

### Challenge: Ensure a strong and common leadership style and culture in a post - merger process

As in many mergers and acquisitions the hardest part is not the integration of the Structure, such as IT-infrastructure, or to find agreement about the Strategy. The hardest part to succeed with is the to win the hearts and minds of the people. To create a common, lived shared and respected Culture and Leadership style. It is claimed that *90% of all mergers fail because of lack of culture integration*. The challenge is especially compounded if the merger is cross-border, when new team members are faced with having to work with new colleagues with a different leadership style than their own.

The natural human tendency to find mistakes in the other's person's style can potentially lead to a situation where the trenches are being dug deeper (we do it right – they do it wrong).

#### **Solution - Example Behavior Starts from the Top**

If top management says one thing but do not follow through with clear and tangible actions, then the culture becomes hollow. Nice words at conferences are not enough, and might even backfire. In cases like this we recommend a three-step approach:

1. The intellectual part; define the desired culture and leadership style (if not already done) on both the level of Values and Leadership Principles. Ideally this is done as a top-down and bottom-up process, taking into consideration the actual strengths and shared beliefs of the organization, through structured workshops.
2. The behavior part: Make sure Top Management can “Walk the Talk”. This is the most crucial step. Most top managers have a tendency to assume they are good representatives of the desired culture. For this target group to truly live the desired (new) culture it is crucial they become aware of their personal assumptions, prejudgments, strengths and weaknesses. This is best done through an intensive leadership program, where each Top Manager discovers the difference between “know-how” and “show-how” and then is encouraged to close the gap. Best practice, to ensure sustainable results in attitude and behavior, is 5-6 days spread

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over ½ a year in groups of maximum 8-10 managers, thus offering “personal coaching in group”. The benefit vs. personal coaching is clear. In a group process the diversity and feedback to each other are key building blocks for the understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different styles, and especially for every Top Manager to be exposed in front of peers with their “show-how” as far as truly living the desired company culture is concerned, giving an emotional imprint, not only intellectual, creating long lasting example behavior.

3. The evaluation part: A few months after completion of the program a follow-up workshop is planned, ensuring the values and behaviors are incorporated in the daily work and is implemented top-down.

### **Result**

We will be happy to share with you examples where the client claims the success of the culture/leadership part of the merger can be attributed to our intervention, and who despite the cost of flying people in from different continent for several sessions can testify that the impact and the results vastly exceeds the investment. After all, what is the value of a shared understanding and, more importantly, a shared lived company culture and leadership style?