



The Research Foundation of Extraordinary Teams

by Kevin E. Coray, Ph.D.

Our approach is research-based. Since 2005, we have been rigorously studying teams that members describe as *amazing*, *fantastic*, or *life-changing*! At this point over 190 teams and more than 1500 team members have participated in our ongoing research. Sixty in-depth interviews shaped *Extraordinary Groups* (Wiley, 2009) and multiple focus groups, three rounds of question testing with more teams, and now over 130 teams have been involved with developing or using the *Extraordinary Teams Inventory* (HRDQ, 2014). This valid and reliable online team assessment tool has dramatically advanced our understanding of what extraordinary teaming is all about.

In the field research that gave rise to writing *Extraordinary Groups*, our research discovered *what* great teams do that allow them to become extraordinary. Second, we identified what *motivates* team members and *why* they do what they do on their way to greatness. Third, we saw that the secret sauce of amazing teams is the personal *transformation* that happens because of what people do in such a team; we learned how these transformative shifts impact individual feelings and performance.

The Extraordinary Teams Inventory

Since that time we developed the *Extraordinary Teams Inventory* (ETI) and have been actively using it and the field research results to work with teams to move them forward in their pursuit of the extraordinary. All of the Extraordinary Teams Partners are certified in using the *ETI* and have facilitated team building workshops and training sessions using the results of the *ETI* as a tool to enable learning and motivation. We have worked with teams with a wide variety of profiles resulting from the *ETI*, from quite ordinary to solid to extraordinary and every possible combination in between. In every case in which we've been involved, the *ETI* results and the facilitated discussions have led to increased attention to and forward momentum on the indicators. In limited situations where we have completed pre- and post-tests with teams that have committed to change, we have been able to demonstrate improvements over a six-month time frame.

We also have testimonial evidence that the use of the *ETI* and the facilitated discussions have led to significant positive change.

More About Our Empirical Research

The *ETI* measures five of the eight indicators of extraordinary teams: Compelling Purpose, Embracing Difference, Full Engagement, Strengthened Relationships, and Profound Learning. Each of these scores have been carefully developed using widely-accepted psychometric methods.¹ What this means is that the results of the *ETI* for any particular team can be trusted to accurately reflect the team's level of achievement overall and on each of the five indicators.



Also included in the *ETI* are several research questions that ask teams about the other three indicators posited by Bellman and Ryan in *Extraordinary Groups*, namely Just Enough Structure, Shared Leadership and Great Results. Analysis of these items indicates that:

1. Just Enough Structure is in part about the development and adherence to group norms which help the team to manage its dynamics in such a way that they sustain their level of extraordinariness;
2. Shared Leadership is about leaders creating and maintaining team level accountability, goals and motivation; and that
3. Great Results is about aspiring to greater outcomes as a team.

¹ The technical characteristics of the *ETI* are published in the *Extraordinary Teams Facilitator Guide* available from HRDQ. five indicators have reliability coefficients ranging between .79 and .90. The factor structure of the *ETI* has been cross-validated and confirmed. All five of the indicators significantly differentiate among teams ($p < .0005$). The indicators were developed to be relatively independent, that is they do not measure redundant aspects of teams.