

Sense & Respond diary, July 31 2009 By Andreas Heinz

For three days now I have been trying to write a diary entry (which should not at all be the purpose of a diary, to think for so long before writing something). I tried to write down what I wanted to say, asking myself what and how I could get that across in a way that it would be understood how it was meant. And it never turned out to be something that I liked and that I wanted to send around. That takes energy, that's real pain trying again and again to get together, what the point is. It was about why people don't like to change their thinking and about how we could deal with the demand to do faster what we want to do. But that felt broken and somehow wrong to write about that. Quite nice, but not really good or new, no flowing thoughts that might touch and inspire somebody. After some time of relaxing and not thinking of it any more, I suddenly knew why I did not feel well with it. There was another question behind for me: How real is all this what we do in sense-and-respond?

If some feel that they would like to see this move faster and to see concrete things earlier coming out (this came from the team as well as from management) this also states that what is there so far is only seen as plans and nice concepts. Only imagination. Nothing tangible, no real work done differently in their area. I look at the future state and must admit, yes, somehow one could say, that's just a plan. Just a nice picture. However, it is strange, but what we learn and do and think in this program feels like the realest thing that has happened to me since a long time. I think this is, because what I learned has changed my perception. And what could be more real than perception? Who would seriously say that his own perception was not real? Only imagination?

This new perception fundamentally influences what I do. How we perceive and interpret and judge things decides on how we act. And this changed perception now makes us see the reality how it is. What could be more real than facing reality as it is? It makes us see what we know and what we don't know. It makes us see where we stand and how our old way to approach problems has led us there. It makes us see, why and where our old thinking did not work out in reality. It helps us see and admit honestly that we are in an unsatisfying situation that needs change. That's what you see when you face reality as it is – not assuming any more, not painting things green which are red, not judging without knowing the facts - but asking for data and evidence instead.

So, the question must also be allowed: How real was some of the stuff that we talked and did in the past – meaning how much was that based on today's reality? How much was based and judged on the experience from the past? How real are the assumption-based plans and the limited, purposeless information in the reports and the nice-talked results of the unreflected action that we take? There is a whole lot of imagination in it that fills the gaps where we simply ignore the facts.

I think there are few things with more impact on reality than a change in perception that makes us face reality as it is and that helps us see why things did not work and how they can work better. Because it changes us to take real better and more purposeful, effective action.

If you listen to the people that are now new in the on-boarding workshop, you can feel and literally touch the change that has already happened to their way to look at the reality. We were completely stuck and trapped in our old views when the very first workshop started. They have already moved from there – some more, some less. But there has happened something – real – that made them start to reflect and change their thinking. It is so hard to describe, to make understand what this really is: That change in thinking and perception does not just mean that there are some nice new ideas and concepts. It means and feels like not being able any more not to see what is wrong and where we need to go. It means not being

able any more to accept wrong things. It's like a new reflex that leads to different reflection and action. And I think we have reached the most important entry to trigger far reaching and lasting change: The thinking of the people. The evidence is the debates going on (including all fears and doubts and expectations) and the different view that these guys have reached since three months ago.

Sense & Respond diary, August 10 2009

Again and again I wonder and stand astonished and angry when I see what we frequently do at work. For some reasons we find ourselves doing something where we already knew that this was not really good before we started doing it. But we say that we had to. We notice how bad it feels and how much damage it does when we continue doing it and what risks we face with it. Somebody starts saying „Hey, I can't help, but that's not really good what we are doing here!“. Then another team-member says, „Yes, I don't really like it, too“. At the end, you discover, that nearly nobody thinks that it's a good way to proceed.

What happens then? You would say, we stop doing that and change the procedure. Well, please, let's stay honest and realistic: Very frequently, we simply continue anyway.

That's crazy, when looking at it with a sound distance. However, in daily work-stress, when there is no distance, it seems like the 'normal crazyness' of an IT-work-life, full of tough deadlines and difficult challenges. It's not a nice Sunday-pick-nick to become the best, right? You have to be tough, not too demanding and questioning. You have to move fast to stay the best.

The best? Do I become the best by doing things shorter and worse than they should be done? To me that is rather evidence of us accepting and practicing mediocrity. But somehow, despite, we imagine, that a combination of unrealistic ambitions and mediocre, forced procedures will result in becoming the best.

We imagine... Imagination is so powerful! It can step over facts and knowledge-gaps so easily. Great capability of imagination, great capability of assumption! That's a fantastic capacity for writing fantastic novels and science fiction. It's also called fantasy. Everybody has it. Fantasy is really great to find inspiring new targets and sometimes I need it to be able to move on. But we have to be careful, where we use it. Because fantasy is really dangerous if we use it to define a problem or to find a way from reality to the target. That can work, that can fail. The problem is, that you don't know in advance. Because you have no evidence, that it will work. So, you take a chance and maybe you will be lucky. Maybe you will be unlucky. What evidence can we find of how good it works? I don't know, I don't have the statistics. Think about it, try it and judge yourself. But I think the best is, to experiment and test, draw conclusions and consequently adapt again and again.

However, what frequently is done instead rather looks like this: Even if we reveal to be unlucky with our fantastically simplified procedure and plan, we do not face the result as it is. And we do not draw the consequences and we do not adapt. Again, imagination comes to help – this time in the wrong place. That especially works very well if results are mediocre. I mean, they are not completely bad and as disastrous that nothing works out. Just mediocre. Not really much benefit. Not really convincing functionality or measurably better workflow, not really fantastic acceptance. Quite nice and polite feedback. So the next reflex starts to work on us: There is still a lot of hope and positive thinking: It is not that bad after all – if we look at it twice it's even quite good. Here, imagination is a really fantastic means of bridging the gap between ambition and real result. Things then tend to be seen as we like to see them.

The other choice is to see things as they are. Things can be seen to avoid a hard time with ourselves – or things can be seen to face reality and take consequences for the next time. We can judge that it is good to have something at least and fast - or we can judge that there is much more value if we spend our energy on finding out how to get what we really need. But

nobody likes to face reality with moderate results. All the effort in vain? All the good motivations and fantastic imagination for a not fantastic feedback? That we have to give to ourselves? And the colleagues that don't like the new thing, that criticize this and that or even those who just refuse to use it? Well, these colleagues... you know. They don't understand the beauty or necessities of the concept, they don't want to use it. They just want to stay in the comfort-zone and are rather unmotivated. But we will get them to use it, you will see! They have no choice, after all.

When we accept that it is normal to be forced to do things only half good, – by time, by constraints, by lack of resources or cooperation – we also accept that results might be also only half good. Accepting hassle and mediocrity in thinking and acting means also accepting a high chance to get mediocre results. There is a cause-effect-relationship that has major impact in most cases. However, we imagine that we will get best results. We do that, because we think that we have no choice, that there is no better possible way. We prefer to believe that it is not our fault that things are mediocre as they are.

Well. I would say, this is the first step in turning our perception from facing results as they are towards making something more pleasant out of it in our eyes. Because otherwise this would create strong inner conflicts. This would attack our personal integrity of values. We then could end up with the question why we are doing all that work? For what? For whom? We then could end up by saying to ourselves that it does not make sense. Neither to the company, nor to ourselves. The consequence would be to stop. Stop immediately and walk away. Do something else that makes more sense. But we can't walk away. Not today. And we don't want to walk away. We want to try again and change something next time. There must be a better way possible. Next time.

Something sounds wrong here, no?

Here comes the next big assumption in our way how we see the world. Most of us think that we are self-controlled. “I, myself, can decide and influence what I do every day.” How successful I am depends on how I act and how I decide.

Oh, look at that. We have come to a contradiction in that text. It started with a situation where we were doing things while we knew it was bad how we did them. And now we say, that we are free to decide what we do and how we do it? But we continue to do something that we have judged to be bad? There must be a wrong assumption somewhere, no?

I know a colleague who decided to stop and to go away. Without having a new job... That colleague is widely self-controlled, because she did not think and let determine her decision by thinking of her pension plan or monetary benefits that she is putting on risk.

However, what I am talking about here, it is not about challenging the basic assumptions of our personal lives. Less would be enough. It's not about leaving the company and changing my whole life. It's about how to stop doing things that we know are not good. And it's about how much self-control we really can get. This leads to a possible answer to the logical contradiction: We can only be partly self-controlled. But as we are not objects but actors in the play, every day we have opportunities to influence how much we are self-controlled. Sometimes more, sometimes less. But every day we make choices to either accept that the system is working on us or to start to work on the system.

So let's get back to the original question: Why don't we stop and change and do it differently? Ah, yes, we found that we are only partly self-controlled. We are not alone. Somebody else or something else is the reason or the constraint that forces us. So, it seems to be justified by this, that we continue. The bad thing is, - as I observe and not assume – that frequently we accept

the constraint or decision without asking why the constraint or wish of somebody is there. Why? Because we don't need to know because very probably there are good reasons for that constraint. Ah – good old powerful friend imagination is back! But – I like imagination – there is a big opportunity, too: Imagine, how things changed if you assumed that there is also a good chance that there is no real, unchangeable constraint or that the decision was not made based on important facts. Now there are two possible assumptions to base my action on. How am I going to continue? I have to make a choice. An informed choice would be good. So I have to find out, which one is closer to reality. There is a mighty little word to help me research: “Why?”.

Ask one time, two times, three times, as many times as necessary “why?”.

But, well, no, we don't really like to do that. And we think, it's not necessary. Because we say that this was obvious or because somebody might become angry or might think we are resisting to what needs to be done or because we might not look bright and so on and so on. Plenty of subjectively good reasons not to ask. Objectively they are all nothing in comparison to knowing what the reality is. But we prefer making assumptions about how badly others might react and think. But what about another possible assumption? What if the others would not have decided that way if they knew that this resulted in a project team doing a mediocre procedure? What if the others don't know, too, where the constraint comes from? What if the constraint is one that no longer exists or can be removed or never has been that important?

And even if they say that a constraint is there: Do all decision-makers know the cost and risk of going that 'only possible' way?

Very frequently we take the shortcut to assume a lot only in one direction and we don't take time and effort to clarify and we then make a big and not very logic thought-jump: We feel that *there is no other choice*.

I resume: We are all very imaginative people. We want to be self-controlled. But we see no alternative and have no choice. Somebody or something has reduced the space of wide possibilities to a tiny narrow slot where only one choice remains. And we even don't know who and what it was.

Puhh. What a boring science-fiction film! No infinite space of possibilities. And no fight for freedom and future. No magic power light sword called 'Why?'. No courageous sword-leaders. No fact-ammunition. No informed choice that changes things. Just crap and mediocrity that is part of normal worklife. Uh. How do I call that? Anti-reality-no-courage-imagination? Or the empire of the dark? No matter how I name it, it does not convince me.

You have the choice, because you have the power of imagination: Use your imagination to help the system work on you or use imagination to work on the system.

Sense & Respond diary, August 18 2009

If you want to get more output, concentrate to work on your means of production – and you will get more output.

One of the best recommendations that I have heard is: If you do things, do them right. That's a spelling written above the entrance of the University of Bremen.

How do I understand that? "Do things right". I understand in this way: Either I see that I will be able to do something in a good way with a thorough and well reflected approach – or I better leave it if I see that I only can approach it half good. If I have the choice, I go for the first option, I would say.

There are emergency-situations or upcoming, unexpected opportunities where you better do something imperfect than nothing, that's clear. To avoid a disaster or loss of great benefit. However, when I look at how often we have very short-term requests coming up in our current work, I get the impression that we are to a high degree mainly driven by emergencies and unexpected short-term opportunities. We called this fire-fighting. And we called it quick-wins. There are a lot of them in our organization, indeed. But before accepting to not do things right, but fast, we should be sure that it really is an emergency or that there is really the kind of quick big opportunity with value that we can not miss. If not, we do much better to concentrate on working on our means of production – instead of chasing after the 'emergency' or quick-'win' output. With better means of production we will have continually better and more output. Not just a quick win this one time.

I am sure, that we said, that we need such a project like sense&respond to be able to do something different than fire-fighting and chasing quick wins. So this mode of short-planned and 'lets-do-something-fast-for-quick-output' should not be the character of the work in our A3s. And also we are all fighting that this will appear much less in other topics or projects, where they are driven by members of this sense&respond team.

That's what we absolutely need to continue to do because this is the only way – the kings way – to a great success. I don't see that there is another way because another way would mean to allow xx percent of old mode (the xx increasing with time and with old-world-gravity and with more and more accepting compromises): This would be like trying a turn with the snowboard where you need the momentum of your whole will and body but you only are doing it half. Not to fall and get hurt is a thing of pure chance – and the chance that this half-tried turn will turn out in a proper and balanced full turn is rather small.

Sense & Respond diary, September 18 2009

Everybody knows how much the people of the sense & respond team have changed since we have started to learn what a lean transformation means and how it can be started. We have learned a whole lot of things – about lean thinking, principles and methods, about how to look at an organization, about change projects, but also about ourselves. It's now great to see and feel how also management is changing towards this.

A big wrong assumption now would be, that we have changed enough at some point in time. Or to say 'now I am lean and thinking all lean' or 'now I know enough about it'. That would ignore that there is still a whole lot that can be found and known about our operation and about how it will work in future. And that would be contrary of one of the basic principles of lean models: It is about building-in continuous learning and adaptation. It is the idea of an ongoing change-dynamic. Not a one-point-in-time change. It is the growth into continuous change. As our world and environment never stops changing, our operation will be able to adapt and develop with this. And so do we. We also do not stop to change. Some more, some less. But we all are human beings with an amazing inbuilt capacity of learning. The basic capacity that made humanity survive.

If we think that we have changed enough, we bring ourselves into an attitude that will not be helpful and that will slow down change and learning. It will close down our thinking to the thinking that we have. It will make it more difficult to listen and sense towards all the others that we want to invite to that journey. It will make it difficult to look for the best way without being attached to one solution. It will make it seem unnecessary to ask why and to look for data and to watch facts as they are. And others will feel that attitude: It will tell them: 'You have to change, but not me.' You will signal them: 'All my arguments are valid, yours are not'. That will not help to make them see, that we and our operation have to change. It will not help them to start their learning by starting where they are: With their own arguments and thoughts. It will not really show much respect for the people. And it will not give a good example of inbuilt learning and changing.

To continue changing ourselves it sometimes needs a lot of taking back ourselves. It needs an attitude of how can I help the other instead of thinking about how can I achieve what I found to be best. Sometimes it needs very intense and controversial discussions to break up our thinking again and to open up sight towards a new aspect or direction. It can help a lot if we try to keep an eye on our own attitude that we bring into a situation.

Sense & Respond diary, October 25 2009

From time to time it's very helpful and healthful to get back to the basics of what we have learned and found during this journey of sense & respond. Time to step back, get out of the wood where we are seeing and talking a lot about all these trees that we are working on. Step back and talk about how the wood looks like that it is all about. Look at the overall situation we are in: We have a lot of difficulties in many corners of our organization, our current operation is not stable enough and customers are not satisfied and tell us that we have to be more flexible and innovative. We answer, that we are all flexible and we are working so hard and we all do our best in overtime and commitment and we spend so much effort to make it flexible and good and stable. And yes, sometimes also we think that we are innovative – if we are asked to be it and if we are lucky to have the capacity. But we know that most time we are not really innovative – not like we should, not like our customers would need it and not like we would like. Those who can or do not want to share this view are recommended to have a talk with our managing director or to look at the customer surveys or at the data coming out of the ticket analysis in the sense & respond project.

If I think of all these colleagues who spend their life-time in so many supplementary hours trying to make this system work that is our organization – but it does not. They all are doing such a good job and are trying so hard, have so many good ideas...they are all so skilled and experienced...but at the end, somehow it does not add up to something really good. Let's be honest, it's quite good, but it's not excellent or fantastic and it does not convince our customers any more. If we listen carefully to them, we hear that they need something different, something more to get the necessary support to stay market leader. It should not convince ourselves any more, too.

Instead of an overall performance that get's really good feedback from our customers, there is a lot of frustration. Frustration on a very individual base for our end-users and for our own staff: For me, for you, for my colleague here and there. And we even do not understand why it is like this. Why systems break down, why tickets get lost in the nirvana of our ticketing system. Partly we even do not understand why customers say that it's not enough.

So, a lot of my colleagues agree that we have to do something. Or let's say it in a more gentle way: At least many will not deny that there is room for improvement. And if we sit in our sense & respond info-events and talk about what we have started with this project and why this is what we need, we get to feel their frustration: They ask us, why it is not good enough what they do. They say that their work is good and well done in their area. They say that they know what can be improved, but that the conditions do not allow it. They ask us, why the conditions are so bad and why we are not going after that first.

Well, that's just what we do with sense & respond. We go after the conditions. The good news from the basics of sense & respond is: It's not the people! I think we can not say that often enough. If all that passion, expertise and experience, overtime and hard work does not add up to a really satisfied customer, to a stable system-operation and to a really innovative organization – then it must be something about the system that is supposed to add up individual work to a real good service.

The second basic is: You get the performance that is designed in the system - in the structure of how your company operates and works as a whole system. Unfortunately, before sense & respond, nobody really saw and managed it that way. The result: Overall-performance is not designed-in. If you don't really see how the whole structure of the operating system is related to the possible performance of it – well guess what: You get something, but not what you

really need. You get what we have today: An operating system that is not capable to add up all these bright people with their hard individual work to an excellent service. That's why we need something like sense & respond so urgently: Because this project is able to change the structures in a way that the parts will add up to a whole again. That's why we are looking at a new model, the so-called 'future state'. Because we need structures that help us to add up that individual work to an overall result that really satisfies customer's needs. We need structures that foresee innovation functions and that are made to align our service strategy and infrastructure strategy to our customer's strategy. Because this will bring the capabilities and capacities to offer excellent service and to be innovative and flexible. That can bring us in a position, where our customers will be astonished about how we are able to help them solve their problems, while our own service is running stable and getting better every day, continuously. That will bring every individual in our organization in a working situation that allows to use our knowledge and motivation in a really effective, purposeful way. That will still be hard work, but it will be much more fun than frustration - that work will be rewarding by its excellent end-to-end results for our customers. And that will give us a pride that is based on the facts of these results.

Sense & Respond diary, November 11 2009

One of these dark and cold autumn evenings I have gone for dinner to the Thai restaurant which is located near our office. I chose a meal with three chili-symbols because I needed something spicy that evening. While I was waiting and wondering if they would do it really spicy - usually they don't for German customers – a hollow hammering noise came from the kitchen. As there was nobody else waiting for his meal at that time, I started wondering, if this hammering sound had something to do with the preparation of my dish. What was going on there in the kitchen and why did they have to hammer or beat something to prepare the chicken-dish that I had ordered? Thai-chicken is not a Schnitzel...What if they had to beat the meat to make it eatable? What if this restaurant was not really trustworthy – as I had assumed? But I pushed these thoughts away as easily as they had come. It did not look dirty there at all. And I had been there before and it had been delicious. But that was years ago – anyway, after all, I was hungry and wanted to eat, so I decided to have trust in this kitchen. Without trust, I never could go to any restaurant...

While these thoughts went through my mind I also found, that this must be a bit the feeling that some of our managers and colleagues have towards sense & respond: There is something going on in that project kitchen. Something that makes noise that we can't ignore and it has to do with what we will get for our work one day. Will I like the dish they prepare? Can I trust in their method, sanity and ingredients? Will it be spicy like I need it? Will it be good for me after all?

Moreover, there is one important difference that makes it even more difficult for them to trust in this: They had these things called improvement-project, change-project or re-organization before and what had come out of these project-kitchens had not always been delicious. That's their lived experience.

So we must acknowledge, for many in our organization, there seems not to be more insight in the S&R-project than for me in that Thai-kitchen. However, one possibility in that situation stays unconsidered so far: Why did I not simply go and knock on the kitchen door to show that I was concerned or just curious and that I would like to see what the hammering was about? Well, I didn't do it, because I had decided to offer trust. But - if I had not been able to offer trust, this would have been a reasonable choice of action. However, very often we don't knock on the door. Because we are not used to do that. And – more important - because we are afraid of what we might see behind it. So we choose the option to rather wait that this change-project passes and we hope that we do not have to eat any of the dishes it produces. While this might also be a question of temperament, one thing is clear: This way, we will not discover what is going on inside and if we get appetite for the meal that is cooking there.

Let's have a look at what we miss this way: For example, we could miss that there is a description of the famous 'future state'. When I was reading that document the first time, I was asking myself if we ever had something comparable in our organization before. Did we ever have one document describing how our operation works and what design principles ensure that it is capable to work for its purpose? And apropos purpose - did we ever have something like these short and really meaningful purpose statements? Did we ever put the employee purpose with same weight into our basic assumptions as the business? Did we ever think about the customer purpose? Becoming aware of why we are working here and why the customer needs us is not an option – it is essential! Without purpose any direction will do and we will get any result – but very probably not what we need.

But there is an even more interesting and important thing to discover. Seen from a quick superficial view, the future state is just describing how a good working operation for our business should look like in the future. But this is not yet showing the real strength and meaning of 'sense & respond'. Let's say, this tells us that there is a well designed, beautiful animal that can walk smoothly and that has teeth and a skin. This could be a cat, a tiger or even an elephant. I really like elephants and cats, but if I had to choose from these animals to describe, what our company really needs us to be in the future, the tiger would give the best image. If I had to choose to describe the potential and meaning of the sense & respond project, I would also clearly choose the tiger.

To understand why this future state model is not just a cat, but a tiger (which is also a kind of cat, but, well there is a crucial difference...), we have to look behind the obvious and see what this operating model will really be able to do. We have to think about what are the impacts of its structures and abilities on the quality of results and the quality of our work-experience and motivation as employees and managers. That impact can be found around our perception of how change happens. Why do we have such a negative experience with change-projects and re-organizations? Because they fall from heaven, being cooked behind closed doors? Because they change our work-conditions and tasks without giving us any influence on this? Because the benefit is not visible and not measurable? Because some things even get worse? And because we need new ones every few years? Bringing every few years again additional efforts, insecurity and doubtful change for many of us?

So how about a future state that makes such change-projects obsolete in the future? How about an future state that has the inbuilt capability to learn and adapt? The cat is beautiful and elegant, it is the nice smooth flow of work. The tiger, however, is the future state that in addition is able to go out in the jungle for the real big meat, the real value. The future state will be able to learn and adapt by sensing the customer and by being aware and in control of its own state at any time. This future state is not just a nice smooth cat that is chasing nice little mice of improvements to play with, while it still depends on somebody to feed and host it during winter. The work-experience it creates is more than the nice comfortable feeling of staying at home with our cat, inside our new comfort zone.

The sense & respond future state will have the means and capacities to work on its own conditions to make sure that it always keeps the ability to sense and deliver what customers need – at the point what they need – not just somehow nearly what they demand. That's real big pieces of meat that this brings. That makes the tiger: It has very fine senses, is fast and very dynamic, has sharp claws and teeth, and it is big and powerful enough to chase real big value animals out there in the deep jungle of our market context. It smells like speed, agility and going out for chase where we have not yet been. Sense & respond is not just some change fun to come and to go again. The idea of sense & respond is big enough to make a real difference – it has the powerful ability of inbuilt, continuous change. It is real big potential and its DNA brings a new level of effectiveness with real impact that makes an important and touchable difference in its surroundings.

We will be able to continuously learn and adapt to ever-changing customer needs, strategy, market conditions, products and IT-technologies. This operating model will not get overtaken or outdated – thus there will not any more be cumulated need and urgency for scaring point-in-time change every few years. There will not be change being cooked behind closed doors. We ourselves, the staff and management will be continuously involved in learning and adapting. It means shared knowledge about customer's needs, shared responsibility and

mutual trust in adapting and redirecting our services and operation. Employees themselves will have time, ability and capacity to surface problems, to see possible improvements and to find appropriate change in their area together with managers. Managers will be able to focus on supporting this and on developing people. Knowledge, insight and ideas of our staff will be the greatest source of value-fortunes. This is a wider and deeper view, more capacity and more capability. And it is more purpose and meaning for our work, because we will be able to direct it towards our customer's needs every day and conditions will enable personal growth and development. We will get up in the morning with the good feeling that we can bring those personal values into our work for which we are working in this company – just in this company and not elsewhere.

To come back to the more basic needs of my life: The dish at the Thai restaurant was great. The meat was fresh and perfect and it was really, really spicy. It was nearly what I needed – it was just a bit too spicy. But no wonder, how ever could they know how much chili they have to put in, if they have not spoken to me about what I had expected and how I related my definition of 'really spicy' to the meaning of three chili-symbols. In the live future of our 'tiger' we would not sit in a Thai restaurant with fix menu and closed kitchen door. We would rather be grilling all together – being able to put just as much chili as we need. From meal to meal we could experiment how much we can put in without setting our mouth on fire - to find out the perfect quantity for best value. We would see at what heat the meat is grilled and we would know where the meat comes from and if it is fresh – we would have hunted it ourselves or our colleagues would have done so and would have shared their knowledge about their chasing and about the food-value running around in the forests out there.

Nice metaphor, isn't it? Animal and cooking stories...somewhat twisted to make it fit to my message... and not really able to fully capture what we do in our organization. It leaves the question how we are going to make this work in the reality of our business. Well, a metaphor is a metaphor and all metaphors are wrong and limited... only, some are more useful to show the difference. To know how it will really work: How about coming over to the grilling site to find out what things are cooking there and what the dish will taste like?

Sense & Respond diary, November 20 2009

What is real trust? I mean, what is the nature and essential of trust? Is it that we first need to know and understand and judge good every detail of what somebody does – and then we trust? Is this trust if we only feel comfortable if we have insight in all these details and if we can influence and control at any time what is done? And moreover: Is it a question of good design of structures, services and processes? Does trust have to come from perfectly designed processes? And must these things get good notes when judged with our current view and thinking? Or is it rather a question of trust in methods – of trust in the way how things are thought and elaborated? Or is it, at the end simply a question of trust in people and their skills and knowledge?

Well, if we want to build our personal trust-feeling by just looking at the outcome in form of structures and processes, it becomes very hard when we go into the details and into how the sense & respond model will come alive in reality. Because if you move from the overall structures into how it can work live with all the details that must happen inside, there is a lot of dynamics and human learning and thinking and few determined and static definitions of how work has to be done. This is like this, because learning and capability of self-adaptation would not happen in a world of static, predefined detail work-processes. That sounds crazy, seen from old-school, traditional and mass-production-model perspective. But the way to the big 'tiger'-quality only opens up when we give up exactly this thinking of static definitions. You can see it like the difference between the functioning of a machine and a soccer team. The machine's operation is predefined to every single detail. For a soccer team, the positions and tasks are defined, but how they finally play is a complex, intelligent and self-adapting act, depending on the game-situation, the opponent and tactical variations.

For us as individuals this may result in a big personal challenge, because we have to get detached from what we did in the past to have a feeling of security and control. It helps, if we become aware, that it was just a feeling, just an impression of security. In reality, a service company like ours would not survive without human dynamics and learning inside. In reality the predefined, static work-procedures are only on the surface of the papers and power-points. In reality work is done how it can and must be done: It adapts to circumstances and specific needs of the concrete case by applying human intelligence. As soon as this is said, it seems obvious, I know. But when we dive into definitions of operation models with traditional thinking, we tend to eliminate this as undesired irregularities – or we say it is the normal individual work contribution within the small frame of one workplace. This results in structures and conditions that do simply not care about how to support the crucial production factor of human skills and intelligence. If we think it in, however, and see its potential, we start designing structures and conditions that support and facilitate its dynamics and that benefit of its fully released capability. This is the foundation that makes possible the 'tiger'-like potential and capability of the sense & respond model. And we are not talking about idealistic ideas of maximizing fun and comfort-zones for our employees or something that some would call 'soft and charity-like'. This is the foundation that serves all purposes and interests: People, customer and business.

But we have to acknowledge: At the moment it is difficult to trust really, because our current state as a whole is not able to produce reliability any more – not for the customer and not for us who work in it. Too much has gone wrong in the past. That's our experience. However, understanding this should not make an excuse of it. Trust is like credit: You always have to

give it in advance. Of course, we want to choose on our own where we offer this credit and we need indications where it is worth it. For the sense & respond project we will find these indications much more in understanding the power of its thinking and work principles than in inspecting and judging its specific detail outcomes. There are a lot of benefits and good reason that can be seen in its outcomes. But what we really need to reassure ourselves is to have a good feeling about what will come up in the next months from this project. Because fear and worry does not come from what is there – it comes from the uncertainty of what is not yet worked out. We need something that makes us trust that also upcoming results will be beneficial and that risks for current and future operation will be mitigated. You will find such reassurance much more if you look into how work is done in the project and what the thinking is behind. Because the quality and success of the results comes from the strength of its methods, which apply a striking consequence in rationality, critical thinking and scientific, data based work approach. And the great new potential of the sense & respond model comes from basic assumptions like the importance and power of human potential. Sense & respond is about deploying the fortune that lies in the most important production factor of a service and knowledge industry: The potential of human intelligence and talent. Sense & respond pays a great deal of attention on how to find conditions that help to release and coordinate this. In a sense & respond world it is the knowledge of the people and the focus on methods that allow to reach excellence by doing things differently. If we want to mobilize the 'tiger'-like level of capability we have to learn to trust in people and in methods. We have to trust, that it is human nature to strive for excellence and to learn. We have to trust that our staff very well knows how work is done, how it can be done better and how it has to be done to tackle the risks. We can trust that they will find to do the right things when the purpose is clear and when they understand what customers need.

Broken down to a very personal and individual point of view, this means that I need a lot of respect for all these people that do the work every day. It means that I have to acknowledge that my knowledge, my view and my understanding are as limited as this is by nature for one individual. Because I can not be everywhere and can not do everything on my own. And because I can not have all strengths and talents that a company needs to succeed. And because others know and experience other things that we should also use as valuable information. And I have to stay aware of this all the time. It means that I may not be attached to needing to know and see and control everything to feel reassured. Or seen from the positive side: It means that I can let go off of having to influence and control and do everything myself. I can rely and trust in the fact that those people know what they do and that they have the conditions, the knowledge and the methods to do the right things. In the future state they will have the necessary conditions and the management support to learn and do the right things better every day and to develop and grow. And they will know what everybody's part is in this: The role of individual staff, of the team and of management and what shared responsibility means.

This will also free a lot of my personal capacity and energy to provide extraordinary value – because I can concentrate on doing those things where I have my personal strengths. And consider: The variety of human talents, value sets and professional expertise is so wide, that you will find everything that is needed to add up to a very well working company. These are treasures of potential to be released. All these wonderful people... Ok - I come back down: We do not have to love everybody. We simply have to respect their knowledge, intelligence and skills.

To put it in a nutshell: If I say that I can only trust if I know and understand and influence all crucial details myself, it is not trust any more. It is risk- and opportunity-free certainty.

Trust is trust.

It is taking a risk to give the necessary credit to open the way for new possibilities.

Sense & Respond diary, February 9 2010

You can literally feel and see how things get real and tough now with the change that we start in the company. People get more sensitive to those things where they think that they reach their very personal faith (“Where will I be in this”). This is no longer the claim of a tourist sitting on the airport and asking ‘When will I finally get in the plane that takes me to the paradise with palms and the blue sea and sun...’. It gets much closer to their skin now: “Will I get a nice place on the beach close to the water? Or a shadowy place?” As well as the impact of what we do is not just paper any more, but change in the daily operation, the impact of what we say and do is not just minds and thoughts any more, it is now their feelings and most existential worries.

In the middle of this, there comes a board member’s demission and the speech of one of our company founders on the global all hands meeting as strong signals of a radical and decisive will for real change. And I would say: His speech was a real leadership speech. He was talking of reality. He was talking of the customer. He was talking about how bad we should feel with what we did and what we could have done. This is talking of a special kind of pain: The pain of seeing the potential and seeing how it is being wasted. He was talking of change that we need - even more: Accelerated change. He was talking of real data from real customers. He was talking openly and honestly of errors that have been made – by himself, by others. He was talking about errors being human. He was talking of opportunities and possibilities for the future – if we only start thinking again. He was talking of courage to follow our good common sense and rationality.

If you have listened to that speech, you may better understand why this S&R approach was so convincing for us who got involved deeply in this project: It is talking of the same things. Now if you are out there, in your A3s, in your interviews, and in conversations, you no longer need to name it S&R. Just talk about the change that our company wants. Talk about the reality this leader has spoken of. Talk about customer, real data, about thinking about what we do, talk about purpose and where we want to go with this company. It is so obvious now that we were talking of the same all last summer long. But the story is not about labels like S&R or lean or whatever nice words that we do not feel as being a part of the special culture of this company. The story is about bringing the change that this company needs to still be an industry leader in future: The best company in the world where I can work. People who don’t feel and think like this, make me wonder. Do they know in what company they are working? Do they know what the legacy of this unique company-story is? If not, they are either wrong or I have to accept that this company and the people in it and their hopes and aspirations have changed. I assume, I have to see and accept this change to a certain degree.

But there is something that may not change, because it makes the core of the identity and success of this company as a place of living. Maybe not everybody sees it like this. And I am not writing this, because it was exactly this founder who said these things in his speech. 11 years in this company is not long enough to be just an ‘anything that comes from him’-fan. I write this, because of what this man said: For me personally today this speech was bringing us back to where we want to be in our company and it was talking of all the disappointment, frustration, self-betrayal, resignation, fighting, personal pain and desperation that I have felt so many times a little bit over long time about what happens to this company and my job where I have put in my hopes for my future.

I felt that this day, this decision, this speech and what the board members said was an important turning point moment for our company: We name a spade a spade (German: ‘das

Kind beim Namen nennen'), remember who we can be, turn around and start off, with change. I was touched, moved and inspired. This was not just another nice and formally correct meeting with the correct business messages. This was a special moment for this company. Many colleagues will feel like that (do I see more happy faces this morning...?), maybe others will not: "Let's see, these are only words. I wait at the fence and see how I best get my pension secured..." Ok. So watch. I don't mind, because I know that there are enough that felt like me. And we will rock that business, rock that company, we will move it. Those in the S&R-team who feel this article being too pathetic, may think twice and go and find valuable help for what we do here. Because what I talk about is what the whole is for, what we do. The purpose of our change-leadership. And the motivations, values and feelings that we need in the background to be courageous.

You could literally feel and see how many employees were waiting for such a speech. I thought: Many of them are so happy that finally somebody was talking reality. Finally somebody was saying what everybody thought, but only was spoken out in coffee-corners and not in meetings. Some leadership theories would call this a 'resonant' speech (in opposition to a 'dissonant' one - we had many dissonant ones in the last years): It starts at the emotional point and view where the auditors are standing and therefore gets a strong response. It acknowledges the reality of their situation as they see and feel it and talks of where to go from there. It acknowledges that what these people have seen and felt for so long is right. It tells them that their views are right, that they are able to see where to go and it encourages them to go there - 'I will go into the right direction, or shoot me'. The very essential of a basic pillar in our S&R philosophy is to provide the right conditions that people can go where they know they need to go (that also includes the necessary cultural conditions that nobody with different wishes will shoot them, when they do the right things). Unleash that potential of changing what is obviously not as it would be good for us and our customers. We have the potential in this company - but we have to do it.

The will and direction of change has been stated and this will create a lot of motivation for a lot of colleagues. However I think that many also already had the next question: Right, less Power-point, less bullshit, less Excels and closer to the customer and let's do some real good work for our customers - but how will we get there? We are so much bound in the current structures and practices... how will we escape and make change happen? How can this be done? Good questions. Important questions. And very good news for us here in our area, where the S&R project is running: We know how we do it, even more, we are already doing it. Isn't that fantastic?

When I was recently reflecting what we could do in communication to respond to those who expressed their lack of trust by complaining about not being involved in S&R, I thought that I should much more go forward, be courageous and talk about my very personal feelings, about my very personal experience with this company, with our area and with this project. I thought I should tell them that this is also my company, my frustration, my pain and my hopes and fears why we are sitting here, doing S&R and talking about it. I should talk about the hope and believe that we found in the 'S&R-way'. That this is the reason, why we believe and trust: Because we have seen, that this S&R approach has the same basic values as we have as our traditional self-understanding in the company and that this offers a way how we get back where we want to be: In a leading company as we know it from its success story, as we want it, as we hoped it to be for a future worth being here. I should tell them, that this is giving me so much hope and motivation and so many good means and questions to lead us into the right direction. I should tell them, that this was so obvious that this is representing what we want our company to be. And that it relieves me from worrying too much about my job. And that it

is so disappointing and hard to accept that others don't want to offer trust in this – just because it does not come from themselves and because they do not fully understand it? And because it carries a foreign name, coming somewhere from Britain and from Toyota? Maybe we rather should have called it 'Back to the future of our company'...

Now we have that speech and a lot of really great sayings from the board. They are giving us the most powerful bridges to communicate what we are doing here with our transformation. They are opening up the door to change very wide. We do change. We are in the midst of a change run, prepared and on the way in the best position to win that race.

So go and talk of our great company, of the reality we are in, of what we want it to be and of the change we need and that our board wants and tell them that we are right in the middle of doing it. This speech is the free ticket to win trust from many who still have a personal stake in this company. Just this company and not any other in the world.

S&R-diary, March 9, 2010

Last summer we had that nice slide with the bubbles and flashes about the past and the future and the choice how we see things: Something that happens in the present, what we make it mean and if we choose to see it through the glasses and framing of the past – to be limited by what we experienced as restrictions – or to see it with eyes that watch a future that is to be created and that offers a wide open range of possibilities. We then understood that usually people will see things through the narrow vision of their past experiences. And we thought that - how great - now at least we from the S&R team were aware of that choice and certainly always would choose to be looking at the possibilities of the future. And at least we understood how important it was to work on building that future. And how important it was to make people see. Make people see the possibilities and potential that we all can create with the change that we are currently developing.

Maybe we forgot to consider that such cognitive processes are not only a question of conscious choice and free will. There are also emotions and still our own old patterns of perception which are working on us unconsciously. Recently, we were again able to witness how that looks like in reality: The first levels of the new organization had been shown some days ago. And we saw several service centers. And we heard something about complex and standard. That was all we knew. But we made much more out of it: We made complex and simple work out of it. And we made silos out of it. One silo for complex work, one silo for simple work. However, nobody ever even mentioned “complex work” and “simple work”. It was “complex systems” and “standard systems”. And no facts and information were present, that determined any silos in the new org-structure. It just looked like with that org-chart it was possible that it could turn out into new silos. But none of the presented facts allowed really to judge on how it actually will turn out.

So why did we go just for this one of many possibilities? Obviously we made all these meanings neither by thinking too much, nor by gathering more information before judging, nor by thinking into various possible outcomes, nor in complex differentiations. We did not look at the possibilities of the future that we can create. This was not missing by intention or consciously. No, we started to think in boxes because we were used to think and work in organizational boxes, also called silos, in the past. That's the way how we were used to experience work. We applied the old view unconsciously. What drives the unconscious to such a relatively narrow and determined past way to see things? Maybe we saw it like that, because we feared that management now brushes away what we had been working out for months. Or we did it, because we could not think differently, because in the past a reorganization with new boxes on a slide mostly resulted in new silos. Or because we were so fed up with the silos and we heard so many times that we did not want to have silos that we were so focused on silos that we instinctively searched for a danger of silos and our thoughts only turned around silos. (You know that effect? An example: “Please, now do not imagine a blue elephant coming into the room...”). Whatever was the reason: We did not really search to look at the possibilities that still were open. We did not look at the major influence that our own work would have on the future work reality of the service centers. And we did not think about what intentions and puzzle-work our management might have had, when they designed that new org-structure.

If you look at the questions that came, it was very clearly box- and silo-thinking-patterns. And it was quite clearly not much trust from us in the intentions of management. There was much

more fear that they created new silos and something that was not compatible with the future state. Some even did not see that the org-structure was something different than the future working structure. Instead of being understood as a complementary view of a different aspect, it was perceived as a new model to replace the proposed future state. All this clearly comes from the past. It comes from our experiences with reorganizations. Reorganizations – I have seen 5 or 6 during my 12 years at here – have been the only visible form of change that happened in the past. That was the only aspect presented – the organizational view. Only new org-units in new org-models on new slides. And usually, they rather had the effect to create silos and to make work more difficult than the opposite. So if we let our unconscious fears and patterns and experiences from the past make up our view, we end up with box thinking: Static, rigid org-boxes. In reality they are just lines on slides, HR-boxes, reporting lines. However they grow to mighty all-determining monsters with the help of our past patterns: We ignore dozens of other factors and make them the only determining factor for everything: How processes flow. How people will behave. How work will be sorted out. How customers will be sorted out. How tools will be set up. As if it was the org-chart-slide that decided upon it and not us human beings. As if the VPs themselves would sit in these boxes and direct the flow of work. As if the org-boxes were water-tubes and the work the water that then only could flow along the walls of the tubes. A quite one-dimensional, last-century way of looking at work...Where are the people with their intelligence? Where are the famous knowledge workers? Where is the lean process-dynamics of continuous change? Where is the post-industrial evolution of the economy? This is a bit like expecting that soccer-players would direct and limit their running-paths strictly by the lines painted to the grass and would not be able to see anything beyond their line-box: Inner defenders would never leave the 16m-room and could not see what happens in front of the adversary's goal...and so on.

All that kind of conclusions were made up within seconds and minutes. Past perception patterns that are linked with negative experiences and feelings are so incredibly fast and powerful. They are, because they are largely steered by an unconsciously working part of our brain (the amygdaloid nucleus) that stores the experience with past situations together with the related positive or negative emotions: Fear, joy, pain... The dedicated task of this part of the brain is to make us survive: It matches situational patterns to stored past experiences and – on the unconscious emotional way - gives very fast and very clear signals to let us know if there is a substantial menace that needs defensive reactions. Once we are in that defensive mode a conscious part of the brain for defensive thinking is highly active and the creative part is driven down to low activity. It becomes then very difficult to mobilize creative thoughts, imagination or new-solution-reflection.

Only after our managing director himself explained how exactly all of this was meant, we started to detach our view from this 'they have created new silos'-skepticism. What he said created new trust – at least for some the new org-model no longer appeared as a menace. We relax, the defensive think-mechanisms disappear and we start thinking of all the great possibilities that still are open and we start imagining again how – besides these VP-boxes – all the dynamic aspects that we will create in the still valid future state will make a great new workplace without silos.

I myself had worries about how these service centers were meant and if they had made up several production lines around different landscape types. However, I was surprised about some questions that came and about the defensive discussions around these worries. Why should we ask some of these questions? And why were they so much sticking to that special view of things? Finally, what I wondered about most was why I did not have these questions and why I did not feel that much a push and discomfort without having yet all the answers.

With that feeling I went home in the evening. The next day I had found out why: I trusted more.

Why did I trust more? First, quite quickly after the presentation I had remembered myself how much our senior management meanwhile had understood lean principles and how committed they were to go for real change. I found that new silos would simply not be reasonable or logic to come from people who had the intentions and the understanding of our senior management team. Why should they invest nine months in the sense&respond direction and then come up with silos?

But what really made the difference for me was this feeling: Even if some real difficulties would result from that org-chart, I trusted in my own will and capabilities and those of this team, to overcome these difficulties and to create a silo-free work-reality anyway. There were so many other aspects: E2E-functions, -processes, -responsibilities, guidelines, principles, knowledge sharing, customer-focus and last but not least, the most important part: The new dynamic qualities of the future state: A continuously changing operation, steadily changing and improving. So far we were only talking about boxes on slides – only one static aspect. Only one of many other aspects that all together would determine the new reality of work. There was so much more.

Meanwhile, however, I ask myself if maybe I am trusting more because I do not see all those details that make others worry? Right – due to the tasks I have in this project, I may not see as close and as many details as others do in their A3s. That's true. But the truth is also, that the detail of how xyz looks like will not determine the difference that the future state will make. Sure, if all details are designed the wrong way, it makes a difference into the negative. But why should we do all details the wrong way? Hey, we are working all day to move them into the right direction! And there are already so many details that already are defined the right way. How come? And how do we avoid that something goes into the wrong direction? It's the principles, the mindset, the theory and the values behind our work that make the compass - and the resulting dynamics will allow people to continuously work and change on the details into the right direction. So, a somehow now installed or perceived detail will not decide on the difference for the future. And the cut of service centers is such a detail. Compared to what else is out there that is currently being designed to make the management center function work, the VP-areas of the organizational chart are only one of many details. That sounds wrong, maybe, but it only sounds wrong if we apply the limited reorg-pattern-view from the past. If we open up sight to all the rest, we see that we are about to install a new, powerful dynamics in our operation and that we are changing the work culture around it. That will determine a better, silo-free and crisis-resistant workplace.

This also results in a task of leadership for this change team. Speak out what's wrong, work on the culture and make people see the development possibilities. The one or other currently visible detail won't decide it. They won't make it and they won't break it! The change in culture and the resulting dynamic aspects and are the crucial aspects. It is about continuous experimentation and continuous change. Dynamics is to watch the method, not the output (the method is what moves, the output is what results from the movement). Dynamics is learning and sharing. Dynamics is surfacing and analyzing problems. Dynamics is continuously measuring and improving. Engaging, learning, leading, improving.

I don't want to give the impression that I think it will be easy or fast success. There will also be a lot of hard detail work. But hey – I want to change this part of the world! And we can do it and I can fight for it.

We will never be safe of having fears that steer our perception towards limited, rigid past

patterns. But as we know that this is working on us, there is a very good chance to escape it: We can notice that we speak out of fears, worries and lack of trust and as soon as we become defensive about our own limited view, we should be aware that this works on us. We are in the favorable position to be aware of our responsibility and capabilities as leaders of change. We can direct our view towards the possibilities that are open for the future. We can exercise to draw our attention there. And we show responsibility for others if we draw their attention there with courage and tenacity. We can remind ourselves to make ourselves see - to be able to make people see the possibilities of real change. We should be aware of our big chance to influence and to create the future as we want it. And we should be aware of our capability to see this differently and we should use it.

The boxes on the slides don't make it. The details don't make it. We make it.

Sense & Respond diary, March 10, 2010

The reorganization-topic is one of the most critical topics where we feel and see what it means that people have low trust and a lot of fears. But I expect that this will not simply stop and everybody will be happy when they will finally see where they will sit in the new org-chart. That will show them, who will be their new manager and VP. But that will not yet give them trust that they will have a good and secure job. And that will not yet explain them what work they will do in the future. They will know where they are for now, but they will still worry and fear where this goes. For many it is like this: As long as they can not see how their own individual future looks like, they will not like this.

If I look at that topic from my very personal point of view, today I have much less fear because I have much more valuable capabilities than ten years ago. This project makes a big part of a qualitative gain in this recently, that's clear. But it's just a project. Projects have an end one day... So I still think, my job might go away, and I still do not know where I will work and what I will do in 15 months. I am realistic to even also consider that I might lose my job here anyway or at least it will be changed. That always can happen. That will happen. That's what I have learned in the last twelve years. Some change was always going on in this company. Reorganizations always happened – many had direct effects on my jobs. (Btw, we also notice that despite many changes I still have a very fine job here ☺). But I know that somebody always will need skills like I have – here or elsewhere. I am able to source a lot of self-trust and future-trust out of my own development that has happened in the last few years. So, we could say, Andreas, what concerns you, things turn well for you. What about the others? For many in the team it should be the same – not exactly, but for them in their way, yes, definitively. How about those who are not included in that fabulous change project – or who just do not see their future in tasks like this? What about their development and their self-trust and future-trust?

Who said that only I myself or S&R team-members will develop? Who says that the rest will not be involved in this change? This whole new system, the whole future state - and everybody will be part of it - is aiming at developing continuously. How could it ever develop without having people who develop in it? Who makes the work move? The people! How should this model develop new dynamic capabilities without the people being developed into thinking and working on the dynamic? This will only get as far as people will develop with their skills and thinking. And if we turn it around to look at it from another viewpoint: This means also, that this future state will bring development possibilities to everybody. And development opportunities will go on and on because as we said, it is about continuous change.

Some might be frightened by this, because it might also look like never ending learning stress and some might ask themselves if they can and want to learn and develop. Well... There are two assumptions in thoughts like that: Number one is that a job in this company, in this industry today can be done appropriately without learning and adapting continuously. The reality is: That would never work! Companies like this only work, because the informal, the human intelligence part is able to adapt to the omnipresent natural variation of situations and work-needs. Not a single job in this company would work without this and not a single job can be done today like five years ago. The whole industry, the whole economy is permanently changing on the search for more wealth. So our products and jobs change with it. The second assumption is that we can't learn or we don't want to learn. Right – I say: It is an assumption that we don't want to learn. I am convinced that everybody enjoys learning when it happens – just as everybody will enjoy a very good meal as soon as he eats it. However, maybe we have

forgotten how it is to develop in a good way and not just by pure pressure and pain of necessity. The future state will bring conditions to see and use so far wasted potentials for many individuals. And development will be done like the word development means it: An actively managed, proactively planned and supported activity towards a defined target. Managers will be able to focus their efforts on people development. This way we develop the system by developing the people. That's multiplying the potential in comparison to some managers alone working on the system. And employees will experience how skilled they really are and how much pleasure it can be to use skills and to explore new individual potentials. We all already are very skilled and talented. We would not work here if we were not. We can be it, because human beings are learning machines by birth. They would not survive without individual development. They would not have much fun in life without it (how would you ever enjoy winning a soccer match, without learning to play soccer and to play in a team?). In principle, human beings in a company that does not challenge their intelligence and does not bring learning and development are like birds in a cage. They can not really use their wings. And I bet they do not feel very happy about it – they can get used to it, but there is no real fun without flying (and you won't get very far with these birds in the cage).

At the moment, many are missing the individually experienced and visible evidence that they would like to have to trust in this upcoming new dynamics. They can not see and feel the benefits and the people development for themselves. However some do. Some trust in this without proofs. Some know how fine this can be and how much we need it. Some claim less. Some fear less. Others are waiting for the final proofs. Thus, it is also a question of personal choices of how I see this and of how much trust I want to offer before having a proof. Do I choose to want somebody who promises me the stability and safety of my current job and who delivers me tangible proofs for that? Or do I choose to want to develop and grow with an organization that only is market leader because it steadily is on the search for the next great thing to achieve for its customers? Is it logic and realistic to claim stable, steady comfort zones in an economy that produces wealth out of never ending change? And what do we experience with our choice of view and claims: How does it feel to see change as a menace? How does it feel if we do not trust in those who decide upon our faith? How would it feel to fight against others in the company to get a good piece of the status-quo cake that does not grow anymore? How will it feel to contribute with our own individual growth to the growth of the cake for all? I can say for me: It feels great!

We have a choice to take change and people development (including also more or less personal development) as something positive and appreciated that brings personal growth, fun and success or as something uncomfortable that nobody needs and that just means pain and stress and extra efforts. If I look at the reality of our company and at the reality of the economy in this century, the second, the static-searching one clearly ignores reality. If I look at the pessimistic, past-patterned negative interpretation of change and people development, there is a strange mismatch with human nature of being curious and being skilled to learn. And something else comes to my mind: If my memory does not cheat me, I think I remember that this was the company to go to if you were looking for a dynamic environment with challenging jobs, much openness and possibilities in all directions to develop and change myself and how things were done. My memory gives me an image that many years ago, dynamics and change were things that we appreciated in this company. We searched it. It was normal. It helped us to develop and grow personally. It was the motor of this company's success. It was the reason why this company became the benchmark.

Let's give it a try and look at the numerous possibilities of using so far unused potentials. We just have to offer some trust to put away the worries that we see through the glasses of the past conditions for development.

Sense & Respond diary, May 28 2010

A swiss bank-manager has chosen the following sentence as his leading ideal:
“Embarrass yourself every day!”

It can be a strange feeling, sitting in one of these meetings recently where our managers are talking about what are the important things to do and what would be needed and what action has to be taken. I noticed that there are topics where the future state and all that useful work waiting to be used is mentioned and seen as a valuable reference. There are other topics where there is not at all such a reference for a common direction and where – at least in my eyes – nearly only old reaction and thinking patterns dominate views and activities. Blamestorming, making up statistics for what we want to show or want to see in the data. Jumping to solutions. Opinions. Actionism for quick, but pointless results that just distract from what we really need. Doing something with whatever few real content and thinking in it, but to meet some result we have been told we need. Without knowing why, what exactly, without watching if and where there is data, methods, knowledge, people, defined processes, roles that can be useful and that can drastically reduce our effort and drastically increase the value we are able to create. Some colleagues even make that strange distinction between the future state and real problem understanding, real good solutions being the ‘long-term-part’ (sound like: yes, that will come some day far away) and there are other, urgent, important topics to be busy with today and tomorrow and next week. However, I wonder how ever we want to make this better state and better thinking become real if we stay (too much) busy with other things that seem to be more urgent. We face difficult situations where the current conditions of our business need attention and urgent action. That is true. However: What can be more urgent than bringing us into a better position for tomorrow’s decisions and difficult situations? My opinion: Only what is absolutely indispensable for short term survival. But nothing more. So if I am part of such a meeting, surrounded by managers, my instinct – what I have learned from the past – may tell me that this is now the stage of management and also I am aware that management may have information that I do not have. So how can I understand enough and how can I speak up without taking a risk? On the other hand I start feeling uncomfortable, when I become aware that I have information that could help making better decisions or if I see that the attention and debate does ignore an important direction where we should be looking at. If in addition the above mentioned old reaction and thinking patterns come into play, the situations starts becoming very very uncomfortable for me. Because I then feel the need to add what I can bring in and to change the quality of the debate. At the same time that whole position-power and information advantage (real or imagined) can be – just from learned cultural patterns – very intimidating. And maybe they already know? Or probably there is somebody else who will ask and speak and lead. But I rather would like to be sure there. And also I am aware of what it means to let pass such moments – it means letting go a wrong debate, it means letting colleagues move into a wrong direction, while I see this and do nothing. It means ignoring that this will have impact on me, too. Watching is easier and bears less personal risk. But for me that also feels very uncomfortable. Two hearts beating in me and I know the one that wants to let me slide back to the passive past is the lazy, sweet and easy devil in me.

How to fight that devil? Well, let’s step back and remind: What is it really about? It is not about having it easy. It is not about avoiding personal risks. I think there is no leading or changing mindsets without taking a risk. And it is not about positions. It is about leading into the right direction – just as much as I can contribute to that - away from the old patterns that

have brought us into the difficult situation we are in today with our customers. And it is not about having all information on my own. It is about sharing that part of information that I have that can help taking better decisions. It is not about knowing, not about whatever strange belief in a wisdom in the hierarchy or a project or one person. It is about asking the right questions, it is about representing a different view of this business. It is about making see possibilities that are different from quick fixes. It is about creating these possibilities with our work in the S&R-project and it is about showing what possibilities are there. It is about understanding what and why management needs something to survive, it is about knowing the issues of our customers. With that knowledge we are able to see what is needed, to find ways where we can move forward into the right direction, by this creating new possibilities and better choices. It is about searching ways and taking action to walk them. It is not about hoping that others see and act the right way for me.

When we want to help this organization survive and become a better workplace with happy customers, we must seize every occasion during important debates to move things away from the old culture, thinking and behavior. Ask questions, share information, ask for information, say something if it feels necessary to say it. Even if it feels uncomfortable and if it looks like this was a manager's show where no role is foreseen for me. That is old perception and the best view to hold back good rationality, good questions and good information. The best view to hold us back from not bringing our managers into a better, more powerful position for decisions and action. In reality there is no such thing as a manager show where only managers can play. There are no electric fences and walls between management and myself. There is just people like you and me who try to take the best possible decisions. Decisions that must be funded on the reality of work, on data, on reason and logic. Decisions that desperately need a clear view on the real work and real life daily business. Decisions that need the knowledge and views of us all. Decisions that concern us all.

In these uncomfortable situations it feels like if we had the easy choice to stay outside that 'stage'. That is a very costly illusion, because everybody who works in this organization is in the stage. If we act or not, we are part of it. And if we like the rules of game is not the question that should decide if we act and play. The game is to change the rules of the game where they do damage to the success of the game.

Sense & Respond diary, June 8 2010

On the weekend I read this quote in a small booklet that a friend and colleague has given me some weeks ago: “We do not fail due to the defeats that we suffer, but due to the disputes that we do not lead.” (Original German text: „Wir scheitern nicht an den Niederlagen, die wir erleiden, sondern an den Auseinandersetzungen, die wir nicht führen.“ A graffiti on the wall of a youth-centre in Berlin. Translation note: ‘Scheitern’ in German means ‘definitive personal failure’. ‘Auseinandersetzung’ is a more neutral term for a debate, dispute, fight, conflict.)

That touched and inspired me and made me think – among other things – of this personal experience:

Last winter my girlfriend and me took a plate of antipasti and French cheese with a good glass of wine in a small ‚French‘ bar, where we both like very much the ambiance and the true French accent and true French service style of the waiter. It was early in the evening on a Sunday and besides us only two or three other people were there. While we were sitting and enjoying our meal and talking, my girlfriend started to complain (to me) about the cigarette smoke from the man at a table not far of us. I looked at the meal in front of me, watched the smoker with his beer and cigarette and thought: Hey, don’t we have now new legal regulations that smoking in bars is not allowed any more? Including that recent update from our constitutional court that it can be allowed in small bars, however not in small bars where food is served? I heard it in the radio. The antipasti in front of me and the smoke next to us – that may not be like that, I was quite sure. Considering the relatively expensive food plate and our meanwhile three beverages, I thought that also the waiter at the end should have an interest to keep us as clients in comparison to the smoker with just one beer consumption.

So I decided to speak up and I asked the smoker, if he didn’t know that smoking was not allowed in bars that serve food (Meanwhile I learnt more: I would not recommend this as a start of such a talk as it starts with two assumptions: Something I assume to know and something I assume the other does not know – two assumptions right at the start...not really good...). The smoker then just replied that here smoking was allowed, without further explanation, what nearly made me upset (as I was right, you know) – but to my surprise the man at the table in the corner presented himself as the owner of the bar and he then clarified that with the size smaller than 70 square-meters and the menu only offering cold starters (no warm, ‘serious’ dishes) he was allowed to make this a smoking bar.

How embarrassing! But I noticed that the debate gained quality by more accurate facts and we continued talking. The owner told us then also that during the time of the total smoke-prohibition before the newest court-decision, his revenue fell by 40%. Because the majority of his clients were people who just came for one or two drinks and a cigarette and a small talk. That was interesting and good to get these facts and to understand his view and what all these new regulations meant to his business. Indeed I felt that it would have been a pity if this nice bar had to close – I prefer having it with smoke rather than not at all.

Also the smoker went on now giving his views on the whole story: He said it was now so difficult for him to find a bar where smoking inside was allowed and that he did not at all understand why we needed such regulations, because before everybody had the choice to go to bars where people did not smoke.

Interesting point of view – that gave me now the occasion to present my view on this: Before the new regulations – at least in my town with mostly quite small bars and restaurants – you simply did just not have a choice to go to a bar or restaurant without smoke – there were nearly none at all. But to be honest: The problem was rather that the smoke-free restaurants were not the bars where I liked to go. Fact is: None of us both has made the real test to go to all bars before and after. However confirmation bias works in the debate: You limit your view to your own small view of the world and you see it like you need it to support your argumentation and interest.

We did not really come to an agreement and soon stopped that discussion, but I think that this was a quite eye-opening exchange that left all of us with a more objective view than before. It gave us insight in other people's views and worlds – at least I can say for me this was enriching and significantly adding facts and more balanced views to how I see that debate about the smoking regulations in German bars.

However, it came at a personal price: It had to acknowledge that my initial viewpoint was quite wrong. I think that seeing such personal risks frequently holds us back from going into a debate. Imagine, in that situation I would have chosen to not talk to the smoker – because it would have been more comfortable, because I did not want to tell an adult person what the rules are. Or because there were others who could have said something (always coming from my original assumption that smoking was not allowed there) or simply because the smoke did not that much disturb myself, but rather my girlfriend – she definitively has the much finer nose. I could have said that she had to say something on her own. But I knew that she would not do that because that smoker did not at all look like the kind of person she wants to discuss with. And to be honest, I had my doubts, too, about how he would react. Very frequently thus we choose to stay calm and tolerant to avoid risk and discomfort. That's why skinheads have such an easy game when they molest somebody in the bus: For most of the people the subjectively perceived risk is far too high, even if they are in an overwhelming majority. But where do societies get that way?

The risk is one thing, and in most situations relevant for such disputes like with smokers, the risk can be neglected. The opportunity is another: If I had not talked to that smoker, I would never have learned what I have learned by doing it: First: Do not start such a conversation with the statement of an assumption. Rather start with a real, investigating question. Second: Now I really know the regulations and how others see this. Third: It was worth it, it made me grow personally. The result was a small personal defeat (I thought I was right but they showed me that I was wrong). But I would have lost much more if I did not start that small debate. The risk is an embarrassment and a situation where we have to admit that we all are quite subjective human beings that make errors. The opportunity was to find out how far we get together if we admit that we are human beings. The opportunity was to find out why somebody was doing what he did – the smoker – and to have a conversation with more facts and a much wider horizon and knowledge than my own. The opportunity was to find much more than I brought there myself. And for the choice of bars I have now a sound base of information: As I became aware that I like that bar even with smoke, I will still go there to have a beer with a friend who does not mind some cigarette smoke. However I will not go there with my girlfriend, because she would not feel comfortable there. I would call that a differentiated and reasonable view on things.

But when I think of it – what was the real reason why I chose to risk breaking the peace and joy of that antipasti-wine with my girlfriend? It was the fact that there was smoke that disturbed us, sure. That was the purpose: To remove a nuisance. But what gave me the

motivation to overcome my Sunday-evening tolerance and laziness-mode? That I thought he would not beat me up? – no, I did not even consider that possibility. It was the opportunity: I remember that there was that mind-second where I said to myself: Do I want to spend my life just watching things that I would like to change and never find out if I can move something and never find out what the other thinks and says? The feeling in that second could be described like that: Do I want to have such a limited and rather boring life where I always stay within my own, limited horizon of self-satisfied assumptions? Or do I want to experience the world and the people around me, stop being a passive part, start being an influencing part of it? Take the risk to put my nose out in the fresh air of life?

On our development journey towards the future state it is not about smoke-free antipasti. It is about much more. It is about a better workplace and a prosperous future for many many people. It is about bullshit-free conversations, about fact based debates, about informed or assumption based decisions, about continuing spending our time on quick fixes or on real thinking. About paying attention to the common future state or not. About changing things and leading disputes myself or hoping that others will do. It is the question if we let us lull ourselves by wrong patience and tolerance to watch how things are moved away from the direction towards a better workplace. Or if we start to lead the disputes to keep direction and to fight to create this better future. With the full personal risk of losing some of these fights. But who chooses not to fight has already lost anyway and his future will be planned by others. And if this future will be good for us, even with the little personal advantages and comfort zones that we may rescue and secure by not taking a risk – I strongly doubt that we manage to keep any advantage for anybody if this thing goes on like in the past. For myself I can say that our organization being pulled back to the past can not be the place where I want to be in my future. I don't want to waste my life.

Opportunities are abundant these days. Time to wake up and go for them is every day.

Sense & Respond diary, June 10 2010

The world soccer championship starts this Friday. Great times again with friends and beer and barbecue, public viewing, a lot of passion - and a lot of great human abilities in action on the soccer field and many expert discussions about game-systems, performance, chances of teams, reasons for success and defeat. Time to talk soccer and use that image for a diary. However, this diary idea was born long weeks ago, when we first encountered that really persistent old perception that work would be organized by the (new) organizational chart and that if I have an org-unit, this would automatically somehow result in a silo. As if work was water and the org-units the water tubes, where the work-water must then flow in, without any relation to the next tube/org-unit. And as if we were people who could not change this limiting view on this. We can understand where that view comes from - the experience of our past (the only models were org-charts; no functional model) - but this is definitively a quite limited and dangerous way to see this and should not limit what we really do with our work. So I suggest we stop seeing it like that and rather think of work, work interaction and work change in the image of a soccer game.

A soccer game? Now he has gone mad...

Don't worry. This is seriously a rich model to talk about intelligent, dynamic, flexible and adapting human interaction called "work"...and about work on the system, called "transforming to a new future state". First exercise with this model: Just imagine a soccer game where the players would kindly and strictly stick to their position and only watch as far as the lines on the field: The keeper only within the 5-meter-square in front of the goal. The defenders only within the 16 meters. The middle field separated to those middle field-players who may watch over the middle-line and those who keep their sight strictly behind the middle line and never move to the front. The strikers would only hang around in the 16 meters square of the adversary team and wait for the balls to come. And all of them pretend that what happens in other positions or squares of the field is nothing they have to be interested in or take care about. Ouch. Crazy. Boring. No passion. No powerful, creative human-being moves. It is obvious, that the real soccer game is different. Otherwise it would not reach the hearts and passion of so many.

It opens a whole different, much more complex but also more realistic, flexible, dynamic view on work if we imagine work like a real soccer game. It makes us think of human being's ability to see and understand things, coordinate intelligently and adapt to situations, move and use a role as flexibly as needed, without trying to make the goals as a defender instead of the striker.

And it makes us think of how they find out how they organize their game and what makes a champion's game successful. Knowing that I am a defender is not sufficient to know how we play a champion's game (as knowing that I am in org-unit or position X is not sufficient to know what I do and how it comes together with other peoples work to an excellent service). There we are back with the beer-drinking and grilling soccer experts and analysis of soccer teams and matches. What does a soccer team (I mean, the real real good ones, premier-league-winners, the national teams, European and world-champions) do, if they want to be successful? They must make goals. Right. That's the necessary result and superficially seen, we could stop there. Goals are the necessary output they need. But, do they then concentrate on the goals? Does everybody rush to the goal with the ball....? That's the worst of poorest village-soccer. The soccer-experts would be quite bored in best case. These experts and successful teams spend a whole lot of time on thinking of their game-system: How they are distributed in the room, if they cover room or man, how they move together forward and

backwards, how they move the ball in the room to tear gaps in the opponent's defense or to surprise them. Rows of 4 defenders and 4 in the middle and 2 in the front? Or 4 3 3? Or 5 4 1 or a libero etc. or or or – I think that does not even cover the newest systems. They concentrate on their setup and on their method and the tactics. If they are really good, the result is that they are organized in a way that they can adapt from match to match and during the match. However, some teams are not able to do a new system or to adapt during the game. They only are able to play one known old system (originally still coming from the 70ies for example).

Let's dive a bit more into this. For that part, I am not really an in-depth expert myself (so forgive me detail mistakes in this), however, being a rather analytic mind and as I like soccer, I listen and understand if somebody explains it (a trainer on TV or a friend or in an article). If I remember that strange European championship in 2004, where the Greek won the cup, I can not get rid of the impression (there was quite some critics in that direction), that they were playing old stuff defensive soccer and a lot of luck was necessary to win the title. Interestingly, it was a good old German trainer (we somehow, slowly have to approach the fact in this article, that Germans at the end are really the best in soccer...;-)) who did two things with that Greek team: He applied a quite old game system (defensive setup of the game) and brought in his quite brilliant tactical capabilities to exercise this not at all new and not at all attractive game system the best possible. He applied that old style tactics because that was what he could do with the resources – ah sorry- players he had. (Please please forgive me if I tell something not fully correct in deep soccer expertise – I checked this with two practicing soccer experts - from whom I consider at least one of them being one of the most credible experts in soccer - and they said that this was not wrong to state this about the Greek team in 2004). A more offensive, modern setup would simply not have worked because they did not have the abundant pool of talents on all positions as teams usually have such as Brazil, Germany, France or Spain (oh, sorry, I forgot to mention England – you know, they invented it. They must be good...).

Spain. Right, great team in recent years. When I was looking for the positive counter-example, I thought of Spain and of the final in the last European Championship against Germany in 2008. I thought of Spain, because what I saw was a Spanish soccer system at work that was so strong, that it was even not really possible for our great German team to beat them in the final (as already slowly approached, you must know from my German viewpoint the German teams usually are the best and win at these championships as always and so if we do not win we really wonder why and how that could ever happen ;-)). Thinking more of it, I want to pretend, that the German system was also a quite modern approach (thank you Juergen Klinsmann), but still, the impression was, that the Spanish system was unbeatably strong. I remember TV-commentators talking about 4321 and 4141-systems and that the Spanish coach was so great and innovative about that, finally getting the fruits of his work with the title. However, when I check at Google, to verify this, I end up with this quote: “Not the system is decisive, but the way how the players understand it and apply it.” Note: This is from a trainer training at a level where it was no more question if they play a new or an old style system. It was just the question if the modern 4321 or the modern 4141 was better. And I like the answer: You need a modern system, however most important is how this is used and if you are able to adapt it to the situation (adversary, changing situation during the match), finding the right mode of leveraging the system's and the players' full potential. So far, understood and very good insight. The rest is real high soccer expertise, I must stop here, I will get it wrong.

What I want to draw out of this is that one thing is certain even in soccer: By applying and

perfecting an already known system or mode of doing things, you may get some success during some time. However, as soon as the world moves on and new innovative systems are brought up by your competition, you will discover that you do not really have the means to compete with this. For some time you can compensate by perfecting and putting more and more effort in the old way of doing things. But you will never reach the possible levels of overall capability that the competitor with a new system reaches. Like the guy who first jumped over the bar in high-jumping with the back first. The front-jumpers could do what they wanted. They had no chance to even get close to the heights that were possible with backside-jumping-technique.

The other point I want to make: What are the foundations of lasting success in soccer (also rather thin ice for me, but again, I just give what I have heard and read). First: You need good players. How do you get them? You either have worked for decades on your system of soccer-youth-development to get a great pool of well trained talents out of your own country. Or – if you did not invest in this - you buy them from somewhere else (like it is a current practice in many premier-league teams). What is clear: For your national team you may not buy them, thus you need that system of talent discovery and development. Second: Once you have these talents, you need skilled and good trainers that can develop them further and work them into a well working team (if you simply buy together 11 soccer stars you do not automatically get a good team – they have to play together ;-)). Third: Successful modern teams invest a lot of time in doing match analysis. I know a guy who's role is just to take care of this for a German premier league team (which itself is an exceptional story of investing into soccer-youth-work and soccer infrastructure development over years – those who pretend that this is a bought star team, have not got the data and have not thought about it really, because they think only teams with long tradition are the real teams and real good guys in soccer that merit glory and passion – a strong risk for our company also if we think there is an automatic of success just by long experience and industry tradition). That guy told me that they spend the whole week with reviewing and analyzing last Saturday's match-videos. They invest in dedicated headcounts and expensive technical equipment for this. Why are they doing that? Not really to point out which player had a bad day last Saturday. They try to find out what strengths and weaknesses they have in their team setup, tactics and game system and what went wrong in its application. They try to find a system that limits the impact of individual bad performance. They try to make visible, how the system works and how not – so the players can see the difference and see what their part was in it. And they know that the game system and its creative and flexible usage is the competing factor. Not the individual stars. The game system, what the players make out of it and the resulting overall game performance.

Making a direct transfer to what we do here in our organization, we must be aware that it is quite the same: If we optimize or practice more perfectly what is old style infrastructure service or old style operating model, we will get a little bit better maybe. And we might win a potted plant here and there. We have won them here and there in the last years (maybe also some real trophies). However, today we are already rather in the position of 'after-the-Greek-European-championship' where our customers tell us that we won't win any potted plant any more with our so-far-style. They are desperately missing the goals we need to make for them (the right services). If you don't believe this, just look at the scores. The opportunity is to go the 'Spanish' way: Work on the system (here = the operating model and the culture) and develop your people (ah, you knew: managers like soccer trainers are there to develop people and to work on the system; not to play on their own in the system) and develop an unbeatable dynamics of constantly innovating your game system. Or, to be honest: I think we even do not

have a choice any more. If we want to stay in the global world champion league of IT, we must work on the system. How else should we get the capabilities that we need to become a trusted advisor and strategic enabler? By perfecting and optimizing and putting more effort to the capabilities and ways of doing things that we have today? Developing new capabilities by putting more effort in the old capabilities? I think that logic is no working logic (however it is still eagerly followed by many).

And as it is with soccer stars it is with silo stars. We will not get a great new game system by only looking and working into the single elements of our operation. The biggest and the essential capability growth will be found by developing the capability to play together in a new, innovative way that others do not yet and that we do not yet. The essential new capabilities are in the dynamics, in new mindsets, in new culture, in a thing like the intelligently and creatively applied continuous change, creating new insights, new inspiration, passion and energy, resulting in a culture that is able to apply the modern 4321-future-state as it best leverages the future-state-potential and the people-potential. The questions are not: What does the element A do? What does element B do? What does department C do? Who does the design of new technology and new services (implying: one or the other). The questions where you find the diamonds are: How do they play together? How do we develop (continuously!) our system of playing together? How do we develop our people? How do we use, share and transfer our knowledge? How do we release our unused human potential? What goes on on the (whole) soccer field and how do we all together move ourselves and the ball in the room of endless soccer and work possibilities.

For soccer teams the trophy that is worth a lot of sweat and challenging themselves is a European or World Cup. A fruit of their efforts that is possible for modern working teams. Here is an insight in what fruits and trophies are possible for an IT-organization (this is real data from a real case and refers to a time span of change of 18 months):

“Our goals have aligned with our clients goals and it has resulted in a 15% increase in revenue for our client. This is as a result of us doing the things they actually need rather than what we wanted to do originally. Consequently the volume of value work increased without additional costs enabling us to pass these savings back to our client further cementing the relationship.”

“It is now no longer about how much we cost them, it is about how we make them the best, by creating value”

“Our client moved from 80% of their staff saying they could not recommend us to 100% saying they would.”

“...remember how venerable we were to our competitors, any of them could do it cheaper and probably better and we might be outsourced. The team have worked hard to change this. Our client no longer sees the work we do as our only value. It is the Management Information we provide, the relationships we have built with our suppliers and the intelligence we give them to make them number one in their industry.”

“We are regarded by our suppliers and our client as the best in the industry and this is now no longer just because we have been doing it the longest.”

“The piece I am most proud of is that we have a culture of change is driven from the lower levels upwards.”

“The staff on the floor are responsible for change and improvement and is part of daily life. We as managers now only have to focus on removing blockers for our staff.”

“Changes driven by the staff have naturally brought in cost savings for us and I am pleased to say that we have passed these savings on to our staff by way of pay rises with the average member of staff receiving a 15% pay rise, this at a time of economic recession.”

“Our error rate has plummeted from 15% to 0.4%.”

Sense & Respond diary, June 30 2010

I had an interesting conversation on the floor, right in front of the elevator today. A colleague to whom I talk regularly asked me, if I could say what the new service managers do – what their tasks are in our new Service Management. Honestly, I felt caught as I would not be able to recite a memorized list of tasks and responsibilities. But the humility to acknowledge that there are many things that I do not know myself in detail helped me very much to resist to try a quick answer of that type and I remembered that we learned that it was much more useful to listen to people and to first find out, why they ask and what thoughts are behind. So I relaxed and simply asked back, what she had understood what their task was. ‘To make our customers happy’ was the answer. The answer surprised me and I suggested that probably operation was in the better position to make customers happy as customers usually get happy with good service and less with good ‘vendors’. However, she insisted that it was service management’s responsibility to find out what service would make customers happy and to bring that knowledge to operation to help them do the right changes or improvements on our services. Now I found even more pleasure in asking back and listening to her thoughts: I was now interested in knowing how this could be done. We ended up with ‘looking at demand-data and analyzing this’ and ‘talking to the customer/users’. I was then interested more to know what would be the quality of conversations we would have to lead with our customers/users. In the following conversation I started to try an example with a pizza-service where the pizza baker always puts a lot of cheese on my pizzas, based on the assumption that I would think he was a nickel nurser* if he did not. While in fact I do not really like pizzas with that much cheese on it because that makes the pizza and at the end myself so fat that I don’t like the pizza nor myself any more. Clearly that pizza baker did not know what type of pizza I want – he did make assumptions of what ‘good service’ meant to me and in fact only worsened the service for me. But even more: If he now would not ask more ‘whys’ to me and would not be interested in finding out what my real ‘Andreas-private-business’-context and needs are and he just would add the option, if I want with a lot of cheese or with less, he would still miss out a lot of possibilities: A low fat cheese pizza for example. If he has cheese that tastes great but has low fat, I take the pizza with a lot of cheese – that’s the difference between what I demand (no cheese) and what is my real ‘Andreas-body-business’-need: Not too fat food. Or even, we could go further: A lower price for the pizza if I come and get it myself by bike (not by car, clearly!). I might even find that attractive, and if not, who knows where that inspiration-journey will end up? Two minutes writing about this on my own is short, but has already given ideas...

But now let’s come to why I really tell that story: This quite nice trial made her talk about a much better story to illustrate what modern service management is about: She said that she liked that much how you can buy olive-oil and balsamic-vinegar on Italian village-markets. She told me that she was so pleased that the marketer had started to ask her back, when she had asked for a good olive- oil and good balsamic. The thing is, that this man had lots of different oils and balsamic-vinegars in different qualities, tastes and prices. So which one should he sell her? A short-sighted businessman (e.g. with traditional management theory of taking the shortest possible way to short term cost and profit-maximization) would have given her the most expensive ones, to make the fast money (we might call that a quick win or low hanging fruit?). But he then simply asked her, what she wanted to do with that oil and with the vinegar (asking for the purpose, the business context). Even as her answer was not really precise (‘for salad and other stuff, well just to have a good oil’ – a bit like that) he did not let

her walk away with just any sold oil and vinegar. He noticed that she was a customer who wanted a 'good' oil and vinegar, but did not have any idea of what a 'good' oil and vinegar would be – because this largely depends on the dishes for which you want to use it. He then explained that concerning the olive-oil, he would recommend to have a mild and not too expensive oil in the shelf and in addition a more expensive, very tasty. The first for 'ordinary' salads, the second to accompany for example antipasti or a good cheese – you dip that very tasty oil with white bread to get the full flavor on your tongue. Concerning the balsamic-vinegar he explained a general rule for orientation: The older it is, the sweeter. And you would like to have sweet balsamic vinegar on small tomatoes or with delicate starters, but rather not in the 'ordinary' salad. I am an absolute fan of such differentiated statements and explanations. And she was quite surprised, delighted and inspired by these questions and explanations of this Italian marketer. In a few minutes more time spent with his customer he made her learn how she could use his products in a purposeful way to achieve her personal gourmet-purposes and to draw maximum value out of that oil and vinegar. And even more: By doing this, he made her discover that in reality she was not looking for a 'not too expensive' olive oil and that she did not need a compromise of enough taste (but not really special) and a still not expensive price – but one lower price oil and one really good with real high taste-value that then would also have a higher cost. It moved the conversation with her away from 'what's the cost' to 'how do cost and value interrelate' and what value was she really looking for. Same for the balsamic: The short-sighted businessman would have suggested her one of the older and more expensive, probably with an explanation like: 'Sure, the more expensive the better it is'. She would then either have turned away (no, too expensive) or she would have bought it, might have used it for 'ordinary' salad and would have thought: Too sweet, I can't see the value for that price. And the businessman would either never have seen her again or only in company of a bad-tempered spirit called customer-complaint. Fortunately, that did not happen and I could see in her eyes that this man had won her trust and that she was happy to get his advice and even happy to have spent more money than originally thought. He is now a trusted advisor for her.

I really like that story. It was so inspiring that I started to add a purely imagined, and therefore less realistic, but still helpful chapter to her real story: She told me, that she used olive-oil for everything, including for broiling meat. I was surprised and said that I had heard that olive-oil was not really the best choice for that purpose**. But I liked to imagine that she had also talked about this with the Italian marketer and I imagined him then come back home in the evening to his olive-oil-farm (the scenery looks like that: Beautiful Italian landscape, the sun standing low over the smooth hills in Tuscany, throwing a warm golden light on the walls of his beautiful old estate, his grand-father greeting him from the forged-iron bench next to the roses in the yard) and would have talked to his olive-oil production operation guys and to his olive-supplying farmers to find out if there was not a possibility to somehow create a new, innovative product called 'Broiling-Virgin-Olive-Oil', that could very well be used to broil meat and even more. That would be a new olive-oil-technology to combine good broiling (high temperature) qualities with the special taste of virgin olive oil. We – the cooking customers - could then for example not only broil beef in virgin olive oil, but also create french-fries with olive-oil taste. Might be delicious, no? I would buy it. And if all this is not possible, at least the olive-oil-marketer could come back to meet her next time with a new (not olive-)broiling-oil in his portfolio and to advise her to use this as this was the right for that purpose (and finally the beef will be really tender...). Oh, in my imagination, Italy is so sunny and beautiful and I exactly know why Italian olive-oil-producers and their market tenders are so gentle and relaxed: They are so sense-and-respondy... They do not pretend to

know what customers need, they listen, sense, think and respond to the need. And that way they get a lot of great feedback from customers – which makes them very relaxed.

Finally, back in the neon-light in front of the elevator (gosh, sorry), we agreed that this kind of story to explain the purpose and new quality of customer-engagement was a good possibility to help with the understanding of the role of a service manager - better than to simply list tasks and responsibilities. The latter is needed, too, sure. However, we have plenty of that and still people ask: What are the service managers doing? What is their role description? What is new and different with Service-Management? Also, some think that they did that for years already... And even if the service managers would have all that detail and exact task-lists and interface descriptions: A service manager who has never understood how it is to be served by such a trusted Italian olive-oil advisor, would not necessarily act like we need it to gain that new quality of capability in Service Management. Because as well as you can play a modern soccer-system in an un-dynamic, not well understood way, you can also be service-manager doing it basically nearly exactly as a CSEM would have done it in the past. Using these kind of stories, we can answer that question (What is a modern service manager? What do they do?) in a more holistic way, that is filled with life and spirit, not explaining from the possible details, but explaining it from what we want to gain with this and what this should do with our customers and with our operation. With that inspiration you walk away and start using your heart and intelligence. Even if this example may not be fully correct and exact for one of our S&R-service-management-experts. I think it illustrates the direction of new insights and conversations with the customer that we need to develop one important piece of capability of a trusted advisor. It's a bit like explaining the service management role 'from inside'. It helps to give a real understanding and perspective of the new horizons to which this is going. That marketer in Italy is a real trusted advisor for her now. And if he will manage to invent that virgin olive-oil that can be used for beef and fries, he will have a new service that makes him the star in the olive-oil industry. Already with what he does today, he is a tough act to follow for those who just sell the most expensive oil to their unadvised customers – or imagine us buying olive-oil in a super-market: The traditional push to stock principle...take it or leave it, if you don't know what you need, that's your problem. If you don't know what value you miss by only looking at the cost, that's your problem. As soon as we have talked to the Italian marketer it surely will not be our problem if the supermarket does not sell olive-oil any more.

And also this was a very inspiring learning for me on how inspiring it can be to talk (ask and listen!) to our people: A question gives another question, gives a thought, gives a picture, gives another picture with another story and more inspiration. And that's what we need, no? Not given concepts, but an inspiring dynamics of sensing, inspired thinking, and responses that surprise and delight our customers.

*(A person that very much likes to save when it comes to the benefit of others – German: Geizkragen)

** (For all those who will now check on Google, if this is true: As I just read in just one source, it depends (differentiated analysis again): Virgin Olive Oil can be heated to a maximum of 180 degrees Celsius. This is enough for most meats (I am still not sure if a professional cook would use it for beef – it must be broiled very hot), however not for the French Fries that need around 210 degrees Celsius. However, refined olive oil (not virgin cold-pressed, but heated in a refinery-factory) can be heated to this temperature. But as you know, all models are wrong and some are better to make us see... and this is not written to be right about broiling meat, but to think and be inspired about where we want to go in our future of work and business).

Sense & Respond diary, July 9 2010

It is always the same with this sport: It is fantastic, great to watch, passionate and gives great metaphors and analogies to surface and picture some thoughts in a more entertaining way. But mostly, for me, I come to a point that reminds me what I do not like about soccer:

What I do not like about soccer is that the match-results do not follow as close the well-design of the system as this can be achieved for a business. Why? This week I would say that 90 minutes can be a short time to wake up for some people on some days. What I also do not like about soccer is that every time I buy a new Germany flag or a new beautiful original Germany-tricot before a semi-final in the world championship, the German team loses in that semi-final. Really. No joke: Four years ago I bought a new flag and we lost against Italy. This time I bought a new flag and a new Germany-team-tricot, and we lose against Spain. If I look at it like this, it seems that this is my fault: Because I have bought that fan-stuff, we have lost the semi-final. That's crazy. I must have many enemies in this country now. Or maybe, maybe it's my girlfriend. She said – after the match – that she already had a strange feeling when we went to our public-viewing bar. So why couldn't she tell me before?! I could have brought her home to avoid that disaster.

And then, there is that fish – ah, a squid? – that had predicted that Spain would win. He had already predicted correctly all the German matches before. Really all 6 matches were predicted right. Some people will say now, that it is proven that this squid can foresee the future. At least the German soccer future. And I would go even further: This squid has even influenced the future. And have you seen how determined and fast that fish has gone to the Spanish food box? You know what: In my eyes that nearly looked like panic in comparison to his slow checking and hesitating before. That brought me to the thought, that this squid had been bribed by the Spanish. Squids live near the shores of Spain, so I suppose they know how to deal and communicate with Squid. They probably even threatened him with something nasty. Maybe they said: If you do not go to our Spanish food box and we lose, we will make Paella out of you! If I was a squid and heard that, I certainly would go for the Spanish box. Doesn't matter what my German owner thinks. I would save my life.

But to be honest: I think nearly all of this is pure bullshit. All of these fun-explanations are with no real evidence. They are not drawn out of what really happened during the match, these are clearly all external events and factors with no relationship to what happened on the field that semi-final evening. Except for maybe the squid. But we will come to that fish again later. All other looks like 'statistics' but in reality is just a poor fan looking for a better explanation than those that are probably the real ones but that he does not want to see because he does not like them. A statistics volume of two (the fan articles) is nothing. And I can be sure that this team did not know that I had bought a tricot. And I have another fan-gadget that I brought to all the games. We won four times, lost two. Why do I not think of that one? Because it does not support my opinion. I am looking for hints to support my opinion. The same for the 'data base' of the squid: Even 6 of 6 (correct squid predictions) can happen relatively easily statistically (really, go and ask a statistics expert. Ask people who have won for two hours in the casino what happened next...). This is not what you would call a data base (imagine, in our sense&respond analysis work we would have come not with several thousand tickets analyzed, but with just a dozen...). So let's move away from these miraculous explanations and let's look more at the evidence that we could collect during the match (as

soon as that fish one day will have predicted 200 matches correctly, I will start to think about it again).

If I had written this 'soccer'-diary before the match (but I do not like guessing before, I like analyzing after) I would have written: Now we will see two well setup, modern soccer systems fighting against each other. And either we will see two systems successfully blocking each other or a rushing up and down the field with a lot of fun and good moves and goals on both sides. As I have seen and learned now, there is another possibility that I successfully had confirmation biased, because I did not want to see that kind of match turning against our team, for understandable reasons. The third possibility is: One system is executed brilliantly well that day, the other exceptionally bad, so the first blocks and dominates the second and wins. Still I am not the super soccer expert, but unfortunately it was quite obvious and the experts on TV also said, that this was the case. The result: No beautiful German combinations and we have lost for good reasons. And a really huge missed opportunity: The best and strongest German soccer system and team since decades with such good chances to win the title, but no final for Germany. That's hard.

What we clearly could see during the match is that the German team did not play the game they played before. It is true that a different tactics was applied by intention, but also it clearly felt as if they did not manage to start the engine in their team (expressed in other words: "The German simply did not turn up on the field"). If this now was more due to the strength of Spain or due to the applied tactics? Or due to too many individual failures in one match? I would say, that it were two factors: The Spanish setup in the room and their well coordinated movements against the German trials to switch to offensive moves were one very strong element in their system that successfully worked against one of the key strengths of the German system: Quickly switch from defense to attack. That's what soccer is about: There is an adversary with the purpose to fight you and your system. Sometimes he does that very successfully.

But there was another factor. One that certainly plays a role in such soccer-matches, where potentially equally-capable teams meet. A factor that will not completely destroy a good system and well designed setup (the German defense still was relatively strong against these combinations and technical skills of Spain), but that can determine how much of its potential a team brings to real action. This factor can bring the right execution of that system to a too weak level: This factor is fear and a lack of will to take risk. This factor is rooted at individual level, but with effect to the performance of the whole system.

At that point I must speak again of this squid. What might have been a reason for this strange fear and respect – among the fact that we knew that Spain is a very strong team and that we remembered the bad experience of the past European championship final – could have been the fact that the German national team has seen this squid choosing the Spanish foodbox on TV. And probably the Spanish team also has seen this. And probably many in these teams have believed that that squid can foresee and influence the future (how should a soccer player be that fit in statistics and scientific thinking? That's not his job as it is for example ours here). So the Spanish went into the match with the clear confidence that they would win – and that's how their match looked like – while the German came to the stadium with that uncertain feeling that they might lose – or that they at least had to fight against destiny. Which is hard. Imagine...destiny working against you. And the past comes to join destiny to fight against you. Not you are in control, but something out there, beyond your sphere of influence. Like a squid for example. That's terrible. How could such a player hit balls and play passes

precisely – if he never can be sure if it will reach his team-colleague over there? I mean, if I do not believe that I can succeed, how should I be able to succeed? Very probably I will not even try it really. I mean not just try a little. Really try hard, with tenacity, courage and endurance and searching for different ways if I hit obstacles like a rock-solid Spanish midfield can represent one.

And there we come to an interesting parallel and to an interesting difference looking at business-operation systems: The parallel is that if we are driven by our fears (that come from our past experience) or kept back by our fears, we will not move into change or not move at all. Driven by fear, we might put more energy but stick to apply what we did so far despite it did not work so far. We would stick to play in the second half as we played in the first half, even if it is plain to see that the others nearly made two goals while we did not even come near to their goal. Held back by fear would mean to not move or only half-move, because it might be wrong to play that ball. We first want to be sure that that pass will reach the other. It must be a 100% safe move, because otherwise the strong Spanish will get the ball and beat back. Well, the interesting thing is: By not taking risks, being hesitant, focused more on security than on the opportunity with some risk and move forward, these German players lost the balls anyway and opened opportunities to their adversaries. That strategy did not work, so what could be lost then by changing it and taking more risks? And despite this, we go on doing what obviously does not work. They could have dared more to play the skills they have, play their system (which lives from the move forward, from taking risks with quick combinations and which lives from fresh offensive action). Maybe that would have brought a Spanish goal earlier. But maybe also two German goals later.

In our business change this translates also like this: If we are driven by the fear of losing what we have now (very safe, strong defense against Spain/ a crappy, but still somehow working old operating model with minimal result level), we will not be able to let the past be the past and let the future decide where we go. By not letting behind parts of what we cherish now, we will not create new possibilities. We will not move on to the next level of capabilities. This is valid during the transformation to a new model or system. There we need individuals that move forward and take personal risks. Get the nose out in the fresh air...Being lead by the opportunity, and not by our fears, this way creating possibilities for others with a courageous, consequently played pass or move that opens room and makes us all move towards the goal.

To come to the difference between work and the situation during a soccer match in a semi-final: Once a well working new business-operation-model is established following lean principles, there will be conditions (provided by the new operating model) and processes in place that will make our work more error-proof. That means, the processes are made in a way that they provide conditions or mechanisms that help to avoid individual human errors or that minimize or neutralize the effects of human errors.

In a soccer match this obviously is quite difficult: Sure you can set up your team in the room in a way that there is usually somebody next to you in the defense to cover up, if you fail. But it is hard to get that secured against not only small, but big individual errors and the impacts can be more disastrous: A defender leaves the striker alone and immediately you can have the goal that will determine the match-result. Or the striker does not manage to put the ball into the goal and you miss your only opportunity. The design of work-situations offers much more possibilities here.

A third thing for which we clearly have evidence by the result and the fact that for nearly 70

minutes the match was dominated by Spain: One capability of the German soccer system (as an ensemble of game-system, training, coach, setup and collective execution during the match) has not been strong enough: Their adaptability and flexibility against a very strong and well tuned, well executed Spanish mid-field. It took much too long until they were able to change the way how they tried to work against them: The collective learning and change capability during a match is still not strong enough in that young team.

Adaptability and continuous change through collective learning are capabilities that we want to develop on this change journey. A necessary, minimal and opportunity-adequate (but still reasonable) level of courage and risk-taking are aspects that we need, to make the change happen. Without this, like with the German team against Spain, there will be very few opportunities for success and if you do not make the goal with these (like Kroos with his really great opportunity), you will fail and fall out of the competition. The opportunity is to use our skills, apply the medicine that we have learned, play our system in a way that we are the change we want to see and that we create new possibilities and capabilities with the future state and new culture that will create opportunities nearly every day. Not just once a year. Every 10 minutes one real good goal-opportunity. Not just one per 45 minutes. And what brings us there into this change is courage and moving away from the past to the future, making a step, taking risks, making the snowboard turns right and not only half to end in a fall. Not to stand there on the field, knowing what fine system and setup and skills you have and desperately want to shout: So why don't we play that now?!

We have an important advantage in doing business change that soccer teams do not have: The German team had to fight their own perceptions and fear at one hand and the strong adversary Spain on the other hand. We only have to fight against our own perceptions and fears. There is no adversary that has the purpose and declared goal to block or destroy our system and what we make out of it. Yes, sure, there is the customer and the still big difficulties in our daily business. But the customer has not the purpose to fight and defeat us. They need what we create by working on our system. There is a common purpose that we all have: The customer, the business, the employee. There is energy and motives in it to make us all work into the same direction towards one goal, not towards two goals in opposite directions on the field. And these difficulties in our daily business are to 70 or 80% within our own span of control, influenced by internal factors: 70 to 80% restorative demand. That means, that we can influence and control them. This daily business is what we make of it – not as single individuals alone – but we as a whole. What we make of it depends on how we see that business. How we see that business depends on the theories and the data that we have as a base of our decisions and actions.

At the moment in this daily business there is few or no data or the wrong data and no theory or just opinions or theories that still come from a push-to-stock manufacturing industry of the last century, but not a service provider industry in the 21st century on-demand markets. We have the choice if we want to use business-squids and cause-relationship-free data rows that consist of two or three cases, a lot of opinion and hope and confirmation-bias and non-existing change-impact measurement. Or if we use real data out of thousands of tickets that provide a view into our daily operation that reflects what matters to our customers and that is able to show what performance really happens end-to-end. Today we look at the foot of one striker and say: Wow, fine strike, that looks great from very near – but unfortunately that energy went far into the wrong direction, not where the customer-goal stands. Today still we apply a jumped-to-solution two times like my fan-stuff-buying, find some effect in correlation somewhere and say: “That was my solution that did that. It works. The problem that occurred at the same time in that other department is that other guy’s problem. Has nothing to do with

my solution.” My T-shirt and my flag decided the German semi-finals. For this level of reasoning my German co-citizens would have right to beat me up. We all have plenty of evidence that the way how we tried to solve problems in the past and up to now, does not work, does not bring goals for our customers or for us. Ask the customer! Look around you, where you are still stuck with all these difficulties in daily business!

I would rather go that way: Come and have a look at the data that is available. Look at the thinking and problem solving methods based on adequate, real and reasonable theory. This is all there. It is all ready for use. And even the conditions to be able to use this and change are growing around us with the future state becoming a reality step by step. It just has to be used. Don't say that you don't have time to look into it. Because very probably (around 70 to 80% probability, following available data) in reality you are working on a solution that does not work because it is based on a data-row of 2 or on a business-squid-theory. Or based on no data, no theory and no real problem understanding at all. I would not waste my time any longer with squids. I would look into the data and use tested methods. This probably looks like easy-written and unfair statements. Far away from daily operation. But the sad thing is that from far away or from close it is not difficult to see that the strike is full of energy and individual pain every day, but customer-evidence shows that it goes off far away from the goal. And the data shows the same over thousands of tickets. So this is no unfair thing to write. It is a very sad thing to write: This is normal reality here every day. And while we have it all there to move out of this, we are still taking many of our daily decisions like looking at what a squid does.

To finish the squid-joke: If I had been the German coach, in a wise foresight of the squid-risk to the perceptions and confidence of my players, I would have strictly forbidden watching TV or reading newspapers before that match this week. That might have saved the title for us! But enough of that soccer metaphor. Nobody knows this and it is rather improbable (2200 championship matches not at all tested with that squid against 6 predicted). However, what seems much more reasonable to me: We should seriously think about to start forbidding in this business to look at useless measurements like 'initial reaction time'.

Sense & Respond diary, October 11 2010

From several own experiences and of what others told me in the last three months I notice a pattern that seems to be in many conversations that are lead in our organization. It goes roughly like this: In a talk or meeting, somebody states that something is not working well, is missing, should be done differently, will not work as it is foreseen in the future state, does not turn out well or is not comprehensible for him. The conversation then turns in vague circles around that and how much this is a problem, opinions are brought about causes of rather general nature and usually located in somebody else's area, statements are made about the 'real' good, 'real' working solutions (by the way, the most popular real good and working solution is: Give me more headcount).

When I walk away from such talks and I ask myself, what was the real content and the real problem, I notice that there was not much what I could take as specific, tangible content to analyze, investigate or even just think about it a bit more. It just feels like an empty conversation. A lot of talk in the dust of the pain we have in our organization every day and everywhere, but no real, specific, precise content. Some of these conversations even touch several topics in a few minutes, but none to a depth or detail level that would allow one to make something out of it that you could call a case.

The same I hear from time to time from what others bring to me as a feedback for communication planning. All the complaints and open questions and pains that are included there are understandable and certainly true and nothing easy to live with. However, I often either feel helpless, just being able to give general comments, finding myself ending up in guessing and assuming what the real situation and problem behind was. Then I realize that I can not really understand what it was about. The conversation and what can be taken away from it, feels empty. It does not allow to understand what the other had tried to do or what specific issue he was dealing with.

I find this is a quite astonishing phenomenon in a professionally organized business with all these very skilled, intelligent colleagues. We all are able to do very precise, very specific work, to tackle just one certain case down to thorough analysis. So why that much fog in many conversations? Sure, we all know these coffee-corner chats where we sit together and complain about how hard work is and what is frustrating et cetera, just to - let's say: relax a little bit. But this even occurs in many situations where we seriously talk about feedback, support-needs or think about specific needed analysis and action.

To be honest, less and less I am willing to spend my time with such conversations. I try to dig deeper in what it is about and I try to nail down the other to become clear, precise and specific with one topic before we talk about four other topics. That's what is needed if somehow I want to find out how I can support, what information, guidance or helpful contacts in our project I can give. However, if that does not work, I more and more tend to walk away from this kind of talk. Because I think then the hidden purpose of the talk is not to work on change, but something else: Just complain, show how great I am with my ideas, create a cloud of shiny reasons for why things can not change with me... things like that. But what's the use of that? I'd rather read a novel at home or have fun on the soccer field with friends. It seems to me that in such conversations people let themselves push by their pain and dissatisfaction to complain and seek for help, but on the other hand they seem to be held back by the fear of what we might find in their own yard if we start exchanging very honestly and openly about the problem. Understandable from a human point of view, but not helpful at all, thus a

behavior that is rather stabilizing the problem and maintaining the human suffering. A helpful way out can be to make clear that bad situations in an organization are mostly not due to individual errors, but due to conditions that need change. Specifying a problem is not specifying an individual's fault, it is about specifying current and target conditions. While this should be very good and relieving message for everybody, reactions clearly show that this is still is a very difficult exercise for many.

However, there are encouraging examples: I heard how a conversation can change, when we start asking for more precise statements, for examples, for the exact case, for the real life issues that create the trouble and pain. We have people in our organization who no longer want to accept this kind of 'empty' complaint-talks. Because they want to get out of these circles of 'empty' talks, they even do it at the risk of opening the deficits-registers of their own work-area: One colleague told me that he did that in a meeting with an important customer. It was said that a certain countermeasure in operation did not bring any improvement. By asking back for specific examples of still existing issues, he took the risk to get a full load of issues in his operation-area as an answer. But he was tired of listening to general complaints or denials to which he never would be able to respond with specific action. He rather saw it as the necessary way to surface and precisely name problems to be able to work on solutions. What happened as a result in that meeting: He unveiled, that nobody could mention any specific issues that would support that general complaint. I think he did a real great job in that situation.

We need much more of this and much less of these empty conversations. A foggy complaint may make the sender feel better for some short minutes. However, it does not give anything to the other to allow him to support in removing the causes. And when the pain stays, what is the strategy then? Just complain often enough to still feel good enough and excused enough despite all the problems still being there? A doubtful way to happiness! I would prefer to look with courage into the ugly face even of my own waste – to understand it in depth and then remove it.

Sense & Respond diary, October 22 2010

Some readers in Germany might have come across a book called 'Momo'. It was a great success in the 90ties telling the story of mysterious men in black suits who steal time from people. A little girl – Momo – gets into the adventure by trying to find out what these men do and how they steal time.

In the story, I remember, she reveals they don't do it by influencing 'the time' itself but by driving people to do more activities throughout their day. These men are the cause of additional activities that finally leave people with the impression that their time has been stolen.

I am reminded of that story when I hear time and time again statements from various corners in our organization: "We don't have time to work on change". This is often the answer we hear from others and very often we say the same thing particularly when we are asked about the progress of our own plans.

If we are honest the statement does not only apply to the workplace but also to our private lives "I don't have time" is a welcome and easy label putting a dense fog in front of our real problems and saving us from serious reflection or revelations about our personal priorities or weaknesses. Maybe a better way to express this 'time-problem' while avoiding the dark depths of those personal weaknesses, is like this "I don't spend my time on this, but on other things."

Clearly – very clearly – we all have too many things to do within any busy organisation but we all have the same amount of time, that's the law of 'physics'. However, how about changing our use of language again by saying: "I don't spend my time on this, but on other things." and: "I have more tasks to do than I can do". This changes the focus of our attention. Simply saying "I have no time" distracts us towards an imagined scarcity of time – as if somebody had stolen the time like the men in black from the 'Momo'book.- It does not have to be like that.

In contrast, saying "I spend my time on other things" leaves us at the end of the sentence with - "other things". Which is a perfect starting place to think about what these other things are and where these other things are coming from. Questions can then be asked such as: "What causes these activities? What is the real need for it? What is their purpose? Finally, we might ask: How can I reduce the number of these things that hinder me to do those things where purpose, need and value are clear to me?"

In a situation of 'too much to do' we are the ones, who are making the choice of which activities we do and don't do. Nobody, in normal organisations, puts us in chains or gives us drugs or stands with a loaded revolver behind us to force us to do certain activities. If there is a list of more things to do than we can do, we are obviously making a choice but what is informing that choice? How do you choose what to do or not to do?

Our time is not stolen we give it away without realising because we let others choose for us, we blame others not ourselves for being overburdened. We choose to say, it's not us, but our managers or our customers that are removing choice: We should keep in mind that as long as they ask from us more than we can do, it is not their choice, but ours in the end, simply because, again, it is impossible to do all within the time we have. So, from that angle, it looks like if we have some freedom of what we do as human beings in a normal office environment. We are not slaves or robots, and we are not Human doings but human beings.

However, I realise it does not feel like that. Yes, it is hard to deal with pressure and to keep

control, feeling you have no chance to become proactive and sometimes no chance to even be reactive. Because something is working on us from outside. Something not someone is stealing your time. You could call this stealthy time stealer 'the system'.

The 'business and working system' pushes and pulls us in so many directions that at the end of the day we say 'I had no choice'. And indeed, as long as we only think and react within the logic of that system, we feel as if we do not make choices. However, thinking and staying in that system is a choice we make. We could also choose to think and act and work on the system, instead of thinking and working in the system.

So How to get out of this trap? A very simple start is to delete "I don't have time" from our vocabulary and to replace it with: "I don't spend my time on this, but I spend my time on other things." Then, ask: "What are these things?", "Where do these things come from?" is already thinking about the system, instead of just reacting in the system. Asking: "What activities on my list are those who can remove causes of other activities on the list?" – is thinking about where I can start to influence the system, thinking about where I can choose those activities on my list where I work on the system, where I change the system.

Do we ask what is creating value for our customers? What is value for our management? Can we change the system to produce less waste? Can we create a space for new possibilities and different ways of working that give back time instead of stealing it.

I still wonder why we choose to do the important things last or not at all, the things that will secure our future by changing the system and that can open a way out of the waste that fills our task lists. Wouldn't it make sense to choose those activities first, that can help to remove the need for other waste activities on our list?

So, give it a try. Stop saying "I don't have time." And go with "I don't spend my time on this, I spend my time on other things." And listen to the echo to follow and track down from which corner in the system they come from, those '...other things...other things ...other things...'