

## A Guiding Light and no one is Looking

Sounds like the beginning of a children's story, doesn't it: "Once upon a time there was a sad lighthouse that shone in wonderful colors, but no one paid any attention to it, and so it became sadder and sadder..."

Let's be honest: how often do you read your documents concerning vision, strategy, mission statement or values? Exactly. And that's a problem: these dimensions are there to give meaning and direction to your organization – but if no one is looking? Is it possible that at some point the meaning and direction will no longer be apparent to anyone? There are hints for this, if you ask me.

Now you could say (purely hypothetically, of course) as a manager, "I've figured it all out and in my head for a long time, I don't have to read it every day to communicate it to my employees." At this point I would then point out a cascade of problems to you:

1. psychological overconfidence. Did you know that ninety percent of people consider themselves to be above-average drivers? Basic statistical knowledge is sufficient to rate this finding...so if you believe that you just have the overarching guidelines of your organization constantly present on the fly in the midst of day-to-day operations, I'm betting against it.
2. what is not in consciousness ceases to exist; Kahneman called this WYSIATI ("what you see is all there is"). So if you don't have your guiding structures in awareness, it means,
  - a. that these things will disappear from your inner compass, and
  - b. that, because you cannot talk about non-existent things, your guiding structures will never reach the inner compass of your employees in the first place.

Even if you just want to run a company normally, there is an urgent need to keep your guiding structures present. It will help you to orientate yourself and will also make you appear clearer to your staff – because you *will* be clearer.

But the potential of guiding structures goes far beyond individual managers. If you want to move toward ownership, self-organization, empowerment, agility, etc., you need a lighthouse that is scalable. Because if it's no longer the boss or the bossess who tells you where to go, everyone somehow has to know for themselves, and the guiding dimensions of vision, strategy, values, etc. (you'll read about the "etc." in January) are ideally suited as a source of this information, because that's what they were made for.

So: make sure that absolutely everyone knows and understands these guiding structures and can establish an inner connection to them, as a guiding light for daily actions. The "middlemen" managers can then turn their attention to other tasks. Of course, they should still support these values and be their guardians, just not alone anymore.

Why do people pray regularly in religions? Why are there mantras? Why does propaganda work so well? What brings athletes to the top? Focus, practice, repetition, repetition, keeping constantly present. This applies to vision and values as well. So why not try this mentality? Constantly use guiding structures as a reference in everyday life; make a quick check with every decision: does it match what you've set out to do? Does it reflect the values you represent internally and externally? Alignment. Nothing new in itself.

Look for sad lighthouses in your organization and see how you can breathe some life back into them. Not only children's stories need a happy ending.