

RASHID ALLEEM



THE 13 CRITICAL TRAITS OF
TEAM DYNAMICS



Dedication

This book is dedicated to
Alleem Business Congress
Members and participants
For their thoughtful comments,
helpful ideas, and advice

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى قَاتِلِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ

Praise to Allah, Lord of the Universe. May Peace and
Prayers Be upon His Final Prophet and messenger.

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If you lead a team and want to survive and thrive
in this turbulent, global economy that we now live in. Read on !

Team management is not as simple as *you* might expect ...!

I have seen “mega” projects succeed against all odds and I have seen “smaller-scale” projects fail regardless of methodology or tools. I have separated these experiences and I have come to the conclusion that the critical success factor was *not* methodology or tools, but PEOPLE.

- Rashid Alleem
Founder & Chairman, Alleem Knowledge Center

OBJECTIVES



In this tip book we help organizational leaders to discover how to :

- Foster a climate of positive morale and ‘can-do’ attitudes.
- Increase team efficiency, improve working relationships, and get the results they need.
- Help all team members “fit in”.

Working Together

Just putting eight or ten people in a meeting room doesn't make them a team!

Situation



Ali's case ...!

Ali is a mid-level manager in a large non profit organization in Dubai. He leads a team of nine people. In a short memo to his boss Ahmed, he wrote :

Dear Mr. Ahmed,

Trust you are doing well. I love the idea of teamwork and know it can produce great results. But the team meetings are more like a 'battle zone' than a positive team environment. It often turns into "dirty tricks." Team members argue with, insult, and don't listen to each other. In other words, it becomes destructive, rather than constructive.

I've always been a leader, and I did my share of influencing other team members. Unfortunately, I have to admit that I led the team in the wrong direction!

As John Maxwell says " *If you think you're a leader and no one is following you are only out for a walk by yourself.* "

I wonder : What to do? . . What can I do to focus team members on what they need to do? . . How can they "buy-in"?

I'm willing to take the time to learn!

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Thanks and Regards,

Ali Salem
Marketing Manager

Questions



1. What advice might you give Ali?
2. Realistically, what do you think Ali can or should do?

These questions don't have simple answers!

So, read on to find out how you can help lead your employees in successful teams to face today's complex challenges.



Great teams aren't born .. they're built. So, Ali's case is not unusual. Everyone knows that teamwork is essential for competing in today's global arena, where individual perfection is not as desirable as a high level of collective performance. “ *One is too small a number to achieve greatness* ”.

In fact, as more and more organizations are using teams as part of their organizational strategies, there is increasing awareness that putting few people in a room and calling them a team does not make them a functioning group. Teams are not the same as other groups; they need to be built and maintained. It's not easy. A team has distinct characteristics. Even training them and giving them objectives does not make a group an effective team.

Understanding the concepts mentioned in “*13 Critical Traits of Team Dynamics*” tip book can be extremely beneficial for people who are responsible for designing and leading teams in a constantly changing business environment.

Team Dynamics

Team Dynamics are the unseen forces that operate in a team between different people or groups. Team Dynamics can strongly influence how a team reacts, behaves or performs, and the effects of team dynamics are often very complex.

Read on to find out.

Key concepts, terms, and definitions

I strongly believe that one of the prerequisites to understanding what a book is talking about, is to understand some of the phrases, buzz words and specialized terms used. The definitions that follow cover the “*most common*” teamwork vocabulary, so let’s make sure we are all speaking the same language!



Accomplishment - the successful achievement of a task.

A group - two or more people coming together for a purpose.

A team - a group of people with different abilities, talents, experience, and backgrounds who have come *together* for a shared purpose.

Charter - a document listing and describing the functions of an organization.

Cohesive - holding or making something hold together.

Decision teams – Teams that function primarily to make decisions. An example would be a committee formed to review flex-time policies at a company.

Diversity - a range of different things.

Dynamics - the study of the unseen forces involved in teams movement.

Inclusion - a person or thing that is included.

Influence - the power or ability to affect someone’s beliefs or actions.

Interaction - (of two people or things) do things which have an effect on each other.

Mission statement - the broad business purpose for which a team has been formed.

Principal - a general truth or rule that ideas or beliefs are based on.

Responsibility - the opportunity to act independently. A thing which you are required to do as part of a job, role, or obligation.

Security - the state of being or feeling secure.

Team Concept - a view of on-the-job working relationships that emphasizes collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork rather than individualism, self-reliance, and competition.

Trait - a particular quality of someone or something.

Trust - firm belief in the truth, reliability, or ability of someone or something.

Values - principles and beliefs about what is important in life and how people should behave.

Vision - tells teams which direction the organization is going and what it plans to accomplish.

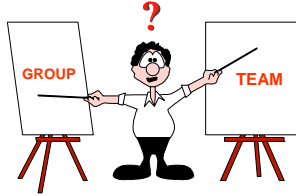
Work teams – Teams that have to coordinate individual efforts on a day-to-day basis to perform tasks; a space shuttle crew is a work team.

Read on and start building a better team!



Group vs. Team

Not all groups in organizations are teams, but all teams are groups.



“Groups, like individuals, have shortcomings.

Groups can bring out the worst as well as the best in people”.

Irving L. Jains

What is a group?

- A group is a living system, self-regulating through shared perception and interaction, sensing, and providing feedback, through interchange with its environment.
- A group consists of any number of people who interact with one another, are psychologically aware of one another, and think of themselves as a group.

What is a team?

- A team is a group whose members are selected based on the variety of knowledge and expertise each possesses.
- A team is a group whose members influence one another toward the accomplishment of an organizational objective(s).

What’s the difference between a team and a group?

In fact, there is one key question you need to ask yourself when you’re trying to decide whether your work group is a team or not. That question is : Is there a *shared goal* and a need to *work together* to achieve it? If the answer is “yes”, that group is a TEAM.

I personally think that, the main difference between a team and a group is the level of *expertise* present. Groups are collections of people who often function more as *representatives* of their area or department rather than as experts. In a team, on the other hand, each member brings a *special* skill or *knowledge* that is *vital* to the team's functioning.

When do you call a group a team?

A group qualifies as a team *only* if its members focus on helping one another to accomplish organizational objectives.

In fact, the shared goal or goals are the difference between a team and a group. So in any organization a team is a group in a work environment. A team is a group that:

- ☞ Works together to achieve a common purpose and is responsible for its achievements.
- ☞ Has specific tasks to perform for which the members are collectively responsible.
- ☞ Operates in an organizational context. Members have to manage relationships with other group and individuals within their larger system.

In closing . . .

In system terms, a team is a group that is responsible for transforming inputs and producing certain outputs for particular customers.



Now, that we're through discussing terminologies, let's take a look at the 13 Critical Traits of Team Dynamics.



The 13 Critical traits

Effective Team Dynamics is Essential to Business Success!

Team dynamics can be characterized in numerous ways. But based on my personal experiences in business management for the past 20 years, I believe that the following 13 critical traits best categorise the issues that teams need to tackle to be successful :

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) Safety and Security | (8) Caring |
| (2) Inclusion | (9) Goal Accomplishment |
| (3) Free Interaction | (10) Provide Room to Grow |
| (4) Valuing Diversity | (11) Communication |
| (5) Cohesiveness | (12) Culture of Blame |
| (6) Foster Trust | (13) Express Appreciation |
| (7) Have a Good Charter | |

We'll look briefly at each of these traits. As you proceed, also remember this:

1. Success doesn't happen overnight ; the world-class competitiveness of teams evolved over years. In order to convert a working group into a successful team, you must take the time to invest in team building. *"Great teams aren't born – they're built."*
2. None of the traits stand alone, but they all stand together really well.
3. The greater number of traits you learn, the better team leader you will become. (Trust me.)
4. Think of these traits as your blueprint for building a team that's stronger, more cohesive and more productive.



(1) Safety and Security

The safety need is the need to be safe and secure. Included here would be the seeking out of stability, freedom, as well as seeking the removal of fear.

Team members need to feel safe in their team and know that harmful behavior (e.g. one team member attacking another or one member being sacrificed as the scapegoat) will not be allowed.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Are the members of your team safe from destructive personal attacks?*
- Can members freely speak and act without feeling threatened?*



Remember . . .

When people are safe, they speak openly! That's what you need.

"Effective teamwork improves bottom-line results"



You need to create an environment that allows for participation and where people can say what needs to be said.

LOOKING BACK

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *It is difficult to sustain high performance when energy is being sapped by fear.*
-

(2) Inclusion

“*Everyone is included*” must be your motto. You *cannot* have successful team if some people are treated as VIP members of the “*Fit in Group*” and others as second-class citizens!

Team members need to be allowed equal opportunities to participate. You must “*Involve everyone in the game*”. Businesses need every brain in the team to succeed.

The team isn’t just dependant on one person; everyone takes responsibility for being in the team, for sharing the team functions, for helping each other without being asked, for offering help. No one is too important or too lowly to do some work that is not part of their job description. Isn’t that what teamwork should really be about?

----- YOUR CHALLENGE : -----

- Are certain people excluded from the team?*
- Is everyone allowed to be a real part of the team?*



Remember . . .

Efforts should be made to consciously include everyone, especially new, quiet, or hostile members!

Together
Everyone
Achieves
More



“Behind an able man there are always other able men.”

← **LOOKING BACK**

- Chinese proverb

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

It's important to take advantage of each player's best insights.

-
-

(3) Free Interaction

This relates very closely to the previous points. Free interaction has to do with how comfortable members feel in interacting with others in the team. Although everyone in a team might be included (full inclusion), certain members might not feel as comfortable in participating as other team members. People differ. Where there is tolerance for other viewpoints, cultures or personality types, people will feel free to be themselves.

In order to engage every “*player*”, every member of the team must feel comfortable enough to speak out. This freedom enables them to “*think out loud*” and do their best.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Is everyone allowed to interact with others?*
- Are there restrictions on who can interact with whom?*



Remember . . .

Teams become less effective and can become dysfunctional when only certain members can relate to the leader or to other members!

Teammates must be able to count on each other when it counts.



“People have been known to achieve more as a result of working with others than against them.”
 - Dr. Allan Fromme

LOOKING BACK

Start Asking Today

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MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *Individuals must feel a sense of mutual accountability.*
.....
-

(4) Valuing Diversity

In my opinion, diversity is a strength; it brings an array of talents. To capitalize on that strength, team leaders need to optimize the potential of *each* individual as much as possible. People don't look at things the same way, and that's important to know!

The concept of diversity encompasses any sort of difference between two or more people. Differences might exist in terms of race, gender, geographic origin, beliefs, and value systems.

In my experience in team building, this is one of the most important traits team leadership must address. The team members must appreciate each other's strengths, weaknesses, and differences. We are all unique and different. That's the Law of Diversity.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- To what extent these differences create advantages or disadvantages for your team members?*
- Which kinds of difference affect the ability of individuals to achieve their potential in your team?*



Remember . . .

Synergy is obtained when participants understand, respect, and value each other's differences.



If we all look at something the same way,
 why have a team? **← LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *I know it when I see it.*
.....
-
.....

(5) Cohesiveness

A team is always greater than the sum of its parts – often the old adage “ *a champion team will always beat a team of champions*” holds true in cohesiveness.

Keep in mind that, most people in a team want to be heard and understood. They also want to feel they are achieving something, adding value to the system, and contributing to something bigger. To achieve cohesiveness, teams need to share a common vision and have common goal(s) for their projects. All members must work together to achieve the desired result. With that commitment comes belief - belief that through good days and bad, winning or losing, the team will stick together and stand by each other.

Yet, I find that many employees compete with each other, rather than cooperating, because they view the world in dog-eat-dog terms. Unfortunately, there is some truth in this and this challenge must be addressed by team leadership.

----- YOUR CHALLENGE : -----

- Do members feel a part of the team?*
- Is there affiliation among the members?*

Remember . . .



When there is no cohesiveness, stress levels are extremely high and “back stabbing” becomes run of the mill.



People in teams don't have to love each other, but they should at least like or respect each other and recognize that they can do better together in a team than by themselves.

**LOOKING
BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *A champion team will always beat a team of champions.*
.....
-

(6) Foster Trust

Trust is one of those characteristics of life that seems to fit the old adage “*I know it when I see it*”. Trust is the key to all relationships. It involves both honesty and congruence between words and actions. If you say one thing and do another, you’ll confuse everyone. Be consistent to build trust.

Perhaps I should say that, in low trust environment; people will always (yes, ALWAYS) look for hidden meanings and agendas.

If your team neglects its trust, the result is; backbiting; in-fighting; and defensiveness. Even worse, some managers withhold information from people who report to them. (Trust me.)

Dr. Stephen R. Covey wrote in his latest book, *The 8th Habit*, “*When trust is present, mistakes are forgiven and forgotten.*” As a manager of a multicultural team, you need to recognize that building trust between different people is a complex process, since each culture has its own way of building trust and its own interpretation of what trust is.

----- YOUR CHALLENGE : -----

- Are team members trusted and asked their opinions?
- Do team members trust each other? Do they trust the leader?

Remember . . .



Knowing that your teammates will stand by you builds trust.

Shared values define the team.



Trust leaves team members no time to stall, hide, or point fingers. **LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *Trust means doing what you say you will do and doing it consistently.*
-

(7) Have a Good Charter

My advice for any new team has always been : “Don’t just “set up” a team charter it.” This is THE secret to resolving conflict. In simplest term, the charter is an agreement between the team leader and whoever is chartering that team, the boss or what I call the “champion.”

When you assemble your team be sure to address with them: Why they are here? (Mission) What they will be doing? (Goals) How they will recognize progress? (Planning the milestones communication and feedback) What happens when they need help? (Support) What’s in it for them? (Recognition).

A team constitution defines team rules – from simple things like how often the team meets and meeting agendas to more complex issues like how the team will handle conflict.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- How do you handle conflicts in your team?
- How much leadership will be shared with the team?

Remember . . .



If you charter the team effectively, you can prevent more than 50 percent of your problems from happening in the first place!

Great minds have purposes, others have wishes.



The chartering process forces people to sit down and talk about expectations. **LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
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- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- Spend the time up front. Please.
-

(8) Caring

Teammates caring about each other’s well being is a primary component of strong teams. In a caring environment, I’ve found that each member may feel more secure in his or her decisions because the responsibility for a bad decision is shared with others. No single member of the group is solely responsible for the group’s actions. No person **wants** to be the bad apple (or stupid or pig-headed).

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Do team members or the team as a whole have influence over members?
- Does corrective feed back affect them?



Remember . . .

Caring and Trust between teammates generate the simple belief that each person will do the right thing at the right moment.

No one can make you feel inferior without your permission.



“In numbers there is strength”
- an old adage

**LOOKING
BACK** ←

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *Team members have to like one another and they have to like what they're doing.*
.....
-

(9) Goal Accomplishment

If teams are to be successful, everyone in the team must pull together towards a common shared goal(s). The key question is : can the team perform tasks and strive to achieve goals? If it cannot, frustration will build and cause the team to revert to conflicts, or finger pointing!

Teams need to have the knowledge, information skills (social and technical), and tools to perform what is required of them. Their mind must be challenged. Goals must be clear to everyone and must be committed to, by the people who must accomplish them. In short, the more the goals, the lower the chance of achieving them all. Focus intensely on a few crucial goals.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

Is your goal smart?

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-bound



Remember . . .

Goals need to be clear, obtainable but also should not be conflicting.

Working together means winning together.



One sure way to defeat a team is to ask its members to accomplish something they cannot do!

← LOOKING BACK

Start Asking Today

What should you keep doing?

What should you stop doing?

What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

Team members must be galvanized by a common goal.

-
-

(10) Provide Room to Grow

We all have seen them. Functional teams are constantly busy looking for better ways of doing things. They take criticism in their stride, focus on solving problems, and learn from their mistakes. No matter what you know today, it could be outdated tomorrow, or the day after. Futurist Toffler writes of a new need for people in the modern workplace : “*an ability to learn, unlearn and relearn.*”

Business like life, is about learning and growing. Now more than ever, team must have “Team Development Strategy” which is a process through which a team prepares for the future in terms of the competencies (e.g. skills, knowledge, and experience) it will need to meet business challenges.

----- YOUR CHALLENGE : -----

- How do you honor the past and adapt for the future?*
- Do you provide opportunities for your team to learn, grow and move to higher levels of performance?*



Remember . . .

When people feel they are moving forward, learning new concepts, adding to their skill base, and stretching their minds, motivation tends to remain high.

All players have a place where they add the most value.



People are our most valuable resources. Sure! **LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

Neglect training, and failure is just around the corner!

-
-

(11) Communication

Communication is a two-way process. That means listen, make sure you understand what you hear correctly and haven't translated it into "what you wanted to hear!"

I believe it is important to realize that the most critical element of a successful team is an open channel of communication from each member to the team leader. Members are more likely to say what's in their minds. I suspect that's true of any team.

I feel the more team members communicate with each other the easier it is to communicate effectively with their leader and avoid pressing each other's buttons.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Is there a cooperative climate in your team?
- Can members table potential problems with the leader?



Remember . . .

To communicate : to share or exchange information.

The team can make adjustments when it knows where it stands.



Communication seems to be the key to making interpersonal relationships work. **← LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

- What should you keep doing?
- What should you stop doing?
- What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *Communication is an important part of building a great team.*
.....
-
.....

(12) Culture of Blame

I strongly believe it is important to realize that in a culture of blame, when something goes wrong and people hear the question “*Who’s in charge here? or, Who did it?*” rather than “*How do we fix this?*” You are sure to find some serious finger pointing rather than effective problem solving.

Clarifying roles and goals, responsibility and accountability in advance not only will help prevent team members and leaders from stepping on one another’s toes because of confusion over roles, but also will ensure smooth operation.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Can your team members tell the difference between accountability and responsibility?*



Remember . . .

In a culture of blame it is easier to pass the blame. Guess what? The guy at the bottom of the pile gets all the blame.

The price of greatness is responsibility.



Good leaders know how to read people and find the key that will make them take responsibility for their part in the team.

**LOOKING
BACK**

Start Asking Today

What should you keep doing?

What should you stop doing?

What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

Blame : Someone is responsible for something bad.

-
-

(13) Express Appreciation

Giving someone an honest compliment on work well done or a good idea, makes them feel appreciated and valued. It is critical that organization celebrates success and rewards those who helped achieve it. In fact, research on motivation consistently shows that, what really pleases people is being noticed and complimented for a job well done.

The idea behind recognition and reward is to inspire your people to work together effectively and efficiently to create outstanding results for your organization. Of course some teams have its share of “free loaders” who are looking for something for nothing.

Be sure that your reward system actually reward what you say you value. If you preach cooperative efforts but reward only individual effort then you are creating competition among team members.

YOUR CHALLENGE :

- Can your team members motivate each other?
- Can you tell low performers “there is no free lunch”?



Remember . . .

Give employees the recognition they need and then step aside and watch the impossible turn into possible.

A good beginning makes a good ending.



Individuals play the game, but teams win championships. **LOOKING BACK**

Start Asking Today

What should you keep doing?

What should you stop doing?

What should you start doing?



MY NOTES

An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory.

- *Insufficient team recognition is a roadblock that keeps a high-performing team from sustaining long-term performance.*



No Magic Formula

Adopting these traits means that you are effectively changing the team culture of your organization. Yet, there simply isn't a magic formula that will work in all cases; while this list of traits is not comprehensive, the traits identified in this tip book are the principal reasons teams fail to reach and sustain a high performance level. There are, of course, other sources of inefficiency. An unskilled workforce, miscommunication, cultural misunderstandings, and leadership are some additional areas that can have a negative impact.

Although the traits sounds simple, they are not easy. It is through constant repetition and reinforcement from your leadership that the change in culture is made.

The fact is, we are all human, and even though we may believe in a principal, we don't always live up to it. There will be occasions when a principal is violated, (What to do?), dust off the dirt and try again, again, and again. As the sports saying goes : “no pain, no gain.”



The Alleem Way

Take a team tip from Rashid Alleem

“So how do you create and manage successful teams?” . . . “How do you drive your team toward excellence, accomplishment, and success? . . . What's the secret to a great team? . . . When is a team a “superteam” or a “high performing team”? These are questions I get asked a lot these days.

My answer was always the same : There are seven key ingredients to characterize a winning team. Number one, a common vision about where the team is going. The vision must be clearly defined and everybody has to understand it.

Number two, the size is the key. Have the smallest number of people possible on board. Think small. Ideally, your team should have 7 to 9 people (max.). If you have more than 12 or 15, you're dead. members will start functioning like a committee.

Number three, generally, a good fit starts with shared values. The team members must be passionate about the work that they're going to be doing together.

Number four, the team members must be galvanized by a common goal.

Number five, leadership. We have all seen examples of how leaders inspired teams to accomplish some phenomenal task. Business management books are full of these stories.

Number six, the team has to be diverse. The team should be made up of people who think differently too -- intuitive thinkers (Right brain thinkers) as well as logical thinkers (Left brain thinkers). That's an important part of building a lasting team.

Number seven, to create a “winning team”, you must assign your team members “shared roles”. By clarifying roles, it helps team members avoid misunderstandings and “*stepping on others’ toes.*” Then ask *your* team members to fill these assignments :

- ✓ The ‘*sponsor*’, who provides resources, removes roadblocks, and determines when to disband the team.
- ✓ The ‘*leader*’, who ensures the team has clear objectives and makes sure everyone is involved and committed.
- ✓ The ‘*challenger*’, who questions effectiveness and presses for continuous improvement and results.
- ✓ The ‘*doer*’, who urges the team to get on with the job in hand and does practical tasks.
- ✓ The ‘*thinker*’, who produces carefully considered ideas and weighs up and improves ideas from others.
- ✓ The ‘*supporter*’, who eases tension, helps them cover personal agendas or conflicts, makes things easier, and maintains harmony.
- ✓ The ‘*Organizer*’ maintains schedule and makes sure all members stay on the same page.



Summary

A winning team is a team whose members have a common purpose, feel a challenge in their project, feel responsibility for the results, teammates feel a sense of mutual accountability, and experience growth.

Good luck!



One Last Important Note

“Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, The All-Knowing.”

[Al Baqarah : 127]

I wrote this book without the aid of a coauthor or a professional writer. The views expressed are mine. I am responsible for any mistakes or confusion the reader may endure. In these pages, I suppose I have given some account to my personal philosophies, principals, and values.

Good luck and a happy journey!

God bless you all!

- Rashid Alleem
Sharjah, U.A.E.
May 2, 2009

