

## A little like dying

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross did interviews with dying people and from that derived phases dying people go through – not always in a strict order: shock, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. It was found that similar processes occur in any kind of change processes, which at the core all comprise an existential component. This lead to the famous change curve with its characteristic progression of system performance declining in specific phases, and then rising again.

The current top issue shows all these characteristics: the Swiss Frank shock (or is it the Euro-shock?) reverberated through the world of economics. We hadn't to wait long for the anger against Mr. Jordan, which was accompanied by futile attempts of „backward bargaining“: one could have communicated in an other way /could have fixed the minimum rate at 1.10 etc. Industry was blamed that they just relied on the minimum rate all these years – which in my opinion is an arrogance towards hard working leaders who in fact do possess prudence.

At present the phase of depression seems to predominate: experts outbid each other in terms of pessimistic forecasts, and we are presented with calculations about how salaries will drop and about how many jobs will disappear.

Three things I won't do. First: sugar-coat the situation. It will probably actually be tough for a while. Second: try to nip depression in the bud and declare slogans like „stop whining and get yourself going“. Because the current phase is a natural and necessary one, and you can't bypass it. You just should not get stuck in it, and to avoid that it may be good to know that is does not last for ever. And Third: I will not conjure the „crisis as a chance“ in a bright-misty-eyed way; I think you can badly get on many peoples nerves with that - right now people are just not amused with the situation.

The transition to the key phase of acceptance is in progress: acceptance for the fact that the SNB's decision had to come sooner or later (one could read that even in the earliest comments); acceptance of the situation itself; and acceptance of the tasks that it presents to us. This is the phase where life returns, and the conviction that you are actually able to do something rises. Acceptance is the key precondition for a sustainable positive delopment. Media can play its part in supporting this phase by focussing attention on all signs for a turnaround, and not focussing on the negative outlooks alone.

And how should what follows look like? One could hear that companies had to squeeze the lemon even with a minimal rate of 1.20; and maybe the lemon strategy has indeed reached it's limits – the burnout rate does suggest that. Probably it is not a question of doing more of the same, but a question of shifting paradigms. This could be the chance for concepts like self organisation, leadership approaches based on sensemaking, empowerment, or systemic business management. These concepts have been ready a long time, but are not used widely yet. But if our quality of life shall rise in the long run, these might be the only approaches with a future.

Kübler-Ross or Swiss Frank Shock: a crisis like the current is a bit like dying, with a significant difference: it leaves much more to shape, and the possibilities point much further into the future. And even if nobody wants this at the moment, Goethe already knew: „And until you have possessed / dying and rebirth, / you are but a sullen guest / on the gloomy earth.“