

## **Interview mit Dr. Karin Jironet**

**Warum die Kombination aus Liebe + STÄRKE die nächste große Herausforderung in der Führungskultur ist.**



### **How is today's leadership culture changing?**

One of the tasks of leaders is still to channel collective efforts towards a common goal. What is new, however, is that they have to abandon traditional ways of thinking about optimal leadership styles and, instead, learn new strategies in decision-making and in dealing with employees.

A multitude of often contradictory information and unpredictable social and economic developments that shape the business world mean that executives today are often overwhelmed and divided. The tendency to rely on rationality in such an environment rather than intuition impairs their ability to respond effectively and appropriately in certain situations.

### **What can leaders do to avoid this?**

Recent scientific results show that our world is to be considered as one big whole: cause and effect are inseparable. It is essential for today's leaders to incorporate this new understanding into their strategic approach. So instead of wanting to know or control everything, they should trust the processes and keep them running as well as possible.

Adaptability is needed, while the traditional focus on differences (me – you, we – you) makes no sense anymore. Allowing this idea of "oneness" means understanding leadership in such a way that its fruits benefit both the whole company and the general public. This can be compared to a relationship based on partnership: we do not cultivate these for the sake of ourselves or the other's will, but for the sake of relationship.

### **What does this mean in practice for executives?**

After we stop defining roles based on hierarchies, creating identity becomes increasingly important. The labor market has become much more flexible and there are more and more freelancers, part-time employees, project-based employment relationships and breaks in CVs. The golden clock to retire is long gone.

What makes the identity of people – at work and elsewhere – is self-realization. If one perceives others as they really are, then success comes by itself. Hierarchies would not succeed.

Today, the unique skills and talents that each person brings play a much more important role. In the future there will be less uniformity in the labor market, but more room – perhaps even necessity – for craftsmanship, craftsmanship and other forms of creative expression. Mediocrity and lack of self-confidence, on the other hand, will have no place.



### **What role do contemporary leaders play?**

Jobs are the same as ever: it's about leading a team to a common goal. The biggest challenge – and perhaps the role of leaders – is to be fully involved, present, and trust people to do their jobs. That requires self-confidence, and I do not mean the ego or belief in something or in something specific. No, just self-confidence, and trust.

### **Can you give an example of such a leadership style?**

I recently advised a prestigious hospital facing major challenges: mergers, site changes, financial turmoil, headcount changes, negative headlines and much more. However, opinion polls consistently refer to it as the best institution in the country. Why?

A manager insists that employees greet each other when they meet in the house: with a real hello and eye contact. This real welcome is part of the culture there. Another manager established cross-disciplinary and interdepartmental collaboration, which allowed for amazing research success. And a third developed innovative courses for clinical leaders – based on “reverse learning”.

However, the main reason for the positive reviews is a CEO who, with a lot of time and attention, tries to define, discuss and clarify issues in one-to-one interviews or in small groups with his employees. This CEO sees his mission in creating a safe, secure place of mutual respect – through trust, subtlety, and: love.

### **What do you mean by “love”?**

Love in terms of leadership means enabling employees to be authentic in the workplace. Love strengthens both managers and employees. When executives acknowledge that their employees know more about themselves in certain situations than they do, and if they believe they are acting properly, they are creating a working atmosphere of mutual respect and self-reliance. Instead of feeling watched and doubted, employees feel authentic and valued. This approach leads to far more loyalty and commitment than excessive control or hierarchical structures ever could.

There is also a certain generosity associated with love – not self-sacrifice, but the willingness to work for something or someone without the expectation of anything in return. Everyone benefits from love, including companies.

**new definition: ST ARKE ... is the ability to overcome one's ego and to open oneself to the complexity of interpersonal structures, intuition and trust.**

### **What are the key actions that leaders should take now?**

There are two essential human qualities that leaders should adopt and apply: love and strength.

To lead with love means to promote mutual trust, respect, openness, authenticity and the networking of employees and colleagues at all levels. Instead of doing it all – which ultimately means lack of trust – people should be encouraged to use all their knowledge. Communication should always be open, clear, supportive and positive. And instead of repressing employees' special skills, leaders can love to encourage them to be authentic in their role in the business.

### **Is not this strength in conflict with love?**

No, not at all – even if it seems so. When it comes to leadership, at first sight, strength seems to be a natural quality. But in this case, I do not mean the definition of strength as a synonym of control, which is common in Western society in particular. Rather, I interpret strength in a more contemporary form – as the ability to overcome one’s ego and open oneself to the complexity of interpersonal structures, intuition, and trust. If you succeed, you save a lot of time and energy. Leaders need to begin to consider love and this new definition of strength in their actions.

### **What is the most important challenge facing today’s leaders?**

To make a difference in global processes, they need to say goodbye to existing colonial or hierarchical leadership models. These were determined by exploitation, domination, self-centeredness and distance. There was no willingness to understand or love, only one-sided profit. Today, it is clear that this approach is more than obsolete, and that companies and executives who are still doing so are suffering.

We move towards a globalized and multicultural model that is determined by coexistence, diversity, interconnectedness and human relationships – qualities that are often associated with a more modern, open and, ultimately, more humane leadership culture. The key question leaders should now ask is, “How can I use love and strength to improve as a leader?”

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