

**Christian Majer/Brigitte Schaden/Luis Stabauer**  
**Light Up The Team Fire**  
**Social Competence: The Success Factor in Project Management**

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## Foreword

Projects are everywhere: Companies, institutions, associations and public administration often carry out part of their duties in the form of a project. However, professional project management is seldom implemented. All too often, it is "forgotten" that one of the success factors in project management is team work. The basis for this - communication, leadership, motivation, team spirit and conflict management - will be made familiar and more understandable to you by the many means used in this book.

Thanks to our extensive experience as project managers, managers, mediators, trainers, consultants and coaches, we are convinced that projects can only be successfully carried out if the project manager has the corresponding social competence.

### Textbook, reference book or novel?

A bit of everything. You are holding three books in one in your hand.

The project management story is a practical case study, which aims to inform as well as entertain. Alongside the chapter contents, we illustrate the topics relevant to social competence in a literary manner, at the same time taking into account standards of the two international project management organizations, the International Project Management Association (IPMA®) and the Project Management Institute (PMI®).

Our story: Katharina Berghof, consultant and coach, prepares the seasoned project manager Walter Pointer for his new job as program manager and for certification in project management. With experience from coaching sessions and Katharina Berghof's preparatory texts, distributed throughout the chapters of this book, Walter Pointer goes from being a social competence grouch to becoming a sensitive, reflective program manager.

Walter's experience and insights can be seen in each chapter in the form of condensed tips and tricks, which contribute towards the book's reference aspect. The index facilitates the search for relevant social competence models and methods, whereby this volume is also a highly useful and clearly laid out textbook.

Walter and Katharina's story appears throughout the book on a gray background. The story delves into the fundamental issues regarding social competence and continually highlights aspects of its implementation. When simply consulting the book or preparing for project management qualifications, the story can of course be passed over.

### Our approach

Practically orientated problems and the impulse towards daily program and project work are the reason for our systemic, constructivist approach. Of course, not every method presented is suitable for every situation. Anyone who tries to implement as much as possible in one go, is more than likely to be faced with a lack of understanding and rejection from their team members and sponsors. Intelligent selection and dosing adapted to the level of knowledge and development within the team are the secrets of success in implementing the methods presented here. For putting social competence into practice, as well as for certification, extensive know-how and in-depth knowledge of methods are an important requirement. With this

book '**Light Up The Team Fire – Social Competence: The Success Factor in Project Management**' we aim to add a useful tool to the project leader's toolbox, but by no means overwhelm them with too much information.

In times of fast-changing methods and concepts in business management, stability in project work is close to our hearts. We can see it above all in the reinforcement of team work from a systemic perspective. The reflective approach and the learning processes deriving from it can lead to a project culture which, despite admitting new trends, does not go along with all the methodical fads.

### **Acknowledgments**

No book exists thanks to just one, or even three people. Many people were directly or indirectly involved and without them this book would not exist. Friends, relatives and colleagues from our networks acting as external proofreaders and readers have considerably influenced the quality of the book with their dedicated feedback.

We would particularly like to thank:

Wolfgang Ammer – for his caricatures, they are an additional, humorous way of representing our topics.

Thomas Berousek – for his revision of the diagrams.

Stefan Kutzenberger – our story became compelling and well-rounded through his literary eyes.

Birgit Straka, whilst proofreading, found a few inconsistencies and mistakes and we gladly took her advice.

Kirsty Olivant – for her careful and sensitive translation.

You can read this book however you like. As a non-fiction book for consolidation and reflection, as a reference works in the case of practical questions, using the tips for project leaders for fast orientation or as a storybook for an exciting coaching process. Anyone who just wants to read the story can - but not just individual chapters, this would lose the thread of the plot.

Experiencing social competencies means also taking into account gender roles. For this reason, we have chosen to keep to the neutral form by using 'they' and 'themselves' when sometimes only referring to an individual, thus avoiding favoring either sex.

With our work, we would also like to bear in mind the constantly increasing internationalization of project management, as well as new reading habits. The book is therefore available in German and English, as well as in e-book format.

Christian Majer, Brigitte Schaden, Luis Stabauer

## Introduction

Walter Pointer finds it highly positive that young people are so creative, but why does his son's strange student nativity play have to last so long? He was out and about on his own, his wife had stayed at home in Purkersdorf, wanting to finish hanging up the Christmas decorations.

As he finally arrives at the Leopold Museum in the Vienna museum quarter, the large atrium is already empty. The guided tours through the art of the Vienna Jugendstil, as the first part of this year's Christmas celebrations, have already begun. Not that this bothers Walter Pointer very much. But he hates arriving late. For twenty-five years he has paid attention to the deadlines agreed in his projects. On his fifty-third birthday, one of his colleagues even congratulated him fondly with "Happy Birthday, Walter Punctual."

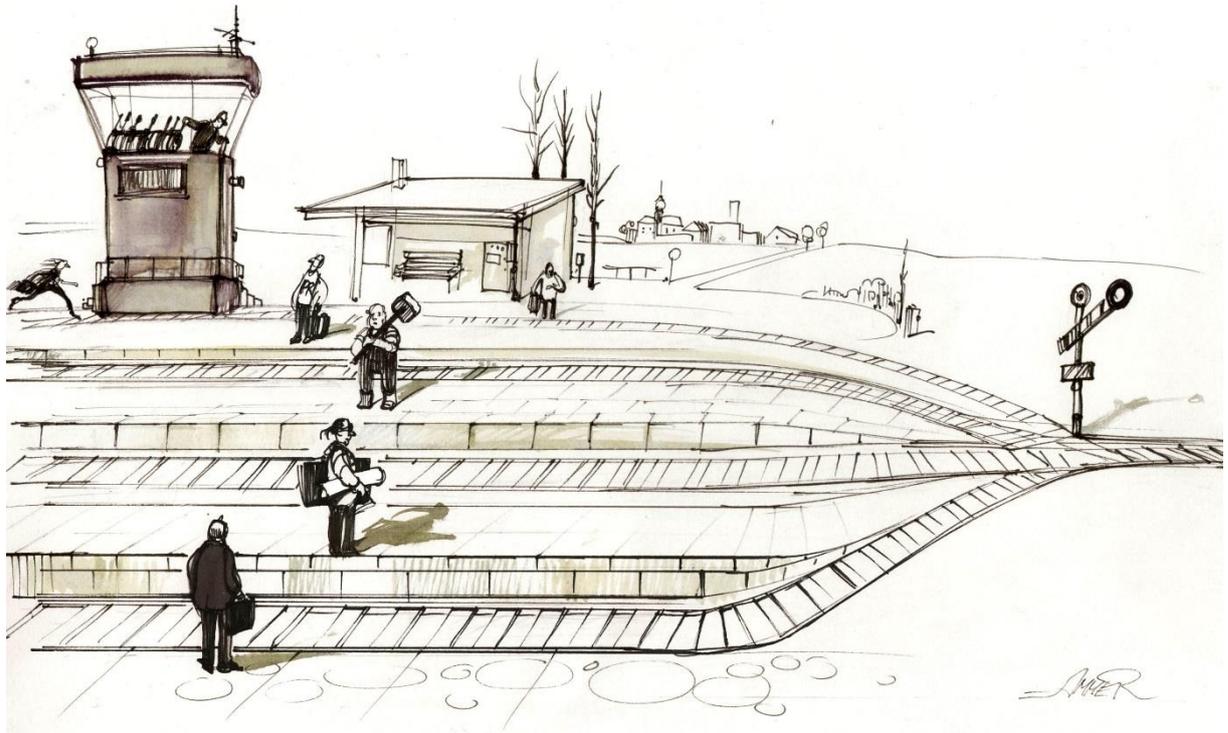
In the atrium, dimly lit with just a few Christmas lights, a catering company is preparing the buffet for dinner. Next to the bar stands a pretty waitress, leafing through a museum brochure. Probably an art student, thinks Pointer. "So, good pictures?" he asks her, to pass the time chatting whilst the others come back from the guided tour. The girl looks up and gives him a friendly grin. "Yes, very good. I've been here quite a few times. The museum has the biggest collection of Egon Schiele's work in the world." Walter Pointer nods, not knowing what he could add about Schiele. "I've never been here before," he admits, to keep the conversation going, "and all the guides have already left." "Art facilitators," the student corrects him. Pointer looks at her inquiringly. "There aren't guides in museums anymore," she explains to him, "due to the historical connection." Pointer nods again, I understand, at the end of the day she's not dealing with an idiot. "Contents are conveyed instead of leading a herd through the museum. It's nicer, isn't it?" she adds. Walter Pointer can do nothing except nod once again.

The waitress goes back to leafing through the brochure, but Pointer is after a conversation. "Could you pour me a glass of sparkling wine?" he asks. She looks at him somewhat confused. "I don't know if I'm allowed to," she says. Walter winks at her in a patronizing manner, "Of course you're allowed to, sweetie. I'm letting you." The girl shrugs with her pretty, bare shoulders, goes behind the counter, fills a glass with sparkling wine and hands Pointer the glass with an enchanting, somewhat ironic smile. As if she wants to say, I'm really an art history student and not a waitress, thinks Pointer and has to smile too. He raises his glass, winks again, something that he doesn't normally do, and takes a sip of the bubbly wine, which immediately gives him a pleasant tickle in his empty stomach, but the girl is no longer paying attention to him and is reading the brochure once more. Walter would have liked to have chatted for longer, but all of a sudden he can't think of anything else to say. The silence doesn't appear to bother her. The atrium slowly starts to fill up, the guided tours have obviously come to an end. Schmolz comes up to Pointer grinning broadly "So, here you are, propping up the bar, it suits you. Art is not your thing?" What did this young Schmolz want from him? He's only been in the company a few months, became head of department right away and apparently always aggressive, ready for senseless taunting. Pointer decides to ignore him, easily done, as Hans Fornach has just come into the atrium.

Hans, who he employed fifteen years ago as an intern straight out of college, is now head of the Project Management office and his boss. It doesn't normally bother him that Hans has overtaken him, he's really good at his job. And at the same time

always fair and friendly with him. But sometimes he does feel the sting: Why him and not me, why the young graduate and not the older, more experienced guy? "Hi Walter, good to see you here," Hans greets him warmly. "I see that you've already made your acquaintance with Doctor Berghof." Pointer looks around confused. The waitress puts the brochure down grinning mischievously and greets Hans with a kiss on the cheek. "Hello Hans," she says. "Kathi," is all he says, looking at her admiringly. Pointer is stunned, the waitress and Hans? Although she is obviously no waitress and no student, he's forced to admit. Maybe he should have looked harder at her face and less at her soft, bare shoulders. In the dimmed Christmas light, Katharina Berghof does actually look very young. But, looking more closely, Pointer sees that she is a fair bit older, with a cheerful, youthful demeanor, but no longer a young student, probably even well over thirty, Hans' age perhaps. How embarrassing. Did he actually call her 'sweetie'? Ground swallow me up. That's not normally his style. What's come over him? "Walter, look here," says Hans, "I'd like to officially introduce you to Doctor Berghof. It's possible that you will have more to do with each other over the next year." Walter tries to avoid Ms Berghof's playful smiling face. Whatever does Hans mean by that? He has no idea, but is sure that it has nothing to do with catering. Before he can say anything or let the ground swallow him up in embarrassment, he hears the voice of the staff representative Hannes Ruhs over the loudspeakers: "Hello, hello? Ladies and Gentlemen, if I could have your attention please ..."

## A. Social Competencies



### A new challenge

Once again, his son makes him see red: On this January morning, Walter Pointer wanted to be in the office before 8 am as that is where he can work on his e-mails best, but he has to wait a quarter of an hour for his beloved son and so doesn't get sat down at his desk until around 8.30 am.

The same story, day in, day out: Ten minutes until his laptop finishes synchronizing with all of the company network security settings, and at 9 am he is supposed to be chairing the first meeting.

And what's that? A high priority, highly confidential request for a meeting at 9.30 from the head of HR Hannes Ruhs, sent to him and cc'd to his boss:

**Subject:** Meeting

**From:** Hannes Ruhs <hannes.ruhs@group-vienna.at>

**Date:** Fri, 01/ 15/ 2014, 07:34

**To:** Walter Pointer <walter.pointer@group-vienna.at >

*Dear Mr. Walter Pointer,*

*Yesterday on the management board the course was set for the future of our company. Up until now, only a few people have been informed, so I ask you to observe the strictest discretion, also regarding the contents of this message.*

*During planning, the head of our Project Management office, Hans Fornach, put your name forward for an extremely important task.*

*I therefore request that you come to my office for a brief first meeting.*

*@ Hans, if you have time, please come too.*

*Hannes Ruhs*

"That sounds important," thinks Walter to himself. "Now I have to call off the 9 am meeting last minute - shame that nobody in the project team is in a position to head a decent meeting - and what reason do I give for canceling?"

Minutes later, Walter sends an e-mail to the project team, an urgent project deadline serves as an excuse, and while he's waiting for receipt of confirmation, he tries to reach Hans. He finally gets hold of his boss, who yet again doesn't have a clue. After a brief explanation from Walter he just says: "Aha, is it that time already? Of course, I'm coming. We'll meet the assistant five minutes beforehand, you know, on the 9th floor, where the terraces are."

Everything but relaxed, Walter flies through the other e-mails. His thoughts are already on this mysterious invitation and his anger at his son surges once again. Although he's already 19, Walter has constant trouble with him, and now, to make matters worse, they had taken his driver's license away from him, so he had to drive him into the center of Vienna every day. "But what does Ruhs care," he mutters under his breath.

Walter pockets his cell phone and takes another quick look in the mirror: The old suit with the pants that are too tight and the ancient blue tie had seen better days and his hair was getting thinner day by day! What does it matter, Ruhs wants something from me, not the other way round. With this realization in mind he grabs himself a coffee from the machine and picks up his note book on his way up to the 9th floor.

He waits for Hans by the door and is glad to have worked well with him for the last 15 years, not bothered that Hans has overtaken him on the career ladder. Anyhow, he's a graduate engineer and even if no titles are used in the company, in Austria they're paid for. Hans arrives on time, they exchange a few words and announce their arrival in the anteroom.

Hannes Ruhs himself comes out, greets both of them almost amicably and invites them into his office. A heavy leather couch, a giant desk and a modern bright orange painting dominate the room. While the assistant gets everyone coffee, Ruhs refers once again to the matter of confidentiality and directly addresses Walter Pointer:

"Mr. Pointer, I've heard a lot of good things about you and not least because Hans Fornach recommended you. Perhaps you already have an idea where I'm going with this. You now have the chance to honor your name and pursuant to the decision made by the board of directors yesterday to totally reorganize the Austrian offices with their 8,642 employees, give the company a few pointers, as it were."

Ruhs laughs heartily at his own joke. "Seriously: After an initial pre-analysis, we have made plans for you to direct this reorganization program. Therefore, I ask you to swiftly complete or redistribute your current projects by May 15 at the latest. At that time we will begin with the intensive program preparation, of course, you will immediately be involved in the program and project planning."

He then summarizes why the reorganization is necessary. He can barely answer Walter's questions. "We only made the decision yesterday and the supervisory board and company management in Munich still have to approve it." Walter Pointer was unable to find anything else out. However, one thing was clear to him: He now had a very important company development program to lead. Happy about the recognition but feeling queasy at the same time, he went back to his office.

That was all to start with. There was no more information. Except that Hans had revealed to Walter confidentially the six names of the future project managers.

In mid February, Hans Fornach, in his role as head of the Project Management office, invited the program team to a workshop to be held at Gardenhotel Altmannsdorf on March 10, 2014. "*Consolidation of the program concept and first steps towards program team building*" with Katharina Berghof as moderator being the only point on the agenda. Walter reads the explanatory note that the moderator is a project and program management coach and will send an article to the participants to help them prepare for the workshop and feels as if someone has punched him in the stomach.

Since the Christmas party he's been trying not to think about his embarrassing behavior. How he mistook Ms Berghof for a student, addressed her informally, called her 'sweetie'. That's really a compliment, he tries to convince himself. But he knows that it'll be unpleasant having to face her again. On top of that, where she's apparently been chosen to teach him something. Why on earth, after so many decades in the profession, did he need a program team-building workshop? That could only occur to people like Hans Fornach. But wasn't there something between Hans and this lady Doctor? He vaguely remembers a feeling of tension as both of them greeted each other in the atrium of the Leopold Museum. A crackle in the air, as if the two of them had had a romantic liaison or something like that. It'd probably be a good idea to talk about it with Hans over a beer, man to man. Then he could also mention the fact that he doesn't think much of workshops and coaching and that the company could save the money and he could save the time.

On March 1, the following article arrived in an e-mail attachment:

*"Dear Project Managers,*

*Your PM office manager, Hans Fornach, has informed me that you will soon be managing exciting projects as part of the company restructuring program. My warmest congratulations, this leap of faith by management is no coincidence.*

*To my knowledge, you are all qualified project managers with many years of experience. In this new task, it is a matter of radical changes and you will be working very closely and trustingly with your teams. Experience has shown that small and maybe even bigger conflicts are to be expected in all projects, as well as the program team.*

*Your board of directors assigned me to moderate a workshop on the theme 'Social Competencies' and I ask you to read the attached article in preparation for the workshop.*

*Please write on 2 - 3 note cards in key words your comments on the text (criticism, Aha! moments, proposals, questions ...), with a marker and clearly legible so that we can pin it to the bulletin board to work on. Please bring them with you to the workshop.*

*We will begin with your points.*

*If anyone has ideas about the program name, please make a note of that too - we will then discuss it.*

*I look forward to working with you,*

*Best wishes,*

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## **Competencies and performance**

We see competence as a retrievable skill, which is neither genetically innate, nor exclusively a product of maturity.

Competencies are therefore dispositions of deliberate actions and reveal themselves as attributions on the basis of observations (made by others and/or by myself).

In addition to this, there are states of knowledge related to qualifications and expertise (standardized), which do not necessarily have to be expressed by an action.

Competencies are abilities, which represent a necessary requirement for performance in the sense of project success or outcomes, however, they are not a guarantee for success in themselves.

In practice, competence is also sometimes applied as responsibility, authority and entitlement. We do not refer to this meaning here.

Social competencies in project management are therefore all capabilities

- that are needed for communication in the broadest sense and for handling communication problems,
- which you can purposefully implement in order to encourage, reflect upon and develop an individual, the team and yourself,
- with which you can ensure sufficient motivation in an individual and the team to be able to achieve your goal,
- with which you not only value the diversity among the team, but are also able to use additional potential, and
- with which you can recognize changes in systems (project organization, stakeholders, etc.), as well as derive policy proposals and monitor and control the necessary interactions.

In this sense, having social competencies in project management means above all to act in a communicative, cooperative and self-organized way, to creatively pull apart and piece together matters with others, to behave in a group and relationship

oriented manner and to develop and implement plans, tasks and goals as part of a team.

### **A prerequisite for this is self-competence**

To be able to assess yourself, to behave reflexively and on your own authority, to develop productive attitudes, values and motives, to display your own abilities, motivations and resolutions and to evolve and learn creatively both within and outside the scope of your project work.

According to Holtz, social competencies can be defined psychologically in increasing levels of difficulty as follows:

1. **Expression:** I can make myself understood, putting forward my own knowledge, opinions and wishes;
2. **Receipt:** I can listen, observe other group members, perceive incidents and group-dynamic processes;
3. **Openness:** I am open to challenges, can accept criticism and am prepared to argue with others;
4. **Cooperation:** I can recognize and perceive my own possible courses of action and responsibilities, adapt and adjust to the actions of others;
5. **Creation:** I can start and build relationships, find my place within a group, criticize according to the situation, lead a learning sequence or talk, behave appropriately in group-dynamic processes;
6. **Identification:** I can adapt to others and address conflict situations appropriately, maintain a good balance between engagement and distance and am aware of my own possibilities and limitations.

These points can by all means be used as a basis for self-analysis and analysis for team building. Requirements for each team member would be points 1 to 4, ideally point 5 as well. The project and program leader should in any case reach point 5 and in addition show identification (point 6) as a competence.

Of course, competencies in project management are constantly matched with the necessary qualifications, e.g.:

- If your communicative competencies are good, but you cannot manage the communication structure agreed upon in the project team via new media, then with your available competencies you will not be able to carry out any activity or action.
- If the company processes are to be newly established in a company development project and you have never heard of a process map, your social competencies as far as group dynamics are concerned will only help you to a certain extent.

### **Everyone in a project organization should have social competencies**

As project and program leaders are also to set an example and are responsible for team development, they above all need:

- **Self-reflection:** When leading teams and individuals, as a project manager you rarely have linear authority (= hierarchical). In spite of this, goals,

deadlines, resources and budget allowances should be adhered to. Cyclical monitoring loops: planning - implementation - control - management - new planning, require constant self-reflection in order to be efficiently managed. The capacity to act is questioned and at the same time to be observed, how you are affected emotionally is to be perceived and to be taken into account to be able to scrutinize it.

- **Social diagnosis capacity:** The capacity to observe social situations and to be able to perceive them differently is a prerequisite for acting successfully. How about the working capacity of a team? What is challenging them or obstructing them at present? What differences (diversity) are there in the team? What differences move the team? What subjects are avoided?
- **Negotiation:** Most of us rush from one meeting to another. The quality of our work increasingly depends on our capacity to conduct different conversations in a professional manner. To do this, we need to find a suitable way to conduct the conversation: a different method for a feedback talk than for a discussion to resolve conflicts. To represent strategic interests, this would be different from an advisory, motivational or problem-solving talk.
- **Ability to work in a team:** The ability to be able to position yourself in a team as regards content, to put forward creative ideas and to place knowledge at others' disposal at the right time secures you a place in the team. To be able to work in a team, however, you must also relate to the group: build upon the suggestions of others, listen, ensure that everyone participates, make and communicate decisions clearly, address conflicts and offer solutions, as well as provide relief.
- **Management of project and program sequences:** Here, competence is needed to structure phases and work processes in single steps and to structure suitable social contexts, develop designs for all types of common operations and to moderate social processes. To structure and moderate social processes in the sense of social contexts in Project management, means to arrange cooperation in the work processes so that it is target-oriented both in the team, as well as bilaterally, but is still socially compatible.
- **Leadership competence:** Giving team members orientation, heading towards commonly established and accepted goals and reaching them together, is the main function of leadership. The better project leaders can direct projects through social influences and the longer they can keep their team motivated, the more firmly they will be able to implement their leadership competencies as goal and results-oriented measures.
- **Organizational competence:** Organizational capacity has gained enormous significance in temporary organizations. Reaching targets is to a great extent dependent upon the performance capacity of the project organization. How does the best possible project organization stay on its feet until it reaches its targets and how can you help get the ball rolling? Which project organization changes are necessary and when, and how can you achieve them? What expert and social competencies do you need in the project team and how can you integrate them? For permanent team observation and organizational adjustments, a high level of social competencies is a necessary requirement. Via the project stakeholder analysis and the measures arising from it, organizational competence is also necessary for observations and change initiatives outside your own project and program organization.

- **Capacity of assertion:** Project managers move along the narrow divide between all too modest reserve and lonely, authoritative decisions. Ability to assert yourself depends both upon the acceptance of the decisions in the team as well as on the project sponsor's evaluation of the results. How much capacity to make decisions and assert oneself a project leader has or can implement also depends on how much of these responsibilities the project sponsor wishes to hand over.
- **Acting as an example:** What ultimately and decisively distinguishes one project and program manager from another in terms of social competencies is whether they apply them to their own lives and can be perceived as genuine in their actions.

To be able to carry out managerial actions in programs and projects, we need to behave in ways that encourage social added value (gratification) among the team members.

We need the

- capability to exert influence in a cooperative, convincing and consultative manner;
- capability to put yourself in the place of others;
- capability to react appropriately (e.g. to communicate clearly what can still be changed in the planning and what cannot);
- capability to motivate, to attune to cooperation partners confidently, and
- sensitivity, to be able to evaluate the reactions of the cooperation partners within the context of the project/program.

### **A new challenge (continued)**

Two days before the workshop Hans Fornach and Walter Pointer meet for an after work beer.

"Walter," says Hans after the first big mouthful, "this program will be the preliminary crowning of your professional career. But it won't be easy. Have you read the article Katharina sent?"

"I've skimmed over it, it's all too theoretical for me," Walter replies.

"Your experience up to now as far as team management is concerned won't be enough for leading this program. You'll have department managers and members of the board in the team, and it's highly likely that there'll be crises and conflicts that are really heavy. Just think about the specifications referring to a reduction in personnel costs. I have the go-ahead from the board for you to carry on with coaching until the fall. Katharina will be in charge of that. It's a great chance for you, take it."

"I will, no worries, I'll take care of it. I have to sit down and have a look at the article in peace and quiet when the product projects finished. I haven't really thought about coaching - does it make any sense? I don't know anything about this Dr. Berghof."

"You won't be able to do everything on your own anymore and will have to depend on your team, there's a whole lot of special tools and methods for that. And I tell you

quite openly, I wouldn't stand for a refusal of this coaching support on the board. What's more, you should get the senior project management certificate by fall. Kathi is a specialist in social competence matters and project management. Most managers would jump at the chance to work with her."

Walter cocks his head thoughtfully: "OK, maybe it is actually a good chance to hear an outsider's opinion for once. Tell me a bit about her, you seem to know her?"

"You'll have already heard it, a few years ago we were quite a bit closer on a personal level. She's a really strong woman, late thirties and her charisma, well, you'll witness that soon enough in the workshop. She studied philosophy and economics at the same time, finishing both degrees in record time, and now she writes books, lectures at Vienna University and is a star coach with international experience. Walter, don't let this chance to have Katharina as support pass you by. You'll see, you'll already be thanking me for it after the first session."

"Fine, Hans," Walter empties his beer glass, "I'll see how it goes with this superwoman. Thanks for the information anyway. See you at the workshop the day after tomorrow."

"OK, Walter, keep your ears to the ground." They shake hands and then rush off to their cars.

The workshop with Katharina Berghof took place as planned. Walter's behavior was more lethargic than anything. It seemed to him to be a relaxation day with games thrown in. The cards that the participants brought with them answering the open questions from the article were however actually discussed and photographed with additions made by the moderator.

Workshop Soziale Kompetenzen I		Workshop Soziale Kompetenzen II	
ihre Kärtchen	meine Bemerkungen	ihre Kärtchen	meine Bemerkungen
Was mache ich, wenn mein PRG keine Soziale Kompetenz hat?	Spezielle Gesprächsvorbereitung, eigene Gesprächsführung, wird noch tiefer behandelt.	Was ist ein OE-Projekt?	Ein Organisationsentwicklungsprojekt. Es geht dabei um die Neuausrichtung der Organisation an veränderte Anforderungen, bzw. deren Weiterentwicklung.
Kann man das nicht einfacher schreiben?	Vielleicht, ich konnte es nicht besser, ohne Inhalte zu vernachlässigen.	Gibt es Selbstreflexion?	Coaching ist ein Begleitprozess dafür, das erbetene Feedback eine wichtige Methode - darauf gehen wir später noch genauer ein.
Was mach ich, wenn jemand nicht will-Motivation?	Mein Tipp: Versuchen, die Gründe zu finden (nicht können nicht dürfen) und dort ansetzen. Wenn das nicht hilft, der Teamzusammenhalt mit PRG anstreben.	Gibt es mir die richtigen Kompetenzen für Kompetenzen? Ich habe Kompetenzen bisher als Befugnisse gesehen	Das wird uns im Workshop helfen 😊
Super, das kann ich für meine Zertifizierung brauchen!	Danke, freut mich! 🍀	Jetzt ist mir der Unterschied zwischen Fertigkeit und Kompetenz klar. Danke, ein wichtiger Anstoß mich wieder mehr mit dem Thema zu beschäftigen.	
Nach dem Lesen fräse ich mich auf den Workshop!		Bei der Teamzusammenstellung habe ich keine Milsprache	auch dafür gibt es Methoden und Wege, wir werden sie gemeinsam suchen
Bin gespannt auf den Workshop und freue mich auf die Programmarbeit		Klingt recht schön, die Zeit dafür habe ich aber nicht	Hm, ganz ohne Rufward wird es nicht gehen!

Translation in Progress ...

## B. Project Coaching



### What do I need it for?

His neck is itching and his head aches too. Yesterday, Walter Pointer reflected on the start workshop with a few colleagues from the program team. He had drunk a bit more than usual, disgruntled because that Berghof was so well accepted by them all. Even by his closest friends. Especially as she had pushed him out of the spotlight as program leader. Even over the beer, the only topic of conversation was social competencies. When he left the bar, he had left his umbrella behind.

His first coaching appointment has been arranged for this morning. Not a dash of freewill, after Hans Fornach pushed him into it. Walter is annoyed, as he feels domineered. The initial euphoria relating to his new post as program manager has already flown. He still feels honored, but all this stuff about social competences seems to be over the top to him. To boot, there was the unnecessary coaching with this 'superwoman'. And the icing on the cake, he was to sit for this project management certificate. He hadn't taken an exam for over 30 years and now this. Don't they trust him completely with the program? If so, then what is this all for?

As Walter Pointer enters his office just before 8 am, his new program assistant Roman Krone greets him with the words: "Doctor Berghof is already here. I've let her in, so she can set up." Pointer frowns and strides energetically into his office. He greets his uninvited coach coldly and sullenly, trying to hide his awkwardness. "Let's

get started right away, I've got a lot to do. Roman, please bring us some coffee. Milk and two sugars for me."

"A very good morning to you, Mr. Pointer. It's nice to get to know you better on a professional level." Was that a jibe? Did she mean by that that they'd got to know each other on a private level at the Christmas party? In any case, she seemed to be professional enough, acting formally and not making any stupid comments.

"Unfortunately, we didn't have time at the workshop for a talk in private, but your reputation precedes you," she continues, "I'm looking forward to working with the person who has taken on this great responsibility," she says smiling amicably at Walter Pointer. There's no irony in her eyes, she means what she says. Walter is relieved. Maybe she's already forgotten the little pre-Christmas scenario. Or maybe it wasn't as embarrassing as he remembers it to be, just a few meaningless comments in the half-light of the museum, forgotten even before Hans introduced her to him. This sets his mind at rest and he tries to concentrate on the matter in hand, even if Katharina Berghof is sitting in front of him today, radiant and youthful once again.

"It is, as you say, a great responsibility and a lot of work," Walter Pointer sits down opposite her. "What are we to talk about in this coaching session? What do I have to learn?"

"Well, learning in the school sense, no, that's not what this is about. The main question is: What do you want to achieve, change? You know that of course, it's like in a project: the desired target state."

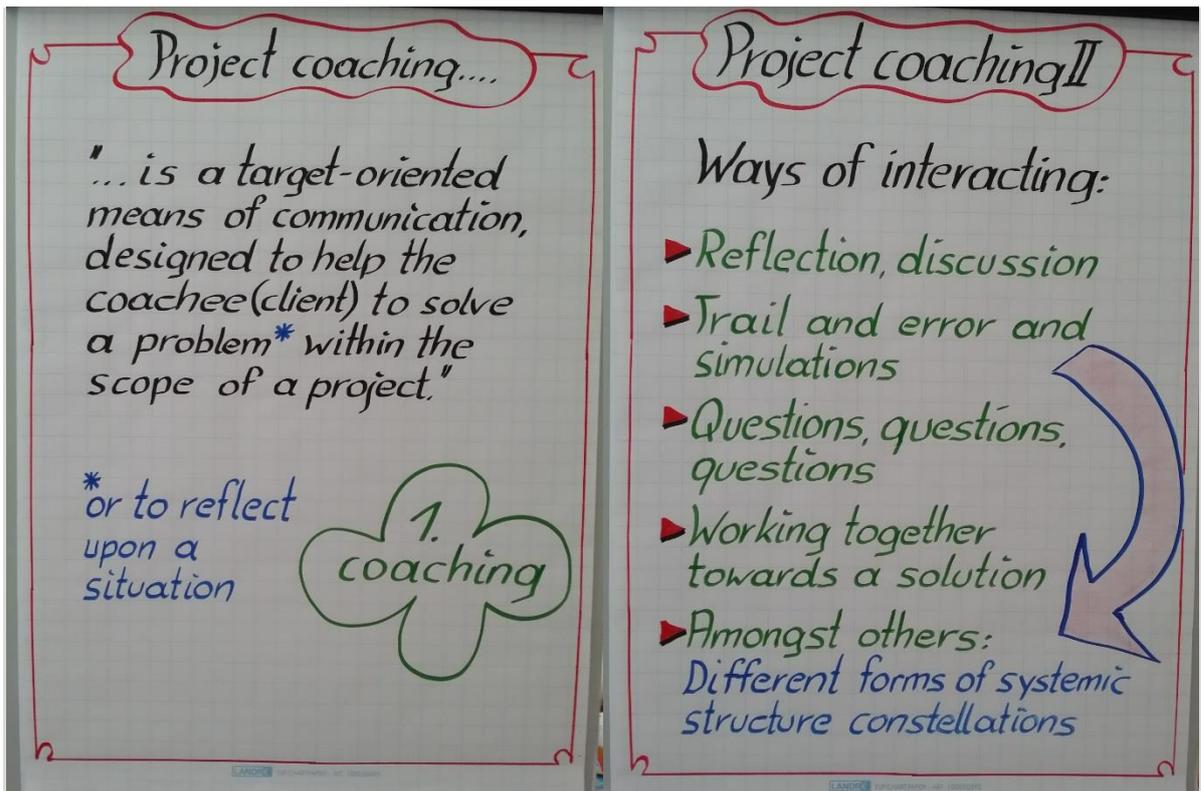
"Change? Me? ... Nothing really. My boss was of the opinion that I needed this coaching as support for my program and moreover, as preparation for this certification exam."

"Hm, if I understand you rightly, you're not completely convinced that coaching could be helpful for you in some way."

"Yes, you could put it like that," says Walter Pointer with a smug undertone. He doesn't want to make it easy for her in any case, that's one thing he is sure about.

"So, how does coaching work exactly? In my mind it's just a new buzzword for further training - intensified in solitary confinement."

Katharina Berghof laughs. "It can come to that, if you stay inside your shell." As the expected reaction to her little quip doesn't surface, she explains in a factual tone: "In my judgment, project coaching is a cooperative approach to help clients or customers to handle a problem or a challenge or to support them." She goes to the flip chart and turns the page.



"I don't have any problems. Maybe I'll have one soon, if I can't work on my program enough. This coaching thing is too theoretical for me, to tell the truth." A cell phone rings. "Excuse me, please." Walter Pointer presses the green button on his cell and stands up. More than ten minutes pass until his conversation comes to an end. "Sorry," Walter Pointer apologizes. "It was about the program, as you may have imagined. Can we leave it there for today? I have to see to something urgently."

Katharina Berghof looks at him calmly: "Mr. Pointer, we can also cancel the coaching course before you've even started it properly. An essential requirement for coaching is free will. If you don't have it, it doesn't make any sense. Let me make a suggestion: We'll use the two hours planned for today to clarify what coaching and certification are. Then you can think it over in peace and quiet, and decide if it's helpful for you or not."

"I didn't wish to offend you, but ..."

"No problem. I'm not offended. I understand that you have a lot to do and that you have a lot of expectation on your shoulders. Just give me a chance to clarify your goals and the course of our planned collaboration."

"OK. We'll try. Where do we start?" Walter Pointer sits back down at the meeting table and takes a sip of the coffee that his assistant had brought in waveringly, as he was on the phone.

"We'll start by making rules for coaching. My guess is that you also agree on some rules with your team regularly during your projects." Katharina Berghof looks at Walter Pointer challengingly, but with a slight smile.

"No, I don't do that. I don't normally have time to. It's usually limited to 'no smoking' and 'no cell phones'..."

"Exactly, no cells." She writes that in blue ink under the heading: Project coaching rules. "Mr. Pointer, there have been empirical studies into why projects fail. What reasons do you suppose?"

Walter Pointer thinks about it for a moment, takes off his glasses and runs his left hand down his face in a bored gesture. "Because of a lack of resources or because too little technological know-how is available."

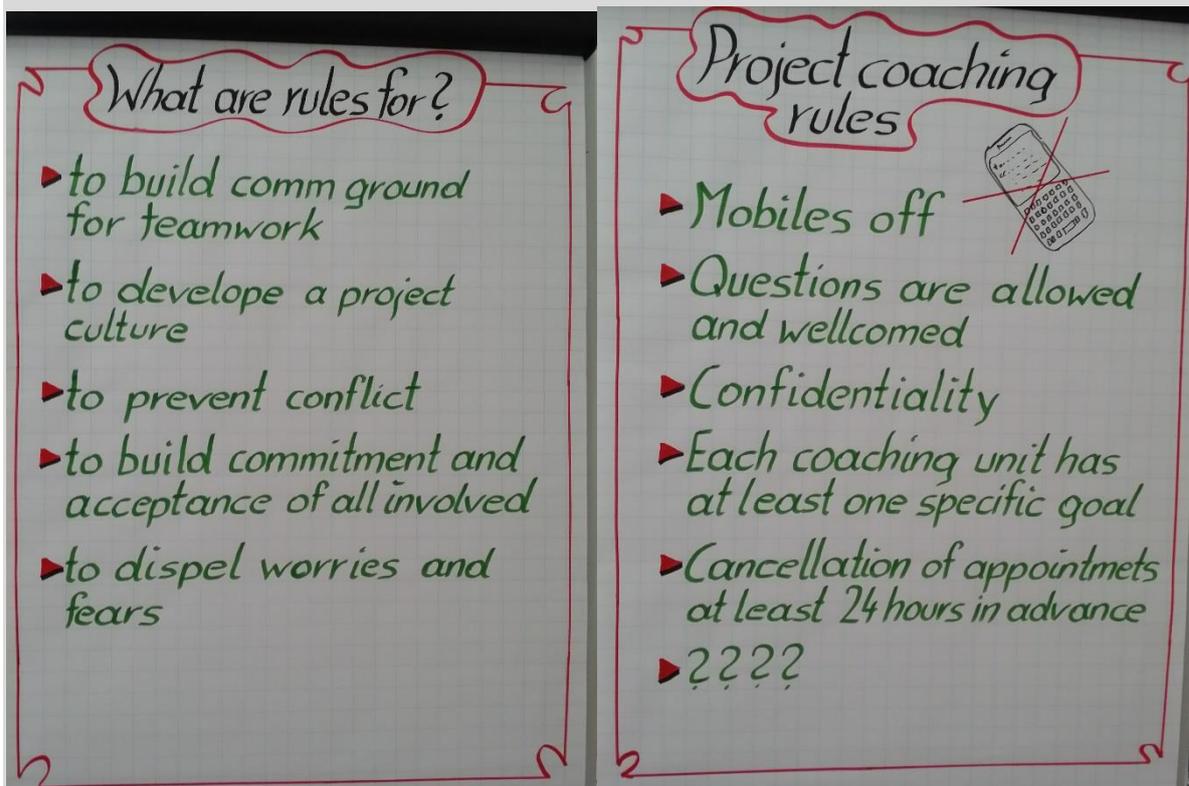
"Yes, those reasons were mentioned. In total, these reasons add up to less than ten percent. What else do you think is critical in achieving success?" Katharina Berghof calmly waits for the answer.

"No idea. You tell me," answers Walter slightly peeved.

"Over sixty-seven percent, about two-thirds of projects, fail because of a lack of social competence. The goals are not clear to the project team. Communication is insufficient. The project team members do not know exactly what they have to do and teamwork hasn't been clarified."

"Why are you telling me that now?"

"Agreements and communication are the basis of all teamwork. In that sense I would like to agree upon some rules for our coaching sessions. No matter how often they are to take place. Let's just imagine for now. At least for today." Katharina Berghof turns the page and writes on a new sheet.



Walter nods and says: "I like that. This, 'as if'."

Katharina Berghof defines each rule, looks at Walter and explains: "Mr. Pointer. This is what I propose. I would like to reach an agreement. Is that OK for you?"

"Yes, it's OK for me. Only, I'd like to put my cell phone in silent mode. In case something important comes up about the program."

"Would it also be possible to give your cell phone to your assistant or to redirect the calls to him, so that you don't have to be looking at your display all the time? If it's really important ... something like the program client urgently needs to speak to you and cannot wait even for a minute, then Mr. Krone will let us know. What do you think about that?"

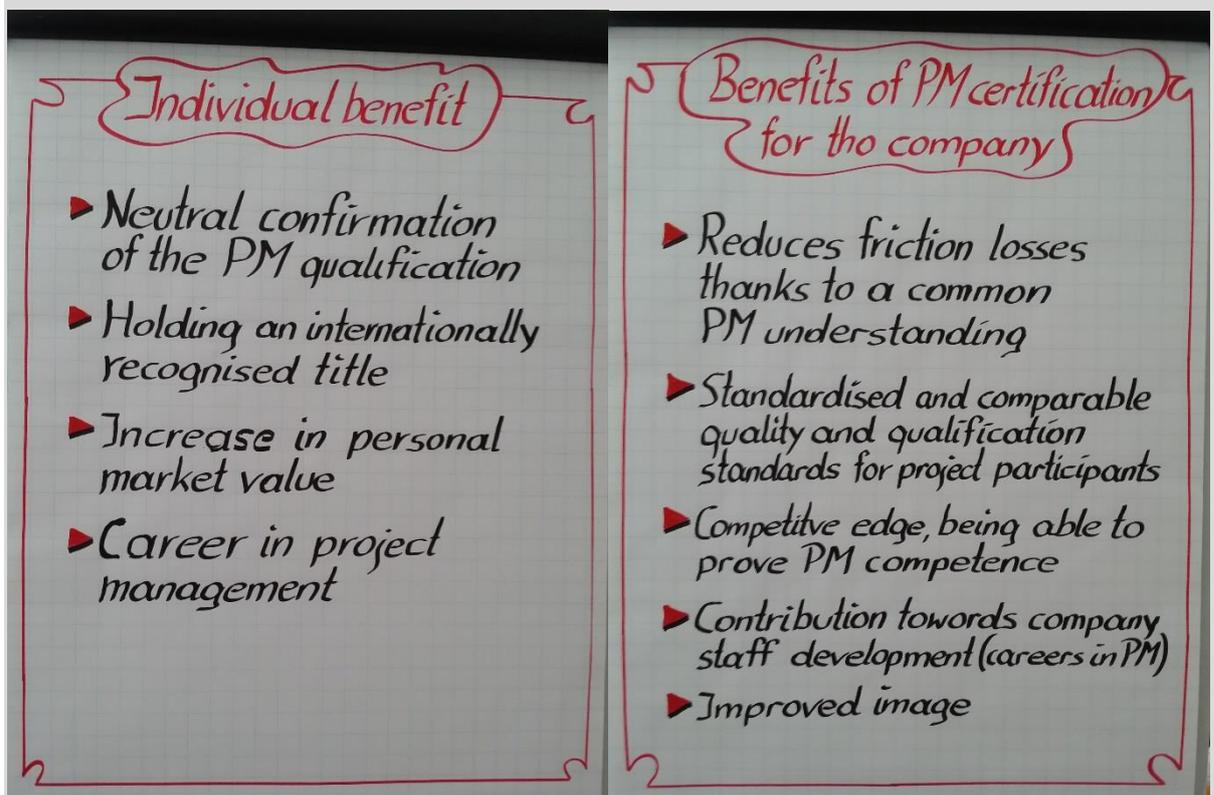
"You're right. I don't have to be available all the time. Agreed. I'll switch my cell off right away."

Katharina asks Walter Pointer if there is anything important missing to ensure constructive, goal-oriented coaching. He sits up straight and breathes deeply. "If we were really to continue with this, then I would also like to know what we will be working on, or if I will be getting something along the lines of small homework tasks to help me prepare beforehand. But nothing too extensive please. If I prepare myself, I think I can learn at my best."

Smiling, she nods: "That's a great suggestion." She adds Walter Pointer's idea to the list. "Shall we use the remaining time to clarify what project management certification is good for and what types there are?"

The next hour flies by and as Katharina Berghof says goodbye, three more pages have been filled in on the flip chart. And an agreement had been made that Walter Pointer would decide by the beginning of next week, Monday morning to be precise, if he wants to continue with the project coaching or not.

Project coaching task, Katharina Berghof called it. Walter Pointer takes another look at the sheet with the coaching task, then turns over and runs quickly through the other sheets on the flip chart once more.



Walter Pointer looks at the clock. Just before noon. He packs his documents up and makes his way to deliver a project. In the lift he thinks about his first coaching session. She's really not that bad, this Berghof. She can't do anything about her good looks; at most, how she dresses. But this shouldn't be a problem. He looks in the mirror and sees a small smile creep onto his face. She's good, I have to give her that. And has the patience of a saint. If I were in her shoes, I'd have thrown in the towel much sooner. But to back down and become subordinate, we're nowhere near to that yet. That would mean that she's won! Now I have to decide whether or not and how this is to continue ...

Katharina Berghof is sitting in her red convertible, getting annoyed with the man in the hat who's driving in front of her at a snail's pace. It's still too cold to open the roof. Shame, that always helps to air things. That was really hard work just now with that Pointer guy, she thinks. I'm completely drained. He can be a stubborn one when he wants to be. But at least not all is lost. He's going to think about how coaching could be useful to him. And if he doesn't want to continue, I've nothing against it. I need every spare minute for the new book. This afternoon I need to finish the chapter on handling resistance in the project team. If this morning wasn't the perfect lead-in for that ... She smiles and happily overtakes the slow coach in front of her. If Hans hadn't put so much pressure on me, as far as I'm concerned I'd cancel the job. Let's wait and see what decision Walter Pointer makes, maybe I'll be spared any more sessions with Mr. Opinionated soon enough. I have to get out for a run this evening without fail. I need that. Am I happy that I don't have a man at home waiting for his dinner to be cooked for him, so he can drink his beer in peace and watch the game! She enjoys the drive, but her thoughts involuntarily turn back to Walter Pointer. Hans had made him out to be such a positive character, she remembers. He must be convinced of his capabilities, or he wouldn't have put his name forward for this responsibility as program manager. And I can depend on Hans. A smile crept onto her face. Obviously, I'll finally have to get to the point. I'll send him another short summary about coaching, maybe that'll help me to create a more open atmosphere.

Coaching has become a temporary fashion. From sport to design and even nutrition, everything is coached nowadays.

Coaching should encourage a balance between multiple demands and different roles in our professional and private lives. More room for a new sense of ease, new points of view, new strategies and lust for life are created in joint sessions.

Coaching is a solution-oriented form of individual or group counseling for people going through change processes and/or conflict situations.

Project coaching refers to the special coaching situation in the context of projects and programs. Based on a project coaching assignment, customized solutions for the concerns and/or problems posed in connection with projects or programs are devised within the scope of project coaching sessions as part of a project coaching process.

The concerns of the coachee (customer, client) with regards to one or more projects will be thoroughly dealt with within the scope of the project coaching assignment. The respective current concerns and goals will be specified and then worked on within this scope at the beginning of each coaching block.

The coach brings the coaching process to life through interventions (questions, common work on contents, tasks, ...). Other forms of support are discussions on possible scenarios and role-playing certain situations (e.g. a conflictive talk with a project team member or with a project client). The project coach can also support the coachee in the preparation of project start workshops or monitoring meetings, as well as moderating in situ, in order to take the load off the project leader.

Requirements for successful coaching are:

- free will, disposition
- a cooperative approach, equality
- use of the coachee's resources (experiences, knowledge)
- appraisal and respect for people and the activities set (and omitted)
- to be open about the matter (the coachee decides what is helpful) and consistent in methods (solution orientation)

## C. Perception and Communication

LAUNCH!



### The coaching begins

May 6, 2014 - The first day of my journal

If somebody had said to me two weeks ago that I was going to write a journal - I don't know: I would probably have taken it to be a bad joke or I would have been annoyed because that person would have been implying that I have typical female mood swings.

Actually, I'm now sitting in front of my company Christmas present, which I received at the office party along with a bottle of sparkling wine from our head of HR Hannes Ruhs. I turn the work diary into a journal and begin to write.

"Sit in your favorite place and switch off. Take in all the smells and listen to your breathing. Slowly take hold of the paper and pen in front of you ... You will see that the words come gushing out of you." Something like that was how Katharina Berghof's instructions sounded. Why was she able to motivate me to write?

Is there a hidden desire to write inside of me?

Is it the appeal of the writing method or prose learning, as Katharina calls it, by which internal conditions are activated and so the most important learning steps are initiated?

Why is she so heavily present in my mind right now? Images appear and I'm surprised at myself - it's best that I don't write them down. I wasn't wrong that day in the Leopold Museum. Ms Berghof is really dizzyingly attractive. Although, according to Hans, she's in her late thirties, she has something youthful, student-like about her. Not only in her appearance, but also in the way she is, I think. She seems to be open to everything, constantly ready to learn from others, to approach others, and yet it's quite clear that I'm the one who learns the most from her. I really have the feeling that Hans is right, that it would be stupid not to make the most of Berghof's knowledge. But of course I would never tell anybody.

### **At my desk back home that evening**

Enough beating about the bush, it's time to make the day's notes on the suggested task: *Writing a learning journal for self-reflection and working on the questions left open in the coaching sessions*, that's what we agreed on the flip chart.

The morning began with something irritating, a false assumption, which however led to more clarity in the end - but step by step, one thing after another:

As I appeared for the arranged meeting with my boss Hans, who upon entering the company was little more than my tutee, he greeted me with "Walter, my headstrong friend, come in, we have to sort a few things out."

What does he want to sort out? Has that got something to do with the last coaching session? were my initial thoughts; and, what's more: Headstrong, he's never called me that before.

Hans knows Katharina from before, has she told him about our last coaching session? Yes, that'll be it, if not, why should Hans call me that? To tell the truth, it infuriated me, I mean, it was her who suggested confidentiality as part of our agreement, so she should stick to it.

Then I put both my feet in it: I told him outright that that wasn't a nice way to summon me to a meeting, to make accusations about things that are confidential under contract.

"Very interesting," was his answer, to which he then added, more seriously this time: "I have neither seen nor heard from Katharina since the team workshop, but you seem to have a guilty conscience."

Of course, now he wanted to know what happened in the last meeting. Apparently he had only called me headstrong because I didn't say a single word to Katharina at the team workshop.

There was no other option but to back down.

The following words that Hans said about me, that are still ringing in my ears, were none of them particularly pleasant: Can't listen, interpreting instead of observing, can't communicate, doesn't really want to lead the program, lacking social competencies, and a few more for sure. I know that he means well, but today I could hear and feel his disappointment and annoyance crystal clear.

Somewhat ashamed, I admitted to Hans my aversion towards people who think they know better and then prove it with scholarly theories. Hans asked if it wasn't also perhaps down to my judgments about women ... Before I had time to answer, he noticed that I wanted to defend myself and simply made a calming gesture. This 'slow down' sign helped me. Yes, there's maybe something in it, sometimes women can

make me hot under the collar, but at the same time I can also gather very positive experiences with independent women. I can't block out my defensive behavior completely and should I really enter into conflict with Hans because of this woman right now?

I took a sip of my coffee and then a sip of water. Hans gave me some time and I was able to confess:

"Yes, Hans, you're right, I stonewalled myself without meaning to. Your suspicion that it's difficult for me to accept information and guidance for the program work from a woman, hm, I think that's right. There isn't really a reason for it, quite the opposite, in the first coaching session she managed to make me acknowledge certain things. And of course: I do want to lead the company program."

Hans was obviously relieved, his typical broad grin appeared and he simply said: "I knew that you were able to think critically about yourself. I'm glad and at the same time looking forward to seeing how your meetings go from now on."

Like two youngsters after scoring a basket, we gave each other a high five and I promised him that I would send my coach an e-mail tomorrow morning at the latest, proposing future collaboration.

I write the e-mail quickly, before my 'better half' calls me for dinner:

**Subject:** my decision

**From:** Walter Pointer <walter.pointer@ group-vienna.at>

**Date:** Sun, 05/06/2014, 18:25

**To:** Coach Katharina <katharina.berghof@bcl.consulting.com>

*Dear Ms Berghof,*

*thank you once again for the initial meeting. As agreed I've mulled over everything again. Our first meeting together had a positive effect.*

*I think that you will be able to support me well in certain aspects and I would like to arrange further coaching appointments with you.*

*Above all I would like to make the most out of your experience in organizational development and your knowledge of project management certification. According to information on the Internet, I have to register for the exam in the next two weeks, to be able to sit it by the 30th of September. It would therefore be very helpful if we could arrange another coaching session before that deadline.*

*In the meantime, the board has discussed the suggestions worked on in the workshop regarding the program name. Our program will be called **SPiRiT 2016** and is to start on 10/10 2014 with a great kick-off. This means that we have to have completed the design project for the program planning by the end of September.*

*Regarding the social competencies that you mentioned, our future work topics are still not very clear. As you mentioned 'perception and communication' as a possible range of topics last time we met, I will look into it and send you the results in time for our next appointment. Maybe you could have a look over them beforehand.*

*I look forward to receiving your appointment proposals and to our future collaboration.*

*Best wishes,*

*Walter Pointer*

*PS: As there are too many interruptions in my office, I welcome your idea of holding future meetings at your office.*

### **May 7, 2014 - I'm actually finding this fun**

I sent the e-mail to Ms Berghof this morning - let's see how long it takes her to write back. I've been doing a little research on the topic that I'm to prepare on the Internet. There's tons of information on it: Meta programs, the four-sided model, the five axioms of communication, Paul Watzlawick also showed up, one-way/two-way communication, controlled dialog, sender-receiver models, I've enough material for the weekend anyway. As bad weather's forecast, I should be able to get my homework done over the weekend.

### **May 10, 2014 - Light is dawning slowly**

Nine pages in the end, she'll be surprised, the lady Doctor. When reading and summarizing I had one or two Aha! experiences. How often had we discussed something in the project team and when asking later, everyone had understood something different. We didn't practice any controlled dialog or each person listened with their own ears to exactly that which suited them best. I can, slowly but surely, imagine how I can put these topics into practice in my coaching sessions, not to mention the reason why, as these eternal misunderstandings have always bothered me - yes, I'm looking forward to the next appointment on May 18. That even surprises me.

Over and out for today. I'll also send the e-mail to Ms Berghof with the attachment to Hans; he should see that I took our last conversation seriously and don't want to disappoint him.

## **1. Perception**

Communication is the exchange of information through signs. The relaying of signs of all kinds takes place via sending (expression) and receiving (perception) between the communicator and the receiver.

Communication, alongside metabolic functions, are an indicator of life.

Communication is therefore one of a human's basic needs. The biological and social existence of humans would not be possible without communication (Kaspar Hauser syndrome<sup>i</sup>).

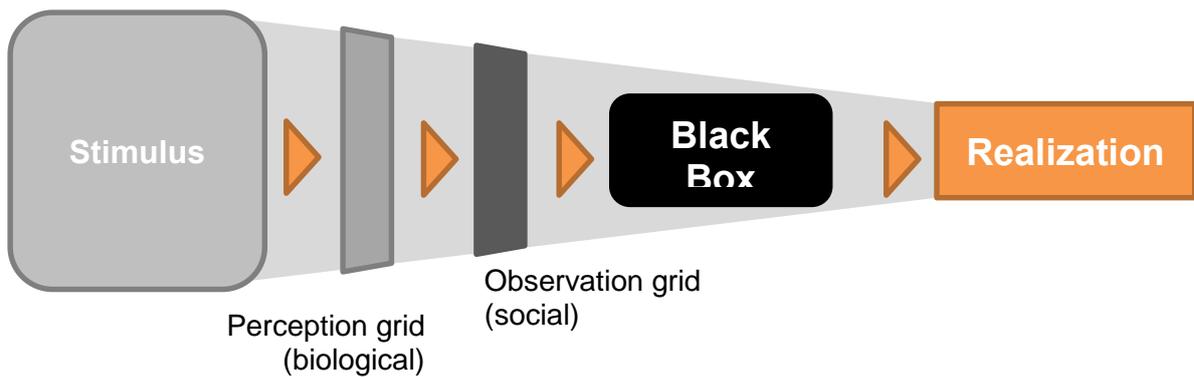


Fig. 1: Perception

The biological pattern of perception: Even in childhood, brain cells develop differently depending on environmental influences (contact with the skin, smells, sounds, voices, etc.). The biological activities in the brain create perceptions and with them a subjective image of the world. Certain smells can, for example, trigger a feeling of happiness.

Contrary to sensory perception, there is the interpretation or evaluation of an observation. The perception 'His eyebrows are raised' can be interpreted and evaluated as 'He is arrogant', but also as 'He is excited or particularly interested'. The observation 'The project manual doesn't contain a work breakdown structure' can lead to the evaluation 'The project has not been planned properly'. A mixture of perception and evaluation is mostly perceived as criticism and can soon lead to conflict.

Social observation and perception patterns are also defined by a person's position in a social environment (family, gender, status in the company or the project, culture of the country they are in).

Every person inherits certain ways of thinking, observation patterns or meta programs throughout the course of their primary socialization (parents, school) and their secondary socialization (career), which influence their perception and view of reality.

### Examples (Dimensions) of Observation Patterns (Meta Programs)

- Based on project **activity**:  
will become active alone in the event of changes to the work package or waits until the project leader gives them a nudge
- Based on all-round project **orientation**:  
almost always has the strategic goal and vision in sight or is simply occupied with their specific task
- Based on the **way of working** in the project:  
develops new methods or procedures in the event of problems or carries out work processes according to the rules, needs direction
- Based on **time dimensions** in the project:  
tends to be oriented towards the past or aims their tasks towards their own and the project's future

These observation patterns are neither good nor bad and are also variable. In projects it is therefore important to know that the participants can have different patterns. It can even be very useful to put a project team together according to different orientations, to increase the diversity of the team and avoid any blind spots (Diversity in project management).

Perception processes in projects are subject to the creation of stereotypes: Planners are inherently complicated, IT technicians don't shake your hand, project managers are bureaucratic, employee representatives only protect the social parasites, etc. Stereotypes can however also create positive expectations: Anyone coming from management will be able to solve that in any case, project managers are socially competent, etc. It is therefore not the aim to repress these stereotypes, but to get to know them in order to be able to handle prejudices appropriately.

### **Perception Effects in Projects**

- **Halo effect:** A project team member is judged due to a single, striking personality trait. Because of this positive or negative characteristic, all other characteristics are taken to be positive or negative. Personality traits of a project team member (diligence, creativity, reliability, social competencies, etc.) play a great role in the composition of a project team. The halo effect, the circle of light surrounding the person, should be especially recognized by project managers and project clients.

- **The primacy recency effect** states that the sequence of impressions has an influence on a team member's overall picture. The first image of a project team member in the team (interesting, friendly, excellently presented both visually and in speech) makes a lasting impression on the project leader (primacy effect). On the other hand, a last impression (a member questions the leadership role of the project manager after the official end of a monitoring meeting) can also be very long-lasting (recency effect). In this case, this team member has a tendency to stick in the project manager's mind as a troublemaker.

- **Projections:** If, for example, the project manager is accused of failure by the project sponsor's board with a string of arguments, this can trigger feelings of guilt. In such a situation the project manager can very easily (often unawares) project these feelings on others. The failure is ascribed to other stakeholders or the team. A distortion of perception, which is very difficult to recognize and often needs outside help (coaching, mediation, consulting).

### **The Inner Map**

Different perceptions lead to inner maps - a metaphor for the fact that each person processes their experience with reality in their own way.

From birth onwards, we form our own, individual experiences, how we have experienced our first hours, our childhood, puberty, our parental home, school, our first projects ... Over the course of the years we get an idea of how the world works and so perceive our environment differently.

This inner map is used by our subconscious at every given moment to be able to interpret, evaluate and classify the current situation.

We do not have an objective reality in our heads and through our feelings, but a constructed image of reality, a map which gives us orientation in day-to-day life. This differs from one person to the next.

## **2. Communication in Projects**

*Communication is the biological fertilizer for the project team and the lubricant for the project.*

*Example of a communication problem: Columbus and his travel guide:*

As is well-known, Columbus thought for some time during his life that he had actually reached India (which in the language used at the time also included China and Japan). What is not so well-known is the extent to which this idea shaped his perception of reality. In this context, the modern and perhaps somewhat banal image of the last-minute holiday booker springs to mind, who in their haste understood the travel destination wrongly and with the wrong travel guide (in Columbus' case it was Marco Polo's report on his trip to China) travels around a totally different country from the one described in it. Such a tourist would inevitably eventually work it out by comparing what they actually perceive with the reality described in their travel guide, and that is what Columbus actually did, as can clearly be seen in his log book - given the fact that his interpreters were only fluent in Arabic and Hebrew and yet wanted to give the impression that they could communicate with the Indians, this should not have been difficult. He searches for the land with the golden rooftops mentioned by Marco Polo (Cathay, today Japan), asks after the subjects of the great khan and in the end interprets all of the answers in such a way that they confirm his assumptions.

Therefore, with Columbus' log book, it's not so much a matter of a factual report as an early case of a constructed reality. Columbus' America (which shouldn't be America, but India) changes from being the product of the projection of medieval conceptions of the exotic Orient and of a paradise on earth to being a real landscape with people who have no idea of these images or where they came from - which leads to a traumatic experience: the slaughter of the Indians by the less idealizing settlers.

A final example of these constructions of reality occurs as Columbus is on his second voyage with three ships towards the west via Jamaica to the south coast of Cuba, in order to finally reach the continent (for him this meant the great khan's golden kingdom). They sail west in the hope that by not reaching the end of an island - they had finally reached the continent. Fifty miles before reaching the western end of the island, the admiral gives in to his rebelling crew and turns around, as the ship is leaking and the supplies have been used up. Before this however, he makes all of them write an oath that they had reached the continent; anyone who claimed otherwise would be given a fine or their tongue would be cut out. So here, a text - the declaration under oath - also creates a reality; and here there is also a misunderstanding. And it wasn't to be the last.

The basis of all communication models is the classic sender receiver model by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver. Here both senders and receivers have a repertoire of signals at their disposal. Both make contact via the information channel, via which a coded message is conveyed. Information is coded in signals and then conveyed to the receiver. The sender and the receiver must have the same coding to be able to understand the message.

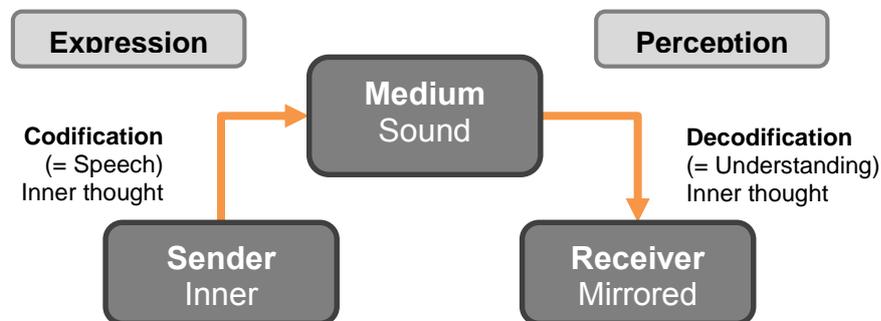


Fig. 2: One-way communication

### One-way communication

One-way communication is made difficult by the fact that queries (and so paraphrasing to check that communication was successful) are not possible. The meaning of a text or spoken message can only be speculated over, it plays with the receiver's curiosity, without satisfying it, which can be appealing in a literary text, but problematic in project-related communication.

The project manager informs the project team by e-mail and doesn't even expect an answer, they 'talk' to their team like a radio presenter.

Example: The project manager presents the work breakdown structure to the team and moves on to another point on the agenda.

The sender assumes here that the receiver understands the same, that is, uses the same inner map, the same patterns and the same decoding process - a very unlikely supposition.

### Two-way communication

Between the coding of a message by the speaker and its decoding by the listener; there is a certain distance caused by the different biographies of the participants; their experience regarding the language and the nonverbal reality of the situation. The paraphrasing of a message by a listener, who decodes it and then passes it on defined in their own words to show that they understood it, represents a slight change in the meaning, as there are no real synonyms in language (even if the speaker themselves uses different words to express the contents to be able to explain it more clearly to the person they are talking to). Each decoding is also a new coding (a repetition of the same wording by the listener will be interpreted as misunderstanding or mockery). Verbal communication is like a tennis match with a Play-Dough ball, which is deformed with every hit and comes back over the net in a different form each time. However, in practice, we can learn to cope with this problem

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The project manager does not only inform the project team one-way, but invites them to ask questions.

Example: The project manager presents the first draft of the work breakdown structure, the team members discuss the draft and suggest changes/additions. This creates a reciprocal communication process, in which the sender and the receiver change roles.

Being able and allowed to query, increases the probability of understanding the information exactly as the sender intended.

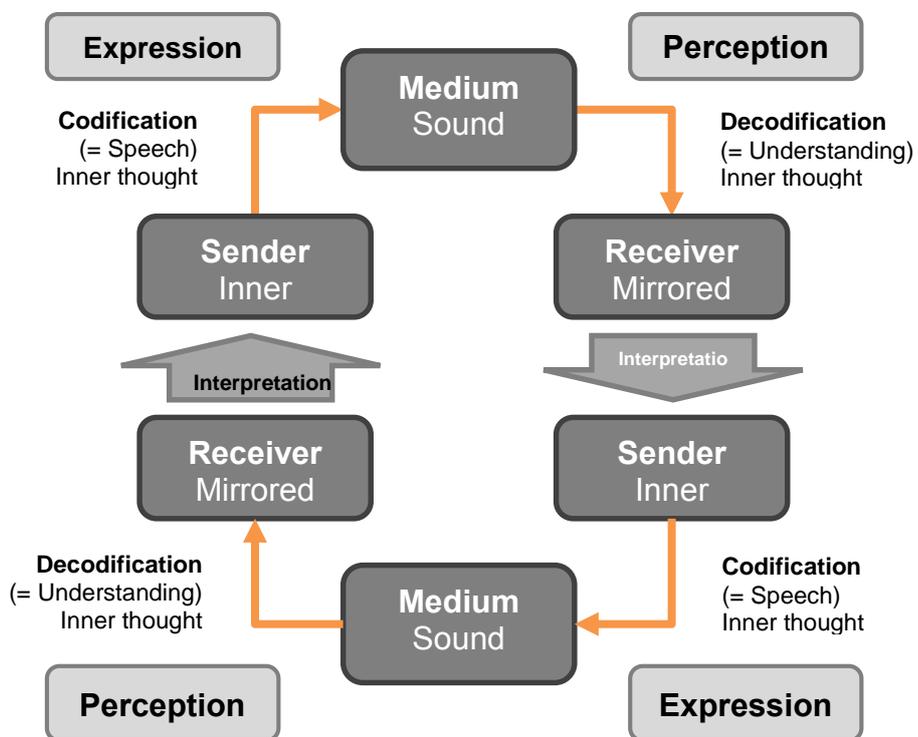


Fig. 3: Two-way communication

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