

# Team of Teams

## How organisations can become fit-for-future

### The problem today

Over **\$1 billion** are spent on engagement surveys alone in the US



Global employee engagement has **dropped**



Anger and stress has increased and **80% of employees** are not engaged



This worldwide trend costs the economy **\$8.1 trillion** in lost productivity



### It's time for some straight talking. Something just isn't adding up.

Over **one billion dollars** are spent on engagement surveys in the US alone and yet global employee engagement has dropped, anger and stress increased and **80%** of employees are not engaged. Gallup estimates that this worldwide trend costs the economy **\$8.1 trillion** in lost productivity.

Designed to measure levels of connection and commitment of employees and the resultant ability to contribute to company success, employee engagement surveys are facing headwinds in a substantially changed world of work. Only 22% of companies are reported to be getting results that they want from them.

Organisations and employees are facing a once-in-a-century shift in ways of working, with two-thirds of the workforce in hybrid working and 45% saying that their life has been affected 'a lot' during the pandemic. It would be easy to claim, given these changes, that low engagement is inevitable but Forbes tells us that:

*"employees who feel their voice is heard are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to perform their best work."*

So why, with such an investment in cultural and engagement surveys, are people not feeling heard?

The answer is astonishingly simple. The key unit of value inside every organisation – where the work gets done and the relationships are formed – has been overlooked and underserved. Organisations have doubled down on understanding the individual's experience of the organisation and aggregated this data into a meaningless organisational average.

The answer to engagement, empowerment and performance lies elsewhere, right at the heart of the action. With the team.



**Team of Teams: a fit-for-future organisational model**

The real work of change in today's world happens not through individual

acts of visionary brilliance but within teams of people who each have a critical contribution to make. As speed and complexity rises, teams are the only way to deliver value. It is only diverse groups that can take the multiple perspectives, generate the ideas and execute with the power and speed that is needed today.

But what do organisations need to look like? In the last 50 years, organisations have struggled to break free from the divisions of functions and hierarchy. Matrix structures looked like they could help but they still leave organisations floundering when they need to be flying.

The answer emerges from the work of General Stanley McChrystal, 'Team of Teams'. In this groundbreaking book, he describes how the US military's hierarchical command and control structure was severely challenged during the early stages of the Iraq war. His radical solution was to decentralize authority to highly trained and empowered teams whilst also developing real-time information through an operations group. This gathered information and provided the teams with real-time, accurate data about war activities everywhere.

In business this translates as a constellation of teams that come together around specific goals and an aligned purpose. Teams and team members work together in quick, fluid and adaptive ways and are enabled through aligned autonomy, decision-making and strong relational dynamics.



### Why 'Teams of Teams' now?

Today's complex problems are the result of a fast-paced, interconnected world. The team of teams approach enables multiple teams to share a common understanding of the overall purpose, known as shared consciousness, as well as common work processes across teams. The leader guides the conversations and makes sure everyone's voice is included in the discussion. They are the person who makes sure that teams are empowered to make their own decisions and build the conditions to support them.

This move to a team of teams structure is the natural – and much-needed – next evolution from matrix structures. The matrix itself was invented to try to balance the different needs of functions with geographies, customer segments etc but it often results in power battles between the functions. Team members can find themselves at odds with opposing KPIs that make collaboration hard.



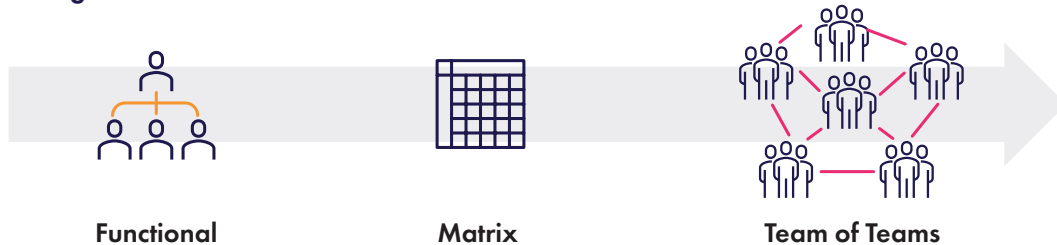
### High level principles of the 'Team of Teams'

The key to a teams of team structure is to give primacy to the team itself. Each individual unit has a job to do as part of the team of teams (which itself has a higher goal it needs to achieve and a flexible roadmap to get there). That team then plans what it needs, coordinates with the other teams and secures the resources, development etc it needs from the various functions. Yes. The functions serve the teams.

The critical point of success and failure in this structure is the capability of the teams themselves. Are they able to rally around a common goal and continually create the conditions for success they require to achieve it? This is not a nice to have. It's the life or death of today's organisation. Every organisation, as a matter of urgency, needs to give its teams:

- **Clarity:** a clear goal and a purpose that aligns it with the other teams
- **Climate:** a process to constantly assess the functioning of the team itself and a climate in which teams interconnect and where mutual support is rewarded.
- **Competence:** development in the key behaviours for effective teamwork including feedback and coaching

## The evolution of organisations



## Case study

### Fortune 100 Oil & Gas Company Team of Teams Transition

- Why?** A Fortune 100 Oil and Gas Company found itself in need of transition. With a rapidly changing world, the importance of maximising resources and empowering frontline teammates to make well-informed, quick decisions becomes critically important.
- What happened?** The company focused on Clarity first. They developed and aligned behind a common mission with supporting objectives and strategies. They then addressed a key climate resource by developing the company's 'operations forum' which equipped teammates with the most up-to-date information and context. The company's leaders leveraged the purpose or 'shared consciousness' by empowering teammates to execute safely, smartly, and quickly.
- The result?** The company successfully adapted to a rapidly changing environment in both the field and office and thrived as a 'team of teams'.



## 6 ways for organisations to make a start

- 1 Review your organisation's design:** Are there ways to bring functional or technical experts into "mission-driven" teams which are focused on customers, markets, or products.
- 2 Shift the leadership mindset** from chess master (command and control) to humble gardener – driving rhythm and transparency and building the trust for cross-collaborative cooperation
- 3 Encourage** senior leaders to share and regularly communicate the aligned unifying organisational purpose and vision with their teams.
- 4 Empower these teams** to set their own goals, aligned with the purpose and vision and to be accountable for their own conditions which they regularly measure, discuss and adjust as a team.
- 5 Explore ways** to replace silos with two-way forums that share information and identify connections between team activities and desired results
- 6 Enable** people to move from team to team as needed and also ensure that they have a 'home' team to return to once a team-based project is done. This broadens knowledge across the organisation and uses teams as a key development experience.



## Putting your teams at the heart of your organisation

*The world we are experiencing is truly a VUCA one (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) and yet often our complex organisational structures fail to support our people at a time when they need it most. "Although we intuitively know the world has changed, most leaders reflect a model and leader development process that are sorely out of date".*

McChrystal 2015

**Placing autonomy, capability and connectedness, the key elements of motivation and self-determination (Deci & Ryan 1985) at the heart of where work is being done, the team, enables this critical unit to thrive, scale and deliver in the future landscape of work within a networked team of teams.**

**Supporting teams and a team of teams approach with accurate data, powerful conversations and actionable insights becomes a key enabler of a high-performance culture which delivers much needed value to employees, organisations and the people they serve.**

Squadify's purpose is to give the world the team in needs. We achieve that by giving every team the data it needs to inspire the right conversations to maximise performance. Teams use Squadify continuously to get the data on teamwork to have the right conversations and so target the most important areas for improvement. Organisations use Squadify to support a Team of Teams approach with aligned, actionable insights to support high performance cultures. Double digit improvements in performance are the norm.

For further information contact [thesquad@squadify.net](mailto:thesquad@squadify.net) and visit [squadify.net](http://squadify.net).

## References

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