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Stir it until it spills over – How ‘Artistic Thinking’ meets the need for movement in organization culture

Abstract

Rethinking Management, **R**ecovering from the crisis, **R**edo practices of management and last but not least **T**urning the culture. There seems to be a strong need for movement...

The experiment

There are 50 people holding a rather full glass of water in their right hands, roaming freely in a limited space.

What if I turned on music? Would they move in a different way?

What if I threw a football between their legs? Would they make use of it?

What if I put chairs and tables in the room? Would they sit down and place their glasses?

What if I turned off the light?

How would the space look like in the end? Just wet?

I would say: It depends on the people's willingness to move, to take risk and to dare having fun in situations of uncertainty. I would even claim that it depends on their professional backgrounds. And I bet if one of them were an artist – he would even come up with some new ideas about how to make use of the whole situation.

But why is this so?

How can we make people derive advantage from uncertainty instead of just feeling unsafe?

Talking Business – Feeling Arts

Following the debates about the capacity of organizations to act in an innovative way, the organization's culture is defined as one of the core coefficients in this context (McLaughlin et al., 2008). Culture that fosters innovation is characterized with words like freedom, autonomy, risk taking and collaboration (Daniels, 2010; Dobni, 2008).

Bozic and Olsson (2013) provide an insight into how members of contemporary dance groups think, act and collaborate in order to support the creation of something radically new. They uncover a great accordance with what is said to be needed within an innovative business culture.

Other studies carried out by Berthoin Antal (2012, 2013) analyze the processes and results of artistic interventions in companies with a view to illustrate their nature and outcome. The author reasons that it lies in the nature of a high quality intervention that the outcome is not known from the beginning. A fact that provokes tensions because funding bodies need to measure the impact of their investment.

'Artistic Thinking' as a method to make people move

Hence there is a gap in translating artistic expertise into a tangible value. I therefore advance the method 'Artistic Thinking' which enables the translation of artistic processes into an adaptable management tool. The method results from a row of semi-structured interviews in the corporate sector and the analysis of video-taped art production processes. The method 'Artistic Thinking' aims at simplifying the artist's working process in a way that makes it comprehensible for workshop participants without artistic background. Still the artist who is leading the process retains the freedom to do his work. Since one of the crucial points of the concept is the collaboration with an artist, the input proposed to the conference „ReThinking Management“ will provide not only an understanding of the discourse and the concluding method but also the opportunity to experience 'Artistic Thinking'.

Since the given debate is about **Reacting** and **Realizing**, the audience should take this literally and start to move and stir – even if something spills over.

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