

Our Consulting Philosophy

Gaining security in insecurity

People are said to be healthy when all organs are functioning properly and sufficient surplus energy is available for them to react flexibly to crises and unforeseen circumstances, and when they embrace change and contact with their social environment. Those who are able to strike a balance between organised and disorganised aspects and phases of change remain healthy. Being healthy means recognising more than a single option and being able to make decisions. This definition of health is also an apt description of situations in organisations.

Organisations are successful and productive if routine and hardship are not mutually exclusive. Instead, management and staff have adequate surplus energy (money, motivation, creativity, knowledge, agility...) at their disposal to flexibly cope with crises, external insecurity and complexity, without permanently losing sight of the equilibrium between internal organisational needs and external requirements. Organisations lose this balance and become "ill" if they cannot maintain genuine contact with their environment, become mired in antiquated patterns and hierarchies and concentrate solely on themselves. But they may also become ill if they are no longer able to develop solutions from their own resources and allow themselves to become dependent on external trends, fashions and miracle cures.

For several years now, we have observed the tendency of organisations to focus too strongly on "what's coming from outside" or "what everyone else is doing" when they try to secure future viability. Excessively adapting to alleged recipes for success to become "bigger and faster" often leads to a loss of inner substance; the internal control competency and credibility so necessary in times of crisis get lost along the way. Frequently, the result is a series of incomplete reorganisation and modernisation projects, burnt out staff, stifled creativity. What can be done to re-establish the equilibrium and feel solid ground under one's feet?

Strengthen balance and self-direction

Como is of the opinion that one of the most important competencies for organisations and their staff will be their ability to self-regulate. Also in times of dynamic market and competitive developments, this means striking a flexible balance between external and internal orientation, innovation and stability, customer and staff orientation. Equilibrium cannot be prescribed top-down, but is acquired through complex processes of self-direction and self-organisation. Similar to a tightrope walker keeping his balance by constantly compensating through movement, organisations and their members can only become independently secure in insecurity through conscious action and continuous self-observation, through the willingness to allow for error and irritation, and to learn from them.

You cannot buy change

Changes don't just happen. Instead, it is often as a result of crises and painful experiences that we let go of old behaviours and develop new, more productive patterns. Transformation processes in organisations rarely proceed harmoniously, but require clear and consistent management decisions in addition to participation. Of course, reorganisation techniques and instruments can be implemented "from the top" or "from the outside". But they won't be effective unless all those affected are actively involved in the design of such reorganisation, change themselves in the process, and make use of their own learning experiences.

As a globally active consulting firm, Como knows the trends and instruments of today's change management. Nevertheless, every consulting process is unique because every organisation has its own values, paces and secrets. To allow for this uniqueness, our consultants don't always work with the mainstream. Instead, they may go against it from time to time as required – it all depends on the customer's needs.

To this end, Como combines specialist and process competence in its consulting. Como consultants don't go to their customers as better managers, but are experts in initiating learning processes and designing the basic conditions in such a way that these contribute to self-change in the organisation and an increase in internal solution expertise.

Taking advantage of diversity

Many social demands and services can only be accomplished through the cooperation of various organisations. In these inter-organisational cooperative processes, diverse views on procedural logic and different interests, paces, areas of expertise, etc. must come together. Complexity increases and accepted certainties and old routines are lost. In our experience, the paradigm change necessary for this cooperation, the abandonment of well-trodden paths and rethinking of previously valid assumptions requires an enormous amount of learning on the part of the individual organisations involved and their employees in dealing with increased level of complexity — even if or precisely because the process is often experienced as a loss of order and is excessively demanding.

Como has a wide range of experience consulting in different countries and cultures. When we talk about cultures, we not only mean national cultures, but also different organisational cultures and lifestyles. Our customers come from teams in large companies and foundations as well as from non-profit organisations in inner-cities and development cooperation projects. In our experience with these various cultures, we have learned first-hand that differences can lead to confusion, but that they can also breed new ideas. And it is this knowledge that we employ in our consulting processes.

Relying on different perspectives, stemming from gender, ethnicity, age, area of expertise, etc. is very important to us. This does not mean simply fulfilling “diversity” quotas because it is fashionable, but rather, we are convinced that greater diversity contributes to greater creativity and productivity in organisations and cooperation systems. However, in order to make this happen, different people must have the opportunity to meet. That will not happen if an organisation remains rigid in its old structures. It requires increased mobility and incentives for employees to continually expand their radius of contacts.

Our key expertise lies in our ability to appreciate cultural characteristics and differences, to deal with ambiguity and maintain an interest in the unknown. We integrate these experiences and capabilities in our consulting process: providing new impulses through our external point of view, supporting our clients in discovering their own blind spots, allowing their curiosity to flourish and developing a joy for learning.