

## behind&beyond #2

### **Do I have something to say? Yes, I do. And I'm not alone!**

In today's behind&beyond, I'm talking about everyone who leads and is led – more often for the wrong reasons?

Leadership, leadership culture, methods, differentiation, situational adaptation, change, transformation, etc. – the necessity of these in logistics is undeniable. The corporate cultures of logistics companies are readily available to read; everything is prepared. And then what?

Leadership – often a complete vacuum! – In my interim management assignments, I repeatedly encounter the same dilemma. Logistics isn't performing. A thousand reasons, based on IT performance issues, technical problems, deviations from the scope, insufficiently qualified personnel, high absenteeism, process problems, difficult customers, and so on. After a brief deep dive, however, one thing becomes clear: Unfortunately, there has never been proper leadership. Managers aren't meeting the expectations placed upon them. The employees are left out in the cold. They want to do a good job, they want to learn, they want to perform, they want to improve, they want to pursue career prospects – but unfortunately, leadership can't deliver.

- The basics are often missing: such as job descriptions and responsibilities, target agreements, an up-to-date organizational chart, work schedules, shift handovers, onboarding, etc.
- Goals and rationale are lacking: what should the outcome of daily work be? Is it measured? When is it good, when is it insufficient? Are employees given context, such as the impact of achieving or failing to achieve goals – for the customer, for the customer's customers, for the company itself, for their own job, etc.?
- Methods are lacking: shop-floor meetings at the beginning of each shift for providing feedback, workshops and background information for communicating changes, quality and error boards for visualization and training, Gemba walks to focus on order, cleanliness, and safety, etc.

I also miss the top-down approach.

- Middle managers who don't meet regularly with operational and technical managers for goal setting or feedback discussions. Mutual understanding, goal alignment, and a willingness to acknowledge feedback are crucial. This approach should be modeled positively, which can then be replicated on the shop floor.
- Operational managers who, unfortunately, meet far too infrequently with shift, group, and team leaders on a weekly or even daily basis, share information, gather feedback, involve them, and identify their problems and obstacles—to resolve them quickly. They are primarily responsible for this!
- Group and team leaders need a clear understanding of their responsibility to instruct, delegate, and train their teams step by step, improving them—to the point where they themselves become "dispensable." Unfortunately, I repeatedly see managers who believe that things can't function without them and without doing everything themselves instead of delegating.

Ultimately, it's the employees on the logistics shop floor, who always have my utmost respect – they deserve to be managed well. They want to do a good job, work as a team, enjoy their work, be motivated, contribute, be heard, and learn and develop themselves. This isn't achieved through programs; it primarily comes from good leadership.

Success in logistics depends on many factors. One, and for me the most important, is "good leadership" – clear, open, direct, structured, empathetic, and appreciative, with significant effects on performance, quality, goal achievement, customer satisfaction, and employee motivation and satisfaction.

Achieving success in logistics can be easier than often believed. What are your thoughts and experiences on this? Welcome everyone – write me your comments!

Yours truly,

**Detlef Kurzbuch**