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"The greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things." — Ronald Reagan

While building a business, the early stage comes with clarity. You're in the thick of it - hustling alongside your team, shaping the culture, holding the vision. Subscribe Past Issues Translate ▼

win.

But when the team grows, and you finally step back... things change.

You tell yourself that's how it should be.

You've hired smart people. The ones who align with the brand. You've built systems.

You're no longer in the approval process of day-to-day routine tasks.

Slowly, it starts to feel like something's off.

The energy is flatter.

The ideas aren't flowing.

People are showing up - but not lighting things up.

You sense they're not checked out... but they're not fully checked in either.

They're quietly giving up on you.

Why it happens (and why most founders don't see it)

This isn't about laziness or entitlement.

The problem starts to creep in with disconnection and misalignment.

Most founders never realize it's happening, because it doesn't come with big blow ups or exits.

It shows up in subtle ways:

→ The team doesn't know what the mission is anymore.

You're evolving fast. The vision is clear in your head - but not in theirs. They don't see where they fit, or why it matters. Without that connection, the work starts to feel hollow.

→ People are confused about priorities.

Everyone's working hard - but not necessarily on what moves the needle. Without clear direction, their effort becomes misaligned. That leads to frustration, burnout, and eventually, detachment.

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hole - or gets shot down without explanation - they stop speaking up. It's easier to just do the job than care too much.

→ They feel like passengers, not builders.

What they wanted was to shape something meaningful. But what they're experiencing feels like being told what to do. No real say. No skin in the game.

→ You've built a team of employees—not owners.

They're executing, yes. But not leading. Not driving. And definitely not owning. Real ownership isn't about giving them more tasks. It's about trusting them with outcomes - and letting them lead parts of the business like it's theirs.

So, is it that your team members aren't motivated enough? Often, this isn't the case.

With time a leadership gap that opens quietly, until one fine day you realise, you're the only one pushing the business forward again.

What you can do to shift it

It starts with honest reconnection.

1. Make the mission visible again.

Every team outgrows the original pitch. Your job is to keep evolving the story and reconnecting the dots for them. Show them how the work ties back to a bigger impact. Remind them what they're building—and *why* it matters.

2. Re-center around ruthless prioritization.

Confusion breeds apathy. Start by clearly defining what *really* matters this quarter. What's non-negotiable? What's noise? Make it impossible for your team to waste energy on things that don't move the company forward.

3. Turn execution into ownership.

Don't just delegate tasks - transfer trust. Give people entire outcomes to drive. Make it theirs to lead, measure, and learn from. When someone owns the result, they show up differently. Not as a doer. As a builder.

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acknowledgment. Share the 'why' behind decisions - even the ones that say no. It builds psychological safety and keeps the conversation alive.

5. Invest in leadership at every level.

Not just the top layer. Give your team the tools, feedback, and mentorship to *lead where they are*. People want growth. If they're not growing with you, they'll start looking elsewhere.

Most teams don't disengage overnight.

They slowly drift - when they stop feeling seen, heard, and essential.

If the spark feels missing, this might be why.

And the good news?

You don't need to rebuild the culture.

You just need to rebuild the trust.

It starts with clarity.

And it starts with you.

I am holding such similar 'much-needed' conversations for leaders around through the week, **follow along** the journey!

Until next time, Pramod Maloo

Founder, Kreative Machinez

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