

NEXT CULTUE WORK: Do You Work for Money or for Something Greater? A New Perspective on Salaries.

A delicate topic that causes in companies friction among employees and bosses is the topic of salaries, especially among employees with a nontariff contract.

Money plays for most of the people an important role, because it gives them assumed security. In the current patriarchal and hierarchical system in which we live, money is necessary as means of payment in order to cover the living expenses and in addition ideally go on holidays. However, the majority of employees feel impelled to work in order to get money for their living costs. That means that they are in a survival mode. The focus is unconsciously on scarcity, and with such an attitude the working motivation is more than questionable. Many regard their salaries even as compensation for pain and suffering for their working performance and the according stress, because they are neither inspired nor fulfilled by their job. They take responsibility at work only to such a degree so that it meets the job requirements and they only do so, because they get paid. For a lot of people their job and the corresponding responsibility are a necessary evil and a burden in life. Real life starts for them only after closing time.

Money has brought us into a material and intellectual world of consumerism that makes us think that money is the most important thing. It is therefore not surprising that many people define themselves and their status by their salary or by the amount of money on their account. You might have heard the sentence "My house, my car, my yacht, my super-holiday..." Salary has turned into a status symbol. Not only that; the misbelief that is connected is: „The more salary I get, the higher is my status and the more attention and appreciation I get.“ And that's where we start approaching the crux, because sincere attention and appreciation are aspects that are rarely found in today's business world. The business world lacks humanness and togetherness so that many employees try to compensate this lack with their salaries and other social services their companies offer. No wonder that people keep bargaining about their salaries over and over again so that salary negotiations turn into nerve-racking acts.

Salary negotiations are mainly based on the game „I win – you lose“, which is the most popular game in the business world and actually on our planet in general. It is about who gets the biggest piece of the cake, the higher salary, the company car, the bonus, the higher status, the most recognition and about who has the most power and impact. It is a game that is based on scarcity and competition and that assumes that there is not enough of everything. Therefore, it is necessary to win. The motto is „I have to win to survive, because if you win, I die.“ It is based on the so called *Low Drama* (which was originated by Stephen Karpman in the transactional analysis) and represents an irresponsible persecutor-rescuer-victim game. During salary negotiations the goal of the employee normally is to take the boss in by using convincing arguments so that a salary increase is inevitable and the employee wins. If this does not happen, employees easily take on the position of the victim, because the „mean“ boss – who is portrayed as the persecutor – has not agreed to a rise in salary. Since the salary is connected to the status and appreciation, the employee ends up frustrated and consequently lowers their working performance to the necessary minimum.

Another aspect that is directly connected to the salary topic is the judgment „good-bad“ or „better-worse“. In the ordinary, hierarchical context the salary is mainly bound to the so called expertise, the

professional competence. If a person has a higher expertise (e. g. in the form of a university degree or the length of their working experience), then this person is considered to be „better“ in the sense of „superior in value“ and gets more salary. However, this kind of judgment is also low drama. To measure and judge people in this way against a scale is an irresponsible shadow purpose. The classification into good/bad, which comes from inquisition times, is everything else than human. Also in this case it is just about what a person does or has. The so called being qualities, which actually make a person unique and describe how a person IS in their being, are completely disregarded. Instead the focus is still on the material and intellectual level.

With regard to salary negotiations low drama also shows in the fact that the salary height is kept secret. Apart from the specific employee, their boss and probably the HR department, nobody knows about the salary. It is actually a taboo to talk about the height of your salary, because it could make others envious or make them react indignantly upon hearing what a colleague earns. It is sad, but true: Competition runs the business world – partly obviously, but most of the time unconsciously and subtle.

So how could the salary topic be addressed differently in the scope of a new company and working culture? What could a new perspective on salary and money be like?

A New Perspective on the Salary Topic

To effect a basic shift of perspectives, it is first of all necessary to change the company culture in a way that the employees become part of a bigger vision. Only few employees know what the vision or mission of their company actually is. Instead they work day-in day-out without seeing the bigger picture. However, as soon as they are able to recognize the bigger picture, i. e. the vision and the supporting so called bright principles the company is dedicated to (like clarity, evolution, being with, creativity, possibility, service), a shift of perspective with regard to salaries becomes possible – supposed the employees can identify themselves with the bigger vision. A second essential aspect for changing the attitude with regard to salaries requires that the employees check whether they are in the right place. Only if an employee is inspired by the work and therefore likes to take over responsibility, they are able to take on a new attitude.

Winning Happening

A completely new game then becomes possible, which is called *Winning Happening*. This kind of game goes far beyond the partly known game *I win – you win (win-win)*. While the *win-win* game normally follows the well meant approach of cooperation, it often ends up in a kind of compromise, where both parties lose (*lose-lose*). In addition it has oftentimes the secret and irresponsible connotation „It is okay that you win, as long as I win just a tiny little bit more“ so that we are back at the game *I win – you lose*. The *winning happening* game is instead based on abundance and is a bright principle in itself that serves all participants. It is based on creative collaboration. This means that colleagues work for each other and for something greater. Be aware of the difference: the colleagues do not only work with each other (like it is ideally the case in the win-win game), but they work instead **FOR** each other. This involves a completely different kind of commitment, because in that case a team works e. g. to support a colleague with their project, without them having a personal benefit at first sight. In this case the benefit lies in being fulfilled by the way of being with and supporting the colleague. In this kind of game competition dissolves completely and a shift from a survival mode to a living mode becomes possible.

Appreciation of Being Qualities

Instead of defining themselves by their salaries and titles, a new attitude would in addition include that employees learn to define themselves by their personal being characteristics and qualities. This shift becomes possible as soon as employees and bosses appreciate their being qualities over and over again in daily life. The being qualities represent the essence of a person. They describe how a person IS in their core (instead of what they do or have). A person can for example in a certain project be very clear, committed, creative, enthusiastic, open, sensitive, powerful, etc. To be appreciated for the personal being qualities is what truly nourishes employees, because they feel seen. Appreciation is often confused with praise. However, praise (just like blame) is limited to what a person does (e. g. „You did this great!“) and can be a subtle manipulation so that the colleague keeps doing things the way you want them. Through appreciation of the being qualities employees get instead sincere attention and are seen in their core.

As soon as humanness and sincere appreciation of employees are in focus in a company and employees love their work and do it responsibly, the salary and the value of money take a back seat. Though money is then still kind of a support in order to live (at least as long as money is officially a means of payment), it is the fulfilling creating and experiencing of an extraordinary company culture in daily life that nourishes and compensates the employees. The focus is on being with.

The new perspective with regard to salary could include that the being qualities and talents of a person are essential. It is no longer about how much intellectual knowledge somebody gained. There is no more judgment of good/bad, just because one colleague studied at university and the other didn't, or because a colleague has a seemingly „higher“ title and occupies a higher position in the hierarchy. The size and presence of a person is instead defined by their being and their level of consciousness.

Transparency of Bonuses and Salaries

Another aspect with regard to the determination of salaries in a new, radically responsible, collaborative context could for many readers at this point sound like an apocalyptic business nightmare. Yet it is an essential step towards dissolving competition and establishing a responsible and healthy team collaboration in the company: Complete transparency of salaries!

There are companies that already experiment with laying salaries open. The company SEMCO has for example revealed all books and salaries to their employees. If an employee wants a higher salary, they can bring their motivation forward and tell the colleagues. The team then makes a common decision, whether a rise in salary is appropriate, or not.

If you think this step is a bit too bold, there are also smaller experiments possible. In a mid-sized company in the region of the Franconia Forest in Germany the team of one department started to experiment with the salary transparency, by just laying the bonuses open. The current bonuses of all colleagues of this department are put into one mutual bonus pot and then the team decides together, which colleague gets which part of the overall bonus. The hierarchical distribution through bosses or the HR department is thus dissolved.

In the following you find an overview of the new and old perspective on salaries.

OLD PERSPECTIVE: Salary as important status symbol	NEW PERSPECTIVE: Salary as side effect of a fulfilling collaboration
I work for money	I work for something greater.
Money is regarded as damages for pain and suffering for a work I don't like	Money is an energetic exchange for something that I love to do responsibly.
Focus is on scarcity	Focus is on abundance
I win – you lose => Low Drama Survival Mode	Winning happening Shift from survival to living mode.
I define myself and my status through money	I define myself by my being and my being qualities
Connected to seeming responsibility. Is based on the game I win – you lose.	I take over radical responsibility. Based on winning happening.
Money is security	Security is an illusion. I don't need money to feel secure. Security is inside of me (e. g. by being centered and having original trust)
Money is survival	Money supports me in my living (as long as it is still means of payment). However, money is nothing compared to real life.
Money is food	I am fed by the fulfilling creating and experiencing of an extraordinary company culture.
Through money I get assumed attention	Through appreciation of the being in daily life I get sincere attention.
Money is superficial, but still everything	Money is not the most important thing. The focus is on being with and collaboration.
Money gives status, hierarchy, power	The size and presence of a person is defined by their being and their level of consciousness.
The expertise and education are essential	Being qualities and talents are essential
Includes the judgment of good/bad, which comes from inquisition times. This judgment is an irresponsible shadow purpose.	Free of judgment. Neutral. Radically responsible purpose.
Is determined hierarchically, i. e. either through a strict labor contract or through the boss or HR department.	Is determined by the team
The height of the salary is top secret. Only the employee and boss know about it.	Transparency of salaries and bonuses
With money I can consume and buy material stuff that makes me seemingly „important“.	Money is only a medium of exchange and energetic balance for my efforts.

Are you ready to change perspectives?

Best wishes,
Nicola Nagel

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