

Phase-out Products for Managers

Among the things that apparently sell big in top management, there are categories of services that can give you second thoughts:

On the one hand, there is the Mystery department: providers who claim to have found nothing less than the holy grail, but are unselfishly willing to share it – well, for a lot of money, anyway. In an advertising text for a seminar, in which it is about the dream of rising to the top of the economy, that will then sound for example, like this:

"Those who build a community gain influence and reputation and decisive business advantages: Recommendations for interesting and rewarding assignments, new customers, job offers, early insider information (sic!), attractive invitations and sales success. Learn how to do this from our speakers, who have fully decoded the secret codes for the first time."

Not bad, right? Especially the one about early insider information.

So first of all, aren't there parts of this that are just a wee bit illegal? And the one about those "secret codes"? Sounds like a Dan Brown novel.... .. "the Illuminati of the business world" or so. Mind you: these speakers in their own practice allegedly charge several thousand euros per hour for their exclusive knowledge. They did eventually take the above text off the net, but at some point they must have been serious about it, mustn't they?

Also very popular in the business-entertainment branch: The paid lashing-out. Preferably performed by well-known book authors, in various versions. For example, by marching onto the stage and explaining to the audience that they won't learn anything because they won't engage with the content. Or washing the heads of the assembled executives in thoroughly coarse language for the nonsense they practice every day. So to speak, this is the business version of the dominatrix visit.

Why are these offers so attractive? They obviously can be sold very successfully and very expensively. This can actually only work as long as it is somehow culturally cool to torture yourself as a manager. A jam-packed workday, a marathon on the weekend, and then letting a speaker push you really hard. Seriously? And am I starting to scold now, too?

Shaking things up is fine, and yes, some old habits from management culture are really dysfunctional today, but that doesn't mean you have to become pejorative and depict managers as idiots. And the mystery department should be closed without replacement anyway. It only encourages people to chase after hopeless illusions and delays acceptance of the fact that there are no clear answers to complex questions. Especially none that are quick, effortless and without disadvantages. That doesn't sound plausible anyway, does it?

So: Get rid of mystery and masochism, this frees the path for reasonable discussions, appropriate humility and for the sincere common search for solutions in the assumption of mutual competence and good will.

Works much better than miracle cures and whips, too. Really. Try it.