



ONE SYSTEMIC  
COACHING

# INSIGHTS INTO WHAT KEEPS TEAMS FROM STELLAR RESULTS LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVES

## OVERVIEW

This document outlines a few preliminary findings, based on interviews conducted with 22 team leaders in Europe and The United States, between August - October 2023. The research is ongoing and this white paper will be updated based on new insights gathered from the field. The leaders, kind enough to share their struggles and desired outcomes, come from different types of organisations (some entrepreneurial, some corporate) and different industries, such as technology, FMCG, energy, pharma & medical, etc. I am very grateful to them for their openness and continued commitment to evolving themselves & their teams.

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# The most common challenges team leaders face in managing their teams...

Called by different names, but essentially describing the same difficulties and recurring patterns that hinder team performance and its ability to operate in flow, here are the top 3 themes coming out of these conversations.

## 1) Lack of ownership & initiative

Most team leaders feel their people do not step up enough, are not proactive enough and do not drive things forward in a way that does not require the leader's constant involvement. Some leaders talk about having to push & pull, to "police" their teams, otherwise the pace would be too slow, projects would not get done in time or innovation would not happen. Others talk about a lack of clarity when it comes to who is accountable for what, especially in large, complex organisations - which leads to delays, frustration and the leader having to step in and move things forward.

## 2) Misalignment & poor communication

Often leading to conflict and an overall sense of disconnect, ineffective communication hinders the team's ability to collaborate effectively, both inside, as well as with other departments. Conflict arises from differing opinions, values, or goals within teams, leading to tension and discord. Misalignment occurs when team members have varying understandings of their objectives or roles, which then result in inefficiencies and confusion. In these cases, leaders become mediators and spend too much of their time putting out fires in the team.

## 3) High turnover & structural instability

With many industries experiencing massive disruption, companies are going through restructures, transformation processes and changes in leadership, which create a turbulent and uncertain work environment. Team members may struggle to adapt to new reporting structures or roles, leading to confusion and a lack of clarity in responsibilities.

When turnover rates are consistently high, it signifies a revolving door of talent, making it difficult to establish trust and continuity within the team. Frequent departures not only disrupt established workflows but also hinder the development of cohesive working relationships.

## What leaders wish for, if they could have it all...

### **Ownership & Responsibility**

Leaders would like to see people in their teams taking ownership of projects and initiatives and driving them forward more independently. Furthermore, some of them would like to occasionally be challenged by their people, in service of progress and innovation. More risk taking and proactivity in solving problems are also desired outcomes.

### **One team mentality**

Team members operating as one, focused on achieving a common goal, instead of individual agendas. A feeling of belonging to the same thing, with pride and ambition. As one leader put it, "the feeling that we are all rowing in the same direction."

### **Seamless Communication**

Clarity between team members regarding expectations, responsibilities and ways of working. A sense of ease in interactions and a genuine desire to support each other and collaborate towards common goals.

### **The right team in place**

A structure fit for purpose, with the right people in the right roles. A sense of stability and clear routines, generating operational efficiency.

**Most leaders estimate that if their team was operating at its full potential, they would have more time to focus on strategic issues , which could lead to an increase of up to 10% in revenue for the organisation.**

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**Moreover, improvements made in the way their team operates would have a ripple effect in the organisation, and in some cases outside it - with customers, families and the wider society benefiting.**

# What's getting in the way...

When asked what they think are the biggest obstacles to their teams operating the way they envision, leaders offered a wide array of answers, some coming from inside the team, some from outside, with some putting the lens on their own leadership style.

## Biggest obstacles

### People's mindset

- "It can't be done" or "It's too much/big/soon"
- Unwillingness to learn and/or develop new skills
- Work not being a priority in their life
- Appetite for conflict and chaos
- Choosing comfort over innovation

### Leadership style

- Leadership above is too directive or, in some cases, too democratic, leading to apathy and/or lack of drive and innovation.
- Own leadership style - too democratic and maybe not directive enough

### People's competencies

- Not fast enough - struggling to keep up with the leader's demands
- Lacking in strategic thinking, vision
- Lacking in management skills
- Lacking in emotional maturity

### Company culture

- Urgency of the day to day work that needs to get done, preventing teams from focusing on the big picture
- Risk aversion and fear of failure in the wider company, impacting the team's ability to be more agile

## What can leaders do about it?

Let's ask some outrageous questions...

### What is this problem a solution for?

If you were to look at problems as solutions for potentially deeper underlying issues - what would you see? For example, lack of ownership in a team can be a symptom for something much deeper, such as **fear of change**. People can become loyal to the way things were, especially when they sense change coming. Therefore, they attempt to maintain the status quo by not taking ownership and not moving things forward. We all do it, most of the time unconsciously. So, what leaders can do is bring it to the surface by addressing it openly, consciously and with compassion.

### How is the team a reflection of its leader?

Yes, an uncomfortable perspective. The team can function as a reflective mirror of the leader's qualities, behaviors and values. The leader's influence permeates throughout the team, shaping its culture, dynamics, and performance. While this may not be the case 100% of the time, it is worth for leaders to ask themselves **"In what way am I manifesting the same behaviour as my team members?"** For example, when dealing with lack of ownership, a leader can ask "How or where am I not fully taking ownership in my role?" and "What would it look like if I did?".

### What does this team do, for whom and to what end?

Teams, like people, can sometimes lose track of who they are and why they do what they do. It is easy for a team to lose its sense of purpose, when workloads are overwhelming and/or the wider organisation is going through massive disruption. What leaders can do is periodically ask these questions and reflect on them together with their teams: **What do we do? For whom? To what end?**

Exploring answers together, reconnects the team to its reason for being, its stakeholders and its mission, bringing back life energy into the system.

**If you would like to go deeper into these questions and your team dynamics together with a professional coach, I would love to have a conversation with you. Systemic team coaching is a powerful tool to gain clarity, create cohesiveness and reconnect people with their internal resources, so that the team can find its natural flow and express its true potential.**

**Get in touch at [corina@onesystemic.com](mailto:corina@onesystemic.com)**