

**Scaling for impact without losing
yourself**

...

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Régis Déau
Engineering Director, Wolt



Introduction

Imagine you're a brilliant software engineer.

You've spent years perfecting your craft:

- writing clean code
- solving impossible problems
- leading projects to success
- being recognised by your peers



Then one day, you're promoted.

Congratulations!

You're now a leader

Does that sound familiar?

What was the biggest change for you?

A few words about me



Régis Déau
Engineering Director, Wolt



Welcome to the leadership paradox!

You don't write much code anymore

Your calendar is full of meetings

You feel pulled between empowering your team and making critical decisions yourself

You want to foster innovation but are swamped with firefighting



Let's explore how to lead effectively without losing yourself...

... and look at lessons shared by engineering leaders



The Self-Leadership shift
—
From Maker to Multiplier

“where success is no longer measured by
what you build,
but by **how you enable others to build.**”

Key Takeaway

- Leadership isn't about **doing** more; it's about **enabling** more
- How to stay technical yet impactful without micromanaging

Actionable Advice



The 70/30 Rule:

- 70% of your time empowering your team
- 30% keeping your technical edge

The Leadership Stack: Developing skills beyond coding

- Communication
- Decision-making
- Vision-setting
- Influencing



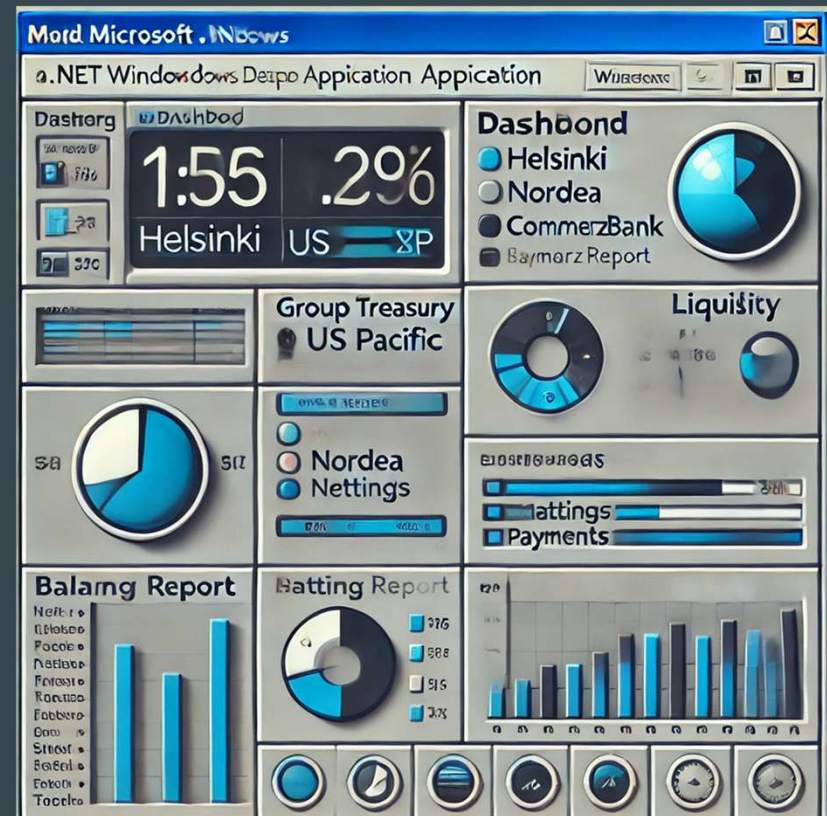
Empowering Leadership — How to Scale Yourself

Story time

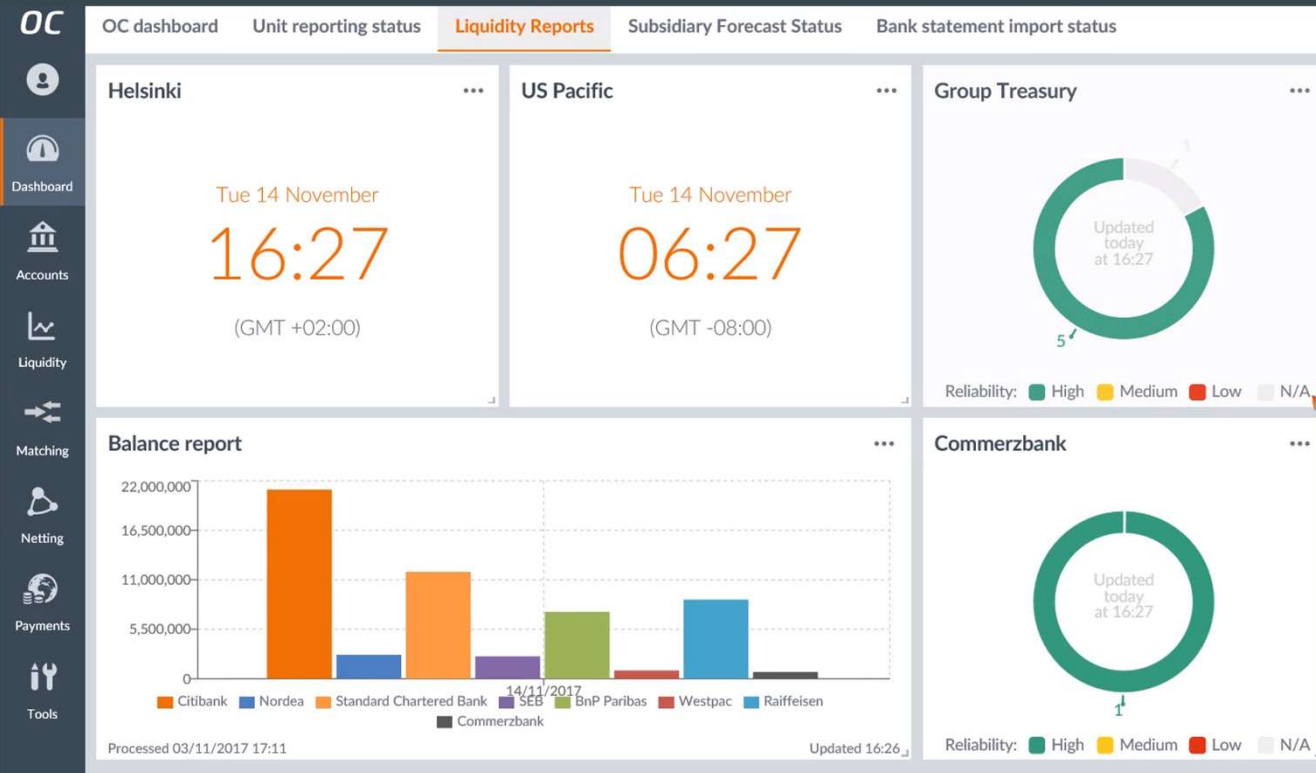
We need test automation!

Why?

- Improve quality
- Faster Release cycles
- Establish a reliable basis for the future
(Tech and business)



Story time



SaaS

Multitenancy

Containerized single page apps

CI/CD

Migration strategy

Tech stack migration

Configuration as code

Key Insight - The hardest part of leadership is letting go

“If you’re the smartest person in the room,
you’re in the wrong room.”

- *Marissa Mayer (former Yahoo
CEO)*

Practical tactics



The “Guardrails, Not Rails” Approach

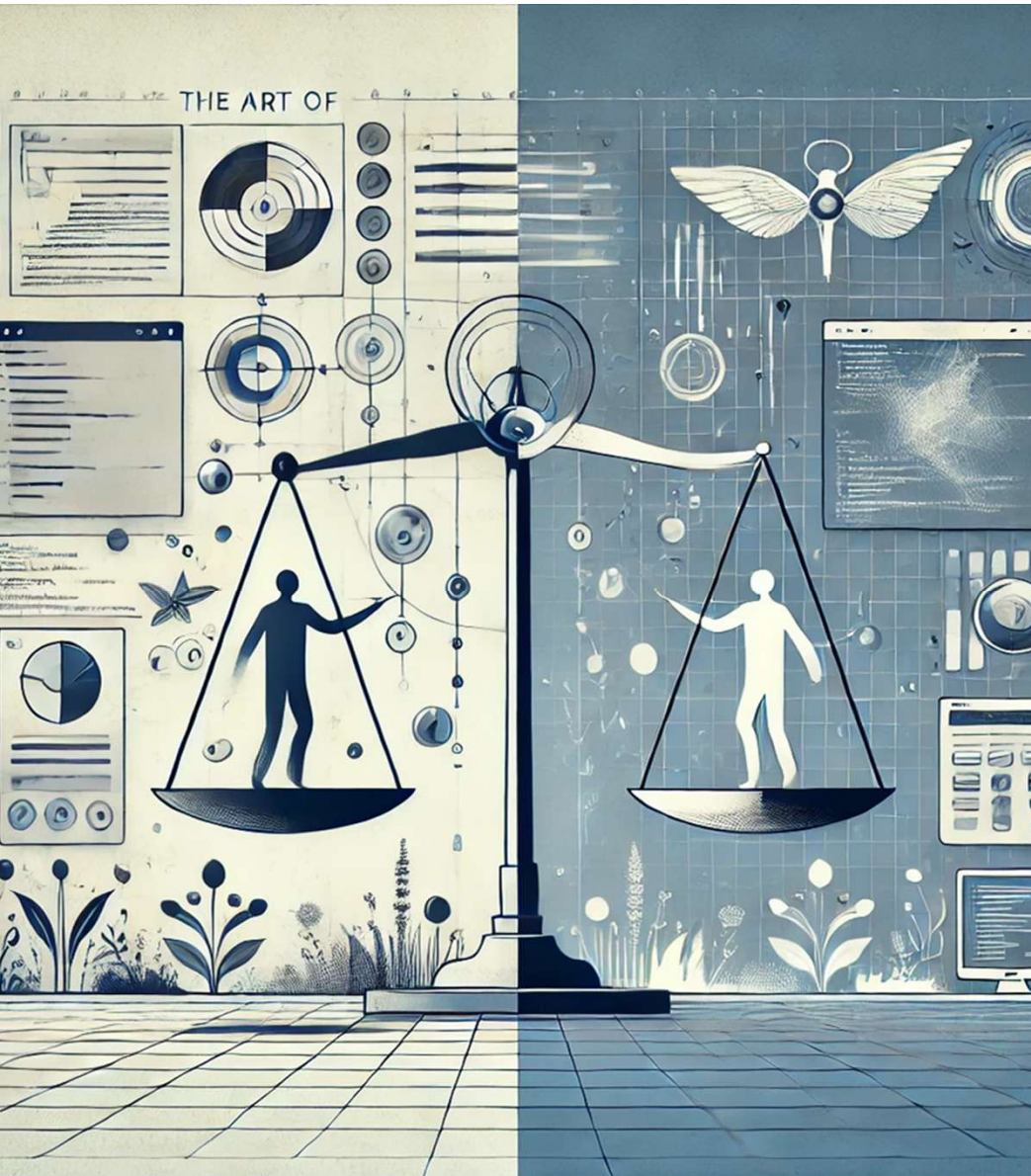
– Giving guidance without dictating solutions.

Feedback Loops That Work

– How to create a culture of feedback in engineering teams.

Delegation Without Dumping

– Ensuring engineers grow rather than feel abandoned.



Leading Innovation
—
The Art of Balancing Stability & Chaos

How do you innovate while maintaining reliability?

People

Small, Autonomous Team
Dedicated Leader
End-to-End Ownership
Decentralized Decision-Making

Product

Customer Obsession
High Focus on Experience
Data-Driven Culture
Learnings and Insights

Craft

APIs
Modular Systems
Contracts and Models
Metrics

Key Insights



- The best engineering leaders create a space where people feel safe to take risks
- Psychological Safety = Innovation Velocity

Practical advices

- The “Sandbox & Ship” Model

Experimenting in a risk-free environment but ensure structured execution

- Giving teams freedom to explore and break things in a controlled, consequence-free space (Sandbox)
- But also expecting them to deliver refined, valuable output to the real world (Ship)

- Failure as a Feature

Why “blameless post-mortems” and “failure/Error budgets” drive innovation




**The Transformational Leadership
Challenge
—
The Ripple Effect**



Niilo Säämänen 18:08

Merry thirdiversary Regis! 🙌 I remember when you joined to level up our fintech and payments work we were in a pickle; having spent a whole offsite in Greece getting blasted by GMs about payment issues, and it being the biggest priority, to having such a smooth ride that we all almost forget it was ever an issue 💪. Along the way you've built a kick ass team, scaled it multiple times larger, made a truly platformized fintech that makes us not only compliant but generates bonus money, and you've done it all with relaxed, good vibes and bringing folks together. ❤️ Most of all you made Fintech sexy again 🇺🇸. Don't know how you pulled it off, but I'll drink a Negroni or two any day to find out 🍷. Can't wait to see what the next three years will bring with you helming our journey, here's to finding out! 🍻

Don't know how you pulled it off?

 **Niilo Säämänen** 18:08
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- “smooth ride” - the energy and feelings you communicate to others
- “kick-ass team” - the team you hire, build and foster
- “scaled it multiple times” - repeatable systems and structure
- “platformized Fintech” - focus on engineering excellence
- “generate bonus money” - customer and business focus
- “relaxed, good vibes and bringing folks together” - people focus and psychological safety

**Leadership isn't (just) about you,
it's about the systems
and culture you build.**

Practical advices

- From Velocity to Impact Metrics and how success looks like
 - Reframing success beyond just feature delivery
- Creating Future Leaders
 - How to mentor the next generation of engineering leaders (Tech and People leaders)

Conclusion: 3 Unbreakable Laws of Engineering Leadership

- You Can't Scale Alone. The best leaders are multipliers.
- Autonomy Drives Innovation. Create the space for others to take ownership
- Your Legacy is the Culture You Build. Leadership isn't about power, it's about impact.

Call for Action!



- Reflect on why you became an engineer in the first place.
- Leadership should enhance that passion, not kill it.
- Unleash leadership in a way that empowers, innovates, and transforms, without losing yourself.

Thanks!

