

The Empowerment of Recognition

On Jan. 22, the Syngenta Flowers team had reserved the evening for the yearly Val-You Awards dinner. During the night, colleagues get recognized for their efforts and valued for their hard work. This recognition comes from their peers. What more of a compliment do you need, than colleagues taking the effort to nominate you because you have delivered extraordinary work? It feels great. It is fantastic to be recognized, but it feels even better to give recognition. I can recommend giving it to everyone. It was a great night and we literally saw our team grow stronger during this dinner.

I was the closing speaker of the night and I opened my one minute speech with: "I had the best year of my career." That almost did not happen, because I had made the executive decision in 2017 that I was NOT going to work for Syngenta Flowers. However, in January 2018, I started with that exact company. The leader of the company, Michael Kester, had told me that the company was going to grow and build on a very strong foundation. He was right. I felt trust and empowerment, and that gave me tons of energy — the energy to make that growth.

The message was simple: "You know what to do, so do it and... dare to make mistakes, because that is how you learn. Mistakes make us stronger in the long run." A refreshing mentality I had not experienced in a long time, but it brought out the fire in me. And it also gave me the direction on how to build my team.

POWER OF TEAMWORK

I am a big believer of team effort. Teams with high levels of empowerment and motivation structurally deliver above expectation. Give them a framework, responsibility and authority to take decisions. And most important of all... the permission to fail. Only failing teams learn fast and improve fast. So fail fast means improving faster. That is what I did with my team this past year. I came to lead a group of people that had been under various forms of leadership before and, for them, I was just the next in line. "Pffff, another one that thinks he knows!" But we overcame that fast by creating agility and empowerment in the team.

In my work as freelancer I had learned the power of agile mindset in teams. It had become a part of my vision on organizations. It became my basis for team building. First, build a framework with clear ambition and the right direction. Next, build the team by the team. They know what to do best. Also, encourage an agile mindset. To me, this means: focus on the

activities with high added value for the customer; work in short cycles to deliver fast; finish what you started and continuously involve the customers. It is simple and highly motivating, because the team is steering, leading and accelerating. It is the way my team is coming together. With an enormous amount of drive and lots of fun. Because, one thing you don't want to look back at when you are achieving your goals is that you forgot to have fun. Fun brings even more fuel to the fire. That is my goal for 2019 actually. We are going to have more fun as a team!

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REWIND TO JULY 2015

Back to July 2015. I was in the dying days of my thirties when I was accepted in the Horticultural Hall of Talent, better known as GPN's 40 Under 40. That was a big surprise for me since I had moved back to the Netherlands. I did not know foreigners were allowed in the competition, to be honest.

The excitement and the pride was real. Again, it was that recognition that contributed to the trust, the energy and the power to make the decisions I made in my career. I am enjoying those decisions every single day. It has given me even more passion for the industry we are all part of, the industry I am having so much fun working in. That is why I encourage you to keep on empowering your team to do what they think they need to do. The result is that they will do better. And keep on recognizing your coworkers, your managers, your employees, your partners or your friends in the industry. That is a way to keep the fire going that is needed to develop our industry to the next level! And fire, passion and happy people are a healthy basis to attract and develop new talents with a passion for our beautiful products. [gpn](#)



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