

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/managing-people-as-you-scale>

Claire Hughes Johnson, corporate officer and advisor for Stripe, shares how her approach to managing her direct team has evolved as the companies she's worked in have scaled. She advises leaders of large teams to be intentional about their communication practices to build authentic connections with employees.



Transcript

Speaker So one of the things that I'm quite fascinated 00:00:04,560 that you've done personally and you've brought people along is there's some people who, and you're the rare person, and go from managing three to 30 to 300 to 3,000 to 30,000 people.. So if you were gonna sort of, well, okay, you're not at Microsoft yet or whatever, but what are the sort of key two or three skills that you would encourage people to develop along the way and maybe what they should ignore that's overrated? - Hmm.. 00:00:30,727 I think... I think that there's a core set of management skills for my direct team that I've gotten better and better at over time because I've had a lot of practice and I was definitely not as good 25 years ago.. But those don't change 'cause you have your direct team and they just happen to be, I mean, you do have to evolve them for a more senior team, right? You're doing less.. I actually have a section of the book where I talk about when you're starting to manage managers and then manage leaders, it's less about tactically coaching and more about, let me help unblock, like let me help you figure out the thing you need to do and then help you get unblocked.. But I think that the core management skills are just get better, give feedback faster, be more direct, and build the team to be more of a unit.. For me, I'm a collaborative leader.. I'm like, I need everyone around me to be contributing or else I don't think we're very good.. I think that the thing that starts to change when you get to real scale of numbers is you have to be incredibly intentional about your communication practices as a leader..

People are not as connected to you personally.. There are people who come up to me even on the street, especially when I'm in California and say, "I was on your team at Google" and my team was like, say 2,000 people and I don't know all of them.. And I say, "Oh, thank you so much for coming up to me." And they say, "You really, like, I learned so much from you." And I think, "Wow, I'm honored." And also like, "How did I do that?" Because I wasn't with them.. They were a few five layers down in the organization.. A lot of these were folks right out of college or business school.. And I think it was because I was out speaking and interacting, but using a lot of different formats.. I even would record, this was by the way before TikTok, now I'm aging myself, but I would record videos and send them to my global team because they were all in different time zones, we could never gather at the same time.. And I was like, it's weird to write these super long emails.. Who wants to read that? Why don't I send like short video messages? And at the time that was an innovation but the point is I think that I spoke consistently and authentically and with specifics in such a way that people felt we were in conversation even when we weren't.. That's the scale difference..