

Strategic (Knowledge)Management

Here a new approach to strategic (knowledge)management will be revealed. The use of brackets is intentional since »knowledgemanagement« is a tautology, at least according to Peter Drucker's definition:

»management is the application of knowledge to knowledge«¹
Peter F. Drucker

Thus in the following we will concentrate on knowledge, or rather: on a qualitative variety of the same which is of enormous significance to strategic management and the creation of organisations.

»Scientia et potentia humana in idem coincidunt«²
Francis Bacon: Novum Organum Scientiarum (ca. 1580)

Francis Bacon's famous quotation became a dictum in the translation »knowledge is power«. Indeed positions of knowledge determine the capacity to act and thus the potential for success both of and in organisations.

Thus Neuberger³ distinguishes between three »faces of power« with regard to the distribution of knowledge.

- The first one is characterized by open confrontation: the opposing parties pursue conflicting objectives, so that either the stronger one wins or a compromise solution has to be found.

¹ Cf. Drucker, P. F.: Die postkapitalistische Gesellschaft, übers. v. Reineke, U.; Ferdinand-Gonzalez, C., Düsseldorf/Wien/New York/Moskau: Econ Verlag, 1993, S. 73.

² Cf. Bacon, F.: Neues Organon, Teilband 1, hrsg. v. Krohn, W., übers. von Hoffmann, R., bearb. v. Korf, G., Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990, Vorwort

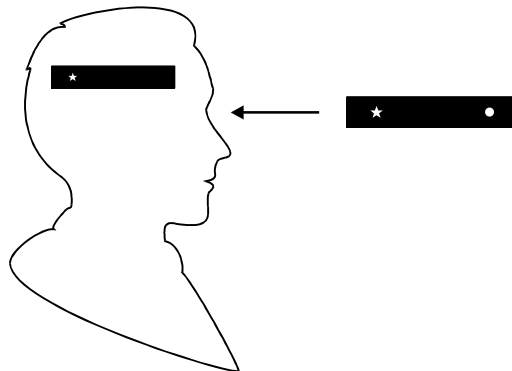
³ Cf. Neuberger, O.: Mikropolitik : der alltägliche Aufbau und Einsatz von Macht in Organisationen, Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1995, S. 55 ff. Siehe auch Neuberger, O.: »Machtansprüche und aggressive Neigungen sind gefährlich« – Macht, Opportunismus und Vertrauen in Organisationen, in: Rosenstiel, L. v.; Schuler, H. (Hrsg.): Person – Arbeit – Gesellschaft : Festschrift für Hermann Brandstätter, Augsburg: Dr. Bernd Wißner, 1998, S. 97-119, S. 99

- In the second face one party has the possibility, right from the very beginning, of restricting the number of alternatives to the ones he desires, so that the other one has, at least subjectively, the freedom of choice, in spite of objective disinformation.
- In the third face neither opponent can see any alternative: instead of controlling their knowledge they are virtually controlled by it.

This situation is comparable to *Passive (or Qualitative) Disinformation*. I refer to the corresponding units of knowledge as (*qualitative*) *blind spots*, after the biological phenomenon. Their effect can be explained with the aid of an experiment: shut your left eye, focus on the cross in our picture with your right eye and gradually alter the distance between you and the illustration.



As soon as you have reached the correct distance, the square will disappear. Every human being has a visual blind spot at the junction between the optic nerve and the retina. This partial blindness is always there, even if it normally goes unnoticed. You don't see that you can't see!



Although this experiment was restricted to visual perception, similar phenomena also exist in other areas, in which information or knowledge is processed. Here the qualitative blind spots of *Passive Disinformation* are of special significance. I refer to the correspon-

ding units of knowledge as (*qualitative*) *blind spots*, after the biological phenomenon.⁴

Qualitative blind spots exist in any knowledge base, if a model is not seen as model. Models are images of something which they do not even necessarily have to resemble. Take, for example, abstract art or our own language. In 1641 the German linguist Schottel even went as far as to praise the affinity of things to their (German) designation⁵ - although it can hardly be denied that the figure 5 has nothing fivish about it, or the word »table« nothing especially table-shaped.⁶ Even in the following prime example of reification, a poem by Eugen Roth, »sheep« is nothing but a word:⁷

*One person calls another »sheep«.
The other man's resentment's deep.
»Alack!« he says, »I won't accept that
and beg you: take it back.«
»No«, says the person, »I really don't see why.«
So now the poor unwanted sheep stands stray
and quite unhappy in everybody's way.*

Models are not identical with their original.⁸ A perfect copy would cease to be a model, but be the original itself. This problem can best be explained by means of mapping paradoxes:
»Imagine part of England was completely flattened and a cartographer drew a map of England on this plain - a map perfect down to the tiniest detail. Then on this map there would have to be a map of the map, and on the latter a map of the map of the map and so on, until infinity.«⁹ Even if we think only in terms of measure-

⁴ Cf. Glück, T. R.: *Das letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken*, Passau: Antea Verlag, 1997, S. 28

⁵ Cf. Schneider, W.: *Wörter machen Leute : Magie und Macht der Sprache*, München: R. Piper & Co, 1978, S. 194

⁶ Cf. Bateson, G.; Jackson, Don D.: *Some Varieties of Pathogenic Organization*, in: *Disorders of Communication*, Band 42, hrsg. v. Rioch, David McK., Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease, 1964, zit. v. Watzlawick, P., in: *Wie wirklich ist die Wirklichkeit*, München: R. Piper & Co, 1976, S. 158

⁷ Roth, E.: *Märchen*, in: *Eugen Roths Geburtstagsbuch*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995, S. 56

⁸ Cf. Glück, T. R.: *Das letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken*, Passau: Antea Verlag, 1997, S. 8

⁹ Cf. Hughes, P.; Brecht, G.: *Die Scheinwelt des Paradoxons*, Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1978, S. 96

ments, an image in the »realistic« scale 1:1 is impossible, as was shown by the »chaos research« in the famous example of the British coastline.¹⁰

The common denominator of all blind spots may be the fact that one is (so to speak) captured by one's own model.¹¹ This is expressed very clearly in Escher's picture gallery:



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»A picture held us captive. We were not able to escape, for it was in our language, which seemed only to repeat it relentlessly« (Wittgenstein)

At the bottom right we see the entrance to an art gallery. There is a young man looking at one of the exhibited pictures, on which he sees a ship and a few houses near the harbour. On the right the row of houses continues. If we look at the bottom right-hand corner, we can see a house with the entrance to our art gallery. So the young man is captured in the picture he is looking at.

¹⁰ Cf. Glück, T. R.: Das letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken, Passau: Antea Verlag, 1997, S. 8

¹¹ Cf. Glück, T. R.: Das letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken, Passau: Antea Verlag, 1997, Titel

The consequences are astonishing: Man, a »non-trivial automaton« per se is being trivialized by Passive Disinformation. His blind trust in the reality of a model makes him lose sight of alternatives and become more predictable.

Typically enough, this endogenous restriction conceals from the protagonist his own exogenous restriction. As Adenauer (the former German Chancellor) put it: we all live under the same sky, but not all of us have the same horizon.

The set of all an individual's models makes his horizon. If there is something missing, the individual doesn't even know what he doesn't know. If he had a clue he could look for it (otherwise he can only come across it by chance).

It is the incongruence of our horizons which is responsible for all verbal and non-verbal breakdowns in communication. Only mathematical terms ensure clear, unambiguous communication. Kant even went as far as to maintain that even »natural science was only science to the degree to which mathematics could be applied to it.« It is indeed possible to adapt or transfer mathematical models (i.e. figures) without any loss: if you think of digitalized music, pictures or even movies, which can be copied without the slightest degradation of quality.

But that should not blind us to the fact that a loss of information has already been incurred at the point of modellization and that this process repeats itself with every re-translation. Einstein mentioned accordingly that mathematical theorems are not reliable, in so far as they refer to reality. They are reliable in so far as they don't relate to reality; so much for the soft core of hard facts.

As a matter of fact no definition, unless abstract mathematical, can be anything but classification. That is why defective communication is not the exception, but the rule. However it won't be recognized if it is practised amid the common set of blind spots - in this respect it is a kind of »standardised interface«.

On the one hand it guarantees organisational continuance, but on the other it restricts the capacity to act.¹²

According to Ashby's law this fact is unproblematic, as long as the complexity of the environment changes more slowly than the ad-

¹² Cf. Glück, T. R.: *Blinde Flecken in der Unternehmensführung : Desinformation und Wissensqualität*, Passau: Antea, 2002

aptability and ability of the system to change its environment, which can be taken as its intelligence.

Passive Disinformation as a qualitative restriction has special relevance for management.

The fractal management approach developed here provides a solid and system-conform basis for the organisation of organisation.

Basic and reference sources:

T. R. Glück: Das Letzte Tabu : Blinde Flecken, Passau: Antea, 1997

T. R. Glück: Blinde Flecken in der Unternehmensführung : Desinformation und Wissensqualität, Passau: Antea, 2002

Internet-resources:

<http://www.wissensqualitaet.de>

<http://www.antea-verlag.de>