

NEXT CULTURE WORK: Organizations in Transition – Concepts and Expectations Block Creativity

A movement that gains worldwide more and more speed is called „New Work“, a new way of working. Many companies have realized that a shift in the way of working is urgently necessary, because the known procedures based on traditional hierarchy, control, pressure to performance, competition and exploitation of resources engulf both the people and the Earth in the abyss.

There are a lot of examples of companies that are already heading into a new direction, like: Semco S/A (Brasil), Cocomin AG (Germany), W. L. Gore & Associates (Germany), Vollmer & Scheffczyk GmbH (Germany), Gravity Payments (USA), Allsafe Jungfalk GmbH & Co. KG (Germany), RWD Schlatter AG (Switzerland), Sparda Bank eG (Germany), to only name a few.

In order to make an essential transformation in an organization happen, it is however necessary to let go of known concepts and expectations. This again seems to be difficult for many employees and directors, because it means to enter completely new, unknown territory. In the past, change was oftentimes based on new management concepts and established top down. However, by now these old, inflexible concepts don't work anymore. Now it is rather about exploring the new territory at own risk and find a practicable, sustainable way of working that serves the employees, the company and the Earth.

Change Without Scientific Proof

The difficult thing about the current change in business life is the lack of scientific or logical proof. The answer to common questions like „Has it scientifically been proofed that this change will work?“ or „Is it at least a known management consultant, who said this?“ is simple: „No!“. That's the point when the first organizations jump again off the train of change, because it is well burned into our cells to rather rely on known things or proofed things than courageously step into the unknown. Therefore it is not unusual that - out of fear and a protection mechanism - comments like this occur: „Such a modern bullshit! This cannot work! You can read in every management book that a company is run in a different way.“ Yes, exactly! In all well known management and other economic books it is well described, how company culture works in the old hierarchical and profit oriented way. This is neither good nor bad and provided a lot of valuable aspects in the past. Fact is though that in today's fast changing times, in which more and more employees suffer from burnout or other psychosomatic or physical diseases, known concepts don't work anymore. The complexity in organizations is huge, not only because of complex procedures, but mainly because of the people working there. *“This complexity cannot be managed. The least with simple concepts.”* (Dirk Osmetz, Team Musterbrecher)

The companies heading into a completely new direction are pioneers, edgeworkers, pattern brakers, trailblazers, some even (r)evolutionaries. They go ways that sound for most of the managers, company owners and directorates like an apocalyptic business night mare: free working times and locations, transparency of salaries, free, responsible choice of tasks, team decisions instead of boss decisions, trust instead of control, empowerment of each individual and teams

instead of top down rules, companies like living organisms instead of traditional hierarchy, and so on.

„Some organizations are so different that they actually must not exist, because they contradict basically everything that is written in management educational books...“ (Stefan Kaduk, Team Musterbrecher).

What all these companies have in common is that they were willing to let go of expectations and concepts they had with regard to how a company should be lead or developed. Even though a company might be ready to step on the path of fundamental change in the sense of “New Work”, the danger is still pretty high that expectations arise with regard to the way or speed the change should occur. In that case it is helpful to address the clinging to expectations and concepts over and over again by asking where these expectation come from.

Based on the competitiveness that has in modern culture been hammered into the children already in school and been promoted throughout further education or studies, most of the employees in organizations are very much familiar with expectations towards themselves or expectations from others. Expectations that have been nourished by management concepts in the past are for example:

- An employee has to do what the boss says.
- An employee is only allowed to act in the scope of their job description.
- The higher the own position, the higher the reputation.
- It is better to not talk about the salary with others.
- An employee belongs to a department.
- The director or boss decides.
- Employees have to be lead in a hierarchical way.
- The performance of an employee always has to be 100% or more.
- etc.

Which kind of expectations do you have towards yourself or towards the company you work for? It is worth writing down all the (oftentimes unexpressed) expectations towards yourself, your colleagues, your boss or the organization. The more expectations you have, the more you live in concepts of how things should be. When the circumstances or situations change, what do you consequently do? You might try to fight against the new situation and establish the known again so that your world of concepts can continue to exist. In a fundamental change process, expectations kill creativity and being with. Where expectations are, new, unusual, nonlinear, unconventional and creative ideas cannot grow. However, exactly these ideas are necessary in order to make a new, sound way of working possible.

Dissolve Expectations

The thing is this: expectations are predestinated to be frustrated. In times of rapid and deep change processes it is therefore helpful to let go of expectations or to consciously take them back. If you are for example the director of an organization and you have the (probably unconscious) expectation towards yourself that you always have to know and decide everything, take a moment

to look inward and check whether you would be willing to dissolve this expectation. If the answer is yes, you could for example declare out of your center “I will now and forever take the expectation from me that I have to know and decide everything.” One thing is for sure: when you want to head into a completely new direction it is necessary that you can stand in *not knowing*, in total nothingness.

If in contrast you sense that other colleagues have expectations towards you and that you set yourself under pressure because of that, you can declare just as conscious: „I give the expectation now and forever back to XY that I have to know and decide everything.“

This procedure might sound almost too simple, but try it. The result will be amazing. When you do this, it is important that you don't decide with your mind to take back an expectation. It does not work on the intellectual level. It only works when you are ready and convinced from the inside to take back an expectation.

Fear is Necessary for Change

With taking back expectations, another essential aspect goes along, which is more or less a taboo in the business world. It is the aspect of FEAR, to be more precise: conscious, responsible fear. To dissolve expectations, consequently stand in not knowing and out of this enter new, unknown territory, creates fear. However, fear is in modern society not a good characteristic of a competent employee or manager. From the common point of view fear – just like the other feelings of anger, sadness and joy – is not okay. Fear is said to be e. g. blocking, paralyzing, unprofessional and weak. If you are afraid you are from the old perspective not able to make decisions, let alone going forward or being creative.

Let us therefore make a new assumption and change perspectives: **Feelings are neutral energy and information that serve us.** Feelings are not a design error of the universe. Feelings are not bad. Instead they serve us as inner navigation system and lead us unerringly through life. Making this assumption, how could fear serve you professionally? Well, you could use fear to find creative solutions, measure risks, be awake and present and try new things. Fear is fear, just this. It is neither good nor bad. You need the fear. However, since feelings are mostly suppressed in daily business life and employees try to explore new ways just with their minds, it might be challenging to consciously admit your own fear while stepping into unknown territory and then use it responsibly and in a constructive way.

Do you think the above mentioned pioneers and edgeworkers were not afraid of the evolutionary changes that were from the perspective of the ordinary business world based on totally crazy, non-practicable ideas? Do you think Ricardo Semler, the owner of Semco S/A was not afraid when he introduced completely free working times without knowing what would happen? Instead of letting himself be blocked by the fear, he threw all concepts of “how something should work” over board:

“It is totally crazy, this idea the people are still so much focused on how something is done. In our company nobody says “You are five minutes late” or “Why does this production worker go to the toilet again?” [...] When you look around in the office of Semco you will see a lot of empty places. The question is: Where are those people? I have not the slightest idea and I actually don't care. I

don't care in the sense that I don't want to control that my employees come to work and spend a certain number of hours per day in the company. Who needs a certain number of hours per day? We need people who are willing to provide a certain result. With four, eight or twelve hours in the office – come in Sunday and stay at home on Monday. It is irrelevant for me”, explains Semler strangely logical. (Source: <http://www.sein.de>, Author David Rotter)

MAP OF FEAR – OLD AND NEW PERSPECTIVE

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OLD ASSUMPTION: IT IS NOT OKAY TO FEEL ...

BECAUSE FEAR IS:

cowardly, irrational, unstable, Chicken Little, impulsive, hysterical, nerve-wracking, paralyzing, powerless, stuck, weak, incompetent, untrustworthy, unprofessional, over reactive and childish. It fogs decisions, cannot protect, cannot lead, gets out of control and can quickly cause general panic.

NEW ASSUMPTION: FEELINGS ARE NEUTRAL ENERGY AND INFORMATION THAT SERVE YOU PROFESSIONALLY.

WITH FEAR YOU CAN:

detect danger, measure risks, concentrate, be curious, make plans, avoid disasters, stay centered, make agreements, handle details, pay attention, be precise, ask dangerous questions, innovate, make mistakes, go nonlinear, stand there in the nothing and improvise, stay present, be alert, face the unknowable future.

(You find more about the topic of feelings as navigation system in daily business life in the book „Edgeworker – Leadership is over. It is time for the management (r)evolution“ by Nicola Nagel and Patrizia Servidio, so far only available in German.)

Fear is an essential part of a change process. The more concepts, constructs, beliefs and expectations you drop, the bigger the fear seems to become at first. Fear of being called crazy, unfit to plead and in the end fear of no longer being part of the community. For others a profound change towards a new way of working causes the fear of losing security and stability. An employee once said „I am afraid that the company will collapse.“ Yes, exactly! During such a change process the company collapses in the way that the outdated ways of thinking, concepts, expectations and assumed securities of the company collapse. Leaving behind old, known and probably comfortable things might feel like dying. A part dies, collapses. However, what's behind this comment in the end is „I am afraid that I will have to change and things are no longer the same.“ That's what it's about. On the way of transformation towards a new kind of working, it is about the human being, about each individual willing to change and become conscious about their behavior. Speed is not essential. It is not about throwing all known things over board overnight. It is about realizing the

necessity of change, then walk the path step by step with the team and trust the process while doing so.

What will be the result when employees are on board the change process? You will get a company, in which a new kind of working is possible, where employees are alive and inspired, bring themselves in creatively, have new ideas, act responsibly and where a new kind of *being with* arises, for the better of all humans and the Earth. Are you ready to take the step into the unknown?
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