

RIDE THE PEAK OF THE WAVE!

How future-proof is your leadership?

Govert van Sandwijk, Time To Grow Global



According to a recent McKinsey research paper:

“Most job growth in mature economies involves complex interactions, not routine production or transaction work.”

Just as the factory-like production of goods and services is on the decline, the need for factory-like coordination and management is as well.

We are coming out of an era in which the most successful companies were those that produced consistent numbers over time. Consistent quality or in other words predictability was the number one value driver. These companies were favorites on the global stock markets and loved by employees for the job security they offered.

We now see this same predictability accomplished by using automation and standardization. But more important it is not sufficient anymore. Customers expect a lot more.

“As a result, working for factory-like, predictable companies is not such a safe bet anymore.”

The security that these companies once offered has been replaced by insecurity and uncertainty about whether your job will disappear.

HIGH-TOUCH AND HIGH-TECH

The number one value driver set to emerge is flexibility and surprise. Already, the most valued companies are no longer those with long histories and that were established several decades ago. Instead, they are companies that are able to fully automate and standardize the transactional elements of their business and to focus squarely on interaction with their customers. Think, for example, of Google, Apple, Uber and Airbnb. There are also examples of older companies that have successfully reinvented themselves. For instance, IKEA is currently transforming from a standardized push strategy retailer to a true Omni channel retailer where customers are turned into fans that are empowered to interact with and buy from IKEA in any way they want.

As a result, future business practice will require interaction and connection between highly skilled and creative people who will in turn interact and connect with customers. Also, customers won't behave as they do right now but will instead demand authenticity as well as quality from interactions.

I would like to highlight three implications of this shift for people in management positions:

INTERACTION, INTERACTION, INTERACTION

In our work as leadership and organizational development consultants we meet a lot of managers

who bury themselves under piles of spreadsheets and engage in lots of number crunching. Often they feel pressured to get short-term results. They use this as an excuse to not focus on the people they are supposed to be leading. The consequence is that each time it becomes harder to deliver short-term results because each time more people disengage. Start investing in developing what makes you human: your social and emotional intelligence.

SOCIAL TRIBES NOT STRUCTURES

As a lot of us have been raised with the idea that predictability in organizations is a key goal, we have developed a deep rooted mindset that views organizations as structures made up of combined processes where we perform well if we comply. Change this mindset by seeing organizations as social tribes where performance is measured by the quality and frequency of meaningful interactions.

LEADERSHIP NOT MANAGEMENT

If you want compliance you need management. If you want engagement, ownership and real output you need leadership. Tribes are not managed, they are led. To be a leader you need followers. This is not the same as being appointed a manager and having employees. If you want to be a leader you need to invest in relationships with those who might want to follow you. This means offering inspiration and helping others to see the bigger WHY. It also means being clear about boundaries and really providing people with room for ownership. Finally, it means letting go of what used to make you a successful manager.