

## Much Fear about Nothing

I don't know about you, but my experience in organizational development is that leadership, strategic foresight, and especially reflection and learning are extremely neglected - the latter is all too often almost non-existent.

Which is shocking to a high degree, I think. Because when you add it all up, you have organizations that are running in any direction, don't know what they want, and don't learn anything. That doesn't sound like a high life expectancy overall, does it? If you think about the impact that each of these three core tasks of corporate management has, then it can't be happening at all that those, of all things, are falling flat for large portions of the time.

When I ask how this happens, by far the most common answer is, "No time." Just that simple. Operational daily life eats up what it can get, and it gets everything. Like the cookie monster. As a result, the above list has to be dramatically expanded: this results in organizations that run in any direction, don't know what they want, don't learn anything, and in addition are constantly running on empty. This does not make matters any better now...

It is obvious that this neglect of crucial tasks must not be an option, right? Just as logical: if they are to get time, other things - namely operational things, because others are often not there - have to give up time. And, again logically: this means that certain operational things have to be left out or done later or done more sparingly.

And at this moment, a panic attack reliably sets in, which is dubbed something like this: "Absolutely out of the question, we can't leave anything out, there are currently thirty projects running at the same time, and they are all extremely important, we can't do without them..." etc.

My bold assertion: this is an illusion. They only think that these thirty things are all running. But because everyone is on the edge, it was long ago the case that at most twenty of these projects are actually running. The others are in intensive care, in agonizing snail's pace, or running at such a deplorable level that they pose a real risk to your company's reputation. No one wants that.

Next assertion: if you were to leave out all the snails, nothing would change in the first moment, because you would leave out something that is not running anyway. In the second moment, the quality of what the company does would increase noticeably, along with the health and motivation of the workforce. Not to speak of the fact that you could use the time that was previously spent taking care of the ICU (because that also takes time) with more meaningful things: Leadership work, strategic work, reflection and learning.

Now you may object that we are then back to the same amount of time as before. That may be true, but there are three advantages: First, you don't run the risk of taking it easy, which you would then have to explain to your stakeholders. Second, you are now doing things that are useful and motivating, rather than things that generate frustration. And third, you are now in a mode in which your organization has a chance to remain sustainably capable of performance and learning.

What does it take? The courage to rigorously make time for the important things and to defend that time even in the face of operational pressure. Say no to the cookie monster.

There is a real possibility that once you have found this courage, you will find out afterwards that you didn't really need it.

But that doesn't matter: practicing courage is useful anyway. Go ahead.