

## „It's the Collaboration, Stupid!“

Suppose you have systematically implemented reflection loops allowing you to learn from what you do (if you haven't, you should be worried): Why do things fail, when they fail? And how could you have prevented the failure?

The number one answer people give to these questions, by far, in different variations, is: „We should have talked more with each other and in a more open way.“ Plain and simple. Projects fail, and it turns out,

- that there was no consensus about the goals and the frame conditions at the start of the project, in the first place
- that there were early signals of trouble, but they didn't make their way to the steering committee
- that the people concerned weren't addressed properly and so important information was lost
- that flexibility was lost because the decision making processes were too complicated
- that smoldering dissonance and conflicts were not approached, until relentless boomerang effects struck etc.

Or another example: Capacity for innovation drops, because there is no culture of sharing between specialised units, and there is no such culture because sharing isn't rewarded and nobody has time for it, let alone money.

No matter what moves your organisation got: if your employees collaborate badly, things will get really difficult, conflicts and disasters accumulate, and intelligent people begin to produce surprisingly stupid results...

The quality of collaboration makes the difference, and this is particularly interesting because it marks an interface between system and individual. Collaboration is, on one hand, a question of your personality: How do you approach other people? How do you deal with feedback? How important is harmony for you? What is the preferred role that you take in teams? What does your self-esteem depend on? What makes you feel threatened? On the other hand, collaboration is a question of systemic structures: What behavior is rewarded in your company? What behavior is punished? What are the free spaces and buffer zones available? Who is promoted, and who is not? Which type of contribution is welcomed, which one not? What are mistakes you shouldn't make?

The interplay is manifold, chicken and eggs can hardly be distinguished: Personalities in the upper echelon coin decision making styles, decision making styles coin systems, systems coin collaboration which is coined also by individuals, on the other hand...

Systems and individuals are equally important; the former have the stronger lever, but a system can not make decisions: decisions are ultimately made by persons who are needed with their integrity, their steadfastness, and vision. In order to develop top level collaboration, one must look at the chicken and the eggs, one perspective alone won't do. Leaders and top level boards play a crucial role, because they have a lever for the lever.

Do you replace leaders who suffocate the potential of their teams? Do you embed learning loops in your structures? What do you encourage in the people who work with you – or is your opinion that they are working for you? And what do you encourage in your system?

It's the collaboration – only Clinton can get away with „stupid“.