

## NEXT CULTURE WORK: The 3 Essential Components for Evolution

Recently a movement gains speed, which deals with new ways of working and new organizational structures. Around the globe there are more and more people and initiatives pursuing the vision of establishing a new and sustainable – for people as well as for the Earth – way of working and economizing. There are already great and inspiring practical examples of CEOs and teams, who courageously try new things, e. g. the company Semco in Brazil having among other free working time and total transparency of salaries, the company Gravity Payments in the States, where the CEO Dan Price guarantees each employee a minimum salary of 70.000 Dollars at the expense of his former high manager income or a mid-sized company in the Franconian Forest in Germany where employees focus according to their talents and inspiration on the tasks they love to do and for which they take radical responsibility. There are many more organizations taking courageous steps, but there is one thing they all have in common: they are all pioneers.

As impressed as many people are by these innovative examples, there are just as well other voices arguing: „Well, it works in their company, but it will certainly not work in our company or in another corporation.“ This is a favorite and comfortable excuse for not even starting to leave known paths and preventing change from happening. What many people are not aware of is the fact that there are 3 essential components for evolution:

1. Not knowing
2. Breaking rules
3. Rapid learning

### **1. Not Knowing**

To act out of not knowing means to have in fact no idea how things go. This aspect seems to be completely absurd, since in modern society the focus is so much on control and security. The annual figures, the profit, the market share, the insurances, everything is well planned. A manager having no answer to questions, renouncing the control of employees or having no idea how a project will develop, is pretty quickly labeled as unprofessional and unfit to lead. Patriarchy has been teaching people that it is better to have things under control, to always know how things work, to not take too daring risks and wear the professional mask all the time.

However, these aspects contradict evolution. Evolution does not work with control, security, net and double bottom. Or did you think that the first sailors knew beforehand how their journey would go when they started exploring whether they would actually fall with their ship off the edge when reaching the end of flat world or whether the round world theory of Galileo was true? Evolution pioneers are ready to not know. People having the vision that a different kind of working in service of humanity and the Earth is possible, are willing to go first without knowing how it goes. In this case the vision is more important than looking “good” and being accepted and loved by everybody.

To be able to stand in not-knowing, in total nothingness, there is one important thing to consider: You have to be familiar with your fear and own it. When fear is not okay for you then you will not do any courageous step into a completely new direction or suggest and try out groundbreaking ideas.

Fear is one of four big feelings territories (anger, joy, sadness and fear), which serves us in life. Together with the other 3 feelings fear is an unerring navigation system that leads you through life and through change. The common opinion about fear is however that it is bad and to be avoided. Fear is weak, negative, blocking, dangerous, makes you a coward, is unprofessional and certainly not a characteristic of a competent employee or manager. This is a huge misbelief that has been planted in our minds over centuries (just think about the fact that 90% of media advertising uses subtle messages of fear to manipulate people and keep them small).

If, based on this parasitic misbelief, fear is not okay for you then you will not be able to go into evolutionary new territory like a pioneer. Then the fear will own you and make it so that you stay in your known place being afraid of possible opposition, conflicts or loss of control, because it is too dangerous for you to break outdated rules. With the belief that fear is negative and unprofessional you will not leave your comfort zone and thus avoid to probably ask dangerous questions in your company, point out to drawbacks, try out crazy ideas and pursue your vision of a different way of working.

The interesting question is: If it is a misbelief, what is fear instead then? Take into consideration that **fear** (just like the other three above mentioned feelings) **is neutral energy and information that serves you**. Making this new assumption how could fear serve you? What useful things could you do with fear? With fear you could for example:

- Be creative
- Be innovative
- Develop crazy or groundbreaking ideas
- Go into and explore new territory
- Make plans / be careful
- Be attentive and awake
- Concentrate
- Be curious
- Be precise
- Ask dangerous questions
- Make mistakes
- Go nonlinear
- Improvise
- Sense dangers / evaluate risks

Is fear against this background useful? Yes, indeed! Consider that fear is just fear, a useful feeling that serves you.

If fear is okay for you and you own your fear (e. g. through experiencing in a safe training space 100% maximum of fear in your body and realizing that you are bigger than the fear) then you can go forward like a pioneer, leave your comfort zone and follow your inspiration without knowing what to expect or how things go.

Evolution includes not knowing. Evolution actually comes from not knowing. What does this mean? If you have a brilliant, innovative idea about how new ways of working could look like, then you don't have to know how it works in detail. It is not necessary that you write down the milestones beforehand in a project plan, know all the details or even know how the idea or project will develop. Instead it is important that you commit to the vision. The rest comes automatically.

Is courage important for that? Yes, indeed. However, be aware that courage is not the lack of fear. **Courage is the decision that something else is more important than fear.**

## 2. Breaking Rules

To initiate sane and sustainable ways of working in organizations it is essential to break rules and deliver new distinctions. Rules, assumptions and distinctions are part of the company context and are oftentimes considered to be fix so that they are not questioned.

However, evolution in companies especially includes suggesting and trying new, crazy ideas. This can start with little things. For example, if your meetings took too much time in the past and the participants were oftentimes busy doing other things during the meeting, well then, for the next meeting take out all tables and chairs from the room so that people have to stand in an open circle. Let yourself be surprised how quick and effective the meeting will be. It is totally appropriate to feel fear beforehand, because you step into new territory (supposed you haven't done such a meeting before). You cannot know how your colleagues will react, what they will say about you, whether they might actually call you crazy, etc. Nevertheless, if you have integrated the above mentioned new perspective on fear, then – as soon as you feel afraid – you can be aware of it and say: „Ah! I feel fear. Fear is fear. Just this. It shows me that I am about to do something unusual.“ Then, in a next step, you trust this fear and courageously move forward.

Just as for this small example with the new room structure you can use fear for much bigger, evolutionary ideas. Many great ideas, which would make a big difference in organizations, are not expressed by employees for fear of what the colleagues might say or even for fear of losing the job. The old misbelieve about fear and that rules have to be obeyed is deep in our cells. Yet it is high time to head for a new direction and pave the way for new collaboration, different ways of communicating and acting, new, sustainable values and new leadership respective non-leadership models.

Which are the rules in your company that are outdated, not effective, destructive and demotivating and need to be changed? What inspiring ideas do you have instead?

## 3. Rapid Learning

As mentioned earlier evolution involves not knowing. Nobody knows how companies of the future will look like. This is in fact not possible, because each company has different employees, who all act in a different way so that there cannot be a unified concept for all companies. There is no patent remedy how a sustainable way of working will look like in the future. That's why it is even more important to try things in order to find the best way for your company.

Pioneers, *Edgeworkers*, impulse and idea givers following their vision of a new way of working are ready to leave their comfort zone. In a figurative sense they are ready to die. They are not afraid of making mistakes. They are in contrast ready to make mistakes, because mistakes are not negative for them, but just crystal clear feedback on the way of evolution.

They practice so called *Rapid Learning* which includes 3 steps:

1. GO! => You have a brilliant idea, go forward with it and try new possibilities.
2. Feedback => As soon as you have started, you will get immediate feedback. This can be either GO! („That works!“) or BEEP! („That didn't work!“). Be aware that there are only these two kinds of feedback. When you try something new and get a BEEP! it just means that something didn't work. It is neutral feedback about the past. Then move to the third step in the process of rapid learning.
3. SHIFT! => If you got a BEEP! this third step is essential. Change something and then start again and try something different.

Rapid learning is essential when entering new territory. The effectiveness of this 3-step process thereby depends on the perception you have about feedback. If feedback is for your criticism, negative or even a personal attack, then you get stuck. Rapid learning only works if you consider feedback as gold and as a clear indicator for what needs to be changed on the way of evolution. When researching and establishing a new, sustainable way of working it is important to integrate rapid learning in daily life and constantly get feedback from colleagues.

Remember: Courage is not lack of fear. Courage is the decision that something else is more important than the fear. The era of change in companies has already started. It is high time to throw old, blocking structures, rules and procedures over board and establish new, inspiring and sustainable possibilities. What is your vision with regard to new ways of working? When do you start?

Warm, visionary wishes,  
Nicola Nagel

*Hint: You find more about new feedback culture, rapid learning and many more aspects with regard to new organizational structures and ways of working in the book „Edgeworker: Beyond Leadership – It is Time for the Management-(R)Evolution!“ from Nicola Nagel and Patrizia Servidio.*