

## THE MAKING AND BREAKING OF LEADERSHIP

Linking the quality of leadership to one person alone is the wrong way to go, say consultants at Train. Leadership needs a favorable environment in order to develop its full effect

*By Heidi Aichinger – 'Der Standard', Jan 7<sup>th</sup> 2006*

Every company has its unique patterns of behavior - for example, when it comes to communicating and making decisions. Decision-making processes are often passed on from bottom to top until they "get jammed" and eventually lead to a lack of speed and poor performance in daily business. "This is how many companies experience deadlock," says Lothar Wenzl, general manager at Train and an expert in systemic organizational development.

"Everybody pretends there is no such thing as company-specific patterns of behavior," he added. Quite the contrary is true: organizations themselves and the environment they create are important factors of leadership, possibly even the most important ones, Mr. Wenzl went on to explain.

According to Mr. Wenzl, leadership encompasses three different qualities:

- Talent and a person's innate leadership skills
- The opportunity of further developing one's leadership skills and
- The company-specific environment that facilitates leadership

Organizations have hereto rarely or hardly ever asked themselves which environment needs to be created in order to make successful leadership happen and for successful leadership to be acknowledged by others. When reflecting upon the issue of leadership, the focus is usually placed on the skills of the leader in question.

### Leadership Check

In large corporations, enormous but rarely used potential for success lies in leadership patterns and organizational patterns rather than in the skills of specific persons. This opens up a new dimension where the "Leadership Check" comes in: it consists of interviews, observations and - in contrast to other programs - analyses using empirical qualitative methods as well as feedback loops. This process allows trainers and participants to develop customized measures with "pinpoint accuracy".

A time-consuming method, which nevertheless paves the way for the solution of many problems and "jams" - by simplifying paths and finding shortcuts. Another objective is creating an emotional understanding for questions of leadership within the company, as Norbert Kireth, director of human resources at T-Mobile, points out.

According to Mr. Kireth, realizing how leadership actually worked at T-Mobile, assessing its prestige within the company and pondering the question whether it matched the company's values was a particularly rewarding experience. The summary of leadership strengths and weaknesses yielded by the Leadership Check was also very helpful, Mr. Kireth said.

The program itself consisted of two phases of six weeks each. They included both one-on-one and group interviews, each 45 to 60 minutes long. Results were analyzed for patterns by TRAIN consultants, the goal obviously being to eventually break these patterns. According to Mr. Kireth, specific sets of measures have already been developed. "It was definitely worth the effort, even though it involved a lot of work. The qualitative analysis enabled us to address all levels of management and all our business sectors." Mr. Kireth pointed out that the result of the process has been accepted throughout the entire company.