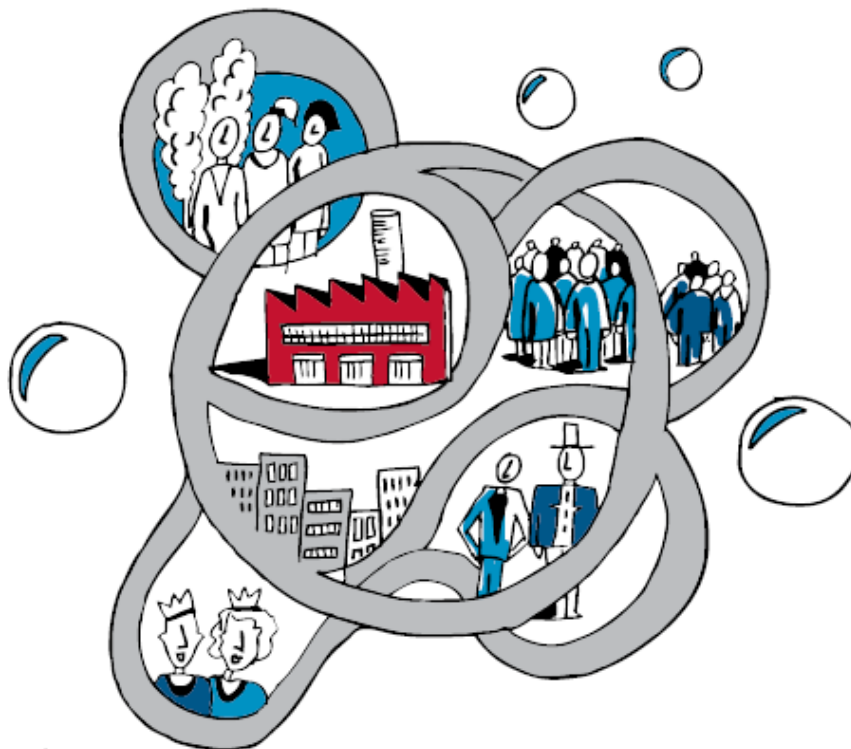


Self-Management  
Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by  
Hans Begeer

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### Content

#### Literature about self-management

<b>1. Frédéric Laloux – Reinventing Organizations .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Beyond Co-creation: Lessons from Frédéric Laloux .....	4
<b>2. Marvin Weisbord &amp; Sandra Janoff – Lead More, Control Less .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Add on Skills for Co-creation .....	5
<b>3. Brian Robertson - Holacracy .....</b>	<b>7</b>
From Top-down Hierarchy to Horizontal Bureaucracy?.....	7
<b>4. Rick Lent – Leading Great Meetings.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Behaviour Follows Structure - How to distribute power differently.....	8
<b>5. Charles Manz &amp; Henri Sims – Business without Bosses .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Leadership Crisis? Self-Managing Teams as an Answer .....	10
Best practices 25 years back.....	10
<b>6. M. de Vries, H. Vermaak - Beyond Hierarchy .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7. Margareth Weathley – Who do we choose to be .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Preparing Yourself for Times of Profound Disruption.....	14
<b>8. <i>The EGO unmasked</i> – Nickolas Martin, Dorrance .....</b>	<b>17</b>

#### Self Managing Teams

<b>9. Self-Managing Teams Roadmap .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>10. Self-Management – Myths Debunked .....</b>	<b>20</b>

#### Own Experiences

<b>11. Effective Change Implementation asks for a Co-created Vision .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>12. Self-leadership - How Scientists Transform into Leaders .....</b>	<b>23</b>
Develop Self-Leadership through structural adaptations,, training and coaching.....	23
<b>13. Self-Development as a Management Development Approach .....</b>	<b>25</b>
A good preparation for Self Managing Teams.....	25
<b>14. How you can develop Self Leadership .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>15. Teambuilding for Self Managing Teams – Fad or Facts Based Reality? .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>16. The Dilemmas of Self-Management .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>17. Self Organization and Ego Management .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>18. Self –Management ‘look before you leap’ .....</b>	<b>34</b>

Laying the groundwork for the successful implementation of self-management ..... 34

**19. It takes more than Tweeting to Change Your Organization! ..... 36**

Don't struggle alone. Instead, learn to collaborate with other stakeholders to facilitate change. .... 36

**20. Do self-organization and co-creation fit my leadership style? ..... 38**

**21. The Power of Self-Organization ..... 40**

A tool to motivate your staff and boost your company's efficiency ..... 40

**22. Self-Organization – Beyond the Hype ..... 42**

A practical book on how to apply it..... 42

**Co-creation**

**23. 20 Reasons not to apply Co-creation ..... 43**

**24. 8 Reasons to Co-create ..... 45**

**25. Conditions for Co-creation ..... 46**

## 1. Frédéric Laloux – Reinventing Organizations

### Beyond Co-creation: Lessons from Frédéric Laloux

I would like to share insights from Frédéric Laloux's book 'Reinventing Organizations'. This is the first study I read that goes beyond co-creation. After Marvin Weisbord's 'Productive Workplaces', another must read, I was sure that the actual way of organizing is insufficient, one-sided, short term oriented and making people sick. I wanted to explore more sustainable ways to organize and found a possible answer in co-creating with the whole system – many different stakeholders – to solve complex problems. Although many people use co-creation they all seem to mean various things and it was not very clear how to do this. Therefore we wrote a book about Co-creation and how to apply it by using 6 principles. (see nr 13). Thanks to Frédéric Laloux we now have on top of our book a real workbook to reinvent organizations! He studied 12 so-called Evolutionary Teal Organizations in depth, in different countries, profit and non-profit, big and small,

family owned and quoted. These cases share very important ways of working, of processes and structures of purpose and values – they all reinvented their organization.

This book is full of very practical examples and avoids unnecessary theory to keep it readable. From the heap of information he pulls together 6 levels through which he can explore the way these organizations differ from more traditional ways of operating. I briefly share them:

1. Self-management (structures)
  - Teamwork replaces bosses, staff functions are reduced to a minimum, everybody is CEO!
2. Self-management (processes)
  - How to decide together, which is not the same as consensus, importance of transparent and frequent communication
3. Striving for wholeness (general practices)
  - Invite humanity at the workplace, make it a safe place to work so that people can be themselves
4. Striving for wholeness (HR processes)
  - Redesign of recruitment, selection, development, pay, etc. where people are taking responsibility themselves
5. Listening to evolutionary purpose
  - Profit and success are byproducts of committed actions, the stakeholder model, not the shareholder
6. Common cultural traits
  - Trust is key which is made possible through information sharing and transparency, responsibility and accountability for all, learning by doing and collective purpose

I consider our book is a quick starter to get a better feel and understanding about co-creation, self-management and multi-stakeholder approaches. The excellent work Frédéric has put together is really showing how to start Reinventing Organizations!

## 2. Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff – Lead More, Control Less Add on Skills for Co-creation

I want to share 8 lessons from a new book from Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, famous from Future Search. Lead More, Control Less – 8 advanced leadership skills that overturn convention. In this book the authors show you how to add 8 new skills which you may not know you have. Paradoxically as they say you may gain control by reducing your need for it!

It all starts with self-control or self-discipline, while learning to do so people need real time practice. They devised 3 single principles:

- Let people build on their personal experiences rather than impose yours
- Set things up so that people coordinate and control their work rather than you
- Change conditions for optimal interaction rather than try to change behavior

And change means doing something you never did before!

### 8 Leadership skills

#### 1. Control structure – not people.

This is about organizing conditions for self-management: people will learn more, share information and control.

#### 2. Let everybody be responsible.

While today many leaders take too much on their shoulder, creating a self fulfilling prophecy that others are dependent on them and are unable to take responsibility.

#### 3. Consider anxiety ‘Blocked Excitement’.

Everybody experiences anxiety often as a thread. Here the authors show you how to turn this around into something positive. Dialogue is the best investment when the struggle escalates.

#### 4. Avoid taking it ‘personally’.

All human beings have projections and if you are a leader people make up a lot of stories about you and vice versa. Although these stay hidden – the feelings and odd behaviors leak out. Here you are stimulated to own yours, to create reality.

#### 5. Disrupt Flight or Fight.

Normally we don’t like differences, but no two of us are alike. We can’t control differences but we can minimize the impact of negative feelings. Sub-grouping is used as a way to do so.

#### 6. Include the right people.

This is something you can control. Make sure you involve all those who collectively have authority, resources, expertise, information and a need: the whole system. If not possible use the 3 x 3 rule. To optimize differentiation, include at least 3 different levels and functions in one conversation.

7. Experience the 'whole elephant'

This relates to: everything connects to everything. You can change a system only by changing its relationship to the environment that supports it, therefore you need dialogue.

8. Surface unspoken agreements.

Instead of trying to control disagreements and conflicts – which leaders put a lot of efforts into, lead by accepting them as natural. This means focusing on what you agree about to base actions upon.

Their book is written full of humor with practical examples and ready to apply one of the many take aways. They sure outperform previous publications by making Lead More, Control Less even more easy to read and to use. This is the new one- minute manager without the obligation to do this or rather that. This is an invitation to start experimenting. Therefore it fits well with our book: Co-creation is ..... 13 Myths Debunked.

### 3. Brian Robertson - Holacracy

#### From Top-down Hierarchy to Horizontal Bureaucracy?

Recently leaders ask me how to get rid of old top-down structures as a reaction on the bore and burn-outs around them. They have heard or read about horizontal ways to organize. More self organized teams who work without a leader for instance. Writing a book on co-creation with the whole system (Co-creation is... 13 Myths Debunked, June 2016) stimulated me to read recent books on self-management, wholeness and purpose.

I already shared my thoughts in previous blogs on Redesigning Organizations (F. Laloux) and Lead More, Control Less (link) (M. Weisbord and S. Janoff). In this blog I want to share reflections whilst reading through Holacracy from Brian J. Robertson – one of the creators of Holacracy who has published a book recently in which he promises a lot if you implement it:

- More efficient communication
- More effective meetings
- Less red tape and fewer roadblocks
- Crystal clear lines of responsibility and accountability

And this by ‘simply’ turning everybody into a leader. Holacracy is all about organizing the work not the people. Main question he was facing is: how do you enable an organization to effectively self – organize? His answer is shifting the power from the person at the top to focusing on the process. This process is defined in detail in a written constitution ([www.Holacracy.org/constitution](http://www.Holacracy.org/constitution)). In other words, this is about governance: the process by which we assign power or authority in an organization. It is also about the purpose of the organization – it’s reason for being. If the structure doesn’t meet what the organization could be, you get tension and this is what is dealt with in Holacracy governance meetings. Robertson uses the metaphor of a game people play – football for instance.

This game is strictly regulated with do’s and don’ts, punishments and rewards. It is clear without a referee this game will not work, self-steering is not enough here! For Holacracy he uses a facilitator who acts as the referee for ‘the game’ how people are working together. This is where I got confused. For me a facilitator is someone holding the space so that others can play their role to a maximum. But how to avoid the game to be short stopped and intervening so often that people have no room to play anymore? In other words if rules and regulations about what to do and what to avoid in working together become so dense that we create the new red tape. What if working together using the processes of holacracy turn into horizontal bureaucracy? For Robertson you need facilitators as referees and people with the right mindset. How to get these?

I believe strongly that you can train people, to get them to adopt another mindset, to help them let go of control for a moment without this ending up in a disaster. Ideally this is already acquired at a younger age at school – during upbringing and in sport or leisure groups. If we want to gradually change the existing situation in an organization from top down hierarchy, with few influence and motivation at the bottom – to people who take responsibility themselves, we need a revolution, don’t we? Robertson admits that you can’t do a bit of Holacracy – you either embrace it and fully implement it or you don’t. I do not think this complex system is easy to adopt in most of the existing organizations. Therefore I would like to advise leaders to acquire experience with elements of it, like we do in our co-creation workshops

#### 4. Rick Lent – Leading Great Meetings

##### Behaviour Follows Structure - How to distribute power differently Starting with meetings

In my last blog I presented possible downsides of more horizontal ways of organizing . In an another blog I suggested that applying Co-creation using the 6 principles could be a first step to help people overcome their fears / doubts to distribute power and responsibility differently.

In this blog I want to share thoughts and insights reading through a very practical guide: [“Leading Great Meetings – how to structure yours for success”](#) written by Future Search Network friend Rick Lent. In his book he presents tools, structures and stories for planning, conducting and achieving results with your meetings. All meetings have structures that affect how we behave - behaviour follows structure. This is an interesting thought because we often understructure our own meetings resulting in miserable and or unexpected outcomes. Structure is often replaced by us trying to control behavior during the meeting. But like Marvin Weisbord always says: control what you can – through structure, preparation and design – let go what you can’t control – behaviour. This is at the heart of self-management and often the reason why we are reluctant to apply self-management, it will result in chaos is it not?

If we want to work with less hierarchy, or even become a so called Teal organisation, self-management, besides wholeness and evolutionary purpose, becomes key. By reading Rick’s book you learn to control by preparing better, using structure. Lack of planning is evocated by the fact we all ‘know’ how to meet. But this often leads to frustrating experiences during meetings. Rick distinguishes 6 structural planning choices for better preparation.

1. Goal: The goal should be a well defined task – Focussed, Actionable, Timely and Timed – (FATT)
2. Who to include: consider to include diversity of views
3. Design: group size, strangers, outspoken people, sharing presentations
4. Reaching decisions (how to build commitment), 5 choices to get a decision:
  - Consensus – everybody truly supports the idea
  - Consent – everybody truly supports the idea as good enough
  - Compromise – each person gives up something
  - Count (votes) winners and losers – don’t blame me I did not vote for it!
  - Consult – leader just asks input , he decidesHe prefers 1-3 for more horizontal ways of working.
5. Time use,
6. Meeting space. (use of tables etc.)



## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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He presents 4 ways to conduct the meeting efficiently using design structures:

1. Sharing responsibility by applying the 4 roles of self-management.
2. Supporting productive conversations – give everyone a chance to speak; respectful listening; avoid defensive behaviours
3. Managing time
4. Working with conflicts. Provide for small groups sharing of views before whole group discussions.

Rick offers very tangible approaches you can consciously choose. Finally he describes two choices for achieving results with your meetings:

- How you build decisions – rather than make – you can use common ground, consensus, multi-voting, ..; focus on areas of agreement
- How to follow-up (timing and follow-up questions) have participants be responsible for actions.

In my opinion applying straight forward meeting structures and tools will enhance useful experiences which will help to let go of control during a meeting. Gaining experience with such meetings will help us to understand how we can distribute power differently – starting with our own meetings!

## 5. Charles Manz & Henri Sims – Business without Bosses Leadership Crisis? Self-Managing Teams as an Answer Best practices 25 years back

In this blog, I want to explore an important element of co-creation: self managing teams as an answer to leadership crisis.

In an excellent study Manz and Sims present results of 12 years of research in Business without bosses' , How Self-Managing Teams are building High Performing Companies.

**This book is from 1993!** More than 20 years before Laloux's publication covering one of his case studies as well: AES Corporations. In their last chapter they summarize important lessons which I would like to share with you.

Pay offs from Self-Managing Teams (SMT) (when implemented well):

- Costs go down, productivity goes up (up to 50%)
- Employees experience greater ownership and become more committed
- Employees experience a higher quality of life at work
- Decreased absenteeism and turnover
- Improved quality and innovation
- Teams provide effective mechanisms for resolving employee interpersonal conflicts
- A more flexible organization where resources can be allocated efficiently.

But SMT are not a panacea, they introduce new problems and challenges . Here are some of the challenges to be met for successful implementation:

1. Employees need expanded technical and behavioral skills so that they can handle multitasking if needed. But especially social skills need to be further developed. They need to learn organizational, planning, interpersonal and self-direction skills. E.g. how to set and achieve goals, interpret feedback systems, lead and participate in meetings, resolve conflicts and initiate problem solving on their own. This requires a lot of training and coaching.
2. A new perspective on leadership is needed – often SMT's are brought in but the mode of leadership remains top-down. At the top, higher level management must re-examine its own leadership and teamwork.
3. Managers' and Supervisors' sense of control and power is threatened. We need to find different roles for them to fill. But also from a psychological perspective it is difficult not to give orders anymore and have impact in a different way. Again, this requires lots of training
4. Things often get worse first after implementing SMT before they get better. Many people have no experience yet with SMT such as self goal setting, self feedback and self leadership. Team members have to learn new behavior and unlearn the old.
5. We tend to expect too much, too soon, while it is not easy to introduce SMT's in an existing organization, it is much easier to do this in a Greenfield situation.

## Self-Management

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Finally Manz and Sims advise strongly to plan and organize SMT's carefully. If teams are given total responsibility without the necessary technical and social knowledge and skills, there will be failure for sure! So SMT can be an answer to leadership crisis if, according to the authors, the future of business is prepared with leaders, instead of bosses. Leaders are human, like you and me. Today democracy across the globe demands a leadership role from ever more people – to begin with, there is a need for greater self-leadership. The real leader stimulates others to become self-leaders. They refer to the Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu: *The best of all leaders is the one who helps others so that eventually they don't need him*. Combined with self leadership, working together in Self-Managing Teams allows us to run a business without bosses. I also refer to 'Lead More Control Less', see this blog – which totally fits the message.

The decision to go to SMT is not evolutionary but revolutionary so Manz and Sims conclude. Next blog we share their Road Map to Success.

## 6. M. de Vries, H. Vermaak - Beyond Hierarchy

Why can self-management be difficult to maintain? Why do organizations sometimes revert back to hierarchical structures and behaviors even after years of self-steering teams and self-organization?

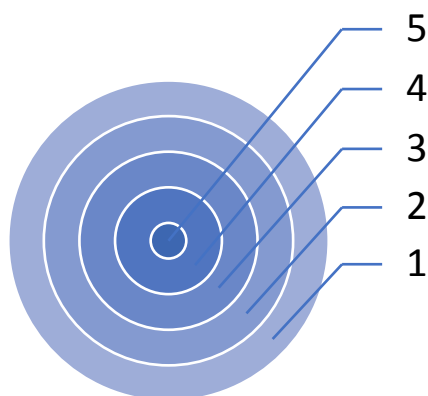
Five years after the release of Frédéric Laloux' book *Reinventing Organizations*, one-third of the studied organizations have reverted to classical top-down hierarchies. One quarter of the organizations described in my own book, *Do-it-Yourself Managers*, did so after only one year.

Why do some companies abandon self-organization? Some explanations from my clients:

- New management had little experience and understanding of self-organization so they reverted to more familiar ways of working.
- Other business priorities got in the way, such as mergers and acquisitions or the need to manage rapid corporate growth.
- Clients from some organizations attend and actively participate in informational “learning platform” sessions. Though interested in the potential of self-organization they are not yet ready to risk applying it in their companies.

Why do others succeed and thrive through self-organization?

An examination of the behaviors of the seventy-five percent of our clients who have not reverted to old ways of working provides insights into how to make a success of self-organization. Self-organization is complex and can be difficult to apply. Its complexity can be visualized by thinking of it as consisting of five layers of increasing complexity each with their own challenges and dilemmas\*):



1. *Dismantling hierarchies requires increased professionalism.* The process can expose competency gaps that can be hard to fill. So management and staff alike have to up their games through learning, through self-development and through becoming more professional.

2. *Cooperation and teamwork requires learning together.* How is this best achieved? Departments are no longer isolated islands, clients become stakeholders, roles and responsibilities change.

When applied well, co-creation and feedback sessions can help teams to learn to cooperate more effectively. They learn the importance of diversity and authenticity and how to retain their own identities within the new structure.

3. *Core values and understanding guide our behavior.* Teams need to examine their core values and to explore the importance of these values with team members. They need to understand how team members rationalize decisions. They need to learn the best ways to interact to achieve true comprehension.
4. *Organize in a flexible way within a hierarchical framework.* When is it useful and when is it not useful to apply self-management? When processes are very complex, when clients are involved and when employees can make a difference - and if everyone has the autonomy to do so - self-

organization can be very efficient. Two situations that require particular attention: i. staff and governance issues are often best managed within a hierarchical framework ii. as the distance between self-organizing teams and top management increases, two important conditions must be met. Top management must have an accurate helicopter view of the organization and they must have an effective means to connect people as needed.

5. *Ability to discuss power and to deal with powerlessness.* Self-organization involves devolution of power. Power issues and feelings of powerlessness evoke deep emotions that are not easy to deal with. Real learning happens when one is able and willing to muddle through the pain and frustration of learning, what psychoanalysts call negative capability. A willingness to cope with emotional issues is critical at all management levels. Top management must learn to relinquish control without letting the organization fall into disarray and they must show their vulnerability as human beings.

Organizations that succeed at managing the complexity of self-organization are motivated by the better results they realize. Thriving in self-organizing cultures requires mature people who are able and willing to take responsibility for themselves but also for each other and for the organization. It takes time, even as much as 5 years to develop a company culture that supports self-organization. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Based on: 'De hiërarchie voorbij' : 10 wetmatigheden over zelfsturing. M. de Vries, H. Vermaak, M. de Ronde; Tijdschrift voor Begeleidingskunde 6(1), 213

## 7. Margareth Weathley – Who do we choose to be

### Preparing Yourself for Times of Profound Disruption

Could you become or could you mentor people to become leaders to guide us through turbulent times? I reviewed the recent work of many authors writing in the field of self-organization and leadership while doing background research for my latest book: *Do-it-Yourself Leaders: Beyond Hierarchy - A Self-Organization Workbook*<sup>1</sup>. Margaret J. Wheatley's book, *Who Do You Choose to Be: Facing Reality / Claiming Leadership / Restoring Sanity*<sup>2</sup>, stands out as one of the most inspiring books I have read in some time. The author is a highly regarded management consultant and teacher whose earlier book *Leadership and the New Science* is a standard reference in the field and a bestseller. (see [www.margaretwheatley.com](http://www.margaretwheatley.com)).

Wheatley summons us “to be leaders for this time of profound disruption, to reclaim leadership as a noble profession that creates possibility and humanness in the midst of increasing fear and turmoil”. Wheatley's leaders ‘lead’ by example, they demonstrate that they care by encouraging others to become more humane, to have healthy family lives, to be sensitive to the needs of others, to inspire generosity, to contribute to society and to the broader community. Wheatley believes that in order to become a leader one must gain knowledge about or become successful at self-managing the following elements:

The arrow of time - Everything has a beginning, a middle and an end – Wheatley provides many examples of the reality that no matter how strong a society, community, organization, family or an individual is, all will travel through this cycle.

Identity – Living systems change in order to preserve themselves. We ourselves are living systems so this applies to us as well. Consider the implications on societies as they pass through the era of post-truth, where the truth has become passé. Emotions, feelings and beliefs, not facts and objectivity, shape public opinion. Each day the news carries numerous examples of the effect of the post-truth era on society at large. Consider as well the effect on each of us as individuals. A lack of objectivity can lead to fear of the unknown, resistance to change, suspicion of that which is new and different resulting in a change in identity and a reduced quality of life.

Information – Wheatley writes “It is better to learn than to be dead”. She explains that our references to reality have changed dramatically. In the past information was a source of order; we could form opinions based on facts. But now facts are intentionally corrupted and used by bad leaders to create disorder, to serve their own ends. She proposes that the circulation of misinformation via the Internet and especially digital social networks empowers bad leaders to control public sentiment to a degree that exceeds their wildest dreams. Wheatley concludes that the digital age has destroyed the information age. She writes that when thinking falters, living systems are at risk and in the context of an organization, faulty thinking leads to death. Wheatley illustrates this through a description of her work with the US Army and their process for deep learning, or learn to learn via their “After Action Review”.

Self-organization – Or How to Establish Order for Free. Wheatley describes self-organization as a means to establish order free of charge. She stresses that a prerequisite for successful self-organization is to

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<sup>1</sup> To be released January 2018, Lannoo Campus (First edition Dutch language)

<sup>2</sup> June 2017, Berrett-Koehler

have a clear identity that is adaptable and to be able to develop new capabilities in response to developments within the larger system e.g. to respond effectively to change. But human beings have needs that can supersede openness and curiosity and impede innate intelligence, such as the need to belong and the need to feel accepted. Managing these potentially confounding aspects of our humanity calls for excellence in leadership. Leaders need to establish a common identity amongst colleagues that is transparent and well understood by everyone, whilst guarding preserving individuals' autonomy. She explains that personal autonomy is needed so that each person can decide for herself or himself how to put that identity into action moment by moment. The challenges of leading in this manner, the skill required to do it well and the benefit such leadership imparts to societies and individuals are some of the reasons why Wheatley describes leadership as a noble calling. Effective leaders can guide us towards success, whether the goals are preservation or destruction, peace or for violence.

**Perception – What You See Is All You Get.** Wheatley builds on old and new knowledge about what we know, but even more about what we don't know. The study of human psychology teaches us that our brains dictate what we perceive, yet our perceptions may be right or may be totally wrong, 'untrue'. This phenomena, known as cognitive dissonance, explains why a group of people can be given identical information but each individual can derive radically different conclusions from it. We simply are not capable of seeing the world as an objective self-existing reality. Even with the aid of advanced scientific equipment total objectivity is impossible for humans. People will deny or ignore that which does not fit their mindset or their world-view. Therefore, leaders need to accept diversity, to even cultivate and depend on diversity. For it is by consolidating diverse perspectives we may be able to construct a more complete truth.

**Interconnectedness - Nothing Living Lives Alone.** We exist in a bundle of life. It is said that "a person is a person through other people". This is the basis of the Ubuntu Philosophy<sup>3</sup>. Archbishop Desmond Tutu said that it is not "*I think therefore I am, but rather, I am human because I belong, I participate, I share*".

**U**identity is a word coined by members of the NGO ubuntu4u<sup>4</sup> to describe a shared identity. Uidentity is defined as you and us uniting, universal, ubuntu and useful. Uidentity is a critical dynamic and organic variable to be tended and nurtured by leaders as part of the starting material and ongoing fuel for implementing and managing self-organization.

I have tried in this blog to convey why I found Wheatley's book to be so inspirational and so relevant to today's world, not only from the perspective of the workplace or the world of politics, but relevant in our day-to-day lives with our friends and family. Wheatley summarized her thesis as follows:

Today's leaders may be called upon to be Warriors for the Human Spirit, to take a position, to adjust this position as needed and to maintain it. This calls for a high level of confidence and determination and is born from calm, preparedness and discipline. The distinction between self-help and self-knowledge for the development of the Warriors is important. There are thousands of self-help methods available to design a better you. Wheatley believes that the key to success as Warriors for the Human Spirit is to aspire to high levels of self-awareness and, importantly, to learn to trust ourselves, to believe in our abilities, to be compassionate with ourselves. Self-compassion is not to be confused with self-love of the common self-help variety. Rather, by committing to self-awareness we improve the quality of support we can give to others. Margaret Wheatley is now 70 years of age. Her aspirations have become

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<sup>3</sup> An ethical philosophy of Southern African origin

<sup>4</sup> An NGO created by the author of this blog and his colleagues in 2008

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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simplified in a sense, but no less profound and no less inspirational. Wheatley wants to leave behind a legacy of strong shoulders, strong enough for others to stand on and strong enough to carry them forward into whatever is to come.



## 8. Nickolas Martin, Dorrance - The EGO unmasked – meeting the great challenge in our life,

Do you understand your ego? Do you realise when it hinders you and when it helps you?

Psychological theory defines the ego as that part of our personalities that we experience as “myself” or “me”. Our egos make contact with the world around us through our perceptions. The ego remembers, evaluates, plans, and otherwise responds to the world. Sigmund Freud proposed that the ego coexists with the id (primitive drivers of personality) and the superego (the ethical component of personality) So the ego reflects both our conscious and unconscious “self”.

The role of the ego in management theory and practice loomed ever larger as I researched and wrote two recent publications on the theme of self-organisation. (*Doe-het-zelf leiders*, Lannoo 2018; *Cocreation. 13 Myths Debunked*, Lannoo 2016). My conclusion is that the main challenge faced by teams transitioning to self-management is for team members to learn to let go of their need to control and that is ego-driven! Weisbord and Janoff have published an interesting book on this topic: *Lead more, control less* (Berrett-Koehler 2015). They propose changes to organizational structure as a means to overcome people’s need to control therefore easing the implementation of self-organising teams. I fully agree with their approach, but their work leaves a fundamental question unanswered: what makes people able or unable to relinquish control? Here ego comes around the corner. I am attempting to answer this question through my current project, a book on ego management and self-managing teams.

An individual’s potential for success is strongly tied to one’s ego. An interesting book that explores the role of the ego in our lives is: *The EGO unmasked – meeting the great challenge in our life*, Nickolas Martin, Dorrance 2010. Martin believes that the key to developing a deeper understanding of one’s own ego is to simply become more aware of it. Martin writes that ego consciousness helps us to manage our egos and to develop them in the direction that is best for our needs.

So let’s look at bit more closely at the above definition of the ego. The ego influences one’s:

- Psychological state, happiness, mental and emotional well-being,
- Perception of our environment. For example, do we feel imprisoned by our environment, Biological state. For example our emotional state, our anxiety and our frustrations can disrupt the normal function of our involuntary nervous system leading to stress-related diseases for example,
- Social life and our interactions with family, friends, colleagues, etc.

Martin describes three characteristics of one’s ego:

1. Size – from big to small. That is how we often speak about ego: ‘he has a big ego’
2. Permeability – very much to not at all. How open to influences is your ego? Both from inside and outside.
3. Fragility – from high to low. How sensitive is it?

He also defines 10 aspects of the human experience which are influenced by one’s ego and which in turn can influence its development:

1. How much control we assume when executing tasks
2. How we deal with close relationships
3. Our level of self-esteem
4. Our expectations and need for achievement
5. Our ability to change our perceptions or “your ability to make changes in your mind”
6. Our capability to deal with the inevitable big changes in our lives
7. Our competence for coping with important adversities

8. Our typical emotional state
9. How stressed and how sensitive and we are
10. Our ability to deal with (serious) conflicts

All of this results in 125 ego types, which Martin uses as a way to self-diagnose and self-develop people's egos.

In don't want to run into stereotypes of people's egos, but it certainly helped me to consider the richness of the concept of ego. This is how I use it in my work. Help people take a better look in the (ego) mirror and from there develop ego consciousness and stimulate ego-management and development.

## 9. Self-Managing Teams Roadmap

### Self leadership paves the way for business without bosses – a roadmap to success for implementing self-managing teams

I promised to provide you with a roadmap to success for implementing Self Managing Teams (SMT) in your organization. And although these lessons date from studies done 25 years ago, they are still highly relevant! On top of this I add my own experience applying Large Scale Co-creation in which self leadership plays an important role. Roadmap for successful SMT and possible roadblocks encountered:

First step is to develop **awareness** of the challenges and pitfalls of SMT, you can do this by multi stakeholder meetings and training sessions, I would call it co-creation with the whole system. Together with important stakeholders a new vision for leadership and organizing is developed, to neutralize resistance especially from managers: what will happen with their new role for instance? But also where could SMT work, etc.

Second is developing clear **implementation structures**, I would call this control what you can – let go what you can't. I would suggest to have diverse Planning Groups as microcosms to prepare and structure SMT implementation. Usually the Planning Group does this by setting up pilots or by organizing workshops. Important is to manage expectations properly as we have a tendency to expect outcomes too fast. Furthermore prepare to deal with fall backs, before finally the sun breaks through!

Third is to offer many **different experiences** of SMT so that people are exposed and can train for the new situations. Offer technical as well as social skills training needed for SMT and higher performance. People learn best through experiences and feedback. Important is not to forget managers and supervisors to prepare them for a change of role! Help managers and supervisors to deal with loss of control, help employees with technical problems and offer them conflict management and problem solving competencies in this step.

Fourth is to make results **transparent and clear** for everybody. Adapt incentive systems and reward teams not individuals. I would advise to do this with the help of all relevant stakeholders by organizing co-creative conferences and workshops. Leadership in this context means 'leading others to lead themselves'. Go beyond the illusion of self-management, make it tangible.

We need one another if we are to solve major crises and recapture our competitive edge to successfully meet new demands! We need the best everyone has to offer – each one of us needs to become a self-leader. Following type of behavior is necessary for leaders of self-managing teams as a different type of leadership is required:

- Encourage self-goal setting
- Encourage self-evaluation
- Encourage high self-expectation
- Facilitate self problem solving
- Develop self-initiative and responsibility
- Encourage within group conflict resolution
- Provide training and coaching
- Encourage opportunity thinking

## 10. Self-Management – Myths Debunked

Self-management and self-managing teams are often regarded as the opposite of ‘boss’ control, although in my view external supervision is not inconsistent with self-management. As it does not operate in a vacuum, it also requires leaders who encourages and helps to develop self-leadership in others – or who leads others to lead themselves.

Here I want to debunk some common myths about self-management.

### 1. Self-management is something new.

Is self-management a new management fad? ‘Self Leadership Paves the Way for Business Without Bosses’ and ‘Leadership Crisis - Self-Managing Teams as an Answer’ are blogs 5 and 6 in which I reviewed books published as much as 20 years ago that analyzed the application of self-management techniques. So, although it is currently a fad, self-management is not a new phenomenon at all. Indeed, self-managing teams are known to have existed since the 1940s, almost 75 years ago.

### 2. Our team is not able or not willing to self-manage.

Research clearly shows that a number of primarily social skills are needed for successful self-management e.g. how to deliver and receive feedback; how to solve difficult problems; how to work with differences of opinion. Support from HR departments can play a vital role in helping people practice, and through practice, help them to sustain their skills in self-management. If one’s colleagues truly are resistant, could it be because they were never asked to try self-management? It must be kept in mind that a little touch of self-management is ineffective in the absence of commitment. Some ideas on how to encourage commitment are presented in the following points.

### 3. Our senior management is against it.

Related to the previous myth – if management is not willing to develop a vision and strategy for self-management, addressing the why, what, where, when, and whom of self-management, it will not be possible to apply self-management in a sustainable way. Management resistance often arises from the fear that self-management will result in a loss of control for them, specifically by a transfer of control to the employees. If self-management is carefully applied in a structured fashion, a subordination of control can be avoided. Effective structures involve management providing employees the opportunity or flexibility to manage themselves within pre-agreed rules. This means that senior management must learn new perspectives and skills, such as alternative ways to structure and manage organizations and learn how to let go of their need for control.

### 4. Self-management does not fit our culture, our way of working.

Responsibility, transparency, and respect are the key values upon which self-management is based. If your organization is not guided by these values, self-management may not be applicable in your case. However, if these key values are already present in your organization and if senior management has developed a vision and strategy for self-management, self-management could eventually be right for your organization. Incorporating self-management in an organization will take time and will involve a cultural change. Several years may be required to truly reform a company’s operating culture.

#### **5. Unions are against self-management.**

If unions are not included in the development of the broader vision and strategy for self-management they will probably be against it. On the other hand, if unions are given a role in the process it can completely change their attitudes. Issues can also arise when unions maintain their traditional role of representing workers. As workers become self-managing,

the role of the line manager as a target for grievances disappears and is replaced by the possibility to develop shared leadership. Unions may become unsettled by the possibility of obsolescence. Make them active stakeholders right from the start!

#### **6. Self-management will cost a lot of money and yield limited tangible returns.**

If all the previous points are implemented – then it is inevitable that, as with most changes, an initial investment will be required. But if properly introduced self-management can yield many positive results, at the individual and the organizational level and have an impact on productivity and profitability. See also the next myth.

#### **7. Self-management will have a negative impact on our productivity and financial results.**

The development of an overall vision and strategy with all stakeholders and the training and coaching of workers and managers alike to take up new roles requires an investment of time and money. Research has clearly shown that self-management has a positive impact on performance when applied correctly (See my previous Blogs as mentioned in point 1 above). Because the implementation of self-management requires the participation of all stakeholders, preferably through a co-creation process, operational productivity can initially decrease and this can persist until all the stakeholders have been adequately trained in self-management. Questions may arise about managers becoming increasingly 'obsolete'. The roles of senior and department managers can come under pressure. Once people are able to manage themselves productivity will improve, though it will typically be characterized by ups and downs. .

#### **8. Self-management will result in chaos.**

When not applied in the correct way – chaos is certain. I know of extreme cases where companies replaced all of their management with self-managing teams. They were of course asking for trouble and yes chaos ensued. But chaos is not inevitable, particularly when best practice advice is applied.

#### **9. Our shareholders will oppose it.**

This could happen. But what could be the outcome if you could persuade them to participate? Do your research. Read up on studies that demonstrate the positive effects of self-management on productivity. Try to reach agreement with stakeholders to introduce self-managing teams in at least part of the organization so that everyone can increase their understanding of self-management, even if most stakeholders are only observers at the outset. But even more importantly, get them involved by including them in a vision and strategy development exercise to introduce them to self-management. Note that if there is no clear business reason to justify the introduction of self-management, it is best to put the concept aside and wait for a more appropriate time. Do not introduce self-management just for the sake of it!

## 11. Effective Change Implementation asks for a Co-created Vision

Are your well-intentioned self-management initiatives meeting resistance?

Here's how to re-energize your team and get your initiatives back on track.

1. A local municipality asks for help with a change program designed to provide better citizen services. Management wants to develop horizontal communication across all departments. Employees have been invited to participate in sessions designed to empower them to take more initiatives. But for some reason motivation is low and progress has come to a halt.
2. Management at a dynamic biotechnology SME wants to stimulate change via a bottom-up reorganization and the encouragement of self-management. Middle- management are reluctant to participate, citing overcharged agendas, but the real issue is that middle-management is finding it difficult to accept what they see as the obliteration of their roles.
3. A merged group of schools engage all stakeholders in open and honest discussion with the goal of reviewing and improving their pedagogical way of functioning. Senior management is hesitant about a fully immersing the entire merged entity into a co-creation project. Their hesitancy leads to a decrease in transparency about the project, finally resulting in a total gridlock as local directors and teachers felt ignored and disenfranchised.

These are three recent examples from my consultancy practice. My analysis of the cases revealed a common feature: the absence of a broad and clear vision of how the organization could function differently and how this could increase the potential for a successful outcome. In other words, the organizations had not clearly defined, or perhaps what they did not even have at all, was a clear mission.

Each group was willing to incorporate self-leadership and co-creation in their projects, but little or no provision had been made for training time and costs for staff and managers. Likewise, each group demonstrated consideration and care for employees and clients and all were interested to learn about different ways of working. But there were no attempts to engage all stakeholders in the change projects.

As a result, despite the fact that senior management advocated self-leadership and co-creation their initiatives failed. A person trained in classical organizational development would attribute this to resistance, whilst Co-creation practitioners would observe that there was a lot of energy but it was not aligned.

In each case, management and staff were working diligently to realize their targets. What an opportunity! So many good intentions would be wasted if better ways of working were not found. So how could we help these senior managers get their initiatives back on track? How could we change the way their teams functioned?

I believe that the starting place for reviving these projects and starting new ones must be vision development co- created with all stakeholders. Senior management must review the broader strategy (larger perspective) with stakeholders and then set the boundaries, specifically; to agree what issues will be included in the project and which will not. The result is a platform or a foundation for the project from which people can co-create.

When is the best time to develop the vision? Ideally before any work is commenced on the project. Circumstances may prevent this. Impediments to the process of change can crop up at any time. A vision creation exercise with all stakeholders can be used to get the process moving again.

## **12. Self-leadership - How Scientists Transform into Leaders Develop Self-Leadership through structural adaptations,, training and coaching**

Some time ago I was asked to help an SME in biotechnology to prepare them for the next phase. They had started 8 years ago from a successful academic spin-off and now employed 120 people, with enough capital and partnership for the next years to burn.

The CEO needed more responsibility and ownership from his people – otherwise he felt he stood there alone. Also the efficiency of developmental processes was questionable –doubles and failures were the proof of this.

For the CEO and co-owner it was time to prepare for a new phase in the organization a stage of self-leadership!

In his vision he wanted to develop the flat organization – which was the case as a start-up – to a higher level.

The idea was to develop a broad Operational Management Team (OMT) next to a strategic Board. The OMT would consist of mostly scientists who should develop their leadership skills. I was asked to facilitate the process for 1,5 years.

After meetings with key people we decided to employ the next steps:

1. Selecting 12 scientists for the OMT and develop their self-knowledge through training / coaching
2. Develop the teams skills of the OMT by teambuilding and team coaching
3. Facilitate organizational and managerial skills for the OMT and connect with the Board
4. Stimulate environmental orientation through studies, meetings with partners etc. resulting in ideas for products, procedures, partners, ...

For me self leadership means you have to let go as much as possible, but only after there exists clarity about the boundaries. For the CEO and his Board these seemed to be clear: the OMT – once fully functioning – would be responsible for operational processes and they would report bi-weekly to the Board. HRM still remained the responsible for the CEO for the time being.

The combination of individual development, team-coaching and organizational restructuring worked well. Whereby not all selected scientists turned out to be the best to develop into leaders – so some had to be replaced – but overall most were happy to develop their management skills and enlarge their scope. Also political games were played and team development alone was not enough.

Special OMT – Board sessions were set-up to fine-tune values and ethics so that noses could be turning into the same direction. If the OMT was not able to agree on certain important items they would ask the CEO for his opinion.

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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Overall members of the OMT turned into a well functioning body which didn't need much steering from the Board. They were mostly self-managing during their meetings as they were turning the roles of discussion leader, reporter or secretary and observer/ facilitator - the person who gave feedback at the end of the session.

Today the CEO is happy to work with this team and he can focus with his Board on more strategic matters like: who should we partner with and how to find funding for the longer term. Some of the OMT members might even develop into Board members of tomorrow.

Self-leadership can be developed, but it needs support from the top and should be combined with structural adaptations, training & development and coaching.



### **13. Self-Development as a Management Development Approach** **A good preparation for Self Managing Teams**

Some years ago I was asked to set-up an MD program for 10 high potentials for the period of 1,5 years. The company – Belgian branch of a well-known, global organization – was facing difficult times and wanted to invest in their own promising people. I decided to develop a program, together with the 10 high potentials and their management, in which the hipo's would take as much responsibility as possible. We started with an exercise in getting to know themselves and each other better. We did this by using the TAIS questionnaire – an instrument originally designed for top sporters and very useful to help people understand their attentional preferences and their impact on stress. Individual results were shared which enabled participants to go two levels deeper in providing each other with feedback. It also grew the openness, trust and belief in each other. The same exercise was done with their managers and also these results were shared together with the 10 hipo's. This was a breakthrough in the traditional top-down culture so common to everybody. I also introduced meetings for the 10 hipo's and de MT together (16 people in total) where the hipo's were in the lead: responsible for the agenda, time keeping, reporting, etc. – self-management was applied by them. For the managers it was an amazing experience: they had to step back, let go, listen and discuss together. They were so used to control these kind of meetings and also to actively steer their direct reports – to unlearn this was a challenge. They learnt that meetings without content were not very useful – then the discussion was only focusing on how participants were dealing with the process. Meetings with an important objective or topic were difficult to deal with for the hipo's – as they had to learn to manage the process and be involved with the content at the same time. But they learnt very quickly that if they prepared roles and structure before well enough, it worked efficiently. Anticipation, also about needs and expectations turned out to be key in managing the process and also that chaos is sometimes part of it!

Another important element of the program was the introduction of a buddy system. Each of the participants were connected with one of the colleagues – although they worked in completely different environments. So apart from being responsible for their own development – they felt responsible for 1 colleague throughout the program. I met with the duo's several times in order to check their development – as they were asked to write a personal development program – together with their buddy and discuss their learnings.

When a reorganization tsunami hit the company from abroad, the MT had a number of well- prepared middle managers (the hipo's) to organize and structure this process well.

Thanks to the development of the 10 hipo's the reorganization went much more smoothly and faster than anyone could have imagined.

Today – several years later – one of the hipo's left the company but all the others are in higher management positions now partly replacing their former managers.

They are also tempted to experiment more with self-management and self-managing teams, a novelty for the company. The MD program was a very good preparation for more horizontal functioning – using self-managing teams for production and logistics, which was unthinkable a couple of years ago.

#### 14. How you can develop Self Leadership

I want to focus on Self-Leadership and the question of how it can be developed. I have been coaching individuals for many years using a well established method: [the Professional Development Exercise \(PDE\)](#).

For most of the people I coached their question was how to grow Leadership Competencies. This is implicit in the concept of Self-Leadership.

Self-Leadership is a process through which people influence themselves to achieve the self direction and self motivation necessary to behave and perform in desirable ways. It has 3 components:

1. **Behavior focused strategies.** Growing self awareness and encouraging positive outcomes
2. **Self reward strategies.** How rewarding yourself after something positive, can have lasting effects
3. **Constructive thought pattern strategies,** influencing yourself mentally through focused thinking

The first component to start with is growing self awareness. The PDE consists of an in-depth interview lasting 3-4 hours together with some problems participants have to solve. This meeting results in a summary stating where the participant is actually and what he or she wants to further develop professionally. This summary is shared with someone from the organization who sponsors the coachee. Then together we agree a coaching contract stating goals to obtain/realize for the coaching trajectory.

For Self-Leadership to grow, it is important to also develop reward strategies and constructive thought patterns. So we explore motivating stories and rewards together and we help coachees to understand what motivates them. This makes individual reward strategies more tangible. We also share and find out more about thought patterns and strategies the coachee has developed and uses. By questioning and analyzing thought in typical situations, coachees are challenged to reframe certain thought patterns that are destructive into more constructive ones. For example if I think that everybody always criticizes me, I can learn to think about something positive and also make a division between me as a person and my results for this task.

My experience as a coach proves Self-Leadership can be developed in most people. But you have to be courageous and stay focused to grow it, and it helps to start doing this with external help such as a coach. It is important to ask for feedback regularly. I include in my coaching trajectory a 360° review where we gather input from relevant people around the coachee. After half a year the programme is concluded with a final meeting to discuss together with the sponsor what was achieved and the coachee summarizes how he/she will ensure further development of self-leadership.

## 15. Teambuilding for Self Managing Teams – Fad or Facts Based Reality?

Self Managing Teams (SMTs) – are a very popular topic in today’s management literature. SMT has even become a fad or buzz word (like co-creation, coaching, mediating, ...). In previous blogs I explained how SMTs can make a quantifiable difference in organizations. I shared results from studies that offer fact-based proof of the positive effects of SMTs and I described how to start implementing SMTs.

Another key outcome that demonstrates the success of SMTs is the development of “soft” skills in all SMT-members. Though not “hard” measurable outcomes soft skills are no less valuable. Soft skills are all about teambuilding: working together (without direction by a boss), fostering real dialogue through communication skills development and building trust through feedback. Specifically, how to deliver feedback to your colleague(s) and also how to receive it and use it properly. All of this can be conducted within the framework of self leadership development.

Team building exercises are an effective way to implement SMTs. I have led teambuilding exercises for many different organizations over the last 25 years. A general program could look like following:

### First day

- Start with all participants in a circle of chairs, no tables and no hierarchy, to create an open atmosphere that encourages the input of every single person. Make an inventory of expectations and needs. Go through the program of the teambuilding session and discuss and share responsibility for the agenda! (1 hour)
- Have an activity or exercise (in or outdoor) that requires working together. Use role switching (timekeeper, facilitator, reviewer, presenter/host, ...) and provide enough time to review what happened e.g. through a so called T (team)-account: WWW (what went well) and EBI (even better if) recorded by one of the members taking the lead (1,5 hours)
- Discuss success criteria for high-performance teams via subgroup discussions and share the results in plenum, making up a team list. Again take time to review the process (1,5 hours)
- Lunch break
- Do a little theme walk – or other activity e.g. in duos or trios to discuss progress towards applying the success criteria (see this morning’s discussion and team list) and share results in plenum and review (2 hours)
- Break
- Do another activity where you have to work together closely and review ( 1,5 hours)
- Round up for the day in a circle: How are people feeling after this 1<sup>st</sup> day (0,5 hour)
- Preferably the evening is spent together relaxing, storytelling, enjoying dinner together

### Second day

- Start in a circle again – how do participants feel and what are their hopes for the final day?
- Simulation exercise e.g; preparing for a major project together including review (2 hours)
- Stages of team development with different roles – lecture discussion (1 hour)
- Lunch
- Feedback essentials: sharing + discussion (0,5 hour)
- Prepare feedback for each colleague (0,5 hour)
- Feedback walk in rotating duo’s so that each person in the group meets and exchanges feedback (2 hours)
- Share impressions and learnings from the duo feedback experience (1 hour)

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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- Close in a circle and agree next steps (0,5 hour)

My experience shows that this general program can be easily adapted to fit specific purposes or contexts. It is quite effective in helping teams and individuals to accelerate growth and development. The program can also lead to some uncomfortable or even nasty discussions, the team may fall into chaos at some point and people may become uncertain about the process. When the team is able to work through this impasse it has proven its strength!

## 16. The Dilemmas of Self-Management

Self-management, self-organisation and self-leadership have been the major themes of my blog during the last year. I have shared ideas from inspiring books about self-management and from my consultancy practice and I have described my experiences supporting individuals and organizations in applying these ideas. This blog describes some of the dilemmas I faced in doing so and how to overcome them. Self-management is a powerful approach and as such requires informed use to reap its benefits and avoid internal resistance to its use. Being aware of the common dilemmas and how to overcome them can increase the potential for success of self-management in your organization.

### 1. The DIY Dilemma

Self-management is a hot topic. There is a lot of free information about it on the internet, many self-management workshops are offered and, after all, the topic pertains to learning how to manage oneself. So it is understandable that many people believe they can develop self-management skills on their own. However, DIYers miss the opportunity to learn from those with experience in self-management, a critical resource. Externally sourced and objective experts can observe and critique behaviour, help participants to be more open to the ideas and contributions of their colleagues regardless of their position in the organisation. This is not a trivial task and it is a crucial part of the evolution towards self-managed teams and organisations. External experts act as critical mirrors to support learning and personal growth.

So the answer to the DIY dilemma is: don't. Like any management method, if it is wrongly applied, the organisation will become resistant to it and access to this powerful tool may be lost indefinitely. Instead, use external experts, at least until your organization has developed highly skilled and objective internal self-management experts.

### 2. The "All or Nothing" Dilemma

How does one start applying self-management in an organization? What is best, a company-wide campaign or a team-by-team approach? Can this tool be initiated in only one part of an organization and expanded over time? I have worked with organizations that have used both approaches. An example is a large company where self-managing teams were established in only one department. Typically, tensions arose between the non-self-managed and the self-managed teams and in most cases the tension was linked to problems of communication. In particular, to unclear messages coming from the self-managed teams. The solution was for the self-managed teams to refine their communication through the development of a shared vision. This entailed the stimulation of dialogue amongst stakeholders and reflection on the part of all members of the self-managed team. The process can be time consuming, but the result is the development of a shared vision that will result in clearer communication and higher levels of productivity.

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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But this is only a partial solution to the All or Nothing Dilemma. The complete solution requires the input of a self-management expert in collaboration with members of the organisation who intimately understand communication patterns and team inter-dependencies. The result is the identification of groups of teams best suited to the simultaneous implementation of self-management in a first phase and a plan for teams to be included in a future roll-out of this management tool.

#### **3. The Dilemma of Ownership**

Can self-management be effective without the buy-in and, most importantly, the adoption of self-management by the CEO, the senior management team and key stake holders (major investors, members of the board, etc)? Ultimately, no. Self-management will fail without their support especially when fears of loss-of-control are present. Members of the senior management team need to be integral members of self-management vision development teams used during the initiation of the tool (see my book on [Co-creation](#)). Ideally, members of the vision development team will act as champions of self-management during roll-out. The support of a highly experienced and objective expert can help stakeholders and the vision development team chart a course through the changes required to adopt self-management. Together they will evolve a new vision for how the organization will operate and define the benefits targeted through the application of this tool.

Are there examples of an “under the radar adoption” of self-management? Yes. I have experience with department managers who have implemented self-management in autonomous teams in their departments. They have monitored and analysed the performance of these teams to describe the benefits of the tool in terms of productivity, return on investment team morale, etc., and used the analysis to present a case to senior management to encourage the adoption of self-management elsewhere in the company.

And here we arrive at a very challenging dilemma:

#### **4. The Dilemma of How to Quantify the Added Value of Self-Management**

Agreement on a means to quantify the bottom line impact of self-managed teams is critical for sustaining the commitment of all stakeholders. Hard, financial endpoints are what matter here. Believing in the concept or finding that self-management can make for a better work environment is not enough. Numerous studies have shown that self-managing teams add bottom line value, but this results from careful planning, by aiming towards specific business-critical objectives, not by accident. Importantly, success in achieving bottom line objectives correlates with the quality of the soft skills of the members of self-managing teams such as how to deliver feedback, how to cooperate in a team and conflict resolution coaching should be a part of the plan of action. These soft skills enable self-management teams to work well together and as such drive value-add on the bottom line. An experienced coach with a track record of team building in self-managed organisations is recommended.

#### **5. The Dilemma of New Roles**

Without exception, all of my clients eventually ask me “what will we do with the managers”. In self-managing organizations the role of managers changes because, to some extent, everybody becomes the manager. So how does one deal with the obsolete managers? Firstly, advanced planning is required to coach the team members on how self-managed teams operate. This encourages team members to think through and discuss the impact of self-management on roles and responsibilities. Teams should be encouraged to discuss new roles that will be required and how individuals can evolve into these positions. Examples include roles that support the company objectives and new management style, such as acting as coach, mentor, or a facilitator or becoming a member of another self-managing team. Preparing for new roles and lack of control is difficult for most people. An expert can help to manage expectations and to prevent control issues and egos from undermining the work of the teams.

These are just some of the dilemmas I run into working with people who are engaged in applying self-management concepts. Would you like to know more or are there some dilemmas that you encounter and would like to share? I would be pleased to hear from you. I am working on a publication about self-management and will regularly organize workshops to share and compare experiences and find out more about self-management. Let me know if you are interested.

## 17. Self Organization and Ego Management

What makes us want to perform, to achieve things, to do what we do? The motivations that drive our behavior have been intensely studied in recent decades in an attempt to find the keys to human psychology. The self-determination theory is one such attempt:

- Deci, Edward L.; Richard Flaste (1996). *Why We Do What We Do: Understanding Self-Motivation*. Penguin. [ISBN 0-14-025526-5](#)
- Deci, Edward L. (2006). Richard M. Ryan, ed. *The Handbook of Self-Determination Research*. University of Rochester Press. [ISBN 1-58046-156-5](#)

The self-determination theory states that intrinsic or innate motivation can flourish in environments that allow autonomy, that encourage the development of mastery and in those where one's efforts are meaningful to one's community or group. Creating such environments is an essential task for leaders who want to encourage co-creation and self-organization in the workplace.

### The Role of Egos

Unchecked manager's egos can restrict the space needed for self-development and self-management within their teams. A good example of what is possible is found in the animal kingdom, especially in the behavior of flocks of birds or schools of fish that form great swarms yet act as one organism. These swarms careen towards one another but rarely break rank and never collide. They appear to behave as one, as though they are being synchronized by an innate structure. Consider as well that birds and fish, at least to my knowledge, do not have egos.

In contrast, when humans participate in large groups a structure is needed to prevent collisions and rules may be needed to synchronize the group's actions. Managers commonly provide these rules but their egos can get in the way, blocking autonomy and impeding the potential for mastery. In other words, manager's egos can repress the performance of team members and the group as a whole. How aware are we of our own ego and the effect our ego can have on others? **How can we detach from our egos** – or at least from its negative aspects?

One solution is for leaders and team members to learn to be aware of their own egos and its impact on their colleagues and their environment. This knowledge makes one better equipped to revise, and ideally, to control our egos and to serve as examples of effective ego management.

### What Tools can be Used to Support Ego Management?

Ego management feedback sessions can serve to build self-awareness and to identify and encourage the development of our capabilities and those of our teams. Points to consider in running ego management feedback sessions are:

We all tend to hide behind our ego, so the creation of ego-free environments can make us feel naked and vulnerable. Be prepared to be supportive.



## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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Equal treatment of colleagues that ignores hierarchy and the skill level and expertise of participants at feedback sessions is one means to reduce feelings of vulnerability.

Sessions should be run within the limits of basic rules that encourage participants to be authentic; to not hide behind small talk; to be open and transparent; to dare to admit mistakes and or weaknesses; to listen to other's words and emotions with your heart and with your mind; to demonstrate empathy and compassion to others and to yourself and to others; to explore the behaviors of participants that stimulates a response in others (positive or negative).

As I wrote in my most recent publication (Co-creation...13 Myths Debunked) managers with high levels of self-awareness who effectively manage their egos are capable of creating environments where open dialogue and shared decision-making flourish. These managers facilitate open discussions and dare to take a personal stand even in insecure and ambivalent situations. This so-called shared leadership stimulates self-organization and helps with ego management.

## 18. Self – Management ‘look before you leap’

### Laying the groundwork for the successful implementation of self-management

My recent blogs have focused on self-organization and self-managing teams. By self-organization I mean a management practice that

- stimulates individuals to take responsibility for their objectives and for the tasks required to meet them
- provides the necessary space and rules at the individual and the organizational level that are need to succeed.

This time I would like to explore the conditions that should be met prior to implementing self-management to increase the chances for success. Transitions to self-management should not be rushed. Proceed carefully and slowly and consider the following questions:

1. What specific changes do you expect from the implementation of self-management and how will you measure them?
2. Are your colleagues ready for this change - have they even asked for more autonomy and responsibility?
3. Are managers and especially the top management supportive?
4. Is the corporate philosophy and operating structure flexible enough to accommodate a very different way of working?

My experience supporting clients as they transition to self-management demonstrates key principles to address:

1. Be prepared to define and measure the results of self-management: What constitutes better results and how will they be measured? For example, do you anticipate higher performance rates, greater motivation, fewer sick days, less burn-out etc., better or more sophisticated solutions to complex problems? Without a specific and well-defined objective in mind and a result(s) to measure and a way to measure the result, a business is not ready to implement self-management.
2. Develop a rationale to help staff understand how they will benefit from the new way of operating: A company’s human capital, its people, is by far its most valuable asset. What benefits will employees receive by taking on greater responsibility and do they want to do it? If there is no benefit for them, can you nonetheless come up with a compelling reason for them to participate? Some staff may argue that it is the boss who should shoulder responsibility, whilst others may not feel capable of doing it. Indeed, management may question the skills, knowledge and general competencies of their staff to take on responsibility.
3. Anticipate and address the effects of change on managers: A transition to self-management can destabilize managers. The transfer of responsibility it entails can lead to fear, a feeling of disenfranchisement and suspicion. Managers may become anxious about their possible loss of status, or a lowering of their position in the company hierarchy and an associated reduction in salary. They may doubt the ability of their staff to perform in the new environment, having found them unproductive in the past in the absence of close management. Younger staff

members may worry that the traditional route to promotion may be lost to them if managerial positions will disappear.

4. Define who will carry the ultimate responsibility for decisions: This can be particularly problematic within auditing functions where a lack of compliance can lead to official fines and impact one's reputation. For all functions, as for auditing, it will be important to structure processes in a way that ensures transparency and avoids victimization in the case of poor results.

In summary, the following conditions should be in place to increase the potential for successful outcomes from self-managing individuals and teams:

1. Ensure a common understanding of self-management amongst participants. One means to do this is to co-create a vision (see chapter 8 in my blog archive) for organizational improvement through self-management.
2. Be ready to train, coach, and mentor employees before, during and after the implementation process. (see chapter 9 and 10)
3. Work with managers to develop concepts for alternative roles and development paths for them. Create an environment that encourages them to be creative and to experiment with new ways of working. (see chapter 13)
4. Apply self-management only where it is appropriate. Study your company's business structure and functions, communication routes and decision making processes to identify the parts of the organization best suited (and not suited) for self-management.

What if these pre-requisites cannot be met, or can be met only partially? Can self-management still be applied? In some cases, yes: A team of internal consultants working within a governmental organization decided to adopt self-organization within a team of seven colleagues. Their manager suggested that they use the tool only amongst themselves and use it only on projects that allowed them to stay under the radar and only for those projects that had no effect on others. After one year they would evaluate the process and its results and share it with other colleagues.

## 19. It takes more than Tweeting to Change Your Organization!

**Don't struggle alone. Instead, learn to collaborate with other stakeholders to facilitate change.**

Co-creation involves drawing upon the core competencies of an entire organization and even its clients to reach mutually valued and more efficiently achieved outcomes

Self-organization is a management practice that stimulates individuals to take responsibility for their objectives and for the tasks required to meet them.

This year I want to share concrete examples of the application of co-creation drawn from my consultancy practice, such as the change process going on right now in a public organization. The organization wants to become more effective, in part by encouraging employees to assume a greater degree of personal responsibility for managing themselves. We have worked with the organization to design a change program. The process involves the following steps:

1. Identifying and exploring general and quite specific opportunities to apply co-creation
2. Co-creation “tasting workshops” where employees try out co-creation management practices
3. Training a number of employees to become internal facilitators
4. Workshops with internal facilitators to develop practical solutions via co-creation

To the astonishment of the organization's directors, freshly trained facilitators are now running additional workshops independently to help the organization evolve to one characterized by self-organization, greater efficiency and higher quality decisions and output.

Another example is a young IT company seeking to help their new recruits, often fresh out of university, make the transition into the professional world. They face a special challenge because their employees are client-based most of the time. We have worked with them to employ co-creation techniques in meetings held every trimester with their staff. The meetings take the form of learning and exchange venues. Each participant is given a copy of my book and attends an introductory “tasting workshop”. Additionally, in-depth workshops attended by staff as well as by clients have been held. Participants have worked together on topics such as how to develop self-organization skills and how to improve knowledge and experience exchanges between IT professionals. Thanks to the application of co-creation practices, management is able to spend less time on staff oversight and is spending more time on the strategic development of the company.

The last example comes from my work with an international engineering company. Their activities are spread over the globe and their service group strongly believes in co-creating solutions with in- and external clients. All members of the European Services Solutions platform received a copy of my book and participated in co-creation tasting workshops. They are now busy resolving technical issues by applying co-creation practices together with their internal and external clients. They are already realizing greater efficiency of internal processes leading to cost reductions and larger profit margins.

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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These examples show that co-creation works in many different settings. It could also add value to your organization. Don't struggle alone. Let yourself be inspired by co-creation and self-organization and the value these management practices can add to your work environment and your bottom line.

## 20. Do self-organization and co-creation fit my leadership style?

My consulting practice has helped many teams and entire companies learn and apply the tools of self-organization and co-creation. If you are new to my blog, thank you for taking the time to read it! In short, self-organization involves creating working environments that encourage and reward employees to set their own targets and organize their time to meet them. Co-creation is a management approach that involves all stakeholders together to improve operations, employee and customer satisfaction and profitability.

My colleagues and I have created a learning platform for developing the skills and self-organization. In developing this platform we emphasize leadership is part of self-organization. Although this sounds paradoxical it is sure that you need leadership even when self-organizing, without this the work environment would become chaotic.

What type of leadership is needed to stimulate others to co-create and self-organize? [Manfred Kets De Vries](#) has written widely on this topic. He underlines the importance of leaders themselves having had experience with self-organization. This can create a dilemma for some leaders. They may agree conceptually that the responsibility for organizing should reside with their teams. But emotionally they may not yet be ready to take that step unless they have already realized the benefits of being responsible themselves for their own organization.

Other conditions may also obstruct or may indeed facilitate whether a leader is ready as a leader to adopt self-organizing. A leader's personal history such as their living environment, family, education, and general life experience can have an important influence. The eldest child from a family of entrepreneurs may adapt more readily to self-organization than the youngest child from a family of bankers. Various life experiences can make people more or less open to the concept of ceding control.

One's organizational environment can also have major effects on the successful implementation of self-organization.

- Does the company's hierarchy operate with a divide and control mentality or do they stimulate experimentation?
- How supportive is the company culture? What level of transparency and responsibility does the environment provide and is feedback encouraged and expected?
- Conversely is there a culture of secrecy and is information precious and unshared?
- Is there a common vision about self-organization that will encourage people to try it?

My recent book on co-creation provides more specifics on what a leader should do to stimulate co-creation and self-organizing, broadly leaders should

- Want to act as "sponsor" and help create the conditions needed for dialogue
- Be actively involved in the co-creative process and at the same time be able to allow sufficient space to others
- Want to commit the time needed
- Be willing to continue building on the outcome of co-creative meetings, together with representatives from the "whole system", even if that outcome does not entirely meet his or her expectations
- Be willing and able to take on the uncertainty and complexity of co-creative processes

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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- Accept that the co-creative process can, at times, be confusing for him or her too
- Sufficiently connect the core activities of the organization with co-creation; assess whether applying co-creation can add value to the organization
- Be willing to look at a return on investment of time and money from a different angle

## 21. The Power of Self-Organization

### A tool to motivate your staff and boost your company's efficiency

You want your staff to be more productive. You realize that to achieve this they need to take on more responsibility, to be better at organize their workload themselves, to be self-organizing. But you worry that this transfer of responsibility could eventually destabilize the existing management structure or hierarchy and even make managers, like you, redundant. And herein lies the paradox, the more effective your staff is, the more effective you can be as a manager. This may encourage you to consider an alternative to top-down management. Our experience demonstrates that self-organization is a tool you should consider.

Implementing self-organization involves creating opportunities for your staff to gain experience, to learn by doing. Managers can create learning environments by delegating specific tasks. Staff are motivated by challenging them to make the most of their capabilities to solve problems and, importantly, to be self-organizing. This alternative to top-down management is the basis of the co-creation management method. You can read about how co-creation can help managers and organizations to self-organize in my recent book *Co-creation ..... 13 myths debunked* and in my previous blogs. In today's blog I provide an example of the implementation of self-organization at a client company. It illustrates how skills in self-organization and tools like co-creation can be used not only to improve the efficiency of teams but to change the culture of entire organizations as well.

My client company wanted to overcome an ingrained silo mentality, to reduce bureaucracy and become horizontally integrated across its various functional teams. They had held participative events on how to improve the running of the organization and the quality of its output. But the result had been merely lists of ideas that were never implemented. The top-down structure itself was the impediment to change. It became clear that structural change needed to be the first target.

How does one change a top-down culture into one that is more horizontal? This demands trust, a feedback culture, openness, transparency and responsible employees. A long-term co-creation exercise was chosen as a way forward. Its scope was to identify opportunities for teams and individuals to work more closely by sharing information and responsibility and for individuals to take responsibility for organizing their own work. This meant that it was down to each individual to coordinate with others upon whom they depended to reach goals. This fostered a natural process of process integration and a solution oriented work culture, without a radical change to the existing structure.

This example illustrates the essential role that self-organization plays in fostering change. We achieved this not by forcing self-organization but by helping people to discover its merits via co-creation workshops. The process was as follows:

1. We offered an experience with co-creation through a half-day "tasting workshop" for 30 people. A few of these people were then trained in co-creation and the application of its principles.



2. A Planning Group was formed from 15 participants representing the diversity of the organization. Their first task was to organize a kick-off meeting to launch a co-creation project for all employees.

Our approach to Planning Groups is that they should be self-organized: they allocate roles (discussion leader, timekeeper, writer and presenter) and change roles at each meeting so that every member has the opportunity to apply and experience these roles. Together they discuss the issue(s) to be dealt with. An essential criterion is that this group is empowered by management with the necessary authority and resources to be able to tackle the matters they need to solve. Self-organization and the responsibility it entails motivates staff to take on this additional task next to their daily work. In the contained environment of the planning group people feel they can make a difference – they can be open – they are listened to – they receive feedback and they develop new skills.

The client organization's Planning Group held a kick-off meeting. It was a huge success: 90% of the staff participated for a full day. They got to know each other and the work of the organization better while discovering co-creation. Co-creation activities were scheduled over the next nine months. Employees now trained in facilitating co-creation initiatives presented the objectives of these activities, and the tangible outputs they would provide.

3. A new Planning Group was put together, this time with a focus on organizing co-creation "cafés". All employees would participate in at least one of them. Each co-creation café had a different issue to resolve: e.g how to improve the quality of services to their clients, how to improve internal communication. The issues were the result of a strategy exercise and were validated by the Planning Group. During each workshop participants were asked to offer ideas for other issues. All employees then voted to choose the top four themes which would be the focus of future co-creation workshops to come. This approach caused the whole organization to become infected with co-creation and self- organization.

## 22. Self-Organization – Beyond the Hype

### A practical book on how to apply it

My intention to write a book about self-organization is about to come true. After almost 20 blog posts on this subject and almost two years after the publication of my book *Co-creation – 13 myths debunked*, my publisher and I have set the 1<sup>st</sup> October for the delivery of my first draft. Ten client organizations have agreed to the inclusion of their experiences with self-organization as case studies for the book. Today, I would like to share one of these cases with you.

The client organization urgently needed an alternative to top-down management. They were committed to change because many of their staff were suffering from burn-out and depression. To make matters worse, this situation had given the organization a bad reputation as a place to work. As a result, it had become difficult to attract fresh young talent who expected other ways of working, such as no top-down and strict bosses, room for self-employment, cutting edge technology and freedom to experiment.

A core team composed of representatives from across the organization undertook the search for a new management model. We coached them through a number of Co-creation workshops that resulted in four core challenges that if met, would help the organization to meet its objectives:

- How to foster innovation and improve our client services?
- How to adapt more effectively to continuous change and to the speed at which change happens? How to mobilize and apply the talents of the employees?
- How to deliver critical information accurately, to the right place, with the minimum amount of delay?

The team's recommendation was to develop an organizational culture and supporting structure wherein managers were more inclusive, ample space was provided for interactions between employees and with IT and organizational software and communication routes that are user friendly and adaptable for use across the organization.

We then coached the organization through the process of developing self-leadership skills and competencies like communication skills, how to give and receive feedback and how to apply it. We helped leaders learn not to only control, but to let go within boundaries. Everyone was stimulated to search for new ideas from inside and from outside the organization. This process included workshops where leaders were encouraged to leave their comfort zones and to develop and apply novel management and team member skills.

One year on the organization is infected with positive results and the optimism they bring. Without revolutions or shouting, but with step-by-step application of self-organization skills, this organization is flourishing.

## 23. 20 Reasons not to apply Co-creation

Are you interested in creating stakeholder commitment and working with multiple stakeholders? Then this blog will be interesting for you. How to build stakeholder commitment through co-creation?

I am planning a series of blogs dedicated to this theme. The series will reflect my own experience with co-creation with clients, but also my thoughts while writing a book on co-creation. Today I want to start with reasons why one should not co-create.

Co-creation is as popular as it is difficult. When you ask managers how they feel about co-creation, like I did in research for my book, you get following reasons not to try it:

1. We have other priorities
2. We are not ready for it
3. The people are not willing to apply it
4. The process takes too long
5. We are not used to it
6. This is too complex
  
7. What do others know of this issue?
8. We need results now, tomorrow is too late
9. This does not fit our culture
10. The boss will allow participation, but at the end he decides
11. To involve the unions is asking for problems
12. You can't take the opinion of workers seriously. Can you?

All of the above have to do with the context or the culture of the organization

Other excuses have to do with the manager's attitude:

13. How can I be sure it will be successful?
14. What if the results do not match my ideas?
15. What remains of my position as a manager if others are going to decide?
16. Don't wake up sleeping dogs
17. This will be misused
18. As a matter of fact I am scared to do it, if we let the genie out of the bottle, how can we get it back in?
19. I want to hold the steering wheel myself
20. I will never be able to persuade the others to do it

If managers take these reasons for real they will never try building stakeholder commitment through co-creation.

In my opinion, today's environment requests other ways to deal with the complexity of this global world than the classic top-down approach we all know. Managers can no longer control their organizations like they used to do in the recent past. Employees are better educated and want to be involved. Policymakers need to involve many parties who have a stake in finding solutions for complex issues. To achieve this stakeholder involvement and commitment are key.

## Self-Management

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Here are 6 principles you can apply when building stakeholder commitment: (see Weisbord M. and Janoff S. Don't Just Do Something Stand there!)

1. Bring the whole system in the room
2. Explore the whole elephant before solving parts of the problem
3. Control what you can, let go what you can't
4. Let people take responsibility
5. Look for common ground to base action upon
6. Use differences in opinion to give renewal a chance.

In conclusion, the question is not why involve many stakeholders and build commitment together, but how to do it. For more information: read my book: "Co-creation is... 13 Myths Debunked (Lannoo June 2016)"

## 24. 8 Reasons to Co-create

Today I want to explore why one could be interested to use co-creation. 8 reasons to co-create:

1. You want to delegate more to your people
2. You are dreaming of more engagement of people
3. You have difficulties to bridge differences of opinion
4. You would like to engage everybody but don't know how to do this
5. You like change and development from the basis
6. You are interested to neutralize resistance to change
7. You see the complexity of things but it is difficult to get an overview
8. You are looking for ways to apply shared leadership

But if you opt for it, how to get started? First we apply the 6 principles of co-creation.

Bring the whole system in the room. Put those stakeholders who have a stake in the issue or problem literally together. Only when different parties are present and diversity is maximized, you have a solid base to start co-creating.

Explore the whole elephant, before solving parts of the problem. It means that you ought to have an overview and common understanding of the complex issue you are trying to solve together. People have a tendency to quick fix things which often creates other not foreseen problems.

Control what you can, let go what you can't. Although this seems common sense, it is not, as it turns out to be extremely difficult to let go for most people. Therefore the preparation of co-creation is of utmost importance. When this is done well, people have a feeling of control and can let go easier.

Let people take responsibility. We facilitators, but also managers have a tendency to instruct or tell people what to do. By exposing people to their own responsibility one might really feel responsible and motivated to steer oneself and apply self-management.

Look for common ground to base action upon. We often get trapped in focusing what we disagree about. With co-creation we look for what binds us, what we agree about - which is often 80% of the opinions present during a well prepared workshop co-creation. We use this common ground as a platform to base actions upon.

Use differences in opinion to give renewal a chance. If during sharing of ideas and opinions, we get stuck a very human experience – we don't try to overrule the other or negotiate. We except the differences and explore where the real differences are about. We try to use this to find new solutions.

## 25. Conditions for Co-creation

### When to apply it and how to help create the pre-conditions

In business schools and leadership courses we have learnt to approach change in /or development of an organization as an expert issue. We are taught how to study the needs of both people and the organization (as an expert). We learn to 'deal' with cultural differences, size, structure and together with a project team we can design the optimum change strategy. Often the result of this mostly top-down approach is limited, especially if we look at acceptance of the change plans as a criterion for success.

Co-creation offers a completely different approach: the issue change/development is considered together with 'the whole system'. A Planning Group prepares and designs the way forward applying the 6 principles of co-creation.

But is co-creation always possible or necessary? If the issue is so complex that you need to involve a diversity of stakeholders to solve it and if there is no one best fit solution at hand, your issue seems to be 'co-creatable'.

Be aware though, co-creation should not be considered in following cases:

- The question is too simple or not important
- (In)formal leadership has already decided what has to be done
- The objective of the change is not realistic, there is not enough time or influence involved, there are not enough resources available.
- Co-creation is only applied as a tool, not from a genuine desire to involve all <sup>2</sup> stakeholders

In our book 'Cocreation is ... 13 Myths Debunked' (June 2016) you can read about misunderstandings and pitfalls regarding co-creation.

As the example of the CEO who thought he could simply delegate co-creation to others and not be involved himself at all. Or the executive team who prepared a vision among themselves and figured that co-creation was the way to get it accepted by the rest of the organization.

There are a number of important conditions that should be fulfilled in case you want to apply co-creation.

## Self-Management

### Blogs about Self – Leadership and Co-creation by Hans Begeer

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Leadership for co-creation makes the difference, leaders should :

- Sponsor the process
- Be involved actively and leave enough room
- Allocate the time needed
- Build on the results from the co-creation process
- Work with and through the complexity and uncertainty
- Approach co-creation genuinely
- Accept to be confused sometimes
- Connect the core-business with co-creation
- Consider alternatives for ROI

#### How to help create pre-conditions

We admit, this is quite a list. Would it mean that if all these conditions are not met completely co-creation is not possible? On the contrary, what could be done is prepare the terrain by organizing 'tasting sessions'. In our practice, this often works as follows: together with interested participants we have an open meeting with believers and neutral people from different organizations. We ask them to get familiar with the 6

principles by interacting. Then we stimulate them to share complex issues to which they want to apply co-creation. We choose 1 or 2 topics. Together we find out what is needed to set up a co-creative process for these particular issues. These 'tasting sessions' make believers into more active promoters and neutral participants into believers. After this open meeting, participants often ask us to organize a tasting session in their organization, with their stakeholders and the theme they choose for co-creation.

#### What do you think:

- Are you interested in co-creating in your organization?
- You have doubts how to start it?
- Willing to share, compare and find-out more about your issues(s)