People-Centric Management: How the Global Drucker Forum influenced the book

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People-centric

My new book is all about people, agile and management in 21-century organisations. Here is what's behind the story.

It’s no coincident. I deliberately published my new book, *People-Centric Management*, ahead of the upcoming 12th Global Drucker Forum in Vienna on leadership everywhere - A fresh perspective on management. Given the current super dynamic and complex business challenges caused by Covid19, the book offers four levers for managers to bring out the greatness of others. The publication could not be more timely as with the new ways of working, most managers and employees personally experience, what researchers, writers and experienced leaders have set out there for the last years – certainly during the previous 12 years of the Global Drucker Forum: New ways of managing businesses and leading people emerge. They put people first.

IF PEOPLE ARE SO IMPORTANT, WHY DON’T WE MAKE TIME FOR PEOPLE?

Most managers operate in a doing mode. Getting things done has more value than the reflection about how to get done. Language gives it all away. At the 2015 Global Drucker Forum, Henry Mintzberg, in his seminal remark, reminded us of this simple but often neglected truth "I’m not a human resource, not a human asset, and certainly not human capital. I’m a human being". Deepak Chopra adds: “We call ourselves human beings – not “doings”. We are called “beings”. Mindfulness is where people

have access to insight, intuition, imagination, creativity, conscious choice making.

That's why *People-Centric Management* offers a diagnostic tool that we used over the past 20 years to get managers into a reflective mode and interaction with their teams. This is valuable time spent with people. Our research with the diagnostic results clearly implies that there are visible signs that teamwork, self-organisation, collaboration, remote work, and blurred organisational boundaries are becoming the norm rather than the exception. In this new setting, managers need to take time and interact with people with four questions that offer the levers for people-centric management: What is my purpose? Who and what can I rely on? What support do I get and offer? And, how do I stay on track? The value from that time spend comes from everyone's answers.

OVER THE PAST 12 YEAR AT THE GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM, MANY MEMORABLE MOMENTS HAVE HAD THEIR IMPACT ON *PEOPLE-CENTRIC MANAGEMENT*:

At the 1st Global Drucker Forum in Vienna in 2009, marking Peter Drucker's 100th birthday, no one less than C.K. Prahalad, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, challenged the 300 participants in his opening keynote: "How do we influence people that are volunteers?" He remined us of Peter Drucker's believe that in the knowledge era, all employees are volunteers. That's in total contrast to the dominant command and control approach.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2010 – MANAGEMENT AS A ROLE IN SOCIETY

Peter Drucker has always emphasized the importance of management as a role in society. At the 2nd Global Drucker Forum in 2010, Julian Birkinshaw from the London Business School, reminded us that management is "Getting work done through others". He insisted that our existing approach to management has failed and that there is ample need for innovation in management if it is to play a role in society.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2011 - LEGITIMACY

In light of the financial crisis, the 3rd Global Drucker Forum in

2011 was on a quest for legitimacy: How managers can shape the future - create value for business and society. Peter Drucker, in *The Effective Executive*, made it clear, employees don't want to be managed – they want to be led. The managers' task is to create an environment for self-efficacy, based on intrinsic rewards and opportunity. That was my motivation to write my fist book, *The Performance Triangle*, that puts people into the centre of the triangle.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2012 – CAPITALISM 2.0

The 4th Global Drucker Forum in 2012 was on the search for Capitalism 2.0: New Horizons for Managers. Again, Peter Drucker's legacy reminded us "The greatest danger to act in turbulence is not the turbulence but to act with yesterday's logic." Umair Hague, writer and director of the Havas Media Lab, added "The future of capitalism is meaning."

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2013 – MANAGING COMPLEXITY

Managing complexity was the theme of the 5th Global Drucker Forum in 2013. There was consensus among speakers that more control and command would increase rather than decrease complexity. The illusion of control has changed. But letting go means more interactions: engagement with people.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2014 – MANAGING OUR WAY TO PROSPERITY

The 6th Global Drucker Forum in 2014 set out for the great transformation – managing our way to prosperity. Gary Hamel, London Business School and founder of the Management Lab, asked:

> "How do we build organisations that can change as the world changes. We have to get a lot better at that. Self-renewing organisation?"

Author, Nilofer Merchant, challenged traditional performance measurement:

> "We are only tracking engagement. We are not capturing whether someone puts the full potential to work. How do we measure capacity?"

That was when the idea for by second book, *Management Design*, crystallised: We needed guidance on how to build dynamic

capabilities.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2015 - CLAIMING OUR HUMANITY

Peter Drucker in Technology and Society in the Twentieth Century, 1967 wrote

> “We are becoming aware that the major questions regarding technology re not technical but human questions”.

In that sense, the 7th Global Drucker Forum in 2015 focused on claiming our humanity – managing in the digital age. Tammy Erickson, London Business School, reminded us that the value comes from people doing the extra mile – not from telling them what do to.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2016 AND 2017

The 8th Global Drucker Forum in 2016 “The entrepreneurial society – moving beyond a society of employees” and the 9th Global Drucker Forum in 2017 “Growth & Inclusive Prosperity” emphasized the societal context for management. Charles Handy, British author and management philosopher reminded us in his memorable closing address: “We must be careful that our humanity is not digitized”. His concern was a bout everything being digitized without regard to the wealth of the human soul. Deepak Chopra in his 2019 Drucker Business Forum interview would add:

> “The soul is meaning, context, relationships and story. As a leader, you are the soul of group consciousness. The job of the leader is to make people look good.”

So, in the words of Charles Handy: “If not us, then who, if not now, then when?” That was my beginning with *People-Centric Management*.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2018 – THE HUMAN DIMENSIONS

In 2018, the 10th anniversary Global Drucker Forum returns to management – the human dimensions. "A healthy organization is a collection of human beings and not just human resources," reinforced academic and author Henry Mintzberg. “Best people are motivated by achievement”, Curtis Carlson from The Practice of Management and former CEO of SRI added. “We need to move from a push-based to a pull-based environment”. Mikko Kosonen, President, Sitra Fund Finland.

GLOBAL DRUCKER FORUM 2019 – THE POWER OF ECOSYSTEMS

While the topics of the Drucker Forum change, some of the concerns and ideas remain the same. The 11th Global Drucker Forum went beyond boundaries: The power of ecosystems. Managing in a networked economy. It seems that, finally, someone caught on the ideas of Frederic Vester, Jay W. Forrester, Robert Simons, and Donatella Meadows that interventions into systems require more than just another change project. It's an intervention into complex adaptive systems in response to a fast changing and complex environment. That's exactly where *People-Centric Management* starts.

I am in full agreement with Paul Polman's final remarks in Vienna, the former CEO of Unilever:

> "You're not going to solve problems by attending conferences. You have to do something. If you don't take action, you're as guilty as those who created the problems in the first place."

I have observed 11 Drucker Forum closing remarks: We must move from idea to action. I agree.

But, let me put it into the words of Deepak Chopra:

> "The highest form of human intelligence is the ability to observe yourself without judging yourself." –

THAT'S WHY *PEOPLE-CENTRIC MANAGEMENT* INITIATES YOUR THINKING AS A HUMAN BEING.

In the words of my long-time friend, the Viennese Professor of the new generation and author of the foreword, Johanna Anzengruber: "Perform the diagnostic, before you dig into the detail." It will raise your awareness; Deepak Chopra may call it his meditation. *People-Centric Management* is about putting people back into management. No set recipe, no easy advice, but an invitation to start your own journey.

Lukas Michel, People-Centric Management: How managers use four levers to bring out the greatness of others. LID Publishing, London, 2020, ISBN: 9781912555994

LEARN MORE

The research: Michel, L., Anzengruber, J., Wolfe, M., & Hixson, N. (2018). Under What Conditions do Rules-Based and Capability-Based Management Modes Dominate? *Special Issue Risks in Financial and Real Estate Markets Journal*, 6(32).

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