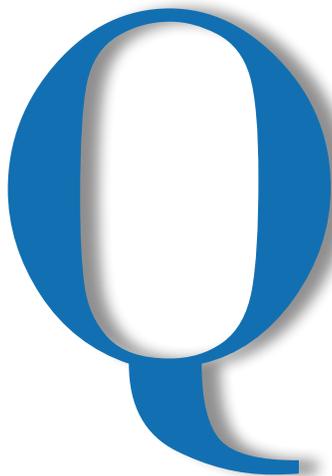




Roundtable Member, **Teresa Di Felice, AVP of Government & Community Relations for CAA**, shares strategies for balancing organizational objectives with team morale and mental health.

Mentoring **MATTERS**



My team is under a lot of pressure and it's a struggle to meet our targets. It's had a direct impact on the overall morale and "team mojo," and I can feel that everyone is a little down. How can I re-energize my team and balance objectives with everyone's mental health?

Teresa's Point of View

This scenario plays out every day in all types of workplaces. Resources are a constant challenge along with the desire to still achieve ever-growing targets or objectives. Let's face it, does anyone ever set a lower target than what they achieved the year before? The last two years have amplified what was becoming more obvious over the last 5-10 years – mental health and well-being in the workplace cannot be ignored.

Check In With Your People

People can produce under extraordinary circumstances. That being said, it is unsustainable if your people are continuously drained with nothing to “fill the tank” from an emotional, mental, and physical perspective. Employee satisfaction and commitment have been directly linked to how people feel about a number of things:

- They know what is expected of them – behaviours, goals, objectives.
- The team/workplace culture is a safe place for them to show up every day.
- Empathy is the standard, not the exception.
- They are listened to and feel respected.
- They feel leaders and the organization are committed to their development and well-being.

The “great resignation” is a result of living and working through a pandemic that shook up where and how we function and gave everyone an opportunity to stop, think, explore, and understand what they want out of their work life and how it balances their own personal values and needs.

Key Questions

As a leader, it is imperative to take stock of people's emotional states, as part of assessing performance. Some things to consider:

- Is the conversation only about work and/or the targets?
- Have your vocal people gone quiet?
- Do you provide a forum for your introverts to have a voice?
- Are there lots of sidebar meetings and conversations after team meetings (or even during meetings)?
- Are you keeping in touch with what is happening in people's lives to understand what may not be stated?
- Does your gut tell you something is off? If it doesn't feel like everything is okay, it probably isn't.

As leaders, there is pressure to ensure you are meeting your targets/objectives which means being on top of the team's performance and productivity. It's also a leader's responsibility to create the right environment for building the team's capacity and capabilities, as well as the culture and environment for optimal individual performance. We have to be humble to hear and respond to the challenges as part of achieving results. What are we not seeing or hearing, and how do our own behaviours have to adapt to respond?

Dig Deeper

If you sense something is off with an individual or the team, you need to explore and ask. Be open and transparent if you are taking an approach that is different from your normal behaviours. And then listen. Validate what you are hearing. Take it away and think about it to determine the best course of action.

Skip-level meetings are a great way to get a pulse on the broader team and dig deeper into what is happening at a personal and professional level. Team surveys are another option. Ask for help from superiors or other areas, like human resources.

Clear realities sometimes surface from these explorations. Do the targets and resources need to be adjusted? Can other projects be delayed to lighten the load? Does someone need more support? However you choose to listen, make sure it's a safe environment and that people are not penalized or regarded negatively for speaking out.

Celebrate!

Finally, make sure the drive to achieve the targets doesn't suck all the energy. Integrate opportunities for team fun – whether it's a virtual or in-person social activity. Celebrate small achievements and efforts that contribute to the final targets. Break down a big project/target into smaller parts, and celebrate the milestones to keep the energy up. If your organization is like mine, there are resources like mental health awareness, wellness activities and initiatives, and tools that promote mindfulness. I start off team meetings with a “good news” session. We have celebrated new puppies, potty training success, a show and tell of a prized purchase and so much more. Team members share good news or things that make them happy. It creates a safe support network and sets a feel-good tone for the rest of the meeting and it humanizes all of us.



Teresa Di Felice is the **AVP of Government & Community Relations for the CAA Club Group of companies**, Canada's largest CAA club. She has been with CAA since 2005.

She is responsible for the overall direction and execution of the organization's advocacy strategies and programs. She also oversees CCG's corporate contributions programs.

Teresa's breadth and range of knowledge on infrastructure, transportation, road safety, automotive and industry issues related to CAA's work have resulted in many contributions to the development and execution of sound public policy. These include input into the province's cycling strategy, being a member of the Premier's panel on the Transit Investment Strategy, tow industry reform and other road safety initiatives.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.