**"Sensing is becoming a competence in leadership development"**

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**How do you see agile sensing?**

"I see [agile sensing](https://agile-sensing.nl/en/) as a method that can be used in large and complex situations to measure the effects of your actions. Patterns become visible through personal answers to the questions you ask. Visualised as dots, you can then click on each dot and see which story each department has.

Management plays 'the power game' to a greater or lesser extent in every organisation. However, agility is also required to manage complexity and survive as an organisation, as a team, and as an individual employee. You have to look closely at how you innovate. In my view, you should do that through leadership."

**As a member of the management board how do you initiate organisational changes, how do you experience that and how do you steer it?**

"I still frequently see a tendency to implement changes as a project or process that can be heavily influenced and controlled by management. While this is fine for some organisations, in agile terms that is 'old school'. What you are also seeing is the complete opposite: letting go of everything in a controlled way and literally experimenting with trust.

If I make such an observation, who am I to say you have to go along with agility? It is all about whether the challenge is a heavy, disruptive development, as is now the case in the banking world, or whether it is something that is developing steadily and will be discussed at some point in the next ten years.

After all, as a whole the management board's commitment to change in order to keep up with the latest trend is a good thing. A lot, however, depends on context. And in the case of the manager, the profile of that person is very important with regard to answering the question of how to implement such a change.

In general, of course, the world is becoming more complex and larger organisations in particular are adapting to this. There is therefore more demand for entrepreneurship, more personal responsibility, more autonomy and more craftsmanship."

**If you consider complexity to be a challenge for larger organisations, what obstacles are you facing, and how are these being overcome?**

"First of all: it's a good idea to involve everyone in your organisation and to involve them in the process. From conversations I have with agencies and internal communication departments, I conclude that there is an enormous need to show people a new approach.

If a new strategy is created that comes from within the organisation itself, you can see that many organisations are continuing to do so in 'splendid isolation', as I call it. But the question is how you get people involved. And those people are all stakeholders, from employees to customers and partners.

The second point is that while there may be experienced people on a supervisory board, but their experience is outdated. This makes sense in a way, because a supervisory board keeps an eye on developments in the longer term. But that supervision has difficulty in recognising the context and trends. The need for innovation is apparent. However, estimating the change that takes place outside is difficult, because internal complexity is already significant."

**A characteristic of agile sensing is legitimation. Do you see a role for the supervisory board in this? For example, does it help if they receive qualitative reports about this?**

"What I see is that the complexity requires you to be even more in touch with what is actually happening and to have the tools to do so. So that you can make this complexity manageable from a systems perspective. You need tools for this. Agile sensing is such a tool, because it makes the undercurrent visible. You can’t effect an organisational change with Excel sheet ratios alone. Sensing shows what is going on in your organisation, how it is under pressure, or whether things are experienced differently.

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As an organisation, you thereby move from 'smart' to 'wise', from knowledge and an MBA approach to a genuine connection with all stakeholders. Sensing is becoming a competence in leadership development."

**What is the role of senior management and middle management?**

"The short answer is: exemplary behaviour. In complex systems, the key is to mirror observations. You carry out an observation and then ask a department how they feel about this. For example, "I perceive xyz; it looks like the department is under stress. How do you feel about this?" By asking other departments the same question, awareness is created.

A leader who raises that issue through sensing shows that attention is being paid to it, which creates a connection. The challenge for the leader is not to intervene, but to ask open questions such as 'if we continue like this, how long will we be able to keep it up?'. These are very important questions you can ask as a leader."

**Is this a big step for management?**

"Sensing is a step in a new form of steering. The next step of giving back is an essential part of the new competence series of leaders. You have to (be able to) mirror inevitable things in a clear and confrontational way, but in such a way as to keep things safe for those involved. Because something will shift in that safety. Something that will inevitably lead to conflict. You have to be open to it, learn about it and go through with it.

This is the main task in leadership programmes: what do you want to sense? Are you even open to it? People are so busy with their daily activities that there’s no way they can be open to it. A new important concept here is the term *unknown-unknowns*. How do you make it clear to someone that they are unaware that they don't know anything? Prior to sensing there is thus a step in which people open themselves up to this way of thinking and taking the time to do so.

Digital support through apps such as Agile Sensing helps us to take leadership developments such as being open and sensing further. On the Fuel for Innovation website this is called slowing down to be able to accelerate. Slowing down frees up mental space to do this."

**How does a traditional organisational change differ from an agile organisational change?**

"If it is a smaller organisation of say 125 people, it is a hybrid, which means the agile approach is a good one and can be done well. As soon as it concerns a larger organisation, you will often see a combination with a round of cutbacks and/or a new strategy that will be implemented. In any case, the larger the organisation, the more people will want to be in control. Agile change is fast, but in a larger organisation coordination poses a huge challenge."

**Having heard everything, is traditional management training still needed?**

"Yes, I think so. For example, one of the important issues is delegating and allowing people to develop. This will be seen in a different light under the influence of agile working. People need to be taught how to do that, too. An immature group of people will have to be instructed and directed. It depends on the profile of the manager or whether he or she tends to move more quickly to a democratic style. The foundation is knowing how to communicate clearly, how to deal with talent and how to stimulate it. At a higher level, it is fundamental to change 'becoming agile' mindsets and paradigms. A storytelling method such as agile sensing can contribute a lot to this, because it shows what is truly going on in an organisation."