

Business Special: The Dilemma of Human Resources Development in Times of Rapid Change.

In an ever faster changing environment, organizations are increasingly facing challenges forcing them to go new ways. What the companies often try is to impose new methods or concepts on their employees, which are then used in the known, ordinary context. Still the organizations hope that the employees will create new results. However, this procedure turns out to be a damp squib. Human resources development seems to be facing a riddle.

In many companies the attitude with regard to employees mirrors a paradigm which has been creeping in over years. The paradigm is 'Employees are machines and have to function. The only thing that counts in the end is the operating results.' This explains the favored tendency to initiate change with new, but standardized methods and to impose the same concept on all employees.

The essential question however is: 'How can a company change and develop, when human beings are not regarded as human beings? When top management tries to impose something on employees in a logical way instead of picking them up where they are? How can sustainable change be reached, when employees are treated as generic mass? And how can in fact sustainable human resource development occur, when the line manager determines the development procedure for the employee?'

The crux of this story is that the employees should develop while at the same time the ordinary business context should be maintained. It is a context based on hierarchical structures making the employees controllable sheep through determined target and performance agreements. In order to maintain this context it therefore makes sense to send employees to seminars or offer other development measures and incentives only to the extent that they are motivated, but not empowered, because empowered employees might no longer keep in line. Controlled potential development in moderation!

Human resource development in the hierarchical context mainly serves the organization. The focus is on the company reaching greater results, more customers in even shorter time or producing new, potential managers that are drilled to match existing structures.

The development measures employees can make demand on in most of the companies are in a first place nothing else but comfortable for the employees. The employer pays and many employees consider human resource development and trainings as nice timeout paid by the company. You don't believe this? Well, it might help to ask the question about how many employees are actually willing to 'sacrifice' a weekend for development measures paid by their employer.

In addition, the current employee development offers are also comfortable, because the participants neither have to take responsibility nor do they have to change in a sustainable way.

They mostly go some place, listen to some nice methods and go home again. Human resource development is mainly based on logic, on known methods that are taught and on the employee feeling at ease and having a good time. Skill enhancement is mostly limited to what can be learned and understood by the employee. Those organizations which actually do a review together with the employees after they come back from a seminar, investigating how the new skills can be integrated in daily business life, are rather rare. Instead the employee had a great time and whether or not they remember and use what they learned is irrelevant.

Human resource development often has a stale smack also because development measures are often imposed by the boss, who sees 'weak points' in the employee. The message that is unconsciously transmitted is 'You are not okay and therefore you have to change so that you match the ideal of the company and produce better results.' Many employees are forced to do development measures. They are expected to participate in a development program. Human resource development has thus only little to do with self responsibility and free choice, but rather with heteronomy and duty.

This in turn brings about the next hook. Employees who are 'gratified' with development measures, but in fact don't want to change by own initiative have a special attitude that prevents per se sustainable development. The attitude is 'Wash me, but don't make me wet.' This means that development on a superficial level is accepted, but deep insights, the solving of personal blocks and pattern and thus sustainable personal change are not wanted, because this could temporarily be uncomfortable for the employees. They might have to reveal something personal and would thus be humanly vulnerable. However, this does not fit together with the current business world, in which employees have to function, take a position and be 'professional'. Human resource development of the old kind promotes cold, distant professionalism, but not warm humaneness and community. It is therefore not surprising that more and more employees set the flag with the words 'I can't go on anymore – I can't bear this anymore.'

Another factor that should not be underestimated is the development target rate. Especially corporations have certain targets determining that each employee has to go through a specific number of development measures. Thus human resource development becomes a rate runner and an alibi like 'at least the company has offered something to the employees'.

Asking companies what kind of human resource development measures they provide for their employees the three most common answers are:

- „None. “
- „Oh, we didn't have time so far to really set up a development program for employees. In our company it happens rather sporadically. “
- „We have a catalog of standard measures that are offered to the employee in accordance with their line manager. “

The interesting question is how human resource development could look like so that an organization can act effectively and sustainably in times of rapid change. What is needed?

Human resource development of the future follows a completely new approach. While the old approach focused on maintaining the existing company context and the hierarchy and on 'feeding' the employees with knowledge, the focus of the new approach is to create a totally new context. This new company context is based on absolute responsibility of each employee and on their empowerment. This means that they are able to act self-responsibly, communicate in a relational way, think non-linear and creatively and maybe even change around company structures completely, away from hierarchical structures towards network structures.

And this is exactly where the dilemma lies. Human resource development empowers employees which could lead to old structures breaking apart. For power-focused leaders this can be a threat, because self-determined, responsible employees are less easy to control than sleeping sheep that do what you tell them to do.

And one thing is for sure: human resource development of the next generation is in a first place for those who see the necessity for change and are really willing to take according steps. Instead of imposing on employees of an entire department to go through certain development measures, the new approach is based on supporting those employees who are enthusiastic about change. They then become the dray horses inspiring other colleagues do go through the same development measures afterwards. People do not only have different speeds with regard to personal development, but for many people change also means fear of letting go of the old. Therefore, pioneers are needed who go first and then come back to inspire other colleagues. Inspiring does not happen through convincing, but rather because other employees realize that the human resource development measures create a new context and allow sustainable, positive change.

However, sustainable change can only happen within a person. New development measures are therefore (r)evolutionary in the way that employees get to their personal blocks, solve these, grow beyond their inner boundaries, and can thus create new possibilities for themselves and the organization. The measures focus on the necessity of the employees. It can therefore only make sense to let employees decide self-responsibly whether they want to go for these measures. Human resource development of the future means that employees experience directly that something new works better than what they have done so far thus changing ineffective behavior patterns by own drive. In contrast to the intellectual learning that has been practiced in the past, a so called four body learning is necessary, i. e. a kind of experimenting and experiencing which directly anchors in the body so that employees can integrate the new skills directly in their daily business life. Yet, it is necessary to therefore look at personal patterns and breach them, which can temporarily be uncomfortable.

Human resource development of the future is not interested in rates and the company's operating results, but in the human being; in employees developing their full potential, being their own authorities and clearly taking responsibility and making decisions. The development measures serve so called bright principles like growth, quality or community.

Here is a short overview of aspects of old and new human resource development:

Human Resource Development - OLD	Human Resource Development - NEW
Purpose: Maintain ordinary context.	Purpose: Create new context to get completely new results.
Focus on the company.	Focus on the employee /human being.
Pure intellectual learning.	Four-Body-Learning.
Based on knowledge and logic.	Based on experimenting and trying new things.
Happens in an ordinary space.	Happens in a safe space, which allows making mistakes.
Based on teaching and learning.	Based on experiencing and feeling.
Limited to what employees can understand.	Unlimited, since it is not limited to verbal reality.
Employees should be controllable.	Empowered employees.
Linear.	Non-Linear.
Irresponsible.	Responsible.
Ordinary.	(R)evolutionary.
Impersonal.	Personal.
Generic. All get the same development methods.	Individual.
Based on a standard concept that can be repeated.	Based on the necessity of the employees.
Often imposed by the boss.	Free choice of the employee.
No self-responsibility.	Total self-responsibility.
Promotes and supports hierarchy and power structures.	Supports the creation of new organization structures.
Confirmation of what is already known.	Going into unknown territory.
Comfortable for employees. „Wash me, but don't make me wet“ => Solving of personal blocks and patterns and thus personal change is not wanted.	Vivid and changing. Unfolds the potential of employees and strengthens their talents by breaking inner patterns and blocks.
Reaching development rates.	Not oriented towards rates but towards sustainable results.
Employee development as alibi, for the „clear conscience“. At least something is offered for the employees.	Employee development as opportunity to set free the creative genius.
Not included in daily business life. No review with employees after development.	Direct integration in daily business life. Use and review with the whole team.
Getting a timeout paid by the company.	Valuable investment in my own personality.
Serves company shadow principles (e. g. greater profits, acquisition of more clients, maintenance of hierarchy).	Serves bright principles (e. g. quality, teamwork, community) and sustainable and <u>human</u> interaction.
Promotes cold, distant professionalism.	Promotes warm humaneness.
Supports competition and separation.	Supports community and bonding.

Fortunately there are companies which already start practicing a new kind of human resource development. The results already showing after a short time are pretty amazing:

- Satisfied and inspired employees,
- Extremely low incidence rates,
- Innovative ideas,
- A strong team-bonding and human solidarity,
- Trust and collaboration instead of competition.
- High flexibility and creative solution finding for challenges.

And it really works that the development measures transfer pyramid to further employees, since these colleagues realize that suddenly totally new results are reached in cooperation with the 'pioneers'.

The essential question for a company in times of rapid change is therefore not only whether human resource development is offered at all, but whether employees who are ready for change are offered development measures, which empower them and enable that old company structures break apart so that new sustainable structures can arise. How (r)evolutionary is your organization?

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