

Managers are good People: „nachgedacht“ in March

It's not easy for managers: they have to serve as examples for greed, they are described as the root of evil, serve as scapegoats etc.

Even being way over average in many admired qualities that are associated with successful managers, they are human beings like you and me, and therefore struggling with the same general questions in a human life as you and I do.

And in these questiones, after all, it always comes down to the same staff of life that everyone of us needs and craves when it's missing: affection, appreciation, valuation, reassurance – ultimately forms of love.

Did you continue reading? Thank you. In corporate environment the L-Word mostly makes people run for the door for various reasons – and I think this is a mistake.

The life of managers tends to be one-sided, favoring aspects of achievement, to the neglect of the above-mentioned staff of life. Here lies one of the many structural traps: what will you do if you don't get your staple food? You will look around and try to find something else to eat, would'nt you? Everybody would do that.

Sometimes there is no substitute other than power and money. And once you depend on these, you get seducable by or even addicted to them.

Now, are managers to blame for that?

I think this falls short when dealing with these topics. We should rather allow for systemic factors that drive such developments and at times almost inevitably create them. We should think about how we can shape organisations and the daily life of leaders in a way that will not support the aforementioned seducability or even addiction. In this regard, horrendous salaries are systemic nonsense: you wouldn't give a sixpack of a nice Bordeaux wine to an alcoholic, either, would you?

Of course there are other factors like the labor market for highly qualified leaders...I do not pretend it to be easy.

Yet I think it is worthwhile for companies to think about the following question: „How do we avoid our leaders being corrupted by their own jobs?“, as the risk is huge: If you have a seducable or addicted person running a company, then it happens what happens with every addiction dynamic: Thinking gets narrow, the attention is aimed almost exclusively at the addictive drug, the readiness to break rules to get hold of your drug increases...sounds familiar in the light of recent discussions about greediness, doesn't it?

I am far from deriving a general amnesty for fallible leaders; they have to take responsibility for their actions, for every action is ultimately a personal answer to the challenges arising.

If you choose to resort to a leading position, no matter which level, you are well advised to acquire systemic knowledge to develop awareness for the structural traps of your job and be able to look out for them. And I suggest that, as a prevention of seducability and addiction you lead a rich, full life, a life providing a permanent place for things like emotional relationship, love, connectedness, spirituality, meaning and art. You should foster your emotional accessibility – which by the way is a big help dealing with stress, rather than a risk. I will come back to that some other time.

I am convinced that organisations allowing their leaders to lead such lives will not regret it. Out of this conviction I became a consultant and coach, because I believe that it is worthwhile to support leaders and organisations in such matters, and because I believe that only the combination of systemic and individual approaches will have long term and lasting effects.

Managers are good people. Like you and me.