

A Drubbing for Leadership

In August I launched my new platform „True Leadership“. My impetus came from the perception that we don't lack anything so desperately as leadership. And I thought that this is dramatic because it will be the key factor for dealing with the challenges we face. And then came this:

„This is what your boss thinks“ was the title of an article in a sunday newspaper on August 20: four leaders report how they see their employees. If you read this article you might well get dantesque: „Lasciate ogni speranza...“.

What on earth was the idea of this article? The introduction roughly said: „Everybody is complaining about the bosses, but they never have their say, so let's ask them, for a change.“ At this point you still could hope for a positive counterpoint to all the complaining.

But not for long. Oh my dear...

I just boldly counted negative versus positive statements. The result: 22 to 1 in favor of...you know, of course. If you wanted to be very generous you could have counted 22 to 4. But no matter how you look at it, the result is a crashing defeat for everything that is known to have positive effects, to mobilize energy, to increase motivation and performance, and so on. Even the statement that I initially counted as the only positive one came with a reservation: „Although I like doing my job...“ Euphoria sounds differently.

What I understood all in all: „You always complain about your rotten, greedy bosses. Now you know what? They don't think a bit better of you, you overdemanding, ungrateful...“

I don't know about you – I need a bit of dextrose after reading this. Apart from the fact that many leaders won't agree at all.

Are these statements representative? I don't know. I don't hope so. I know that there are examples to show the opposite. But maybe they are only two percent, that would make a relation of four to zero the best approximation to balanced journalism, thinking proportionately...but this can't seriously be right, can it?

Sooner or later somebody will pull out the argument of structural causes: the leaders would be willing, but the structures don't allow for it. Well, dear leaders: change the structures, then. And yes, it is possible. You cannot talk to structures, but you can talk to leaders who have the shaping power to change structures. And where do we end up again? With various aspects of Leadership.

In the future CEO's should be fired if they allow or even actively support the growing of a culture that puts a whole organisation into the sloth mode oder into acute shortness of breath, burns money and people and generally puts the future of an organisation at risk. Mister Kalanick was a good start, to spell it out.

In everyday life there is far too little room for things like big ideas, inspiration, common goals, intrinsic motivation, or unleashing of potentials. Some see these things as naive reverie. The others make quantum leaps.

My tip: choose the second group. Presently you will still be a minority and you will have the opportunity to clear away all the prices, with the fantastic chance of distancing the rest of the pack by miles. If you think about it, it must be called negligent to let this chance pass by.