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Howard Guttman draws upon several decades of wide and deep experience will thousands of executives within hundreds of companies throughout the world when offering in this volume everything he has learned about how developing high-performance individuals and teams will create and then sustain a high-performance organization. He asserts that there is a "code" to be cracked and cites several dozen examples of executives who have done so. He correctly points out that effective collaboration is essential at all levels and in all areas of an organization, whatever its size and nature may be. Moreover, the focus must be on cross-functional team initiatives.

"Great teams make great organizations. Period, Good and mediocre teams make good and mediocre organizations. They meet deadlines; they stay within budget; they maintain the status quo. But they do not push the envelope. They do not typically reach for performance breakthroughs. It is unlikely they will set the world on fire. And over the long haul, they will take you out of the game." According to Guttman, great business teams are led by high-performance leaders who create a "burning platform" for change, are visionaries and architects, know they cannot do it alone, build and nourish authentic relationships, model the behaviors they expect from their team members, and in unique and effective ways "redefine" the fundamentals of leadership. I wholly agree with Guttman that members of great teams are "us-directed": they tend to use only first-personal plural pronouns (i.e. we, us, our). Great teams play by protocols such as these ten agree-upon ways of working together at Chico's FAS in areas such as conflict resolution, decision making, meetings, and when determining performance expectations for both individual team members and for their leader:

1. Be candid and straightforward.
2. Be receptive to others' points of view.
3. Be accountable for your results and behavior.
4. Hold others accountable for their results and behavior.
5. Let go of "stories."
6. Resolve it or let it go.
7. Do not triangulate.
8. Do not accuse or allege in absentia.
9. Depersonalize (i.e. focus on issues, not individuals)
10. Structure decision making and follow process.

Guttman asserts that great teams continually raise the performance bar rather than allow complacency. They also have a supportive performance management system that provides whatever resources may be needed. "In order to effect permanent behavior change, a team's performance management system must support the new expectations [perhaps what Jim Collins characterizes as a "BHAG," a Big Hairy Audacious Goal]. Team and individual goals have to be crystal clear; the necessary technical and interpersonal skills have to be provided; performance has to be monitored; and feedback has to be timely and well thought out...Unless there are

positive consequences for staying there [in support on the given initiatives] - and negative ones for retreating - most people will quickly revert to old, safe ways of behaving. That is why great teams only flourish when there are positive consequences [e.g. financial incentives and rewards] for embracing team values and negative ones for flouting them."

The Chico's FAS list of protocols is but one example of reader-friendly devices that Guttman skillfully uses through his narrative. Others include self-audit questions to determine how well one is adapted to the player-centric leadership imperative (Pages 39-40), six principles that can guide and inform the development of leadership (Pages 41-43), characteristics of the mindset of a "great player" (Pages 50-60), a graphic illustrating the four stages of team development from hierarchical to horizontal (Pages 82), how great teams make decisions (Pages 131-133), several behavioral protocols that great teams insist on (Page 147), how to mange key issues (Pages 148-149), ten elements of high-performance communication (Pages 156-158), and the five "musts" for building great organizations (Pages 171-1281). Readers will also appreciate Guttman's provision of two appendices, a review of the key components of "Player-Centered Leadership" and then a review of "The Skills of a Great Team Member."

One of Guttman's most important points, reiterated throughout his narrative, is that all great leaders are also great team members, and, that all team members must also provide leadership. What he proposes is high-performance collaboration within the structure of a meritocracy. "Cracking that code does not guarantee a perfect outcome every time you engage in competitive play. But, by changing your game, you will acquire a sustained competitive advantage and the ability to excel in a very different marketplace. Make the change and you will likely join the ranks of the great leaders and teams" he discusses in his book. I congratulate Howard Guttman on what I consider to be a brilliant achievement. . . .