

## Inside Out

When you listen to the current tenor, it seems that it hasn't been fun to work in a larger company for a long time: Inertia, far too much politics, power games, greed, bad superiors, meaningless work, chronic overload, powerlessness, wrong, over- or under-challenge – I just get tired while writing.

Well, a little bit you can ask yourself if it's not the people who make their money selling New Work models (You can argue about the "new", by the way) who are advocating this position especially strongly. But even if you normalize the relations: there is something about this misery, you cannot deny it.

It's no wonder that large, established companies, which year after year are told by the Gallup engagement study that sixty percent of their employees do not identify with their company and retreat into resigned satisfaction, would like to do something about it.

So it is obvious to look for suitable living cell therapies. This is partly done by personnel policy, in the hope that the equation young = flexible is correct. I have already heard frustrated statements from highly qualified people that age discrimination in certain large companies now starts at thirty. The other possibility is to replace old structures with new ones. And that is where offers en masse are tempting in the form of tools, methods and entire organizational models, above all Holocracy, the wonder-weapon hope.

But this starts at the wrong end, because if you go and radically change the structures, you will generate one thing above all: overwhelm. Meanwhile, there are enough high-calibre admonishers of this overwhelm, from Gerald Hüther to Ricardo Semler, and I agree with them. The natural direction of change is from the inside out, from the decision for change to its implementation in reality. Because:

At the beginning of an organization there is an idea. Then people come together to realize this idea together. Little by little, requirements become visible, and people look for ways to satisfy these requirements. This is how processes, rules, building layouts, etc. crystallize. Structures are thus something like coagulated attitudes and attempts to find solutions.

Of course, structures develop their own dynamics, and there is no question that there are interactions between structural conditions and the experience and behaviour of people who work within these structures. But structures decide nothing. People do. To do so, they first have to see and understand the structural dynamics, then want to change something about them, have the necessary power to shape them, and finally also be prepared to pay the investment for it in the form of effort, temporary instability and mini-crises that are included.

Of course, it can be the other way around, but the sustainable examples tend to come from categories like earthquakes, acts of war and paraplegia. With structural bombing, you can force people to change, but "forcing" doesn't really go along with "intrinsic", does it? The impulse often comes from outside, yes. But whether the change succeeds is decided on the inside. The structures don't give a damn about that.

So if you ask me whether the first thing you should do is introduce Holocracy on a large scale: I wouldn't. I'm sure it would be very exciting. It would definitely be a consultant's El Dorado. But I think you should look inside first. If you know you want it, test appropriate principles of agility, empowerment and self-organization in small doses. As a manager, allow yourself to lose a little control when you give up decision-making power in favour of participation and self-organisation. You may then find that this is not easy for you. You would not be alone in this. Then you have arrived at the real work, and that is an inner work.

Do this work, and you will have gained a lot as a leader and as an organization. Then repeat these steps and you are in a mode of sustainable development. Inside Out.