection. When in this mode of thought, we can really rock it!

So guess which state is better for business? Especially a business where innovation and change are necessary for growth? What state is best to lead people from, to sell from, and to grow from? Yep. You've got it—the Smart State.

Fear Pushes, Vision Pulls

If we look at the management techniques that emerged during the Industrial Revolution, they seem far more based on Critter State phenomena than on Smart State evolution. Survival was based on driving your competition into the ground and the law of the sea prevailed: the bigger fish wins.

If your competition was in-house, if the culture of the company encouraged you to compete against your own side, this was considered okay. The theory was if you competed against each other, you would work harder for the company. If the culture was a bit cutthroat, well, that was just the price of higher performance.

Then came the Information Age, and we were faced with increasing complexity of tasks and accelerating technological innovation. Holding people in fear and driving them into the unresourceful and highly stressful Critter State just doesn't work anymore. Fear may push people to action, yet this approach is not sustainable and will ultimately lead to either burnout or extreme apathy. Vision pulls, attracts, draws people forward, and emotionally engages them. With vision, the Smart State is engaged, and we can create, love what we're doing, work longer hours, and leave work excited and wanting to come back for more. Technically love, excitement, and passion reside in the right hemisphere of the brain, mostly the temporal lobe. What is key is that with a SmartTribe, we have the synthesis of the “smart” and “emotional” brain—and the best of both.

Here's a quick reference guide for some behaviors that send us into our Critter State versus our Smart State—do note that all of the Smart State behaviors are taught in this book:

What Sends Us into Our Critter State	What Sends Us into Our Smart State
Layoffs/reorganizations without explanation	Clear messaging on what this layoff or reorganization means and how it is for the health of the company and team
Tight/unrealistic deadlines	A culture of promises and requests and clear priorities

Conflict	A culture that supports differing opinions and acknowledges plus resolves conflict openly
Gossip	Zero tolerance for gossip, with full leadership support
Political posturing	Zero tolerance for politics, backstabbing, sabotage, and undermining, with full leadership support
Secrecy/the unknown	Consistent and transparent communication
Mixed messages/unclear expectations	Explicit communication
Budget cuts	Clear messaging on “belt tightening” and how we can all chip in
Imposed change	Clear change messaging with an explanation as to why and what it means
Revenue loss/key customer loss	Clear messaging on how we’ll turn this around
Burnout	Sustainable cultures with managed workloads

Figure 2-3. Behaviors That Send Us into Our Critter State and Smart State

Note that some roles with either high routine or high stress—such as those in data entry, assembly lines, and call centers—are more apt to see workers slide into their Critter State. This is where cultural rituals around recognition as well as a highly emotional mission, vision, and set of values help tremendously. More on both of these in Parts Two and Three.

Growth Mindset

It is time for leaders to learn how to be “agile,” how to “fail fast,” how to learn to live in their Smart State—and guide their teams there too.

Unfortunately, many of us have been socialized differently. We were given tests at school that decided how smart we were. We were taught that intelligence is fixed, or that some people have talent because they were born with it. Many who were told that they were smart have spent their lifetimes defending that identity by never taking any risks. If you don’t try anything new, you can’t fail, and no one can challenge your perception of being “the smart kid.”

But what is smart, really? Is it IQ, high grades, and college degrees, or is it the ability to adapt, to be resilient, to persevere in the face of adversity, and to seek challenge, learning, and growth? Is it being rigid, or is it being flexible and changeable?

According to Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset: The Psychology of Success*, we can succeed if we embrace a *growth mindset*.⁷ Simply put, we can improve anything, but—and this is a pretty big “but”—we have to want it and work at it. This means not only that we have to learn to accept failure and feedback, *we have to seek it*. It’s how we handle failure that determines our success. Do we get every bit of information we can and use it to try again? Do we work hard and keep practicing to overcome our limitations? That’s what Michael Jordan did when he was cut from the high school basketball team—and how he became one of the greatest basketball players of all time.

Nowadays it’s the *smarter* fish that wins over the bigger fish. The smarter fish has the tools and the ability to manage and shift their and their team’s Critter States. In particular, the smarter fish knows how to cultivate the SmartTribe Accelerators of focus, clarity, accountability, influence, and sustainable results.

Enough about neuroscience for now. Are you ready to create your SmartTribe? In the following chapters of Part Two, we will examine these five SmartTribe Accelerators in detail and provide you practical, easy-to-use tools to immediately apply them.

Net-Net

- Human beings have two primary areas of their brain we want to focus on: what we call the critter brain, which is the part of us that reacts with fight/flight/freeze and is primarily concerned with safety; and the prefrontal cortex, where we can choose to respond, innovate, and grow.
- The critter brain will trump the prefrontal cortex until we learn tools to manage our emotional state and get unstuck.
- For simplicity, we’ll call the critter brain the Critter State and the prefrontal cortex the Smart State.
- To grow our business and navigate to and through revenue inflection points (which we’ll explain in the next chapter), we must spend as much time as possible in our Smart State and create structures for our team to do the same.

Assess

- What percentage of time do you spend in your Smart State versus your Critter State in your work? In your life overall?
- Consider your company organizational chart. Starting at the top, what percentage of time do you think your C-suite spends in their Smart State versus their Critter State? How about the executive team? The management team? The supervisory level? The individual contributors?

⁷ Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The Psychology of Success* (Random House, 2006), 7.

- Now consider your culture overall. What percentage of your culture's working time is spent in the Smart State? The Critter State?
- What behaviors do you and your company leadership have that might send someone into their Critter State?

Act

- What are three things you could do this week to help foster a greater sense of safety, open communication, and risk taking within your team and colleagues? Setting standard meeting and communication rhythms is a great start, as is looking into roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures. When people know what they are responsible for, how to deliver it, and who they can turn to for help, safety is increased.
- What are three things you could do this week to help foster a greater sense of belonging, connection, and camaraderie within your team and colleagues? We find team brainstorming, cross-functional task forces with a common goal, and team victory celebrations are a good start.
- What are three things you could do this week to help foster a greater sense of mattering, recognition, and appreciation within your team and colleagues? We find daily appreciation of one or more team members is a solid start. (Be sure to be specific about what you like!)

ROI

- What results will your tasks in the Act section above yield in the first 90 days? 120 days?
- How will you measure your ROI? See chapter 14 for the results we recommend tracking for your SmartTribe.

Resources

Go to www.ChristineComaford.com/resources and download the Kits which will be most helpful for you. We think the Leadership, Accountability, and Team Performance Kits are a good start.

Rave Reviews for The SmartTribe Techniques

“Thank you for all your work in fostering American entrepreneurship.”

— President Bill Clinton

“Christine is super-high bandwidth.”

— Bill Gates

“CCA has made a huge difference in the growth of our company, the level of leadership across the team, the sense of ownership in all of our employees. In addition they are helping me perform at new levels I had not known were possible.

Before working with CCA I had too many direct reports, and although our culture was terrific, we weren't developing leaders at all levels. CCA did a Cultural Assessment where they uncovered what truly motivates our employees, helped us identify our emerging leaders, and helped us see how we could create a cultural of profound innovation, collaboration, accountability, empowerment.

The results have been remarkable. Our employees are more engaged and taking greater initiative, our emerging leaders are learning how to be more effective and are mentoring their reports to be the same, and our company is reaping the substantial benefits. We are on track to double our 8-digit revenue in the coming year.

Our board has commented on our renewed vitality, focus, performance. Our employees are on their way to a ‘Thank God It’s Monday’ attitude. And I have greater visibility and more time to focus on strategy.

Thanks, CCA!”

—Michael VanErdewyk, CEO, ReliaMax

“Whatever business challenge we’ve come up with, Christine and the CCA team have worked through it before—and often across multiple industries. CCA has multiple approaches and strategies for us to pick from and match with our culture and the opportunity at hand. CCA’s tools and techniques are practical, easy to apply, and are super impactful. They have truly resonated with my team.

Christine is all about ROI—she helps me drill down to what will really move the needle in our business, then she helps me and the executive team get the result we want. Whether it’s company-wide accountability and incentive plans, sales process and strategy, marketing measurement and effectiveness, cultural programs to increase engagement, CCA has tools and past ROI measurements for each investment we consider making.

Thanks, CCA—here’s to our next level of growth together!”

—Kristin Richmond, CEO, Revolution Foods

“I’d heard that CCA helps companies increase annual revenues by 25-110% and net income by 17-200%. Long-term, sustainable, top-line growth was something missing at my company, so I decided to see what CCA was all about.

From our first conversation, Christine asked me questions no coach or consultant ever had. She made sure I knew exactly what I wanted so she could help me get it. Then CCA performed a Growth Assessment, which yielded a year-long plan to get me the exact results I’d asked for.

In the first 90 days we created and communicated a compelling new mission, vision, and set of values—which tangibly increased engagement and alignment within our entire company; launched a vibrant innovation program—which yielded the first results within 48 hours; and rolled out new accountability structures.

Our leaders are more focused, more clear in their communication and directives, more accountable, more influential, and most importantly, the energy behind the innovative process is palpable. I have the 5+ hours of strategic time each week that Christine promised I'd get, and am more energetic than ever. And my executive team is following suit.

CCA has provided the exact burst of momentum our team was ready for. Their practical, easy-to-learn-and-use techniques quickly engaged our leaders to perform at much higher levels. CCA has positively and profoundly positioned us for future growth."

—Jeff Hoffman, Vice President/General Manager, Baxter Manufacturing

"Rising already had a fantastic culture and tremendous growth over the years, but we can always get better. I'd been through a couple of CCA trainings and knew some leaders I respected who worked with CCA and had rave comments about their ability to develop great leadership and ensure continued growth, so I was curious.

CCA has helped us 'up' our own high expectations of ourselves. We have streamlined our sales process and provided our team with new tools and techniques, our marketing is more effective and ROI-focused than ever, and our implementation process is tight and run by a cross-functional team. The best part is I have more energy, focus, and time than ever before.

Our new incentive plans, accountability structure, executive team code of conduct, ranking of high- and low-value activities, and other techniques have provided the executive team members with 5-10 hours of strategic time per person each week. We're finally out of the weeds—and you can feel the momentum and excitement in our halls—it's palpable.

Thanks to CCA's programs and accountability structures we have a clear path to the next five years of growth. We know where we want to go, how to get there, and our team is more collaborative and innovative than ever. The increased performance, communication, accountability across the company has significantly increased leadership at all levels and is just plain more fun.

Any business challenge we come across, teams roll up their sleeves and figure it out together. Christine and the CCA team bend over backwards to get us the resources, strategies, connections, outcomes we seek—they do this again and again. It's great to have a partner in the trenches who has been where you want to go.

I knew we had a great team, and I see now that they're capable of far more than I could've dreamed. Thanks, CCA!"

—Jason Beans, CEO, Rising Medical Solutions

"When I first met Christine, I knew we had to work together but wasn't sure what the return on investment in coaching could truly be. Now I know what it is: I think bigger working with Christine—we will double (or greater) our revenue this year as a result of my increased ability to create new strategies, expand my vision, see into my blind spots.

Christine helped me see it was time to bring on a seasoned COO, scale up my team, and bring them new resources. She helped me create accountability structures and communication rhythms for my team so everyone is aligned and charging forward. We're rapidly growing the company in a safe and sane way while preserving and increasing the fun of our culture.

In less than 120 days we closed the largest deal in our company's history using the strategy Christine and I created together. I know what's going to happen next—we'll exceed our sales quota. Again. This is now how we roll. Thanks, CCA! Thanks, Christine!"

—Sharon MacDonald, CEO, Interim Furnishings

"I initially hired Christine because I needed a Business Coach/Mentor to help guide me, grow my business, and provide insight on improving process improvement, efficiencies, and building a great team and company. In addition, CCA is known for helping change behavior that can be a hindrance to your organization.

The results have been terrific. In our first 6 months working together, Christine helped me delegate low-value activities and gain 15 hours of strategic time per week, optimize our sales pipeline and process, get me out of stress and into peace and increased performance, and streamline both marketing and account management.

Since I am in HR, I know hundreds of self-proclaimed coaches—many are just ‘textbook’ coaches and have no experience growing a successful business. I work with Christine because she has achieved great success in her own businesses—she has gone where I want to go and helps me navigate from her own direct experience. Christine has been amazing—she is personable, creative, extremely intuitive, and understands the steps needed for a company to consistently grow.

I highly recommend CCA for any organization that wants to take their company to the next level and build a great team.”

—Gail Tolstoi-Miller, CEO, consultnetworkx

“I’ve been in boardrooms around the world, and I’ve been in the C-suite for many years. I thought I’d learned a great deal about leadership and culture in my roles as COO and CFO at Patagonia, and CEO at Smith & Hawken. Then I met Christine.

What blew me away initially was her insight. Christine can see into me, my team members, our challenges, and our limitations so easily and clearly. And she does this with compassion, with total support, and with the aim of helping us to help ourselves.

And we have. Our team has come together in a way I couldn’t have imagined prior to coaching with CCA. We now have the right people in the right roles with the right tools on the right initiatives. Our revenue and profitability is rapidly growing; our culture is rich, honest, and thriving; and our team is rising up and performing at unparalleled levels.

I always knew we had this in us! Thanks for helping us to help ourselves, CCA.”

—Karyn Barsa, CEO, Coyuchi

“Prior to working with CCA, we did not have a great meeting and communication routine and did not have focused accountability. This was impacting our performance. We could do better. Christine has been very effective in helping me establish a strong meeting and communication rhythm, which has increased our team’s morale and improved our culture.

Christine has provided practical advice on rewards/consequences and increasing our alignment. We have implemented systems to improve our accountability, which has led to our largest pipeline in history and more proactive sales activity across the firm. I am really excited about where we are going and greatly appreciate all that Christine is doing for us.”

—Scott Eisenberg, Managing Partner, Amherst Partners LLC

“Working with CCA has made a huge positive difference for us in sales, marketing, culture, operational efficiency, and leadership overall. Our sales plan is now streamlined, and our reps have compelling new incentives—plus we’re getting great feedback from them. We’re now putting in place a solid ROI structure and can cost-justify our marketing—plus CCA introduced us to trusted, cost-effective marketing resources.

Our executive team is more focused on our key opportunities and priorities and we now have communication and meeting rhythms throughout the company and with our external sales reps. As a result of our work with CCA, I have increased visibility of each department and can help guide our company more effectively. Operational efficiency at our company has reached a new level—and we’re raising the bar.

The best part is our culture is deepening, our team is emotionally engaged, and we know where we’re going and how to get there.

CCA is helping us focus in on our highest leverage points in sales, marketing, and management. I plan to have them coach many of our executives.”

—Asha Chaudhary, CEO, Jaipur Rugs

“CCA has helped me to become a more effective leader in the eyes of my team members, my colleagues, my strategic partners, and the loved ones in my personal life. A true coach has your back, tells you what you need to hear, helps you grow even when it is uncomfortable. Christine’s commitment to my evolution as an executive and a human being is significant. She’s the real thing...a true coach.

Our team loves working with Christine. They are now more aligned, are closely tracking to our goals, and are more emotionally engaged and accountable. We’ve recently had the two best months of our history, and the trend continues upward. We’re on track to significantly increase revenue and profitability in the coming year.

CCA has truly ‘moved the needle’ for our business.”

—Dione Spiteri, CEO, US Appraisal Group

“We’re a high-performance service team in a very complex business with very demanding customers. We’ve been ‘hard at it’ for 4 years since the last merger, tasked with delivering huge savings and other value contributions to the business year on year. We also reduced our headcount significantly during the same time.

Get the picture? A lot of committed but tired professionals. Christine Comaford spent time with our team talking about how we could use her learnings to re-energize, beat bureaucracy, and put excitement back into the job. We’re a tough group...but it was transformational. She’s the best!

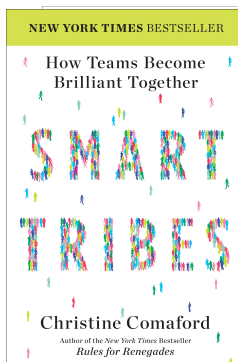
— Gregg Brandyberry, VP Procurement, Global Systems and Operations, GlaxoSmithKline

“How do you inspire a global sales force to adopt new, high velocity sales techniques and get beyond ‘no’ even in the face of a down economy? Christine Comaford. That’s how. Thanks for rocking our sales conference! Your proven tactics for sales and life success left everyone inspired, invigorated, and ready to exceed their quotas!”

—Tim Minahan, CMO, Ariba, Inc.

“When the Oval Office says ‘jump!’ the only question is, ‘how high?’ Christine helped us develop and launch our intranet strategy, which was super-aggressive for standard-pace government workers. She got everyone past the fear of change and into the excitement of it—and now Americans have access to far more government data via self-serve websites. Christine’s contribution to creating a government that works better and costs less was critical.”

—Greg Woods, National Performance Review, Clinton Administration



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