



© Prof. Ján Košturiak


ISBN 978-80-89667-50-5



JÁN KOŠTURIAK

# EVERYDAY REFLECTIONS

Reflections and questions  
concerning management,  
doing business and life.



# Content

- 7 | **1 Contemplations for Everyone**
- 9 | Specialists and a Fragmented World
- 11 | Destructive Growth
- 14 | Communication
- 17 | Garden
- 19 | “Dill Pickles”
- 22 | When the Small Will Be First and the Big the Last
- 24 | Our Good Capitalists
- 27 | Organisational Structure Is Nonsense
- 29 | To See the Invisible
- 31 | Life Is Kaizen
- 33 | After the Visit
- 36 | When Success Is Harmful
- 38 | World of Peacockery and Cock-Sureness
- 41 | Muda Mura Muri
- 43 | Principles of Change
- 46 | Family Is Everything – but Is Work More?
- 48 | Button Stop
- 50 | Systematic Problem-Solving
- 53 | Don’t Make Compromises
- 54 | Time to Pause
- 56 | Coward Realists and Brave Knights
- 59 | The Joy of the Unknown
- 61 | Peace and Silence
- 64 | Is It Really So?
- 66 | Evil Always Finds a Direct Way
- 69 | What Is Happening?
- 71 | At the Right Time
- 74 | Ora et Labora

<b>77</b>	<b> </b>	<b>2 Observations for Managers and Entrepreneurs</b>
<b>79</b>	<b> </b>	How to Destroy the Company Systematically and Reliably?
<b>88</b>	<b> </b>	Save Your Company – Stop Reducing the Costs
<b>93</b>	<b> </b>	A Short Story about a Top Manager
<b>98</b>	<b> </b>	The Best Practices Are Sometimes Harmful
<b>109</b>	<b> </b>	The World after
<b>116</b>	<b> </b>	Principles in Management and Doing Business
<b>126</b>	<b> </b>	Conclusion



# 1

## Contemplations for Everyone





# Specialists and a Fragmented World

**My friend rebuilt his house some years ago. Experts – one on forming plasterboard, another on roughcast work, an electrician, a fourth one for the floors, the fifth a plumber...- came to his home. “I will not coordinate you or solve any problems between you,” my friend said. “I need universal workers, a team of people who will do everything – from A to Z.” Finally he found a team like this and it has been working for him ever since. The value this group offered to him was much greater than the value given by individual specialists.**

There are lots of examples. Go to see the doctors – specialists. One of them will treat your nerves, another one your eye, the third one the ear and the fourth doctor will heal your knee. And the result? In Germany they were to operate on my friend’s meniscus and he suffered from borreliosis; the doctors were treating an allergy of my friend in the USA for years and his eyes were streaming due to a decayed tooth; the specialists were investigating why my little daughter Zuzka was limping with her leg (one of the explanations was she did not want to go to school). When she was finally left paralysed, it was detected that she was suffering from meningitis. Nature does not know physics, chemistry or mathematics but it works as one whole. The human body is not a “Lego” consisting of ears, nose, bones, muscles and internal organs, the company is not a building set consisting of logistics, trade, marketing, development, administration or production machines. Only we, people, created a fragmented world for us to be able to research its individual elements. And sometimes when we investigate we “drill” into one specialised part so deeply that we fail to understand how the whole is working. Why do we

often deal with logistics and production separately? Why do we have IT specialists who are understood by so few people? Why did we split the company into departments? Why are there so many specialists who stop understanding things even in the framework of their specialisation? I know that a logical answer can be that our knowledge and individual disciplines develop and therefore it is necessary to specialise. People have been able to develop amazing technologies – computers and machines which replace human work in many aspects. On the other hand it seems we underestimate a little the creator of the current technique. We have created specialists from people and defined their boundaries exactly. Integration, compactness and not fragmentation and isolation are important for our survival.

I believe that a physician who wants to heal well has to understand the whole human being and his/her psyche and soul. Similarly a manager who wants to manage a company has to understand the whole complicated system of its management. The majority of innovations arise at the interfaces of branches, a lot of successful managers, innovators and scientists were studying several specialisations and this is the reason they were successful. I am sure we will have to link the tunnels of specialisations that we have developed. The world around us is compact and we have to understand the whole not only its individual parts. A too high specialisation sometimes causes the so called intellectual incest. The students copy their professors; closed teams of specialists develop concepts which, according to them, are the most correct ones. The specialists are frequently like an isolated community intellectually reproducing between themselves. Nature and the world around us does not know occupations such as IT, gynaecologist, chemist or engineer. We have dragged this division and specialisation even further – we have experts in the area of African spiders, Impressionism, the history between the years 1918 – 1920 or ball bearings for lawn mowers. However, the world is of a different character – a compact and non-fragmented one.

## *Questions for Contemplation*

---

*Doesn't our specialisation prevent us from seeing important links, looking at a problem from a quite different point of view? Isn't our specialisation a threat to us? How to link specialisation with a holistic view of the world around us? Specialisation creates a specific language and view of the world – who will be the interpreters for the specialists who have stopped understanding each other?*

## **Destructive Growth**

**Growth is said to be the basis of economic development. All politicians and economists long for growth. A growth of what? When the doctors reveal cells which grow rapidly and without control in the human body they implement radical treatments – it is often a fight with death. Our economic growth is something like a global cancer. No accounts book of the “growing” companies and economies furnishes information about the hundreds of thousands of tons of toxic substances, waste, and devastated nature, nor the human lives we have sacrificed for the growth. One day we will have to replace GDP growth with the growth of happiness and quality of life. One day we will replace gold with drinking water and platinum with clean air. One day we will no longer be here if we do not stop this destructive growth.**

Professor Vladimír Krčméry writes: “Out of 6 billion of people living in the world 4.8 billion are living in the developing countries. Approximately 1.5 billion of them are suffering from hunger; two billion are infected with tuberculosis. 600 million people fall ill with malaria every year and 50 million

are infected with HIV. Tens of millions of children who would be able to change this situation die every year due to these most frequent infections. Hunger kills another ten million people. I believe that everybody wants to have these children in the jury box on the Judgement Day ...”

Professor Krčmery works more than he writes. With his Tropic Team he establishes hospitals where Slovak doctors and volunteers help, heal and teach – in difficult conditions, with an annual budget which is smaller than the Christmas party budget of many companies in our country.

For many of us in the current world of “virtual reality” these stories may seem unreal or remote. We do not like listening to unpleasant things. But if we close our eyes and ears to them we will destroy this world. We take more from nature than we need and return there more waste than it is able to process. The seas are full of time bombs in the form of chemical weapons, bombs and nuclear waste. People have destroyed 80 % of the original forests of this planet. During my walks in the Malá Fatra I can see they are diligently continuing this activity. The “foresters and conservationists” change to being tree-fellers and businessmen. 2,000 trees allegedly disappear in the Amazon forests every minute. Many mayors who take care especially of themselves in our country, log age-old trees, but nature does not belong to us! We are only part of it and depend on it. We live surrounded by toxic substances whose impacts upon us and our environment have not been tested. We are only experimental samples in a laboratory called Blue Planet.

James Gustave Speth writes in the magazine Harvard Business Review: “Materialism, we know, is toxic to happiness”. I am thinking about a balanced system of company management. I am thinking about a situation where we have to replace the traditional indicators – market share, profit, turnover, and profitability by new metrics, e.g. the satisfaction of the customers and shareholders with our access to the Earth and protection of our environment, solidarity in the fight against poverty and disease, the quality of life, job

stability and self-realisation, the elimination of waste and economy in a closed cycle, saving energy, security and safety, the ecology and employees' satisfaction. If we do not change the destructive growth will destroy us. What we are doing is only an increase of productivity and "sawing the branch" we are sitting on. The "most intelligent being" in the world should not do this. Abbé Pierre writes in his Testament, "For the first time in human history we cannot be saved without each other. It is not possible to allow the poorest to be destroyed – it is necessary to find a place for everybody, a place where he/she will be useful. If we do not carry out a revision of the so called global balance, we will head towards a disaster, to an explosion of hopelessness of those who are superfluous, who starve and who have been moved to the "dump".

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Are the current indicators through which we assess the society and company development sufficient? How to overcome the short-term objectives enforced in politics but also in doing business and in company management at the expense of our future? How to measure our responsibility for the future? What particularly can we do for people who haven't been as lucky as we in their lives?*

# Communication

**It often happens to me that I visit a company and independently speak about the problems I have encountered in other enterprises. My listeners ask with surprise: “Have you ever been to our factory? How do you know that these are the main problems in our company?” Well, the problems of the majority of enterprises are similar in many aspects, similarly as with the problems and illnesses of people. Certain phenomena help us detect the type of an illness, its causes and also the healing method.**

Once I was in a company. “What is your biggest problem?” I ask. Similarly as in most companies the answer is: “Communication!” What is it? We are discussing. A young man starts speaking about tables, formats and protocols. He is apparently thinking about transmitting information in the information system. A lady at the other end of the table shakes her head. “We are missing visualisation in the whole company, making access to important information in a simple form”, she says. Another participant continues and speaks about the “non-communication” between people and departments which are, he says, “completely separated”. A top manager speaks about a boss’s monologue during the top management meeting; we can hear words like empathy, listening, etc.

I look into the encyclopaedia and find out there is a similar mess in the definitions – one of them speaks about a two-way transfer of information, ideas and feelings, another one about exchanging information, ideas and feelings and the third one about handing over information between subsystems... Atrocious!

A short time ago I met my friends and discussed this topic. We arrived at the conclusion that during communication with others we, as a matter of fact, actually discuss inside ourselves. The thing that people said a moment ago affects what they are

saying now and what they are saying now affects the things they will say in a moment. A sequence runs in our brain which is actually a dialogue with ourselves inside of us. If somebody interrupts your monologue (he/she also speaks with himself/herself) it can cause an interaction and correction you will say in a moment. Or he/she can interrupt you and you continue conducting your dialogue and wait for the moment when you get the space for its presentation. A dialogue between people is actually a dialogue where everybody is speaking on behalf of himself/herself and in very rare moments something special arises – something we call a link, an interaction, an understanding, an inspiration, an impulse, a harmony, etc. Likewise, as information is not knowledge, communication is not an information transfer. Communication is a type of an interaction which causes a mutual coordination of our behaviour, i.e. a coordination of activities. An action is a consequence of the communication. What type of an action? A consequence of good communication during a workshop is a solution and its realisation. A consequence of good communication during a meeting is the enforcement of a change.

How many words have been said during meetings and how few actions have been developed? How much information is collected and exchanged between various people and processes without starting, changing or activating anything. How many words are said during discussions – not for us to make an action but only for satisfying our ego or to draw attention to ourselves. Communication courses teach active listening, empathy, verbal and non-verbal “communication”. However, communication is no conversation. During communication the ability to create a question is sometimes more important than formulating an answer. The questions are important because they mostly lead to an action. Each why moves us forward in our cognition. Let us think about the fact why we communicate. Not to exchange information or to entertain. We communicate to start an action. The director communicates with his/her employees for them to do

something and not for them to receive information from him/her. A small child does not cry to inform his/her mother he/she needs the nappy changed or is hungry but to solve his/her problem. The workshop team members do not communicate to exchange information about the fact of how they view the defined problem but to solve it. Neither the information system nor the visual boards and perfectly prepared and hosted workshops are the basis of communication. Mutual respect is the basis of our communication.

Why do many companies, families and relationships have communication problems? I think because we do not clearly understand the content of this term because everybody perceives it in a different way. Let us think about ourselves. How do we communicate? In our office and also in our personal life? How much time of our “communication” leads to an information exchange or self-presentation and how much to a particular action? Let us repeat that an action is the consequence of the communication. Let us prefer calling all other things an information transfer, social conversation or a meeting. If we remove these unnecessary activities from our work, we will acquire more time for improving our communication. And the real communication adds value – to our work and life.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do we understand the word communication in the same way? How do we want to improve communication when everybody understands something different under this term? Why does every organisation need to create its own language and clear terminology at the beginning? Does communication in your company lead to an action or is it used to avoid any action? What will you do for improving communication in your surroundings during the weeks to come?*



# Garden

**I like sitting in my garden. As a matter of fact, it is the garden of my grandparents. After my grandmother died twenty years, step by step ago the garden became desolate. Nettles, quack grass and all sorts of weed created an impenetrable jungle there. It is interesting but during our life bad things spread much faster than the good ones. If you do not care about the garden, the weed quickly overgrows the useful plants. Similarly, wastage in a company spreads faster than order, discipline or quality. Bad habits take root quickly and we need much more energy for their removal than the energy spent on getting used to them was. The good things require investing much more effort in than the bad ones. This is valid both for the life of people and companies.**

Managers often ask if it is really necessary to pay so much attention to the removing of wastage, audits, projects, everyday assessments of abnormalities and deviations from the standards. Well, when people do not wash, they will stink to high heaven. When we have no cleaning women, the floors and toilets will be dirty. When we do not fight laziness, bad discipline or wastage every day, the result will be similar as in our garden. The weed will be everywhere. When I and my wife came with two spades and started to cultivate the large garden, the neighbours considered us fools. Similarly people in the factories sometimes look at us in the same way and say – people like you have been here before, they began improving processes and establishing order and in the end everything returned back. The weed overgrew again. If you have weed in your company, look for a gardener. The nameplate is usually – CEO. Could it be an abbreviation of the word gardener? My wife has taught me if we want to remove the weed from the garden we have to destroy the roots thoroughly and not simply tear away the leaves from the ground. Have you ever seen nettle roots which have been freely growing for 10 or 15 years? It is an unbelievable toil to get

rid of them. When we were rummaging through the soil with our dirty fingers and were falling tired into bed in the evening I always remembered my grandmother and grandfather. How many times did they have to dig, seed or fertilise this soil. It is our task to take care of our patrimony – not only in the garden but also in our factories, restaurants or vineyards. I am sure only those people and nations have a future, who are able to develop the things left by their parents and grandparents.

We are sitting in the garden. Hundreds of little plants, flowers and trees create unique and beautiful fragrances and it is impossible to tear our eyes away from them. The concerto of colour and pleasant fragrances begins in April. The twittering birds and burbling water are companions here. A “small apple tree” is the only reminiscence of my grandparents. We called it this a long time ago. When I was a little boy it was the only tree in the garden from which I was able to pick a white transparent apple. Today this “small apple tree” magnificently rules the edge of the garden. It is old and remembers much. It connects us with the past and I was not able to cut it down. But its time will come without my contribution. And there will be a small tree in its place which will link us, people, in time.

Everybody has a “garden”, something that our predecessors left us, something into which they put part of their lives. Something we should develop and not break the chain which links the soft fibres of the important things in our life. Everybody has their garden and dreams that it will never become desolate. If you want somebody to take care of your garden you have to find and bring him/her there. If you have not done so, do not complain your gardens are dead.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*What have you done with your garden during the recent year? Have you thought of the fact there is a lot of weed in your garden and the crop was bad? What action plan have you prepared for your garden? When will you start your plan?*

# “Dill Pickles”<sup>1</sup>

I often receive mails from university students. Something along the lines of: “I am a third-year university student and I am writing a bachelor thesis about Lean, Six Sigma, Toyota, etc. Please, send me some articles and figures.” Why waste time? It is necessary to finish it as soon as possible – the thesis, the thesis defence and the exams. The students, lecturers and professors are tired of it. The students can have part-time jobs or booze, the lecturers deal with their hobbies or they will be building their houses, and the professors – they have a lot of activities – teaching at several schools, travelling in the framework of European projects and controlling their consultancy companies. Everything is fermenting somehow unnaturally and quickly. And the result? “Dill pickles”.

My colleague at the university explained hundreds of Edison’s experiments with the filament – as an example of patience and effort which are so important for innovations. After he told the students to ask him questions, one of them asked: “Who was that Edison, professor?” “Specialisation belongs to insects. The human being has to be compact and complex,” says Milan Zelený and continues: “One of the problems of our life is that the experts and people who are closely specialised, the “single-track” and unilateral ones, interfere loudly in general matters and the things of the whole – it means in matters they do not understand and which far exceed their proven competencies. They have had neither the time nor determination or even the conditions to learn. The more specific the education, expertise and specialisation of

---

<sup>1</sup> There is a term in Slovak “rýchlokvašáci” - **DILL PICKLES** - that literally means a quick dish (e.g. pickles) but can refer to a person, generally a male with little experience but convinced of his own expertise in every field he comes into contact with.

people is, the more they feel the need to interfere in things they do not understand. Is it not absurd?"

It is absurd. A self-important young politician can be regularly seen on the TV screen. With no problem at all he gives his opinions on everything he is asked about. He has three big life merits – he was born, he went to school and he understands everything. He has not had time to do anything, however, he lectures us on how it is arranged in the world. I meet consultants – the ink on their diploma has not yet dried – but they lecture the company employees on how they are to organise their processes and activities. They have learned examples, they can fill in and assess the tables, however, their life experience = 0. One famous American company employs such “dill pickles” only in their purchasing division. They have no idea about the trade in their line of business. Their only task is to negotiate the lowest possible price with the supplier. They are “trained monkeys” without knowledge, experience, or emotion... If they were experts and understood the real situation, they could understand the problems of their suppliers and their pressure on price reduction would weaken. Do you know what the reunion of the “dill pickles” after ten years of graduating from the university looks like? A hit parade of success – management positions, bonuses, company cars, holidays, houses, ...

Once a company manager told me how he had asked a young director of a consultancy company that was working for them what goals he had for the future. The answer from this self-important guy shocked him. He said he had no goals, all goals, he had ever had, he had fulfilled. And he was less than thirty! Would you take advice from such a consultant?

I know a lot of “dill pickles” in management positions. Nice suits, trained smiles and gestures, learned phrases from the management courses. They concentrate on themselves – the status, office, golf, squash, vintage wines and French cognacs, balls, company cars, holidays, study trips,...

They like people who agree with them. They regularly call and go for lunches with their business partners. However, the

problems of their employees do not bother them. They do not understand that the leaders should serve first of all; they have to take care of their employees - colleagues, they are the first who should cancel their bonuses if the company is not successful, their status is not conferred by their business card, car or black suit. The “dill pickles” have a lot of things around them; however, they are missing something within. They run through schools and life so quickly that they have no time to read, learn and think about connections (it only wastes time). They are often missing a piece of soul and heart. The well-kept body and rehearsed smile are mostly enough for them. The same phrases are always repeated during social conversations. The “dill pickles” have multiplied. It has a logic – they ferment very quickly. More quickly than normal people. And they push forward. More than the others. Some of them change over the course of time, some suffer the consequences of their peacockery, some will never understand. Those who fail are replaced by new ones. There are hordes of them and they are impatiently waiting for their chance. The “dill pickles” – so rich and yet unbelievably poor.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you know any “dill pickles” in your surrounding? How do they affect you? Do you sometimes feel a desire to be admired by the public, to be successful or to receive awards? Does it happen to you that you like expressing your opinion on things you do not know thoroughly? Do you have the feeling that you have mastered everything better than the people around you? Wouldn't it be good to gaze into the mirror?*

# When the Small Will Be First and the Big the Last

For years we had been living with the idea that it is advantageous to be a large company. The large ones could allocate enough money for development and innovations, they affected the relations on the markets, they realised acquisitions of the smaller players. However, there were just small companies coming up with innovative ideas and products and they became prey for the voracious sharks. The large companies invested to modern manufacturing technologies, they created huge production capacities and a management resembling an army. However, the modern and complex machines frequently do not have sufficient flexibility; it is difficult to integrate them into flexible cells and to create continuous flows. The large manufacturing capacities mean high fixed costs; the army of the “productive human resources” is typified by a low motivation. The managers of these companies spend the majority of their time on building and defending their positions; they do not take risks and prefer to play it safe. The tactic of “better to be safe than sorry” is the greatest risk.

During the 1980s a lot of companies had to face the problem of low operating flexibility. This resulted in new and flexible manufacturing concepts. Today the enterprises are confronted with a shortage of strategic flexibility. The inability to respond quickly to the changes in their surrounding which are sometimes very fast and in arrive in leaps, acts similarly to the inability of the mighty Titanic to avoid the iceberg.

The company strategy is not what the company strategists write and declare in their company visions, missions and strategies. The strategy is what the enterprise actually does. Some time ago I was in a Czech company which operates in

the chemical line of business. It entered the market with an ecological product which the big players would not consider because they are trapped in their successful history and product portfolio into which they have invested huge means. This small Czech company is growing and the big players have begun to take it seriously. During serious changes on the commodity market the company owner phones the trade director and they make strategic decisions even at midnight, if necessary. Their bigger competitors have to analyse and assess the information; they call strategic meetings and workshops and lose time and money.

A company's performance efficiency is today measured only by one parameter – the speed in reaction to the customer requirement, on an abnormality in the process, on the market changes. The smaller companies have a speedier transfer of information, they make decisions faster – they are more viable in the current world. The time of the dinosaurs is shorter and shorter. The smaller companies have better communications, more confidence and fewer intrigues. There is a higher motivation, more opportunities to implement your talent, less bureaucracy and politics. The smaller companies often take risks because they pay less for a mistake than the large ones, they can experiment, try various products, services, processes and company models, customs and traditions which can be changed with little difficulty. Pride and traditions count for nothing in the current business. The current world is about challenges, opportunities and the courage to grasp them. The small companies can create networks, connect their advantages and achieve synergies better than the large ones. The small ones are able to respond more quickly to the changes in the environment, they are able to create a more suitable culture for the most important motivating factors – enthusiasm and the joy of work. The crisis is turning the world from head to heels. A new world where the small will be first and the big last is being formed.

## **Questions for Contemplation**

---

*Does it feel that you are satisfied with the results of your work and your company and you don't feel any threat? What new things have you learned during the recent year? Which of these things have you used in your life and work? What change are you planning to make in the near future? How have you prepared for it? Do you regard the changes in the current world as threats or opportunities? What have you done in order for the changes to be a real opportunity?*

## **Our Good Capitalists**

**Recently I have visited a lot of Slovak and Czech companies. There I met our Slovak and Czech capitalists. People who founded their enterprises 15 or 20 years ago. Their companies were growing during this time and sometimes also the problems within them. I learned that many of our capitalists are good people. No, I am not being ironic, I believe it sincerely. It is as if they have had pangs of conscience, they are wealthy and wish to give also to their employees. They give bonuses, the extra thirteenth and fourteenth salaries and various premiums to them. It is good to take care of the employees, if the value added is also on the other side.**

I meet with a huge amount of poor discipline and breaches of the elementary rules in a lot of our companies. They chronically fail to fulfil the standards required, and sometimes there are none. The machines for which the owner pays enormous sums work at half-output. Due to low utilisation of



people and machines the plan is not fulfilled. There is a disorder at the workplaces, the owner eliminates a lot of problems every day and the majority of employees only passively observe this situation. Many of them think silently: “Let him try, still, it’s his business. We simply go to work.” Do I exaggerate? I am speaking about cases I could see with my own eyes. One of my friends wanted to motivate his employees and prepared a presentation for them. He showed them his beautiful family house and garden, his big car and sports aeroplane. He finished his presentation with these words: “You can see, I can let it all hang out (he used a spicier expression), I’m secure but I go to work every day, I’m seeking orders and solving problems only because of you!” He failed. Instead of motivating people he only made them angry. Another entrepreneur bought recreation premises near the sea and sent his employees there. He also got criticism – they said he had money enough and should have paid the money to them. I also go to other companies – international concerns where often a military culture prevails, everything is standardised, monitored, controlled. People are sometimes like unimportant cogs in a huge mechanism. Should those same employees suddenly behave in a different way – they are then disciplined and so work dutifully. I was speaking with employees of a smaller private company about their experiences after they had had an excursion to a certain supplier for a car company. They were shocked – they said the employees there worked as if in a concentration camp, it would not be possible to keep up with the working pace, horrifying...

They return back home, to their “nursing home” and complain about the capitalist who built socialism for them. He likes them, they are his employees. He has enough money, why not increase their wages. The fact that there are only a few reliable people and enthusiasts who are collapsing from overload is the other side of the coin. Extra money is to be given to people for their work, performance, learning, ideas, initiative and not simply for going to work. These companies don’t have their ‘mother company’ somewhere in Germany – a mother that will prepare standards for them, standards

of orderliness at the workplace, the system of monitoring the performance indicators, the system of production planning and control, the process organisation, the process improvement system, the innovation process, the process of developing the human potential, the quality control system, etc. The owner with only a few enthusiasts, but with an army of grumpy employees can hardly cope with this. A lot of our capitalists begin realising their errors. Good companies have developed, but there has not been enough time for bringing along good people. The companies are lacking the basic tools for measuring and managing the process performance efficiency. These are activities requiring a further 20 years experience. They are far more demanding tasks than building premises and purchasing machines.

It is necessary to send people to other countries, to schools, it is necessary to start paying for the value added and not for just going to work. The fate of the company is not only in the hands of the owner, it is dependent mainly on whether all of the others are working or not working. Capitalists of all countries, unite! Get rid of that conscience - you are rich so stop building socialism in your enterprises. You will be helping your employees to the maximum when you teach them how to work.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you give your employees a fish or do you teach them how to catch fish? What new and essential things have your colleagues learned from you during the recent year? Would your company survive if you stopped working there tomorrow? If not, why? Does it sometimes happen with you that due to the good relations with your colleagues you tolerate their shortcomings and mistakes and give them rewards they do not deserve? If yes, what's the result?*

# Organisational Structure Is Nonsense

**Nature has no organisational structure and works perfectly. Everything in nature has its organisation which is mostly not visible to the naked eye, but is somewhere within. However, we can see the result of the organisation and that is the structure. When the organisation changes, the structure is also altered, when the organisation stops working, the structure will cease to exist. This means that the expression organisational structure does not make any sense in this context.**

People mostly try to change the structure – in other words the external demonstration of the internal organisation. However, the visible structure is the result of an invisible organisation. The professors at universities describe the advantages and disadvantages of various types of “organisational structures” – the process, project, team and fractal ones which have proved to be good in several companies. I also used to view an enterprise in this way. It was a mistake. If the relations between parents and children have been disrupted for a long time (organisation), the family sometimes breaks down (structure). Also physicists could speak of how the material structure changes after its internal organisation is altered – heating, cooling or exposing to radiation. If we want to have a structure that fulfils the required function, we have to understand its internal organisation. Can you imagine e.g. a construction that the engineers could design without any knowledge of static?

Many companies want to show a good performance, want to be innovative and flexible. But to draw an “optimal organisational structure” is not enough for that. It is not enough to call in consultants who will “calculate” that we need

more accountants, three IT engineers and five maintenance workers. It is necessary to go deeper – to build the organisation. In the same way as the physicists have their physical laws and their knowledge enables them to change the organisation and structure of various materials purposefully, also the company has its laws. If we do not know them, it can lead to a situation where a lot of managers make experiments resembling the ancient alchemists. We want to have a structure where people collaborate and want to score a goal. However, only a few people in our companies know where the rival's goal is and for many of them it does not matter, a lot of them do not know or do not fulfil the rules, many cannot play. Lessons learned? If we want for our structure to work, we have to build its internal organisation. If we are unable to speak about problems openly, we cannot expect our employees to improve. If we do not fulfil the given promises, we cannot expect that things will be completed. If the breaching of standards is common, we will hardly achieve any stability and quality. If there is mistrust among people and rivalry, then team work and synergy remains only a dream. If we have no respect for our colleagues, then do not let us expect respect and loyalty from them. The external structure and its behaviour are the result of the internal organisation.

### **Questions for Contemplation**

---

*Are you satisfied with the “organisational structure” of your company? Do you distinguish the terms organisation and structure? What are the main values your company is based on? Do people in your company behave according to these values? Are you thinking about what is required to create an organisation which will adapt to the changes in the surrounding? What do you have to do to succeed in this area?*

# To See the Invisible

**There are people who see other things and see them differently from others. What? The sun behind the clouds, a smile in the eyes or a hidden problem in the soul of a close friend. A lot of things in the world can be perceived only through our heart and they cannot be seen. I cannot see the law of gravity but we can recognise its consequences. We can see the material flow which moves as perfectly harmonised players in the orchestra, however, the things in the background are hidden. We do not know the emotions inside people but we can see their results in their behaviour. There are laws working beyond us. The understanding and harmony of our deeds with them is a strenuous process which sometimes lasts our whole life. However, we must not give up on this effort. Just this can be the sense of our life. The most important things in life cannot be recognised through our senses. Those who want to understand them have to be patient and have to delve deeply when they investigate the links in the world around us.**

Some time ago we discussed in Prague with Jeff Liker about the principles of product development, building the corporate culture and development of talents in the company Toyota. I think there are few people in the world that would be able to show the essence of success which is hidden under the term Toyota Way so comprehensively, and, at the same time, as simply as Jeff. He told us a story about a visit by the Ford Company president to the Toyota plant in Kentucky twenty years ago. A big, self-important American boss together with his entourage visited a humble Japanese chief of the plant – Mr. Cho. After the visit the Toyota manager asked him if he had any improvement recommendations for them. The Ford manager turned to his people and said: “I didn’t see a single thing that we wouldn’t have in our Ford factory. So I don’t see any reason we

should be worse than Toyota”. He could not see the invisible. He did not see the invisible. He did not understand the important thing. His name is not mentioned any more today but Mr. Cho is the Toyota Motor President in the USA. Toyota is the most successful automotive company in the world and Ford is at the edge of bankruptcy. Jeff was explaining to us for two days that the most important things in Toyota cannot be seen. And this is just the reason why many companies fail to build the Toyota system. The Toyota manufacturing system is not a toolbox of methods with a manual. The most important things cannot be seen; we cannot take a photo, a film or copy them. It is a flow of innovations which runs in the background of the manufacturing system; it is a flow of people and the handing over of experience and knowledge in a DNA process, it is the culture, learning and leadership. The managers are those who create the conditions for the enterprises to be successful during utilising the elements and principles of the Toyota production system. Those managers who are responsible for developing the people and culture. Those managers who do not demolish things created by their predecessors but build on them. Those managers who are humble, who do not need to satisfy their ego every day but who patiently develop the potential of people around them. There is only one goal a good teacher should have: the pupil should be better than he/she. When I observed the production process in the plant in Toyota City where Taichi Ohno was working for long years I realised that the difference between other companies I had already seen was in the small and extremely important details. In details that many of us cannot see and understand. In details that can hardly be copied. During my journey from Prague to Žilina I was thinking about the message Jeff Liker gave us. I do not know if all of us understood it, if all of us could notice those invisible but key details which are essential for our effort to bring us lasting benefit. Those who tried are on a good path although they are only at the beginning. It is necessary to continue – to penetrate the essence and to build a new management system, the culture of confidence,

collaboration and improvement. The culture of learning, the culture of values based on the past and oriented on the future ahead. We can choose another way – to remain on the surface, to copy the visible things without recognising the invisible ones. However, the result will be similar to when we plant seeds in frozen soil. Disillusion and frustration. The most important things in the world cannot be seen.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Have you ever experienced such a situation as that which happened to the American managers in the Toyota Company? Does it sometimes seem to you that you are doing exactly the same thing as the others and yet you aren't that successful? Have you ever thought about what the invisible elements that lead sometimes to completely different results are? Which invisible elements are working in your company? What are you doing for their development?*

## **Life Is Kaizen**

**We travel to Japan to know Kaizen. It is a country where the word Kai – Zen (a change to the better) reportedly belongs to the five most used expressions. In our conditions we often try to “implement” Kaizen similarly as the teams of socialism worked (until 1989 in Czechoslovakia) or the competitions of the improvement movement. It is necessary to go through Kaizen but also our life should be kaizen. As a matter of fact all global religions perceive human life as Kaizen – a continuous change to the better which comes about by doing penance, realising our mistakes and**

**making the effort for improvement. The whole human life is improvement, learning, collecting experience, wisdom and maturing.**

Also the Catholic Church in the past used to punish every sin with a special penance corresponding to the seriousness of it. Over the course of time this practice was abandoned and the priests were led more to helping the confessing persons to prepare an “action plan” or a “programme of exercises” which would help them improve their lives.

The self-cognition, the ability to look into ourselves, at our mistakes and darker sides is thus the first step towards our improvement. Two important events happen – the calm realisation of our failings and coping with them, this leads to a reconciliation with ourselves, to finding an internal peace and equilibrium. At the same time it is an impulse and energy for a change to the better, by the eliminating of bad habits we have created, our own self-improvement. The central element of the Japanese culture is “hansei” – self-reflection, merging into ourselves, recognising our deficiencies and looking for ways for improvements. The Japanese say if they have not seen their friends for a few weeks, they try to recognise if they have improved. Improvement is a natural part of life, like breathing, sleeping, water or food. In our our world we are used to being punished for mistakes, the Japanese view them as an opportunity, lessons that can be learned. “Hansei” also means to look back – at our plans, projects, workshops and to ask again and again: “How should it be? How was it really? Why was the result different from what we wanted? Which lessons can we take from it?”

A lot of people in the companies ask me: “How are we to motivate people for them to be better? How are we to implement Kaizen correctly in our conditions?” Kaizen is not implemented, Kaizen is lived. The life of each of us is Kaizen. I begin to understand where we make a mistake. The answer is simple – at first I, then we and after that the processes. Don’t you understand? The first stage of Kaizen in the company is



with the improvement of ourselves – it starts with humility and self-cognition and fulfilment of the goals. At first we have to learn how to fulfil the promises we gave to ourselves. The result of this stage is the self-confidence, integrity and equilibrium of people. S. Covey summarised this development in the first three habits. The second Kaizen stage is to build the mutual confidence, reliability, open communication, team collaboration, learning and synergy. This is the basis of improvement culture, the soil into which we want to be planting experience from Japan – Kaizen that improves the company processes. Do you say it is a long way off? In life there are no shortcuts, only dead ends. Life is Kaizen.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*How do you perceive Kaizen in your company? Do you think about your own improvement and the improvement of your surrounding? What did you improve in yourselves last month and what are your plans for the next one? Do you recognise any improvements on people in your surrounding? If not, what's the reason? Where does the mistake lie?*

## **After the Visit**

**We visited Nepal and Tibet. When you are on a visit you should not assess how the host's household is furnished or equipped, his/her habits and give him/her advice on how to live. The host on the other hand does his/her best for the guests to feel as congenial as possible. Our visit to the kingdom of Mustang which is inhabited mostly by Tibetans who escaped the Chinese Maoists was like this. "What we**

**have not is that which we do not need,” was the idea our guide Zolo told us at the beginning. During our hiking I remembered it very often.**

I will not describe the countryside because there are no words, photos or movies that would be able to express the colourful beauty which is changing literally every minute. Even here you realise the full extent of the unrepeatable beauty of every moment in our life. A moment for which it is worth living – here and just at this moment. After several days of marching the body is adjusted like a machine even in the altitudes of 3,500 to 4,000 metres. The step and breathing settle into a rhythm, the body and the soul are in harmony, the thinking becomes clear. It seems you are floating in an indefinable state of mind. I begin to understand the old pilgrims in the desert.

Cool, proud and clear people are living in this country. Although our visit lasted only three weeks and you have to rely on your subjective impressions and feelings, I did not meet any form of anger, envy, arrogance, violence or lying (if we do not take into account the innocent business rituals and tricks of the street traders in Kathmandu). All the things which flourish in our “civilised” society have not found their place here. Peace and an absolute relationship with nature. However, the closer we are to the roads used by rich tourists and goods, the more we can see industrial waste but also the negative influence of money. I do not believe the western tourists come here to do harm. Quite the opposite, they mostly want to help. But this society which was closed against the world for a long time is very fragile and also presents and money offered with good intentions can sometimes damage it. We met amazing people who have not participated in any training in team work, but they were working like excellent teams. It was just the harvest time and whole families were working there as teams. We could see a perfect team composed of our friends Sherpas and Rais every day. They put their heart, smile and sincere eyes into their immensely hard work when they saw we were satisfied.

Nowhere in Europe would I see such an effort and natural orientation on customers. Never before had I seen such effort put to one's work with so much heart and joy and being happy when other people were happy and satisfied. Without training and education these gifted and flexible people coped naturally with things which many of our companies try to implement. However, the answer does not lie in training and education but in our hearts which we often replace by money. And it does not work. In the communities of people we visited in Mustang there was no wastage. Everything was utilised, you could see unbelievable economies and natural circulation everywhere. Also their funerals convey a certain symbolism – the vultures carry parts of the human body to “heaven”. A lot of people from the west have a tendency to give lessons to the “less developed” societies (let us remember those foreign “managers” in our companies during last twenty years). However, when we are on a visit we should behave differently. As a matter of fact, what can we learn from our hosts? What we have not, is that which we do not need. This sentence resonated in my mind when I looked at the shops filled with perfumes, alcohol, chocolate and other luxurious goods at Qatar airport. To be patient, balanced, to feel joy every moment we are experiencing and to have joy from the fact we can make someone happy. To do our work with love and to enjoy it and our life too. You say, it is an illusion and deception? Maybe for those of us who have exchanged everything that is natural for glitz and unnecessary possessions. In Mustang I met people who live their way of life. I think they can give us more than we are able to offer them. Although they are living in houses made of clay and have almost nothing. However, they own much more than the majority of us.

## Questions for Contemplation

---

*Have you thought of that which drives us, people from the west, towards increasing our performance and making more and more money? Are we happier? Is the quality of our lives improved? Does the higher material standard bring also more equilibrium and peace to our lives? What should we change in our behaviour to improve our lives?*

## When Success Is Harmful

**Success is a trend. The majority of people want to achieve it and present it as well. The problem is how to define this term which in the current world of tabloids, trivialities and entertainment leads to “success” which has a destructive effect in the end. The magazine Harvard Business Review analysed in its article When Growth Stalls the main causes of a sudden decline of successful companies’ growth. Do you know what the main causes of the failure was? Being seized by success and a premium position on the market – pride, self-confidence, success, an inability to respond to the prices of competitors, changes in the customer values, overestimating the brand value, innovation inertia and a too carefree attitude. The success today is often the cause of the failure tomorrow.**

Success is for many something like a drug which controls people. I know successful managers and entrepreneurs who measure their success by the profits of their companies, I know managers in the multinationals who measure their success by the fact of how quickly they have achieved their dream position.

I know young ambitious people who measure their success by the speed of acquiring their family background – the house, car, holidays, a stable financial income. A housewife who has brought up several children and prepared them for life, or a teacher at the basic school who continues mother's work for a few crowns, a person who takes care of seriously ill people, the homeless or alcohol-or drug-addicted people is not considered to be successful.

However, successful entrepreneurs and managers often turn out badly too – as alcoholics and drug-addicted people. Now I do not think they start drinking or taking drugs although this also happens. I think addiction to success and its outward manifestation, the addiction to public persona and seeking of appreciation for the achieved goals. A lot of these people begin gradually suffering from very serious illnesses. At first their vision deteriorates. They cease to view themselves and their surrounding in a real way. They succumb to the idea that their success will last forever and their abilities are unlimited. They start deluding themselves that they are excessively talented and ignore the opinions of the “less intelligent herd around them”. They succumb to the illusion that it is not important what they are doing as success will come anyway. Another malaise that successful people succumb to is an uncontrollable desire to speak about their success and to present their achievements in public. Those who do not perceive the reality around them, who permanently speak about their success, who lecture their less clever surrounding and try to organise this world according to their unshakeable concept, those inevitably lose their sense of hearing. They are unable to listen to people who are around them but also fail to hear that voice that is inside of us that tells what is good and bad, which helps us distinguish the important from the unimportant.

However, the destruction continues – friends and close people turn away from the successful egotists, the agreeable material conditions often cause a loss of aggressivity and the life motivation of their children, success allied with being self-absorbed can finally lead to loneliness and isolation. It must be

difficult to recognize that the whole “successful” life led to an unsuccessful end. I believe that at the end of our life all stages of our career, honours and medals, the whole property and accounts will seem ridiculous and unimportant to us. Only one thing will be important – what has our life brought to the people who remain after us in this world. Therefore it is worth thinking of whether it is not better to replace our efforts to achieve success in our life by activities which would help achieve success for others around us.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you know any “successful” people in your surrounding who are unhappy? Do you find internal satisfaction from the results of your work and life or are you more or less driven onward by the assessment of your surrounding? How do you measure your success? What causes you the greatest happiness and joy? Are they those activities you invest most time and attention to? Do you wish to change anything regarding your attitude to success? If so, what?*

## **World of Peacockery and Cock-Sureness**

**Too much peacockery and cocksureness seems to be everywhere in the world. As if modesty and humility were only for the weak and incompetent. However, just the opposite is true. The mask of self-confident people often hides inability; unbelievable stupidity can be behind the great pride. Give a stupid person a high position and you**

**can then watch him/her swaggering with an important expression on his/her face. When his/her limousine stops he/she hurries (as in the American movies) to the meeting room with the feeling that his/her time is suddenly worth more than the time of others – the common people...**

I have taken part in many conferences. The university professors were declaiming their ideas about the educational system, science, research and innovations self-confidently as unchangeable and unchallenged truths. I used to work at the university where people address each other “Your Magnificence” and acquire a feeling of importance in ornate academic gowns with golden chains.

I have read articles where journalists who think they know it all enforce upon us their opinions, their black and white vision of the world. I have attended briefings where the powerful blockheads of this world were self-confidently telling us lies with unbelievably straight faces.

I was in the Orava region. The humble, simple and hard working people you can meet there have more wisdom than dozens of our “celebrities” and swell-heads from the mass media who think they know it all.

Modesty and humility are considered weaknesses in the current world. However, just the opposite is true. The Latin word for humility is “humilitas” whose basis is “humus”, i.e. the soil we come from and to which we will return one day. Humble people are aware that they are merely dust in this vast universe. They realise that everything they know is only a negligible part of cognition of that which is around us. When I was a university student, the lecturer bullied us with minor matters to which he assigned great importance. He was very important because he had the power and his knowledge was concentrated on trifling details that he forced us to repeat. Then we had an exam. We were examined by the famous professor Anton Puškár, a person who was globally known in his field. It was a pleasant dialogue with a generous person who knew there had been things he himself did not know. Modesty and humility are two sisters who have

a hard time in the present-day world of glory and success. But let us regard it from another side – humble people view themselves as they really are. They have the opportunity to improve, to work on themselves and to clarify the sense of their life. Haughty and self-important people not only cannot see themselves, but they do not perceive the impulses from their surrounding, they are not open to other opinions – they remain in one place and do not develop. We are often critical and intolerant of the mistakes of other people and ignore our own shortcomings. This is the thing a lot of managers have to change if they want to be successful. Nobody is infallible; nobody has mastered all the wisdom of the world. The most important things the managers have to learn: to listen more and to speak less, to tolerate more the errors of other people and not to tolerate their own ones, to balance the arguments and logic with emotion and understanding, to look more at the mirror than to hold the mirror up to other people, to praise others more than themselves. I was in a company where a new manager had joined the company – he knew neither production nor the problems, however, in an effort to show his “competency” he labelled everything created by his predecessors as errors and nonsense and started giving instructions without any discussion. He was lacking humility. “The humility of the heart does not ask you to humiliate but to open. Simple humility is the key to change. Only then can you give and take,” Exupéry said.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*When was the last time you admitted your mistake? When was the last time you admitted your shortcomings to your colleagues? Are you able to state the important qualities and knowledge you are lacking? Does it happen to you that you see more deficiencies in other people than in yourself? How often do you look at the mirror of self-criticism and your imperfections?*



# Muda Mura Muri

**Equilibrium is the basis of the functioning of the whole universe and the world. If the equilibrium between individual elements of matter and foreign bodies were to be disrupted, everything would cease to exist. Also every one of us has a small universe within us where we should look for equilibrium of the physical, emotional, spiritual and psychic area. Are we looking for it? In the Japanese companies they emphasise the 3 MU – muda, mura, muri. These three words mean three things which the companies should remove from their processes – wasting, imbalance and overload. Also for people it is bad when they spend their time on unnecessary things, if they are unbalanced and if they are extremely overloaded by stress or physical load.**

I took part in a course. We were speaking about our values and learning how to plan our life better. I realised again that I concentrated especially on planning my work in my schedule. The other important things in my life remain on one side and it also happens I have no time for them. However, just this can be the way for wasting our time; people will be unproductive because they have no time to “sharpen the saw” - to maintain or increase our ability to achieve good results also in the future. But it is also the way to be imbalanced in life, to overloading and stress. Karl Gustav Jung defined two types of people – extroverts and introverts. At the same time he defined two antipoles of functions people possess – thinking/feeling and perception/intuition. The imbalanced state between the two traits of character and four psychological functions is the cause of many illnesses and conflicts.

“The calmer mind we have, the deeper peace in our mind is and the greater is our ability to live a happy and joyful life,” says the Dalai Lama. The equilibrium is not a static but a continuous

phenomenon, so we have to look for it again and again. It is important to limit our ego, the desire to make an impression, to be a “superman” and to rule everybody around us. Already the Greek philosophers considered the equilibrium and peace to be a sign of wisdom and maturity. The Romans called the stance of peace “aequo animo”. People should do everything in this condition – with a balanced mind, with a spirit which will not allow it to be thrown out of balance. The Benedictine monk Anselm Grün says: “We nourish the illusion that we have everything under control that we are just the best and that we will achieve what we want. Only those who will give up their ego with its illusions will be really peaceful. They will become internally free.” Father Anselm graduated in economy and trains stressed managers in Germany who began going to the Benedictine monasteries. When they arrive they hand over their mobile phones and everybody goes to a silent cell. TV, internet, notebooks, meetings and interviews are forbidden. Many people are confused due to this regime because they are missing the everyday adrenalin and hectic pace. However, peace and equilibrium bring besides happiness also a clear mind for making decisions every day. And that is the main task of the managers.

“Take a position in the circle on the shop floor and observe the manufacturing process without any prejudice and with a clear mind. Ask five times “why” when a problem occurs.” This was said by Taiichi Ohno the father of the most perfect manufacturing system (TPS). Without any balance and peace, without knowing the problem and its real cause a lot of our overloaded managers in our enterprises jump from one problem to another. They make lots of mistakes and unnecessary decisions and in spite of the huge effort the result equals almost zero. “You are running around in your companies like rabbits in the field. The turtles which walk slowly but in a cultivated, well-informed way and take the correct direction will overtake the rabbit and they are not even tired”, the Japanese say. So, if we are speaking about productivity, we should, first of all, remove wasting, imbalance

and overload from our life and also from our enterprises – it is called Muda, Mura, Muri.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you sometimes feel overloaded? Does wasting occur in your life – i.e. activities that do not contribute to your life and working goals and priorities? How much of your time do they take? What is the reason for them? Do you find balance in your life and work? What do you want to change?*

## **Principles of Change**

**There are things around us that work according to laws. When you throw a thing up, it will fall to the ground due to gravity. When you do not water the plants they will dry up. When you plant a seed you have to wait for the crop. Also human life has its rules. We were discussing how to plan and realise a change successfully at a seminar. Also the changes in our lives and organisations run according to the principles. The fact we do not know them or breach them leads to failure.**

The first step to a change has to be a need, a dissatisfaction with the current situation, something like “enlightenment”, realising the new connections, a look at the world through different optics, a change of paradigm. Therefore companies sometimes call in external consultants. Their task is to disrupt the company myopia and resistance against change. Also human life sometimes brings moments when people ask the question: “Why do I live like this?” Or: “What is my mission in

this world? Why am I here? Why did this happen just to me? Why have I lived in such darkness until now?"

Each change should bring an improvement. It means it should have an addressee, somebody to whom it will bring profit. In the companies they are usually the customers, shareholders or employees, in human life the person who has decided for the change or those people close in his/her surrounding.

The best way is to start the change within ourselves and from our heart. We are often critical of our surrounding; we are dissatisfied with the development around us. If we are not able to change and control ourselves, how do we want to change our surrounding? The real change has to develop in our heart, in our deepest mind. Only then are we able to persuade others. All the tricks, learning the verbal and non-verbal techniques of persuasion, these others are unnecessary. Our strongest freedom and strength is in our heart. The problem is sometimes that due to meetings with "important" people we have no time for the most important meeting – with ourselves.

The change starts from the end, from the visions and goals we want to achieve. If we want to transfix our colleagues, it is not enough only to have a vision in our head; we have to explain it in an understandable way. If you invite an unknown person to climb the mountain Rozsutec his/her first questions will be: "What will I see there? What will I experience there? How much effort will I have to spend?" Are we able to explain to our colleagues the climb to Rozsutec appealingly? Or do they go with us out of compassion, fear or for money? Building confidence and strong relations between people are the most important things not only for realising a successful change but also for our whole life.

A change needs time. For preparation, realisation and also for it to mature and settle. Children are born after nine months, at the age of six they go to school; also the grapes need a lot of effort and time before they become wine. The law of the farm is working. Besides the necessary time for change its appropriate timing is also important. The people

are impatient, we want many things at once, quickly, and we do not want to wait. Then we also want to change everything at once and the result is often that we do not change anything at all. We do not have to change the whole world at once. Let us change only those things we can and for which we have the time and strength. A lot of things are changed without our efforts.

Many people say: “A more difficult thing than the change itself is to maintain the new state, to keep on, not to turn back.” Both the boozers and industrial engineers can talk about it. The change is durable only when a habit develops. And the habit develops through repetition. Through repeating good things a good habit develops, when we repeat bad things a bad habit arises. “Plant an idea, you will harvest a deed. Plant a deed, you will harvest a habit. Plant a habit, you will harvest a character. Plant a character, you will harvest destiny”, says Samuel Smiles.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Does it happen to you that you fail to change things around you? And do you succeed in changing things inside of you and about you? Why do you fail? What do you have to change for you to be able to change yourself and your habits? Do you have a plan? How are you preparing for enforcing the change?*

# Family Is Everything – but Is Work More?

Most people say that their family, health, and love are the most important things in the world. The family is often in first place. In spite of this our schedules are full of meetings and tasks; we take our work home and do it in the evening or during weekends. We have better results, we are more effective, or the company grows, GDP increases, the well-being of the society is greater and greater. Is it really so? If we work like this for a long time, we can seriously disrupt not only our family and life but also the whole society. You don't believe it? No society in the world develops only on the basis of the GDP increase, productivity, on development of technique and technologies. Every civilised society is based on a functional family. One of the most famous world historians Edward Gibbon identified five main causes for the fall of Roman civilisation:

- 1| *Disintegration of the family structure (the number of children born outside the family has increased by more than 400 % during the last 40 years).*
- 2| *Weakening of the sense of personal responsibility (the European trend is to beg, to accuse the government or to go on strike).*
- 3| *Increase of taxes, control and intervention by the government (the EU and many governments do the same as the Roman clerks).*
- 4| *Looking for pleasures which became more and more hedonistic, violent and immoral (switch on your TV).*
- 5| *Decay of religion (even in the traditionally strong countries like Austria or Germany religion is regarded more and more as a tradition or a certain type of folklore).*

In 1940 the main disciplinary offences were unruly behaviour, running along the corridors, unsuitable clothes, making rubbish, speaking without being invited to and interrupting somebody. Today they are drugs, alcohol, violence, thefts, premature pregnancy, murders and suicides. The average child spends five hours daily in front of the TV and five minutes with his/her father. Children are reading books less and less – books have been replaced by TV, DVD and computers. The mass media has reported murderous attacks of students against their schoolmates and teachers during recent months (USA, Finland, Germany).

I do not like catastrophic scenarios but something is wrong here. If we say the family is one of the most important things in the world (let us repeat the family usually consists of the wife, husband, children, parents and relatives) we have to find some time for it. Not simply a formal telephone call for conscience sake or a birthday congratulation. In the family we form ties with our children, we develop love and collaboration. In families we also build the relationships of our children with their future families. Let us plan our related ones into our schedules, let us not push them away – we emphasise they are the sense of our life. They are our most important “clients”. It is impossible to pay to any teacher what we ourselves can do for our children – and free of charge.

Entropy is defined as a continuous degradation of the system or society. If we do not take care of a machine – it will be damaged. If we do not take care of our body – it will become ill and will waste away. Every system needs energy not to decompose and be degraded. It is also necessary to invest energy into love and relationships between people. The family and every human community have to find time for their physical, social, spiritual and intellectual recovery. Otherwise they will cease to exist.

A father and manager in one person is writing something on his notebook the whole evening. His little daughter asks him: “What are doing with the computer, daddy?” “I’m planning and managing the most important things I have to

arrange, I have here all the important people I have to meet with, I have to send them e-mails or call,” he answers. “I would like to be on your computer so much, daddy,” says the girl sadly. Let us put our children on our notebooks – not only as the screen background.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Are you thinking about your mission, roles and goals in your life? Do you schedule your time? Do you plan your working tasks or your private life? How are you fulfilled by the successes at work, are your close relatives also that satisfied? If you don't schedule your personal life, do you succeed in fulfilling your personal roles and goals? What do you want to change to find a better equilibrium between your personal and business life?*

## **Button Stop**

**Sometimes it happens to us that a situation irritates us so much that we explode and utter words that we would not normally say. Also company processes and manufacturing lines sometimes “explode” and the consequences are remarkable. People who have worked dutifully all their life collapse psychically – they find out they have been climbing a ladder leant against the wrong wall. A company led by a successful management team is realising uncompromisingly their company strategy, and suddenly it falls into the red and bankruptcy. Are we missing a stop button?**



There is a space between our stimulus and reaction. It is easy to say but sometimes I respond in such a way (I am speaking about myself) that it resembles a nuclear explosion. Then I am sorry for it. I try to create my “Stop Button” which will give me time to take a deep breath, to count to ten or hundred and to respond as a polite person of my years should. Sometimes there is such a red mist in front of me that I am not able to find any button. I think everybody has to fight his/her temper and exercise self-control; everybody looks for a stop button and learns how to control it. People have the ability to view a problem through the eyes of the other side, to look at everything with grace or in another time dimension. If we try to look at the problem through the eyes of the other party, we are close to a solution and we will achieve a certain appreciation of the rival. If we say: “How will people assess this problem in 100 years?” or “How would a terminally ill person look at my problem?” we will gain a distance and grace which can show us the minor importance of the problem which has caused our irritation and brought us to a conflict.

The stoppage of a production line – the greatest sin for a good manager in the western world and the main principle of a good manager in a Japanese factory. To stop the line means to reveal the problem, to look for its real cause and to remove it forever. Not stopping the line means to sweep the problems under the carpet and to learn how to live with them.

There are people who are helpless at the end of their lives. They no longer have their beloved work in which they had an unbelievable career, and there is nobody with them who can understand them and who they could be happy with. While they were climbing to the highest rungs of their life ladder they had no time for those close to them. Today those people have no time for them.

There are companies which have no time to stop, to assess their direction, to look across the lines of business, markets and segments, to re-build their strategic products. They rush up a blind alley at high speed, into a tunnel where no way back exists.

What is the common thread in these human and company stories? Both are missing the stop button. And after pushing it - distance, appeasement, assessment of the view of the world and at our direction in the future. Our life can be dangerous without a stop button. Both for people and the company. It is not easy to locate and push the stop button at the right moment. However, time cannot be returned.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*When were you “carried” by your emotions for the last time? What is your feeling from your response? How would you solve this situation today? Have you ever succeeded in pushing the stop button in a stressful situation? What was the result? What will you do to get control over your stop button?*

## **Systematic Problem-Solving**

**Do you know the story of the people who were working hard all day – they were sawing trees with a blunt saw. Someone asked them: “Why don’t you sharpen the saw?” And they answered: “We have no time; we have to saw the trees!” I know a lot of companies that work from morning to evening – with a blunt saw, the hours of overtime increase the people are sweating, they work on Saturdays and Sundays, the managers are at work until late evening, anxiety and stress grows, the employees are weary of it – a lot of them are leaving.**

If we want to be effective at work and to have a quality life, we have to learn how to work with a sharp saw. We have to have a system. I meet the following situation in many companies:

I ask: “Have you any problems?” The answer is? “Of course, who wouldn’t have any? However, the worst thing is the problems grow bigger and bigger and we are not able to extinguish the fires. The poor quality increases, we fail to fulfil the deadlines, the customers are dissatisfied, the profits decline...”

Another question: ”What do you do with your problems?” The answer: “We enter them into the information system.”

“Pardon?”

“It is simple – we spot a problem, e.g. bad quality and save this information into the information system”. I ask: “What follows?” The answer: “Mostly nothing. Only when a really big mistake occurs – then the director rushes out at us and we look for a speedy solution.” What sort of solution?” I ask. “It doesn’t matter – but it has to be done quickly because the director is shouting.”

So, let us summarise it:

- 1| *We have a lot of problems in our company.*
- 2| *As we have lots of problems, we register them in the information system.*
- 3| *There are so many problems we mostly have no time to solve them.*
- 4| *The result is that the same problems are repeated permanently.*
- 5| *When the problem overgrows we solve it, however, under the time stress, in an unsystematic fashion and with the risk that we have not found the best solution and the problem may occur again.*

When we solve a problem we should realise that the path from spotting the problem to its solution usually cannot be solved in a “shortened legislative process” – the problem – solution.

The normal procedure is:

- 1| *We reveal the problem.*
- 2| *We describe, define and measure the problem (there is usually no time for this step).*
- 3| *We analyse the causes of the problem (this is also sometime realised very inadequately).*
- 4| *We look for and verify the solutions.*
- 5| *We realise the solution, standardise and ensure the process against it returning to the original state.*
- 6| *We follow the solution in operation and make possible corrections.*

This procedure should not only be used for the technical problems in production or problems with quality. It should be used for every problem that arises in the company - including communication, insufficient information rate, high fluctuation, low motivation, etc.

You say you are doing it like this? If yes, congratulations. But frankly – do you really do it in this way or you would like to do it like this because it is written in a quality manual? If you really do it like this you should have a wonderful life – there should be fewer and fewer problems and you should have more and more leisure time. Try it – it is well worth working with a sharpened saw.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you have more problems than the time for their solution? Does it happen to you that some problems chronically repeat? Have you thought about the causes of this situation? Do you take systematic and consequent measures when solving the problems in your company? What would you like to improve in this area during the next four weeks?*

# Don't Make Compromises

**They say politics is the art of compromise. And the results mirror this fact. I encounter compromises in many companies – How to change something but not too much? How to remove the problem but not to solve the conflict which causes it? Compromises are time bombs; compromises push the solution of the problems to the future.**

I meet the following opinions both in personal life and in companies – do not let us solve it now, we will return to it later, why make it even more tense, we have other priorities, time will show, why 20 % when 5 % is enough for this year... This results in “half-solutions” which are imperfect and uncompleted. I know of companies (Toyota is maybe the best-known one) that make no compromises. It is usually given by the managers and the corporate culture. These companies try to solve their problems forever, without any compromises, without the word BUT. They look for a perfect solution and subordinate everything to fulfil it. They overtake other companies by this flawlessness and stamina because the other companies have to return constantly to the “time bombs” they planted in the past.

The company Toyota has not reduced the inventories in production and logistics for many years. Of course, it ran into problems concerning the instability of the processes, long setup times, poor quality, etc. on the way. But it resulted in the synchronised production, Just in Time, Toyota Production System. Over decades of fighting the compromises they have created a perfectly organised company but first of all a corporate culture which cannot be copied. It can be only built over years – by searching for solutions which are not based on compromises, through being closer and closer to perfection.

An analysis of three million revolutionary innovations

showed that 85 % of them were based on solving contradictions. If we have to choose an option – let us choose both of them. How to offer our customers more for less? How to give a higher value with lower costs? How to give the customer an individual product or service quicker and cheaper?

We have to try to look for a win-win solution (the compromise is lose-lose). It is more demanding, it takes a longer time, it requires more patience and effort. But it results in a solution which is stable and brings a bigger profit. But not only profit, but also joy from the results. The compromises we had to make gnaw at us, the conflicts and contradiction we were able to solve, free us. It is a part of experience which comes to many of us – at work and also in life. Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today. Let us do everything as we would do so for the final time in our life. Already our grandparents had taught us these things. And they were right.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*How many compromises have you made during recent years? What was the final result? Did you have a good feeling when somebody forced you to make a compromise? Have you ever been successful in finding a solution where both parties were satisfied? Do you use solutions based on solving contradictions in your company?*

## **Time to Pause**

**Everything around us dashes by at high speed which sometimes wears us down. We have no time to pause, to think about the fact of where we are and where we are going. Understanding ourselves and taking the right way is the basis for being successful in life and business.**

How many managers and their companies daily solve a lot of problems under stress! How many people try to place into their time schedules lots of tasks and to settle them as effectively as possible? We dash sometimes through our life at enormous speed and the question is if the way we have taken is the right one. From time to time we have doubts or frustrations and we ask: "Are we investing our time correctly?" Sometimes people have to stop, clear their minds and assess their place in the world. Also companies and their managements have to find some time and to look for the answers to such questions as: Where are we? Where do we want to go? Which path will bring us there?

If we ourselves do not stop, sometimes life will stop us – an illness or a tragedy in our personal life, a crisis in the company which will show us we have stopped taking care of the employees and communicating with them, we are not as effective as we used to be, we have stopped learning, and the need to innovate and improve ourselves.

I remember one journey from Prague when I had to stop my car along with hundreds of other drivers on the highway D1 from Prague to Brno. All of us were hurrying somewhere and suddenly we were standing in one place. And we were standing for hours- the first nervousness disappeared. People gradually switched off the engines and lights. And at last I was able to listen to a CD with lectures I had had no time for before. On my notebook I could read ideas my friend had sent some time ago. If the snow and road-men had not stopped us I would have hardly had time for reading them. The snowflakes were swirling around, the highway was suddenly still. Suddenly as if time had stopped. Maybe in the other cars there were managers and they could discuss things they could not speak about at work. Or maybe in another car there was a married couple who said to each other things for which they have no time during the hectic day. After hours of waiting the highway was free. In spite of fatigue this standstill brought some sense of quietening, pacification and equilibrium. Similarly as each reasonable stoppage in our life and at work. Step by step all

the cars turned on the head lamps and started moving. At first carefully and after a few kilometres they were speeding along as usual. They soon returned again to the speed and rush of everyday life.

We need time for intensive life and work, however, we also need time when we can stop, think and orient ourselves in the right direction. If we are not stopped by a situation, our inner voice should pause us from time to time.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Are you able to stop? When did you stop for the last time? What did you obtain from this stoppage? Do you think a stoppage means a loss of performance? When will you stop next?*

## **Coward Realists and Brave Knights**

**When we were children we read fairy tales and legends about brave knights. We admired the courageous heroes in the books by Karl May and Alexander Dumas. In secondary school I was fascinated by the knight of the sorrowful countenance. However, the mass media today brings only realists and cowards. It seems the brave heroes have died off and we can find them only in old books covered with dust.**

A few years ago I took part in a meeting in the headquarters of a large automotive company. The head of the quality department asked for an explanation from the supplier's managers why there had been bad quality in their



delivery which caused a stoppage of the assembly line. The representatives of the supplier tried to explain to him that it was a failure of one employee who was found and punished. The head of the quality department interrupted them and refused to continue this style of discussion. He said sharply something like this: "One person cannot be blamed for a mistake. Your system has to be resistant to errors and only the managers are responsible for the system." I realised how important bravery and courage were – the courage to tell the truth, to take responsibility, to admit an error. At the same time I realised that this approach was the basis of a durable solution based on confidence. Bravery and courage are necessary not only for the knights but also for every one of us.

Some time ago a director of a factory complained about his colleagues abroad. The company creates profits which disappear quickly in the indebted headquarters. "They promised our employees rewards and a pay increase for the good results, however, they broke their word and did not even bat an eyelid. They claimed that inflation was lower than they had assumed a year ago. I feel sick about how our company lies and dupes people," the manager said. I meet people in a lot of organisations who behave like politicians. They are lacking dreams, imagination and principles. They lie with a smile on their faces and blame others for failures and they call it realism. Their only life strategy is to maintain their position. There are many similar examples, e.g. on TV every day. The politicians like boasting about successes in which they mostly have no merit. However, when a process or a problem develops for which they are responsible; they immediately speak about the "individual failure of the human factor". I think that a company led by realists and cowards can never be successful. There will always be compromises, the enterprise will achieve average (real) results and will always look for culprits when the expected results are not achieved. But also, a country ruled by people who are lacking bravery, the ability to admit mistakes and bear responsibility, will never be successful. The courageous and brave people have always

changed the world. They were able to oppose the collective opinions and a lot of them sacrificed their jobs, freedom and lives. Many of them suffered for others, corrected what they did cause, and they did not seek their personal comfort and profit but kept their principles. I do not know if young people today read Cervantes or Dumas but I have a feeling that chivalry, bravery and courage are disappearing from our life. The coward realists and populists have shoved them away. If we can find the courage to admit that we have made a mistake, then we are on the way to the truth; if we are able to admit an error and failure then we are on the way to improvement. But probably it is not that bad. I know a lot of “brave knights” even today. Never mind that they do not belong to the cream of society and resemble Don Quixote. The most important thing is they are still living and not simply in novels. You say, they are a minority? Still, their power is much greater than the “power” of the coward realists.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Has it happened to you that you did not have the courage to tell the truth? Have you ever avoided your responsibility? When was the last time you took the blame for a mistake in your company? Think about a person you consider to be brave. How do you perceive him/her? How would you like to be perceived by other people?*

# The Joy of the Unknown

**When we were children everything astonished us, we asked questions all the time and were always learning something new. The world around us was amazing! Adulthood often brings knowledge and answers which rob us of the miracles, secrets and astonishment of what is happening around us. We are missing the curiosity of a small child and we are often living a boring life – we know the answer and have an explanation for every question. We are self-confident, self-contented and proud; we are lacking what the Bible calls the “poverty of spirit”.**

The Book of Genesis writes that the God forbade Adam and Eve from eating from the tree of knowledge. The knowledge of good and evil. At first sight this decision can seem incomprehensible; it prevents people from acquiring knowledge and enlightenment. However, Richard Rohr explains it very well: “It seems that God wishes people to live inside a cosmic humility. We should understand the ambiguity and disruption of all things instead of insisting on the division of people into good and bad.” A patent for wisdom, dividing people into good and evil – this has always led to persecution and injustice.

Our knowledge and logical evidence we use is based on the past. The logic and knowledge has to be complemented by empiricism and our experience. We have to return to our childhood again and to open our hearts and minds in order for us to discover the secrets around us. The self-confident people who have an explanation and answer for everything are neither adult nor clever. And there is a danger they will never be because they move within the areas of solving known problems through procedures known from the past.

According to Nilton Bonder we have four areas of problem-solving. In the first case we know what we know and we need

only sufficient information to solve the problem. In the second case we know what we know, however, we have information that we still do not know. We need listening, learning and understanding to solve this problem. In the third case we are obtaining the information about what we do not know and here intuition, experience and wisdom are required. In the fourth case we are getting to know what we do not know and how much knowledge there is to be acquired. We need respect and humility for this. The self-confidence and the feeling that we understand everything keeps us in the dark. However, humility and being aware of our lack of knowledge can help us understand those problems which are not perceived by other people.

A lot of people who rank themselves in the VIP category try to give the impression they understand everything, are clear about the questions of the world around us and do not need any secrets to be revealed. Apart from the fact, they are losing the joy of life revealing itself, their development has stopped. I often meet self-important managers and entrepreneurs in companies who understand everything and are unable to overcome paradigms which have been “paradogmas” for a long time. I meet people who cannot see, hear and feel anything new in their self-importance. I am sorry for them similarly as for people who have been robbed of their senses and the ability to be moved by their fate. At universities I have met self-absorbed scientists who have been circling around their axis in their “truths” for decades. Tomáš Halík writes: “It is necessary to maintain a spirit of poverty, not to rank oneself with the satiated, confident and self-confident people who are satisfied and closed within themselves.”

Those who have no questions, who are not able to ask why five times, who have lost the ability to see miracles are standing in one place. We do not only acquire information about our world through our mind and senses but also through our heart. Contemplation is another form of cognition based on the area of the unknown and invisible. We need not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and we can gain

a greater freedom and joy. It is time to experience the joy of the unknown and invisible, of looking for the happiness being revealed in the secrets around us.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Does it seem to you sometimes that cognition extends the area of the unknown? To which questions do you have no answers? What unknown teases your curiosity? What are you going to learn and reveal over the next few years?*

## **Peace and Silence**

**Our minds are daily overloaded by external stimuli. When I switch on the radio before Christmas, I feel sorry for John Lennon as he has to sing one Christmas song over and over again. The TV stations are even more active – nobody knows what they offer us, however, they bother us over the whole holiday – the mobile operators. Let us agree we will ignore them during Christmas, let us stop phoning, sending SMS and MMS. Let us visit people who we love in person, shake their hands and share joy with them.**

One stimulus after another. Dissipation and distraction, uncontrolled emotions, the trigger of illnesses and problems, the inability to concentrate on important things. Peace and silence. I went to the mountains. I found there people looking for peace and silence. I felt good with them. Some languages call peace and silence by the same expression – e.g. German Ruhe.

The Slovak writer Juraj Jordán writes in his book “Silence”: “There is no better medicine for people than silence. The world is full of noise and we forget to find the essence in this rattle. The essence lies in the silence. If you want to understand the butterfly’s soul follow its flight. If you want to understand the soul of the river perceive its flow. If you want to understand a prayer, allow it to carry you like a leaf on the water. If you want to understand the world, listen to it. If you want to understand God’s dreams, look for silence.”

We are tempted by external stimuli every day. You can scarcely find a café or restaurant without loud music. You can scarcely find a place where somebody does not try to sell you something, where somebody does not chase you. There is music everywhere as in a circus, the hosts shout on the radio, bellowing fools rush from all sides. Henry Nouwen speaks about three dangerous temptations which seduce us again and again. We want to be important, we want to be magnificent and we want to be strong. These temptations draw us into the clamorous world of noise and advertisements.

Peace and silence. We are missing them so much. We look for them and run away from the lime-light world, noisy music and empty slogans. Like wild beasts. However, somewhere deep within us there is an oasis of silence and peace, a place where nobody can disrupt and/or wound us. We will reveal this place when we are with ourselves more often. Peace is in our grasp. In the same way as we control our muscles, we can control also our ideas and emotions. We can expel the negative ideas and create a place for the good ones. I know managers who “gobble up” dozens of books, attend seminars and begin something again and again. They have no time to sit down, to clean their ideas and to find the unchangeable essence. A much more important thing than looking for that which is necessary to change, is to reveal what is not to be changed, what is durable and unchangeable. We are living in a world of permanent and hectic activities. And sometimes their real sense is lacking. A stoppage and being idle are considered a sin against our productivity. People sitting and observing

the world around them are considered to be strange, as if they have missed their train. And just maybe we are the ones who miss the train everyday – people who are always in a hurry and are unable to find peace and silence. We do not have to find new experiences and achieve new objectives everyday. “People are not disturbed by the things but the picture they are creating about them,” says Epictetus. Lao ‘c adding: “Silence is not on the mountain peaks and noise in the town market places. Both of them are in people’s hearts.”

Peter Russel writes: “It is not necessary to achieve something for acquiring peace. The only thing we have to do is to stop – to stop wanting to change things, to stop worrying, to stop getting angry when the things are not as they should be or when people do not behave as we would like them to behave. When we stop dealing with everything that blocks the peace within us we will find out that everything that we were looking for was silently waiting for us.” Saint Isaac of Syria says: “If we place all the activities of the world on one dish of the scale and silence on the other, we will discover that the balance tips in favour of the silence.”

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*When was the last time you had your “silent hour”? What did it give you? If silence helps you what do you do to have more of it? Where and how much silence will you find for yourselves next week?*

# Is It Really So?

Everything supposedly flows and you never enter the same river twice, Heraclitus says. Everybody says it is impossible to enter the same river twice because the river has changed in the meantime and it is different. But also people who once entered the river have changed. When somebody enters the river again, he/she is a different person with different experience and knowledge. When people repeat something again and again they should ask the question: “Is it really so?” We keep on talking and saying the words and sentences without understanding their essence. We learn that thousands of books and articles have been written about knowledge, innovations, quality or communication – but these terms are not sufficiently defined - yet we continue writing without any problem.

Some time ago I was in a commission where dissertation theses were being defended. One professor was very surprised – he found the idea in one book that defining the vision and strategy of a company need not lead to success. They say there are many successful companies which did not define their visions and strategies. What to add? It is not important if a company has a defined vision and strategy. A much more important thing is what this company is doing. I know a lot of people who want to stop smoking, boozing, who want to be better. ... But they are not. The action, realisation, attempt, experiment – all of this is always more than words, sentences, presentations and declarations. Sometimes it is good to ask the question: “Is it really so?” It is said that satisfied employees perform better and are loyal. I know companies where the employees are so satisfied they have no effort to work. The professors at the Slovak universities say to themselves: “We have so much well-paid work we have no time to work.” Loyalty and solidarity? They mostly work when the times



are good. When problems appear and when belts are being tightened they are usually replaced by selfishness and the instinct for self-preservation. Someone says the state is a guarantee of stability. However, history shows that the state is the biggest source of instability and destabilisation. The state through its intervention mostly disrupts the economic stability, destroys things which are functional. We are still waiting for the largest economic invention in history - how to preserve viable enterprises and entrepreneurs against the liquidation function of the state. They say democracy is the rule of the people. It has never been! Democracy is mostly the rule of swindlers who were given a mandate by people without any elementary knowledge of things. They say education is important for success in doing business. However, the most successful entrepreneurs are mostly those who did not lose time in learning, who were courageous and had energy and intuition. When I taught at the university I lectured about the optimisation methods for balancing the lines and about simulation of the manufacturing processes. Today we cut strips of coloured papers for balancing the operations and the line is modelled with cardboard boxes. Everything is different! It is said that intelligence, tolerance and good will triumph. But all through history the intelligent and tolerant built have something only for a band of primitive loafers to come and confiscate everything. Christmas time and Advent are said to be holidays of peace. I do not see a more overridden people than during Advent. A magical question: "Is it really so?" I ask when they blame a person who is unable to defend him/herself. I ask the same question when they bomb a country which is not backed by the strength of the world's mass media. The world is really different from that of its projection, the routine myths and views of it. Some time ago I was asked the question - "Are the Slovaks conservative?" I answered thus: "We are sensitive when we defend our property; however, we have no problem in stealing the property of someone else. We concordantly hate successful people; we are envious of someone's wealth and elect populists and communist turncoats. We tolerate

bribes and corruption, failing to fulfil the laws and rules. Our Slovak “conservatism” seems sometimes to me to be like the Ľapák family by the Slovak writer Timrava. The “conservative Ľapák family” allows their politicians, who they elect again and again, to rob them, swear in the pub and go to church once a week.

### **Questions for Contemplation**

---

*Do you sometimes ask the question: “Is it really so?” Do you observe things around you, keep on the top of things and from another perspective? What has surprised you recently so much that you had to change your opinion principally? How many opinions of the people around you express reality and how many of them are only a result of “company blindness”?*

## **Evil Always Finds a Direct Way**

**In the past people in China and Japan did not build straight bridges but arched ones. One of the reasons was (according to Feng Shui) the belief that evil always takes a straight path. Everybody has experience of evil. The worst experience is often meeting the evil that is hidden directly inside of us. It often comes when we do not expect it, when we have the feeling we are “clean”. It comes unexpectedly and directly.**

It is not necessary to have any great energy, knowledge or talent for doing bad things. When I was a little boy I slung a stone at a small bird and hit it. After a short pleasure from this success embarrassment arrived and I have always remembered this event with displeasure. We do not need much effort not to do anything, not to help people, to spoil what the others have done, to offer rejection or to accuse other people. It seems that doing bad things is simple. It is so easy to say false words about somebody; it is so easy to acquire bad habits. And then it is so difficult to get rid of them. Various forms of addiction come easily and directly and people sometimes are not aware of it. And to heal addiction is so difficult. It is simple to let people work in the company without clear rules and targets and then it is very difficult to teach them how to do it. We often need ten times more time and effort to get rid of the bad habit than it took to acquire it. Evil arrives directly.

My friend told me how he had been marching through a village when he was a soldier. A rifle on his shoulder and boots. Suddenly he started stomping even stronger. The feeling of power was so pleasant for him! “I got frightened of myself, of the evil that woke up within me,” he told me. A lot of people have the experience of such a situation. When they thought they were on top and nothing could happen to them – a blow came, a blow that knocked them down. Was this blow the evil? I think no. The evil was hidden in the pride and carefree manner. The blow awakens people; it is a signal and motivation for a change. The crisis is no evil, it wakes us up. The evil brought us to a crisis – along the straight and carefree path. A few years ago Toyota defined the goal to become the largest car maker in the world. Some time ago its president apologised for the pride hidden behind this strategy. And today Toyota pays a high penalty for this growth.

The paths to goodness and wisdom are not direct. If we look for direct shortcuts towards them, then evil may lurk somewhere there. “I am afraid of people with an unshakeable stance, in religion, science and politics”, says Tomáš Halík. Sometimes I also ask the question if these absolutely self- and

over-confident people to whom everything is clear, who like giving lessons and see the world in black and white, are not simply those people who have taken the direct path of evil. Each of us falls so as to be able to stand up again, everybody makes mistakes to learn lessons and everyone shivers with doubts to get closer to the truth. The path to goodness and knowledge is not direct but has many curves.

Tomáš Halík writes: “Where are the boundaries of human responsibility? If people were to remain in a state of immaturity, they would not use the strength of their wisdom and would expect help from outside or from the heaven. It would be irresponsibility and immaturity and according to Christian ethics it could be rightly called the sin of ‘daring reliance’. However, there is also another extreme of irresponsibility and impudence – when people overestimate and deify the strength of their wisdom - they do not feel they are responsible to anybody, when they hear only the echo of their own voice and do not perceive the voice that is speaking through their conscience... Therefore I fully agree with what both of the last popes emphasised – religion without wisdom is extremely dangerous, however, wisdom that is not corrected by ethical and spiritual impulses which have their age-old source in religion can be similarly deadly dangerous both to people and the world”.

Maybe sometimes it seems to us the direct paths are easier. We are afraid we will not be strong enough to climb from the dark abyss we have fallen into. We do not believe in ourselves though we have enough energy to overcome some habits. However, we carry the source of this strength and energy within us. Only we have to take them. And we have to avoid the direct and straight paths where temptation and evil lurk.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*How do you assess those things you have reached easily in your life and those ones that have*

*required effort and austerity? What impression do you get from people for whom everything is clear, who are self-confident and think they are absolutely right? Are you sometimes lured by straight and comfortable paths? What do you do to avoid them?*

## What Is Happening?

**Toyota, the archetype of quality and Kaizen, is repairing the brake and gas pedals in millions of its cars. Honda, PSA, Ford and others join it. The betting shops declare the odds on which will be next car maker to reveal errors in their models. The political parties launder money and one thief shouts: “Catch that thief!” What is happening?**

In spite of playing down and muddying the waters concerning the problems with poor quality in the automotive plants a serious problem is emerging. During recent years the companies and their suppliers have been expanding globally very fast, they have outsourced much manufacturing but also many development activities. The main competition parameters have become reducing the costs and the product time and production start-up. I myself had the opportunity to follow with surprise the start-up of a (finally) successful car plant where many things were completed at the last moment and some were not completed at all. The companies which today are complicated networks concentrated at first on the product quality and later on the quality of the process. They utilise various systems of audits which are, unfortunately, mostly too bureaucratic and do not solve the quality in the whole system. The studies concerning quality are full of definitions that more or less define bad quality –

the percentage of failures per million, the process utilisation ratio, etc. However this approach only catches the failures and solves the consequences.

Similar “rejects” arise in the whole of society. There occurs news such as – the Italians have problems with toxic waste, the Greeks have falsified the financial statistics – and there are lots of scandals in Slovakia.

I think we are missing the quality of the whole system. I am not naïve and I will not appeal to the moral principles of the politicians, oligarchs and their servants in various positions. People behave how the system enables them to. All of them keep speaking about democracy and freedom but the so called democracy is mostly a dictatorship by a minority. We refuse the world regulations. However, the state should protect people – against toxic foodstuffs, credits, products and members of parliament who terrorise the citizens. Regulations should protect the weak against the strong, the helpless against the powerful and uninformed people against manipulators. The regulated and free markets – they are two ways. The first one is about protecting people and the quality of the system where the security of honest people against dishonest ones is ensured. The other one is a jungle where the nouveau riches can ride their snow scooters across the national natural parks, the politicians can hide behind their immunity and people are buying products which threaten their safety or health.

Let us return to the car companies. It is necessary to say frankly that the recent years have been particularly about the large pressure on reducing the time of the product development and their launching onto the market. Let us confess that many quality audits were often only a tool for blackmailing the suppliers and pressure for a further reduction in the costs. Let us confess that also the terms Kaizen (continuous improvement process) or making the processes lean are often misused for reducing the expenses. However, value for the customer has several dimensions – it is not only a low price and speedy delivery but also a relationship with the environment, security, reliability, design, emotions, etc. A disruption of the

equilibrium only in one direction leads to destruction. Many manufacturers of premium brands in several lines of business have suffered from this situation. They started with selling their products in the bottom price segments and destroyed their brand which they had been building for years.

We need a quality system for the whole society. A system where every citizen will be protected, a system where freedom and democracy will not be misused for corruption. Each, so called free market, will finally turn against itself – the Mafia gangs start killing each other, the political parties will start revealing their money laundries and the manufacturers who reduced costs to the detriment of quality will start spending billions in solving the consequences.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*Do you also have a “skeleton in the cupboard”?  
Have you given in to pressure and have you  
reduced costs to the detriment of quality? Did  
you do things you didn’t want to do and did you  
apologise for them by saying that others do it too?  
Do you want to continue doing these things or has  
the time for change come? If yes, what will you do  
in the next weeks?*

## **At the Right Time**

**“I am planning to limit the idle times in the processes and during deliveries of parts and materials as much as possible. The basic principle of realising this plan will be the approach “Just in Time”. The main principle will be to deliver the goods neither too early nor too late,”** said Kiichiro Toyoda in 1938. The “Just in Time” era started.

**Richard Schonberger was one of the first authors who described this concept in 1982. The company warehouses moved to the trucks and highways, global competition with the parameter TIME began.**

There are things that need time. Time will not solve many of them; others need to be thought over or understood better. However, there are things which have to be realised at once because otherwise they make no sense. It is sometimes very difficult to distinguish them. The current world of business is fast and flexible. There are opportunities which do not repeat and those who are waiting for the result are often only waiting for their end. Gorbachev once uttered the famous sentence: "Who will come late is punished by life." I know a lot of people who were hesitating for a long time, who were calculating and planning – they were missing an action. Today they look at their old love living with another partner, it is all their fault they missed a number of opportunities that life offered them. I do not think we should thoughtlessly chase after the "opportunities" around us. However, everybody is born with a certain talent which should be developed and utilised. St Matthew's Gospel gives a famous parable: "For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them." The Bible often ends similar stories with the words "wailing and gnashing of teeth". Tears and grief tested people in Haiti a few years ago. I cannot assess the complexity of the logistic organisation of these operations but this event was sad. We could see the satellite images of the destroyed towns in Haiti but we were not able to provide them with effective help at the right time. Is it a problem of technique, bureaucracy or something else? Real aid is only that one which is given at the right time; all other things are simply empty gestures. The mass media reprimanded the Slovaks, they did not help Haiti enough. However, it was necessary to look also at the other side – the effectiveness and how quickly the aid was provided, but also to look at the quantity of various organisations



which emerged with the goal of helping – themselves. The NATO member states expend 600 billion EUR on armaments annually, which is approximately 60 % of the global yearly expenses. If any problems should occur this organisation is able to intervene with its perfect technique anywhere in the world. If we want to kill or browbeat somebody quickly we are able to implement modern and expensive technology. If we need to save lives and help quickly, we collect money in the churches and look for ships which could bring aid to the affected people. I have a feeling we invest more in the technology of killing than in the technology of help. Also in the Haitian streets stricken people were sitting among dead bodies – hungry people without any help. In spite of all the objections of many people against the USA this country was the most operational one in this situation. Haiti in that situation did not need any “big-shots” to arrive there and show them solidarity and block up the airport, but professionals who knew what to do. I have the greatest regard for people who really help.

We have to know how to do some things very quickly; however, there are things where a slow action and enough time are necessary. The wine producers, farmers, teachers or monks could tell you about it. Also in management there are things which cannot be speeded up – some things cannot be omitted, some things have to become ripe, the company needs time for building its language and culture, for bringing up the people. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish things for which the right moment has come and things which still need their time. We often want to impatiently accelerate things which cannot be accelerated at all. We invest a lot of energy in them which is then missing for doing those things which need to be done right now. We need intuition, energy and time for actions we have to realise at the right moment and need patience and the time to postpone some things. And we also need peace and wisdom to distinguish these two things.

## Questions for Contemplation

---

*Has it happened to you that you missed an opportunity? What was the reason? Are you sorry for something you did or didn't do? How do you recognise the "right thing and right time"?*

## Ora et Labora

**These words can explain the essence of time management. Pray and work – the rule of St Benedict encourages the monks in the Benedictine monasteries to look for rhythm in their life. It expresses the polarity and a looking for an equilibrium between rest and work between the fast (chronos) and slow (kairos) time, between passivity and activity. An old Indian chief on observing the behaviour of white men 200 years ago said: "The white men have only one God with the name Tick- Tack. He tells them what they are to do." The managers and entrepreneurs call me and apologise – I have no time, I am very busy. They leave seminars after the first day because they have planned more activities than they can cope with. The managers managed by the God Tick- Tack. It is summer and they are hurrying to the airports and summer resorts. Swimming pools, animators, attractions, purchases, airport – all of that under the baton of tick-tack.**

I am sitting in the garden watching the flying house-martins and little birds taking a bath in the little lake. After the rain the small trees gleam beautifully in harmony with the colourful flowers. Big lilies emit wonderful scents and there is the taste of a good wine on my tongue. The time has stopped and there is only this unrepeatable moment. Our life is full of moments

like this, when we gaze into eternity. The beautiful moments when your child is having a rest or a beloved person is sitting close to you. *Ora et labora* means a rotation of the peace and effort, rhythm and equilibrium which are so important for our lives. It is the alteration of day and night, rest and activity, holiday and working day, summer and winter, joy and sorrow. We should learn how to get rid of the tick-tack world and to find the world of silence and peace. The world where we can feel the real life and hear the most important signals. Some time ago Milan Zelený explained the advantages of old age to me: “The loss of ambitions is beautiful in old age, people need not hurry anywhere, they can do what they want and can say to anybody – go to hell!” Old age can be beautiful when you turn to your internal world. During recent months I have seen the highest top managers of the rich global companies. The president of Toyota was weeping and doing penitence for the fact that his company wanted to achieve its goal so quickly – to be the largest car maker in the world. I saw the boss of BP who will understand once (maybe) that his effort to drill deeper and to produce more and more oil will irrecoverably destroy natural riches as well as the whole company. Work, work, work. We have created factories in our world during the last century where standardised and unified employees are working. We have created machines and gear wheels from unique human beings. And at the end of this endeavour millions of barrels of oil are leaking into the sea, we eat “yogurts” made from powder and run to work everyday under concrete buildings through which we cannot see the sun.

“You must not forget – despite the watches and calendars – that each moment in your life is a miracle and a mystery”, says Robin S. Sharma. Anselm Grün adds: “The work pause is based on the Greek work “*anapausis*” which means to have a rest, to recover. The sacred peace. The flow of time will pause. The time remains standing. Let us enjoy the time we have at our disposal, become ourselves in a unity with ourselves and everything that exists.”

I meet dead-beat managers who look for new planning calendars and time management systems. They learn how to rationalise, delegate, synchronise, parallelise, manage by priorities and objectives. They have forgotten how to sit in stillness and listen to the silence, to climb a mountain and gaze into the distance, to watch a flowing river or the birds only so as to stop themselves and touch the eternity of our world. I have one piece of advice for all of you – ora et labora.

### ***Questions for Contemplation***

---

*How is your life time divided? Do you perceive the difference between the time defined as chronos and kairos? Do you know how to take a rest? Does the sentence – ora et labora – make any sense to you? How will you implement it in your life? Are you happy?*

# 2

## Observations for Managers and Entrepreneurs



# How to Destroy the Company Systematically and Reliably?

Seminars and books frequently present success stories and the Ten Commandments of success which usually do not work. Even 80 % of the restructuring projects in companies are “unsuccessful stories”. However, the steps leading to failure - as opposed to the guaranteed advice for achieving success - work relatively reliably. No managers or entrepreneurs turn up at their offices in the morning in order to make mistakes, to damage and liquidate their companies. However, in spite of this they subsequently often do so, and diligently. How? Here are some of the mistakes that can destroy every company.

---

**1** Permit your activities to be exclusively controlled by the slogan “The Customer Is King” and fulfil all the customer demands without discussion

---

To do exactly what the customer wants can be the quickest way to destroy a company. The broad and vague offers of many producers, the complicated logistics and production – these are often the outcomes of helpless trade and marketing. It is good to have a broad offer if the customer chooses something that is good for us. E.g. Toyota thoroughly analyses the real needs of the customers in a certain segment and it results in a standard model which contains all the necessary requirements of the majority of the buyers. The non-standard models are then often assembled at the seller’s premises. To know what the customer wants, what his/her hidden desires are or to copy

what he/she is telling us blindly – those are two different ways. The first one leads to creating a value for the customer. The second one leads to losing productivity and innovative ability.

---

## 2 Create a perfect vision, mission and strategy of the company

---

Companies are full of perfect visions, missions and strategies – carefully saved in the management archives and computers. A lot of companies use the reversed Pareto principle when creating and realising their strategy – 80 % of time is spent on creating a vision, mission and strategy and only 20 % for their realisation. There is a “thick fog” between writing and realising the strategy. It separates the small group that has prepared the strategy from the large group of its realisers. The realisers mostly do not know the goals, they have no clear procedure, motivation and instead of enforcing the strategy they fight with each other. Let us imagine that only four of eleven football players know the objective and where the rival’s goal is, only two of eleven are interested in the objective (for the others it is the same), only two of eleven know their position and how they are to play, nine players out of those eleven compete more with each other than with the rival. This is the statistical result of a research aimed at realising the strategy in thousands of companies carried out by the company Franklin Covey & Harris Interactive.

---

## 3 Try to reach a situation where all employees are productive and are doing as many activities as possible at the given time

---

The effort to do as many things as possible at the given time is wrong. Productivity does not mean to do the activities quickly. It is more important to choose the correct activities and to carry them out correctly. Productive people look



more frequently at the compass than at the watch. There are principles which control human effectiveness, and the fact that we fail to know or respect them can lead to low productivity. The compass shows us where North is, it helps us find the correct direction but also our limits and limitations at the given time and space. Productivity thus does not mean to run quickly like rabbits in a field but to walk along the correct path and in the right direction. The compass tells us we are to deal with valuable and important things; the watch often tells us we are to prefer the urgent things. The solution of this dilemma is not only the way to a high performance efficiency, but also to a life which is happier.

---

## 4 Reduce the costs radically and uncompromisingly

---

“It is necessary to save – no matter how much it costs”. This is a slogan which with a little exaggeration can be heard in many companies. This often results in rash outsourcing which at first sight in the framework of the calculations shows lower costs for the given product or service. However, in the end it leads to an increase in the total costs. Also the efforts to reduce uncompromisingly the number of overhead employees are often ridiculous. The Japanese expert H. Takeda e.g. claims there should be one overhead employee who improves the processes for every 15 manufacturing employees. The ratio of the overhead employee’s benefits and the costs is 4:1. If we want to increase the company’s performance efficiency, we have to concentrate first of all on the throughput (the value added in the process during a time unit). This results in increasing the production volumes and the utilisation of resources. The second step will concentrate on reducing the inventories and synchronising the processes and even the third step reduces the operating costs. The consultants who “work wonders” immediately can bring a short-term effect, however, they usually damage the company.

---

## 5 Send your employees on courses for them to implement all the most modern methods and procedures for improving the company's performance efficiency as quickly as possible

---

Particularly the bosses and company owners should take part in the courses for them to know the individual methods, procedures and links between them better. They would understand that sometimes less is more. It does not make any sense to implement in the enterprise all the new things which are presented at the conferences and in the books. The result is often a “mess” of the most different elements – process management, BSC, re-engineering, Kaizen, Lean, Six Sigma, ABC, etc. Of course, these “constituents” are not harmful; however, they are to be administered appropriately. A lot of “modern methods” are often only already known methods of common sense wrapped in new packaging. A more important thing than their name is the knowledge that we cannot plant too many seeds in the field at one time. At the same time the law of the farm is valid – it says that everything has its time – the time for seeding, the time for fertilising and hoeing and finally the time of harvest. The implementation of new methods and procedures in the company requires time for preparation but especially the time for finding a place, preparing and taking out roots. The acceleration of this process leads to major damage.

---

## 6 Innovate the products and company processes steadily

---

Nobody questions the fact that no company is able to survive without innovating the products, services and the company processes. Where is the problem then? In the word steadily. An innovation is a change possessing a greater extent

and thus also an influence on the customers and employees who accept each change with a certain amount of resistance. The changes in the company have to be balanced; they have to run at a certain rhythm. The radical and major changes have to be combined with the continual and minor ones. It makes no sense to bomb the customers with innovations that they do not want, it makes no sense to liquidate successful products for new ones if their time has not come, it makes no sense to upset the employees with changes whose time has not yet come. In the case of innovations it is not important what will be changed on the given product or service, and how we will re-organise the company processes but also the correct timing of this change. There are many examples of failed innovations which brought a significant solution and a step forward but people did not accept them because they came at the wrong time.

---

## 7 Invest in a perfect information system to have as much information and as many reports from the company processes as possible

---

If you ask in a company what does not work there, the greatest probability is that you will receive the answer – the information system. However, the answer itself is formed incorrectly. The information system is no miraculous machine which we switch on and it starts generating information. The problem is not so much to do with the information systems but rather in their appropriate implementation. A company does not need any information system but the information. The current information systems aim at the speedy processing of the data; in the better cases they alter them into information. The result is usually a flood of reports and tables which quickly and precisely summarise inaccurate data. The key problem in many companies is the technology and the system of collecting data and not the information system itself.

---

## 8 Start organising outdoor trainings and engage psychologists and trainers for improving company communication

---

No outdoor training or external psychologist has ever solved any company's communication problem. During an outdoor training we can relax, then, in the evening after a glass of wine we can give a feedback to the director with whom we are not brave enough when sober, or let off steam by firing off the whole magazine at a colleague we hate. That is all, but it has nothing to do with communication. Good communication is based on confidence, not on the communication techniques. The formula by S. Covey states, greater confidence means a greater speed and lower costs. "Technique and technology are important," adds Tom Peters. "the task of this decade is not to simply stop at them but to add also confidence to them."

---

## 9 The key management positions are offered principally to the top managers from other companies

---

It is not good motivation to create a strong pressure on the performance of the employees, maintaining uncertainty and competition. The fear and uncertainty are to be replaced by confidence and stability. It has its advantages to employ a top manager from another company – he/she is a "mature player" and often brings also new know-how. However, the disadvantages prevail. To bring up people from within own staff is maybe more demanding but you have a greater certainty and loyalty. People from within the company often reject those managers coming from the external environment because they feel their own people are being unvalued. The external managers are often solo-players, supermen, individualists who play for themselves. The conclusion: the correct way is to have

your own incubator and school for bringing up the managers. People from the external environment can be good for crisis management, disrupting the local links which damage the company or for overcoming the company blindness.

---

## 10 Do not trust people and try to keep everything under your control

---

Distrust is very expensive – it requires control, time and energy. Those who want to check people will become their slaves and in the end they will have no time for their own work. Also the motivation of people who feel mistrusted and are checked constantly is very low. Punishing people for errors is the best way to hide the mistakes and problems will even increase. There are few people in the world who purposefully cause damage or do only bad things. People's mistakes often result from insufficient motivation, inattentiveness or in the most frequent cases from the fact that inappropriate people are in inappropriate positions. Therefore it is necessary to create a culture where people will point to errors and problems around them without fear. Only in this way can we recognise their real causes and solve them. If an error arises through the failures of people, let us ask how to help them, how to adjust the process so that no mistakes can occur, how to remove the cause. If a person makes the same mistakes repeatedly, there is the justified question of whether we chose for them the appropriate position. It is no punishment to give people positions corresponding with their abilities. It is the best thing we can do.

---

## 11 Purchase the most modern and complex manufacturing technologies

---

Many successful companies invest in complex and expensive equipment. This would be all very well if the possibilities of

the existing technologies were finished and done with. Every company has its “hidden company” – the non-utilised potential and capacity of machines and people. Another problem is that they often buy inappropriate equipment whose capacity and technical possibilities are not fully utilised. In this way the fixed costs are unnecessarily increased and the expensive and complex devices can sometimes limit the company’s flexibility. Several global enterprises (e.g. Siemens, Continental, Bosch, Boeing, Nissan, Toyota) are nowadays dealing in the area of simple, modular devices and low-cost automation. There is also one important point – we should invest in sufficiently verified and reliable technologies.

---

## 12 Try to utilise the key technologies and people to the maximum

---

The effort to maximally utilise a machine often leads to one thing. When a company owner asks the head of production: “How is our key machine being utilised?” the answer is often: “And what’s your idea?” This frequently results in an effort to make use of the machine at any price, to produce pieces, pieces, pieces... This is the worst possible action that the production managers can take. When we fail to stop the manufacturing process after the occurrence of an abnormality, an error, a deviation from the standard – this means we do not solve the problem, we sweep the problems under the carpet; we learn to tolerate disorder and imperfection. The overloading of key employees brings even worse consequences – these employees have no time to hand over their knowledge, to describe their best practices and to teach their colleagues. Paradoxically, in this way the ablest people become bottlenecks in the company and their departure brings a serious problem. The basic task of the manager is to find and bring up a descendant who will replace him/her. The top bankers understood this a long time ago and that’s why they can spend several-week-holidays in the Caribbean without problems.

---

## 13 Lead the managers to focussing their attention principally at results

---

The orientation on results is not enough. The results are only a consequence of utilising or failing to utilise the potential that the given process or company has. Therefore managers have to deal with developing the potential – first of all, the human one. “Improve people around you and they will improve the processes, our employees do not come to the company to work, they come here to think. The main task of our managers is to be a teacher of their colleagues” – these are the principles of one of the most successful manufacturing enterprises in the world – Toyota. It means the managers have to look for and develop the talents around them and the word teacher means that they themselves have to learn and improve; they have to be a professional but also a human hero for their colleagues. This is the only way of transmitting the genes in the company DNA and it is also a way to the respect and mutual esteem which is lacking in many of our enterprises.

---

## 14 Change the things and people around you all the time

---

We need not change everything around us all the time. Each change starts from within, from ourselves. The task of the managers is not to change everything around – people need their work and a certain stability, satisfaction and peace. In the same way as St. Francis of Assisi said: “Oh Lord, give me the courage to be able to change things that I can change and am to, give me the peace to accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom for me to distinguish all of that.” Stephen Covey once wrote clever books about 7 habits of effective people and his brother John paraphrased him with 7 habits of ineffective people:

*Be reactive – question yourself and blame others*  
*Work without any clear target*

*Principally do the urgent things first  
Think in terms of victory/loss  
Do your best to be understood as soon as possible  
If you cannot win, make a compromise  
Be afraid of a change and put the improvement aside*

There are many ways to destroy a company. There is nothing worse than to do bad things perfectly and subsequently with a good intention. The history of failed companies is full of cases like this. However, in the management libraries you will find mainly the success stories. It's a pity.

## Save Your Company – Stop Reducing the Costs

A lot of people are poor because they have no time to make money. Also many companies do not earn because instead of creating wealth they deal with reducing their costs. I would be a bad industrial engineer if I fought against the systematic removal of wastage and the reducing of costs in an enterprise. The problem is that a lot of projects for reducing costs are lacking just one important word “systematic”. These projects often do not reduce the costs at all or work as a yo-yo effect after a reduction diet – after some time the costs are increased to a higher level than they were before the reduction project.

***Why does the reduction of costs often lead to their increase?***

Many multinationals have plans for reducing their costs and the rewards for the managers depend on their fulfilment. Various tricks are used for reducing the costs. Here are some of them:



*The costs are over-dimensioned during development of a new product and its start-up and during a further period of time the costs are “reduced” from this reserve in the form of various rationalisation projects and improvement activities. This is no distant echo of socialism but the current reality of many multinationals. As a matter of fact, the costs are not reduced but they have been artificially over-dimensioned by the design, technology and incorrect dimensioning of the processes.*

*The real costs are hidden in the statistics and are moved to various places but in reality they are not reduced but increased – various “outsourcing” projects where the costs are reduced only on a sheet of paper but in fact they are often higher.*

*The cost reduction is often reported locally. However, the local cost reduction often leads to an increasing of the total costs of the company. The cost reduction in the area of purchase often results in additional costs of production and quality, the costs reduction of purchasing new equipment often leads to increasing the costs in operation, the cost reduction of the staff in logistics leads to losses in production and assembly, etc.*

However, not all cost reduction projects are subterfuges by the management. There are also very serious projects aimed at reducing costs which do not bring the expected results. The problem is that many managers and also consultants who are dealing with reducing the costs are rewarded for a short-term effect.

Let us show some examples of projects of this type where a short-term cost reduction led to long-term losses.

### *Project*

*Reducing the costs for investment in a new machine. The cost reduction for machine peripheries – transferring this activity to the operator*

### *Expected results*

*Saving 5,000 EUR for the conveyor and further peripheries*

### *Real outcome*

*Reducing the machine performance by 20 % - a loss of 200,000 EUR*

### *Cause*

*The machine is waiting for the operator and is losing output. This loss will come to the surface only after a detailed analysis, a year after installing the machine.*

We could show dozens of similar examples and these “saving” measures were not realised by the managers purposely. However, they were carried out with the aim to gain ‘brownie’ points for themselves, to fulfil the plan and to acquire their bonuses.

### ***What is the typical procedure for reducing the costs?***

Reducing the staff, personnel costs and surfaces – the operating costs.

Reducing the inventories and stock.

### ***A good manager should work just in the opposite way:***

*- Increasing the value added – new products and services, higher value for the customers, higher contribution margins, higher sales, better utilisation of capacities,...*

*- Reducing inventories and wastage in the flow, reducing unnecessary stock.*

*- Reducing staff, personnel expenses and surfaces.*

The first procedure is crisis management, the next one is the strategic development of the company. The first procedure rewards with short-term results; the latter appreciates the long-term development of the company and its business. You can sack maintenance workers, logistic workers, HR managers, designers and process engineers from the company. But the enterprise will pay with a collapse for this short-term effect. Let us remember many projects where we reduced the purchasing costs and paid far more for the failures in the processes, re-work

and claims. “I am walking along the company production line and looking for what else I could trim”, says a development manager of a food-processing company who is reducing costs. Also the current scandals with repairing millions of cars of the global producers has cost billions of dollars and are the result of reducing costs which saved millions. The flawed products, ruined company reputations but also the disruptions to the corporate culture are the results of the senseless reducing of costs.

Let us plan our company in such a way that all employees will carry out only those activities they have in their job description and will be loaded up 100 %. How much time will be left for educating their colleagues? How much time will they spend on projects of the process and product improvements? How much free capacity will be left for innovations, new opportunities and development projects? The worst thing on reducing the costs is the fact that people spend so much time and attention on it that in saving time they lose the time which could be spent on earning money. The saving procedure can bring a saving to many companies amounting to hundred of thousands of EUR; however, the innovations are able to earn millions. The ratio of the effects of saving and creating the wealth is 1 : 10 but it can be even 1 : 100 or 1 : 1,000. These opinions are in no way a criticism of reducing costs in an enterprise. However, the following principles should be valid during their implementation:

*Do not reduce the costs locally but follow the impacts on the whole enterprise – not only from a short-term but also from a long-term point of view.*

*Stop lying to yourselves – stop believing in the managerial and consultants’ ruses during “reducing” the costs.*

*Do not promote costs reduction over innovations and strategic projects; give the company the capacity for the development of knowledge and creating the company wealth, not only to saving.*

*During reducing the costs we have to solve the cause and not simply the effect. A lot of costs which develop during the*

*production process are caused by defining the requirements for the product incorrectly or by errors during the pre-production stages.*

*Start measuring the managers' successfulness by long-term metrics – the development of the knowledge of your colleagues, the development of the existing and new customers and new products and services for them, building the culture and values of the company and the development of your exceptionalism as well.*

Cost reduction can never be more than quality and an orientation on the customer satisfaction. The customers always want more than just a low price although they sometimes do not say so. The mastery is not to sell cheaply and to have a satisfied customer; the mastery is to sell expensively and to have a keen customer. The price of the Chinese products cannot be our benchmark but a top design, problem-solution for our customers, fulfilment of their desires or dreams.

A new stage of doing business is coming where the customers will appreciate the value of the whole life cycle of the product and service they pay for. Growth cannot be endlessly achieved in such a way that the customers will buy cheap and low-quality products or products whose life span is determined by “programmed elements” which spoil the product and are re-installed by their creators. The customer will be willing to pay but for the quality of the product, for an affinity with the environment and for an exceptional value... Such practices which are described in this chapter have led us to the current crisis. It is necessary to return to the essence of quality and value for the customer.

# A Short Story about a Top Manager

*Reflections from my own experience*

***Would you like to be a more productive manager? Do not make mistakes.***

Who would not like to be a productive manager? The question is what actually the manager's productivity is and how to increase it. A lot of managers have a feeling their productivity means they are able to arrange more for a certain period than their colleagues, they are able to solve a complicated problem their fellow workers cannot move with quickly. I perceive the manager's performance efficiency and productivity as his/her capability to make a difference between urgent and important things (the watch and compass) and is able to solve the important things in advance where there is enough time. What are the important things? The answer is simple – those things which contribute to fulfilling the strategy and mission of the company, to the achievement of its main goals, the task which ensures the long- and short term stability of the enterprise. The most important things the top managers should deal with are:

*Development and teaching their colleagues in the professional, value, organisational and emotional area – building and developing know-how and knowledge, confidence, relations, team collaboration, high performance efficiency of the organisation and high moral standards.*

*The strategic projects and innovations, involving people in changes, developing their motivation and internal energy, developing their realisation ability and completing things throughout the whole company.*

*To manage the company in such a way that the right people will take responsibility for the processes they are able to cope with*

*and find their self-realisation, to coordinate the orientation of the activities of the whole company on the key priorities towards the strategy and not on dispersing energy to many unimportant areas.*

***A lot of top managers make the following mistakes:***

---

## 1 The effort to do several things at once

---

A typical mistake of a lot of managers is that they try to do as many things as possible at a given time. At the end of the day or week they have a good feeling that they are very effective. However, things pile up; working tasks are brought home and are settled during the weekends. But there is more and more work and even the most effective manager starts feeling stress, overload, fatigue, nervousness and sometimes conflicts within the family can also start. Another negative side effect is that too-busy managers have not enough time not only for their family life but even for their colleagues, their problems and development. A major problem often arises between the frustrated colleagues (the boss has no time for them) and the overloaded and more and more nervous boss.

---

## 2 The effort to do things more quickly

---

The second phase is arriving. The managers decide to increase the effectiveness of their work by realising some activities faster. The meetings will be without unnecessary discussions, the orders will be sent by e-mails, they will not be hampered by unnecessary analyses and dialogues. Quick work often brings erroneous decisions, insufficiently defined tasks and projects, incorrect understanding of the problem. Communication, frustration and nervousness in the company

are getting worse and worse. Besides the problems at work the family starts asking for their rights and also a guilty conscience can be heard.

---

### 3 Separating work and personal life, relaxing with the family

---

Logically, a radical decision follows. Separating work from personal life. To confirm this decision by a real deed, the businessman goes to the Caribbean or Mauritius with his/her whole family to spend a few weeks there. During the journey back a plan is hatched – we have to do it like this! Intensive and productive work and then two or three weeks peacefully with the family. However, after returning back to the office the manager is flooded with waiting tasks and decisions and the whole chaos begins again. As in the worst possible dream.

---

### 4 Priorities

---

It cannot continue like this. The manager goes at last to a seminar on time management. During the seminar he/she learns that time cannot be controlled but what people do during their time - this can be managed. They say a good manager should work in the second time quadrant, i.e. he/she should deal only with important things, however, not urgent ones, he/she should not be under a time stress. After returning from the course the top manager decides to control his/her activities in time according to priorities. He/she chooses only certain matters and deals most of the time with them and stops solving the others. The priority things are allotted maximum energy and the people around are pressed to deal with these things too. This can cause two problems:

*some working activities are not accomplished and after some time this will cause a big problem,*

*the majority of the subordinates have to adjust their time management to the boss's criteria*

The result of this activity is another spiral of gradually “exploding” problems but also more and more frustrated colleagues. At last the manager has to change his/her priorities under this pressure and gets them back to where he/she was at the beginning. The only difference is that in the company, in spite of enormous effort, the relations and results are worse.

---

## 5 Delegating work to others

---

The final step to rescue follows. Delegating work to others. The manager realises he/she cannot work like this any more and employs other people to whom he/she delegates some of the activities. What is the result? Many of the new managers do not have enough experience and knowledge about the company, the boss often lacks the time and patience to instruct people and explain to them certain important details. Sometime it happens that the boss transfers some activities to his/her employees which really cannot be delegated at all – only the manager can do them. The delegation process is not a simple transfer of activities to others, it is an art in the framework of which it is necessary to link teaching the colleagues, building mutual confidence, coaching and mentoring. After some time it is clear that many managers to whom the boss's activities were delegated do not carry them out according to his/her vision – it brings a weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, a nervousness, changes of staff, destabilisation and a new start of chaos in which the managers who are becoming increasingly weary are operating – they give a worse and worse performance.

### ***Why is it so?***

I am sure, a lot of managers would say here: “I am lucky; I am



not doing things like this. It is quite different in our company, the situations described are far-fetched.” The question is, in which mirror are they gazing? A lot of companies are managed by their owner, a strong personality with charisma and high esteem. These people do not find any colleagues in the companies who would hold a mirror up to them, who would offer them a fair feedback, who would oppose them. Let us admit that our opinions concerning our own capabilities, behaviour and deeds are malformed. Let us confess we do not like admitting our own mistakes and inadequacy, we prefer to look at the mote in our brother’s eye, while failing to notice the beam in our own.

### ***What to do with it?***

Here I would not like to give the “guaranteed” truths which would bring success. The problem I have described has no simple solution to be provided in a few points. It is a process which has to start by realising the reality and assessing the real causes – not the effects.

### ***The following steps could follow:***

- 1] *An analysis of the current situation and a unification in understanding the real problems and their causes, the definition of a common strategy, mission, goals and priorities.*
- 2] *The preparation of an action plans and projects, a general analysis of time, processes, responsibility and powers.*
- 3] *Creating and developing a team of top management that meets minimally 2 whole days monthly and solves systematically all the key problems – project management, capacities, communication problems, development of abilities and defining clear rules, building culture, collaboration and confidence, creating a common company language and values, optimising the activities and processes in the enterprise.*
- 4] *Learning and dividing responsibility, a gradual separation of the strategy and making sudden and necessary decisions, separating the urgent and important tasks, building an*

*effective company where the right people deal with the right things, where we can find an equilibrium between work and personal life, between the long-term and short-term goals, where the majority of people occupy positions according to their abilities, where the majority of people are satisfied with their work and dissatisfied with the current situation, where the “disciplined freedom” works, where creativity is linked to high performances efficiency, where a top manager can go to the Himalayas for two months and the company will work better than when he/she is sitting in his/her office.*

I did not write this article with the intention to provoke but to help. The similarity with real figures and situations in our companies is only coincidental.

## The Best Practices Are Sometimes Harmful

If someone says he/she knows how to manage your company, this person has not understood your question. The incorrect usage of many management theories and best practices can seriously damage the health of your company.

My son was preparing for the management exam. I looked into his materials and was shocked. A mixture of useless things and rubbish. “It would be better if you do not remember this and forget it quickly after the exam,” I told him. “Don’t be afraid,” my son answered with a smile. I know his approach to similar “theories” and I calmed down. A much worse state of affairs is that managers and entrepreneurs are taught many harmful things during serious management courses and are massaged with them by a number of consultancy companies and books.

In this article I will not deal with the multinationals which repeatedly produce standardised products in standardised processes and their organisation and management strongly resemble an army. I will deal with smaller companies which are innovative and their owner is working directly with the top management. These are companies working in the area of IT, architecture, design, advertising and other services with a large portion of creative work.

***The innovative companies cannot be managed like global car makers***

During recent years a great many managers have started to deal with the so called World Class, the Best Practices and benchmarking. A lot of works describing the practice of a successful manager or company have been written. The writers try to summarise them into general advice and rules. They result in articles and books with titles such as: How to Be the Best; Ten Rules of a Successful Manager, etc. It is no bad thing to study successful people and companies. However, a dangerous thing is to copy these “practices” which usually describe only the external phenomena (visible elements) but which are often unable to explain their invisible parts and the unique context in which they were used. The results are the unsuccessful attempts to copy the manufacturing system Toyota, the organisation Kyocera or Baťa management system. Try to study the behaviour and actions of Steve Jobs and establish another Apple! The company organisation involves elements which cannot be described by process charts, standards or a file of simple rules. And it is just these invisible elements that sometimes play the decisive role.

The conclusion? It is fine to read something about successful leaders and their companies before sleep, to seek inspiration and impulse. But to make efforts to copy them is a waste of time. Create your own Best Practices which correspond to the situation in your company, with people who are working there and the surroundings the enterprise is doing business in. Instead of studying a lot of books use your own common

sense. Instead of asking “How” questions, ask “Why” questions.

***They say the company is to be managed by professional managers, preferably without its owner***

The owner in the top management is said to be a disruptive element, let the company be managed by a hired professional. This idea is principally wrong. The company owner is usually the person who created the enterprise through his/her ideas, diligence and business contacts. Although the position of exceptional leaders in the top management is sometimes questioned, their task is irreplaceable. Hired managers are often more interested in the details of their managerial contract, with the targets and bonuses than in the long-term fate of the enterprise they are managing. The task of the owner in the strategic top management is that of a key character, similarly to his/her task in the area of people’s development around him/her, building the company values and corporate culture and innovation development in the enterprise. It is clear that every owner has to learn to delegate the routine and emergency tasks to people he/she trusts. The company owner has to learn sometimes how to push ego and the feeling of infallibility to the background in the interest of his/her enterprise. Owners have to be humble in order to learn new things, they need to have respect and confidence in their colleagues and to create for them a space for making decisions and taking responsibility in the company.

***Individuals versus teams***

Team work is important. In the framework of the team we can find surprising solutions, a synergy develops and we complete each other. However, there is a big difference between building process teams in manufacturing organisations which are based on discipline and standardisation, and teams where individuals and individualistic work are required to bring innovations and exceptional solutions (the so called dream teams). The process team are often based on the personality of the team leader whose task is to coordinate the performance

of individual members towards a high productivity. Teams working in the innovative companies are often built from powerful personalities who strongly enforce their opinion; they are often exceptional individuals who do not like subordinating to rules and common goals. The tough and uncompromising enforcement of individual team rules and standards overwhelms these people and it also diminishes their performance. The building of the “dream teams” is the greatest art of team work – take a look at the star teams in the sports competitions, showbiz and film production. It is the so called spaghetti culture which creates the connection of a strong individuality in the team management. It is “disciplined freedom”.

***Innovation is not an increase to a product and offers complexity***

A lot of companies try to “innovate” in such a way they add to a given product or service further variants, functions and attributes. The results are opaque and ill-defined offers which confuse the customers more than addressing them (mobile operators, bank products). They offer functions the customer does need at all and yet has to pay for them (software, car radio) or mindless attributes that the customer is unable to interpret (e.g. limited series, etc.). The majority of the so called “innovations” are created by the development workers who want to add new functions to their products, or by business people who simply follow what the others are doing and what the current “trends” are. Only a few innovations are developed through a thorough knowledge of the customers, their processes, problems, dissatisfactions, dreams... The customers are to get neither more nor less. The customers are to receive what they want even though they are not able to define it. Instead of understanding the processes and problems of the customers the innovators and development workers offer them more and more variants, complex and ponderous solutions which can be selected, configured and utilised with difficulty. However, the strength lies in simplicity,

in the accuracy of understanding the customers, in fact we will learn their dialect and will not force them to learn the “dialect of our tribe”.

***Project and process management – why does it work at seminars and not in our company?***

A lot of enterprises devote a great deal of time and money to describing processes and implementing various programmes for the project management. But the expected results are not achieved. Why? Because no process chart or diagram for the project management has yet been able to improve the internal company organisation. There is an interesting phenomenon – the more we describe the processes and define the standards the less we respect them. It seems as if the description should replace the action, our behaviour and habits, keeping the rules and discipline. No company works like a machine which we can describe by a process chart. We will change the parameters at the input and will receive exactly the expected results at the output. In a way such as this no organisation, only a dead machine or production line can work. In an organisation where people work, each input arouses a different response, the system and people’s behaviour adapts to the stimuli from outside and the responses are always different. Therefore a lot of HR managers suffer from the non-functional “motivation” systems. Give your people an annual bonus of 2,000 EUR at the end of the year - they will be happy. Give it to them next year – they will consider it commonplace. Do not give it to them next year – they will ask with dissatisfaction what they are being punished for. Neither the process nor project management are about process charts and programmes for managing projects but about people’s behaviour, about keeping clear rules (which are often missing), about the internal motivation, about the appropriate composition of the teams and how they are led.

***A satisfied customer and the end of the business***

In many cases a product gives the customers such service they have no need to change it for a long time. In the case where

a solution (e.g. IT) works without any major requirements on maintenance, the satisfied customer, paradoxically, becomes the source of a problem – it can happen that they will not need the IT company for several years. This situation results in several reactions – the IT solution is innovated in such a way that the company adds further functions which the customer often does not need, the programme becomes more complex and can be controlled only with difficulties. Another “innovative” solution is that the customers are convinced about the “pseudo-problem” which will be solved by a new offer or a new fashionable abbreviation BPx – “Business Process...” which is launched onto the market. The solution of how to solve the “saturated” customers is to go to other segments or enter other markets. This brings the problem of high costs for entering a new territory (a lot of IT companies invested large sums of money and energy into expansion without any significant success) but also the problem that the customers speak a different language, they have specific problems the suppliers do not understand, the line of business already has its own relations and rules. A “burnt-out company” is often the result of this development where people have invested huge efforts into achieving measurable results. The bounteous period of development and expansion is only a pleasant memory, fatigue and frustration is coming, ideas and the people who could ignite the innovation spark are missing. The innovation of the type experiment – failure rarely leads to any success. The result is a burnt-out company with burnt-out people who are looking for a new spark.

### ***Surplus of information, lack of knowledge***

Professor Milan Zelený says the markets with new ideas are chaotic. There is too much information and too little knowledge. The consultation management “experts” publicise themselves by emphasising the successes of their consultancy and downplay the negative impacts of their advice. Ordinary people also prefer simple solutions when there is no solution necessary. “If somebody tells you that he knows the right

solution,” said one sincere business guru, “he probably did not understand your question.” A lot of companies are finding newer and newer methods in how to repeat the same mistakes in an indefinite cycle. The managers like half-truths – but they are more dangerous than the full-truths. They are not, as a matter of fact, completely wrong but when the managers deal with them as if they were the full-truth absolute nonsenses arises.

It is ironic that using common sense in compliance with experience in doing business really leads to success only because it is carried out by so few company directors. Thinking hurts: it is hard work. The fashionable, bestseller directions in management are an opium replacement for the need to think.

Information is a description of an action – a recipe, a procedure, a book, the “Ten Commandments to success”, knowledge is an action which leads to success. Instead of gathering information managers and company owners have to deal with the development of knowledge – their knowledge and the knowledge of their colleagues. Similarly as when a product or services quickly become a commodity – i.e. the product or service are not exceptional and distinguished only by their price – also the knowledge become a commodity. Therefore we acquire a competitive advantage particularly in the area of utilising and expending the knowledge. Growing and successful companies often meet with crises and collapse because the key persons have no time and so lose the capability to develop their knowledge and the knowledge of their colleagues.

### ***Solution?***

The aforementioned situations occur in many companies. The problem is they sometimes burst out without any prior warning, similarly as with an illness. A lot of company owners look for solutions in “clever” books or from consultants. It is important which books or consultants they find, however, “guaranteed” recipes seldom help. We will repeat once again: “If somebody claims he knows the correct solution, he



probably did not understand the question.” The advice is most frequently from the following areas:

- 1] *Create a process or project organisation and define clear standards.*
- 2] *Build an information system with clear rules and indicators according to which the company will be managed.*
- 3] *Change the rewarding and motivation system.*
- 4] *Define the goals and indicators; implement BSC or management by objectives.*
- 5] *Define the vision, mission and strategy.*
- 6] *Build a team company.*

Every management “guru” or consultant adds something else from his/her own ingredients but the result is often a mess of adopted methods and procedures which will bring no great progress. I do not criticise the aforementioned procedures, professional literature or advisors and consultants. But I am against the mechanical and uncritical adopting of various methods and procedures from other enterprises and I am also against too simplified solutions which are no solutions and their authors call them “common sense”.

At the end I would like to summarise a few areas whose solution I consider important:

The employees are the most important elements of every enterprise. This sentence sometimes sounds like a cliché but we have to look for the source of problems right here. The creative entrepreneurs who started their companies as development workers and designers gradually become “clerks” who look for orders for their growing company and daily solve a host of problems by making speedy decisions - and this does not work. This has three negative consequences:

- 1] *a gradual loss of professionalism and capacity of the company key person,*
- 2] *the key person becomes an impediment in the company,*

- 3| *this person has no time for the most important things he/she should be doing – looking for and bringing up further talents in the areas he/she is good at and which is the basis for further enterprise development.*

There is only one solution – these people have to devote at least 50 % of their time to their further development and the development of his/her colleagues. This has to be planned, organised and managed. We are speaking about people who have never dealt with coaching and mentoring their co-workers; their thinking and activities are often very quick and they have no patience to wait on other people. In spite of this they have to do it.

Already the previous point is referring to the fact that a system of development and knowledge management is to be created in the company. We are not speaking here about databases or a system of trainings. It is a system of defining and acquiring the necessary knowledge and its dissemination throughout the company (knowledge is not information, knowledge is an action). This system will enable the key person to be unburdened from some routine activities on the one hand but at the same time it creates a competitive space for the “irreplaceable celebrities”.

It is necessary to create a strategic innovation process which will thoroughly scan the market, new opportunities and threats, the customers, their processes, problems and dreams. The process has to work continually like a production-line that defines and creates new values for the customers and new sources of wealth for the company. The above-average individuals and personalities in the company find their self-realisation in the innovation process; it is a process that systematically builds the future of the enterprise, shows the direction and creates the spark which prevents the company's burn-out.

It is sometimes difficult to manage smaller companies that deal with creative activities through indicators and standards. A lot of individuals cannot be tied down; they need a certain

level of freedom, space, opportunities in which they can seek their self-fulfilment. The management system of these companies is to be built on common values, an unrepeatable culture and atmosphere, and on the fact that people know each other and their typology, on continual learning and the development of the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual side of the people and the whole company. We need time for this – regular meetings which should not only concentrate on people during a 2 – 3 day “wellness,” but where an entertaining outdoor activity connected with psychological relaxation and communication exercises is organised. We should work hard during these days – on strategic projects, innovations, on clarifying the company values and rules, on building confidence and team spirit. Sports teams can be formed and strengthened on the playing ground in a real match, also in these sport teams there will be players who have their own individual salary or training regime. However, they are able to subordinate to their common goal and rules during the match. Too many companies are too self-absorbed. They have their own language, they often view their problems from one angle, they emphasise their specifics and non-repeatability. It is good if a company has its own language, its culture and professionalism. However, it is also good to meet people, to visit forums where other enterprises present themselves, their problems and views of the world, to go abroad, to visit other companies, to be inspired by others and to overcome one’s own stereotypes and “blindness”. The consultants also have their part to play in the enterprises – sometimes their questions are more important than their answers. Independent and experienced external workers can bring new viewpoints and valuable experience from other enterprises but mainly – they can be opponents, professional partners and coaches who will be the managers and owners of companies.

Who likes those never ending meetings, tables and reports? When the problems pile up the time that managers need for meetings, tables and presentations also increases. It is necessary to deal with the time management – our own but

also that of our colleagues. From urgent to important things, from looking at the watch (chronos) to following the compass (kairos). The fewer the goals the better, a good report has to fit on one page, those weekly plans and written preparations for meetings can save 30 – 50 % of our time. The heart, emotions and enthusiasm also belong to the company management. Do not let us try to make bureaucratic structures from our creative companies in an effort to “make our management professional” – a situation we can see in many multinationals. Let us remove the bureaucracy and buck-passing right at the start.

A lot of successful companies try to give their employees various advantages – above-standard working conditions, bonuses, the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> salary, etc. There is nothing better than when people feel pleased and satisfied at work. However, people have to get working challenges, demanding tasks and opportunities. Then the result itself is sometimes a bigger reward than the bonus. When the enterprise is growing new employees enter it and they often perceive the above-standard benefits as everyday things. The working environment is created more by the people, relationships and confidence than a beautiful interior, the above-average people are motivated more by formidable challenges and adventures than by big money and certainty.

Instead of describing visions, missions and strategies it is necessary to deal with the realisation. It is not important what the managers declare and hang on the wall. The important thing is what they really do. The strategy is not a description of an action but the action itself. The key ability of the managers is the capability to realise. For the managers to be able to involve people in the realisation, they have to possess the capability to explain the goals correctly and to enthuse people. They need to possess sufficient internal energy but also the ability to ignite this energy in other people, they have to know how to link the demandingness in themselves to a demandingness in others – the enthusiasm and joy which comes with the achievement of major goals.

These notes are not to be taken as advice and they are in no way procedures for solving problems. They are impulses for thinking which should lead us to contemplations about searching for our own way, about creating our own management system, and building our own company with its specific culture, amazing people and exceptional products and services.

## The World after

Do you also think we are living in a beautiful era? Do you think I have gone mad or am suffering from heatstroke? I am sure we are living in a beautiful era in spite of the fact that a lot of people lament over the crisis and its consequences. In Slovakia a politician claimed even at the end of 2008 that the crisis started by the “Wall Street hawks” would miss us. It did not. At the beginning of 2009 they admitted that the crisis would reach Slovakia but the European tiger of economic growth would never be brought to its knees. By the middle of 2009 they were proclaiming the crisis was a difficult rival and it would be an honour to be defeated by it...

So, firstly: The crisis is not a rival. The crisis is part of the economic development and has a purifying effect. It frees the economy and society from unnecessary and harmful things and creates a space – for new ideas, businesses, enterprises and people. What is wrong with this?

Secondly: The communists tried to eliminate crises and unemployment – they slowed down development and scored an own goal. Also today many people would like to eliminate the crisis rather than fight it. People are obstinate. The last major crisis led to a war and the result of the current crisis will probably be high global unemployment.

Thirdly: The principle question is how to carry out the purification function of the crisis without causing any crisis in the companies and in the economy. How to ensure the process of removing the old system which has become bureaucratic, non-functional and unnecessary and to run without the pressure of a crisis? The solution to this problem will be worth the Nobel Prize and it will surely be connected with continual and total innovations of the products, services, company processes, entrepreneurial systems and the company management.

Tomáš Baťa said about a crisis: “I want to prove not by words but through deeds that a company managed by our principles is unbeatable even against the strongest competition. I do not ask for any help from anybody, especially from the state. I need only one thing for my work: to be allowed to work.”

***As a matter of fact, what did the crisis bring us?***

*The crisis brought us a lesson that it is good to diversify our business. Those companies whose business is based only on one pillar have far greater problems than those enterprises doing business in a diversified way, and the same is valid for national economies, including the Slovak one.*

*The crisis revealed the brainless investments in superfluous capacities. Already in the second half of the 1990s there was a superfluous capacity of 20 million cars a year, during the last ten years more and more automotive plants have been built. Also many Slovak companies invested in over-dimensioned machines through the EU stimuli and they will pay a high tax for it.*

*Over the last twenty years Slovak enterprises especially have built flexible manufacturing capacities which have developed minimally during recent years. The problem is even greater due to the fact that nobody in Slovakia will decide about the strategy of the enterprises producing here. We are lacking a strong group of capable domestic capitalists and companies.*

*The governments of many countries, including Slovakia, are trying to combat the crisis. The result is usually of a tragicomic character – the money of the able ones supports incompetent*

*people and companies, success is punished and failure rewarded. These steps lead to a prolongation of the crisis but they also instil a dangerous virus in society.*

*The failures and errors are paid for by others instead of us, honesty is punished.*

*The state support of foreign investors is another ridiculous myth. It is necessary to support domestic entrepreneurs and their expansion abroad. We need a Slovak Nokia or Toyota.*

*It is necessary to change the system of education, research and innovations quickly and radically, to create links with the top research and development centres abroad and the industrial enterprises. We have to stop pouring money into a black hole out of which no revolutionary innovations have ever come. It is necessary to create a new type of entrepreneurial university and innovation schools.*

*When there is a crisis, management should not work to a shortened working regime of 4 days a week but in a crisis regime of 7 days weekly. What is to be done? It is time to build three key company processes – a development of talents, an innovation process and a strategic flexibility. These are the main tasks of managers during a crisis.*

*The economists and analysts are under great pressure, they are expected to inform us about the end of the crisis. Let us wake up! There are worst things still ahead of us – people spend their savings (they are influenced by the senseless government stimuli of the “scrap money” type), they stop paying instalments and leasing, the government Treasury will be running dry, a lot of companies will go bankrupt and people will be going to the Job Centres.*

*After the global crisis is over, every country in eastern and central Europe will experience its own national crisis where the bills for the political errors (a very polite word) during last two decades will be paid.*

*After the economic crisis is over the whole world can expect a crisis which we do not mention aloud at the moment – a global crisis of unemployment. People who have been transferring from agriculture to industry and from industry to services during the*

*last decades will have no place to go. In the USA there is the following ratio 0.5 % : 15 % : 80 %. Today we serve ourselves at the bank and at the airports, and also the spheres of services are pushing excessive workers out. Where will they find a job?*

*Working methods will change radically. Flexibility, permanent retraining and preparedness for changes will make the current Labour Code an irrelevant scrap of paper. After the crisis we will need another type of worker – flexible co-entrepreneurs.*

*We have to be prepared for a new structure of industry. It seems the small and flexible companies have a future – they have not had time to build bureaucratic decision-making rules and they will learn new things quickly. After the crisis, the world of entrepreneurship will be different from what we know it to be today. The manufacturing systems of the future will be working in a closed cycle, eco-business is a sound direction even today, those who will not be able to enter the flexible and effective networks will perish.*

*The crisis demonstrates that also in economics there are principles whose disruption leads to destruction. When the equilibrium between the company, customers, shareholders, employees, company and nature is broken, it leads to a crisis. If we do not return to doing business where the principles and values are valid, we will experience a permanent crisis compared with which the current one is only a bed of roses.*

### ***A few tips for managers and entrepreneurs for the after-crisis period***

*Let us forget the methods of prognosticating and forecasting. It is a dangerous game to forecast the future from the past. Instead of forecasting and planning the future it is necessary to develop a flexibility – a strategic one (monitoring the opportunities and threats, innovations) and a flexibility on an everyday basis (quick responses to the individual requirements of the customers). The economic analysts understood it a long time ago – they are able to explain very well what has been, but they have no idea of what will come.*



*A revolution will arrive on the work market and in the area of education. From an education aimed at handing over information (description of an action) we will have to move to an education oriented on knowledge development (we will cope with the actions practically). The managers have to be teachers, trainers, coaches, the enterprises will build their company schools, new forms of education at the entrepreneurial universities and innovation academies will arise.*

*The age of the strong leaders, admired celebrities and supermen has ended. The time of humble, serving leaders who allow growing talents to flourish around them, who are tougher on themselves than on others, who serve more than lead, who support more than control, who learn and teach others is arriving.*

*We have to learn new things. It is not enough to be a specialist; we also have to study other specialisations where much inspiration for innovations and non-traditional solutions develop. The managers and specialists will have to be more universal experts than specialists. Besides learning new things we have to learn how to forget the old and unnecessary ones, to overcome the old ways of thinking, to liquidate the successful products and processes at the right time.*

*Besides the capabilities to change the things around us there is one, more important ability – to identify those things which are not to be changed, which are to remain unchanged. They are mainly the roots of our own specific management system and corporate culture, the unchangeable principles.*

*It is necessary to stop extending the “collections of butterflies” which contain extensive lists of “miraculous methods for success” in a lot of companies. It is harmful to read the pink library of management which describes the best practices, “Ten Commandments guaranteeing success and secret weapons of competitiveness”. Instead of benchmarking and copying others we should deal with building our own system of company management in such a way as the companies Bata, Kyocera or Toyota have achieved.*

*We should stop describing the company processes by linear arrows with inputs and outputs. It is necessary to finally understand that managing a company is not like operating a machine where an exactly defined input will bring an expected output. The company is a living organism which involves the elements of adaptation and change, the company processes run in a cycle, not linearly.*

*Let us forget what they taught us about strategies and management at university. We were taught by people who had never realised any strategy or management. Moreover, they studied from books that were often written decades ago. The world has changed since then. Quite a lot. Strategy is not the defining of visions, missions and descriptions of actions. Strategy is a set of actions, it is what we are doing, and not those things that we are talking about and planning. In the same way as a lot of errors occur during reproduction in nature and nature is able to correct them quickly, similarly the company strategy should be realised. Professor Milan Zelený said he planted a tree in his garden and watched what would happen. It was growing. He planted another one next to the first and observed it. He built his whole garden in this way. Some plants did not take root, some of them became dry. It was a set of actions which led to the situation where today he has a beautiful garden. It was a strategy. A strategy without any master plan, a strategy responding to changes, a strategy of learning and improving. Exactly as in nature.*

*Do not let us copy others and do not let us make compromises. If somebody tells us it is impossible, it is necessary to try it. If we are sure we have found a contradiction which has not yet been solved, then it is the assignment for our innovation project. Let us find a value which is important for a certain type of customer and let us achieve an improvement here. Such an improvement about which nobody even dreams today. Let us remember the Japanese – at the time when poor quality was measured in percentages, they implemented a parameter (PPM – parts per million) and stated the goal of 0.*

*Do not look for an optimal organisational structure. The organisation is an internal operation of a system; there are relationships and interactions between the basic elements of the company management system (customer – finance – innovations – processes). The structure is the external image of the organisation. Where the organisation is how the internal organs in our body are working; the structure is what we look like. It is the same with a company. The term organisational structure is a non-sense.*

*The company is a living organism and live people are working inside of it. The development of the staff potential is the best method for the company development. Motivation is not manipulation or a game for money and goals. In the same way as an apple tree does not grow by objectives and bonuses, also a company organism cannot be developed only by management objectives and rewards. Live organisms develop in such a way that we create suitable conditions for them, they are planted in a suitable soil, the generally valid principles are respected – equilibrium, division, life cycles, effectiveness, evolution, learning, circulation, honesty.*

*The companies of the future will have no employees or trade unionists. The co-entrepreneurs who will have the courage to take responsibility, to make decisions, who will be able to learn and adapt quickly will work there. There will be plenty of companies, however, few talents. Companies will fight for them, similarly as in the NHL or the Champion's League. Those that will be able to gain, keep and develop the talent will have a huge advantage.*

*I meet two groups of entrepreneurs. One of them cries and begs the politicians for donations and emergency packets. The other says: "We don't want anything, only, for God's sake, let us work." Guess which group will survive?*

# Principles in Management and Doing Business

What is the difference between successful and unsuccessful enterprises and entrepreneurs? Millions of managers learn everyday “miraculous” methods which have brought success to global enterprises and businessmen. And one thing is continually repeated – sometimes the methods are successful, they work and bear fruit, another time they bring nothing and the managers continue looking for the next “miraculous” solutions. Why is it so? Farmers can tell – when to sow the right seed in the soil and what things are to be done in order to be able to reap a harvest. It means the farmer has to know that the principles which are given are generally valid and are independent of his/her wishes. It is not important what size plough the farmer will use for cultivating the field (tools) but rather if he/she knows the principles of nature and the world without which the seed will never germinate into a plant (principles). It is not the methods but the principles which lead to the goals in our life. Managers who understand this will save much money on studying revolutionary methods at the schools of management. The principle is valid independently of us. It is not important whether we know the laws of gravitation: if we drop something from our hand, it will fall to the ground, the balls we throw move along exactly defined paths, beer in ten glasses gets warmer at the same speed, the sun always rises on time (although our Earth rises), if we were to move with a velocity of 87 % of the speed of light, our time and biological processes would move by half of the current speed, etc.

Scientists have been able to describe many of the principles of the material world around us. However, they have not been so successful in describing our mind, the internal and spiritual world.

First of all we have to realise that the economy and companies do not work like machines where an exactly defined input creates an exactly assumed output. Economic and company mechanisms behave like living organisms and the following principles are valid:

### ***Principles of division***

What is the typical development of an enterprise? At the beginning a cell, a foetus or a spin off company which separates from its mother arises. This company which is usually based on a new invention, an innovative idea or a new value added gradually grows. At a certain phase of the growth it is necessary to define clear organisational rules, standards and guidelines. The company gradually loses its innovative character, i.e. the phenomenon which was the source of its growth at the beginning puts on weight, its procedure become bureaucratic and it becomes clumsy and inflexible. In the end it splits into smaller parts (see e.g. GM or Chrysler during the recent period). A lot of enterprises that understand this principle try to control this division process deliberately (e.g. Kyocera – the amoeba organisation). Team or fractal organisations utilise this principle in a certain way – with autonomous teams amounting to 10 – 15 employees work in such a company.

Capitalism contains a self-cleansing, self-renewing and self-producing cycle of creation, growth and crisis. Creative destruction is an inevitable process which cannot be replaced by any planning commission, state or government. The fact the government disrupts and slows down the process of creative destruction (anti-crisis packages, scrap money, support for ineffectual companies and entrepreneurs) leads to a situation where the growth is stopped, the dynamics are lost and the “life” of the economic system is suppressed.

The continuous creation of a vital market space: the break up and destruction of the old structures, companies and networks enable the company to enter new relations networks, a new growth. This is the only way how new enterprises can

arise and new entrepreneurs can enter this process. The basic assumption of life and capitalism as well is the renewed creation of new market space in the same way as the old people make way for the younger ones. The situation where we artificially maintain the “companies – dinosaurs” closes and congests the space which new enterprises, new entrepreneurial models and new ideas could enter.

### ***Principle of equilibrium***

Similarly as disruption of equilibrium in nature and live organisms leads to changes which can sometimes result in catastrophe or illness, also the company management systems need equilibrium and be able to maintain it. The simplest company management system involves the following elements – the customer, finance, innovations and processes. The equilibrium between these elements is the basis of this process. The company cannot work from a long-term point of view only in the cycle of customer – finance, but it has to invest and innovate. It is impossible to innovate without a continuous monitoring of the market, the customers and their needs. But the investments and innovations would be useless if the company was not able to create effective processes which will deliver the product or service (value) to the customer.

The company also has to maintain equilibrium between the interests and values between the shareholders, customers, employees and company. It cannot last for a long time if the company owner takes more from the business relationship than the customer; however, a company which is a customer’s slave is not able to work successfully for a long time. A lot of automotive companies wobbling at the edge of bankruptcy have experience with the rule of the trade unionists; however, those enterprises that create their profits at the expense of their employees cannot be successful either. Companies have to keep equilibrium also towards the society – they must not conduct business at the expense of the environment, of damaging health, morale and education. In the world of nature there is a huge wealth of living forms in a continuously repeated

cycle of the seasons of the year. There is a minimal amount of entropy. Everything in nature is working in equilibrium, the volumes are as needed and things complete each other and work in an amazingly economical way.

The internal equilibrium of people, the equilibrium of relations in the community, the equilibrium of the economy, the environment and the society.

Also in the society it is valid that a success is not achieved at the expense of others, that compromises are not the best solutions but it is the equilibrium based on looking for a win-win solution.

The principle of circulation is linked with the aforementioned two principles. Everything in nature works on the principle of cycles. Our nature has neither raw materials nor waste. Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return. We can see it already today that companies will work in the following cycle – their outputs will be at the same time their inputs (recycling, cleaning and utilisation of the wastes again, eco-business and re-manufacturing).

These development phases are not any fashion but inevitability for companies to survive in the global competitive environment. The individual phases of this development cannot be omitted.

### ***Principle of life curves***

Similar life cycles as in nature are also working in the companies. The fact we know them enables us to plan the changes of production assortment and company processes better. The technical systems have similar life curves (S curves) known from human life – design and concept, birth, childhood, maturity, pension and death. It is important to know this curve for managing the innovations in an enterprise. When we innovate a product, all the effort is concentrated on ensuring functionality in the first phase of the S curve. The next phases follow – ensuring the appropriate functionality, increasing performance, effectiveness and reliability. The last phase of the S curve is oriented on reducing the costs – the

product becomes a commodity and goes to the happy hunting ground. The problem of the recent years is that the S curves are reduced and changes and new S curves are to be planned already in the phase of growth.

### ***Principles of evolution***

The laws of technical evolution are the principles valid during the evolution of the technical systems and they help predict the directions of the next development and look for inspirations during their innovations. G. Altschuller, the author of the TRIZ methodology and J. Terninko defined the following laws of the technical systems' evolution:

- 1| *The technical systems have life cycles in the form of S curves.*
- 2| *The technical systems during their development increase the level of perfection.*
- 3| *The systems and their elements develop irregularly, each sub-system and element has its own life cycle which can slow down the development of the whole system.*
- 4| *The increasing dynamic development and utilisation of the fields – e.g. cutting tools, computer printers, etc.*
- 5| *The system develops in such a way it increases its complexity and then is simplified as a whole through integrating the functions, the complexity is reduced.*
- 6| *The increasing coordination and balancing the rhythm of individual system elements.*
- 7| *The transfer from the macro- to the micro-level – miniaturisation, at first the whole system improves and then we transfer to the micro-level, smaller and smaller elements for achieving the required function are used.*
- 8| *The higher controllability, self-management of the system and automation.*

### ***Principle of effectiveness and usefulness***

The principle of effectiveness and usefulness says that only those organisms have the right to exist which fulfil a certain necessary function (they have a customer) and they fulfil this



function with the need of minimal resources (they produce a competitive value).

The basic principle of the company existence is the creation of a value. The value has two dimensions:

- 1] *The value for the customer (quality, satisfying the needs, low price).*
- 2] *The value for the company (profit).*

Those companies that have been working for a longer time period are able to solve the conflict between these two dimensions through their effectiveness (the needs of the customers are satisfied by expending lower costs – eliminate wastage, lean processes and their improvement) and at the same time they are able to offer a value which is not offered by other companies and the customer is willing to pay for it (and sometimes even more) – the innovations. All living organisms are typified by their effectiveness which is the basis of survival.

Enterprises and entrepreneurship work similarly as does nature. Nature does not like unnecessary things, the volumes are as needed and everything works economically and effectively. The systems and organisms which do not have their customers and are ineffective will perish.

### ***Principle of learning***

Every company has two functions:

- 1] *To produce products and services that enable the enterprise to make money, create profit and develop the company.*
- 2] *To create knowledge, develop people, produce themselves – this task is the basis of coping with the task 1 over a long-term period.*

A lot of people claim that the successful entrepreneurs were lucky. To be really “lucky” means to be patient and persistent, to be able to learn (from the failures of others not from your own). Edison carried out 147 unsuccessful experiments until

he found the right fibre for his bulb, The Wright brothers took off 805 times (and crashed) until they succeeded in their first flight when they made their mark in history.

The company Toyota or Bata showed that the age of a company depends on learning, creating, sharing and capitalising the knowledge. Knowledge is not information. Information is a description of an action (recipe) and knowledge is the action itself (the ability to prepare a good meal).

Does your company fight some typical problems in the area of human potential development?

- 1| *People are missing the proactivity and ability to take on responsibility.*
- 2| *The management has no time to be trained, it sends its subordinates to the education and trainings.*
- 3| *The managers do not deal with the development of their colleagues, they do not teach, train and/or coach them.*
- 4| *The employees do not feel any need to learn new things.*
- 5| *The employees attend various trainings but they do not utilise the methods they have learned there in practice.*
- 6| *The people are not used to solving problems in teams.*
- 7| *The employees do not hand on their experience, they do not teach each other.*
- 8| *The required knowledge and the methods of its verification are not defined exactly for the working positions.*
- 9| *A lot of employees carry out work for which they do not have adequate abilities or activities that they are not interested in.*
- 10| *The company is lacking real leaders and natural moral authorities.*
- 11| *The company has no internal trainers, coaches and mentors.*
- 12| *The people in the company are missing internal motivation, challenges and opportunities.*

The majority of companies try to increase their performance efficiency and competitiveness. They spend great financial means on new technologies, changes in the area of

the products, trade, logistics, production, organisation of processes, etc. However, very often simply the most important element of the company is underestimated and incorrectly resolved – people. The company employees are those who decide about the company's ability to manage the necessary internal changes, to adapt to the changes in their surroundings, to innovate or create and realise the strategies.

The development of the enterprises leads to the individualisation of the requirements of the customers and its result is continual change. The capability to learn, innovations and the change management, the speed of the customer service, the flexibility of all company processes – these are the key competitive factors. We can see that people, the company employees have the essential importance for these competitive factors. The professional knowledge of people and their intellectual potential, physical potential expressed by the skills, psychical stamina but also their emotional potential. The ability to solve problems and to collaborate in a team and the moral potential expressed in the value orientation of the people, in their ability to build confidence, cooperation and ethical behaviour are important.

People are the long-term assets because they acquire capabilities, the machines are depreciated and lose their value, on the other hand the people's value grows. During the process of developing the human potential within the company it is necessary to realise that it is not only to select and develop the right people but first of all to link them correctly, to “mix” them in such a way that they will be able to collaborate and develop the company's knowledge systematically.

On the other hand we know that the utilisation of the human potential in a company belongs to the worst types of wastage. The productive utilisation of many employees in the production and non-production areas is often under 10 %. It is a consequence of bad organisation of work, of many unproductive meetings and bureaucracy, vague objectives, insufficient confidence and frequent conflicts, ill-defined vision, strategy and values of the enterprise.

The system of the continual development of people should be one of the basic pillars of building a prosperous enterprise. Everything that is invested in the development of people will be returned many times because the quality and price of appropriately stimulated and professionally growing employees will increase in the course of time. It is much more advantageous to invest gradually in a compact group of stable employees than to look for and train unreliable people who will move to the competitors when the first difficulty occurs or after receiving a more advantageous offer.

There is one important fact that companies do not know the real value orientation of their employees, their motivation factors, real abilities and areas of interest. On the other hand, an exact definition of the critical knowledge and abilities for a certain position as well as a method for their testing are missing. This results in a situation where unsuitable people get placed in an inappropriate position that they have neither the professional nor psychological abilities for. This causes problems for the employees themselves as well as to the whole surroundings. Then the organisation gradually suffers from gradual conflicts and low performance efficiency.

The key abilities we need to develop in our companies are:

- 1| *Completing things – the realisation ability xQ.*
- 2| *The ability to catch the problem, to locate the real cause and to find a solution.*
- 3| *The ability to define the problem openly, to communicate and solve any conflicts without compromises.*
- 4| *The ability to work in teams and to create synergy.*
- 5| *The ability to learn new things, to teach others, to create the knowledge and experience and to hand it on.*
- 6| *The ability to lead and motivate people.*
- 7| *The principles of ethics and honesty.*
- 8| *Neither success in life nor in business is achieved at the expense of other people.*

Jan Bata says that one means of payment has not been implemented in the economic and public life. It is called honesty. Many people are convinced you can get anything for money. It is not true. You can obtain much more for honesty.

One of the most significant teachers of global management Stephen Covey says that how much people acknowledge such basic principles as honesty, justice, sound judgement, sincerity and confidence and will live according to them in harmony, so much they will be on the way towards survival and stability. Deviation from these principles means decay and destruction.

The golden rule has its expression in all global religions.

The Taoists tell us to consider the success of your neighbour to be also your success and his failure to be your failure. The Koran adds that nobody is a believer until he wishes his brother the same as for himself. And Christ also says - do unto others as you would like them to do unto you.

Time is money and those who pause will lose, a lot of managers say. One Japanese proverb says that he who walks slowly, goes quickly. In other words those who stop can listen, feel and understand the principles. They need not hurry because they have taken the right way.

To feel things that a lot of people do not feel, to see things that many people cannot see, to hear things that others cannot hear – just this distinguishes exceptional people from the rest more than university diplomas and titles. Mahátma Gándhí speaks about seven things that are unworthy of people and inhuman – acquiring wealth without work, satisfaction ignoring the conscience, knowledge not respecting character, business without morals, science without humanity, worshipping without making sacrifices and politics without principles.

The top managers have a lot of opportunities to commit these sins every day. It depends only on them if they want to build their work according to the principles or if they want to plant the seeds in a soil which will not yield any harvest.

One of the most significant leaders of current global management Gary Hamel says in his latest book “The Future

of Management” that modern management brings much and in return has taken a lot and is still taking it. Maybe it is time to look at everything from its basis again. We have to learn how to coordinate the working effort of thousands of individuals without creating a burdensome hierarchy of supervisors, to control the costs with steady reins but not to suppress the imagination of people; we have to learn how to build organisations in which discipline and liberty do not exclude each other...

Take part in a typical top management meeting during which you will discuss e.g. the strategy, budgets, employees or anything else – not only will you see a lack of thinking which requires the right brain hemisphere but you will hear practically nothing at all that would show the participants of the meeting have a heart. Beauty. Love. Duty. Wisdom. Justice. Freedom. Compassion. These are the moral commands that have been arousing human beings to extraordinary performances for ages. It is sad that management language has such little space for these virtues.

## Conclusion

I have been visiting companies and meeting entrepreneurs, managers but also with people from the spiritual area of life, philosophy, environmental protection or charity for years. These meetings with many outstanding people have always enriched me and so I began regularly to write observations where I began summarising some experience, knowledge or issues.

They are no philosophical wisdoms or scientific solutions for company management and the development of activities within them. I was writing them more for myself than for others and after the stimuli of my colleagues I chose some of

them for this book. They are simple reflections about how we live and what is around us. I hope they inspire readers to think but also move them to particular deeds which will contribute to a better life.

Although situations from the life of companies and my personal life overlap here, the first part of the book is more or less a set of personal contemplations. In the second part we can find reflections which are of a more professional character and their objective is to encourage managers and entrepreneurs to adopt new views on their work and life.

In the current accelerating world we have no time for questions. However, we will seek in vain for the right answers without questions. We are missing a dialogue. The result is we solve a lot of things by strength, in a technocratic way; we make compromises which will always return like a boomerang. Dialogue is not fashionable. Who wants to lose time by listening to other people? The politicians are shouting each other down in the TV studios; each of them wants to make use of the time and say as much as possible. Also the majority of the managers' decisions in the companies is not the result of a dialogue, looking for the truth, recognising the essence and finding a consensus, but the decisions arise in an authoritative way or are based on conflicts and the enforcement of opinions by strength.

We have an opponent who we want to defeat or at least to wound, humiliate and satirise during a dispute. In a dialogue we have an ally on the way to the truth. Our task should not be to prove to the opponent that he/she is mistaken but to look for the truth and solution together with him/her. The enemy becomes a person with whom we have found understanding and mutual respect. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "Give me, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy thought can drag downwards; an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside." It seems today there is no time for the Platonic dialogues of Thomas Aquinas who challenged his opponents to speak. They helped him be resistant to one-

sidedness, simplification and subjectivity. We often want to silence our opponents, we interrupt them and do not listen to them when they speak and we are not even interested in it. We replaced love of the truth with searching for quick and simplified shortcuts. Respect for the partner was replaced by conflict in which everybody tries to interrupt and beat the other. This results in solutions which are not durable and only postpone the problem, in disrupted relations, lack of respect and in emotions and nervousness which cause further mistakes. Dialogue begins with respect. It continues by listening and making the effort to understand. It ends with a common victory, mutual enrichment, with extending our knowledge, good feeling, partnership and a solution which will last. Do you say that we need much time for a real search through a dialogue? Truth and mutual respect between people are worth it. Let us confess that we do not have time also because we waste it in conflicts, disputes, compromises and half-solutions from the past. Dialogue is the way – to positive solutions and a valuable life.

I believe we do not live to win “World Cups of Productivity”, to have entertainment every day and to seek new adventures. As we are getting older, more and more we frequently think about questions such as – “What do I want to achieve in this world? What is my mission? What footprint would I like to leave here? What values do I want to aim my life compass at?” Also companies define their visions, mission and strategies – and similarly like many people they fail to achieve them. Ingmar Bergman says that many people are unhappy because when they are happy they would like to be even happier. I would add – a lot of entrepreneurs are unsuccessful because when they have enough they would like to have even more.

Benjamin Franklin says – “Do you love life? If so do not waste time because life is time.” Many of us say – how light-heartedly we wasted our time on games and entertainment when we were young. But do we deal only with meaningful things today? How many hours last week were we sitting at meetings, on business trips and were resolving matters which



are not connected to our life mission and values? Do you say we need more money? How much more? When we have more will it be enough? It looks like selling our time and life for further material things and experiences which will seem vainglorious and unnecessary at the end of our life. Let us visit our family and friends even today, let us tell them what we want to say to them and do not let us postpone important things till tomorrow. Do not let us allow ourselves to push important things from our life by concerns which are simply not worth it. How much evil and how many quarrels, trivialities and stupidities do we have to resolve everyday? Do we have to? Who controls our life - we or the circumstances? Disraeli's words that life is too short to pay attention to trivialities have helped me overcome many painful experiences. Trivialities often disconcert us – such trivialities which are not important, which are not to be paid attention to... We are living here on Earth and we can expect only a few decades of life. And we lose so many irretrievable hours by pining over various grievances which neither you nor anyone else will remember after a year... André Maurois tells us to devote our life to valuable deeds, feelings and ideas, great loves and steadfast projects. Because life is really too short for us to pay attention to trivialities.

We will not be returned the time which is behind us and the time before us is in our hands. What do we want to leave in this world? Not everybody has to be a famous writer or inventor. The most valuable deeds are discreet, often unnoticed and hidden – however, very useful. Mother Therese used to say that only few people can do great things. But everybody can do small things with abundant love.

## Bibliography

---

- 1| *Abbé Pierre: Testament. Karmelitánske nakladatelství, Kostelní Vydří, 2009*
- 2| *Assländer,F., Grün,A.: Řízení jako duchovní úkol. Karmelitánske nakladatelství, Kostelní Vydří, 2008*
- 3| *Assländer,F., Grün,A.: Time management jako duchovní úkol. Karmelitánske nakladatelství, Kostelní Vydří, 2010*
- 4| *Benedikt XVI: Encyklika Caritas in Veritate 2009*
- 5| *Bonder,N.: Jidiše Kop. Knižní klub Praha 1999*
- 6| *Bossidy,L., Charan, R.: Řízení realizačních procesů. Management Press 2004*
- 7| *Covey, S.R.: 7 návykov pre úspešný a harmonický život. Open Windows. Bratislava, 1994*
- 8| *Covey, S.R.: 8 návyk – Od efektivity k výjimečnosti. Management Press Praha 2005*
- 9| *Collins,J.: Z dobrého skvelé, Eastone 2006*
- 10| *Covey,S.: Důvěra – jediná věc, která dokáže změnit vše. Management Press 2007*
- 11| *Covey,S.: Bez zásad nemůžete vést. Pragma 2003*
- 12| *Covey, S.R.: 8 návyk – Od efektivity k výjimečnosti. Management Press Praha 2005*
- 13| *Frankl,V.E.: A přesto říci životu ano. Karmelitánske nakladatelství Kostelní Vydří 2006*
- 14| *Frankl,V.E.: Vůle ke zmyslu. Cesta 2006*
- 15| *Goleman,D.: Emoční inteligence. Columbus 1997*
- 16| *Gardner,H., Bronwyn,F.: The Ethical Mind. Harvard Business Review 3/2007*
- 17| *Hass, A.: Morální inteligence. Columbus Praha 1999*
- 18| *Hamel,G., Breen,B.: The Future of Management. Harvard Business School Press 2008*
- 19| *Halík,T.: Stromu zbývá naděje. Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2009*
- 20| *Halík,T.: Co je bez chvění, není pevné. Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2010*
- 21| *Jordán Dovala J.: Ticho. Vydavatelství Michala Vaška Prešov 2007*

- 22| Korec, J. Ch.: *Človek na cestách zeme*. Matica slovenská Martin 1997
- 23| Košturiak, J., Frolík, Z. a kolektív: *Štíhly a inovatívni podnik*, Alfa Publishing Praha, 2006
- 24| Košturiak, J., Chal.: *Inovace. Vaše konkurenční výhoda*. CPress 2008
- 25| Košturiak, J., Boledovič, L., Krišťak, J., Marek, M.: *Kaizen*. CPress 2010
- 26| Krčméry, V.: *Desatoro Vysokej školy zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce Svätej Alžbety v Bratislave* 2008
- 27| Olson, M. S., Van Bever, D., Verry, S.: *When Growth Stalls*. Harvard Business Review 3/2008
- 28| Rozenzweig, P.: *The Halo Effect and the Eight Other Delusions That Deceive Managers*. Free Press. 2007
- 29| Srholec, A.: *Každodenné zamyslenia*. Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška Prešov 1995
- 30| Srholec, A.: *Ako čerstvý chlieb*. Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška Prešov 1995
- 31| Tournier, P.: *Silní a slabí. Návrat domů* 1995
- 32| Zelený, M.: *Human Systems Management*. World Scientific Publishing 2005
- 33| Zelený, M.: *Hledání vlastní cesty*. CPress 2010

Author: Ján Košturiak  
Everyday Reflections

Published by: IPA Slovakia, s.r.o.  
Printed by: Varínska tlačiareň  
Graphical design: Norbert Kotrbanec  
Translation: Július Paur, Peter James Murphy

ISBN 978-80-89667-50-5