

The LEAD Forward MAY Brief

Powering Performance, Preserving People: Key Factors for Success in Times of Challenge

To manage our way in these challenging times, we need to foster a performance-oriented culture. Driving accountability and a clear focus on continuous improvement cannot though, come at the expense of employee engagement and team cohesion.

Last month, we talked about staying resilient amidst resistance to change. Often resistance can come from teams who are more comfortable with the status quo or who are experiencing anxiety. This can have a terrible effect on teams, leading to low morale and even delays in projects or deliveries.

Getting below the surface to find out what is blocking the system involves more than change management tools. It involves open-hearted and playful conversations to create a common understanding of performance culture and the metrics that drive it. Without this radical focus on people, the system slows down and stays stuck.

What might be draining the system

At LEAD Forward we have been in the business of helping clients overcome challenges by directly connecting the mission of the business with their everyday work. Here are the top blockers we find most often:

- **Unclear goals and metrics:** When teams lack clear line of sight to performance metrics, it becomes challenging to align employee efforts with outcomes and objectives, leading to inconsistent results and accountability issues. But they need not be overwhelmed with dashboards!
- **Insufficient leadership support:** When senior leaders become cynical at yet another 'new' initiative they can undermine transformational initiatives, causing confusion and reducing momentum among teams.
- **Communication barriers:** People are messy and so are relationships. Frequently frustration at conflicting metrics creates breakdowns. At its worst, this leads to siloed operations and misaligned priorities.
- **Remote work dynamics:** Effective communication does not create trust if teams do not spend quality time together. The hybrid model is great and it requires a conscious management of online and offline meetings.
- **Lack of trust:** Change and refocusing our work and tasks can be met with initial doubt. It is important that leaders enjoy utmost trust from employees to be able to try something different – even if first successes may take longer to manifest.
- **Not celebrating success:** Without enough reasons to celebrate, the joy simply drains away from teams.



Innovation, Playfulness, and Creativity at scale

The performance culture that emerges when the system gets unblocked is vibrant, agile, and highly adaptive. We have been able to observe shifts in mindsets in organizations that were forced to rethink performance during challenging times due to targeted and smart interventions. We want to share two examples with you here:

CASE EXAMPLE ONE



A large global technology player in agribusiness asked LEAD Forward to help shift the culture from a project-centered approach towards a product organization. Put simply the organization had outgrown its current way of working and technology. Poor customer performance led to internal frustrations, which in turn created a cycle of missed deliveries.



We co-created and implemented a lean transformation journey consisting of Agile Lean Management and systemic interventions. Collapsing one silo at a time, we were able to co-create interdependent teams and redefine roles from project management to product ownership. Ongoing training with a focus on mentoring and coaching supported the leadership to focus on flow.



This led to an increase in the speed of product-to-market, the engagement of leaders, and even the notion that Agile is fun!

CASE EXAMPLE TWO



A player in the automotive industry asked LEAD Forward to help them work together in a more collaborative, creative way to support the organization through crisis.



In a tough market where supply chain price inflation and long lead times led to market pressure on prices we co-created and implemented a system of performance hacks. These were aimed at making the organization more agile. For example, starting with the leaders we kick started activities that sparked a performance mindset. Addressing hot topics such as sharing resources, reducing processes, meetings and tasks meant finding smarter, more efficient ways to work together and tackle the difficult challenges.



As a result, more collaboration drove aligned prioritization and heightened energy levels in the team.

Developing and maintaining a performance culture is ongoing. Encouraging honest communication, creating spaces for sense-making, and not shying away from difficult topics is how we go on together. **It is all about learning how fun and performing can go hand in hand.** It is all about knowing its potential to be an approach that is joyful, inclusive, and effective. To find out more email: Scott.Goldner@lead.berlin