



Paper SP05

Mindset for Effective Collaboration and Success in a Multinational Remote Team

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ABSTRACT

The modern world is full of opportunities. Globalization and digitization make possible to work together with completely different people from different cultures, separated by great distances and time zones. But every human is a person with their own values, vision, level of involvement, function, experience, habits, goals and desires. Therefore, when these people become a Team, a real mission for the Team Leader and Manager arises: how to create an effective collaboration between every team member, how to turn so many different factors from chaos into an opportunity for development, growth and self-motivation, and besides how to achieve the Success.

The key ideas which will be presented here include everyday challenges and good practices, personal development strategies, key principles of thinking and communication, and the real power of having a successful mindset in any team.

INTRODUCTION

Success provokes growth, and growth may provoke either success or failure. There are times at which any person should pause and ask themselves if they still desire to move in the chosen career direction, if they still possess energy and passion to share, and whether the purposes are clear and inspiring.

There are individuals with relevant experience and proper habits who can carry out that regularly and effectively, but normally the team isn't born miraculously. Therefore, there are newcomers with underdeveloped personal skills which could be common among former university students, those who have been temporarily out of work or have just requalified, etc. They need assistance to jump in the process and find their ways to work in the most effective and inspirational way afterwards. And the best person to provide such support is a conscientious leader.

1. TEAM, PERSONALITY AND SUCCESS

"It is never too late to be what you might have been" - George Eliot

1.1 BASIC CONCEPTS

The main question is what it means to be a **Team**. The job may bring together many people located in various places on the Earth to work on a task. And all of them have their own values, vision, involvement, function, experience, habits, desires and purposes. The leader, being a great manager and psychologist, should consider this to achieve success.

But **success** is a very comprehensive concept. It is commonly defined as achieving the goal in time with a good quality of the result. It clearly requires each team member to understand the final goal, timelines, possible problems, their roles in the team, also they should be aware of the strategy. And it is highly important for all of them to have an absolutely clear and identical understanding of these things. To achieve this effective communication is essential.

Effectiveness is also something that depends on various factors. Since people in a multinational remote team are separated by great distances and time differences, their communication usually leads to merely exchanging a few lines on the computer screen. And it cannot be enough, because people are not robots. There should be a possibility for every team member to identify themselves in the team as a real person with thoughts and emotions, as truly effective communication lies beyond emails. It is much easier to understand a colleague and the rationale of their actions if one remembers that everybody is a human with their own feelings and desires.



1.2 ADVANCED CONCEPTS

But success is slightly more complicated. The author believes it is also something that makes people love their job. When they wake up in the morning and head for the office to face interesting challenges. When they like people around them. When the reality isn't worse than their expectations, which are quite bold and inspirational. When they believe that at this moment they achieve their own maximum, that they are doing what they love to do.

Usually people forget to ask themselves if they are doing something that they love. In most cases the answer seems obvious due to the reason that not too many people wanted to become SAS programmers in their childhood. But despite the fact that a regular programmer has quite a limited number of tasks and responsibilities, there are numerous types of work and possibilities to find what they really need.

If a person has forgotten what they love to do, allow them to try to recall their dream job from their childhood. This is not about changing a job, this is about realization of the type of tasks which they want to take, which motivates them to work hard. For example,

- if they initially had an ambition to become a teacher, then they may take interest in some mentoring challenges;
- if they planned to be a builder, then let them have a look at such tasks as creating programming design and strategy;
- if they desired to become an artist, try giving them more opportunities to apply their creative thinking;
- and if they wanted to be a doctor, let's not forget that helping people is in fact what we already do.

So as soon as a team member understands their preferences and starts implementing them, they become happier and, as a consequence, more successful.

Of course, this approach doesn't apply to projects with tight timelines, when personal happiness is not the key factor, and all that everybody needs is just obtaining a high quality result. However as was mentioned before, success is not just about the final result, but also about the process, namely the mindset.

2. STRATEGIES FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

"If you don't know, the thing to do is not to get scared, but to learn" - Ayn Rand

2.1 BASIC CONCEPTS

What to do when a person has realized what actually they like the most? There are two main strategies for development.

- The first one is **wide**: when they decide to become a universal programmer who can quickly switch between absolutely different tasks. This approach improves mindset flexibility, helps to get the big picture, realize the connection between a lot of different important things, concepts, environments, approaches and so on. Having a common understanding of what is going on and why, in combination with experience, makes the intuition more powerful. The person becomes able to make hard decisions as they see possible consequences and can assess the risks.

This strategy is for those who are thinking about leading roles in the future. But leading is not the only opportunity to grow.

- Another way to develop is **deep**: when they dive into a specific area and become the most qualified there. Such a person can become an irreplaceable specialist, who can be very appreciated by colleagues and highly required for some specific tasks. However, we shouldn't forget that our global programming strategy is changing, and some specific tools aren't expected to be used in the nearest future, no matter how good we are at them.

It should be noted that our desires, purposes and priorities can change over time. An approach that was great for a person five years ago might become outdated. Thus it is important not to forget to ask ourselves periodically if we are doing the job which suits our current personalities in the best possible way.

2.2 ADVANCED CONCEPTS

In reality the development is a **combination of wide and deep** strategies, without boundaries and specific limitations. Successful development happens when a person consciously controls their growth by:

- knowing their weaknesses and overcoming them;
- improving key skills for the chosen development way;
- being honest;



- listening to themselves and making rational choices of tasks and/or solutions;
- risking and speaking up;
- predicting crises and challenges, etc.

The fact of a great significance here is **regular learning**. Firstly and obviously, because it is the key point of development. Secondly, because otherwise boredom and routine might take over the person, and getting out of it will be extremely difficult. Finally, because people are unaware of what they don't know, so when being overconfident one may easily miss opportunities for career and personal growth.

There are two key questions here: **what to learn** and **when**?

- When someone is a beginner, they don't know so many details, so they have to learn everything. But even when they already have some experience, it is important not to forget that the industry and standards are evolving, and they should keep pace with rapid changes.

Of course, sometimes one has to learn topics required for their job right now, even if they find them boring. Sometimes it is the opposite – one wishes to learn topics of their personal interest, not relevant for their position at that moment. Balance is important here, and one has to be honest with themselves in order to make the right choice.

- Regarding when to learn, there are again a few solutions. There are people who prefer work-related development at weekends. Other people periodically learn instead of tending to their project responsibilities. This way doesn't lead to great success.

There is a third solution: to optimize everyday work for doing tasks faster without losing the level of quality. Usually such free time means just performing additional tasks, but occasionally some spare time appears, and it is the best moment for, firstly, reviewing the development strategy, as was mentioned before, and secondly for improving preferred skills.

3. MOVEMENT REQUIRES MAINSTAY

"Give me the place to stand, and I shall move the earth" – Archimedes

Realization of desired ways of development is just one side of a coin. The other side is a pillar: something and somebody who help to stay balanced.

- **Management and Discipline.** It is going to be hard for creative people at the beginning. But clear rules help not to get lost in the ocean of standards. And the best moment here is that the more experience in following the rules a person has, the better they know these rules and the easier they can solve non-standard problems.
- **Teachers and mentors.** Firstly, learning inevitably means having teachers. And it is very important to find a Master whose success will inspire and motivate to work harder and better. And secondly, the more experienced and successful the person becomes, they are more likely to become a Master and a source of inspiration for somebody. So, it is important to teach people the things the teacher is confident about.
- **Inspiring people and tasks.** Challenges help to get out of routine's boundaries and to learn how to work in stressful situations. Great successful people inspire and motivate to work harder, and the harder a person works, the greater result they have. So, it is essential to find a Mastermind.
- **Team and Company Support.** This is very important for any team member to feel that there are people who can help when necessary. Trust, confidence in safety and clear communication lower the level of anxiety and help people to be more productive.

4. COMMUNICATION

"It has been said: The whole is more than the sum of its parts" - Kurt Koffka

Interaction inside a team is a crucial point, especially if the team is multinational and/or remote. This is the reason why a great leader should be not only the specialist in the area, not only the manager, but also a psychologist, who understands how people



feel, what they want, what consequences the decisions might have, and how to use this information effectively. And the bigger the team is, the more crucial these skills are.

Below there are common communication mistakes:

- too many meetings – it leads to wasting time;
- too few meetings – it leads to losing issues from focus;
- too many people attending meetings, most of whom are not involved in the discussion of specific tasks – it leads to wasting resources;
- only audio meetings – it leads to losing personal contact and decreasing a member's self-awareness as part of the team;
- losing people from email discussions, related to these peoples' tasks – it leads to wasting time and decreasing the level of trust inside the team;
- and lack of trust – the worst issue with the most incredible power to destroy the success.

The solutions to these problems lie inside their descriptions. For well-balanced interaction it is important for the leader to be flexible and try new strategies when the previous one has stopped working. Here honesty and trust work for the team.

The possible course of action for the leader would be:

- Initially set up regular meetings. Have a few. Better done with a video.
- Periodically analyze the level of effectiveness by discussing it with team members:
 - ✓ are there more or fewer meetings needed?
 - ✓ do people feel involved in the discussion or some of them are wasting time?
 - ✓ do people know each other's responsibilities?

Basing on the result of the discussion, change or keep communication strategy.

- Do such analysis regularly. In case of the performance reductions, do such analysis out of schedule.
- Set up periodical one-on-one meetings with team mates to help them in their development and increasing their effectiveness. Better done with a video.
- Periodically communicate with team face-to-face. Provide and receive feedback.
- Review mistakes after delivery.

The leader of a small team should be a programmer, manager and psychologist at the same time, as was mentioned above. And the bigger the team is, the more reasonable it becomes to delegate some areas of responsibilities. Usually in such cases the leader focuses on management. But there are also many options, and sometimes new risky strategy works better than the old one.

5. DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new" — Albert Einstein

Any growth means inconvenient situations, difficulties and challenges by default. And there is a question, how to deal with them. Below are the key principles.

- **Honesty and fairness to yourself and to the people.** Knowing the person's strengths and weaknesses helps them and their leader to effectively assign tasks. Depending on the final goal and timelines, it can be a task for their personal development or for the effective team's task delivery.

To avoid possible problems in task delivery in the future it is required to do the job properly from the beginning by:

- ✓ wisely distributing tasks within a team: ideally considering each member's goals and opportunities – for a team leader;
- ✓ speaking up in case there is any doubt about the decision which may lead to a critical issue – for a team member;
- ✓ storing everything in one place or collecting all document-related links together;
- ✓ documenting all the decisions even if they seem obvious;
- ✓ making sure every team member can find and use all relevant documents;
- ✓ keeping documents and programs updated;
- ✓ following standards to keep everything compliant and readable and to avoid frantic updates before auditing or deadline.



- **Mistakes.** It is important for everybody to remember that they are not at school anymore. Their mistakes may be minor or major, may be noticed or not. But they have to realize the influence of those mistakes: the influence on reporting objects, delivery, analysis result, somebody's life, etc. And it is essential not to repeat such mistakes more than once.
- **Questions.** It can be really hard to figure out which questions can be asked without looking amateurish and incompetent. Sometimes people feel like they should know the answer to their questions already, which makes asking them embarrassing. Sometimes people don't even try looking for the answer and go straight to the colleagues for help – but firstly it is better to try finding the solution without assistance if it doesn't take a lot of time. And sometimes nobody knows the answer even if the question seems obvious, so not asking this question out loud may waste too much time.

This is a point where intuition starts working. And for the intuition one needs either great professional experience or deep understanding of the problem and people.

- **Chances and risks.** It is best not to waste chances. Regardless of the chosen development strategy, people have such a quickly growing field of actions, that wasting opportunities becomes a real issue for their career. Some of the accepted challenges they may like, some of them they may dislike. But in fact, all these just make up their experience, and there is never too much of it. Sometimes failure teaches more than success.
- **Human factor.** The final point regarding communication in the team is about building the character. One should train themselves not to give in to primary emotions regarding other team members' actions, which seem to be weird and/or insensible. Humans cannot know their colleagues' thoughts and the reasons for their decisions. But in any case, nobody is interested in wasting a colleague's time.

There is a good calming practice: every time when there is a problem or misunderstanding or even some irritation, keep thinking: *'This is just a job for me and for them, and we have to achieve our common goal. If we miscommunicated, let it be my personal challenge - to find the most effective solution for it and just continue working'.*

This is an approach of taking responsibility for the actions, thinking and result – the conscious leader's mindset.

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of important milestones for achieving success, and they may and should be absolutely different for various types of people and for different members' positions in a project. In this paper the most valuable principles for the Author were collected, and she truly believes that the way of thinking plays a key role in achieving success. Things initially take place in peoples' heads, and the effectiveness begins at the point where they decide to think in another way, and when they start working not only on hard and soft skills, but also on their own mindsets.

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RECOMMENDED READING

Winston Churchill, CEO: 25 Lessons for Bold Business Leaders - by Alan Axelrod

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