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Consulting Inter-organizational Relations in the Public Sector

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When addressing societal questions and problems, one has to confront a plethora of difficulties facing the modern Western society: unemployment, poverty, environmental protection, educational development, restructuring of health care – to name just a few. The list goes on – collaboration and networks are the current trend. And this is no coincidence: our society is developing ever increasingly into a juxtaposition of highly engineered systems and organizations, which end up doing that which they are usually good at.

This development is especially noticeable in the field of public services: those services previously provided directly by organizations managing utilities and other services are now provided by a variety of independent and eager undertakings.

The solution, or rather, the treatment of such social problems is obviously a complex and highly demanding task that is only made possible by the involvement of very diverse social factors, sub-sectors and organizations. The public sector therefore encourages and pushes both collaboration and networks in order to attract new means of shifting services out of administrative bodies. The management in the organizations views cooperation as an opportunity for growth and innovation, as a means of exploiting synergies and as a way to safeguard the organization in a turbulent environment.

Due to this trend, a paradigm shift was initiated at the same time which not only made change and adaptation of affected organizations necessary, but also required consultants to adjust to this new complex management situation.

Collaboration and networks are based on a logic of their own: cooperation through negotiation. This is new and different to hierarchically controlled contexts and unlike that in the free market economy. The central question is therefore: what special qualifications are needed and have to be developed for a consultant to be able to provide a successful and sustainable response to these new challenges of “management of collaboration”?

As part of a study entitled “Collaboration in Public Management”, this issue was investigated and, among other things, the role of consulting further analyzed. Based on this study, the close relation with 35 other case studies and individual long-standing consulting experiences made it possible to identify more challenges for management consultants. These have been reviewed since early 2008 in a concrete research and practical consulting project.

Since the beginning of 2008, the iff Department for Organizational Development and Group Dynamics has been entrusted with carrying out a complex collaboration project in the healthcare field in Upper Austria. The central goal of this – currently ongoing – cooperation

projec. Optimization of the interface management in Upper Austria (abbreviated in German as “NSM”) is the establishment and development of a collaboration for the optimized cooperation of service-providing government organizations as well as non-profit organizations in the health care and social services sector.

The issue bears special importance, as the inclusion of all sectors can lead to a dispute between the interfaces of the different levels, sectors and institutions of health and social care.

This management project is principally involved in the sustained assurance of a rapid, seamless and medically as well as economically meaningful treatment chain for all patients in the medical field along with all clients in the social sector with the objective of maintaining existing strengths and eliminating weaknesses.

About 30 organizations from the fields of regional government authorities, social insurance, social service organizations, social security organizations, hospital owners and the medical association are represented in this project. From the start, it was the main objective to avoid launching yet another standard planning project, but instead to develop a concrete, stable cooperation system based on the cooperative approach already in the design phase, and to try this out in selected model regions while the project is on-going.

The services necessary for professional organization consulting and scientific analyses are compiled on our consulting page.

The scientific aspect of the project focuses on sound modelling and organizational development-based design of development- and testing processes, as well as the interpretation of international case studies with a focus on the future implementation of the analyzed cooperative conditions.

Based on the findings of the study “Cooperation in Public Management”, organizational consulting is geared to responding to the management challenges in the design and development of collaboration.

The key challenges for consultants in this context are:

- The consultant perceived as a “third party” by all parties
- Initiating Collaboration
- Structuring Collaboration
- Collaboration consulting is more than just moderation

New and Changing Roles for Consultants

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New management consulting roles are continuing to emerge in ever-evolving complex organizational environments. Globalization, increasing competition, virtual communication, growing cross-cultural interaction and the trans-organizational collaboration requires the capability of permanent and rapid change in many ways.

Consultants today must offer ways to deal with change at all levels of organizations. In this session, we will

1. Focus on the emerging external forces that are impacting organizations and clients' needs for new consulting
2. Advocate a role for tomorrow's consultants where there is more dynamic integration of process with content
3. Describe new consulting roles in creating, forming and evolving collaboration, cooperation and competition
4. Present transorganization development and change consulting models
5. Describe how consulting and consulting firms would need to develop and adopt new consulting roles to address the new and emerging client needs and requirements

The seminar invites and builds on participants' input and experiences of new consulting roles and their effectiveness.

Teambuilding across borders and cultures for a fast paced-world

A solution-oriented systemic approach

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Today's agenda

Our aim is to make participants familiar with lessons learned from a live case study. We will examine a multi-lateral team building process in a major Central and Eastern European enterprise from two different perspectives - the department heads and the systemic consultants one. Participants will experience some of the same exercises that were used as part of the one-year team development process.

The following will be explored in our 1.5-hour workshop:

- building trust in the team
- solution-oriented systemic team development
- developing values for a unique team culture
- reflection, feed-back und feed-forward

The workshop traces the team's development by demonstrating a selection of challenges encountered during the process. Significant situations are presented and discussed from an internal and an external perspective, solutions for particular problems are explained. In addition, workshop participants are invited to take part in experiments that will familiarize them with some of the techniques used in the team-building process, e.g. using problem-orientation to get to solutions.

Finally, we will take a look at the team's status quo and future outlook in the context of their company's merger with a large Eastern European competitor.

Client context

A new manager had been hired to lead a large, cross-border sales unit of a major Central and Eastern European enterprise. The unit head needed to build an international team of managers recruited both internally and externally.

To be successful, the department head had to remove existing bureaucratic processes. Only a fully integrated team that works collaboratively across borders has been assumed to prevail in current increasingly competitive and volatile market conditions. His main objectives have been to:

- break down silo mentality amongst country and profit center units
- manage the whole business with harmonised processes

- establish strong intercultural co-operation
- think and behave internally and externally as *one* team
- increase the performance of teams to leverage the commercial success of the department
- integrate the management team of a newly acquired company

Main challenges included leadership from distance across diverse countries and cultures and the creation of a new vision and value set for the department. To facilitate this process, an external consultant was invited to work with the team.

Consultant context

The external consultant works with a solution-oriented systemic approach. She aims to use the focus leading away from problem-oriented discussions towards an increased emphasis on solutions. Instead of devoting time to endless discussions about problem issues, demoralizing accusations and finger-pointing – characteristic features of ‘problem hypnosis’ – she endeavours to encourage participants to focus on potential solutions and to change paradigms. They are led to focus on questions such as “What is your goal?”, “What keeps you away from it?”, “What do you need from me?”, “How can I support you, how can other team members help you?”, “What can I contribute?”. The solution-oriented approach improves what is working and shapes new communicative and cultural patterns. This supports participants’ day-to-day pursuit of concrete business goals. The main advantage is the avoidance of the typical pitfalls of problem-oriented approaches: blame, problem hypnosis and distrust amongst team-members.

Case study

Using the approach described above, the consultant began to facilitate the process of building a cohesive team which defines, lives and reflects its own culture and rules, a common vision, common goals and a common team language.

A series of experiential learning exercises were led by the department head and facilitated by the consultant. In these, the participants learned to acknowledge and trust each other as reliable members of the same team. This inspired the development of an understanding for the necessity of a common vision. The foundation of shared goals and a certain common team language supported the process. An understanding of solution-focused leadership emerged. At the same time, the team members became both more self-reliant regarding own decisions and supportive of each others’ decision-making abilities. Thus, overall confidence and trust were increased.

Once mutual trust had been established, constructive feedback mechanisms were introduced to enhance team communication. A spirit of openness started to develop, on a regular base enforced by special exercises in which team members had to give and take feedback from different viewpoints. This helped to reduce each individual’s insecurity. Team members lost their reserve to challenge each other to improve further; a strong emphasis to solve issues via a focus on solution approaches and to unlearn destructive behaviour patterns occurred. These initial steps ignited a process of individual and team growth. The department heads unconventional solution-focused leadership and his belief in the team members’ abilities (which initially often exceeded some team members’ belief in themselves), contributed significantly to the success of the entire process.

The Design and Teaching of a Management Consulting Course: Discipline Courses Are Not Sufficient

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The industry of management consulting has been growing throughout the last 25 years. Total revenues of the global business have exceeded \$200 billion and the number of consultants is probably far more than 1.5 million. The implications of this development are many. One is to ensure that the consulting firms have the consultants with the necessary competence and skills which allow them to serve the clients in a professional and ethical way. As a consequence most consulting firms today spend substantial resources on training. Another trend is that more and more institutions and organizations within education and training have moved into the consulting area. They offer a variety of training and development covering a broad range of issues relevant for the consulting business.

This symposium focuses more specifically on why universities and business schools are developing and offering programs and courses within management consulting and what various schools in different parts of the world are doing. The presentation illustrates the profile and variety of efforts on business schools within the theme of consulting from a teaching perspective. The presentation also includes a discussion of the benefits the business schools can achieve from engaging more actively in consulting and discusses how consulting firms can benefit from these activities as well as how consulting firms can be seen as a part of the various programs.

Unfortunately, a majority of business schools do not yet offer much in the way of courses on consulting knowledge or skills. They operate under the fallacious assumption that sufficient preparation for consulting is contained in the functional discipline courses. However, there are unique skills relevant to consulting that are typically neglected in the functional discipline courses. These include knowledge of the consulting industry and its economics and ethics, preparation of a consulting proposal, client politics and relationship building, data gathering through interviews and other methods, working in a consulting firm, and change management skills.

The workshop focuses on many issues involved in the design and teaching of a management consulting course to better prepare graduate students to enter the field of consulting. The segments of the symposium are:

- **Why teach a course on consulting in a business school.** A variety of consulting courses and programs are offered by academic institutions worldwide. Some universities offer full Masters Degree programs in Management Consulting while other institutions have a major, minor, concentration, or elective courses in management consulting at the graduate or undergraduate level. A list of institutions and their current programs are provided and form the basis of a presentation about the different types of offerings associated issues involved with designing and providing courses and programs in management consulting
- **Types of Management Consulting Courses Offered Today.** A variety of consulting courses and programs are offered by academic institutions worldwide. Some universities offer full Masters Degree programs in Management Consulting while other institutions have a major, minor, concentration, or elective courses in Management Consulting at the graduate or undergraduate level. A list of institutions and their current programs are provided and form the basis of a presentation about the different types of offerings.
- **The role of exercises and field projects in a course.** A well designed project provides a valuable learning opportunity for students to reach a major objective where they become closely familiar with the typical phases in a typical consulting project, including the selling of a project, entering the client firm, gathering data, diagnosing issues, implementing solutions and leaving. The advantages and disadvantages of each methodology are discussed.
- **Model teaching session of a case involving consultants.** Teaching a management consulting course at the academic level requires a solid anchoring to reality to makes the material covered come alive and become more meaningful to the students. This goal can be achieved through role plays and exercises, but the main conduit is by far the case method since it encourages the student to follow the very same steps of data analysis, diagnosis, solution and advocacy typical of the consulting process. A short case is used to cover the full spectrum of issues of a typical engagement.

The Pentaeder Model of Decision Making in Organizations

Why it is necessary in a fast-paced world and how it works

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What is the Problem with Decision Making in Organizations?

The propensity of organizations to learn from past decisions and decision-making processes is very poor in general (Ackoff, 2007). Indeed, the global crises of our financial and economic systems is highlighting in a dramatic way that their unmistakable root cause lies in an insufficient understanding of and responsibility for organizational decision-making. No one in organizations seriously denies that joint and focused awareness on better decision-making processes definitely has great potential to generate aligned energy, an increasing number of win-win-games, thus sustainably better results. The need increases to more often opt for true decision-making instead of drifting, i. e. doing business as usual.

The more complex the organizational world becomes and the faster the pace the more we have to work professionally in permanent touch with the essence of the organization's operating system: The decision making process. "Judgment is the core, the nucleus, of leadership. With good judgment, little else matters. Without it, nothing else matters." However, judgment also is "the proverbial elephant on the dining room table that no one dares speak about." (Tichy/Bennis, 2006).

An obviously erratic higher risk level in a global context deserves urgently a new and more profound approach as to how we look at decision-making, sense it, frame it, and go about closing the gap between paramount importance and little conscious awareness as well as investments in personal and organizational learning.

What do I aim at in my work and with this symposium?

I try to close the gap between high relevance and comparatively little awareness as to the craft of high-quality decision-making. I try to elicit and facilitate ongoing and structured communications that otherwise would not take place. I help to craft decision-making processes in a professional way. I urge to put decision-making on the shortlist when it comes to investing in organizational capabilities.

How Do We Get There?

More than 10 years ago we began to develop what eventually became a) the *Pentaeder Model of Decision Making in Organizations* and b) three core tools that put the model into practice.

- The *Pentaeder Model* is anchored in the conviction that decision making, and therefore consulting, in organizations is by necessity to be conceived as intervening in 3 linked task-related social systems at the same time:

- **personality in varying roles** (where psychology applies and awareness plus responsibility – in the literal sense of the word - and context sensitivity make the difference),
 - **the organization as system** (made up of processes, culture, strategy und structure) in its context, and
 - **teams** in varying arrangements and sizes (where membership and the variety of perspectives is key) as the bridge between persons in their roles and the organization.
- The Pentaeder Model depicts the “decision making space” as an integrated issue linking risk awareness and process quality with the three social system levels. Up to now this integrated systemic view is not the rule but the exception although it is obviously necessary.
- The core part of the symposium will be dedicated to describing the practical use and usefulness of three intertwined tool boxes which we call:
- Kairos-Decision-making-Profile, a questionnaire with 112 choices that show the personal preferences in the 8 primary dimensions of decision making. Kairos (the ancient greek god responsible for the right moment) elicits communications and learning agendas about appropriate decision-making on the personal and team level.
 - Decisio-Process-Map which is primarily used to guide task-centered communications in varying team settings and networks, thus linking the personal preferences in decision making with the organizational perspective and challenges.
 - D-Code-Analysis finally as a set of tools (including systemic interviews and an adaptation of the presencing approach of C. O. Scharmer) to elicit rather narrowly focused communications about the organization’s cultural context of implicit decision rules in which the business, the individual personalities and teams / networks flourish well – or not so well.

What is the contribution we hope to make?

This approach induces sustainable awareness within the client system by linking content and process tightly and renders safety through a variety of containers because the perspective is an unusual one. We nurture organization-wide responsibility for good risk assessment. We facilitate, particularly under high pressure and in crisis times, in taking the middle road of focused high energy between fighting too much (overreaction, equals to bad decisions) and flight (i. e. denial and paralysis, equals to bad decision processes, too).

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European Standard “Management Consultancy Services”

Development, Value, Trend

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There is a growing need for clarity about what can be expected from a management consultant. Clients increasingly insist on more transparency with regard to what management consultancy actually involves and how management consultants work. Clarity in the way management consultants works, and how the process of consultancy develops, can lead to a successful outcome.

Role of Standards in Management Consultancy

Standards can be recognized as useful tools that increase transparency in the exchange of goods and services and hence client’s confidence. Standardization is a main factor in efficiently trading B2B services, saves time, budget and other resources during service delivery and thus shows the high quality of management consultancy services to the customer, mainly by

- improving the service delivery performance through using standardised procedures
- providing a basis to compare service offers and to decide on the best service partner
- facilitating internal processes for offering, delivering and accounting management consultancy services.

Standardization need neither restrict competition nor inhibit innovation. An appropriately prepared standard will encapsulate currently accepted good practice in a manner that does no more than make it universally understandable and uniformly applicable. This gives innovative management consultancy providers the freedom to introduce new practice with the intention of developing excellence in management consultancy provision and achieving competitive advantage, secure in the knowledge of the benchmarks against which their service improvements will be judged.

Standards for management consultancy require equitable participation of beneficiaries and providers supported by a broadly based cross section of stakeholder representatives.

European Standard “Management Consultancy Services”

The Lisbon Accord and the issue of a Draft Services Directive demonstrated that the heads of Government wished to establish a “borderless” market for goods and services and to address this issue with vigour and determination. As part of this programme, CEN (the European standards body covering the EU and EFTA countries) has decided to establish a set of “service standards” for the nominated services. This programme has started and with management consultancy being so prominent in the Draft Directive, and being the least well

the first professional services for which a standard will be drafted.

"Service standards" can be viewed as another development in the evolution of the standards concepts. They are entirely driven by the customer viewpoint. The concern is how the purchased service fits into the buying organisation, how they decide to need and procure an external service, i.e. how to select, to manage and to judge potential service providers. The intention is to use best practice in specification, sourcing, delivery and quality of business-related services.

The preparation of this service standard for management consultancy will evolve quickly. The project committee PC 381 established by CEN – comprising European representatives of the consultancy industry and relevant stakeholders - met to prepare the draft CEN service standard "Management Consultancy Services".

The purpose of this standard is defined as to support the business relationship between clients and MCSP (Management Consultancy Services Providers) by developing transparency and understanding. This standard aims at providing recommendations and requirements (if identified and agreed) for offering, procurement, execution and evaluation of management consultancy services. The rationale for the standard under preparation is to share European best practices in management consultancy, whereas the following benefits were defined:

- to remove barriers to cross-border consultancy services;
- to deliver better value services to clients;
- to improve the quality and professionalism of management consultancy in Europe;
- to reduce the risks associated with management consultancy assignments;
- to increase transparency among consultants and clients.

The draft for enquiry is foreseen by December 2009. The consultation will then occur on a Europe wide basis, the publication of the standard is expected in 2011. The agreed standard "Management Consultancy Services" is then mandatory for all CEN member countries and must supersede any existing national standards.

Having a service standard for management consultancy services is considered to be a tremendous advancement for the role of the professional bodies and a positive contribution to the success of the management consultancy profession and all those who practise in it.