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**WORKPLACE
INNOVATION**

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Kopp / Dworschak /
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Workplace Innovation and Leadership

EHP

"This book presents an encompassing overview of key leadership challenges related to workplace innovation from the perspective of renowned European scholars. Their insights will undoubtedly be of great practical value to managers who want to learn more about how to contribute to a successful socio-digital organizational transformation."

(Pascale Le Blanc, Professor of Workplace Innovation and Sustainable Employability, Eindhoven University of Technology)

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(Herman Kok, Lindum Group Ltd.)

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WORKPLACE INNOVATION
AND LEADERSHIP

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Herausgegeben von

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Ralf Kopp / Bernd Dworschak / Roman Senderek (eds.)

**WORKPLACE INNOVATION
AND LEADERSHIP**

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Contents

Preliminary Remark	9
Michael Kohlgrüber, Ralf Kopp, Hendrik Lager & Antonius Schröder	
Managing the Socio-Digital Transformation: New Settings and Demands for Leadership	13
1. Introduction	13
2. New Contexts for Leadership	16
3. The Role of Leadership in Recent Research and Innovation Projects	17
3.1 Sectoral Skills Alliances – The European Steel Skills Agenda (ESSA)	17
3.2 Embedding Workplace Experience in the Technological Innovation Process – Coordinating Optimisation of Complex Industrial Processes	21
3.3 The ROBOHARSH Experience (Robotic Workstation in Harsh Environmental Conditions to Improve Safety in the Steel Industry)	23
3.4 BEYOND 4.0 – Inclusive Futures for Europe BEYOND the Impacts of Industry 4.0 and Digital Disruption	24
3.5 Co-Involvement of Work Councils in the Development Process	26
3.6 Socio-Digital Transformation towards Excellent Leadership and Labour (eLLa4.0)	28
4. Conclusion and Outlook	35
References	39
Steven Dhondt	
Workplace Innovation: Concept and Basic Principles	41
1. Approaches to the Concept of “New Work”	41
2. What is a Workplace Innovative Organisation?	43
3. Benefits for the Employee and Company	46
4. Follow-up Questions	50
5. Conclusion	52
References	52

Peter Totterdill & Natalie Wilkie

Workplace Innovation, Co-Created Leadership and Emotional Intelligence	55
1. Leadership for Workplace Innovation	55
2. Workplace Innovation: its Origins and how it Embraces Leadership	56
3. Leadership as a Dimension of Workplace Innovation	60
4. Leadership and Alignment	62
5. Workplace Innovation and Leadership in Practice	65
6. How Co-Created Leadership Co-Creates Business Strategy: the Case of Booth Welsh	66
7. Being a Leader	70
8. The Emotionally Intelligent Leader	72
9. Conclusion: How to Lead with Workplace Innovation	76
References	78

Peter Oeij, Gerben Hulsegge, Paul Preenen & Fietje Vaas

Leadership and Innovation in Logistics in the Netherlands: a Leadership Tool from a Workplace Innovation Perspective	83
1. Introduction: Logistics, Innovation and Leadership in the Netherlands	83
2. Leadership Theories and Innovation	87
3. Tool Innovation Leadership: Content, Method, Effects	91
4. Conclusions, Limitations, Recommendations	98
References	101

Matthias Müssigbrodt, Roman Senderek & Luisa Majewski

Digital Tools for Digital Leadership – New Work for the Industrial Transformation	105
1. Introduction	105
2. Specific Characteristics of Leadership	106
3. Digital Leadership	113
4. Identifying Digital Tools for Digital Leadership	115
4.1 Communication and Collaboration Tools	115

4.2 Knowledge Management Tools	118
4.3 Learning Platforms	120
4.4 3D Working and Learning Environments	123
5. Reflection and Outlook	125
References	126

Roman Senderek, Matthias Müssigbrodt & Volker Stich

New Work – Innovative Concepts for Working and Learning in the Digital Transformation	129
1. Approaches to the Concept of “New Work”	131
2. Aspects and Fields of Action Associated with “New Work”	133
2.1 Work Organisation	136
2.2 Work Tasks	137
2.3 Learning Culture	139
2.4 Leadership	141
2.5 Communication	143
2.6 Competence Development	146
2.7 Installed Learning Solutions	148
2.8 Use of Technology	151
3. Reflection and Outlook	154
References	156

Valerie Wienken

The Role of Middle Management in the Digitalization Process – Eliminate, Fire or Empower?	165
1. Organizational Perspective	166
1.1 Fear is a Lousy Companion	166
1.2 Innovation Now	167
1.3 All a Question of the Strategy	168
1.4 Impact on Decision-Making and Organizational Forms	170
2. At the Level of Individual Managers	172

2.1 On the Necessity of Leadership	172
2.2 Appeal of Management	174
2.3 Innovation-Driven Leadership within the Company	175
2.4 Competency Requirements	176
3. Summary	178
References	179

Thomas Kuhn & Jürgen Weibler

Ethics as Workplace Innovation? – An Orientation for the Well-Intentioned	181
1. Determinants of Unethical/Ethical Leadership	181
1.1 How to Recognise Unethical Leadership	181
1.2 How to Recognise Ethical Leadership	184
2. Explanations Surrounding Unethical/Ethical Leadership	186
2.1 How Unethical Leadership Arises	186
2.2 How Ethical Leadership Arises	189
3. Effects of Unethical/Ethical Leadership	192
3.1 Harmony Thesis: "If you want to be successful, you have to be ethical!"	192
3.2 Disharmony Thesis: "If you want to be successful, you have to be mean!"	194
3.3 Contingency Thesis: "If you want to be successful, you can be ethical as well as unethical!"	194
4. Conclusion	195
References	196
Editors and Contributors	203

Preliminary Remark

The rapidly increasing pressure of digitalisation presents (company) organizations with complex challenges and poses considerable risks of mismanagement. Technological or economic reductions in the potential of digital transformation not only quickly lead to a loss of acceptance and motivation on the part of employees, but also undermine their legitimate expectations of participation and co-determination as well as their ability to self-organise and innovate, which ultimately forms the basis for economic success.

No doubt digitalisation can also make organizations more competitive, sustainable and resilient by consequently focusing on the empowerment of employees. This is the central issue for management and leadership in the socio-digital transformation. Essentially, it is about using new technological devices and organisational models to implement post-heroic management in the sense of Charles Handy: *"Whereas the heroic manager of the past knew all, could do all, and could solve every problem, the post-heroic manager asks how every problem can be solved in a way that develops other people's capacity to handle it."* (Charles Handy 1995: 166)¹ Based on socio-technical system approaches, empirical research and practical experience, Workplace Innovation is a tradition-rich design concept on a European level for the realization of this objective.

In this book, leading scholars and promoters of the concept of Workplace Innovation have contributed and highlighted current aspects of leadership in digitalisation against the background of their recent research projects.

¹ Handy, Charles (1995): *The Age of Paradox*. Harvard Business Review Press.

Kohlgrüber, Kopp, Lager & Schröder start to provide an overview of concrete new settings and demands for leadership in their contribution *“Managing the Socio-Digital Transformation: New Setting and Demands for Leadership”*. They also discuss the results of an expert survey conducted in 2020, which deals with the new demands on leadership. There is a great need for approaches such as Workplace Innovation, because especially these approaches *“take account of the high degree of complexity, view social and technological innovations as two sides of the same coin and place the interactions at the centre of management.”*

This leads to the question of the fundamentals of the Workplace Innovation concept, which **Dhondt** takes a closer look at in his article *“Workplace Innovation: Concept and Basic Principles”*.

Totterdill & Wilkie continue the discussion on *“Workplace Innovation, Co-Created Leadership and Emotional Intelligence”* and add further aspects to the genesis of the approach with special reference to emotionally intelligent leadership.

In the part written by **Oeij, Hulsegge, Preenen & Vaas** on *“Leadership and Innovation in Logistic in the Netherlands: a Leadership Tool from a Workplace Innovation Perspective”*, the relation between leadership and innovation in the Dutch logistics industry is discussed in more detail and a tool for developing adequate leadership competencies is outlined.

Müssigbrodt, Senderek & Majewski also address the question of appropriate tools to support leadership. They provide a structured overview of current offerings in their article *“Digital Tools for Digital Leadership”*.

Senderek, Müssigbrodt & Stich examine *“New Work – Innovative Concepts for Working and Learning in the Digital Transformation”*. It becomes clear

that Workplace Innovation and New Work have large overlaps, although they have different origins. Even if New Work is not directly linked to the socio-technical approach, there are numerous points of contact and similar design fields of for leadership.

Wienken's article *"The Role of Middle Management in the Digitalization Process. Eliminate, Fire or Empower?"* shows exemplarily that the implications of digitalization must be differentiated regarding various management levels and their roles.

All the explanations in this book are more or less affected by ideas of good leadership. This leads to normative and ethical foundations for workplace innovation. **Kuhn & Weibler** show that it is not only innovations themselves that should be the subject of the discussion, but also the way in which they have come about. In *"Ethics as Workplace Innovation? – An Orientation for the Well-Intentioned"*, they first discuss bad leadership and then outline the counter-image of good leadership.

We wish all those interested in Workplace Innovation an enriching read. The authors are responsible for the professional and formal correctness of their contributions. Deviations in citation are possible.

Ralf Kopp
Bernd Dworschak
Roman Senderek

Michael Kohlgrüber, Ralf Kopp, Hendrik Lager & Antonius Schröder

Managing the Socio-Digital Transformation: New Settings and Demands for Leadership

1. Introduction

Social innovation means the introduction and dissemination of new practices, organisation, behaviour, and ways of life. Although it is a basic phenomenon in the history of human development which permeates all areas of society, research, politics, and business, the focus is still concentrated on technological innovations to solve almost all problems (Howaldt/Kopp 2012). Currently, digitalisation, Industry 4.0 and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are experiencing a new hype. Even if it is universally postulated that the human being must be the focus of attention, many design concepts and real developments fail to reflect this. What is needed are approaches that take account of the high degree of complexity, view social and technological innovations as two sides of the same coin and place the interactions at the centre of management.

In the 1960s management theorists like Peter Drucker introduced the idea of social innovation into the world of management without deepening the implications. In the tradition of socio-technical system approaches, the core paradigm is to deal with the interdependencies of human-technology-organisation at their interfaces. This is based on the idea that social and technical subsystems of an overall system should be optimised simultaneously (joint optimisation). The socio-technical system approach (with its design criteria based on work science) is the unanimously favoured design model in the

current debate on digitalisation in politics, science and industry (among employer as well as employee representatives).

Workplace Innovation combines impulses from labour research, findings from dealing with social innovations and is composed of (newer) socio-technical approaches at European level. The Workplace Innovation concept promotes employee-driven production and innovation (including the development of an employee-driven socio-digital transformation). It is a broad concept that overlaps with other forms of innovation, in particular organisational and process innovation and comprises a wide range of different practices assigned to areas such as human resource management or organisational development. This approach is promoted by European Workplace Innovation Research (EUWIN), an international community of partners aiming at stimulating workplace innovation in Europe (<https://workplaceinnovation.eu/euwin/>).

Workplace Innovation is defined *"as a social process which shapes work organisation and working life, combining their human, organisational and technological dimensions. Examples include participative job design, self-organised teams, continuous improvement, high involvement innovation and employee involvement in corporate decision making."* (Dortmund/Brussels Position Paper 2012, 2) And following this *"Workplace Innovation is about creating organisations in which all employees use and develop their knowledge, skills, experience and creativity to the full."* (Workplace Innovation Europe 2020). In addition, *"[g]rowing evidence shows that workplace innovation practices which empower employees to make day-to-day-decisions, challenge established practices, contribute ideas, and be heard at the most senior levels, lead to better business results, as well as enhanced workforce health and engagement."* (Totterdill 2015, 55)

The development of Workplace Innovation based on organisations is first not a consequence of the technology used, but a fundamental management

decision with significant implications for the corporate culture, including the way technology is introduced and designed. It is evident that the attitude and function of management must be aligned accordingly. In other words: Leadership not only decisively prejudices the quality of the employees' work tasks and conditions, but also influences their own work requirements. Leadership in the context of Workplace Innovation *"is about the ability to engage, motivate, inspire and coach others to welcome responsibility; to contribute their thoughts and ideas and achieve outcomes that they never thought possible. Such leaders create an environment where everyone feels valued, where everyone works together to build a culture of trust, respect and transparency enabling continuous growth, success and an enhanced quality of working life"* (Workplace Innovation Europe 2020)

The design of the Workplace Innovation principles and the derivation of leadership requirements (and competencies) must be closely aligned with new organisational developments and technological possibilities on the shop floor. At the beginning of this article, we sketch relevant leadership aspects from some of our application-oriented research and consulting projects, in which the human-centred design of advanced digital technologies, robotics and AI is addressed. Based on that we argue that new or changing settings and demands for leadership evolve. We illustrate this by presenting empirical results from qualitative interviews from the project "Socio-digital Transformation Towards Excellent Leadership And Labour" (eLLa4.0¹) which explicitly addresses the issue of leadership in the digital transformation and show requirements to realise Workplace Innovation. Finally, we discuss our results and present our conclusions.

¹ The eLLa4.0 research project is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the program "The future of work". The research project is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and supervised by the Project Management Agency Karlsruhe (PTKA) in the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. (Funding code: 02L18A200ff.)

2. New Contexts for Leadership

Digitalisation and Industry 4.0 applications will undoubtedly change the work of the future: some tasks will be performed by AI and robotics, remaining tasks will change and new ones will be added. This does not leave the task of leadership untouched – especially when seen in the context of Workplace Innovation. It is obvious that digitalisation always manifests itself at workplace level, where it is integrated into an existing or adaptable work organisation. At the workplace level, it decides whether digital technology is used to push the Taylorisation of processes (by giving employees tight instructions on how to perform a task) or whether it is used to support the self-organisation and autonomy of teams through providing more comprehensive and better data. This is what is meant by augmentation as an application scenario for technology (in contrast to automation), by which a complementary design of task allocation between technology and workers is established. Thereby, digital technologies contribute to Workplace Innovation, if embedded in a work organisation that leaves the analysis of data and decision making to workers in manufacturing processes. This setting is part of the triangle of human–technology–organisation and its interfaces (Dregger et al. 2016): new skills demands, new organisational settings, new task allocation, collaborative robots and assisting digital tools are changing the working scope and role of the workers (e.g. from operators to supervisors) and leaders.

Against this backdrop and the evidence of the results of empirical projects, we illustrate the context within which new leadership has to be applied:

- new sectoral skills alliances and strategies (ESSA²)
- co-involvement of work councils in the development process (in the Aerospace sector)

² The ESSA project has received funding from the European Union's Erasmus+ programme under agreement No. 2018–3059 / 001–001.

Steven Dhondt

Workplace Innovation: Concept and Basic Principles

1. Introduction

Companies try to make the best of their inputs. The COVID-19 crisis is an important reason for companies to rethink how they should organise their work. Markets are in turmoil, and companies are not sure whether they will manage to sell anything, let alone be sure that they can make the product or provide the service. In times of social distance, rethinking how an organisation deploys employees is the order of the day.

How we think about employees in a business context has gradually changed over time. In the Dutch context, we first talked about the personnel department and later about personnel management. Today we are talking about human resources management. With HRM, the reasoning is that the production system with machines is central and that a company needs 'human resources' as an extra input. In a context in which a machine determines everything, it seems logical that the perspective on the deployment of people is limited. A company then mainly optimises the technological situation. But even then, the question is how a company can generate added value. In that line of reasoning, it is even conceivable that no human resources would be needed. In the 1980s, Volkswagen built Halle 54 as a human-empty factory. The experiment with Computer Integrated Manufacturing failed. In 2013, Frey & Osborne (2013; 2017) predicted that most occupations would disappear as a result of robots and Artificial Intelligence. By 2020, all the occupa-

tions that they predicted would disappear still exist. There is sometimes hope among managers that the organisation will still be able to create a great deal of value without a great deal of effort on the part of employees. Companies will then organise themselves like a spot market: employees won't get real contracts; wages will be minimised. Is this an exception? According to EUROFOUND/CEDEFOP study (2020), some 21 % of companies in Europe choose such a model. Platform companies that distribute tasks via a website are examples of such 'spot market companies'.

Is such an organisational model advantageous for the owners? Actually, it is not. According to this EUROFOUND/CEDEFOP survey, the performance (profit, turnover, future expectations) of these companies is exceptionally low compared to other organisational models; employees in such organisations are quite dissatisfied (EUROFOUND/CEDEFOP, 2020). Staff turnover means that the company is faced with high costs and actually has little future. It is, therefore, worth thinking about how you organise your work. How do you turn the thinking about human resources into thinking of employees as the organisation's main source of innovation?

Companies that do focus on employee input perform extremely well in relative terms, and their employees are extremely committed. It is important that companies match their message to employees with their internal strategy. The EUROFOUND/CEDEFOP survey shows that in more than half of the companies there is an imbalance between message and action: many companies claim to be committed to a workplace innovative model, but this is not visible from their measures and policies. Another part of companies does invest in the workforce but does not have any message to employees about this people-centred policy. Message and action need to be balanced if a company is to realise the benefit of workplace innovation.

Exactly how is that possible? It does not happen by itself, despite what economists, among others, would have us believe. Markets would be efficient

Peter Totterdill & Natalie Wilkie

Workplace Innovation, Co-Created Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

1. Leadership for Workplace Innovation

It is unsurprising that enlightened leadership plays a key role in driving workplace innovation within enterprises. We certainly know that the absence of active leadership engagement and support is an importance cause of workplace innovation failure or decay (Business Decisions Limited 2002; Karanika-Murray and Biron 2015). In this chapter we argue that leaders who are effective in building high-performing organisations become active participants in workplace innovation as both its champion and guarantor. In this sense, positive leadership becomes a core component of workplace innovation (Totterdill 2015; Totterdill & Exton 2017) rather than just an independent enabler.

An early definition of workplace innovation focuses on the unleashing of workforce potential, empowering *“workers at every level of an organisation to use and develop their full range of knowledge, skills, experience and creativity in their day-to-day work, leading both to high performance and enhanced quality of working life”* (Totterdill, Dhondt & Milsome 2002). There are many reasons why employee competence, insight and ideas from every level of the organisation should be embraced by senior management teams and in boardrooms. Tackling the complex business challenges of the 21st Century can't be done by senior teams alone: they need to harness all the

Peter Oeij, Gerben Hulsegge, Paul Preenen & Fietje Vaas

Leadership and Innovation in Logistics in the Netherlands: a Leadership Tool from a Workplace Innovation Perspective

1. Introduction:

Logistics, Innovation and Leadership in the Netherlands

Technologically the logistics sector is rapidly changing as it continually enhances its process optimization. There is a keen eye on continuously improving quick dispatch and delivery, with minimal errors, very low costs, and high flexibility. Although the Dutch logistics sector is certainly advancing technologically, it is not the most innovative sector in the Netherlands (SEO, 2019). Moreover, it is rather traditional when it comes to personnel management and leadership ("White paper workplace innovation in logistics", Manpower Group 2015), which can hinder innovation. One reason for this limited innovativeness and traditional organisational culture is the dominance of small family firms in the sector that often have lean means for innovation. Another reason are the traditional management styles in those small and medium sized firms. Many firms are highly operational, focus on the most efficient execution of warehousing, distribution and transport tasks, but do not timely recognize the opportunities for renewal, strategy and vision. It feeds a hierarchical culture, with a clear division of execution and management roles. As a consequence, many logistics firms underuse the capacity of employees to help adopt and boost innovation. In doing so it underuses the power of workplace innovation. If logistics companies in-

novate, it is often a top down management approach, with a mere focus on technological improvement, and limited attention for innovation adoption, organisational innovation or employment, let alone employability of personnel.

Workplace innovation can take many shapes (Oeij, Rus & Pot 2017b). In small firms it can be as simple as employee idea boxes, while in larger firms workplace innovation programmes may be in place. In both cases the core is to use ideas of employees about improving work processes and work organisation, share such ideas among colleagues and supervisors, and set improvement in motion through employee involvement, which leads to better results (Manpower Group 2015). Such engagement stimulates the creation of ideas and the adoption of new technology. Workplace innovation has proven to help logistics firms taking up innovation and perform better (Putnik et al. 2019a; 2019b).

The mentioned White paper (Manpower Group 2015) recognises the traditional culture in many firms. It provides advice for changing management styles as follows: begin with yourself, because workplace innovation demands a leadership style that is opposed to strong steering and directing and addresses the need for employees to take responsibility. Motivation, creativity and entrepreneurship will get a boost, make the organisation less hierarchical and more self-managing, with managers more in a role as coach. With such leadership styles, an organisational culture is helpful when there is transparent communication and visibility, employee voice, job autonomy, learning opportunities, experimentation space, use of talents and co-creation (see also SEO 2019). Changing leadership styles, thus require awareness about both changes in the environment and changes desired among employees, and this demands self-awareness about the need for other leadership styles among managers themselves.

Matthias Müssigbrodt, Roman Senderek & Luisa Majewski

Digital Tools for Digital Leadership – New Work for the Industrial Transformation

1. Introduction

Many companies are currently facing enormous change processes. Today's world of work is clearly undergoing a rapid and revolutionary change, the central driver of which is digitalisation. The coronavirus crisis has accelerated this change. Leaders are the main shapers of such transformations in companies. Through their decisions, they have a significant influence on the working conditions of the people they lead. Digitalisation presents leaders with completely new challenges; leadership, something that was originally a purely analogue phenomenon in companies, is changing. For example, leaders have to work with new digital tools at ever shorter intervals and carry out their leadership tasks across different locations via the media. The multitude of new technological possibilities gives many leaders the feeling that they are standing in a digital jungle. Leaders often lack knowledge about existing digital tools and their inherent leadership potential. They therefore often find it difficult to assess the specific impact of the use of digital tools on the leadership process. Perhaps this is also a key reason why, for example, video conferencing services such as Zoom, which have been in such high demand since the coronavirus crisis, have only been made available to 16% of office-based professionals. The situation is even worse for the so-called collaboration tools that enable joint work on documents. Only 11% of professionals with office jobs are provided with such services (Initiative D21 e.V. 2020). There is therefore a

Roman Senderek, Matthias Müssigbrodt & Volker Stich

New Work – Innovative Concepts for Working and Learning in the Digital Transformation

The world of work is currently undergoing a profound change, the central drivers of which are digitalisation and automation, the complexity and dynamics of the markets and demographic change. This new world of work is characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability, which is why there is often talk of a VUCA world (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) (SCHERMULY ET AL. 2019). Increasing complexity and the growing dynamic of global markets lead to a massive pressure to innovate. This requires a high degree of flexibility from companies in order to be able to constantly adapt to changing conditions. Digital technologies enable new forms of communication that fundamentally change social relationships, social structures and inter-organisational / intra-organisational forms of cooperation (AMELN/WIMMER 2016, p. 11–12). This development is accelerated to a great extent by the COVID 19 crisis. The digital transformation, which has been driven forward for years with more or less emphasis, is moving from a much-discussed future scenario into an everyday working world.

In the course of the digital transformation, not only are new business models and competitive structures emerging, but there are also drastic changes in the content of work and in the organisation of production and work processes (KLAMMER ET AL. 2017, p. 459). With regard to the automation of work processes, there are different development perspectives. On the one hand, a polarisation of tasks and competences is assumed due to growing automation

among jobs requiring medium qualifications. This will change activity and competence profiles, reducing the number of jobs requiring medium qualifications. On the other hand, an upgrading of qualifications and tasks is predicted, so that either simple activities are substituted or all tasks and work processes become more complex and demanding (ACATECH 2016, p. 9–10). However, this does not necessarily mean that whole areas (such as simple work) will disappear completely and that unemployment will inevitably rise. Rather, there will be a change of activities within the occupational profiles, which will require an adaptation of skills and knowledge (KLAMMER ET AL. 2017, p. 463).

Demographic change and the accompanying change in the population structure result in the retirement of knowledge carriers in organisations, and this leads to a loss of knowledge. The labour market is characterised by increasing fluctuation and heterogeneous professional biographies. In addition, changing social demands and life plans are leading to changed expectations of work and life, as is often discussed in connection with Generation Y. The changing expectations of the workforce are expressed in changing demands concerning the meaningfulness of work and the quality of cooperation, but also in increasing demands for more ecologically, socially and economically sustainable practices on the part what companies do (AMELN/WIMMER 2016, p. 11–12).

The changing world of work is also characterised by an increasing flexibilisation of work with regard to independence of time and place. However, this currently only affects individual occupational groups, because for certain activities, it is essential to be present on site (WERTHER/BRUCKNER 2018, p. 16–17). This applies, for example, to the majority of production workers, whose work is directly linked to their presence on the factory floor.

Valerie Wienken

The Role of Middle Management in the Digitalization Process – Eliminate, Fire or Empower?

Some of the brightest minds at companies and in leadership research are currently examining the question of whether managers will still be needed in the future, as well as the role they will play in the changing world of work. Nothing is as constant as change, and nothing is currently changing as much as our values, products and the economic and political environment in which we operate. What does this have to do with managers at companies? In addition to the management board, they are the ones who need to prepare for this change in the organizational environment. Perhaps they have long since noticed this change, analyzed the situation and developed problem-solving strategies, but have not been heard. Or they have lost their bearings in a maze of information, decisions and changes in direction. Maybe, in light of the demands that have recently been placed on them, they simply feel overwhelmed. Or they are only considered a viscous layer that paralyzes the organization because they do not want to – or are not allowed to – change?

In the following, I would like to take a closer look at “these” managers and present a more nuanced picture of them and their situation on the basis of the findings from our research in recent years and from the current context of the research project “Sociodigital Transformation towards Excellent Leadership and Labour (eLLa4.0)” (for more on this project, see <https://ellaviernull.de/>). We will begin in the context of the organizational structure, where we will identify the

factors that affect the situational analysis. Subsequently, we will take a closer look on the level of the individual managers.

1. Organizational Perspective

1.1 Fear is a Lousy Companion

Using methods from neuroscience, it is possible to depict conclusions about people's "perceptions, thoughts and emotions" (Bergner, S./Rybnicek, R. 2015, p. 543) in the respective regions of the brain. In connection with leadership, the subdomain of neuroleadership has emerged. Initial results show that negative experiences are perceived and processed directly and immediately via the structures of the brain – above all, norm violations due to noncompliance and perceived injustice activate the social alarm system (Bergner, S./Rybnicek, R. 2015, p. 560). In contrast, positive and encouraging words from managers address the same region of the brain neuropsychologically as a salary increase, and thus act as a reward.

The Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) approach is another noteworthy branch of research on the effects of deliberately emphasizing and promoting positive factors at companies (Cameron, K.S./Spreitzer, G.M. 2012a, p. 7). This research explores the perception of positive and negative experiences at the organizational level. Since we, as individuals, react more strongly to negative experiences, this approach deliberately emphasizes positive factors, as this can also trigger positive trends within a company.

Both approaches can be used to argue that the manager, as a guiding element, can have a positive impact on their employees' development if they also perceive their corporate environment as positive.

Thomas Kuhn & Jürgen Weibler

Ethics as Workplace Innovation? – An Orientation for the Well-Intentioned

In view of increasingly reported ethical misconduct by institutions, organisations and individuals, the question arises as to whether it is not only innovations themselves that should be the subject of the discussion, but also the way in which they have come about. Shouldn't every innovation be expected to have grown out of legitimate actions? Those who affirm this – and there are many good reasons for doing so – should, however, be aware of how these ethical claims can be defined in more detail. Because leadership is directly or indirectly critical to the success of innovations, there is a legitimate interest in knowing when leadership itself meets ethical criteria. Because this knowledge is often not available, either in institutions or organisations, or among the relevant people (leaders, followers), orientation relating to this seems necessary. (Social) innovation can be seen in the subsequent implementation of this knowledge, even from the point of view of the units concerned. This makes the workplace a righteous place from which a radiating effect emanates on the stakeholders.

1. Determinants of Unethical/Ethical Leadership

1.1 How to Recognise Unethical Leadership

Clear evidence of the booming debate concerning the topic of unethical leadership is the multitude of recent approaches that deal with the subject

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