

New Work needs Inner Work

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Every change process is preceded by an assessment of the current situation. Only if we know where we come from can we plan the journey to a particular destination. That's why the New Work journey starts with teams better understanding how they are currently led and work together.

When Bettina coaches organisations, she first asks employees to define exactly what they understand by leadership. What elements of leadership are important to them and create, in their experience, good working environments?

Basic elements of good leadership

Over the course of our work, some basic elements have emerged that almost all teams suggest regardless of their size, industry or organisational form. Good leadership generally includes the following:

Vision	Dependability	Appreciation	Emotional safe space
Clarity	Responsibility	Feedback	Trust
Orientation	Transparency	Mentoring	Structure
Meaning-making	Processes	Employee development	
Impact			

A similar list was created in the course of Google's Project Aristotle, which explored the characteristics of successful teams (Duhigg 2016). Contrary to popular belief that teams with the most brilliant employees perform best, it turned out that top performances could be attributed to a mixture of five entirely different factors.

The special mixture ("Special Sauce") consisted of:

- ① Dependability
- ② Structure and clarity
- ③ Meaning of work
- ④ Impact of work
- ⑤ Psychological safety

One could deduce that these basic elements alone would lead to a concrete new leadership and cooperation model. If bosses are reliable, and employees understand the meaning of their work in the overall context and see that they have an impact, everything should work out. However, it is not that simple. This is because

every term mentioned above lends itself to an arsenal of possible interpretations.

Let us take the demand for “clarity”. This can be interpreted and put into practice in many different ways. For example, one boss may assume that her employees receive orientation and clarity through concrete performance targets, so-called Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), while another boss clearly defines the roles and tasks of individual team members.

Teams should therefore not be satisfied with blurred generic terms when determining their position, but must dig deeper: what exactly is important to us and which assumptions and processes are hidden behind the generalised terms in our work?

How does psychological safety arise?

When dealing with the subject of leadership, safety plays a particularly important role. Security, as discussed in Chapter 4 under principle #3, is not only one of our existential basic needs, but also plays a central role in working life. In turn, insecurity is reflected in anxiety, stress and burnout in the individual, and has severe negative consequences for the company as a whole. But even though security is so important, we rarely talk about it. To many of us the topic seems too personal and has negative connotations. Who would like to appear insecure and anxious in front of their colleagues and their boss? Everything in our professional life is designed to show strength and conceal weakness. But this attitude, as “normal” as it may seem to us, is difficult to reconcile with New Work principles. This is because showing oneself “as a whole person” is an integral part of the new workplace. We’ll be looking into this concept more closely in the next chapters.

In order to discover where a team currently stands and which forms of cooperation and leadership are best suited to its needs, Bettina inquires into what each individual needs to feel secure at work. She usually gets a whole range of answers. Many employees associate security with stable processes, clear role descriptions and objectives, but also with concepts such as appreciation, empathy and reliability, honesty and support, trust and freedom.

Many of these terms are identical to those that appear above as characteristics of good leadership. Leadership gives us security.

Half of the terms refer to the outer dimensions. For many of us, team security is created by factors such as reliable structures and processes, clearly defined roles and objectives. In the course of the development towards more self-organisation, however, we reduce these predetermined orientations. Role definitions are opened up, targets are no longer the responsibility of the boss, but of the individual team member. Hierarchies are flattened or completely abolished. Leadership is distributed among all team members. This fundamentally changes the structure in which the individual is embedded. Instead of orienting themselves on a fixed process or boss, they have to find their security in a complex network of interactions and dynamics that are all happening simultaneously.

For many people this is a very challenging experience. We have already seen teams where the bosses happily announced a New Work process and panic broke out in the team.

Once the external structures are reduced, people are left to rely on their inner stabilising structures. These particular inner competencies, related to communication, reflection and relationships, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. At this point, it's enough to repeat principle #2: if we dismantle structure on the outside, we must build structure on the inside.

After having clarified their individual relationship to psychological safety, team members then proceed to explore related issues regarding leadership and collaboration. They ask themselves questions such as: "What do we mean by clarity?", "Which structures work for us?", and "How do we experience impact?" [→ Exercises, p. 121]

Leadership in different value systems

In order to gain a better understanding of different leadership styles, we found it helpful to combine the five success elements of good leadership from Google's Project Aristotle with the value model of Spiral Dynamics in a matrix. Spiral Dynamics is a developmental psychological model that assumes that people go through concrete developmental steps that enable them to process more and more complexity. Each family of values, marked with the colours red, blue,

orange, green and yellow, goes hand in hand with a specific world-view and allows people to experience different (e. g. linear/non-linear) cause-and-effect relationships (Ackerman 2018). Frederic Laloux also works with this model in his book *Reinventing Organizations*, albeit with a slightly different colour coding (in which, for example, “teal” replaces “yellow”). This is important to note since the phrase “teal organisation” has come into common usage– because of this we sometimes use “teal” as synonymous with “yellow”. For the illustrations, however, we stick to the original colour-coding.

In our everyday life, we resort to different world-views, depending on the specific situation, that help us understand ourselves and navigate our environment.

Combining Google’s leadership model and Spiral Dynamics results in the following picture:

	Red	Blue	Orange	Green	Yellow
Dependability	Strength	Arrangements & Rules	Optimisation	Empathy	Systemic view
Clarity	Dominance	Order	Targets	Communication	Intuition
Structure	Bound to specific people	Bound to specific rules	Oriented on specific processes	Directed towards consensus	Competency-based
Meaning	Assertiveness	Duty & Loyalty	Performance	Relationship	Developing potential
Impact	Being the strongest!	Doing it right!	Doing the right thing! Sensing opportunities!	Achieving something together!	Holistic and systemic action
Security	Power & Dominance	Order & Rules	Autonomy	Relationship	In motion

Each color, or family of values, stands for a specific understanding of leadership and collaboration, with most companies consisting of a mixture of different values. They can be “blue” in some areas, i. e. they take roles and rules very seriously and prioritise duty and loyalty (typically bureaucracies and institutions such as armies or churches) while at the same time containing “orange” elements, such as rewards for individual performance.

When using the spiral dynamics model, it is important to remember that none of the values are unique to any particular color. However, the way a particular value is interpreted is different depending on the worldview of the individual. For example, in the graphic above we can see how the same value, dependability, is defined differently depending on who interprets it. Someone with a predominantly red worldview sees it as strength, whereas a person with a blue worldview sees it as arrangements and rules. It is therefore imperative that we clarify to each other what we mean by the values that are important to us.

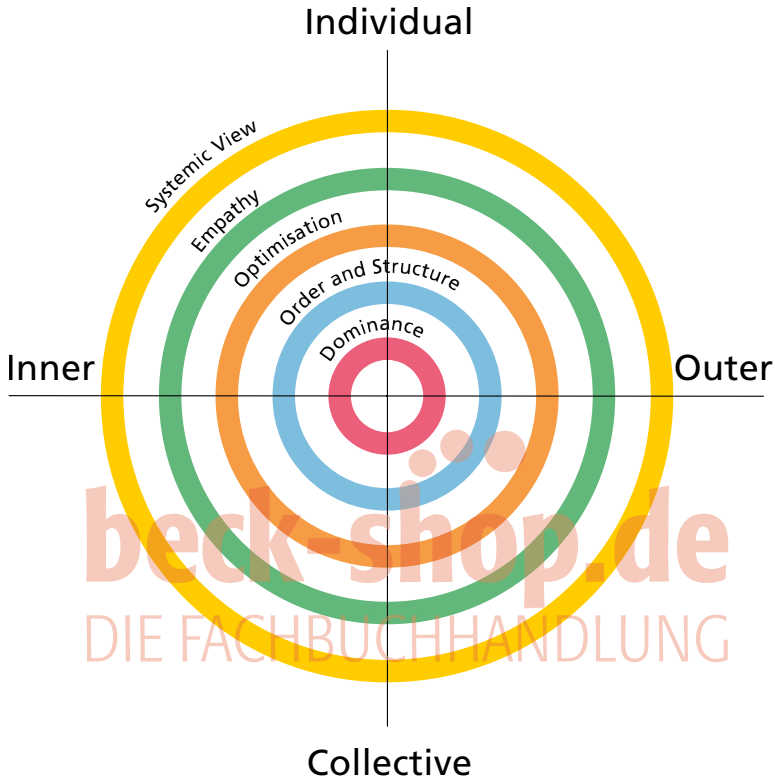
In companies, Bettina frequently observes misunderstandings arise from heterogenic definitions of values. Two colleagues would, for example, discuss their need for respect. Both agree that respect is important to them, and yet they are unable to reach a mutual understanding. The tension persists. Only after having explained their respective ideas about what respect means do they gain a deeper insight into the nature of their conflict. The one defines respect as being given the freedom to make decisions based on a trust in their expertise (orange). The other defines respect as following the agreement and sticking to the plan they created together, without allowing for individual adjustments. After clarifying their definitions, they were able to look for a compromise.

The different value families from Spiral Dynamics can be inserted into the four quadrants of the AQAL model. Every value in the internal dimension is expressed externally in the form of behaviour, structures and processes. Thus a “green” understanding of leadership, guided by the values of equality and participation, corresponds, for example, with democratic decision-making processes. “Optimisation” as an “orange” value is expressed in just-in-time production systems. [→ Graphic, p. 44]

Social enterprises are almost always a mixture of “green” values such as integration, participation, and justice, and “orange” virtues such as goal orientation, efficiency and effectiveness. Within individual teams, the picture then naturally differs again, since each individual is a unique mixture of different elements. So I can work for a “yellow” organisation, which is completely dedicated to developing the potential of its employees, and, at the same time, be anxious to avoid mistakes and to do my tasks “correctly” (“blue” elements). Despite this mixture, most organisational cultures and teams can be identified with a specific family of values to which they

The AQAL Model with Development Levels from Spiral Dynamics

Keks Ackerman CC BY-NC, based on Ken Wilber and Don Beck



gravitate. Here are two practical examples of how these different elements occur and shape a company.

At the beginning of this chapter we described that the *betterplace lab* team felt insecure after Joana's departure. Some employees did not dare to leave their (safe) comfort zone and were afraid to make independent decisions. Instead of the targeted "teal" working method, team members longed for clear rules (blue) and consensus (green) to ensure stability.

The *Ashoka Germany* team also found it difficult to make mistakes. But for different reasons. *Ashoka* employees were so competitive, entrepreneurial ("orange") and enthusiastic that they were reluctant

to reject new projects. Saying no felt like a failure to them. As part of the team development process, each employee had to learn to respect their own stress limits and support each other to maintain this process.

“To shape the future, we must know the past,” is a widely used quote attributed to all sorts of people, from Teddy Roosevelt to Helmut Kohl. We concur with this dictum. It is important for every team to explore its current leadership culture and its underlying values and assumptions. Only when this has been done can you explore which degree of self-organisation suits your team, what the next steps are, and which competencies you have to build.

The most important points at a glance

- In companies, the most diverse – almost always implicit – values and assumptions prevail. These must be made transparent and explicit as part of the organisational development process.
- Good leadership and cooperation is characterised by reliability and clarity, meaningfulness, effectiveness and psychological security. However, different people interpret these terms differently.
- Teams must therefore clarify exactly what they mean by these terms and how they can be embodied in everyday working life. Models like Spiral Dynamics can help teams talk about the different values of their members.

practical questions

- Can you relate to the elements that make up Google’s “Special Sauce”? What exactly do you understand by the five elements?
- Choose a colleague and compare your values with theirs. How do your different preferences affect your daily work?
- As a team: do the exercise about values in the appendix of exercises. [→ Exercises, p. 121]

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