

Everything VUCA with you?

It does sound like a workout thing, doesn't it: After the Zumba lesson I go for VUCA...the new mantra is omnipresent, and overblown descriptions with systemic complicatedness are omnipresent, too.

The practitioners got it anyway, cross your heart: things just blow up in our face, don't they – and with more fierceness the more we clutch to the illusion of possible control. The conjurations that managers should manage VUCA-appropriately sound more and more desperate.

They should, in fact, I agree. But I think that at present we are putting the cart before the horse. The advices are alike and condense into a handful of recipes that are repeated over and over: adaptive learning, agile management, new holistic and/or magic forms of organisations, „managing your main vulnerabilities“, „knowing what levers you can pull“ (taking first place in the you-don't-say-so competition) etc.

Tools, tools, methods. But you won't hear much about the precondition to be able to use such methods and their potential, in the first place, the admission ticket – and that is found in your own person. Because VUCA leaves us with chattering teeth. Uncertainty is tough to accept, as it is. And so we sit in our cockpits, shivering and managing and measuring our heads off; one of the syndromes that is epidemic in companies.

In the operative short term business it doesn't work that bad because visibility for the next month is fairly okay. After that the benchmark for decision quality is held by chimpanzees throwing darts – for stock options this is not a funny metaphor, by the way, but the grim state of research.

Whoever comes up with tools in this situation in the first place serves the popular customs: „one solution per problem“. But trying to implement these magic tools, at best you realize what individual and cultural barriers are in the way – the blood-brain barrier of organisations, so to say. And that is where the real work is waiting.

Because if, in you deepest, you are in need of checkability, you will find ways to follow this need, no matter what organisational form you apply. An addict will smuggle his stuff even into a maximum security prison. On the other hand, if you have truly said goodbye to the idea that you can or must be able to precisely control things, you will – potentially, at least – reshape systems on your own, arrange yourself within them in the cosiest possible way, or be bored and leave them.

The preconditions for coping with a VUCA environment are mainly shaped by the personality of deciders. In the short version: If you want to be able to cope with the instability of the external world, you need a high stability in your internal world. If that is the case no efforts are needed anymore to persuade you to organize your working system accordingly – then you can go for the tools.

It's not easy to accept that we are tossing dices and prodding about in the dark, but once you have accepted that, many things get easier: less stress with uncertainty, more tolerance for failure, less back pain, more inner freedom – there is a lot to win, both personally and in business. So have courage, even if all is VUCA.

The motto is: find the courage for experimenting, be awake and ready to move. It's a question of your inner possibilities. The VUCA age is a time for liveliness.