

**Interview with Peter Stapfer, Founder and Managing Partner of Navigation Consulting & Coaching on the company's foundation**

**Q:** Peter, you only recently launched Navigation Consulting & Coaching (NC&C) in order to offer consulting and coaching services in various areas related to talent management and organizational and individual development. What do you want to achieve with NC&C?

**A:** I often hear in discussions with business leaders of firms of various sizes and in various sectors that they have specific and sometimes acute issues in the above areas that they would like to explore further. Some of these issues are unique and some have already been partially resolved by several companies via the use of tools and the adoption of appropriate approaches. Nevertheless, they feel that they would like to discuss a couple of scenarios with an external consultant and examine options that they may not have been previously aware of. Maybe they would like to systematize the career pathways of their company's most critical job families in the interests of retaining talent, or perhaps introduce a more systematic performance evaluation and goal-setting system. Or maybe they want to ensure that they more systematically and rigorously factor diversity aspects into defined processes.

**Q:** Because of the economic crisis and presumed "lack of leadership" many exponents point out that our existing leadership models have failed and that we need new approaches. What do you think?

**A:** We and many experts in the field disagree that the models as such have failed and that there is a need to adopt new approaches. What is important is that people understand the leadership models and that leaders apply them correctly in their respective industries. Leadership means taking responsibility for your own actions and those of your subordinates, providing guidance, instructing and supervising and leading by example; in other words, "walking the talk". Leaders need to set an example and understand that they are measured by their success in achieving what they set out to achieve. Employees don't lose sight of goals like these. It is therefore not surprising that effective leadership training and executive coaching have increased in importance and we believe that this trend will continue.

**Q:** Do you think that leadership can be learned through development and training programs and executive coaching?

**A:** Yes, absolutely, there is no doubt about it. If the programs are set up according to the leader's individual needs and provide him or her with ample opportunities to apply what has been learned both during the program and "on the job" and if follow-up measures are taken as planned, there is a very high probability that the individual development process will be of an effective and sustainable nature. We have witnessed many leaders making tremendous progress during relatively short periods of executive coaching. They went on to become decisive and credible business leaders who influenced business and their environment in manifold positive ways and led their teams on to more success that had a direct impact on their bottom line. Nowadays, solid research confirms that

executive coaching is effective, meaning that its direct impact on business (in monetary figures) by far exceeds the outlays for coaching sessions and the time commitment (opportunity costs) required of the leader in question.

**Q:** Why has the management of diversity become a critical success factor for globally and locally operating companies, and what is the general trend going forward?

**A:** There are basically two reasons why diversity has become a critical factor in the corporate world. Firstly, research has proven that business solutions created by diverse teams are simply better. Diverse teams take multiple additional factors into consideration that result in solutions that are better thought through and prove more robust in unexpected business situations. Secondly, diversity in terms of gender, race, geographical origin and age has become a critical factor in countries where different cultural groups need to be given equal consideration in crucial talent management and human-resource-related processes. Whereas most companies have laid their primary focus on the second point, the first one requires equal consideration. But this calls for the adoption of different approaches as the visible characteristics of individual team members are not the critical differentiators when building up a diverse team. You cannot put together a diverse team based on race and gender considerations alone; you need to uncover several additional aspects of the personalities of the individual team members. These aspects include the way in which they think and communicate, their way of making decisions etc. They can be discerned during individual or team meetings using instruments that everybody understands and appreciates. The outcome of such meetings are manifold: while team heads are aware of the qualities and characteristics they need to look for when building up more diverse teams, team members find it meaningful to learn about their differences and what they have in common. This generally leads to more tolerance of other people's work styles and better collaboration.

**Q:** You are a business economist and have worked for financial institutions and business consultancies. How do you keep up to date with the latest insights and developments in the area of executive coaching, corporate learning and interpersonal issues?

**A:** Despite the fact that I hold degrees in Business Administration, I have been consulting companies on corporate and individual development topics, incl. executive coaching, for many years and have been privileged to gather a great deal of valuable experience in all these areas. Since it is my firm belief that professionals should continuously develop and keep abreast of the latest insights and trends, I am attending a Master's program in Executive Coaching at a renowned business school outside London targeted at experienced executive coaches. Besides gaining sound expertise and know-how, participation in the program offers me the opportunity to compare notes with senior executive coaches from across Europe and provides me with excellent regular supervision.

**Q:** Can you shed some light on your actual work? Can you tell us about your client base? Who would be a typical client? It seems that you primarily aim at large firms.

**A:** Besides individual executive coaching assignments that we receive directly from individuals in different institutions and industries, we are currently working with two companies on a permanent basis. The first one is a medium-sized asset management and consultancy company based in Switzerland that gave us the mandate to perform several talent development-related tasks. The second is the UK headquarters of a US financial services company that tasked us with performing an analysis of workforce planning and succession. One outcome of this cooperation is our current exploration of a number of highly specific diversity-related topics.

We believe that NC&C's offerings make most sense for small- and medium-sized firms striving to align their human resources organisation by introducing comprehensive corporate and individual tools and activities across the board. The primary factor driving these firms is usually the wish to increase their professionalism and reliability against a background of rapid business growth and the need to increase headcount, restructure their ambitions and/or deal with talent retention issues. The size, industry or economic situation of the client firm is less important than their reason for wishing to introduce systematic corporate and individual development.

It goes without saying that NC&C can add value to large companies on very specific topics by working closely with their management teams and illuminating various scenarios and prospects.

**Q:** What can a medium- or small-sized firm wishing to introduce corporate and individual development expect?

**A:** Enhanced clarity, transparency and less subjectivity when dealing with human resources related subjects. As a result we see guidance for line managers and reliability for employees both increasing. These are outcomes that are very much welcomed by all parties.

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