Your Leadership Health in 2023

Discovering the True Health of Leadership Amongst CTOs and Other Senior Technology Leaders





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Introduction

CTO Craft's Leadership Health Survey, in partnership with Lohika, focuses on understanding the true health of leadership amongst CTOs and other senior technology leaders. We aim to discover how leaders intend to look after their health (and their teams' health) in 2023.

We carried out the survey now as tech leaders continue to battle unprecedented times with ongoing challenges both in business and externally. For example, as leaders face layoffs and hiring pressures, the potential for them to neglect their well-being and health is high, and their teams are also likely to feel the strain if teams are restructured or under-resourced.

This report provides CTOs and technology leaders with data on essential leadership areas, including:

- A leader's personal development.
- How leaders give and receive feedback for their personal development and their team.
- How they manage their stress and well-being and that of their team.
- How leaders intend to develop their people in 2023.

The survey was conducted online during February and early March 2023. We collected over 100 survey responses and then interviewed randomly selected respondents for further insights into their input.

The Methodology can be found at the end of this report.





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Foreword

The step into a technical leadership role is a complex move as it's exciting but undoubtedly brings new challenges for individuals. And while employee well-being is a rising priority for many organisations, it begs the question of who is looking after leaders as they continue to face pandemic repercussions, layoffs, skills shortages, talent recruitment and retention challenges and economic uncertainty.

We partnered with Lohika, part of Capgemini, to assess tech leadership and team health and show trends and insights to highlight what others are doing or experiencing. We wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how technology leaders manage their health and well-being while also managing that of their teams.

Whether individuals are moving into, or already established in, a CTO or tech leadership role in a startup or developed organisation, leaders will face issues with headspace, time, and resources and managing multiple priorities and stakeholders.

We've identified the key issues surrounding tech leaders and how they do (or don't adequately) find ways to take time out for themselves, find that essential headspace, and avoid personal burnout, which is unfortunately still prevalent among tech leaders and CTOs.

The information from this survey and subsequent interviews with survey participants will offer insights into how tech leaders manage their health and the health of their teams. In addition, we'll provide suggestions for doing this more effectively while also managing priorities and keeping all the business wheels in motion.

> Andy Skipper Founder and Chief CTO Coach CTO Craft





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Executive Summary

A healthy team environment, nurtured by a motivated and inclusive leader, takes planning, experience and intention. So, what's the true state of technical leaders' approach to their health and their team's health, and how can they shape this to ensure a productive 2023?

We surveyed over 100 global engineering leaders and below are the key findings from the data, which we will discuss in further detail throughout this report:

Personal details:

- 75% of the respondents are located in Europe.
- CTOs comprised almost two-thirds of the respondents, followed by 18% in some type of engineering roles (including Directors, VPs and Managers).

Part 1: Leadership Health Check

- 1 in 5 leaders are not giving enough time to their personal leadership growth.
- 83% of technology leaders work on their development at least every month.
- Joining a community was the number one choice for leader development, but over half of the leaders haven't set personal goals for 2023.
- In 2023, almost 1 in 5 leaders want to learn something new.
- Three-quarters of leaders manage their well-being in some form, but 1 in 5 don't ask for feedback.

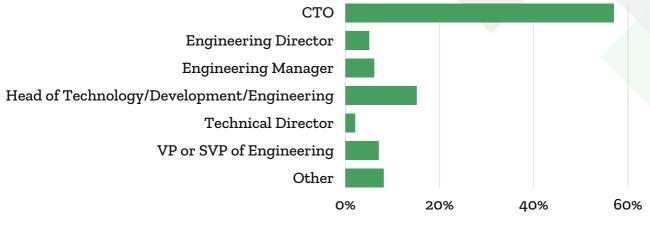
Part 2: Team Health Check

- 2 in 5 leaders have been part of laying off team members, and over half of organisations have not implemented layoffs in the past 3-9 months.
- Half the leaders intend to grow their teams, and over a quarter use LinkedIn to hire.
- Compensation is not the most important way to retain talent.
- 36% of leaders have not seen team productivity changes.
- 42% of leaders rely on word of mouth to check on team well-being, and most leaders use 1:1s to give feedback to their teams.



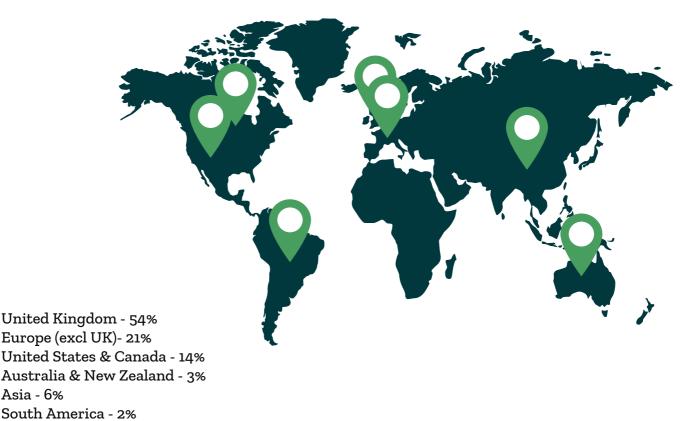
Our Survey Respondents





Where Our Respondents Came From

27 Countries







Your Leadership Health in 2023

Part 1

Your Leadership Health Check



Finding 1: 1 in 5 leaders are not giving enough time to their personal leadership growth

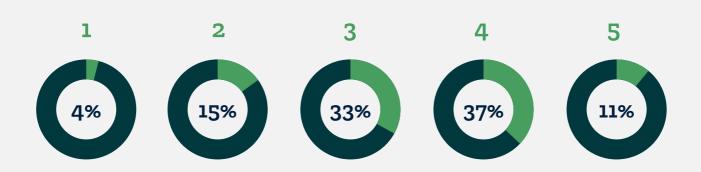
Personal leadership growth can mean many things to many people but concerns how leaders develop themselves through training, reading, networking etc.

The results show that 48% of tech leaders said it is important to prioritise their leadership development (scores 4 and 5), closely followed by 33% at 3.

With my growth as a leader, I can grow others. I consider this my highest responsibility, as people are the ones keeping the company afloat and building products. Leadership growth means learning myself and learning through the others I train. Max Orlovsky, Head of Engineering, Chiliz/Socios.com

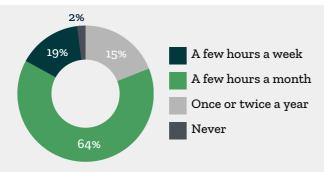
Almost one-fifth of tech leaders are not prioritising personal leadership development significantly. This is a concern because almost 20% of tech leaders are not helping themselves by committing time to their development, which may impact the teams they are developing.

It's also a risk to businesses because if leaders aren't developing themselves, they may not be motivated or feel like they are doing enough for themselves. In addition, their direct reports and subordinates will not necessarily see a role model who encourages them to develop themselves.





Finding 2: 83% of technology leaders work on their development at least every month



The great news is that almost a fifth of tech leaders work on their leadership growth for a few hours a week, and a very encouraging 64% are developing their leadership skills a few hours a month. This means that 83% of our leaders work on their development each month.

As part of my growth strategy, I actively seek out educational resources such as articles, TED talks, CTO Craft emails, weekly newsletters, LinkedIn, YouTube, Reddit posts, meetups, and conventions. I believe that theoretical learning is important and broadens knowledge into different situations. I don't think it's 100% enough, though, as practice in my opinion, trumps theory. But practice in this position is very situational. Max Orlovsky, Head of Engineering, Chiliz/Socios.com

I need to separate it between learning and actually executing because when I said a few hours a week, I included execution, which means thinking about how to actually help others in a leadership team grow as well.

Andreas Rudischhauser, CTO, Bridge

I'm part of a CTO community, I follow a few newsletters and read books. For the scale we're at, I feel this is enough for now. Anonymous CTO

Read, executive coach and I go to tech executive group meetings. It's enough of these things, but I feel they are broadly ineffective. So not enough leadership growth. An executive coach is the only thing I've been doing lately that I believe is helpful. Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

Thankfully, only 2% of the respondents never work on their leadership growth, and 15% said they only commit to developing their leadership skills just once or twice a year.

It can be down to time. We only have 30 people in the company, and I manage 5-6 people. But I wear the hat of about 6 different roles, so finding time to put effort into improving leadership and myself is really hard. And it's validating the need to put time in my diary (e.g. a couple of hours a week) to say this is the time I need for myself; this is the bit I'm really struggling with. Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel

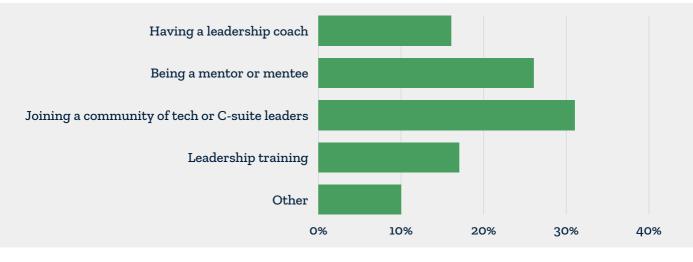
So while the majority of leaders that we surveyed actively focus on their own leadership growth, there is still 15% who are only doing this sporadically throughout the year.



Finding 3: Joining a community was the number one choice for leader development, but over half of the leaders haven't set personal goals for 2023

Almost one in three tech leaders said joining a community of tech or C-suite leaders was their development choice this year. It was followed closely by just over a quarter who are considering being a mentor or mentee.

17% said they would get some leadership training, and 16% would invest in a leadership coach.



The main development I think will come from joining the CTO peer group is exchanging ideas and solving problems together while having a broader vision of multiple different environments. Anonymous CTO

Networking is something I'm looking forward to this year, as this is a very strong incentive to grow, as it opens your eyes to other people's experiences. Max Orlovsky, Head of Engineering, Chiliz/Socios.com

The other ways leaders said they were developing themselves were by:

- Reading (books, articles, blogs etc.)
- Self-reflection
- Observing other leaders
- Self-study
- Networking
- Mindfulness and
- Trying new ideas.



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Regarding setting personal goals this year, 44% said they had set them, 51% said they hadn't, and 5% did not answer.



So, why are over half of the leaders not setting such goals for themselves:

A lack of time featured a lot, as did leaders not having a clear awareness of what they need to improve. There was also a sense that the organisation comes first, leaders are too preoccupied, and they don't know where to start or how to make goals SMART.

Goals are more emergent given the current environment. Anonymous

Not enough time to focus on me. Anonymous

Nowadays, the company's sustainability is more important than my personal growth, so I have to take care of sales and new clients onboarding. Anonymous

It's really hard to set a goal when you don't know what you're aiming for. If someone in my team came to me and said they were struggling with something I'm doing, I would then have something to work on and I'd have a goal. Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel



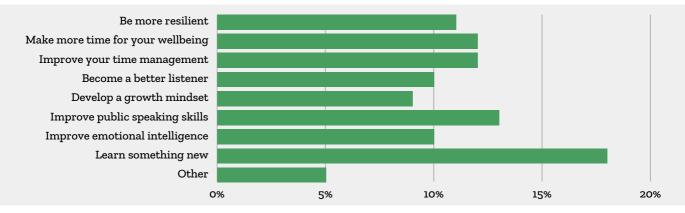
Finding 4: In 2023, almost 1 in 5 leaders want to learn something new

We wanted to find out more about the areas leaders were looking to develop this year. The top response at 18% was learning something new, followed by 13% who wanted to improve their public speaking skills.

This was followed closely by 12% for those who wanted to improve time management and make more time for their well-being.

The Other category flagged a sense of leaders feeling overwhelmed, unable to filter priorities, looking for discipline and the ability to prioritise and lacking in focus and planning skills.

Comments included getting better at accountability, 'Learn how to find a good place to work', strategic planning, developing scalable processes, technical leadership, 'Don't get trapped into looking into detail' and 'Improve information management for the million competing priorities.'



Solutions

Coaching or mentoring-having a coach who has been through the process of adapting to a CTO can be an invaluable way to progress and learn as a leader in tech. Not only can they help to answer practical questions, but they can also be a great sounding board to help leaders discuss concerns and worries.

They can also help to improve listening skills, 'When someone is speaking, focus on active listening. Don't listen and then forget about it; really listen, concentrate and understand what they're saying and don't interrupt in the middle of a sentence. Remember to stay at the leadership level and not always be into the details. I used to be a developer, so I'm used to detail.' Andreas Rudischhauser, CTO, Bridge

Leadership courses-can help develop the skills required for a CTO that aren't necessarily learned during a technical career.

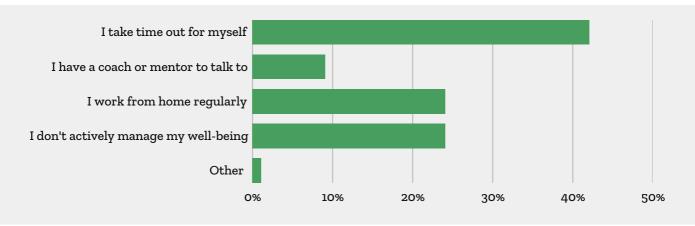
'I'm looking for the business side of the CTO role. I come from a very tech background. I was a developer, team leader, senior lead, and up to Head of Engineering. I missed the business side, so I don't have all that business and strategy knowledge, I've never done anything on that kind of stuff. So, I'd be interested in looking at that side of things specifically with the CTO role in mind.' Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel.



Finding 5: Three-quarters of leaders manage their well-being in some form, but 1 in 5 don't ask for feedback

Well-being has climbed up the agenda for many companies in the past few years, with the pandemic shining a light on more support and solutions for employees. And while this is a positive move, we wanted to find out how (and if) it extends to CTOs.

75% of leaders are managing their well-being in some form. 42% of leaders said they take time out for themselves, and 24% work from home regularly (although this may also include those working from home full-time as they don't have an office or external workplace).



I take time out regularly. I want to set an example to my team; we all need to take time off in order to recharge our brains. Last month I was away for a couple of days. Next month I'm going on a big holiday to Sri Lanka with my family. Anonymous CTO

9% said they have a coach or mentor they can speak to.

However, in contrast, a concerning 1 in 4 leaders said that they don't actively manage their wellbeing, which does not bode well for their health, the organisation's success and for the teams who report to them.

I definitely should (manage my well-being), but life is just complicated. I'm transgender and just came out in November. It might sound a bit backwards, but that has meant very little time for true self-care. I have a whole host of new pressures – personal and professional to deal with that keep me from actually taking care of myself.

Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

Solutions

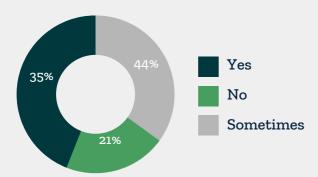
Working from home can help to reduce stress caused by commuting and provides flexibility. However, it may mean some people feel isolated, so options are important.



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We're a fully remote company but once a month, we have a co-working day somewhere in the UK as the majority of us are in the UK. So, we'll switch between London, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham, but otherwise, we can do co-working sessions outside of these schedules. At home, we're connected by Slack and email. We promote a good flexible working policy and update Slack statuses (just popping to shops etc.) so we know who's unavailable. Trusting your team is essential.

Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel



35% of leaders said they do ask for regular feedback from others. However, 21% said they do not. 44% said they sometimes ask for it.

There are many reasons why individuals may not ask for feedback as often they may be too busy, it's not the top of their priority list, and it's not something they are used to doing.

I rarely ask for feedback as it's not on the top of my priority list to ask for feedback on myself to improve myself. It goes back to not putting time in for yourself but putting time in for others. If I asked people, they would give feedback, but I haven't done it. Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel

One of my strengths is generally building honest relationships with my team. They know they can tell me what they think so I can adjust and make changes to how I manage, how the teams work, etc. I need feedback from the team to correct and adjust so we're doing the right things. Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

Solutions

Three months ago, I implemented Officevibe for feedback in my company. It's a tool that helps to streamline feedback by asking feedback questions to people and also allows you to set up 1-to-1s with people. It's had a great impact. You get an employee satisfaction score, and then you can monitor how the mood in the company changes. So we implemented it first, and then once we have insights, we can set actions. It's created a culture of people being more open. Andreas Rudischhauser, CTO, Bridge

I have quarterly skip levels with my whole team - one of the subjects is asking what I can do differently for them. I usually get pretty useful responses. Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

I ask my team and my CEO for feedback, both directly and indirectly. "Sometimes" is quite a broad definition, let's say when needed. Anonymous CTO





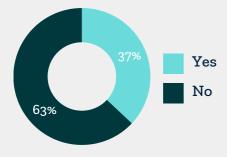
Your Leadership Health in 2023



Your Team Health Check



Finding 6: 2 in 5 leaders have been part of laying off team members, and over half of organisations have not implemented layoffs in the past 3-9 months



Although 63% of leaders said they had not made layoffs in the past 3-9 months, that leaves almost two-fifths of tech leaders who had to go through this process recently.

Layoffs inevitably come with stress for the person affected but also for the leader carrying out the process. They also place pressure on the team.

Employee reductions via redundancies also often leave unanswered questions about the future and if / when those layoffs will be replaced. Sometimes rapid work needs to be done to consider how to fill gaps.

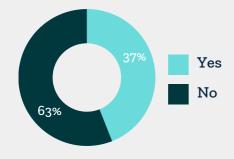
Layoffs always bring down the mood. Andreas Rudischhauser, CTO, Bridge

Solutions

Leaders must have the right tools to make team redundancies and know how to support their people through organisational layoffs. And this is where some of the leadership development points discussed in Part 1 can be essential to help leaders manage themselves in their teams through difficult times.

Communication is imperative to help leaders update their people on company layoffs so that employees know about these at the right time rather than finding out via the grapevine. While leaders may be unable to prevent layoffs, they can be open and honest about the company plans and ensure that their people can voice concerns or talk to them whenever needed.

Such openness and honesty will help to maintain trust and reduce the potential of an 'us and them' culture emerging. Leaders must also be aware of additional support networks available to employees, including employee assistance programmes.



We wanted to gain a sense of whether organisations have downsized or restructured in the past year and what tech leaders are planning to do with their teams in 2023.

56% of leaders said their organisations had not implemented layoffs in the past 3-9 months. However, while it sounds encouraging for the stability of the technology sector, that still leaves 44% of organisations that did make layoffs, which is a considerable proportion.



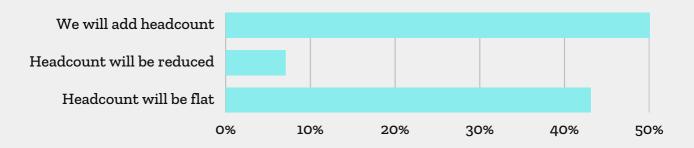
Unfortunately, the impact of restructuring and redundancies can be difficult and stressful for the people who remain working at the company. Layoffs can negatively affect the company culture and morale and may result in a breakdown in employee engagement, motivation and trust.

In addition, even a small number of redundancies can create a ripple effect throughout the company that may increase sickness absence and turnover and reduce productivity and performance.

Part 2 | Your Team Health Check

Finding 7: Half the leaders intend to grow their teams and over a quarter use LinkedIn & Job Boards to hire

Looking forward, we wanted to determine whether leaders plan to expand or reduce their engineering team size this year.



Positively, 50% of leaders said they plan to add headcount this year, and only 7% said they would reduce it. The remainder said they believe their engineering headcount will be flat. But, with a continuing talent shortage, acquiring talent may be more challenging and take longer than previously.

Solutions

The data shows a period of slowing down for many, which poses the questions of how will organisations and leaders know when to start recruiting again and how do they manage in the medium term?

Temporary workers–going straight to hiring for a permanent position is common. However, contractors and temporary staff may be easier to find if leaders don't have permanent headcount available or if they need to fill short-term skills gaps.

Outsourcing–leaders may consider using an external company to outsource engineering work to extend their teams without adding headcount or recruitment time. For example, Lohika has provided remote and agile engineering teams for over twenty years. Their purpose is to:

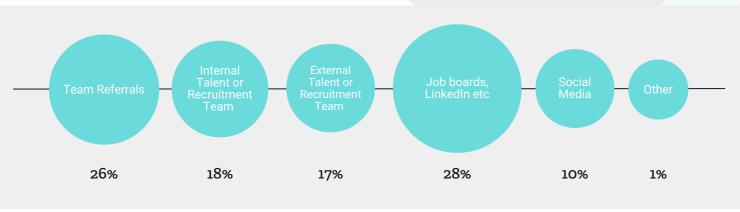
'Enable high-growth companies to thrive and succeed with elite engineering talent.'

Whether a start-up or established organisation requires experienced engineers, they can fill and manage the talent gaps.



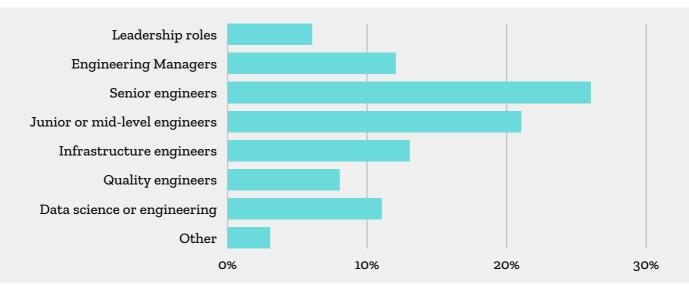
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Following the question above about team growth, we wanted to determine how CTOs hire new recruits.



Job boards, LinkedIn etc., came in as the most popular method for hiring at 28%. Team referrals closely followed at 26%. Next came internal talent or recruitment team (18%) and external talent or recruitment team (17%). Social media was at 10%.

And who are they hiring? The results for this question were very close, with the response distribution only going from 3% (Other) to 26% (who are hiring or have recently hired senior engineers). 21% of respondents said they are or were recently hiring junior or midlevel engineers.



The Other category included: Project managers, architects, ML engineers, product designers and not hiring.

Solutions

Suggestions by leaders for hiring talent included Slack and Discord networking, manual sourcing and outreach to those in similar roles and recommendations from people they trust or those they have worked with.

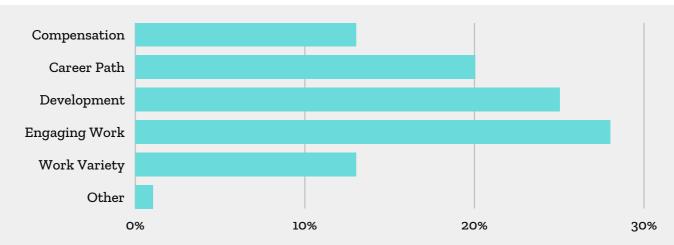
In addition, there's the option of reviewing skills gaps and re-examining existing team skills and capabilities. Can leaders reassess current talent and upskill individuals to fill gaps in the longer term and encourage the development and engagement of existing employees?



Finding 8: Compensation is not the most important way to retain talent

The pandemic sparked the rise of remote and hybrid working and the great resignation, which prompted employees to be more selective about their roles, employer and flexibility. Although the great resignation has calmed, retention remains a critical aspect of talent strategy and should not be ignored.

It's interesting that compensation is not the main way leaders intend to retain engineers this year. Instead, engaging work, learning, and development were the main retention methods at 28% and 25%, respectively.



20% said they would concentrate on employee career paths to encourage retention, and 13% said compensation or work variety.

Solutions

Technology leaders must ensure they take the time to determine what is important to each team member. Once they understand the individual motivators, they can work towards delivering what they need for engagement and potentially retention.

But they must be careful what they promise as increased compensation or promotions aren't always possible, but smaller incentives in development or learning might be.

Max Orlovsky, Head of Engineering, Chiliz/Socios.com suggests:

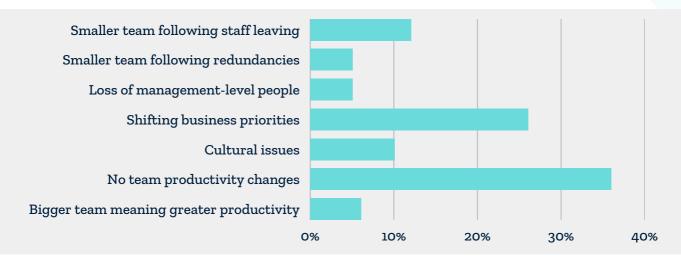
- 'Have a dedicated budget for people to train, and assist them with training as just providing them with a budget is not enough.
- Ask team leads to find conventions and courses for engineers that might interest them.
- Valuable in-person team building as we work remotely across Europe, with informative workshops.
- Personal and professional development assistance as our team leads are trained to work with people and concentrate on people as people and not as cogs in the mechanism.
- Try to make work more engaging, where people can build creative solutions and solve problems, rather than be like a code-monkey dishing out features that are requested from stakeholders.'



Finding 9: 36% of leaders have not seen team productivity changes

Productivity has been potentially impacted over the last few years due to the increase in flexible and hybrid working, the increase of mental health issues in the workplace, and the impact of high turnover and talent shortages.

We wanted to find out if team productivity has been affected by such changes and, if so, how.



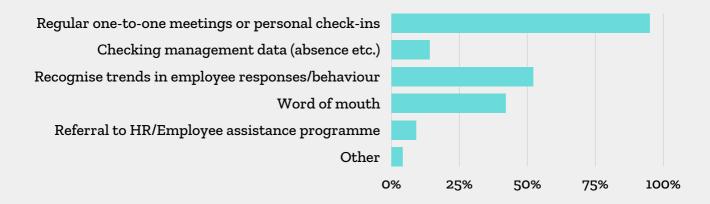
The highest result, 36%, said there were no team productivity changes. There was a small percentage of increased productivity, with 6% of leaders agreeing.

For those that did see productivity changes, a quarter said it was due to shifting business priorities. It's interesting that people aren't directly pointing to fewer people as the reason for productivity change but more to shifting priorities and the cultural impacts.



Finding 10: 42% of leaders rely on word of mouth to check on team well-being and most leaders use 1:1s to give feedback to their teams

Well-being can be linked to many areas of an employee's role and personal life. Therefore, it's essential to look after each person's well-being and be aware of the signs that they may not be okay and consider ways to monitor and measure well-being.



Firstly, as respondents could select more than one choice, looking at all the responses, 95% of all leaders said they use regular one-to-one meetings or personal check-ins to check on their wellbeing. Just over half of all leaders recognise trends in employee responses/behaviour. While it's good that leaders are noticing changes in behaviour, it's not enough to rely on this with many remote workers and distributed teams.

It's tough, I've been part of a lot of organisations who do any number of well-being tactics, and generally speaking, I think none of what I've been part of has been useful. I'm sure there are ways we could find, but I'm not sure what those ways are. The most effective way I can think of is if I had more people so I could have more time. There is nothing better than simply talking to your team.

Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

Our 1:1s are a very mixed bag. We usually start off with 'How's life?' just generally how are you, not how's your job etc. How are you? This enables an open start and then we move into work. We have good support from the Head of People in the company. Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel

42% of all leaders said they rely on word of mouth, which again is a concern as well-being issues may be missed.

Only 14% of all leaders use data to review well-being via absence trends etc., and 9% refer individuals to HR or the employee assistance programme (EAP), but this may be because individuals approach HR directly or some start-ups may not have HR or an EAP.



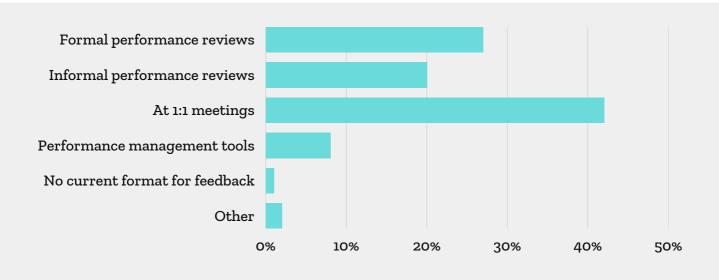
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Solutions

In the Other category, there were suggestions for ways to measure team member well-being:

- Carry out regular employee satisfaction or quarterly pulse surveys to gain general feedback (ideally through an app that collects and analyses the information).
- Use Officevibe to gain a sense of employee satisfaction and engagement.
- Carry out fortnightly health checks with team members to check on well-being, workload and individual stress levels.
- Use 1:1s to check how team members are before discussing work etc.

Returning to the ever-important subject of feedback, we wanted to find out how leaders give feedback to their teams.



Solutions

I give feedback. I try to make it timely and actionable. I wish I did more, but I have very little time and I think more would provide some but not a ton of added value. I hope to hit the balance of the most impact for the least time investment. Some feedback is definitely a priority. Giving more would be nice, but that isn't a priority right now.

Emily Stephens, VP of Product Engineering, Mersive Technologies

We gather all the feedback using Officevibe, and then we decide whether to respond to it directly or whether it's a topic to present in an all-hands meeting. As we have a lot of feedback coming in, we tend to group it and then present it once in a while during an all-hands meeting, so everyone knows what is going on.

Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel

One CTO uses 1:1 meetings and performance management tools to give feedback and says:

This is enough direct feedback. We then have retrospectives after each cycle where we can analyse and think about teamwork. It's either no tool (walk and chat at retreats) or via knowyourteam.com.



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Jen Beattie, Head of Engineering, Give Panel says:

I do monthly one-to-ones because I asked my team, and that's what they wanted. I know people outside my team who think that's not enough, but I think it gives enough time between the meetings to make progress and act on the feedback. It's working really well.' 'I did an anonymous poll in March which asked if the monthly one-to-ones were still working, and everyone said yes.

I go through constructive criticism in that here's something you're not doing quite so well, but here's how you can improve it. And the next time, we will review the suggestions for progress.

We have a culture of candour, where we've all had feedback sessions. One of the feedback sessions was about how to accept negative feedback and how not to take it personally.



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About CTO Craft and Lohika

CTO Craft helps CTOs and technology leaders in businesses worldwide become better leaders through Community membership, transformational coaching, mentoring, workshops and events. The CTO Craft Community of over 8,000 brings together technology leaders from small startups to global organisations across all experience levels.

To join the CTO Craft Community or learn about events, coaching or mentoring: https://ctocraft.com/

Lohika partners with growth-stage technology companies to help them engineer the next Big Thing. They collaborate closely with their clients' engineering organisations to transform them from bottlenecks to growth drivers. Lohika's clients include Okta, Twilio, PagerDuty, Pinterest and Palo Alto Networks. Lohika is part of Capgemini Engineering.

Capgemini Engineering combines its broad industry knowledge and cutting-edge technologies in digital and software to support the convergence of the physical and digital worlds. Coupled with the capabilities of the rest of the Group, it helps clients to accelerate their journey towards Intelligent Industry.

Learn more about Lohika and Capgemini Engineering:

https://www.lohika.com/ https://www.capgemini.com/us-en/about-us/who-we-are/ourbrands/capgemini-engineering/



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Methodology

At the start of 2023, CTO Craft and Lohika collaborated to survey and interview global engineering leaders, to understand how they manage their leadership health and development and that of their team.

Identifying these challenges will help us devise solutions that work for everybody.

We have divided the report to reflect the survey into:

- Part 1 Leadership health
- Part 2 Team health

We collected over 100 survey responses and then carried out interviews with randomly selected respondents for further insights into their survey input.

Some respondents wished to remain anonymous, while others are listed below. Huge thanks to all those that took the time to complete our survey and to those who kindly gave time to interview.



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