



Columbus reloaded – real leaders needed

“You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.” (Christopher Columbus, 1451-1506)

No question, the world is experiencing turbulent times. Whether it is political, social or economic – we are living in a time of radical change. Understandably, people search for stability in those times. The fear of the future or in general the unknown nourishes the wish for security, for certainty. But exactly in these times it needs people who aren't frightened of pursuing their visions and taking the risks related. It requires leaders who are also discoverers. Who dare to take new routes to explore the unknown. Especially when the circumstances, when the basic conditions seem to be difficult and one tends rather towards caution and restraint. This does not mean that risks should be completely neglected. But it means that we should not bury our heads in the sand and not move on, just because of the fear for the unknown.

In business life, very often chances are not taken because of the risks related to. Avoiding mistakes seems to be the better option, the easy way out, at least at short term. This applies to business leaders as well as to politicians in the election year. From an individual point of view this may make sense, but for a company or a society this leads into a deadlock. Moving back instead of forward. It requires courage to break through this cycle. The willingness to hold back own interests. It requires leaders to accept and to take the risk to fail. But it widens the space for a quantum leap.

The key to overcome the obstacles are the values and the attitude of every single decision maker. The mindset. And a strong will to succeed. Columbus would not have discovered America if he hadn't followed a vision and derived a clear strategy from that. Many great inventions are based on the genius and the passion of inventors, who despite of all setbacks never gave up till they reached their goals. One might say that most discoverers or inventors have failed and that this comparison cannot be transferred into business life since business leaders are in charge of a company and therefore have to take risks more serious. The answer to this is yes and no at the same time. No business leader is asked to take risks without caution. But being too careful is not the right way as well. Certainly Columbus has not set sail spontaneously, he rather had a vision, which he transferred into a clear strategy and then operationalized it by carefully planning and preparing his journey. Or as Columbus said: "Reliable information is absolutely necessary for the success of an endeavour." Therefore, it was no hasty action and although he suffered a lot of setbacks during a long period of

preparation he set sail. If he had followed all worries, concerns and doubts he never would have achieved his aim. He never would have changed the world.

Of course, in many ways Columbus was not a role model, one only may think of the way he treated his crew and the inhabitants of the discovered countries. And of course, not all expeditions were successful. But here it's about courage, visionary force and risk appetite. It's about the spirit of explorers navigating through stormy waters. In many parts of today's life, and very much also in business, people lost this spirit and replaced it with risk avoidance which hinders them to move forward. But for success in turbulent times, it's essential to retrieve this spirit of discovery and to have the courage to take decisions. The courage to take the risk. And the responsibility.

Following a vision and taking the risks despite of all challenges and uncertainties ahead makes managers become real leaders. Leaders, who are role models and fixed stars giving guidance to their people. With a solid and strong set of positive values and an attitude showing this. Leaders, whom the employees follow because they receive trust and appreciation, because they understand sense and purpose of the vision and therefore take uncertainty and risks as a chance. And not as a threat. Especially in difficult times it requires leaders who take the risk, who have the courage to see discovery as an opportunity for progress, who take a leap where others stop.

A leader afraid of the future is sure to fall behind. That also applies to the own thinking.

Our aim at Alpine One is to accompany individuals on their journey to become great leaders.

Alpine One – The Human Factor Company

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