Honeycombing

"Making work rich and decent"

The creation of a health promoting partnership at work.

This book is for people who are willing to lead themselves.

A ready to use method – SIKA®

SIMONE VON FIRCKS/ KARIN BRAMSTEDT

NOMADICMIND LTD
NEW ZEALAND

With love and thanks to our families

Contents

For many of us, a large portion of our days (and thoughts at night) are spent at work. In fact, the average person will spend 90 000 hours at work over their lifetime[1]. We sure have. We - the authors. Sisters!

In late January 2022 we started to work on some ideas which we have continued to develop. We talked about how we have loved and have been defined by our jobs. Our work became part of our identity, became who we are, both, to those around us and, even more, to ourselves. We had found happiness and passion with what we were doing, though we agreed life hasn't always been easy on us as single mums. Our efforts and performance were driven by Erich Kaestner's (well-known German satirist and writer) saying 'nothing good happens, unless you do it'. Endless work hours, challenges and failures couldn't stop us from going back to it every single day. Freedom was the key as there seemed to be three common factors we both had been granted across our work life: responsibility, time and action had always been within our own control and skills.

If it wasn't we didn't hesitate to take the freedom to move on. This way we made sure we stayed authentic and preserved our integrity. Not a common way in the work-life of our generation, however we have observed in recent days, and particularly after the Covid Pandemic, increasing tendencies of the same approach within the youngest work-generation Z. One thought we bounced at times was appealing to us: our ability to recognise stressors and deal with them, utilise our own resources and rely on them, and general confidence in life and its purpose. We believe this was essential and would have been based on where we came from, our origin, socialisation and education at home as farmers' daughters in northern Germany. Did the pandemic cause a similar effect? Certainly complacency has been challenged during this time.

Our backgrounds and work couldn't be more different and so it came as a surprise for us when we found out how well aligned we were in our conclusions. Particularly the expression 'work - life - balance' didn't sit well with us as it implies imbalance is possible and this is because these arguably are supposed to be two different things, work and life. We agreed on the view that this is not the case, as for one, joy and satisfaction at work adds value to your leisure time and activities, and for two, boundaries between working life and other life can get blurred.

Our meeting in January 2022 took place in Biarritz, France and kept us enclosed for one entire week with the wild and rough Atlantic Ocean, where the wind blew strongly and waves broke high in January. The wind also constantly changed direction. Adapting, releasing control, and shifting course at the right time are vital decisions for every captain navigating a ship through rough seas. It was a great setting for life reflection.

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[1] Susan Peppercorn (2019), Why You Should Stop Trying to Be Happy at Work, Harvard Business Review.

The ever-changing mood of the Atlantic Ocean reminded us of the importance to not lose track on purpose during times of change. There is always change, it is inevitable. In our lives, we had to make choices and let go. Sometimes this rather was a process of 'let it be' in order to be able to accept what it was we had to let go, and move on. We started to see the world through a lens of possibilities rather than limitations. Every change made us realise the potential of growth. Purpose grew with us. We learned to navigate the highs and lows of life, developed resilience and self-efficacy. We took the freedom 'to do it'.

This also very much is the work attitude we noticed in the early stages of a young company, rather than at places where structures have matured. Startups are depending on a 'we can do this' approach and naturally we felt drawn into this type of business to perform some analysis. A startup culture is a workplace environment that values creative problem-solving, open communication and a flat hierarchy. Complacency doesn't belong here. Change is a given on a short notice and regular basis, change is a normal. People take the freedom 'to do it'.

In this environment we have seen it all, rise and fall. We were wondering what change would give us - or our businesses - the 'unhealthy' turn? There is so much fun and energy involved, the term 'to do it' means nothing else than decision making and execution in short sequence, engagement will be high, learning from failure and moving on to whatever comes next will be a given. Somewhere on the work and life journey, purpose seems to get lost, more often these days than when we started our careers. We believe, while multiple factors contribute, speed, severity and impact of change has increased, and our ability to orchestrate change at scale is still limited to theory and methodology derived from a former technology revolution. We believe, in the era of a new technological revolution, there must be new ways to manoeuvre change and to equip businesses and their employees to better steer through the ocean.

With this book we are advocating revolutionary change for a move from the established to effective advanced organisational structures and organisational evolution, as the ones currently in place no longer serve their intended purpose. The management models we have today are not working to address challenges and mentality change of today's employees adequately. Cracks are showing and will become bigger. The organisational structure of the future has to be collaborative and replaced by operational models that are appropriate to facilitate people's lives. People's work and life is deeply integrated into a world of advanced production processes with smart technologies, global remote access options, and great and growing responsibilities and expectations of individuals and society. We observe a transformation of humankind, with fundamental changes to the way we live, work and relate to one another.

We offer our experience to contribute and help build a world where work can be 'rich and decent' again. We hope we connect by telling our story. We hope that we will provide a way to find solutions to the conundrum of today's work-life.

Books are always a collaborative adventure. A number of people have read this book in draft form and offered helpful suggestions and inspiration for the work that underlies this manuscript. They not only provided enthusiastic support and encouragement throughout the process of work for this project, but also helped refine the final work and provided astute editing in the final stages. We are particularly grateful for input and content provided with numerous conversations we have shared over time, which helped shape our own thinking in approaching this project.

Our thanks to all.

Simone von Fircks
Karin Bramstedt

'To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end in life'

(Robert Louis Stevenson, n.d.)

Go for it…

This book is for people who are curious and adventurous. This book is for managers and aspiring leaders who feel that the changes we face today are no longer served by the current management models. Employee acknowledgement and influence within the company in today's world becomes more and more important, in a much different way to yesterday. Different, because "everything is changing everywhere, all at once"[2].

We want to focus on tomorrow and explore models to help answer the question of how to achieve this. We looked into the different impact of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors. Intrinsic motivational factors such as meaningfulness and purpose become most potent in driving job satisfaction. We can see value in re-viewing the question if there is longevity in purpose, if growth does change purpose and if so, is this for the better.

The release of ChatGPT in November 2022 was the 'iPhone moment' of artificial intelligence. Since then, the technology has become available to everyone for the first time. How is AI changing our cultural practices and norms? What are the societal impacts of AI technology? Are we now collaborating with AI machines? Wasn't it hard enough to collaborate successfully just human to human? What are the skills we need now, what will our tasks and responsibilities going forward look like and how do we prepare for that? Wouldn't it be the right time now to get started?

We considered the question if and how skills, tasks and responsibility are kept in balance and - if they are not - if imbalance would create dissatisfaction and failure? Our approach is to start at the start of growth. Startups prioritise employee comfort and innovation. On the down-side, surprisingly, reasons for startup failure are often related to the lack of understanding the importance of human capital management, despite all the training and support offered in this area.

Would there be an impact based on external and internal motivational factors? Are there missed opportunities to align and build a force in sync?

While bouncing these questions with a friend he gave us the idea to think of a job as a construct of three bricks stacked onto each other, each one symbolising one of the areas we are dealing with at work: skill, task and responsibility. We liked the construct as it covers, in simple terms, quite a bit of the conundrum at a workplace. Imagine the lower one represents your skills, the middle one your task and the upper one your level of responsibility at the firm. Now imagine either of them to be smaller than the other two, either of them bigger than the other two, or all three of them in imbalance, in no particular order. The result is tough, if you have to tackle progress on your own, even worse if you find yourself in competition with others in the same position.

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[2] Miriam Meckel, Lea Steinacker (2024), Alles ueberall auf einmal, Rowohlt Verlag.

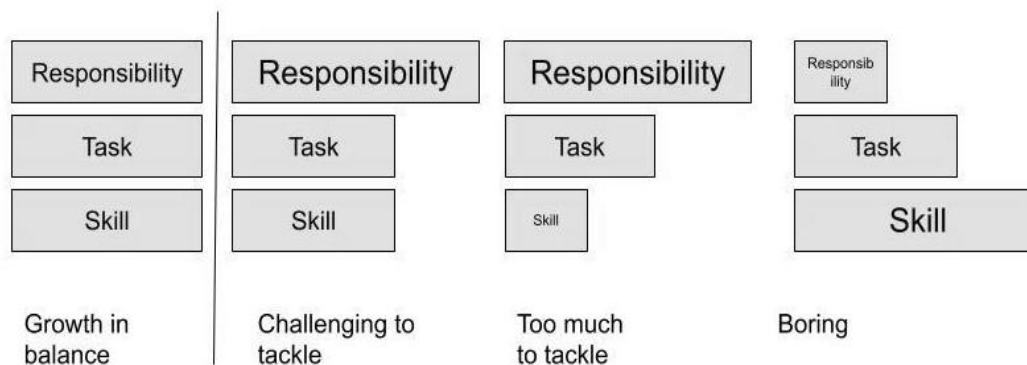| Responsibility | Responsibility | Responsibility | Responsibility |
Task	Task	Task	Task
Skill	Skill	Skill	Skill
Growth in balance	Challenging to tackle	Too much to tackle	Boring

Figure 1: Bricks in Balance by Simone von Fircks (2024)

With this book we want to focus on opportunities, not least in relation to the new technological advancements, and help to form a new perspective. A perspective of diversification at work, meaning to allow for their - the employee - own potential to be seen, as an individual, and as part of the group, with a collaborative rather than competitive mindset.

A perspective that would change the way we work, make decisions and build resilience in an increasingly fragmented world. A vision to move from 'outer' to 'inner' work models. Models, not so much supported by continuity and externally provided stability, but support to help balancing capabilities and willingness from an inner starting point. We want to be thought- provoking and suggest thinking outside the box.

With our method SIKA® we are going to introduce a new perspective to analyse resources, characteristics, competences, abilities and preferences of every individual and the group. SIKA® will assist to utilise personal responsibility; targeted and beneficial to the business. SIKA® will tap into the skills every employee brings to the table while simultaneously encouraging each employee to be a leader, to lead themselves. This will support businesses to be more adaptable to changes and be more aligned in purpose due to employees being free to make their own principles the companies' principles, rather than the other way round.

We want to help create a vision for a partnership model at work, and we want to question forces that support the status quo.

Despite advancements in technology and culture, many organisations still fall into old patterns - rigid hierarchies, top-down leadership, and ineffective change management. *Honeycombing* provides a fresh alternative, rooted in both lived experience and public health science.

Readers will gain:

- A critical perspective on why traditional management models are no longer effective.
- A roadmap for building resilience, purpose, and human-centered leadership.
- Insight into how emerging technologies, especially AI, are transforming work - and how leaders can adapt.

Target Audience

- Business leaders, managers, and HR professionals
- Coaches and consultants facilitating organisational change
- Entrepreneurs and startup teams focused on sustainable culture
- Readers interested in the future of work, leadership, and organisational design

The SIKA® Method

A key element of the book is the SIKA® Method - a proprietary framework for self-led, sustainable transformation in both individuals and organisations. Key principles of SIKA®:

- Every individual can lead from within.
- Moves organisations away from top-down control toward adaptive, purpose-driven models.
- A full implementation guide is available separately for interested readers and organisational partners.

Structure of the Book

The book is divided into three parts, each with three chapters. Every chapter concludes with a summary of key takeaways.

Part I: The Problem

- Analysis of outdated leadership styles.
- Cultural inertia and resistance to change.
- The psychological toll of control-based systems.

Part II: The Impact

- Health consequences of current workplace structures.
- Introduction to scientific and public health frameworks for change.

- Exploration of startup culture - its innovations and limitations.

Part III: The Future

- Vision for human-centered, health-promoting organisations.
- Practical leadership tools and reflective exercises.
- Introduction to the SIKA® roadmap as a change model.

Why Now?

The convergence of AI, global connectivity, and the post-pandemic reassessment of values presents a critical opportunity for organisational transformation.

Honeycombing arrives at a time when:

- Businesses must evolve to remain relevant.
- Employees are demanding purpose, flexibility, and well-being.
- Leaders need tools grounded in both science and humanity.

This book offers a timely guide to navigating this new era with clarity, compassion, and courage.

Wondering what's first….

Chapter 1: Culture and Leadership
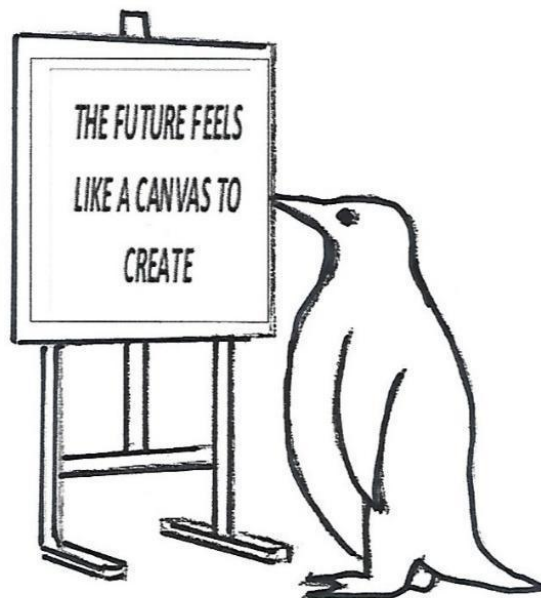
➤ Here we were, one sister with a background in biological sciences, steadily climbing the corporate ladder in the biopharmaceutical and medical device industry. In contrast, the other sister dedicated her life to social work and community service. But was it really a contrast? Our generation came with certain characteristics - a belief in hard work and to hold on to a job once you had succeeded to outperform the competition. We on the contrary started a nomadic life early on, accompanied by the willingness to take risks, and the courage to walk away when necessary. Neither of us ever followed a strict career plan. Instead, we both became intrinsically involved and engaged with the companies and institutions we worked for. We shared similar experiences, particularly when it came to the rise and fall of ideals in people management.

Both of us worked with managers who were more interested in pointing fingers when things went wrong than in understanding or supporting others' work. We observed leadership cultures driven by ego, individualism, and bureaucracy - cultures dominated by a sense of foreboding and authoritarianism. On the positive side, we also witnessed leadership styles that flourished through vision, great communication in words and deeds and genuine care for the needs and aspirations of people.

Through it all we both underwent countless leadership training sessions and coaching programs, both for our personal development and alongside our teams. It was worthwhile at the time, however the question has never been raised whether the existing culture serves the needs of the organisation and people, or might it be inappropriate. We witnessed executive leadership teams spend hours and days to sum up what culture they would want to see in their organisation. By doing so, they completely avoided the harmful or unpleasant effects of the existing culture.

We saw teams brainstorming The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, trying to carefully word even the ugly by addressing items they knew management would agree too. Anxiety became a normal part of professional life. What happened to curiosity?

Failure was driven by cultures that didn't serve the needs of the organisation; negative impact on the company's budget and overall profits as well as employee turnover was the result. Often, employees worked on redundant projects, projects were delayed and deadlines were missed. Employees would start to flee. The management team was in denial. New ideas were dismissed. Managers focussed on the negative. Toxicity became a normal part of professional life, which was often accompanied by the syndrome of anxiety and burnout.

It didn't take long for us to find the common denominators. Regardless of the business sector, and regardless of generational factors, gender, experience, organisational model,

there were four factors all along that seemed to us to be affecting organisational and personal freedom and health:

#1 Control

In our experience when leadership focuses on maintaining control over budgets, processes, people and, consequently, decision-making, it can lead to a stifling environment. If the leadership style leans towards micromanagement, constricting the organisation with rigid KPIs and objectives, individuals may find their initiative restricted, leading to narrow, tunnel-visioned perspectives.

This dynamic can signal a drift away from the company's original purpose. As leadership shifts from a guiding force to a dictatorial, controlling entity, the company's purpose - once a living, integral part of its culture - will begin to reflect this shift in everyday decisions and actions. This transition, particularly when leadership starts to assume more of a managerial role, can erode core values and integrity.

While it's natural for a company's purpose to evolve over time as it grows, if these changes are driven by a select few, the majority of employees may feel disenfranchised. In such scenarios, we observed individuals feeling unempowered to express their beliefs freely, potentially stifling open dialogue and creating an environment where employees fear retaliation for speaking out.

#2 Management

Particularly during our roles as work counsellors in social settings, we noticed that leadership inevitably requires using power to influence the thoughts and actions of other people. Power in the hands of an individual entails human risks, which is why ideas about collective leadership models have been developed. Regardless of Hierarchy or Holacracy[3], over time the term 'leader' has been equated to the term 'manager'. Managerial leadership will try to ensure competence, control and the balance of power among groups, but this unfortunately comes with the potential for rivalry, as we could observe. Managers and Leaders are per se very different kinds of people. They differ in motivation, personal history, and how they think and act (John P. Kotter, 1996).

In our early days as manager, we learned about the effectiveness of leadership attitudes. One of the most impressive attitudes we got to know was the ability to transform uncertainty and fear into curiosity. Many years after that we happened upon the quote "Choosing to be curious is choosing to be vulnerable because it requires us to surrender to uncertainty. It wasn't always a choice; we were born curious. But over time, we learn that curiosity, like vulnerability, can lead to hurt. As a result, we turn to self-protecting, choosing certainty over curiosity, armour over vulnerability, and knowing over learning" (Brenee Brown, 2024).

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[3] Brian Robertson (2015), Holacracy: The New Management System for a Rapidly Changing World, Henry Holt & Company

For us, it all comes down to authenticity. At the heart of successful management development is the ability to stay curious - choosing openness over self-protection. It takes courage to confront our fears and vulnerabilities, but doing so allows us to show up as our true selves: authentic, transparent, and ultimately more effective. It's not about striving for perfection, but about showing up consistently. Authentic behaviour builds trust, strengthens relationships, and allows others to see us as real people - imperfect, but genuine.

Leadership is an achievement of trust[4]. Leaders need to be trustworthy and people need to trust their leaders if progress is to be realised and sustained. While this is generally accepted, we will look into what it actually means, how it manifests in practice and how it can be developed and sustained.

#3 Experience

Trust is built on experience. Experience enables us to make better decisions that are in line with our values and goals. An experienced leader will bring a sense of authenticity and relevance into the picture, it is these relatable elements that people can connect to. 'Been there, done that' as we say. It is like some of the hard work is being done already, somebody opens the door and you just need to step out to feel freedom.

So why does experience matter? It enables both direction and autonomy. It is liberating. Leading people means allowing them some freedom. Being led means being able to handle that freedom.

We have been trying to live by the motto 'don't let perfect be the enemy of good'. Even small incremental steps can deliver good results. Waiting to be 'perfect' means missing out on marginal improvements, even if they might feel small. In our careers sometimes this hasn't been received as 'big' and perfect enough, and failure wasn't acceptable.

There are so many competing objectives and demands, ranking what activities are important and which to address first can be challenging. There will always be different judgments with respect to the issues one faces and the outcomes. "The secret of getting ahead is getting started" (Marc Twain, n.d.). Experience is the result of doing and learning. Experience often leads to a deeper understanding of complex situations in work and life. It shares feelings and perceptions within our commitments. Those impact engagement. As we become more comfortable with who we are and what we stand for we become more open to new experiences and possibilities. We no longer let setbacks hold us back.

#4 Ego

One of the most significant changes that occurs with experience is the ability to let go of our ego. We realise that there is so much more to life than just ourselves.

 "Working and being part of an organisation provides us with a sense of purpose, value and community: a feeling of belonging, achievement and influence. Losing that, particularly for people who have invested perhaps too much of themselves in work, can be a challenge"

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[4] Peter Drucker n.d. in J.McGrath, B. Bates (2013), The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.

(Hall, Stokes, 2021)[5]. The book was an eye opener for us. Probably not in the way it was supposed to work, which was to help people understand what comes with moving into the next stage of life, e.g. into retirement or - like us - stepping away from life in a corporate job, while you however want to be active, contributing and valued. The book Changing Gear[6] told us about the incredibly powerful process of letting go, which is a process of enduring beauty. Letting go is a process we face more often than once in life. It is a process to step up to the next level. It comes with transformative change.

Every developer and entrepreneur can tell you how painful it is to let go of something they have been totally in control of. Parents aim to provide and protect their children, then comes the utterly difficult transitional stage where children hopefully still listen to parental advice but follow their own path.

And still, once completed you can take a deep breath and move on. Though the change you have been through feels like a disruption of everything familiar to you, failure, a loss or even abandonment, it is actually a shift towards something new and the start of a transition process. The process of transition is your own, 'inner' process, caused by a change that derived from an 'outer' event. Things change, people transition. People need time to explore and investigate the new, then return to the familiar, before venturing out again, only gradually feeling that the new something is safe enough to commit to. People need safety so their ego wouldn't be in the way when committing to a change in culture.

Key takeaways:

We believe control, management, experience and ego can be both pain and gain in the process of creating culture. All four factors contribute to power and seem to be imperatively aligned with the involved systems at work and life. Culture and leadership build the pathway to individual and institutional freedom and health. Culture and leadership can provide the framework with stability and safety to allow for change and transition. Resilience isn't just an individual effort: it requires teamwork, supportive leadership and healthy workplace cultures. In this way, the resilience of each individual contributes to building a resilient company across all aspects.

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[5] J. Hall, J. Stokes (2021), Changing Gear, Creating the Life You Want After a Full-On Career, Headline Home.
[6] J. Hall, J. Stockes (2021). Changing Gear - Creating the Life You Want After a Full On Career. Headline Publishing Group.

➤ We worked with a business that integrated Sociocracy models into its technology-based startup. It was very important for this business to sustain this part of their purpose, with growth, and operationalise a health promoting management model into their technology-based startup. However, two years later, a leader in the business questioned whether their purpose had longevity.

This pattern is common among young companies. Often early on entrepreneurs focus on creating a product and shaping their business model around shared values and a clear sense of purpose, such as solving specific problems and making a positive impact. As the company grows the entrepreneurial spirit may shift toward profit-driven strategies and management models aimed at efficiency and predictability, causing the original purpose and values to evolve.

Theory explains that the goal and purpose of every business is to find and keep customers, while this can end up in making profit, making profit is not the purpose in the first place. Why is this? Can making profit be the purpose of a business? Sometimes the impression is established. The values are related to the product, people and how a company runs its business in general[7].

As a company's purpose evolves, leadership must evaluate whether its core values align with the new direction. If any values are impacted, adjustments may be necessary, which comes with change. While change is inevitable it must be transparent and involve employees, particularly when core values play a central role in decision-making. Startups prioritise agility, risk-taking and collaboration but, as the company matures its risk appetite often decreases. Clear communication and employee involvement in major decisions, such as rightsizing, are essential for maintaining alignment and minimising disruption.

While a company's purpose may shift, core values should remain steadfast and clear. Core values are not open to interpretation. Change is an external force that often requires us to adapt our behaviour. This adaptation occurs through a transition process in which individuals reach an 'inner agreement' with the change. This process can either solidify the change or cause it to fail. When the inner agreement aligns with an individual's passion, gifts, and mission - and when that alignment extends to the team and business - the organisation's purpose will resonate with both its people and its goals.

This is more often the case where communication works well, where communication channels to transfer and discuss changes are well established, and where information is trusted. Not only corporations large and small may struggle to achieve the 'inner

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[7] Peter Drucker n.d. in J.McGrath, B. Bates (2013), The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.

agreement' through their workforce. This comes down to the way that the established, hierarchy-based feedback processes work.

We have always wondered why profit margin discussions often seem to be reduced to efficiency targets set by non-experts in the upper management levels. The message to employees becomes 'tighten your belts' leading to frustration that lingers throughout. Beyond the impact of material savings, compromised quality, staff shortages, underpaid workers on long hours and the use of outdated equipment, there's also a lack of motivation. The ultimate goal seems to be meeting or exceeding the target, and failure is sometimes even swept under the rug.

We could observe that typically on the shop-floor the call for higher profit margins is seen as a sign that the business is struggling. Employees are left working with the tools they've been given, which may very well be the root cause of the issues. Despite employees raising concerns and requesting better tools, if things go wrong and external expertise is brought in to fix it, those who followed orders and tried to 'tighten their belts' will feel blamed and demoralised. Trust in leadership evaporates.

Has there been leadership provided at all? Or have managers tried to manage the impossible?

A more effective approach would have been for business leaders to share their vision with all employees from the outset. The goal should be clear: as the next growth step, the company aims to increase profits by a certain percentage in order to fulfill its purpose - whether that means expanding services or products at a sustainable price, satisfying existing customers, attracting new ones, or entering new markets. Employees should understand that quality will never be compromised. Risks will be carefully assessed and mitigated, and that the strategies for achieving these goals - such as setting specific targets - will be entrusted to individual business units, with input from experts strongly encouraged.

By fostering collaboration and continuously reviewing progress, targets can be met or even exceeded. Doesn't this sound like a more empowering approach? Adapting the company's purpose to the next phase of its journey, and communicating it clearly, is a major leadership responsibility. It's not something to be left to just a few; it requires the alignment and agreement of everyone on how to move forward.

In business change is not motivated by ego or knee-jerk reactions; rather it's a deliberate effort to improve products or services to better serve real human needs while create efficiencies. This kind of change is driven by the pursuit of innovation and customer satisfaction aiming to create tangible value. For those who thrive in such an environment the constant evolution feels exciting because it provides an opportunity to contribute to something larger than themselves. It fosters a sense of purpose where every decision or development can have a direct, meaningful impact.

The rapid pace of change can be challenging, especially for individuals who are accustomed to more traditional, hierarchical business structures. In these settings decisions tend to be slower, and change is often met with caution or resistance. Adapting to a faster-moving, less rigid environment may require a shift in mindset, as well as a willingness to embrace uncertainty and risk.

That said, once individuals adjust to this dynamic way of working many find that it brings a sense of energy and excitement. The workplace becomes a place of constant innovation, with new challenges and opportunities arising regularly. It is a refreshing change from the monotony that can sometimes accompany more bureaucratic systems. The feeling of accomplishment that comes with overcoming obstacles, seizing opportunities and achieving success in such an environment is often deeply rewarding.

Ultimately the true satisfaction lies in making a genuine, positive impact; whether on the product, service or company. This sense of contribution to a greater purpose is fulfilling for many because it aligns with a deeper desire to leave a legacy and make a difference, both in the business world and beyond. The reward is not just in personal achievement but in knowing that the work being done has a lasting, meaningful effect[8].

These values are intrinsic to startups from the beginning. People in startups focus on growth, adapting to change, and refining their leadership skills, are often driven by a strong sense of purpose. They believe they are doing what's right for themselves, their families, and their organisations. This sense of purpose serves as a motivating force during challenging times and strengthens their resilience.

Purpose is the deeper meaning behind our work. On the other hand, values represent the personal beliefs that drive individuals to act in certain ways, aligning toward a shared purpose. A change in purpose may prompt renegotiation, but it will still be rooted in individual personal beliefs. As long as the purpose remains clear, understood and supported by everyone, and it clearly articulates what your company stands for, where it's headed, and the kind of people you want by your side, you'll avoid the risk of a silo mentality where individual interests overshadow the collective goal.[9]

Key takeaways:

In business, purpose may change, but core values should not be up for interpretation. Successful change requires internal alignment with personal values and mission. When the purpose is clear and understood, and aligned with core values, it unites the team and prevents competing interests from creating division. A strong sense of purpose motivates individuals through challenges, helps maintain direction and ensures lasting resilience in the business. Communication is key.

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[8] John P. Kotter (1996), Leading Change, Harvard Business Review Press.
[9] Mikael Krogerus and Roman Tschaeppeler (2022), The Collaboration Book, Profile Books.

➤ Over the past 100 years thousands of managers, academics and researchers have tried to define what makes a great manager, identify the secrets of effective management and how to build a winning team. The result is hundreds of management theories, many of which are contradictory[10].

Unfortunately, even when a theory appeals to a manager it is unlikely that it will come with any advice on how to use it in the workplace. Training and seminars will be helpful and enlightening with Post Its everywhere. However back home at the workplace this will go into a drawer and never be looked at again.

One theory that stands out and has influenced core management ideas is Frederick Taylor's concept of 'scientific management,' or Taylorism[11]. This approach, once seen as revolutionary, focuses on improving efficiency by breaking down tasks into smaller steps, measuring and refining each one, and assigning specific roles to workers. The goal is to increase productivity, with workers expected to cooperate and follow a clear hierarchy. While it emphasises efficiency it overlooks the human side of work, like personal differences and creative ideas that don't fit the structured framework.

A major issue with Taylorism is that workers often feel they aren't benefiting as much as executives from the increased productivity it generates[12]. Although Taylor (Frederick Winslow Taylor, 1856 - 1915) initially suggested that scientific management would benefit both employers and employees, in practice, it often favours business leaders as its main goal is to maximise profit and minimise waste.

In today's world there's more focus on balancing employee well-being with profitability. The pandemic and economic challenges have made it clear that businesses need to consider the mental and physical health of their workers alongside their productivity. Is it still true that efficiency and profit come first, or can companies balance both?

One important area to explore is how motivation impacts performance. Occupational psychology can help, but it's crucial to avoid sticking to outdated ideas like traditional Taylorism. Leadership training today often still follows old hierarchical models focusing on nurturing employees within a top-down structure.

A newer concept, 'New Work', aims to improve work-life balance and attract employee loyalty through benefits like flexible hours, wellness programs and even things like rooftop

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[10] J.McGrath, B. Bates (2013), The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.
[11] Jeremy Rifkin (2023), The Age of Resilience, Swift Press.
[12] Joe Postings (2023), The return of 'Taylorism'?, The British Psychological Society.

basketball courts or in house laundry service for the family. But while these extrinsic motivators are great, they don't necessarily foster true, intrinsic motivation. Even with all these perks a loyal, motivated employee will continue thinking about solutions to work problems outside of office hours.

During our discussions around the phenomenon of well-established but nearly 'expired' leadership and management theories and how to approach the 'revolution', I read about Vivian Westwood at an exhibition at the Te Papa national museum in Wellington, New Zealand. She was an English fashion designer and businesswoman, famous because of her new ideas and innovative take on traditional tailoring leading to designs that referenced historical styles. Vivian said "The only place to find ideas is by looking at what people did in the past. It's the way you can be original. You can't be original by just wanting to do something. Nothing comes from a vacuum. It is impossible to be creative unless you have a link with the past and tradition. You cannot merely have a desire to create something and attempt to do it without learning from the techniques of the past" (Vivian Westwood, n.d.).

In sharing this quote with my sister, it opened up a whole new way of thinking for us. In fact, it sparked ideas about how to develop a new management approach, a revolutionary approach as it would end in a fundamental change in the way an organisation is run, a turnaround of the predominant way of thinking within the established operational models. SIKA® will deliver the onset.

We suggest starting by looking at work through a systemic lens, which takes into account the interaction between different parts of a person's life and their environment. Instead of seeing problems as solely individual, a systemic approach views behaviour as a form of communication, showing how management and organisational culture affect each other. It's a more holistic view that looks at the organisation as the sum of all its parts.
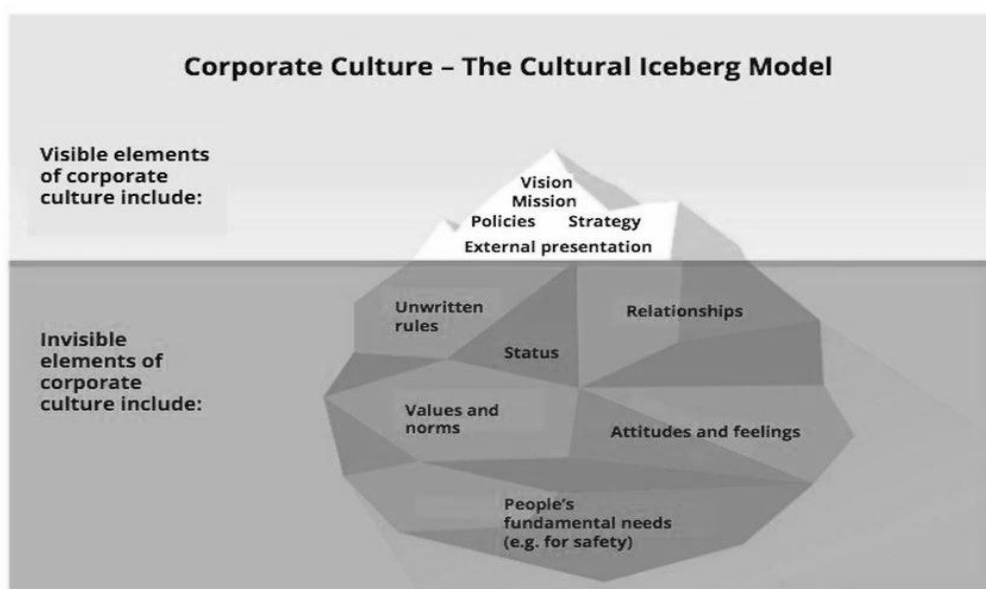

Figure 2: Iceberg model of corporate culture by Edward Twitchell Hall (1989)

Systemic questions are valuable for gaining a deeper understanding of complex systems and identifying opportunities for improvement or intervention. Questions trigger responses and thus the individual will start reflecting based on that. Questions also allow for a process of care self-engagement, rather than being cared for. The following are examples of questions that will trigger and initiate reflection.

Table 1: Systemic Questions, Examples by Karin Bramstedt (2024)

Type	Example
Scaling	On a scale of 1-10 how satisfied are you at your workplace?
Outcome	What works for you?
Marvel	How does it feel, imagine you found your dream job?
Consequential	What does a reaction to your action look like?
Paradoxical	What would make it worse?
Comparison	What has changed compared to yesterday?
Hypothetical	What would you do if you couldn't fail?
Resources	What helped to achieve your goals?
Confrontational	If you don't want to change, why continue?

Some of these don't seem to be the type of questions that you would often hear in the workplace. But wouldn't you enjoy thinking about these questions related to your workplace? Wouldn't it allow for thinking the unthinkable? Wouldn't it help with a change of perspective?

A leadership coach once shared a story with the group of trainees which I was part of. The story stuck in my memory as it took me a while to grasp how it could possibly make sense to my career. He recounted an experience that took place during his qualification period as a leadership coach. At the end of the first day, he and his peers were expected to leave and stay in their rooms for the rest of the evening, while the trainer enjoyed a drink and a cigarette at the bar.

The trainees followed that request reluctantly and stayed in their rooms during that first evening, catching up on emails and other routines. When this repeated on day 2 discontent started rising. On day 3, the trainer made their way to the bar again. Meanwhile, everyone else had to stay in their room, where the group decided to question this behaviour and ask for an explanation the next morning. They chose a speaker, which was our coach, and he advised that he was upset and unhappy with how the evenings turned out and they were unwilling to continue this way. The response he received was short and simple: If you feel this way then change your perspective.

The quintessence for me was that if I feel stuck in a perspective that may not serve me, this may be because I am telling myself a narrative. My mind thinks I don't know how I am going to handle this. I would think this is awful. My body feels tension and tightness, and feels this is difficult for me. I feel rejected. However once I start looking for alternative ways of looking at the situation would that help to navigate the challenge at hand? I might think, well, these evenings will be over tomorrow and the training otherwise is superior. I am not allowed to smoke in the house of my in-laws either, which is difficult but bearable and I have got used to it. I am going to quit smoking anyway, so maybe this is a good first step. Also not having the beers in the evening gives me a fresh start in the morning. I am resilient. I'll get through this. Rejection is not reality as this is supposed to be an exercise. My body feels a little more relaxed, at ease, with more breathing space.

Note, nothing in the situation described above has changed, however the outcome for your mind and body is completely different.

A perspective change at work would likely do the same.

Key takeaways:

The key ideas around the scientific management theory and concept known as Taylorism, its significance and its criticisms are introduced and the need for a more holistic, people-focused approach to management has been emphasised. To improve productivity and performance it's essential to understand motivation's role in the workplace. Instead of reinforcing outdated management models based on Taylorism we suggest businesses should apply systemic thinking which focuses on the relationships between different parts of a person's life and the systems around them. A systemic view recognises that all behaviour is a communication seeking meaning, and that management and the organisation affect each other in a comprehensive, ingrained way.

Conclusion Part 1 'Letting go'.

"The art of conducting consists in knowing when to stop conducting to let the orchestra play". Herbert von Karajan.

We found this a very relative quote as it indicates the need to let go of outdated management models and leadership styles. When leadership focuses excessively on

controlling budgets, processes and people it can create a restrictive environment, stifle initiative and narrowing perspectives. Over time this can lead to a shift away from the company's original purpose and core values.

As leadership becomes more authoritarian it erodes trust and authenticity, making employees feel disengaged and fearful of speaking out. Leadership involves the use of power, but true leadership is not just about managing; it's about fostering trust and authenticity. While managerial leadership ensures competence, it may lack the creativity and ethical decision-making needed for strategic guidance. Authentic leadership requires vulnerability and curiosity, transforming uncertainty into learning. Trust, the foundation of leadership, must be nurtured through transparency and ethical behaviour.

Trust is built through experience which enhances decision-making and aligns actions with values and goals. Experienced leaders bring authenticity and relevance, helping teams feel empowered. Growth comes from embracing discomfort and taking risks, fostering a culture of learning and incremental progress. Even small steps toward improvement lead to significant results and experience deepens understanding of complex situations, enriching engagement and fostering resilience.

A critical aspect of leadership growth is the ability to let go of ego. True leadership requires self-awareness and a shift from self-centeredness to a greater sense of purpose. Letting go is a challenging but necessary process that helps individuals transition to new phases in both work and life. This process of letting go is central to growth as it creates space for new opportunities and a more collaborative, less ego-driven approach to leadership.

The art is to identify the right time for this to happen and to identify the right style. This may depend on the character of the people who run the organisation[13]. Over the course of a company's journey and business lifecycle it may well be that more than one change back and forth could take place. Employee needs, such as autonomy, competence and belongingness have made their point. A systemic view will allow for multiple components to be taken into account. It will also consider factors related to local and global structures and cultures, which become interwoven more strongly than ever, connected through trade, international corporations, transport, travel and communication[14].

Letting go enables flexibility and agility in managing the right systems, leadership, and resource strategies. It also allows for real-time adjustments based on the evolving needs of the business. A CEO once shared with me that he would focus on addressing weaknesses within his business, seeing it as his duty as the expert across all areas. This opened him up to micro-management behaviour. On another occasion he mentioned that, with unlimited funds, he would hire the most competent experts in the world for every business function, aiming for excellence. This suggested that ordinary solutions provided by the existing experts weren't sufficient, which immediately caused demotivation issues.

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[13] Desmond Grave n.d. in J.McGrath, B. Bates (2013), The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.

[14] M.B. Mittelmark et al. (2022), The Handbook of Salutogenesis, Springer Verlag.

In both instances my thoughts were: why does he feel it's his responsibility to tackle these challenges? Why not empower the area managers to address their own issues from the start?

The answer is there is no one way of doing it. The challenge is in aligning systems with conflicting goals and logic: individuals are driven by self-preservation and growth, private companies focused on market strategies and resources, politics shaped by stakeholders and lawmakers, and society as a whole, which carries shared values and norms to help individuals and groups navigate the world.

The culture in your organisation will build the basis for change and flexibility, the culture will deliver the framework for a safe path of transition into ownership and capability, and will allow for knowing when it is the right time to 'let the orchestra play', and when it is not.

A starting point could be to identify the dominant culture in your organisation. Desmond Graves identifies four possible cultures:
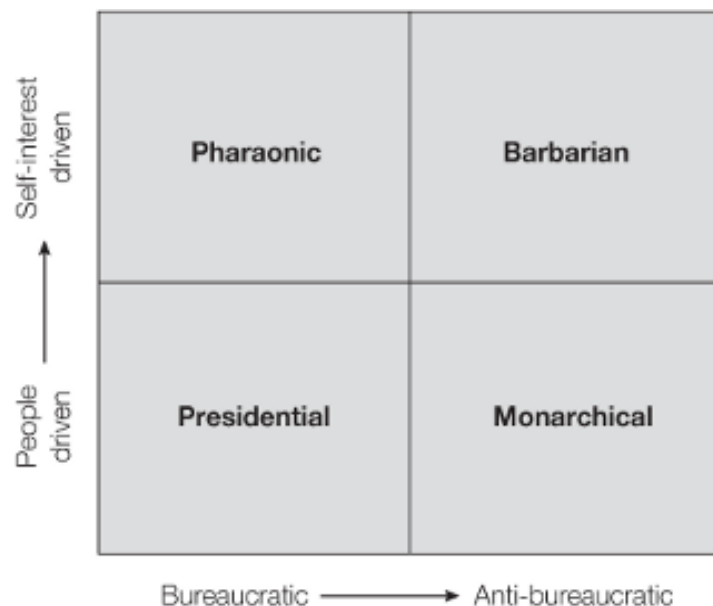

Figure 3: Adapted from Graves, D. (1986), Corporate Culture: Diagnosis and Change: Auditing and Changing the Culture of Organisations, Palgrave Macmillan. In J. McGrath, B. Bates (2013). The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited

Whilst the terms sound somewhat extreme, they very well point in the right direction to get to the core of the meaning.

Pharaonic cultures are characterised by dominance by individuals, marked by bureaucracy and ego-driven decision-making. Cultural leadership thrives on a deep respect for status, rituals and order.

Barbarian cultures, on the other hand, are driven by a sense of foreboding. These cultures reject bureaucracy and are fuelled by ego, with leadership maintained through a blend of uncertainty, fear and charm.

Presidential cultures are more bureaucratic, with a focus on democracy, status and coordination. Cultural leadership is shaped by a consideration of the people's needs and aspirations.

Monarchical cultures are defined by a rejection of bureaucracy and a belief in the absolute authority of the leader. Cultural leadership is sustained through the unquestionable loyalty of followers.

In presenting these cultural stereotypes Graves suggests that symbolic leadership is a means of inspiring people to feel they are working toward something meaningful.

If your team or organisation is new it may exhibit characteristics of a barbarian culture, where a dog-eat-dog mentality prevails. This type of culture is more suited to acquiring new business than maintaining it. Eventually the culture will need to evolve to create stability and structure.

A Pharaonic culture may prioritise creativity and imagination, but it often limits the emancipation of its workforce. It values position and adherence to established procedures. During periods of rapid change adopting a new approach will be necessary.

Presidential cultures, less ego-driven than barbarian and pharaonic ones, emphasise cooperation, status and responsiveness to employee needs. While this approach fosters inclusivity it can also lead to slow decision-making. In times of crisis a more directive leadership style may be required.

Monarchical cultures often revolve around loyalty to the leader, frequently the founder. As the organisation grows it becomes unsustainable for one person to hold all the power. At some point the leader must share authority with others.

In conclusion we believe to navigate cultural evolution leaders should ask: Does the existing culture serve the organisation's needs? If the culture is misaligned what changes are needed? As a leader you can influence this process; as an employee you must decide if you are content with the culture in place.

As long as the culture supports the purpose and matches the defined values, it doesn't matter what you call it, all of the above-described cultural styles will serve the purpose at some point.

► To elaborate on our approach of diversification and how this is different to existing interdisciplinary team work approaches we need to go back to the weaknesses of Taylorism.

One of the most common criticisms of Taylorism and other scientific management approaches is their lack of humanity[15]. Taylor's engineering background led him to view workers as tools to generate profit, prioritising business needs over human concerns. By assuming that all workers are solely motivated by money Taylor overlooked the fact that people can derive personal satisfaction from their work.

Additionally, by dividing the workforce into those who 'do' and those who 'think', i.e. managers, Taylor stripped workers of the autonomy to make decisions about how to approach their tasks. It is ironic that a methodology rooted in innovation would actively discourage workers from experimenting. By imposing a uniform approach to tasks dictated by management businesses miss out on the innovative potential that comes from allowing employees the freedom to experiment. Without this autonomy workers cannot discover better, more efficient ways of performing their duties.

A significant flaw of Taylorism is its failure to understand what truly motivates workers. While earning a living is a primary reason people go to work, money is just one part of a much broader spectrum of needs and desires. Pure Taylorism expects managers to break tasks down into small steps and optimize each one, leaving no room for collaboration between managers and employees to improve efficiency based on personal working styles and skill sets.

As a provocative example, think about the job of a dentist, working in a dental clinic. The dentist would be a 'doer' and at the same time a 'thinker'. Thinking about how to improve whatever they are working on at that point of time. Why should this be different to any other workplace scenario? Would the dentist assume that management would come up with the same new improvement idea? We suggest here that decision making structures about dental work step improvements in a dental clinic already allow for their own potential to be seen, while the existing mindset in production type environments is still waiting to be adapted.

Some aspects of Taylorism remain relevant in today's workplace, such as standard operating procedures. Concepts like performance reviews, quality metrics and sales targets are modern iterations of Taylor's ideas. Acknowledging the value in certain elements of scientific management doesn't mean that all of Taylor's methods are suitable for today's work environment, nor do they apply to all types of work.

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[15] Kurt Lewin (1920), Die Sozialisierung des Taylorsystems: Eine grundsätzliche Untersuchung zur Arbeits- und Berufspsychologie, Verlag Gesellschaft und Erziehung.

Taylor's principles are more suited to jobs that revolve around measurable tasks such as engineering, software development or manufacturing in a matured stage. They are less effective for knowledge and creative work, which are difficult to quantify. They are also less effective in situations of crisis or unknown circumstances.

The workplace organisation during the Covid pandemic serves as a prime example of how individual working styles and skill sets led to the creation of new workflows and values at a time of disruption. Essential service workers, driven by creativity, engagement, and an immense sense of commitment, found ways to make it work. Their efforts were crucial in overcoming the challenges the pandemic presented. At the same time, the experience spurred a level of awareness around change that we hadn't seen in such intensity for a long time.

While we haven't all transitioned to being digital nomads - thanks to hybrid models and the necessity for on-site roles like healthcare professionals and manufacturing workers – there is still a shift in expectations. People now have a heightened awareness of new possibilities and options that didn't exist before. Change, however, takes time. Modern workplaces benefit from holistic, contemporary approaches. Modern workplaces attempt to balance efficiency with creating a psychologically safe environment that supports diverse working styles and individual needs. One effective way to achieve this is by diversifying management styles.

Below are several management approaches that offer alternatives to the rigid structures of Taylorism:

Table 2: Management Approaches by Simone von Fircks (2025), adapted from Hannah Taylor-Chadwick (2023), RUNN

Management Approach	Key Focus	Overview
The Human Relations Approach	Social relationships, motivation beyond finances	Emphasises the psychological and social factors in work.
Scrum	Flexibility, continuous improvement	A project management framework within Agile that values a learning culture.
Druckerism	Collaboration, individual goal-setting	Promotes decentralised decision-making, creativity, and employee accountability.
Contingency Theory	Tailored management based on context	Argues that management should adapt based on factors like tasks, worker styles, and industry needs.
Theory X and Theory Y	Managerial assumptions about workers' attitudes toward work	Theory X assumes workers dislike work and needs control, while Theory Y assumes workers are motivated by responsibility and challenges.

Management Approach	Key Focus	Overview
Transformational Leadership	Personal development, team morale, goal achievement	Focuses on building team morale, self-belief, and motivating individuals to exceed their goals for overall company success.

Shifting from a 'Taylorism' mindset to a more diversified, cognitively guided approach to performance in the workplace requires new conditioning, training and time. Traditional management theories and training are often shaped by the well-known two-factor motivation theory of Frederick Irving Herzberg (1923 – 2000), American psychologist, which continues to influence workplace practices.

Herzberg's two-factor theory, also called the motivation-hygiene theory, suggests that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by two different sets of factors. This goes against the idea that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are directly linked. In his research Herzberg identified 14 factors that affect job satisfaction, dividing them into hygiene factors (which prevent dissatisfaction) and motivation factors (which increase satisfaction).

Herzberg's theory highlights the importance of 'internal' factors like achievement, recognition and personal growth as key motivators for employees. This is in contrast to 'external' hygiene factors such as salary, working conditions and company policies. His theory aims to improve job enrichment, giving employees more involvement in planning, and carrying out and evaluating their work.
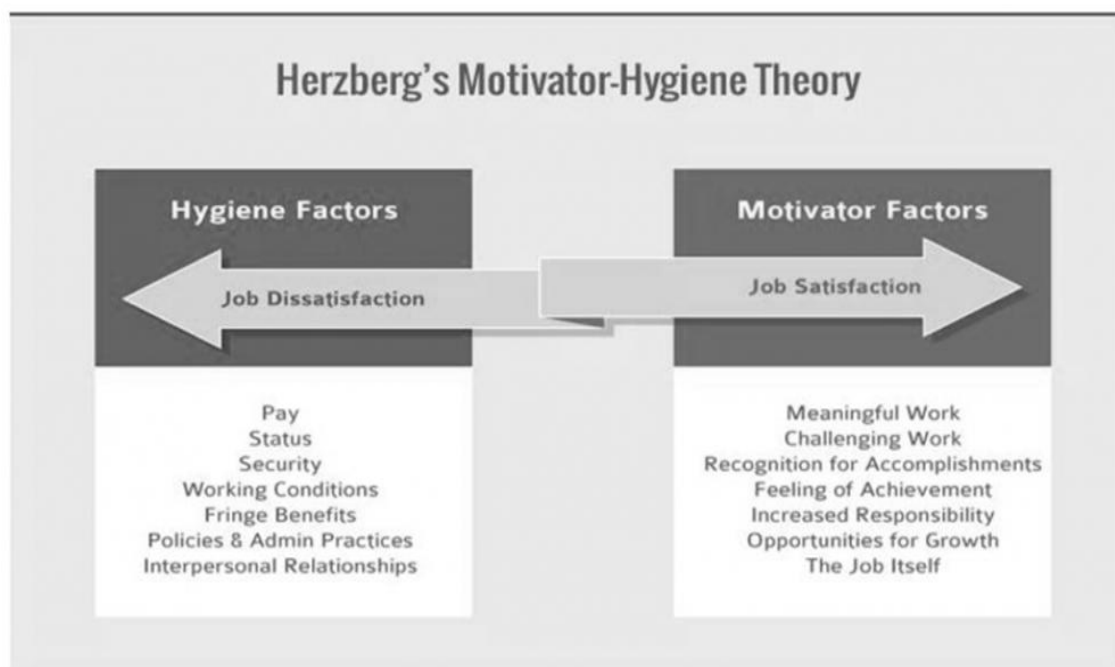

Figure 4: Dr. Serhat Kurt (2021). Herzberg's Motivation and Hygiene Factors, Education Library

The main takeaway is that creating meaningful, manageable and comprehensive jobs helps foster self-initiative, responsibility and accountability.

For example, consider a company restructuring workflow. While the reasons behind the restructure may be in the best interest of the company's future, the plan is often kept secret from employees for months to prevent panic and anxiety about potential job losses. Once the plan is finalised by management, including legal and impact assessments, it is communicated to employees via a single email with the expectation that the process will be completed in just a few weeks, leaving little time for adjustment.

This represents a top-down, crisis-driven approach which overlooks the cognitive potential available during such times for collaboration. The approach will likely persist because, after the restructure, staffing resources will be limited and productivity needs to be increased. In these situations traditional Taylorism management practices are often applied to address inefficiencies, reinforcing the belief that there is only one most efficient way to do any job. As a result staff will be assigned specific roles, trained and standardised to those tasks.

We see it being revolutionary to involve employees in these processes, as long as they are not just implemented superficially and later ignored.

It's important to remember that Taylor's ideas extend beyond the shop floor. However even within manufacturing some level of diversification has been shown to improve efficiency. Lean approaches, such as cellular manufacturing, have not only reduced overproduction and waste but also allowed workers to take on multiple operations. The implementation of lean methods or Kaizen often represents a significant shift in production, serving as a key enabler of increased production velocity, flexibility and reduced capital requirements[16].

With Kaizen, Masaaki Imai (1930-2023), introduced process improvement processes at Toyota, encouraging employee to be involved. This focus on continuous improvement was groundbreaking and became a key element of Lean Management. Employees' participation was financially rewarded, providing an incentive for them to contribute to improvements in their immediate work environment. Kaizen aimed to inspire employees, regardless of their role or education, to make small changes or propose adjustments to management that would enhance efficiency, improve quality, and reduce waste. Both Taylorism principles and Kaizen focus on optimising production processes, with employee management often viewed as a human-machine factor in workflows designed to boost productivity. However, the human aspect is typically overlooked, except for offering extrinsic motivation.

In contrast, when developing a new human resources management concept and fostering modern collaboration, we place a greater emphasis on intrinsic motivational factors, values, skills, and the potential for personal growth elements that are initially separate from workflows. Insights from organisational psychology can be valuable in this context.

This is why we've reflected on motivation, how we identify employee profiles, and the reasoning behind these actions.

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[16] J.McGrath, B. Bates, 2013. The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.

This also works in sophisticated and highly technological environments, even in very young manufacturing environments like in Startups. Instead of numerous workers needed to service a single production line running from receiving of raw material to shipping of finished product, in cellular manufacturing production is divided among groups or cells of workers and production machinery. This means if there would be a breakdown in staffing or machinery, in any part of the line of a traditional production line the entire process would be idled until the issue is resolved, whilst in a cellular manufacturing process this wouldn't affect the rest of production.

In Lean Manufacturing, creating semi-autonomous and multi-skilled teams who manufacture complete products or complex components has been a significant step towards the empowerment and intrinsic rewarding process of employees. Our revolutionary approach includes further diversification to an extent that goes beyond one division or department in a workplace.

In our experience a simple assignment matrix, like the RACI model used in project management, can clarify responsibilities. This matrix helps define the core domain based on professional qualifications and knowledge. By expanding responsibilities into new and unfamiliar areas an individual may experience discomfort, but this discomfort is essential for growth. It requires courage to abandon established methods and take risks, making more mistakes than others. However this is the only way to accelerate personal and team development. Diversifying talent and skills within a team not only reduces the risk of failing to meet collective goals but also enriches the team's experience and capabilities.

It also helps avoid the silo mentality. A silo mentality is the unwillingness to share information or knowledge between employees or across different departments within a company. The silo mentality is generally seen as a top-down issue arising from competition between senior managers. The protective attitude toward information begins with management and is passed down to individual employees. It also may be seen between individual employees, who may hoard information for their benefit. It is often found between employees of competing departments, such as marketing and sales, where some assigned duties overlap.

It is not always a matter of clashing egos. A silo mentality can reflect a narrow vision. The employees are so bogged down in their daily chores that they never see the bigger picture or see themselves as having a critical role in that bigger picture. They also may be totally unaware of the value to others of the information they are sitting on.

Silos can create low morale and negatively impact workflows.

Applying the Pareto Principle when creating a responsibility matrix can help avoid common organisational challenges. This principle, first devised by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), originally demonstrated that 80% of Italy's wealth was owned by just 20% of its population. Over time, it was discovered that this 80/20 split could be applied to a wide range of business and social situations. For example, 80% of a business's sales often come

from just 20% of its customers[17]. The Pareto Principle separates the important few from the unimportant many. It is extremely elegant in its simplicity and has shown over the years that it can be applied to virtually any situation.

It's important to note that the Pareto Principle isn't an exact measure but rather a rule of thumb. The 80/20 split might vary—sometimes 70/30 or 90/10—depending on the context. It can be applied to numerous areas, including staff, products, resources, customers, and suppliers. The key takeaway is to focus on the vital 20% and leave the remaining 80% to run its course.

When it comes to building a RACI matrix, incorporating the Pareto Principle can help prevent silo mentalities. Typically, responsibilities are assigned based on expertise and knowledge within each business area, which often leads to siloed teams that focus narrowly on their core tasks. However, if 80% of your RACI A/R tasks are handled by 20% of your team, it allows the remaining 80% of people to focus on other aspects of the business. This setup, while efficient in some ways, can limit cross-functional interaction and collaboration.

What's often overlooked is that the small 20% group of people responsible for the 80% of A/R tasks in this particular area of the business also holds responsibility for effectively coordinating with the remaining group of 80% of people with less responsibility. In many cases organisational structures tend to shift the focus of this 80% group to other areas of the business, where a similar 80/20 distribution exists.

The skills and attributes of the 20% group - especially in terms of collaboration, communication, and cross-functional understanding - will ultimately determine not just individual success but also the overall success of the business. Understanding strengths and weaknesses of personalities may provide good assistance in defining roles beyond responsibilities in the team, based on competencies that will support the demands of the role. The following example illustrates this, not accounting for any formal qualification and expertise.

Gerald (45): The employee Gerald was a lively, cheerful person. Always in a good mood and very dynamic, full of energy. He was in constant contact with all employees, was very curious and interested in what was happening in other departments and how he could contribute to moving the company forward. He sometimes spoke frankly when something didn't please him, but he was also willing to compromise. He was a born team leader and an alpha type who took charge.

Mike (48): The employee Mike was a qualified teacher and business economist. He had a high affinity for paying and controlled occupancy figures, checked stocks and expenses. He was always benevolent and helpful, but reserved. He was happy when he could do "his thing" and showed competence in mathematical acrobatics. He also gladly accepted technical innovations and examined their use for the company.

Sandy (35): She was a qualified teacher, was always up to date with her knowledge, checked results and thought them through. She often approached the team when appointments

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[17] J.McGrath, B. Bates (2013). The Little Book of Big Management Theories, Pearson Education Limited.

were pending, deadlines had to be met and she expressed concerns about upcoming actions. She weighed up the pros and cons and pointed out discrepancies. She also insisted on compliance with agreed rules and always checked the quality criteria.

Lara (42): She was an employee who was always thinking up new projects, contributing scientific know-how, she was also a worrier but more analytical in nature. She thought things through and analysed. Her sense of justice led her to participate in employee representation and she tried to support the employees in dealings with management.

By using these examples from our coaching experience, we would like to explain how useful it can be to have the right employee on the right job. Here it was obvious that the employees felt comfortable and loved their job, did well and felt challenged and seen. There was respect within the team despite all the usual challenges because everyone was aware that they had their own qualities that were needed and valued by each other. Wishes, expectations and skills often overlap in such team constellations. Competition over popular work assignments may be enjoyable as roles and tasks can change in such teams. Regular supervision and effective communication helped us in this organisation to maintain and live clarity in roles and task allocation.

In organisational psychology, there are numerous methods out there to help assess what works best in a specific work environment and to support businesses in a wider and deeper context to assess. From our point of view, alongside carefully selected assessments, it is essential to incorporate self-reflection and an exploration of the values, goals, and skills of employees in relation to the company. The focus is not on evaluating or judging, but on understanding where the professional journey could take all involved. This approach aims to tap into the intrinsic motivation for the chosen role, ensuring it aligns with the employee's personal goals and both their professional and personal future visions. The goal is to create harmony between the company's objectives and vision and the employee's, minimising conflicts and reducing disruptions.

A few examples to support in a simple way some self-reflection will be highlighted here as extremely useful for our concept. We have worked with these selected tests successfully in the past to find the right fits for specific roles in a business in a diversified combination.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is based on C. Jung's type theory[18], and measures preferences to act, think or behave. It is considered one of the most serious and respected instruments for the areas of human resources, executive training, management, and organisational development. Well-known companies such as Apple, AT&T, Citicorp, Exxon, General Electric, General Motors and Siemens regularly use these instruments. The instrument describes personality preferences that characterise our behaviour in professional and private life.

The MBTI is based on various theses, on which both the instrument and the interpretation of the results are based: Human behaviour is not random, even if it sometimes seems that way. Patterns exist. Human behaviour is different because there are personal - innate -

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[18] Carl Gustav Jung (1921), Psychological Types, Rascher Verlag, Zurich.

tendencies or preferences. We behave and decide in a certain way because we have preferences - other people with different preferences decide differently. This "otherness" is the reason or key for unsuccessful or successful communication, for conflicts or their resolution, for dislike or understanding, for teams acting ineffectively. The MBTI describes preferences. Preferences are not abilities, the MBTI doesn't say what someone can and cannot do, but only how someone prefers to act (think, behave). Behaviour based on personal preference is easier and appears more competent, while behaviour on the opposite pole is more strenuous. Preferences are not exclusive or absolute, everyone uses all possibilities. There are no better or worse types, every personality has potential.

Another method we would like to introduce is called the The Riemann-Thomann Model.

This model is based on the premise that all individuals have preferences in their behavioural patterns, which can be categorised along two dimensions, each defined by two poles. One-dimension spans between proximity and distance, while the other ranges from change to duration.

The model helps individuals and teams gain insight into the underlying needs driving their behaviours, allowing them to address situations that cause stress or may lead to conflicts in a more constructive way.

In team leadership, understanding the preferences of team members can be instrumental in creating an optimal work environment that aligns with their preferences, thereby increasing the likelihood of coherence and success in their professional lives.

Teams perform at their best when they are composed of a diverse mix of individuals, representing a variety of behaviour types. This diversity significantly enhances the quality of the team's performance, the creativity of its ideas, and its capacity to tackle a wide range of challenges together. However, diversity also includes differences in behaviour types and their associated needs, which may occasionally clash and lead to conflict. In business coaching and team development, an analysis of the makeup of teams enables the teams to better understand, discuss, and ultimately manage these dynamics more effectively.

Helpful with this will be a method to identify the Internal Drivers, that are based on beliefs that we have sometimes internalised so strongly that we are not aware of them when they affect us, so-called 'scripts'. The term Internal Drivers describes very aptly what these beliefs do: They drive us from within and determine our behaviour. Internal drivers are clearly visible when we are stressed and lead to critical work behaviour, although they can sometimes be the trigger for stress in the first place. Recognising your own drivers and deactivating them leads to greater well-being and a less stressful life.

Basically, there is a positive characteristic behind every internal driver. The need for harmony, hard work, perfection, effort and haste are actually personality traits that bring many advantages in the job or when working with others. But when it comes to drivers, the dose makes the poison. Too much of one of these drivers causes stress. The crux of the

matter is that stress essentially fuels the strongest internal driver and drives us into a downward spiral that, in the worst case, ends in burnout.

The internal drivers are closely linked to our needs. Drivers are the motivational motor to fulfil basic needs. These needs include self-determination and autonomy, attachment and recognition, self-protection, striving for achievement, avoiding unpleasantness and well-being (this is the link to the above mentioned Riemann model). Through certain behaviours, we learn to fulfil needs and develop certain reaction patterns from them, which are sometimes counterproductive and should be reconsidered.

Our drivers are activated when an important need is not met. Our response to this is then the automatic reaction with the learned behaviour pattern. The behaviour is then not even questioned or reflected upon, but simply played out. This means that it is often not adapted to the situation and therefore does not solve it.

Key takeaways:

Diversifying management approaches addresses the limitations of Taylorism, which is criticised for its lack of humanity, treating workers as tools for profit and stifling creativity. By focusing solely on financial incentives and rigid roles Taylorism ignores intrinsic motivation and employee autonomy, hindering innovation. While some elements of Taylorism, like standard procedures, remain relevant in certain tasks, modern workplaces benefit from holistic approaches.

Shifting from Taylorism to a diversified approach requires new training, informed by Herzberg's two-factor theory, which distinguishes between "hygiene" factors that prevent dissatisfaction and "motivational" factors that enhance satisfaction. Focusing on intrinsic motivators promotes autonomy, responsibility and meaningful work. Taylor's principles extend beyond manufacturing, where diversification has been shown to improve efficiency. Improvement has been achieved by lean methods like cellular manufacturing that have reduced waste, increased flexibility, and empowered workers by allowing them to perform multiple tasks. This approach works even in startups and high-tech environments. Additionally, diversifying skills within a team reduces risks, enriches team experience, and prevents silo mentalities.

Organisational psychology provides tools and methods to help analyse and understand behaviour preferences, improve team dynamics and recognise internal drivers. The models applied can reduce stress and increase well-being. Understanding and managing these preferences and internal drivers allows individuals and teams to respond more effectively to challenges and improve overall performance.

Moving on from Taylorism …
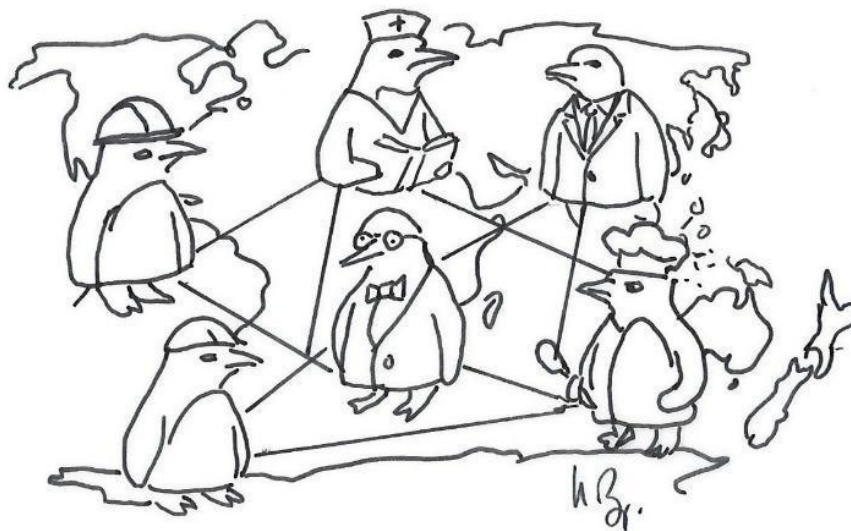
… into a diversified and interconnected community

► The previous chapters all sound very theoretical; we'd like to use the opportunity to add some flavour.

One of the most impressive exercises I got to be part of during one of my leadership development courses at a large corporation was called 'The Island'. We were a small group of leaders participating in a pilot program for leadership development. 'The Island' was the opening exercise one morning, after we had finished an enjoyable breakfast and entered the training with a fresh head and curiosity for the day.

Expecting to be introduced and get direction we were quite surprised to find ourselves left with a room of tables but without chairs, supposed to constitute an island, and there wasn't a task or goal or timeframe set for us. After a few moments of feeling uncomfortable all of us adjusted to the first step, moved the tables together so it formed the island for us, found our individual spots on the table, sat or lay down and started considering the next steps. Initially this was dominated by thoughts about real life tasks in such a situation, like looking out for food and water, or how to generate a fire. Becoming more familiar with the thought of this environment we entered a more strategic perspective and developed a plan to leave the island, searching for help.

Since the group consisted of leaders this process started up as a competitive brainstorming session until reason was applied and a collaborative approach allowed us to build a boat, establish a manned lighthouse at the island, organise food and water for the trip and set sails. The diversity of skills and knowledge in the group allowed us to put this all together in record time and off we went. It then occurred to us that the job was not completed by leaving the island and being rescued, our creativity then started flourishing. Assigned roles on the boat changed ad hoc if the situation required it. The captain turned out to be the only one with engineering skills so he got assigned to alternate and turbo-speed the boat when we noticed a cruise ship nearby.

By this time, we got to the point where the sky is the limit and we decided to enter the cruise ship and take over, sail back to the island to join the team at the lighthouse and use the cruise ship technology to build a manufacturing facility. We sent a delegate on the cruise ship helicopter out in the world to organise funds for further adventures. We became bold and ambitious; we had fun and we didn't worry about restrictions or limitations.

Debriefing from this exercise we all felt enormously liberated, inspired and empowered. The island literally filled us with fresh air. Although confused at the beginning, conditioned to being told what to do, we enjoyed the journey and developed a new and different relationship among each other. We recognised individual contributions that were different from expectations based on our job titles. We collaborated rather than competed with each other.

Being left on the island without direction helped to quickly constitute step by step purpose, mission, plan and execution, purely based on our individual knowledge, skills and personal attributes. We built a strong team by taking everybody's strengths to complement existing weaknesses and there was no threat to position or authority. We learned new things about each other, such as what the deeper motivations might be behind what we enjoy at work, and what was important for us, what was driving us.

On the boat we were five or six people, but the roles we filled were more than double. I refer back to my favourite book entering the stage of 'changing gear' (see p 14), which explains in one way what deeper motivation based on our personalities might have been underlying to take certain roles over the period of the journey:

Table 3: Personality Types by Simone von Fircks (2025), adapted from Hall, Stokes (2021)

Personality type	Definition
The Specialist	Someone who enjoys being the technical expert in a particular area
The Creator	Someone who likes developing new ideas and approaches
The Shaper	Someone who enjoys having impact and leading change
The Planner	A methodical person who prefers to think before acting
The Warrior	Someone who enjoys the fight and beating the enemy
The Influencer	Someone who enjoys having impact through persuading others
The Stimulator	A person who enjoys challenging the status quo, sometimes perceived as a maverick
The Participator	The quintessential team player who prefers working with others to working alone
The Developer	Someone who enjoys supporting others
The Coordinator	Someone who enjoys bringing people together to achieve things
The Assurer	Someone who enjoys working alone to check the details
The Implementer	Someone who enjoys putting plans into action

I found myself according to the analysis being The Creator, as I was the one spotting the cruise ship and thinking out loud about its new use for our purpose.

There is another aspect to this example which highlights the difference between management and leadership. In my opinion the distinction between management and leadership has often become blurred over time, but to us it seems it's crucial to re-establish the core differences between the two.

Management is primarily about ensuring that systems and processes run smoothly. It involves overseeing the day-to-day operations of an organisation, managing people and technology to meet predefined goals. Key functions of management include planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling and problem-solving; all aimed at maintaining stability and efficiency and maintaining the status quo.

In contrast leadership is about creating and adapting organisations. It involves setting a vision for the future, guiding the organisation through change and inspiring people to strive toward that vision, even in the face of challenges. Leadership is focused on innovation, growth and rallying individuals around a shared purpose, driving them to achieve long-term success (John P. Kotter, 1996).

While managers keep the machine running, leaders define its direction and push it forward into new territories. Both roles are essential, but their core purposes and processes are distinct.

The skills and personal attributes required to excel in either management or leadership are often quite distinct and may not be found in a single individual. Management tends to foster predictability and order, ensuring the consistent delivery of short-term results that meet the expectations of stakeholders such as on-time delivery for customers or staying on budget for shareholders. In contrast leadership drives change, sometimes of a dramatic nature, and has the potential to bring about significant innovations such as new products that resonate with customers or new labour relations strategies that enhance competitiveness.

These differing approaches can lead to personality conflicts, which, while potentially challenging, can spark valuable strategic discussions. However, an individual who attempts to fulfil both roles simultaneously may struggle to achieve meaningful results as the mindsets required for managing and leading are often in tension with one another. Effective organisations recognise the need for both management and leadership, but the roles need to be clearly defined and supported by the right individuals for optimal outcomes.

In our roles as both, manager and leader, we personally came to experience these fine lines.

We would have been excellent manager in certain areas: areas of expertise and knowledge, however, being leaders, we also were comfortable providing leadership to areas where we were less competent as a manager. Our mind as leader would have identified potential for change and improvement in both areas, while not being in the position of power to decide and perform the change. We had no choice than to deal with what we got as a manager in the area of expertise and stay out of the other areas. The powerlessness and lack of control over the situation directly affects manageability, one of the three most important factors to health in a systemic sense for both, personal and business, at the same time.

Looking back to the experience on The Island, my conclusion is the level of liberation and inspiration we all felt, directly is a result of empowerment, individually and as a group. We were a group consisting of leaders, and we were managers too. The managing aspects of our journey fell naturally into our areas of competence and knowledge (home making of the island, hunting and fishing, building a boat, sailing and navigating) while the leaders in us were empowered to decide on strategic direction: get off the island, take over the cruise ship with a modified purpose and get funds from 'far away', or so to speak external funding. Guided by our purpose and in forced proximity this all happened in perfect unity, productive and creative, without competition.

Key takeaways:

Work is not just about tasks and responsibilities; your entire personality is involved. At some point you make a choice about the kind of work you want to do, how you want to spend your time and what truly matters to you. Based on how fulfilling that choice has been, how much enjoyment it has brought and how well it aligns with your personal aspirations, you either continue on that path or seek something new. If the environment you work in supports change you may not need to change your workplace to pursue a new direction.

The deeper meaning behind your work, the values and aspirations driving it, can offer insight into the broader purpose of your life. When your personal values align with the purpose of the business it creates a meaningful, manageable and comprehensive relationship with your work, and one that connects your personal mission with the organisation's goals.

Once empowered the resulting liberation helps find your wings to truly thrive in collaboration.

Liberation helps to find your wings

➤ When we first learned about Salutogenesis in 2004, while studying public health, it was a challenging concept. Instead of focusing on disease it centers on what promotes health and well-being, viewing health as a continuum from poor health to optimal health. Once we understood this shift it completely changed my perspective on traditional disease-focused theories.

In startups founders often start with high motivation and work beyond their capacity. Driven to realise their ideas, preferences and predispositions, they live to realise the desired product, and develop therefore significant stress-resistance.

Eventually work-life balance becomes crucial. As pressure increases they seek ways to stay mentally and physically healthy. This then becomes part of the culture for the company. A 'healthy workplace' aims to make employees feel valued, with motivation driven by factors like social status, power and income.

The absence of these factors can lead to dissatisfaction and demotivation (F. Herzberg, n.d.).

We believe that focusing on 'care' or the idea of being 'cared for' in a workplace counteracts the purpose of a healthy workplace. True health should be viewed as a personal, holistic balance of physical, mental and social well-being rather than as an external service. And here it gets tricky: In our society yet we are not used to listening to ourselves, truly understanding our needs and expressing them outwardly. Every person is different and everybody tries to fit in. Top-down company culture provides the framework, however, very rarely employees would have been asked to contribute based on their individual needs. Being cared for is commonly an expectation, however the package one gets might not suit.

The world has changed drastically, with the pandemic and technological advancements reshaping work and life. Although Salutogenesis has been discussed in the social sector since the '80s it's rarely applied in commercial settings. However, as the world of work is currently undergoing a transformation, it can be assumed that, due to increased work intensity and fewer skilled workers, businesses must place health aspects in the workplace at the forefront more than ever to avoid sick days and maintain competitiveness. It seems increasingly important not only for companies to pay more attention to health factors and provide corresponding measures, but also to consider employees more as whole individuals for better efficiency.

We see purpose, work, and life as connected, shaped by a conscious process that gives us meaning. Meaning is how we perceive our actions as a way to achieve goals and intentions[19]. The question of work's meaning also leads to the question of life's meaning. Meaning can be found where we recognise and feel connections, providing support and

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[19] Wilhelm Schmidt (2013), Giving Life Meaning (2013). Suhrkamp Verlag.

releasing energy. On the other hand, feeling meaningless weakens us. Burnout begins when meaning is lost, making it a sign of the search for meaning, both for ourselves and in society.

Aaron Antonovsky's (1923 – 1994) concept of "Sense of Coherence" (SOC) explains why some people maintain good health and resilience. SOC includes three components: Meaningfulness (feeling involved and committed to work), Manageability (having the resources to cope with challenges), and Comprehensibility (understanding and controlling the work environment). These elements help individuals cope with stress and enhance overall health. While the pandemic brought immense stress and health risks to the world it also led to the rise of new work behaviours like remote work and global contract roles. SOC thrives within these evolving work styles[20].

Salutogenesis emphasises health promotion, while pathogenesis focuses on disease prevention. A strong SOC is crucial for thriving in both personal and professional life.

This balance is easier to achieve in smaller, often younger work environments, such as startups. We've seen that as businesses mature, particularly larger organisations, they often lose one of the key SOC factors: comprehensibility. As hierarchical structures increase decision-making becomes more distant and diluted. For example, a manager might find themselves two or more levels removed from key decisions. This distance means less direct involvement in day-to-day work and strategy. Although they might still enjoy casual team activities, such as a rooftop basketball game after work, this manager could feel increasingly disconnected, lacking clarity and control, leading to demotivation.

This sense of detachment often results in reduced commitment, leaving employees more likely to explore other job opportunities. Stress and internal conflict can push one's health from a good to a poor state, raising the risk of burnout[21].

We believe that work, purpose and life are interconnected in a systemic way. How you view the 'health' of a person or organisation can be the defining factor between success and failure. Our approach focuses on promoting the health-enhancing aspects of work rather than simply removing stressors.

In our example, while options like basketball can offer temporary relief from a stressful day, they don't address the fundamental issue: the work itself remains unchanged the next day. The underlying frustration continues to build, despite the moments of stress relief.

For practical illustration we'd like to add two examples from coaching work performed after burnout, with the focus on Salutogenesis.

Peter (35) had previously worked in a bank. His greatest wish had been to train as a bank clerk and he had passed this training with distinction. He saw himself as a service provider

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[20] M.B. Mittelmark et al. (2022). The Handbook of Salutogenesis. Springer Verlag
[21] Gabriele Kypta (2011), Burnout erkennen, ueberwinden, vermeiden, German edition, Carl Auer Verlag.

and wanted to help people invest and manage their money well. As the banking landscape was being restructured, he found over time that he was under increasing pressure from management to sell financial and banking products, regardless of whether he could identify with them or not. He underwent sales training and his professional orientation changed from service provider to salesperson. This did not correspond to his mentality or his preferences, nor to his actual desire. He had never seen himself as a salesperson and selling products went against his heart. He actually wanted to help people invest their money well, but was increasingly pressured by the bank to sell products that he himself did not consider useful. After a few years he was exhausted, had depressive episodes and finally quit.

In our view, this illustrates struggle when we do not follow our inner needs and want or have to fill positions that contradict our actual preferences. Work can therefore actually make us ill if our own sense of purpose no longer applies. Salutogenesis deals with exactly this phenomenon and focuses on aspects of maintaining a person's health and what contributes to this. Salutogenesis asks for answers to the following questions: Do I still have influence over the things I like to do? How much scope do I have in terms of my own freedom of action and what meaning can I give to my task? If these three aspects get lost, we run the risk of becoming ill. This was obvious in Peter's case.

Our second example shows the effort it takes to look for preferences and wishes in order to awaken high intrinsic motivation.

Christopher (48) who came to us because he had suffered burnout due to the loss of his job and asked for support, reported that he had now had to change jobs 15 times in a very short space of time. He never stuck with his jobs for long because he didn't like the work. He had originally trained as an interior decorator. He had loved selecting fine fabrics and furnishing posh hotels; that had been his dream and the reason why he had chosen this profession. However, he had only ever worked for small companies that had employed him on labour such as laying floors, not least because he had to earn a living for his family. The creative element that he wanted to find in his work had been completely lost. After going through intensive training and coaching regarding his wishes and preferences such as skills and abilities, he applied to work at a wholesaler that sold high-quality materials to smaller companies. He had realised that he did not have to work just for material gain, but that the decisive factor for his motivation and his enjoyment of the work also had to match his preferences and talents. The client was overjoyed when he was offered a job in sales there. Since then, he has been able to pursue his deepest desire and sell fine fabrics, floor coverings and other materials. His self-confidence, his strengths and his desire to make good sales have increased significantly.

Both examples show that companies have opportunities to consider the three basic pillars of Salutogenesis in company and employee management. Opportunities for employers to ensure coherence by giving employees meaning, options for action and influence, opportunities for employees to look after themselves and their health by keeping these three factors in mind when looking for a good job.

My sister shares here her best work experience so far; to illustrate the insights she gained on her discovery journey of Salutogenesis.

"After university, contrary to my expectations, I joined a company that had made it its mission to make people with burnout available for the job market again. The people who sought help from this company were psychologically burned out by stress and constant pressure at work. What we all now know as the burnout syndrome was new at the time, and it was apparently becoming more and more common, and it became socially acceptable, however it didn't result in society or companies considering changing the problem. Burnout is caused by excessive demands on one's own part, excessive demands from outside, or an unsuitable workplace that does not do justice to the employee and his or her disposition. A person's permanent state of exhaustion means that they can no longer achieve the level of performance they originally had, regardless of their age and general performance. This is a major problem, especially in highly developed civil societies with a high level of performance.

This company, which wanted to help these people to restore their level of performance, was run socioracially and relied on motivated employees who were committed and socially minded. This form of cooperation, which was still unknown to me at the time, made me pay attention and interest on two levels.

The first level was obvious. The restoration of performance of people who had suffered from a permanent state of exhaustion in their working bodies and were therefore no longer able to perform well, were able to recharge their batteries and energy in a protected environment. With training, coaching and psychological help with self-care, building resilience and training new skills such as communication, conflict resolution and stress management, it was possible to restore health after a year of training so that they could start working again.

I asked myself how we could get to the point where people get so exhausted and without having control over it, whilst at the same time companies now placed a lot of value on work-life balance and working conditions became more and more appealing compared to previous working conditions.

These were my conclusions:

1. The employees affected had not had the opportunity to build resilience factors in their previous life circumstances.

2. The employees affected had developed a work ethic or a life script that relied on values such as perfectionism, self-sacrifice and sacrifice for people and companies. That did not allow them to rest and pay attention to themselves and their own needs and rest periods.

3. Too little awareness and knowledge of stressors and their coping strategies, existential fears and ignorance of their own preferences (abilities and skills, as well as personal preferences, preferences, talents and interests) for certain work areas.

4. Companies that have little interest in whether employees take good care of themselves, can use their strengths in a health-conscious manner and create framework conditions that enable employees to work in the right work area for them with all of their skills.

The second level was a more personal experience. I found myself engaged with a socioracially managed company that completely turned my idea of hierarchy and collaboration on its head. I was received with great appreciation and was given the freedom to choose which work area I felt most comfortable in according to my abilities. The organisational tasks were distributed equally among the team members and departments, and team meetings took place in an interdisciplinary composition. Roles and tasks were distributed among the team members for the organisational tasks, regardless of profession, depending on their other skills and abilities. The teamwork was regularly examined and improved from the outside by independent coaches, so that conflict and communication problems could be prevented in good time. Apart from a management team that coordinated the commercial processes and contributed to the further development of the company and carried out staff recruitment and development, the operational daily tasks were solely in the hands of the teams, who worked across departments with other teams.

My summary of this work experience was that it was probably one of the best jobs I have ever had and that it differed considerably from other companies in terms of team management, personnel management and communication between employees. This company has operated successfully for over 25 years with the concept of almost hierarchy-free collaboration. I say 'almost' as this particular style of management still includes a certain degree of hierarchy that can influence the path to go. This company still exists. Spirit and attitude of the respective upper management will determine its faith". (Karin Bramstedt, 2025).

Key takeaways:

We believe that focusing solely on "care" in workplaces undermines true health promotion which should embrace a holistic approach to physical, mental and social well-being. The pandemic and technological advancements have significantly altered work and life. While Salutogenesis has been explored in the social sector since the '80s it is seldom applied in commercial settings. We see purpose, work and life as interconnected, and how we define "health" directly impacts success.

Aaron Antonovsky's "Sense of Coherence" (SOC) explains why some individuals remain resilient. SOC which includes Meaningfulness, Manageability and Comprehensibility helps individuals cope with stress and improve health. In such circumstances, environmental factors such as working conditions and salary, as well as areas of responsibility, are optimal for the employees and meet their desires and expectations and help to handle stress better.

By focusing on health-promoting work aspects in a holistic and systemic manner rather than merely eliminating stressors, both individuals and businesses can thrive.
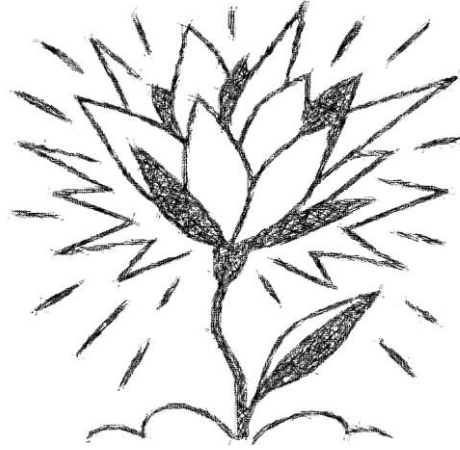
SOC … sparks and flourishes your health and thrives an organisation

Conclusion Part II

'Making work rich and decent again', to recapitulate the words on the title page of this book, encapsulate the essence of Kurt Lewin's critique of Taylorism and his vision for a more humane approach to work[22]. We feel now it is less of a choice and more of an imperative. The challenge lies in reconciling the competing objectives and often contradictory logics of the various systems involved. Individuals as bio-psycho-social beings driven by self-preservation and self-enhancement. Private companies as complex social entities with market-driven, resource-oriented strategies. Politics as a sphere influenced by shareholders and lobbyists with law-making power. Society as an overarching construct that shapes shared values and norms, guiding both individual and collective identity formation in an increasingly complex world[23].

Today's fast-changing economy is reshaping careers, requiring new leadership and change management skills. In the past white-collar workers typically climbed the ranks in stable companies, while blue-collar workers stayed in one trade for decades. These traditional career paths no longer guarantee fulfilment in the 21st century where more dynamic careers are required.

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[22] Kurt Lewin (1920), Die Sozialisierung des Taylorsystems: Eine grundsätzliche Untersuchung zur Arbeits- und Berufspsychologie, Verlag Gesellschaft und Erziehung.
[23] M.B. Mittelmark et al. (2022), The Handbook of Salutogenesis, Springer Verlag.

Many people still hold on to outdated career models, often out of comfort or past success, but these won't work in the future. The key shift is moving away from expecting a linear career path and being told what to do, to embracing a more flexible, meaningful work environment. The challenge is how much maturity it takes to accept freedom in our work without fear.

As the pace of change increases even skilled individuals may struggle to keep up with the quickly shifting landscape of competitors, customers and technology. They may not have the time or resources to communicate every decision, and won't always be able to lead others effectively.

Leadership may shift from selecting one individual to replace another, to choosing a strong team that can work together from the start. In this model team collaboration is prioritised over individual egos.

The goal is to create confidence in team structures, empowering employees to take ownership and lead without fear, which includes taking responsibility for the company's success or failure. Employee Stock Options can encourage this sense of ownership and combine both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

In the end the choice is between 'working less and more comfortably' or 'making work more meaningful and fulfilling' (rich and decent).

Chapter 7: Movement to a human-centred future for all

➤ Once we understand the major trends shaping our world today, the path forward becomes clear: we must focus on creating an empowering, prosperous, human-centred future for all. Over the coming decades, the technologies that shape our daily lives will fundamentally transform the global economy, our communities, and our identities. Minimising risks and improving the human condition will be essential. As work and life continue to blend together, it's clear that we must rethink how we approach both in the traditional sense.

It was a wake-up call for me when my then 25-year-old son asked, "Who actually defines what the foundation for livelihood is?" We were discussing how life and work would shape his future and why things would change. Up until that point, he had only known life through the lens of education - school and university - which he thoroughly enjoyed. He didn't feel it was meant for him to enter the traditional nine-to-five grind, five days a week. He gave it a

try, but it never fully resonated with him. For me, it shook me up really, as this was the point of observing the signs of a beginning revolution. What I knew and defined as the 'normal', coming from a generation that always had to deal with a lot of competition, had to fight for a job, and tried to hold on to it then, even with my nomadic mindset and flexibility, it was eye opening to see the confidence and ease in place, by how a young man in today's workforce would approach his work life.

Now, at 28, he raised that same question again, but this time with a broader perspective, influenced by his experiences. He's questioning the status quo - the societal acceptance of a long, hard work life - and trying to find a way to live fully while balancing that demanding work. He wants to live a life that doesn't just revolve around hard work but exists *despite* it.

He is not the only one in his generation considering a new way of doing it - life.

Posts on platforms like LinkedIn show an inflationary rise of Vice President - and Executive titles among the 30- to 40-year-old globally. Status and income related to these job titles dominate the job hunt and seem to guarantee a come-back and keep-up with competition, regardless of industry or country, for those professionals who don't want to wait until they are 65 for their time out. Sabbaticals are back in modern work-life, on a much larger scale than historically seen. In the 80th only a minority of academics have had the privilege to take a one-year sabbatical to expand on their experience and knowledge. With the scale we see today, the network resulting is tremendous and results in collaborative learning and new mindsets formed. Our Generation Z is demanding. They want explanations, ask questions, need answers, and want to make decisions. They seek shorter working hours with the same pay, more vacation, more free time, and yet still expect sustainability, prosperity, and satisfaction. How can we address these challenges?

In Germany, discussions around 'Industry 4.0' have gained momentum since the term was coined at the Hannover Fair in 2011, describing how this revolution will reorganise global value chains. By enabling 'smart factories', the fourth industrial revolution fosters a world where virtual and physical manufacturing systems cooperate flexibly across borders, allowing for highly customised products and new operating models[24].

The broader scope of this industrial revolution covers breakthroughs in nanotechnology, AI, renewables, gene sequencing, and quantum computing. It's the fusion of these technologies and their interaction across the physical, digital, and biological realms that sets the fourth industrial revolution apart from previous ones. While parts of the world are still catching up to earlier revolutions, we welcome the term 'fourth industrial revolution' as it represents a shift from muscle power to cognitive power, enhancing human production in unprecedented ways.

The cognitive abilities required to navigate this new era will reshape organisational structures and leadership approaches. The future must be grounded in human-centred, collaborative models - moving away from divisive and dehumanising methods. This transformation cannot be the responsibility of a single sector or stakeholder. As traditional business practices continue to evolve, so too must the way organisations are structured. The

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[24] Klaus Schwab, The fourth Industrial Revolution (2017), New York Crown Business.

interactions and collaborations necessary for this change are essential in enabling people to participate in and benefit from the transformation. We call it a revolutionary change.

Shifting organisational structures to empower and engage individuals is crucial to keep up with rapid technological changes. As work, communication, and self-expression evolve, new roles and professions will emerge, driven not only by technology but also by demographic, geopolitical, and cultural shifts. Talent, more than capital, will be the key driver of innovation and growth, and a shortage of skilled workers will likely limit progress.

This shift will also change how we define 'high skill'. Traditional definitions based on advanced education and specialised knowledge will evolve as workers must continuously adapt and learn new skills. Learning and innovation will become essential skills.

We will need new social and employment contracts that reflect changes in the workforce. It's important to ensure that technology doesn't lead to exploitation while allowing people the freedom to work as they choose. The 'fourth industrial revolution' will not only change what we do but also who we are - affecting our privacy, ownership, consumption, work-life balance, careers, and relationships. These changes could raise questions about human existence itself, sparking both excitement and fear as things move faster than ever.

This change may imply that increased work intensification, higher cognitive demands, and more challenges due to technological requirements could lead to a surge in health problems that cannot yet be adequately addressed. Maintaining this balance, while incorporating revolutionary innovations into organisational and personnel management, is a significant challenge that, in our opinion, has not yet been sufficiently considered and has prompted us to develop a unique concept for it.

Technology has already made us more efficient and helped personal growth, but we are now entering a time of greater change. Everything around us will transform, requiring us to keep adapting. This may create a divide between those who embrace change and those who resist it. At this point, it involves more than just extrinsic incentives and the pursuit of power, recognition, and professional status. Taking on responsibility means continually expanding, adapting, and developing one's abilities, while maintaining health and well-being amidst all challenges, as well as contributing to a healthy humanity, healthy businesses, and a healthy environment. It is about taking responsibility for oneself and for others.

To succeed, we need to break down barriers and use networks to build strong partnerships. Organisations that don't embrace diversity or build diverse teams will struggle with the changes of the digital age. Leaders must be able to shift their thinking to adapt to today's fast-paced world. Sticking to old ways of thinking will hold us back. In a world of constant change, leaders with high emotional intelligence will be better able to innovate and stay agile. A mindset, which promotes collaboration and new ideas, relies on emotional intelligence to succeed. This will be key to overcoming challenges and thriving in times of disruption.

Understanding the human drivers and identities involved in the process will become increasingly important. Emotional intelligence allows you to understand yourself on a deeper level, giving you confidence in what you contribute and clarity on where you need

help from others. It helps you tune into your emotions, accept criticism and responsibility, move on from mistakes, and set boundaries when necessary. We, too, are human and we change. Once we accept that all our abilities and traits are valuable in different contexts, and aim for collaboration based on the compatibility of individual contributions, we can focus on our strengths and overcome weaknesses. This will enable us to shape our own identity, constantly reassess where we stand, and make adjustments as time goes on.

Designing your identity has been characterised as a process of 'patchwork-identity'[25]. The classic patchwork arrangements, with their evenly repeating geometric shapes, align with the traditional concept of identity. In contrast, a patchwork made up of wild combinations of colours and shapes can express creativity. The term 'Crazy Quilt' is tied to modern identity work and formation. Identity doesn't disappear; rather, it's the predictable, ordered form of identity - like the classic quilt - that fades away. It's not the loss of a centre, but rather the gain of creative possibilities around it. The 'Crazy Quilt' emerges from a creative process and maintains an internal coherence. The variety of roles that today's person must navigate, along with the need to quickly adapt to changes - whether in career, relationships, or other areas - demands flexibility. This flexible identity requires adjusting to new life situations and challenges without having pre-existing maps to guide us.

People feel their identity when life changes. Identity also is experienced through work, performance, and achievements. It's about values, creativity - but also about economics and status. Identity can be redefined and accepted anew. It is not final and is never complete. Instead, it changes and is fuelled by new ideas.

A fundamental experience of identity is the awareness that we constantly change throughout our lives, yet remain the same. People who have known us for a long time can recognise both the constant and the change. We experience identity as the core of our existence – a synthesis of who we have been and who we will become.


Key takeaways:

Understanding the major trends shaping today's world reveals a clear path forward: we must focus on creating a human-centered, empowering, and prosperous future. Technologies will continue to transform the global economy, communities, and identities, making it essential to minimise risks and improve the human condition. As work and life blend together, we must rethink our traditional approaches to both. As technological and societal changes accelerate, new forms of employment contracts are needed to protect workers while offering flexibility. The Fourth Industrial Revolution will not only change what we do but also who we are - our identities, privacy, work-life balance, and relationships. While it sparks both excitement and fear, embracing these changes and building diverse, collaborative teams will be crucial.

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[25] Heiner Keupp (1999) Identitaetskonstruktionen, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag

Leaders with emotional intelligence, adaptability, and the ability to foster collaboration will be better equipped to navigate this disruption. Understanding human drivers and identities will allow us to design and evolve our identities, engaging in a continuous process of adaptation. The concept of 'patchwork identity' or 'Crazy Quilt' captures this process of creative, flexible identity formation; where predictable, ordered identities fade, and new possibilities emerge, demanding flexibility and constant adaptation to change.
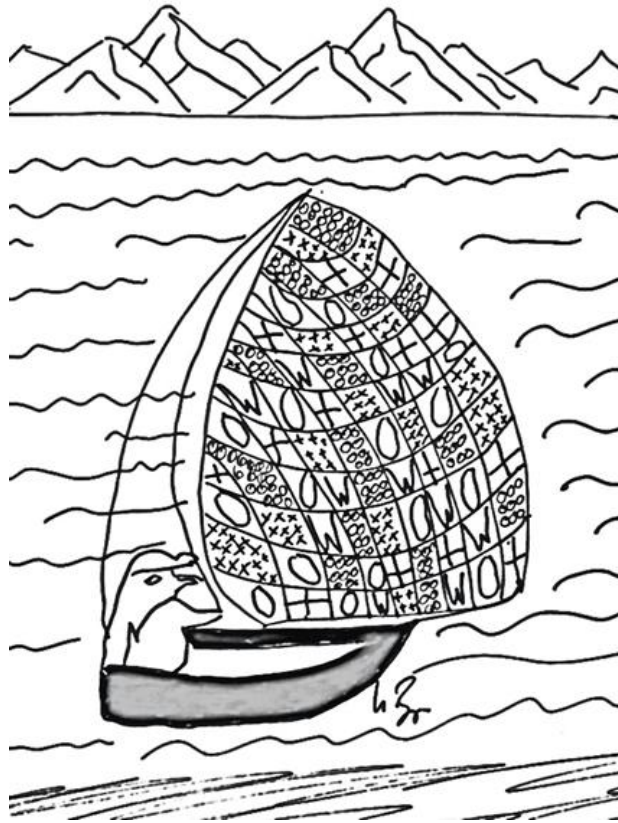
Patchwork Identity … tacking the wind

➤ Finally, here we go. We introduce SIKA®.

We built the method primarily from experience and the use of supportive theories. The concept is based on similar organisational concepts with agile structures involving employees without hierarchical structures and goes back in its original approaches to the Austrian-Hungarian writer Arthur Koestler (1905 – 1983), who shaped the Holon concept with his book "The ghost in the machine"[26]. He constructed the term from the Greek word hólos = whole and the suffix on, which should point to the partial or particle character. In his definition he describes the holon as a component in a hierarchy which, depending on the point of view, behaves as a whole or as parts. A very good example of a holon is the human cell which can be seen as a whole and at the same time represents only a part of the superordinate structure.

American entrepreneur Brian J. Robertson uses the Holon concept as the basis for his organisational concept which includes the practice of regulating and managing organisations, which is characterised by decision-making based on transparency and participatory opportunities for participation at all levels[27]. In New Zealand agile structures and working methods have already been experimentally implemented in this way by a few small companies e.g Snapper. Internationally there is experience in the US and also in the German speaking areas e.g. Blinkist, Deutsche Bahn in selected areas. Success is yet to be proven; however the general concept seems to be suitable over traditional and hierarchy-based concepts, especially for an organisation that has just started growing.

The health-promoting outcome of SIKA® in a startup should be measurable. A company's culture, shaped by the rules governing member interactions, influences collaboration. To foster collaboration rather than competition the organisational structure should encourage mutual cooperation. However, measuring the success of such a structure is challenging as it relies on the individual's willingness to collaborate, which can vary.

The examples illustrate how interconnected the various levels in organisations are. It is important to acknowledge that the surface structure must always result in development of the underlying structure, if the intended effect is to generate findings from a systemic point of view and related theories. Any changes in the underlying structure, e.g. new identity, consequently will have to be followed up by changes on all other levels. This interconnected view is at the core of the organisation's systemic view[28].

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[26] Arthur Koestler (1968), The Ghost in the Machine, Molden Verlag.

[27] Brian Robertson (2015), Holacracy: The New Management System for a Rapidly Changing World, Henry Holt & Company

[28] Niklas Luhmann (2012), Introduction to system theory, Polity.

The understanding that the individual levels of the organisation cannot be separated from one another and have an effect does often look different in practice. This perspective is a central element of the effective change of organisations and thus is also part of the SIKA® model in addition to the other models considered in SIKA®.

The salutogenic model, central to the SIKA® framework, can be used to create metrics for monitoring individual well-being. When applied to a startup the model requires adaptations from its original public health context. The adaptation process could involve using measurement tools and methods inspired by the Kaizen concept, focusing on continuous improvement.

Kaizen often is associated with efficiency. During my work with a large pharmaceutical company I have learned about tools utilised in SixSigma efficiency courses to improve business processes and lean manufacturing. Kaizen is a Japanese word that means change for the better. KAI means change and ZEN means good. The philosophy of Kaizen has many facets, and the basic idea behind the philosophy involves improvement and change. This improvement ties into the success and competitiveness of an organisation. As a philosophy, Kaizen involves a culture where individuals do not judge and do not blame, where groups practice systemic thinking and everyone has a focus on results and processes.

So, what does this mean for SIKA®? We do want to develop the spirit of efficiency; however this should not come at the expense of resilience. The single overriding principle of Taylorism was the separation of management and planning from the execution of tasks on the factory floor and, further dividing those tasks into ever-simpler subdivisions of the overall operation, then coordinated to work in tandem to speed the efficiency of the production process[29].

We also sometimes call it stop-watch-manufacturing, where each worker's movements were tweaked and measured, individual behaviour eliminated and workers made almost indistinguishable from the machines they were attending. This is how it all started, later evolved into modern household efficiencies as well as in education, standardisation and numerical grading became the norm, knowledge was broken up into small bits of easily digestible facts to be memorised and reviewed in standardised tests. The 'why' became replaced by the 'how' of things. Efficiency became the chief criterion of determining performance, deadlines and siloed discipline the guarantees for success. "The brilliance of Taylor's narrative is that it was attached to science, giving it the legitimacy that would make it palpable to an educated middle class while using the term *efficiency*" (J. Rifkin, 2022). The term originally was an engineering term and attached to the performance of machines. Now it was suggested to be applicable to almost every aspect in life.

How does this relate to resilience? Whilst there were adjustments made over time in execution, the Taylorism mindset still seems to be the base for efficiency approaches. SIKA® wants to approach tools like Kaizen in their original meaning and use it to measure 'good change'. In our concept the factor, however, should be resilience.

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[29] Jeremy Rifkin (2023). The Age of Resilience, Swift Press.

The factor measured will be the resilience factor. We believe collaboratively and collectively individuals and organisations can flourish as a whole by building resilience in. The science of Salutogenesis will provide us with guidance.

We understand that individual resilience will strongly impact the resilience a business can prove in times of crisis. Single-point-of-failure is a phenomenon I had to mitigate my entire professional life. It meant that in order to achieve efficiency and lean manufacturing a business would save costs in building and maintaining e.g. one single process, facility, supply chain or source of material. During the COVID crisis we all could observe how that caused disruption and how businesses who planned for buffer, surplus inventory and additional work stream backup overcame the crisis and slowdown. On an individual basis this also meant that highly specialised operators for a single work process were not easy to replace when there weren't multi-work-stream trained or even interdisciplinary resources available at the same time. Business resilience became a meaning during this period of time. Businesses were dependent on people who could cope with the situation they found themselves in and businesses had to manage the situation they were facing, with the resources available.

"The viruses keep coming. The climate keeps warming. And the earth is rewilding in real time. We long thought that we could force the natural world to adapt to our species. We now face the ignominious fate of being forced to adapt to an unpredictable natural world. Our species has no playbook for the mayhem that is unfolding around us." (J. Rifkin, 2022).

Efficiency seems to be a temporal value, whilst resilience is a condition. It appears that increasing efficiency might undermine resilience, however plenty of theories suggest that evolutionary adaptivity will be the key to harmonisation. Biology has proof of it. Efficiency focuses on removing redundancies that slow down economic activity, while resilience, especially in nature, relies on redundancy and diversity. For instance, a monoculture crop may grow quickly, but if it faces a blight, the losses could be devastating.

In biological systems adaptivity rather than efficiency is the temporal value. Consequently generativity rather than productivity is the measure of performance. Adaptability and regeneration are inherently connected in all living organisms and ecosystems[30].

Fritjof Capra's notable work "The Web of Life" explores the interconnectedness of living organisms and ecosystems. He discusses how biological systems function not just through efficiency but through the dynamic process of adaptation and regeneration. His concepts align well with the idea that adaptability and generativity are key measures of performance in natural systems.

We agree this sounds like a long shot. Capitalist theory and practice doesn't seem to be directly linked to counter economic narratives about adaptivity and resilience. Business

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[30] Fritjof Capra "The web of Life" (1997), Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

efficiency is all about time and saving. Risks have been mitigated away. A factor of stability over time supported all of this. We believe this comforting moment of having unlimited time available in a never changing world has become our past. Fast and utterly disruptive changes in the world we are living and operating in require fast adaptivity and resilience. SIKA® has been designed to support a process that allows a business system to adapt in mutual collaboration of its individuals, collectives and business principles.

Key takeaways:

SIKA® is a method built from experience and supported by theories inspired by agile organisational structures and the Holon concept introduced by Arthur Koestler in 1968. A holon represents both a whole and a part, like a human cell in a larger system. Brian J. Robertson's Holacracy model, based on Holon, emphasises transparency, decision-making and participatory structures, while similar methods have been experimentally implemented in companies globally. SIKA® aims to promote health and resilience in startups by fostering a collaborative culture rather than a competitive one. Success in such structures is hard to measure due to variability in individuals' willingness to collaborate.

The salutogenic model, central to SIKA®, emphasises well-being by cultivating a sense of coherence; viewing life as comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable. In the context of startups this model requires adaptation with tools inspired by Kaizen for continuous improvement and metrics, enabling better coping with stress and promoting overall well-being. This chapter explores the balance between resilience and efficiency in business and ecosystems. Efficiency focuses on reducing redundancies for cost-saving, while resilience thrives on redundancy and diversity to adapt to challenges. SIKA® aims to use tools like Kaizen to measure "good change" and build resilience in individuals and organisations, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis, where businesses with backup plans and cross-trained employees fared better. Efficiency is a short-term goal, while resilience is a long-term necessity. The chapter argues that focusing too much on efficiency can undermine resilience, as seen in nature. Businesses must move beyond outdated models of efficiency and stability and embrace adaptability and resilience in a changing world. SIKA® is designed to support this adaptive process collaboratively.
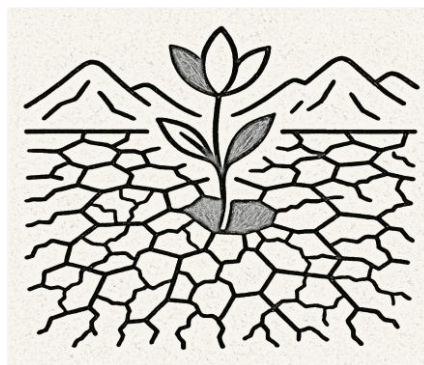
Resilience enables Adaption

➤ Our toolbox aligns with others, but where traditional operational models follow a top-down approach our baseline is bottom-up, focusing on strengthening the Sense of Coherence through three scientifically proven health-promoting factors.

SIKA® for Startups is a guide to creating a sustainable, unique operational model tailored to a company's vision. It customises organisational concepts by integrating flat hierarchies and agile workflows, working alongside the team to design a structure that leverages individual strengths for enhanced speed, efficiency and acceptance. By improving organisational structures, adopting innovative work practices and fostering a healthier work environment SIKA® helps build business resilience and partnership.

The process focuses on six key pillars in any order: functions and roles, decision-making, training, talent, remuneration and an evaluation phase to provide metrics for ongoing assessment. The goal is to align these pillars effectively to help the organisation achieve its objectives.

Figure 5: "The Comb" by SIKA®, Simone von Fircks, Karin Bramstedt (2024)

The honeycomb serves as the framework in how to achieve this. Each pillar is captured with six walls. This way six walls of their cells are exposed to allow them to connect to another cell with a regular hexagonal grid and so on. Referring to the overall connection in a systemic sense this means each of the six pillars may contribute to another operational unit and so on.

The sooner in the development of the business this process is started the faster results are achieved, and establishment can have started and expanded as the business grows. The operational model will have achieved alignment of the organisational direction with the strategic goals and will be a key element in engaging and communicating the rationale for change to stakeholders. It will have addressed the processes, technologies and organisation required to meet the organisational objectives and provided the link to a roadmap of change initiatives to establish the desired outcomes, services and behaviours.

The key benefit of a SIKA® (six pillars) is that the model is fully aligned with core business objectives which are monitored and measured. This in turn drives improvements in time, cost and quality of the delivered service/product to users/customers and in improved satisfaction and retention of staff.

Our method to develop a new operating model focuses on capabilities that allow us to change the model quickly if needed. This agility can make all the difference.

The process for implementation involves eight stages. Each stage builds onto the previous one and requires the previous stage to be completed and agreed on, having involved all the people affected.

Stages of implementation:

1 Creating

A creative 'brainstorming' process to get the ideas of everybody involved on current status of the workplace e.g. a catalogue of needs of the good, the awesome, the bad and the ugly (systemic).

2 Developing

An approach to develop an outlook to the future, the way everybody pictures collaboration e.g. a RACI with the goal to break up existing silos and tunnel views. A decision-making procedure will add to it, as a financial delegated authority matrix will.

3 Communicating

A comprehensive discussion including views from different perspectives with regard to the status quo and opportunities, systemic practice applied.

4 Empowering

A deeper look into preferences and talents by psychometric analysis for matching and complementary types in teams. Liberating.

5 Generating

A revised operational structure with overlapping RACI, PD's and a salary structure. Prepare options for deep impact change management.

6 Consolidating

A feedback and evaluation process, considering the SOC's described in chapter 6 with a salutogenetic view to evaluate how meaningful, manageable and comprehensive the job is seen.

7 Anchoring

A period of time that helps having the process 'sink in'. Leading by example.

8 Review and metrics

A new set of metrics derived from the salutogenetic theory, to determine the 'factor' Health

Key takeaways:

SIKA® for Startups is a guide that creates a sustainable operational model tailored to a company's vision. It adopts a bottom-up approach, strengthening the Sense of Coherence through health-promoting factors. By integrating flat hierarchies and agile workflows, it boosts speed, efficiency, and team acceptance. The process focuses on six pillars - functions, decision-making, training, talent, remuneration, and evaluation - optimising structure, work practices, and resilience.

The SIKA® model, structured like a honeycomb, connects six pillars in a systemic framework for organisational development. Early implementation accelerates results by aligning the operational model with strategic goals and fostering stakeholder communication. The model improves time, cost, quality, and employee satisfaction while being agile enough to adapt to disruptions. The implementation involves eight stages.

Conclusion Part III

The major trends shaping today's world highlight the need for a human-centered, empowering, and prosperous future. Technological advancements are transforming economies, communities, and identities, making it vital to minimise risks and improve the human condition. As work and life merge, new forms of employment contracts are necessary to protect workers and provide flexibility. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is altering both what we do and who we are, influencing our identities, privacy, work-life balance, and relationships. Embracing these changes with diverse, collaborative teams will

be key. Leaders with emotional intelligence and adaptability will be better positioned to navigate these disruptions.

The concept of 'patchwork identity' emphasises flexible, creative identity formation, where adaptability to change is crucial. SIKA® is a method based on agile organisational structures, focusing on transparency, decision-making, and collaboration. It aims to foster health and resilience in startups by promoting a collaborative culture over a competitive one, though success depends on individual willingness to collaborate.

The Salutogenic model, central to SIKA®, promotes well-being by cultivating a sense of coherence, helping individuals view life as comprehensible, meaningful, and manageable. In startups, this model is adapted with continuous improvement tools inspired by Kaizen, enhancing resilience and stress management. The SIKA® for Startups framework uses a bottom-up approach to create a sustainable operational model aligned with the company's vision. It incorporates flat hierarchies and agile workflows to improve efficiency, speed, and team engagement, focusing on six pillars: functions, decision-making, training, talent, remuneration, and evaluation.

The SIKA® model is a systemic framework that connects six pillars as a base for organisational development. Early implementation accelerates results and aligns operational models with strategic goals, improving time, cost, quality, and employee satisfaction while being agile enough to adapt to disruptions. The process involves eight stages.
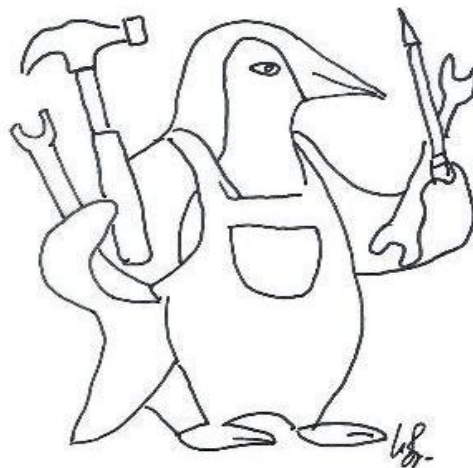
SIKA® is tools … and beyond

Epilogue

'Think vastly. Act narrow'. (Mongolian quote).

We hope we have managed to cross this bridge. We hope we contribute vastly and most of all with vastly different ways to the workplace challenges of our time. We aim for this book to be a powerful catalyst for transforming and evolving management theories. Our goal is to inspire a new understanding of freedom, both as a core value and as a purpose for work and life. This freedom is about choosing what's best for you, whether personally or professionally. As transformational storytellers we seek to redefine 'old-fashioned' management theories within a new context.

While this may be seen as visionary, or perhaps even 'head in the clouds', the pandemic has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of security. Who could have anticipated the disruption to supply chains and its far-reaching effects on daily life, or how quickly we would adapt to manage those disruptions? Changes in work behaviours are already underway and the concept of freedom has taken on new, tangible meaning. The possibilities that have emerged are vast and they continue to unfold in ways we couldn't have imagined before.

SIKA® is not just another management method. It is meant to be both inspirational and a scaffold to hold on to at the same time. The view and outlook into the future we have is our contribution to generate a mindset that supports new accountability. We want to support conditioning the collective mind towards self-responsibility, and to bring in our own potential and be seen at the place and time where needed to best serve the customer. Everybody's knowledge, skills and contribution counts. How best to access, utilise and measure is the art here.

Taylorism has been outlived by AI, the world changed to 'head intelligence'. This equals a new technical revolution. Our inherited perception of the world, supported by extrinsic motivational factors, includes a 'top-down' approach in nearly all aspects of life, with rare space for the, possibly different, own potential which comes by intrinsic motivation. The pandemic has brought people to think about locality and community, work-life balance and their own potential and needs. AI is stepping in, ready to take over the admin-heavy tasks.

This comes with change. Managers will be free to become leaders. Anyone involved in a renewal effort needs to behave like the founder of a new Venture, avoid walls between different functions and help diversifying, encouraging a faster-moving decision-making process.

The existing mindset in employees has already changed. It is the right time to get started and configure the appropriate operational structure for this to access. What's most important is to keep an open mind about where to go and to where you are. I am referring back here to my ingoing statement and the question raised: does the existing culture serve the needs of the organisation and people or is it time to move on? There are choices.

Creating your company's structure means keep talking and experimenting, keep honeycombing. Empowered employees will share and trial ideas rather than keeping them in the drawer. Invested employees care about the business and its success. Liberated employees prefer collaboration instead of competition.

Why honeycombing?

Honeycombs are ultra-light materials with outstanding mechanical properties, which mainly originate from their unit cell configurations rather than the properties of matrix materials. Honeycombs are triggering numerous promising applications in the fields of architecture, automotive, railway vehicle, marine, aerospace, satellite, packaging and medical implants, etc[31].

The field under discussion is new in the context of the honeycomb structure. We use the pattern to create a strong, flat, lightweight and minimalistic operating model. There will be no idle functions, nor grounds for complacency; the honeycomb allows your talent to move around on an as needed base. This comes with liberation.

How The Road-Map Works:

Here comes what we call ' act narrow'.

The roadmap provides a step-by-step guide to help you integrate the model into your organisational structure, with a key focus on *your* specific organisational needs. You have the freedom to decide what is necessary based on the stage and circumstances of your organisation. The choice is yours. There isn't one way. Whether you see yourself caught in a monarchical structure or in a presidential, it doesn't matter as long as this can be interchanged. Company policies and constitutions, decision making processes and employee skill diversity will deliver the framework. Designed to be practical and accessible, the roadmap serves as a useful reference for improving or reshaping your organisation's processes. It offers a flexible framework that you can tailor to your needs.

Small businesses and startups will find the roadmap particularly effective, especially if their structures are still adaptable and not overly institutionalised. The path to renewal remains open, even for more established organisations. The key is to embrace new approaches rather than close off possibilities. Following a DIY (do-it-yourself) approach the roadmap outlines the implementation process, though mentoring services are available upon request.

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[31] Chang Qi, Feng Jiang, Shu Yang (2021). Advanced honeycomb designs for improving mechanical properties: A review. Elsevier.

Feel free to adjust the steps as needed, adding or removing elements to best suit your organisation.

While it is important to get through the eight stages quickly it is equally important to review and communicate frequently so the principles are well understood.

The journey just started. Our brains are conditioned the way business operations have worked for over a hundred years. It was no surprise for us to find out that the mindset of Taylorism is still dominating every nowadays fancy leadership training, management online courses, YouTube clips, whatsoever. Even the most progressive, sociocracy minded entrepreneurs seem to get lost during the journey of building the business, trading their resilience with efficiency.

With our method SIKA® we suggest building a system that helps to transition away from that old mindset into a new one. The roadmap consists of a collection of proven methods and tools and provides a scaffold to hold on to whilst entering unknown territory. Design will depend on individual needs and circumstances. SIKA® is the sum of all parts. We will be in a process that requires rewiring the way we think, breaking free from the limitations imposed by our past experiences and creating new ground. We found a starting point. We invite leaders and coaches to join us on our journey.

For those who are not ready to let go of their power, to diversify rather than centralise, to share accountability on a larger scale, or even to delegate financial responsibility and decision making in the process, for those - if not caught in complacency - we ask for feedback and alternative visions of cultural change and adaption for success.

The road map is available here: https://nomadicmind.co.nz/ .
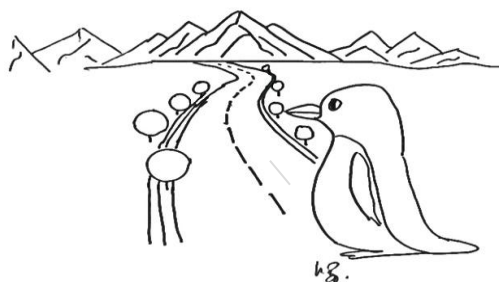
Wondering if I can choose…

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List of Figures:

List of Tables:

Illustrations:
Karin Bramstedt, 2025

About the authors

"We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing"

- George Bernard Shaw –

The authors were born in the early 1960s, spirited Caucasian Europeans with roots tracing back to Lithuania, embarked on a journey that would weave together a narrative of artistry, science, business and a love for exploration. Like many of their peers they've noticed a shift after midlife, different to the previous generation. They don't see the end of employment as an end to professional life but rather as an opportunity to continue serving a purpose - specifically, to share experience and contribute to change with a mix of skills derived from applying human centred work and life approaches in real work and life. In today's working world, change, both planned and unplanned, seems to be the driving force.

With a strong belief that without revolutionary change of current organisational models into self-led, flat and lightweight models there won't be achieved sustainability in businesses of the future. Based on the authors skill combination of practical business experience and real-world challenges and needs on the one hand, and academic insights of research findings and theories on the other hand, they have been able to develop a fast acting and strong model to sustain long term stability of an organisation.

Simone Freifrau von Fircks, lives in New Zealand and Italy, Founder and Director of NomadicMind Ltd. Operations Executive and Board member specialising in the commercialisation of new technologies, corporate organisation and strategic planning, focus on building high-performing teams through transformational leadership, coaching and storytelling with the open mind of a Nomad.

Dipl. Soc. Karin Bramstedt, lives in Germany, Writer and Consultant. Degree in Social Sciences with a specialisation in Industrial and Organisational Sociology, complemented by comprehensive systemic training certified by the Systemic Society (SG). Operational Executive in social enterprises, specialised in coaching in human resources management.