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Coaching as a Way out of the Management Misery

The Blindness, which Costs Billions

From Christa Karas

Conflicts in firms are not only harmful for the working climate, but also for the entrepreneurial success. According to a current study of the Vienna Advisory Group Neuwaldegg, conflicts on the management level arise most frequently with reorganization and restructuring processes – with the effect that in 85 percent of the cases the merging of companies, in Austria and Germany, does not realize the expected synergies. The main reason for this, again according to the study, lies in a lacking quality of communication and in unbridgeable attitude differences of the top management.

Michael Patak, acting partner of the advisory group: “Managers, who concentrate too strongly on economic results, often neglect ‘soft’ factors, for instance the working climate. In doing so they overlook that exactly these factors have a large influence on economic success.” However, due to mobbing cases – per case the average damage is estimated to be 25000 to 35000 euro – enormous sums are being permanently wasted.

“As a problem appears that many top managers do not recognize or do not want to recognize the signs for this”, so Patak. The study showed that the most frequent causes for conflicts have an institutional character. Often ambiguities in the areas of responsibility as well as deficits in the leadership behavior trigger conflicts among employees.

Not enough with this, then also the “highest floor” attributes conflicts and mobbing usually to deficits of the employees, which implicates further malpractice and an escalation of the problem. Patak: “Our studies

demonstrate that, for example, during the merger of IT systems only up to 20 percent of the conflicts are technically conditioned, the others, when closely looked at, refer to failed communication.” Estimated damage from all this for the Austrian economy: up to three billion euro per year.

The Advisory Group Neuwaldegg, created in 1980, with 12 advisors and 30 network partners well established in the area of integrated enterprise development, extended its emphasis – among other things, strategy and structural development, corporate culture, team and personnel development as well as advisor training – to coaching. Managers should, as Patak recommends, deal with conflicts “actively and pro-actively”. Because: “Conflicts are always a chance and a source for new impulses, therefore they should also be treated like this.”

The goal is leadership

Regina M. Jankowitsch, who just returned from Washington to Vienna, is a coaching professional for difficult customers in business and politics, and addresses also directly personal deficits. Her impulse lectures have for instance topics such as “if change is a problem, then you have a problem” or “if you do not like people, then leave the committee/presidency”.

Jankowitsch can afford such directness, is very desired because of her coaching offer, and communicates, what she herself has: professionalism. “The objective is leadership. The task reads: How do I inspire people?” With this she underscores, what coaching means, no matter, whether it concerns now training in handling the media, over to presentations (also in contests), the moderation of special events or a career jump in to the top management. Jankowitsch hardly has to express concerns about the future: “As long as there is no compulsory subject ‘social competence’ in the schools, coaching remains indispensable.”

Andrea Komarek, for many years particularly successful in business conflict mediation: “Coaching is primarily an assistance for self-help. The

coach supports his client with his tasks and the solving of problems, by helping him, to develop further and to use his resources.”

A precondition for this is, of course, that the coach knows these resources, but also the obstacles, which stand in the way of the resource use.

Coaching thereby is open regarding its content, is transparent, and permits no manipulative techniques. The desires and goals of the customers are the basis for the common work. One of the main aspects is to never lose sight of the goal and to evaluate, again and again, how close one came to the goal realization, whether it changes, or whether possibly new goals were added.

But of the same relevance it always remains to see interactively the obstacles, the blockades, “paralyzing certainties”, “blind spots”, which place in contrast. – And no matter in which field: “Who wants to become ‘seeing’, needs a coach.”