

The Inner Management Team

excerpt of Fischer-Epe, M. (2012): Das Innere Führungsteam. In: Rauen, C.: Coaching-Tools III, Bonn 2012.

In short

The inner management model offers a simple system to address conflicting role and leadership requirements. It can be a help to managers (and those in the process of becoming one) to clearly understand their respective roles, to adopt them and to act accordingly and appropriately. The main role requirements are represented as separate team players, who need to work together sensibly, if they want to be successful.

Fields of application

With the help of the model questions regarding leadership and difficult leadership situations can be viewed from different angles. This ensures that even not so well-loved aspects of leadership will also be taken into consideration. This model is supposed to help executives and managerial staff

- with self assessment and development of role competence
- with role determination and in finding solutions to difficult leadership situations
- in preparing for difficult conversations and developing appropriate arguments in conflict situations and difficult leadership conversations.

Aim/effects

Executives are gaining assurance and clarity in designing their leadership role. They will be able to justify their behaviour regarding their leadership role from different angles.

Detailed description

The inner leadership model is a variation of the model 'The Inner Team', invented by Schulz v. Thun, integrating parts of psychodrama and gestalt psychotherapy (see Schulz v. Thun, 1998/2010).

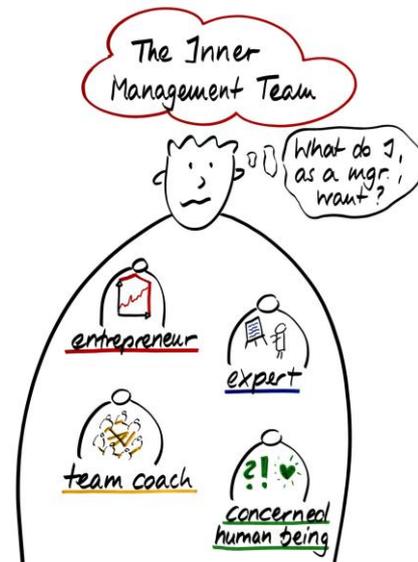
To avoid misunderstandings, the main differences between the two will be described here: The inner team as Schulz von Thun developed it, is a tool for self clarification. The client explores the different aspects of his personality, that are leading him in certain situations – may that be unconsciously or consciously. The basic idea in using the inner team is the following: all identified parts should be accepted, are ok, and have in regard to the client's personal life history their right of existence. Therefore they should be acknowledged, accepted and be taken into consideration.

The inner leadership team is completely different. No exploration is taking place regarding inner aspects, motives, voices etc. which the executive might discover. The inner leadership team consists of four team members, that are stated in advance. The inner leadership team is not about aspects of the executive's personality but about the different role aspects, that sometimes might even be contradictory (in reference to Redlich, who also used the idea of the inner team for the systematic reflection regarding role requirements in conflict; see Redlich, 2000 and 2009).

The metaphor of the inner leadership team is perfect to illustrate these aspects of the leadership role and make them emotionally tangible. It emphasizes the fact, that the executive has to accept these aspects of the leadership role and has to incorporate them (in comparison to the different hats one could wear).

Four core issues are being distinguished, each of which is being explored together with the client:

- entrepreneur
- expert
- (team-) coach
- concerned human being



The coach will explain the model with the help of the flip chart, will question the client regarding the different perspectives and will write down the exploration's core messages.

Entrepreneur: Here the executive has to have an eye on the economic success and the company's interests. He has to lead his department, his sphere of responsibility in a way, that his employees are able to add an adequate share to the strategic goals of the company with their work. This aspect deals with strategic goals, costs and effectivity, gain and loss. The coach might ask the client i.e.: „How do you perceive the situation from the entrepreneur's point of view? What are the entrepreneurial chances and risks? How promising is option A or option B regarding the company's goals? What do you have to demand from others as an entrepreneur?“

Expert: The executive is always similarly an expert when it comes to developing useful work processes regarding the task at hand. He has to make sure, that the necessary work is done well and efficiently. The coach is helping with the exploration of this aspect, i.e. with the following questions: „What would you consider to be quality? How efficient is the process? What kind of procedures have to be developed? What kind of qualifications do you need in your team? What do have to do to succeed?“

The inner entrepreneur and the expert can easily be controversial: where the expert wants to optimise, the entrepreneur might prefer a 80:20 solution, whose main goal is an increase in profit.

(Team-)Coach

An executive has to create for his team and each team member an environment, that enables them to cooperate successfully in respect to the task. He has to ask himself:

„How can I support the cooperation? What does every single employee need to really develop his strength? What needs to be clarified? How can I support the individual?“

But not everything that's useful for the individual is useful for the team – and vice versa. And the insights of the (team-)coach can be in conflict with the entrepreneur and the expert. Maybe the inner entrepreneur wants to apply pressure and demand performance, while the (team-) coach thinks the opposite is called for.

Concerned human being

Naturally the executive always has to consider his personal values, his health and capacities, his private life and his life situation. He is not only a carrier of functions, but at the same time a human being with individual preferences and characteristics, desires, values and emotions. He has to be prepared to take responsibility for his actions and to stand his ground. The concerned human being might have completely different ideas and goals than the entrepreneur, the expert or the (team-)coach. Sometimes it might be necessary to confront an employee strongly, even though one is personally quite attached to this person and whom one doesn't like to annoy. At other times one might be forced to voice management resolutions, that one personally finds unreasonable or wrong and unfair and that one doesn't feel possible to support.

So the client will be led by the coach to become aware of his personal concerns in his leadership role. The coach might ask:

„How do you experience this situation personally? What bothers you? Which voices are looking for attention? Why is this personally so important to you? What would you wish for, if everything went your way? What kind of proceedings could you support and cope with? How can you fulfill your role requirement without denying yourself?

How can you find a balance between loyalty and personal credibility? What do you experience as personally challenging?“

This 4th perspective does have a different quality. The concerned human being doesn't represent a role oriented meaningful position. But it is – consciously or unconsciously – always present to play an important part in every leadership function. This part of the exploration is very often quite challenging for executives, who are mainly operating rationally but at the same time especially important for them. It is essential to consciously reflect on emotions, values, positions and interests involved. Only then will the executive be able to consciously control his leadership actions in complex conflict situations. It will also enable him to justify these actions personally.

Field of application 1:

Self assessment and development of role competence

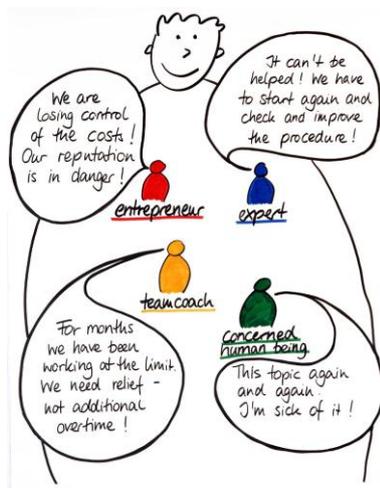
Executives can use this model of inner leadership as a development model and examine how successful they are in regard to the four aspects, i.e. to find out which aspects come easy to them and which are difficult and therefore are not properly developed. At first the coach will explain the model and clarify together with the client the criteria for the self assessment. Those can either be developed jointly during the coaching session or can be explored in form of questionnaires, which have been created by the company or the coach. The next step will be concerned with the development of those leadership aspects that need to be strengthened and ways to achieve that.

Field of application 2:

Role clarification and decision making in difficult leadership situations

The question leading to insight when dealing with difficult situations with the help of the inner leadership team is the following: How does the client judge a certain situation as the inner entrepreneur, expert, (team-)coach and as a concerned human being? What are his conclusions? What goals and behavioural options does he derive?

At the beginning the coach encourages the client to voice everything that concerns him rationally and emotionally in regard to all four aspects.



The coach visualises at the flip chart the core messages and so helps the client to put order into his thoughts. Then these messages are being valued: What importance do the different arguments of the team members actually have?

Only after this valuation has taken place will the client decide how to proceed regarding a certain behaviour or a specific procedure, that is justified by his role requirements or that he feels himself able to accept responsibility for.

Field of application 3:

Preparing for a conversation and a role adequate argumentation

After the client has decided on a specific procedure, the coach will be able to help him in preparing himself for a concrete conversation: „*How are you planning to conduct the conversation? Which arguments out of the four different perspectives would you like to present to your employees?*”

Very often the answer or solution is the following: All arguments can be revealed, if one succeeds in finding the right phrasing. By revealing to their employees even sometimes conflicting thoughts the executives show that they don't make decisions arbitrarily, but with a lot of responsibility with respect to their role.

Future leadership conversations can then be practised in small role plays. The coach will act as sparring partner and will pay special attention as to how well the client succeeds in justifying his decisions with regard to the four aspects.

Personal advice/comment/experience

It is advisable not to be too dogmatic with the four aspects. There are a lot of overlaps and in the end it is not important if for example the idea of an additional training is subscribed to the coach or the expert. It is far more important that the client will reflect on his situation from different perspectives. Sometimes the team members have to be re-named, i.e. in manager, sales-manager, representative etc. Of course it is possible to enlarge the inner management team by additional members, but in terms of succinctness it is advisable to limit it to four.

Technical information (duration, materials, preparation)

As the four aspects have been copied from the every day experiences of executives, experienced managers hardly need a lot of time for explanations. Its mostly enough to give an explanatory sentence and draw the four team members onto the flip chart.

„*I suggest we analyse your situation from the main perspectives of your leadership role...*“ Younger executives, that are just in the process of getting to know their role, need a little more explanation. Because of the variety of application possibilities the duration of a setting can vary from 5 minutes to several coaching sessions.

Sources/further literature:

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