



Cream-of-the-Crop New Year's Resolutions

For Managers, their Teams, and a
Satisfying Employee Experience



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As another year is drawing to a close, managers are once again recapping what went well and what could have gone better in the twelve months that are behind them. With all due respect for this tradition, it is much more important to make targeted resolutions for the new year, helping managers and their staff members grow by overcoming challenges as a team and changing things to the positive, especially in times of hardship.

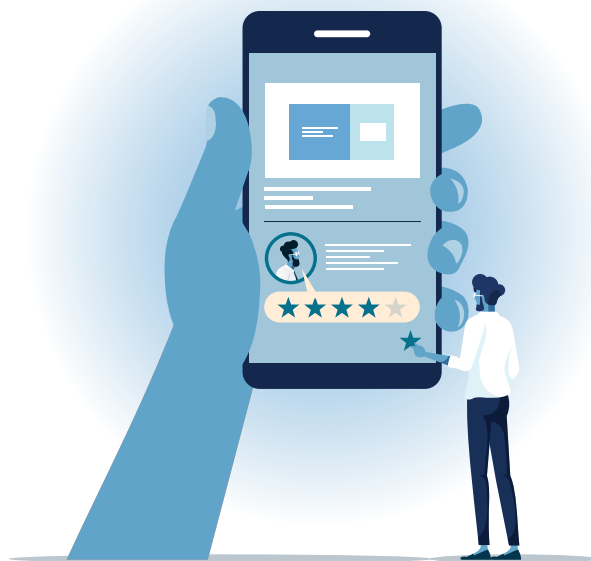
Although this is admittedly anything but trivial, the right leadership resolutions will help you get there. Here is what managers should keep an eye on an what it will take to create a successful employee experience in the year to come.

Part 1: Leading Myself – What's Important for Me

New Year's resolutions are essentially change processes, and as such, they need to follow one rule: start with yourself – especially if you want to be a successful leader. For this reason, **the first part** focuses on self-leadership.

Self-Leadership Resolution #1: Get the Feedback You Need

International studies have shown that the quality of leadership hinges on a person's ability to take feedback to heart and then walk the walk – especially in difficult or volatile circumstances. If you really want to know how you're doing as a leader, actively look for feedback that will allow you to identify your own growth potential. Come up with clear-cut questions to ask your supervisors, your colleagues, and anyone who directly reports to you. Keep in mind that praising somebody is easy but people might find it hard to address things that are not going smoothly and/or require a change. For this reason, try to anticipate a certain amount of tension. Do your best to communicate that you're interested in honest feedback and that the right input will enable you to adapt both your own approach and the situation at large. Listen carefully and try to really understand what the other person is saying instead of concentrating on your own reaction. To ensure that you will continue to receive honest feedback in the future, thank your colleague for speaking their mind and tell them which concrete measures you are planning to



take based on what they've told you. Encourage your team to approach you proactively at any time – proffering feed-forward, so to speak – and emphasize that your door is always open.

Self-Leadership Resolution #2: Be Content with Your Success

Have you ever wondered why a successful career doesn't necessarily make a person happy? If you are one of those people who tend to feel dissatisfied with themselves even after having reached a professional milestone (a raise, promotion, or something similar), there are three ways to change your mindset and stop being your own worst enemy:

- Stop measuring your accomplishments against others' or your own conflated expectations of yourself and indulge in some self-care instead. Don't reproach yourself for the things you haven't achieved but celebrate every step forward, no matter how little. And instead of begrudging others their success, try to acknowledge that their achievements are special, too, and they won't negatively affect your own success.
- Don't count the things you have amassed (money, followers, etc.), but make a habit of recognizing your contributions and positive impact on other people's lives. Real and lasting joy is in giving, not taking.



- And, finally, make sure you're not eaten up by ambition. No matter how much money or influence you've gained in the course of your career, unchecked ambition will make you feel bitter and alone. Instead, nurture your relationships and truly appreciate the people in your life, especially those who don't have anything to do with your professional success.



Self-Leadership Resolution #3: Get Better at Getting Help

Many of us have a hard time asking for help. Some are afraid of being vulnerable or being met with rejection, others prefer taking matters into their own hands. In any case, there's good news: there are things you can do to overcome your inhibitions.

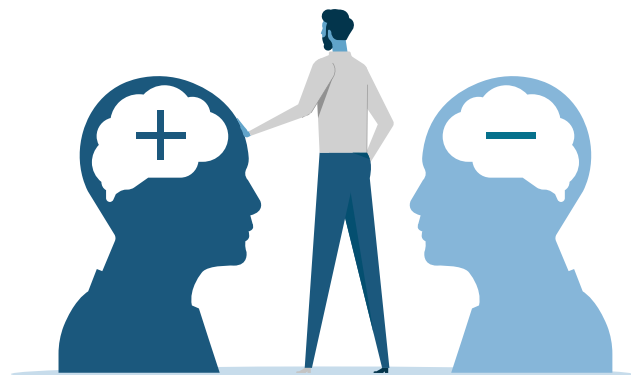
- Activate your inner resources. Try to understand where your inner barriers come from and visualize the importance of getting over them. If you find that you will probably not be able to do that on your own and could use some additional help, it's a good idea to get an expert (coach, etc.) on board.

- Readjust your own conception of what it means to accept help. Keep in mind that asking for support doesn't mean you're a burden to someone else: you're giving another person the chance to do some good. Every contribution to the team's success, no matter how tiny, is a true win-win situation for everyone concerned.
- Communicate in an open and authentic way. The better you can explain where you need help, the easier it will be for others to offer to help you out.
- In a first step, confide in somebody you know well, maybe a family member or a trusted colleague, and ask them for a hand in a small matter. You will be surprised to find out how helpful most people are.

Self-Leadership Resolution #4: Are You a Difficult Boss?

Nobody wants to be a bad boss. And yet, they exist. What are you like as a leader? The questions below are meant to help you find out whether you are the paragon of a modern executive or if you're difficult to work with.

- What do you expect of your team? Nobody needs to feel bad about looking for top performance. Unrealistic expectations, however, set your team up to fail. Think about any perfectionist habits you have that might (negatively) impact your team.
- Do you micro-manage your employees? Do you tell them how to do their job, leaving them little space for creativity or taking initiative? If the answer is yes, try to concentrate on results in the future. Tell your team what the goals are but not how to reach them.
- Have you made a habit of delegating only routine jobs? Everyone wants to evolve, and your team is no different. How about raising that yardstick of yours a little and letting go? You will be surprised to see what your employees are able to accomplish on their own.
- Feedback? Sure, but only if there's something to dispraise. If that sounds like you, focus on giving significantly more positive than negative feedback in the future. The easiest way to do that is to acknowledge the strengths and wins of your employees in a targeted and timely manner.



Part 2: Leading the Team – What Your Team Needs

What's just as important is to think about what leaders need, because only managers who look after themselves will be able to support and be there for their teams, especially in challenging times. **The second part** of the team leadership resolutions will focus on this issue.



Team Leadership Resolution #1: Lead Your Team through Times of Turmoil

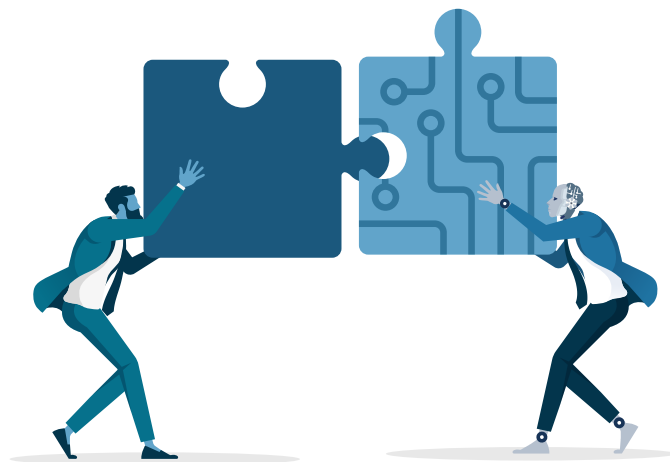
Inflation, rising interest rates, life after and with COVID, the war in Ukraine, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East – there's a lot going on in the world, and some of it can be hard to stomach. What can you do as a manager to be there for your company, your team, and, not least, for yourself in challenging times? Here's a few strategies you might find useful:

- Create a culture of perspective, putting your company first. This includes leading by example and focusing on what is right for your company and employees instead of pursuing your own personal career goals. It also means developing an awareness of the fact that your role transcends the unit you are heading, requiring you to communicate across teams and departments.
- Focus on reinventing your company if necessary. When things are not running as smoothly as they should, it's time to look for ways to make a change or be more innovative. Start by identifying the members of your team that you consider most apt to drive the planned changes together with you. As a next step, entrust the routine, day-to-day business to another team. This way, you are making sure change happens while keeping an eye on everyday business.
- Make integrative leadership one of your priorities. That means not just focusing on diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity but also with regard to world views, backgrounds, and skills. The more diverse and inclusive your team is, the more adaptable it will be in times of turmoil.

Team Leadership Resolution #2: Introduce AI to Your Company

There's simply no future without AI. As a leader, you need to identify the areas where using AI is meaningful for your company, and where it doesn't make any sense. To this end, there are three things you should focus on:

- Make sure everybody in your team has some basic understanding of how digital systems work. That doesn't mean everybody needs to become a software engineer or data scientist. What's needed, however, is an innovative and proactive approach to working across platforms, a willingness to consider new developments as an opportunity instead of a threat, and acceptance of the fact that the only constant in life is change.
- It is your job to ensure that your company is prepared to make adjustments whenever the need arises. Share your experience with other leaders: it's the best way to break out of the silo mentality and create a central interface where knowledge and data can be accessed. Integrating AI not only means familiarizing yourself and your employees with the newest technologies, it also requires you to make preparations on a structural level to make sure your company can adapt to future developments.

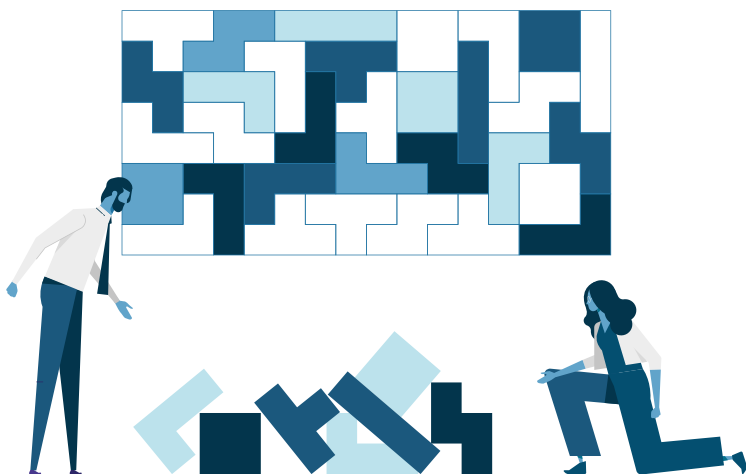


- Integrate AI into your business model. If the technical systems of your enterprise are static, your company will remain static as a whole, including yourself and your team. This is why you need to break up data silos, improve collaboration across functions, and help build a software- and data-driven business model that harvests the potential of AI.

Team Leadership Resolution #3: Make Learning a Fixture of Your Team's Daily Business

How can you support your team in being open to new things and willing to keep learning? Here are three strategies you might want to try.

- Start by communicating clearly that mistakes are a part of life. The important thing is not to be afraid of making them and learning from them when they happen. Leading by example, you might want to kick off your meetings by sharing one of your own mistakes with your team and analyzing what you've learned from it.



- As a next step, introduce constructive feedback into your team's workflows. Reserve some time during meetings to think about what has worked well and what you could have done better. This not only serves to strengthen trust, it'll also motivate your employees to harness their full potential.
- And finally, encourage your team to experiment. Emphasize that you're always open to suggestions and happy to try out original ideas through prototypes and pilot projects. Empowering your employees to be bold will help them continue to learn new things and develop.

Part 3: Shaping the Employee Experience

Giving Your Team as Much Attention as Your Customers

Last but not least: **the third part** of this series will focus on employee experience. The latter will be a crucial matter in the coming year as an ongoing shortage of skilled labor and the employees' market will make it more necessary than ever for leaders to pay just as much attention to their team members as they do to their customers.



Employee Experience Resolution #1: Create a Successful Employee Experience

Current studies show that positive employee experience ratings can bump up a company's revenues by up to 50%. But what does it take to create a good employee experience?

■ **Mutual Trust**

Trust is a two-way street – it needs to work in both directions, not just from you to your employees but also the other way around. And establishing trust pays off: genuine trust within a team motivates people, boosts creativity and cooperation, and improves employee retention.

■ **Ownership at the C-Level**

Leaders who take responsibility are committed to both the company and their employees' well-being and keep an open ear at all times. They know the

needs of their team members and do their utmost to consider them in any decisions they make.

■ **Dovetailing Employee Values with the Company's Vision**

Clear-cut goals, milestones, and KPI will help employees get in touch with the company's vision and understand their roles in implementing it.

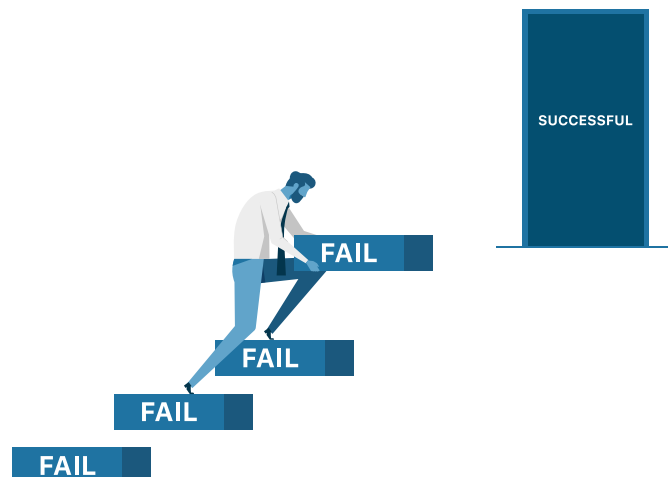
■ **Recognition and Opportunities for Growth**

True recognition is more than commending your employees for their successful work. It also means recognizing their potential and supporting them accordingly by giving them tailored opportunities to learn and grow.

Employee Experience Resolution #2: Motivate Your Team, also in Difficult Times

It's a common side effect of our BANI world that employees get distracted by the challenges surrounding them or lose the spring in their step from time to time. Naturally, you won't be able to eliminate all the worries that might plague your team members. What you can do, however, is create a motivating and supporting environment that steers your team toward the right goals also in times of difficulty:

- Don't shy away from discussing tough issues. Solving tricky problems together creates trust, and nothing could be more important during hard times.
- Be creative when it comes to ways of motivating your employees. Sometimes, a promotion or a raise is not an option. In this case, just ask the person upfront: What would motivate you in the next year? How can I support you in your goals?



- Help your team stay focused. The best way to do that is through personal conversation. Make a conscious effort to give each of your employees the time they deserve. Personal interaction between two people will not only motivate them in the long run, it also creates stronger ties between you and your team as well as between your team and your company.

Employee Experience Resolution #3: Boost Your Team's Creativity

Creativity is what makes or breaks innovation. To actively promote a culture of creativity, there are a few things you should consider:

- Create an environment that is conducive to new ideas, including ones that might not seem so great at first glance. If you want your team to solve a problem creatively, let them come up with many possible solutions to the problem instead of just finding the one "right" answer. This way, less obvious solutions stand a chance that might not have seen the light of day otherwise.

- Bear down on your conviction that failure is a natural part of experimenting. This way, you'll take some of the pressure off. Sometimes you need to understand what doesn't work in order to figure out what might.
- Emphasize the importance of penciling in time in your calendar that is off-limits to meetings or work packages. This is the only way creativity can truly unfold.
- Make sure to consistently engage in some self-care and motivate your team to do the same by taking

time for things that bring you joy (but that you don't necessarily excel at), for instance exercising, playing an instrument, or simply reading a book. This way, you'll create the balance you need in your life.

- Retire a classic from the executive dictionary: "Bring me solutions, not problems." Make a habit of asking your team members what is not working (well), what's missing, and where the status quo simply doesn't cut it. There can be no innovation without problems.



- Then you need to find out what to do to make them see the light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe it's enough to tell them you need to stick together as a team and see this through for a little while longer as things will change for the better after a certain point. In any case, it helps to rally around a common goal or priority again.

Employee Experience Resolution #4: Don't Let Negativity Seize Hold of Your Team

As a leader, you need to feel emotionally connected to your team members. A new strategic orientation, a change in management, or the most recent job cuts – a number of things can put a damper on the mood in your team. What can you do to prevent this negative emotional momentum from spiraling out of control?

- Open up a dialogue and tell your employees that you can see there's something that is troubling individual team members to a lesser or greater extent, and that you want to do something about it.
- And, finally: as an executive, you should be able to self-regulate even though this can be an immensely hard thing to do. This is important because leaders serve as a signpost when it comes to assessing the enormity of a situation. The cooler and calmer you appear to the outside, the more relaxed and focused your team will go about the issue, not matter how dire the situation.

Conclusion: New Year, New Leadership Perspectives

The new year always presents a unique opportunity to rethink and enhance both personal leadership and team collaboration. It's the perfect time to pause, reflect, and set goals that promote not only professional development but also personal growth.

These resolutions are more than just annual objectives; they are guiding principles for effective, empathetic, and forward-thinking leadership. They offer an opportunity to question old habits, develop new strategies, and strengthen the ability to lead both oneself and others in an inspiring way. This includes, amongst others, being open to feedback, learning from mistakes, making continuous adjustments, and considering the integration of innovative technologies like AI into daily life.

Moreover, the new year is an ideal moment to strengthen leadership culture and create an environment where every team member has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. By fostering a climate of openness, mutual trust, and continuous development, leaders significantly contribute to the success of their entire team.

In conclusion, the journey towards improving leadership skills and team dynamics is ongoing. The new year is an excellent starting point, but the real changes and successes are seen in the consistent application and development of these resolutions over time. Take the time to regularly assess and acknowledge your progress, establishing a culture of learning and continual improvement that will lead you and your team towards a successful future.



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