

New Year's letter to Managers: Time for Leadership

Today I'm starting with myself, because at the beginning of each year I reflect on why I do what I do.

My vision are organizations that are inspiring places; successful companies that are equally respected and admired by their employees, society and all their stakeholders, and that are shining examples of true leadership.

That's why I never tire of working in the field of organizational development and leadership development and hopefully helping to ensure that the potential of leadership and collaboration is harnessed as well as it can be.

This is multi-faceted, but today my plea is first of all about a very simple factor: time.

Time is precious. And time is scarce. If you ask me: too scarce, in practically all organizations. Because day-to-day operations eat up what they can, and everything else is pushed to the sidelines, to the point where managers tell me that they don't have time to lead.

Which is alarming: on an individual level, because then they're not actually doing their job at all, and on an organizational level, because then the whole thing is spinning in the red with blinders on, and that definitely doesn't sound like a successful operating mode.

Yet it's so obvious: if things aren't going well, it doesn't take five minutes before you end up with the leadership factor. Leadership simply influences everything, because it sets the framework for what is possible in an organization and what is not. Moreover, leadership is the activity that allows you to scale your impact. So how could you not use a scarce good like time for leadership?

And now, while the year is still young and resolutions are being made, you could resolve to invest time in leadership.

For what exactly? Here are a few questions to get you thinking about what you could use leadership time for:

- Do you receive critical feedback from the organization? Including feedback that applies to you personally?
- Do you help to create good conditions for productive and creative work?
- Does the potential of your employees flourish?
- Does what is crystallized in processes, rules and actions reflect the cultural values you want to promote, or are there gaps between these elements?
- Do you expose yourself in defense of values and norms?
- Do you replace managers who stand in the way of their employees?
- Do you nurture your empathy, your ability to listen and your ability to build trusting relationships?
- Is your organization as good as it could be, or is it falling short of its potential?

The answer to all these questions is significantly influenced by what you as a manager do with your personal impact and your shaping power. So: of course it's worth investing valuable time in this.

And by the way, it is incredibly satisfying to play a decisive role in building something good and then to see what kind of performance such an organization delivers. Really cool, I can tell you.

So go and lead – it's a fantastic job. Here's to a successful 2024!