

Team Pulse by CoastZone — The Deep Dive

Week 26, 2026 (Monday 22 June 2026)

Teams, leadership and behavior in late June 2026: the pressure is where you're not looking

Companion read to the podcast. Written for consultants working in a Danish/Nordic context. Every claim links to its source so you can dig in.

The big picture

Last week we argued that the problem with modern work sits in the human layer — the self-improving team and the manager as bottleneck. This week the lens tightens onto two blind spots: the friction *inside* the team, and the wellbeing of the leader who is supposed to hold it all together.

The backdrop hasn't softened. [Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2026](#) — drawn from 263,810 respondents across 160+ countries surveyed through 2025 — puts global employee engagement at **20% in 2025, a five-year low**, at an estimated cost of **\$10 trillion** a year in lost productivity. And [McKinsey's State of Organizations 2026](#), based on more than 10,000 executives, concludes that transformation can no longer be treated as something that ever "finishes" — it is becoming a **permanent condition**. The Danish tradition of trust-based leadership and flat hierarchy remains a real advantage, but it is not immunity. Four themes shape the week.

Theme 1 — Friction is fine; dysfunction is not

The strongest teams don't win by avoiding conflict. They win because they understand how teammates process information, communicate under pressure, and make decisions differently. That is the argument of [Prevent Team Friction from Turning into Dysfunction](#) (HBR, June 17 2026) by Leonard A. Schlesinger, Joseph Fuller and Robert V. Toomey.

The evidence. The authors draw on a redesign of Harvard Business School's FIELD Global Immersion program, where they treated "**interpersonal competence**" as a **learnable capability** rather than a fixed personality trait. After introducing training and tools to build it, the number of student teams requiring faculty intervention for serious collaboration breakdowns fell from **45 to one**. The mechanism is anticipation: teams that can name how each member thinks and decides head off cognitive clashes before they curdle into performance problems.

A concrete case. The FIELD redesign itself is the case — a controlled before/after inside one of the world's most-studied team environments, with a near-elimination of breakdowns once interpersonal skill was taught explicitly.

The Danish angle. This lands squarely on the Danish flat structure. In low-power-distance workplaces people *do* dare to disagree — but disagreement without interpersonal competence becomes noise, not better decisions. The Danish advantage (psychological room to dissent) only pays off when paired with the skill to disagree well.

What to do Monday. Spend 20 minutes letting the team articulate *how* each person prefers to receive information and reach decisions. Make it a standing artifact, not a one-off workshop. It is far cheaper than the conflict it prevents.

Theme 2 — The leader-wellbeing paradox

We usually talk about employee engagement. The fresh signal in 2026 is what's happening to the people at the top.

The evidence. Gallup 2026 shows a paradox: **leaders report the highest engagement (26%) and the highest thriving (43%) — but also the highest daily stress (46%), anger (33%), sadness (34%) and loneliness (31%)** of any group. Meanwhile manager engagement fell to **22% in 2025**, down from 27% in 2024 and roughly nine points below its 2022 level — what HRZone bluntly calls a "manager engagement collapse." Overall employee thriving ticked up slightly (33% to 34%), but 40% still report daily stress.

The hopeful counter-data. It is not destiny. Within Gallup's **best-practice organizations, 79% of managers are engaged — nearly four times the global average.** The variable isn't the role; it's how the organization supports it.

A concrete case. Væksthus for Ledelse — the Danish public-sector leadership body — has launched a project recruiting municipalities to test how to work *strategically* with leaders' own wellbeing, treating "trivsel kræver ledelse, også af dig selv" (wellbeing requires leadership — including of yourself) as a design problem rather than a personal resilience pep talk.

The Danish angle. Denmark's flat structures and trust culture can mask the fact that a manager carries the emotional load of both directions. The Væksthus framing — that the leader's wellbeing is itself a leadership task — is a usefully un-individualizing way to put it on the agenda.

What to do Monday. Ask the leader you're coaching a single question: "Who leads *your* wellbeing?" If the answer is "no one," that's where the intervention starts — and the data says it pays off downstream.

Theme 3 — Behavioral science you can actually use on Monday

Two practical, well-evidenced levers this week — one biological, one cultural.

The biology. Stefan Volk (University of Sydney), in [*Tapping into Your Team's Circadian Rhythms*](#) (HBR, May–June 2026), makes a deceptively simple point: **circadian rhythms are biological dispositions, not habits you can train away.** Corporate culture rewards "morningness," but chronotypes are stable. His prescription: do strategic thinking, feedback and emotionally demanding work in high-energy windows; delegate and take lower-intensity roles in the troughs. For teams, schedule **high-stakes collaboration during shared peaks**, assign hard tasks to individuals' peaks and routine work to off-peaks — and when peaks don't align, lean on recovery, flexibility and rotation to prevent burnout.

The culture. The [*COE 2026 Psychological Safety Study*](#), spanning **47 countries**, confirms psychological safety as the bedrock of high-performing teams, names inclusive leadership as the key that unlocks it, and flags **psychosocial risk as the next major workplace challenge** leaders must prepare for. (We covered the foundations of psychological safety in Week 25; this is the global stocktake.)

The Danish angle. Both findings point the same way as [*Morten Münster's*](#) *adfærdsdesign* (behavioral design): change the environment so the desired behavior is easy, rather than lecturing people about willpower or values. Scheduling for chronotypes is, in effect, behavioral design applied to the calendar.

What to do Monday. Move your next high-stakes meeting into the late-morning window where most chronotypes overlap — and notice the difference in decision quality. It costs nothing.

Theme 4 — Change that doesn't drown people

Transformation is now permanent — which makes *dosage* the new discipline.

What's moving. [*McKinsey's State of Organizations 2026*](#) argues organizations can no longer see transformation as completed, and calls for an "inside-out" leadership grounded in inner motivation and continuous relearning. [*Michael D. Watkins*](#) (HBR, June 17 2026) adds that three forces — generative AI, geopolitical instability and a compressed leadership pipeline — are rewriting the very transition from manager to leader: today's leaders must govern human-AI decision systems, practice dynamic rather than static strategy, design hybrid operating models, and cut through noise to set a few priorities.

The evidence — and the warning. [*MIT Sloan Management Review's When Employees Are Drowning in Change*](#) (David Grossman) supplies the reality check: employees can realistically absorb only **one or two major changes a year**, yet leaders are planning **three or four by 2027**. The average organization runs **five major change initiatives at once** — many juggle ten or more once smaller projects are counted. Organizations don't fail because they do too much; they fail because they aren't intentional about the cumulative load hitting people at the same time.

A concrete case / Danish angle. [*Christian Ørsted*](#) offers the sharpest Danish frame: there is only one recipe for change leadership — **collaboration**. His equation is *psychological safety + collaboration = successful change*. And his reframing of the oldest myth in the field still holds: what we call "resistance to change" is usually resistance to **loss**, a natural reaction — not an inherent objection to the change itself. Lead the loss well and much of the "resistance" dissolves.

What to do Monday. Draw a "change map" of everything currently landing on your team. If you can't count the live initiatives on one hand, the answer isn't more plans — it's fewer, sequenced to people's real capacity.

Books & tools to watch

- **Stefan Volk** on chronotypes — the [HBR article](#) and its companion [IdeaCast episode](#) are the most directly *usable* science this month.
- **Morten Münster** — his 2025 book *Afdelingen for magisk tænkning* (not new this week, but his current title) and his Børsen column remain the best Danish-language entry to behavioral design.
- **Dennis Nørmark** — *Tilbage til arbejdet*, the practical successor to *Pseudoarbejde*, pairs well with this week's change-fatigue theme.
- **COE 2026 Psychological Safety Study** — a free, 47-country benchmark worth citing in client conversations about psychosocial risk.

The three things to remember

1. **Train friction before it becomes dysfunction.** Interpersonal competence is a skill; build it into how the team works, not into a crisis intervention.
2. **The leader is both the most engaged and the most depleted.** If no one leads the leader's wellbeing, it leaks downward — so name it explicitly.
3. **Change is a permanent condition, so dose it.** Measure capacity, not just ambition; sequence change deliberately; build it on psychological safety and collaboration.

Can your team disagree intelligently? And who, exactly, leads the leader's wellbeing where you work?

Sources & dig deeper

International research & media - Gallup — [State of the Global Workplace 2026](#); manager-engagement read via [HRZone](#) - McKinsey — [The State of Organizations 2026](#) - MIT Sloan Management Review — [When Employees Are Drowning in Change](#) - Harvard Business Review — Schlesinger, Fuller & Toomey, [Prevent Team Friction from Turning into Dysfunction](#); Volk, [Tapping into Your Team's Circadian Rhythms](#); Watkins, [3 Forces Are Redefining the Transition from Manager to Leader](#) - Workplace Options / COE — [The 2026 Psychological Safety Study](#)

Danish sources & voices - Væksthus for Ledelse / lederweb.dk — [Trivsel kræver ledelse](#) — også af dig selv - Christian Ørsted — [Der er kun én opskrift på forandringsledelse: samarbejde](#); [christianorsted.dk](#) - Morten Münster — [mortenmunster.com](#) - Dennis Nørmark — [Pseudoarbejde](<https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudoarbejde>)