



From A Players to an A Team

Small organizations typically rely on independent rockstars who simply "make it happen" while larger organizations often crumble without effective collaboration and communication. But when does the shift happen? How do you guide it? I'll give you a hint: letting it happen "organically" rarely succeeds...

Leaders must make a proactive decision to reshape their organization's operating model and shift from a collection of "A players" to a true A team. This talk is all about identifying when that transition is needed and designing a new organization that will enable both the business and the individuals within it to thrive. In the workshop version, participants will have an opportunity to reflect on the current state of their business or team and decide if they are ready, or past ready, to make the leap.

Friction to Function™ – Teams and Leaders and Systems, Oh My!

We've come a long way as a society from the early days of Scientific Management! Recognizing that people are individuals, not automatons, has led to huge leaps in employee engagement and satisfaction. But 21st century management rhetoric has swung so far from its rationalist origins that many leaders don't even consider technical approaches for designing and optimizing their organizations.

Yet technical problem solving and engineering concepts can often be applied directly to organizational challenges, without losing sight of employee individuality and humanity. This talk shows how several engineering concepts can be leveraged in Operating Model (roles, responsibilities, and the interactions across teams) design and optimization for leaders seeking to build more effective and engaged teams.

Tricksy Words

Excellence. Quality. Respect. Many companies come back to the same words when describing their unique culture or vision. These words inspire and motivate but when it comes to day-to-day actions, the interpretations can vary widely. Even the most well-intentioned team members can find themselves in conflict traceable to a single word.

These misalignments can be particularly difficult to identify, even in teams that communicate openly and honestly, because everyone is using the same "tricksy" words. Often, just a bit more detail will have everyone working together smoothly again. The challenge lies almost entirely in identifying the tricky words in the first place! This workshop reviews the pitfalls of tricky words, teaches the algorithm for identifying them, and discusses mitigation techniques to avoid ongoing confusion.

Leading in the Aftermath of Layoffs

Layoff decisions are inevitably made in limited time frames and with imperfect information yet many organizations are reluctant to make any further changes in the wake of layoff announcements for fear of change fatigue. Although change fatigue is a valid concern, implementing a basic, iterative model for adapting post-layoffs can effectively rebuild trust and re-empower teams. Acknowledge the situation, Observe the impact, Adjust as necessary, and repeat these steps until a new steady state is established. Although simple in concept, this approach can fundamentally improve a team's post-layoff dynamics.

This talk is particularly geared towards preparing middle managers for what comes next.

Building Successful Hybrid (Collocated and Remote) Teams

After transitioning from traditional, office-based operations to fully remote work over the past few months, many businesses will soon find themselves in yet another new state: hybrid collocated and distributed teams. Blending remote and in-person interactions poses a new set of challenges, often requiring specifically adapted solutions. Information and guidance abound for remote collaboration and the physical safety aspects of returning to the office but thriving in a hybrid state requires targeted planning. Fortunately, smaller teams and companies can stand on the shoulders of giants as they plan for, or dive into, this new way of working.

This talk walks through basic best practices, tips, and tricks for leaders ready to think about hybrid teams in the new light they deserve.

Tech+ Leadership

In almost every field, from engineering to sales, the transition from practitioner to leader poses the same challenge: Refocusing individual identity from technical prowess to team success. From the sidelines, it may seem straightforward. New role, new goals. Yet no matter how many examples we see of unparalleled experts in their field struggling in a managerial role, when the time comes for our own transitions, learning to base our pride around an entirely new set of metrics remains easier said than done. But there is good news! With a slight shift in perspective, the exact same skills that led to technical prowess in an individual contributor role can be used to build and support world-class teams.

This talk is particularly geared towards engineers but can be adapted for leaders in any field.

Cultural Alignment: Vision and Values and Goals, Oh My!

Whether the result of slow and steady change, or acute shifts such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational cultures inevitably evolve over time. Changes in co-located or remote work, shifts in a company's culture or mission, executive turnover, and many other natural evolutions can have unintended and often negative effects on employee morale, efficiency, and communications. Of course, intentional, positive change is also possible! Get ready to be proactive about culture and values, to realign your walk to your talk, and reengage your employees. Create a clearly articulated and shared understanding of what culture means in your workplace and accelerate your journey to success.

OKRs, KPIs, Metrics, Goals, and Starting with Why

Humans have a tendency to focus on whatever is being measured and modern leaders have numerous models to choose from when configuring their teams' performance management expectations. So why do many teams still report misunderstandings around goals and metrics? How is it that some teams can achieve their metrics but still feel unsuccessful? When leaders jump too quickly into detailed planning, even goal planning, their vision of "why" remains fuzzy and misalignments between metrics and true success become almost inevitable. After all, OKRs, KPIs, and similar systems are tools that are only as strong as their users. This talk imbues attendees with a personal understanding of the importance of beginning with "Why" (and then Why, Why, Why, Why!) and then draws clear connections from the resulting vision to effective metrics, referencing OKRs, KPIs, and other popular approaches. Get ready for a return to basics that will prepare your team for a turboboost towards true success!