How teams are changing faster in 2021 and organizations need to reorganize and connect more.

By Nadia Nielsson & Werner Valeur
Co-founders of Successteam

Successteam.com

Index

Introduction

Companies have restructured, which demands new leadership skills and ways of building successful teams.

Looking into each individual's responsibilities, feelings and performance conditions can be difficult, and sometimes leaders forget the continuous follow-up, as they are busy leading their company or department.

Another challenge is getting direct and honest feedback from all employees in the organization – and as remote work is rapidly becoming the new normal, this is not an easy task. Feedback is necessary to help leaders improve, and team members will feel heard and recognized if the feedback is turned into action.

We have extensive experience with building companies, and have been faced with the many difficulties of rapid team growth. The main issues revolve around four specific areas:

1. How do I keep people motivated?
2. Do I know how people are really feeling?
3. How can I make sure that people are performing on an individual level?
4. Has there been an effective way to make sure people are satisfied?

All four areas have been our main reason for establishing Successteam. With this guide, we'll provide inside information and answer all of the above questions in-depth. As the organization structure has changed over time, the four key areas have not, but it is definitely harder to provide the answers in a more complex and diverse world.

If you have a clear overview of these four areas and know how to address them with your team, you'll perform on a much higher level and have a strong sense of self-development as a leader. It will be easy to identify where your team excels and where you need to improve.

The funny thing about successful teams compared with unsuccessful teams is that the distinction between them can be surprisingly small. It is all about getting the tools to make good people great.

Enjoy our guide and feel free to share it with others if you find it inspiring and helpful.

Nadia Nielsson & Werner Valeur
Co-founders of Successteam

From silo to agile organizations

How to rethink organizations and leadership.

Traditional organizations are designed primarily for stability with silos and structural hierarchy where goals are set and decision-making is by the top leaders. It operates through linear planning and control in order to create value for the company owners. The structure has been vital in supporting the production age paradigm, but it has become rigid and too unagile during the past decade.

In contrast, agile organizations create a much more dynamic work environment where teams collaborate across departments. The focus is a people-centered culture where they operate through rapid learning and quick decision-making cycles, enabling a much more efficient workflow.

In the future, organizational control has to change to support a new agile paradigm where it's possible to quickly and efficiently change direction and restructure processes at all times. We'll see leaders lead through empathy with a people-first mindset. And they will always have a technology-driven perspective to increase efficiency in all possible areas.

Agile organizations have a high level of adaptability, giving teams much better conditions to face the many obstacles they will meet in today's technological age, where you will fail if you move too slow. Teams should be able to act independently and have high accountability with their leaders, eliminating micromanagement and control.

Paradigms affect our perception, which dominates our behavior.

We all have a perception of how things are "supposed to be done" or how they "have always been done." This mindset is created over time based on our experience and surroundings, and if it is not challenged, it will limit our desire and ability to change. An open mindset is vital in order to adapt and change direction based on new learnings. Nothing should be set in stone; everything should be changeable, if necessary.

First of all, today's demand for adaptability is extremely high, due to technology evolving faster than ever. Consequently, changes in structures, tools and direction need to be adjusted continuously, which is a demanding task for leaders as well as employees.

We need to work closely together to adapt in mindset and behavior. This requires constant feedback from employees to team leaders, creating a better environment for change for all teams.

Linear organizations, as we know them from the past, can no longer deliver the above. They are simply too slow, because several decisions have to go through top management, making the execution of any task unreasonably lengthy. Small teams with a direct connection to customers/suppliers need to be able to make choices locally.

It's all about enabling team leaders to make decisions based on good feedback from team members including employees, freelancers or customers. Today, a team member is not necessarily someone you have on payroll. A team should have a much more fluid form, meaning that a new team could be established for each goal, target or project, and that team is the combination of people and skills best suited to deliver the most solid results. No more silos; whoever can contribute should be a part of the team, no matter what department they usually work for.

To summarize, bury the linear mindset and develop an agile mindset, where you are always ready to adapt to your surroundings and circumstances quickly.

How to help leaders become even better

There are six basic leadership principles in an agile organization. First of all, a leader has to inspire and lead with passion and motivation. Their mindset needs to be strong in innovation and digitalization because, as explained, new technology is advancing quicker than ever before, which introduces new methods and tools to consider. A digital mindset is essential for leaders today, because technology will increase efficiency in many of the operational areas. If you are not utilizing it your competitors probably are, and you won't win that fight. You will be bringing a knife to a gunfight. The advantages of technology are too substantial to ignore.

Leadership has become much more about handling people than creating or facilitating a process. Of course, operations and procedures need a game plan, but nowadays it's secondary in the leadership role, as we have so many digital systems designed to support operations, and the real challenge is in handling people and individuality. In the future, leaders have to be the facilitator of change, direction and drive. This will create a culture where things get done without the leaders having to control everything.

On a day-to-day basis, listening to team members' feedback might be the most crucial leadership skill.

We know that "flow follows focus" which implies that a leader has to clearly show the direction with a strong focus on results to build an high-performance team. Focus and energy should be directed towards a common team goal, which drives the process almost by itself.

A leader must know what is going on, both internally in the team and in their surroundings. That is established only through continuous, honest feedback loops between members and team leaders, enabling everyone to acclimate to any situation.

So, this means that the "new" leadership skills are:

• Give and receive honest feedback
• Active listening and awareness skills
• Clear communication of direction
• Facilitation skills
• Structured follow-up skills to adjust fast
• Natural empathy capabilities
• A "learning by doing" and "Digital first" mindset
• Adaptability perception and "can-do" attitude
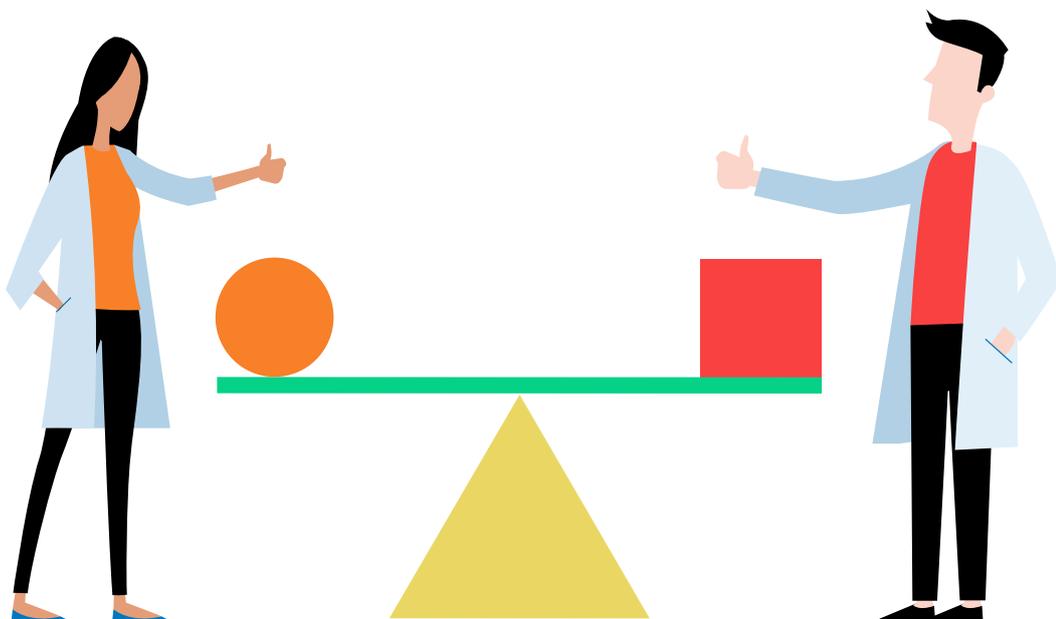
What we know about stress today has changed the rules of leadership

Stress is a tricky thing, as it appears and is triggered differently in everyone, and the symptoms can variate, depending on how an individual cope with the pressure. The list of stress symptoms is endless, but the point is, that being overworked and stressed doesn't look or feel the same for everyone.

What makes it even trickier is the fact that there isn't a certain amount of work which is too much or an amount where we know it might cause stress. It all comes down to a person's bandwidth level. If a person has more tasks and responsibilities than what they feel they can manage, it can cause them to feel overwhelmed. If this feeling becomes constant, it will cause stress. A workload might be the perfect situation for one person, who is thriving and loving life, but causing stress for another person. And to make it even more complicated, your personal life will also affect your overall stress level, which underlines the importance of understanding each individual's personal needs.

Research conducted in the United Kingdom shows that around 13.5 million workdays are lost yearly due to employees' stress concerns. Some of the most common issues leading to workplace stress includes the fear of being fired, the pressure to fulfill above-average expectations (with no increase in job satisfaction), and lack of control over how the work is done. This is just one example of a large number of studies that show how costly a bad work environment can be.

Sadly, we have taught each other that it's necessary and a symbol of status to work 60+ hours a week, and that is simply not for everyone. Even worse, we have made it seem weak to set boundaries and say "no" to work tasks. We have created an unhealthy work environment based on how we lead military forces back in the day, and stress is the aftermath. Truth is, some of the leadership principles we use today were molded by this military mindset. No one could foresee that stress leading to depression and anxiety would cost the global economy approximately 1 trillion in lost productivity. Read that again… one trillion dollars! But the cost in dollars is secondary to the consequences for the individual's quality of life. That is what truly matters.

It may sound complicated and almost impossible to counteract, but Successteam makes it easy. The simple answer is you need a strategy for stress prevention. And we all have to be educated on the subject, raise awareness if it emerges within the team and speak up if we feel overworked.

It is essential to provide all team members with the best possible conditions in order for them to perform and deliver on set targets. It's beneficial for the individual team members and beneficial for the company, which gets to keep important key employees. Everyone wins.

Yearly employee evaluations are dead, so do this instead

Leaders need to acknowledge the problem. A yearly employee conversation is not enough anymore (and has probably never been). Structured feedback needs to be more often and in a more flexible format, that suits the new organization. When the circumstances change, we need to adapt and change with them and if leaders today evaluate like they used to, the team won't improve fast enough and fail over time. In essence, new challenges arise quicker and need to be fixed instantaneously. Good and relevant feedback needs to be given at the right time and in the correct format – and not once a year.

Besides the fact that yearly employee evaluations have a bad reputation, leaders have a long list of employees they can't distinguish from one another and the employee has accumulated a full year of things that need to be solved in one quick session. That doesn't work for anyone.

As a leader or an ambitious employee you'll know that developing someone's skills and abilities is a long journey that never ends, and it can't be done once a year; even four times a year is not enough. People need to get feedback from their surroundings as often as possible to improve fast enough and keep up. It has to be a part of the culture. If you want that, you need to facilitate an easy channel to get access to that.

Evaluations are not the most comfortable setup
The accumulation of one year of thought and getting them "out in the open" is not a good option. Nevertheless, many companies are still doing this style of old-school evaluation instead of thinking out of the box and introducing something more contemporary. This is where Successteam come into the picture – a new and easy way to build better teams. A way to make sure your team gets the vital feedback and suggestions on how to improve on a continuous basis, whenever it's needed.

Alternative to the obsolete evaluations
People evaluations are not necessarily a bad thing, but it needs to be done in a more flexible and contemporary framework. This is where Successteam excels. It's a tool that measures four different parameters on three different levels, giving broader yet more precise insight into the team performance. How it is motivated, stressed, and satisfied. On the next page, we'll go into further detail on how you can leave the yearly evaluations behind and do something smarter for both leaders and employees.

The agile and easy way to improve everyone in your teams

Successteam is all about the people in your team. People first. If your team members are happy and motivated they will perform. That's a fact.

But of course, it's complicated to understand each team member and what drives them, as no two team members are the same. And It's not a simple task to create an environment where all team members feel they can share their feedback without consequences. Successteam changes that.

Successteam is a digital tool created to get honest real-time feedback from team members in order to help leaders take action on team challenges and develop their leadership skills. Through a Feedback Collector we ask team members about Performance, Motivation, Satisfaction and Stress, and we ask within leadership, Culture and about them as individuals. A single team member's answers are always anonymous. However, through a simple indicator overview, we will notify team leaders of the most critical challenges and suggest to take specific actions to improve.

Succeesteam digitalized a feedback loop, making it easy and intuitive to create a feedback culture, ensuring happy, motivated teams who perform on a higher level. A user-friendly tool making it simple to understand something as complicated as people, giving any team better conditions to be successful.

Putting people first is great business.

Try Successteam for free and see how valuable the tool is for your team and organization here:
www.successteam.com

Share the guide
and spread the word

If you liked our guide, feel free to share it with others.
Simply link to www.successteam.com/guide-download-free

successteam