Self-Managed Teams Survey Results

Vasken Dermardiros

May 31, 2021

self-managed-team

Conducted a small survey about how the team views the direction of the company following me reading [[how_tech_loses_out]], [[bullshit-jobs]] and other articles. Have a hunch that things may not be very clearly defined since we *still* don't do optimal controls and monitor performance very well. Talking big things instead. Very *marketing-heavy*.

For the sake of trying to preserve some anonymity of the responders (N=6), I've paraphrased and/or combined the responses. Average time to complete: 103 minutes. The survey was much more qualitative than quantitative, so don't expect to find pie charts in here – the French refer to the *pie chart* as a *Camembert*, like the cheese.

Thank you tremendously for your feedback!

Company Vision

Pretty clear in the 'YES/NO' part (everyone said 'YES'). Explanations quite different from person to person though. Does this mean otherwise?

Key terms:

- Green + sustainable technology
- Leverage AI + HVAC expertise to automate energy efficiency methods and deploy at scale
- Serve as basis to help the grid
- Get as much square footage as possible
- Improve comfort

Employees don't all care about being *green* since their behaviour at the office and elsewhere says otherwise. The impact of BrainBox on climate is not obvious as is understood.

Company Goals

66% clear. Responses lean lower. Summary:

- Make money by automating energy efficiency processes and deploying at scale

- – Secondary: save energy/CO_2, improve comfort
- To that point, not clear what the measure of success is and how we're tracking it
  - – Reports were nice
  - – Need other visibility sources: CO2 dashboard? $ dashboard?
  - – Number of clients signed? Income stream? Square footage?
- Automation. Lot of it.
  - – Lacking testing, validation; feedback after client complaints
- We offer services to clients: what's on the menu?
  - – We're not a controls company (Honeywell, Siemens, etc.), not an integration company (Regulvar, ADSS, etc.), not a consulting firm (BPA, PMA, SNC-Lavalin, etc.), so where do we fit in?
  - – Often our solution is an afterthought after getting a client; solution not ready for scaling; should get the solution mostly ready before getting new clients-
- Changing goals:
  - – Maximize the number of solutions
  - – Maximize square footage signed
  - – Maximize number of buildings deployed from signed
  - – Maximize speed of run-time analysis reports
  - – Maximize conversion rate
  - – Stabilize everything: database, edge communication, writer round-trip confirmation, extractor round-trip speed, coding style/practice and use of tools (git, docker, ansible). . .
  - – Grow as fast and as aggressive as possible: take everything, hire everyone, "don't worry about it, the issues will be solved in the next release and it's okay to exaggerate"
  - – Maximize retention?

Near Term Objectives

- Start from a client and grow towards the portfolio / swarm; need a steady stream of income to fund the larger ambitions
- Build the portfolio approach for RTU buildings; requires automation

Your Work in the Bigger Picture

- Not clear how work of individuals fit in the big picture
- Not clear how the work of other teams fit in or make our lives easier / simpler

What is the Objective of Setting Goals

To take a step back and look at the big picture. And decide, where is it that I want to go.

Is failure of hitting your goal targets a bad thing?

Think about the researchers trying to "solve intelligence". They've been at it for decades. Have they succeeded? Does that deter them? Or motivate them? Or provides a clear

direction?

About Creativity

- Everyone believes creativity is a strong requirement
- You can read a paper and replicate the results, but being creative is to imagine the best and most elegant solution from many potential solutions.

Does creativity stem from freedom? Or from constraint?

Is what we're doing interesting?

Between sometimes to definitely.

Sometimes is because there are tedious and mundane work to be done. On the *definitely* scale, intensive learning, trailblazing, attacking very large ideas that others are just starting to take notice.

Are we well organized?

Seem to think on the AI-side we're much better organized than on the higher level side – where all the departments come together. Inter-team collaboration lacking. Intra-team looking good.

Do you know what the rest of the company is doing?

- Friday guests and updated town halls are quite helpful
- The work of all teams seems clear except for: ECO, DataStreams, and the SMEs
- Which algo does what again?

Someone else has already done the thing you're working on

- Compared to the internets: not in the niche that we're in. Buildings are unique beasts and their optimizations tend to be one-off solutions. For more general/generic things, we are getting close of being equal to what's out there.
- Internally, in the AI team: new Kits and Methods every other day. Hard to follow or have a place or method to search through these.
  - Would documentation help? A small *updates* presi or walkthrough / screencast? How can you get to information fast?
  - Internal FAQ? Code snippets / gems?
- Internally, in the dev team: expertise of SMEs not fully utilized in virtual metering; there exist models of chillers, boilers, cooling towers, etc but require calibration and expertise

Mixed Bag

Quite different from person to person. Overall is quite positive, pressure if on the operations track, but clearly there's room for improvement.

End Note

Just read an article about management by Warren Buffet, and he says: "Hire Well. Manage litte." He sends a letter to his managers once every two years. Managers can decide how often they want to interact with Buffet: some daily, some yearly.