



“If you fail with the results, there is always a second chance. If you fail with the values, you lose.”

Edwin de Bree, Bianca Stokman and Wim Heuvelman

Who Wears the Tie Today?

At financial service provider Finext, no one is *the* leader or *the* entrepreneur. Everyone fulfills that role. Trust is the underlying assumption and values are the shared benchmark. How about the self-managing organization?

The majority of the customers are organized according to traditional hierarchical structures, while you have self-management. How is that perceived in cooperation?

Wim Heuvelman, one of the driving forces when Finext was established, and Edwin de Bree, who organizes workshops on Organization 3.0 in close cooperation with Finext, explain their basic assumption is that everyone can be trusted, although you may be disappointed on occasion. "Our customers are often focused on verification, rules and preventing disappointment. That is exactly what distinguishes us. If we start resembling our customers, we can no longer be distinctive. On the other hand, if the differences are too great, it does not work either. In organizations where politics plays a significant role, 'red tape' sometimes seems to be more important than the results. Sometimes our consultants are not sufficiently aware of that and behave like bulls in a china shop. In that case, we see from the employees as well as the customer that one project is enough. It also simply requires translation. You have to know how to speak the language of your environment and be flexible with it, both with the customer and in your own context. As a subsidiary of Ordina, Finext satisfies certain reporting requirements in this way. That system needs the information in order to be able to trust our system. It does not affect the core."

Why does self-management work so well here? You've been in business for 14 years now and have 130 employees.

"Because we continue to confirm our values. All too often I see organizations where 'working on trust' deteriorates into a *laissez-faire* style, where no one calls each other to account. Or where you are trusted as long as you do what the boss has in mind. That is not the case here.

We are very clear and strict about that. If you fail with the results, there is always a second chance. If you fail with the values, you lose. You can offer freedom by being strict about values and frameworks. We also confirm our values by not interfering with each another without being asked. By saying: 'We see it and we are here, but you have to do it yourself.' It becomes unclear when self-management is the motto, while hierarchy shapes the core. A bit of self-management does not work; you just have to be honest about it."

How does the organizational structure promote entrepreneurship and leadership?

"The people here are responsible for profit and loss in small units (business projects). Their salary partly depends on it. And they establish that part of the salary together. What results do we expect next year and how do we divide it? People also provide their own staff roles such as marketing, sales and HR. They may not be as quick as a professional, but their passion is 200%. It creates a lot of goodwill, among our customers as well. And hard work is usually not a problem as long as you are in your own circle of influence. It goes without saying that the finances are in order, which is a precondition to continue. That structure is also needed to organize the freedom. Is there a healthy division of starting and ending projects? And is there room for innovation? It is a shared responsibility. We regularly ask, who is wearing the tie today? What is the leadership issue and whose qualities best fit the bill?"

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