When you lose traction as a successful manager

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These days, most managers sense that their successful way of getting things done somehow loses effectiveness. For example, your personal performance objectives seem outdated the minute you have agreed them for yourself and your employees, budgets seem not to be able to keep up with the changes in the business, strategy keeps shifting, and risks suddenly are at places where you did not anticipate them. Our natural approach to deal with this is to try harder, but we lose even more of our impact. No worry – you are in good company and there are good reasons for this.

Most of what we do as managers is supported by tools, processes, and rules that stem from a stable era with little change. Management by Objectives assumes that the year stands still and budgets claim that resources remain available. If further assumes that competitors wait for the next strategy cycle with innovation, and that risks are generous and gentle for the season. Your senses don’t cheat you – it is the tools, processes and rules that stem from the past century that keep you from being effective and powerful. I might well be that some of your employees already told you that their performance objectives don’t make sense anymore or that you are wasting time with endless renegotiation and bureaucratic procedures for Home Office…

Our reactions are normal - human. When we lose sight, we install more controls. When things change fast, we run faster to capture

what we have lost. When uncertainty rises, we revert delegation and command our way. When there are multiple outcomes, we tighten the rules and limit the options. These are behaviors that are natural to us as humans – but they are ineffective in dealing with a turbulent environment.

Today, leadership teams of most organizations are challenged with the increasing volatility of markets, higher uncertainties, raising complexity, and the ongoing changes at the work place. At the same time, leaders, advisor or coach sense that proven management and advisory recipes lose their impact and interfere with the future-oriented leadership of their organizations.

To cope with an uncertain, turbulent environment, organizations need to build dynamic capabilities. They need less of the traditional control approaches to advice, rather more of the self-responsible, fast-learning guidance with the aim to build the capabilities for non-disruptive ongoing change.

Management Design is the technique for leadership teams to rethink how they manage their organization – how they enable a work environment that can cope with the challenges of a turbulent environment.

How do you enable your leaders and employees to effectively cope with turbulent times?

About Management Insights

Founded by Lukas Michel, Management Insights draws on more than 25 years of research and practice to help people understand how their organizations work. The Organization Twin brings organizational patterns into view for reflection, dialogue, and informed choice.

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