

Amrop Leadership Series

Personal Governance – 6 Principle V

Personal Development

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Amrop

Leaders For What's Next

Personal Governance - 6

Principle V – Personal Development

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Executive Summary

Good Personal Governance incites lifelong personal development, or *éducation permanente*. This is a dynamic journey, linked to our personality development, aptitude for reflection, coping strategies, the way we communicate and interact, our ethics - and beyond. And managers must be shining examples. Yet, as an executive search consultant and management coach, I see senior managers mainly emphasizing professional experience as a way to round out academic foundations, supplemented at best by a short-lived executive development program. When it comes to holistic development, this is not enough.

Knowledge is Issued in Bite Sized Chunks With Little Time to Digest Them

In-house executive development has been gathering pace over 20 years as digitization and globalization have fueled new strategies, business models, and borderless working. Yet it tends to be administered in small doses designed to minimally disrupt normal operational flow. If most companies pay lip service to executive development, little time is devoted to preparation and follow-up, trapping output and insights in a mental cage of non-reflection.

The Leaders of Tomorrow Are the Early Adopters of Today

Recent years have seen a marked progression in executive and personal development offers, led by universities of applied sciences. Young managers are increasingly motivated to follow development programs tailored to their careers, running in tandem with their professional lives and a recurrent activity offering meaningful breaks for rest and application. So the development of young managers is overtaking that of their more senior equivalents.

Executive Learning Programs Fail to Go the Distance

The higher they rise, the more senior managers seem to rely on on-the-job learning and institutional, bite-sized knowledge chunks. Time is at a premium, success is in sight, and leaders are reluctant to expose themselves to learning in groups comprising mixed functions and hierarchical levels. Executive programs offer more guarantee of peer learning and making new contacts, but even a twelve-week course is but one piece in the greater mosaic.

Mature Managers will Be In Demand, and Must Invest in Personal Development

Ageing workforce factors will increase the demand for mature managers (between 50 and 60 years old). As such, senior managers would do well to invest in their own development. The investment will bear fruit not only personally, but financially.

Management Practitioners and Recruiters Have Tunnel Vision

Hiring organizations still focus on professional experience and academic qualifications, and in turn, senior hires adopt the spirit of: “*as much as necessary and as little as possible.*” It’s a vicious circle. Demand from talent strategists is low, perhaps because of their own shortfalls in the domain. This is still a soft market.

Executive Coaching can Transform Professional Experience into Personal Development

Supported by Chief Knowledge Officers, today’s corporates enjoy a plethora of executive development options (global spend on employee training and education was close to \$356 bn in 2015¹). Yet senior managers are training-weary. Experience and on-the-job learning can and should be integrated into executive and personality development. We explored executive coaching as a development resource in the 4th article of our Series (Principle III, Self-reflection, Self-assessment, Self-regulation). The arena of personal development is exactly where coaching finds its home.

Lifelong Learning Will be a Fact of Long Life

Demographic realities will transform *lifelong learning* into a *fact of long life*. Many universities have installed Centers for Lifelong Learning. On-the-job, lifelong learning, (in Personal Governance, primarily off-the-job), nourishes lifelong mental vitality. Based on our curiosity to discover new things, it demands creative competence in personal renewal (and this is also a precondition for innovation in organizations). Seen in this light, learning should be experienced not as an obligation but as an irresistible journey of discovery, with multiple paths to multiple destinations. Neither age, time pressure, nor any other perceived constraints should be barriers. The contents must be spellbinding, and spur further discoveries still.

Ethics Can Never Be Taken For Granted

Finally, the bridge between incentives, lifelong learning, and Principle II (Ethics), deserves a mention. Demand for executive development in ethical virtues is low compared to other competencies. Ethics are simply not part of the typically sought-after leadership portfolio – they are quietly taken for granted. So demand for their development is undercooked.

6 Self-check Questions For Personal Development

- Which activities do I engage in with a view to developing my personality?
- What was my last significant development step (more than 2 weeks)?
- What effect did this have on me?
- What development step have I planned next, and how long will it last?
- What steps have I followed in ethics and ethical management?
- What do I imagine *éducation permanente* to be, what role does it play for me personally?

¹ Why Leadership Training Fails, and What to Do About It, Harvard Business Review, October 2016

Personal Governance - 6

Principle V – Personal Development



Managers with good Personal Governance nourish their own personal development, and that of others, via *éducation permanente* (or ‘lifelong learning’). The concept was originally developed by the French economist Jean Fourastie in 1954.

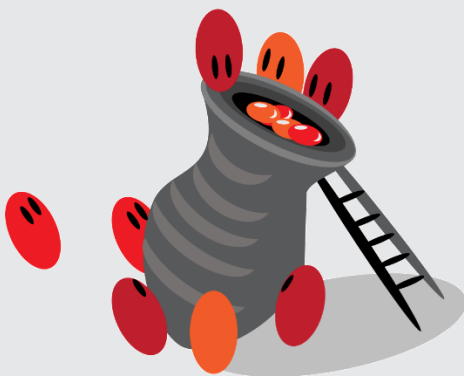
Good Personal Governance entices us towards personal development. The process constantly and dynamically signals new growth areas as it unfolds. Personal development is strongly associated with personality development and addresses our aptitude for reflection, our coping strategies, the way we communicate and interact with others, our ethical frameworks, and beyond.

Recognizing the needs and measures that emerge from our personal development and experiencing how it feels to put them into practice unleash more learning processes still. What’s more, as a senior manager, our own personal development spurs the personal development of our colleagues and direct reports - with a positive ripple effect on the organization.

The implication is clear. *Leaders have to be shining examples of personal development if they want to bring colleagues into an organization’s learning process in a meaningful way.*

We may be over-estimating the current level of senior managers' personal development.

What's more, gaps in their own development mean too few senior managers are credibly engaged in challenging and developing their people.



Yet, as an executive search consultant and management coach, I regularly see senior managers emphasizing professional experience as a way to round out their solid academic grounding. This may be supplemented by one or two (short) executive programs at a high-profile international or US organization, focusing on the latest in business or financial management. However, these development tracks alone are not enough to assure the holistic development of a manager's personality.

We may even be over-estimating the current levels of senior managers' personal development. What's more, gaps in their own development may mean too few senior managers are credibly engaged in challenging and developing their people.

Do We Know What We Know?

Acquiring Knowledge, Cultivating it, Expanding it²

The 'knowledge society', the 'knowledge company', the 'brain company', the 'learning organization', the concepts and slogans are everywhere we look. They signal just how important a role is played by knowledge and executive development in business. I've never heard anyone question them. The question is: *what to do with them?*

Knowledge management makes a distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* knowledge. As individuals, we can access our implicit knowledge, but it is difficult to share. And a company can only unlock implicit knowledge via the brains of individuals. Explicit knowledge is accessible to a larger circle of people within an organization. Not in the sense of property, such as financial capital and other material resources, but in the sense of its (temporary) use.

² Knowledge is the most important production factor (Becker, 2004)

Personal Governance embraces both implicit and explicit knowledge. And managers have to permanently develop their implicit knowledge in order to make it available to the company as explicit knowledge – or at least partially.

At corporate level, CKOs (Chief Knowledge Officers) curate knowledge more or less successfully and productively. And today's majors can choose from a plethora of development options (according to the HBR³, the global spend on employee training and education was close to \$356 bn in 2015). These programs are very much driven by external knowledge suppliers (universities, specialized trainers etc.). Corporate universities have, of course, become widespread, customized to align with corporate strategy, and again, working with external transporters of know how. In medium and small companies, knowledge management and executive development are less broadly supported. Still, programs tend to be situational and pragmatic, making tactical use of external suppliers.

Given the prevalence of organizational learning programs, what's happening on a personal level? For the manager who is interested in Personal Governance, things get more complicated - and more interesting.

Bite Sized Knowledge Chunks – With Little Time to Digest Them

In-house executive development has been gathering pace for the past twenty years as digitization and globalization have fueled new strategies, new business models and a surge in borderless working, (and the corresponding need for inter-cultural competencies).

Yet today's development programs tend to be administered in small doses that are designed to disrupt the normal operational flow as little as possible. They have an aura of disturbance: one manager might use them as a constructive break from the day-to-day, another may just tolerate them as an interruption to delivery. Yet managers can enjoy these bite-sized chunks on a half yearly or yearly basis whilst remaining well within the corridor of their strategic goals.

Although most companies pay lip service to executive development, little time is set aside for participant preparation and follow-up. Many potential insights and knowledge get trapped in a mental cage of non-reflection, and there they remain.

Development has an aura of disturbance: one manager might use it as a constructive break from the day-to-day another may just tolerate it as an interruption to delivery.



³ Why Leadership Training Fails, and What to Do About It, Harvard Business Review, October 2016

4 Trends in Personal Development

1 - The Leaders of Tomorrow Are the Early Adopters of Today

Recent years have seen a marked progression in executive and personal development offers, with universities of applied sciences taking the lead. More and more young managers are motivated to follow programs tailored to their career planning and running in tandem with their professional lives. Not only in the sense of: “right, my rucksack is packed and ready for market,” but as a recurrent activity offering meaningful breaks for rest and application. This means that the development of young managers in terms of specialization, relevance and breadth is outstripping that of their more senior equivalents.

2 - Executive Learning Programs Are Failing to Go the Distance

The higher they rise through the ranks, the more senior managers seem to rely on on-the-job learning and the institutional, bite-sized chunks referred to earlier. Time is at a premium, success is in sight, and leaders don't want to expose themselves to learning in a group that mixes functions and hierarchical levels (for which, read, 'lower levels'). Heterogeneous group learning can be problematic and challenging, it's true: the experiences and needs of participants can vary widely. In this respect, executive programs are more appealing - there is at least some guarantee of learning with senior peers and making new contacts. But what happens after the program is done and dusted? Five or maximum twelve weeks, and that's it for life? Or a 'refresher' five or ten years on? It's hard to argue with these programs, in many cases they are even highly recommended, but we should see them as but one piece in the mosaic of comprehensive personal development - and personality development.

3 - Mature Managers will Be In Demand, and Must Invest in Personal Development

Until now, managers aged over 45 rarely followed the kind of formal further education that spans several years. This can and must change, because ageing workforce factors will generate an increased demand for mature managers (between 50 and 60 years old). Given this demographic evolution alone, investment in substantial development steps - also for managers over 45 - will be worth its weight in gold. Not only personally, but financially.

4 - Management Practitioners and Recruiters Have Tunnel Vision

Many managers follow their own development in the spirit of: “*as much as necessary and as little as possible*”. They obey the call of the market - the bare necessities that will keep them in their current position and stave off their exclusion from the next one. Since managers with a long and successful track record primarily focus on professional experience (something which companies understand and preserve), many feel little compulsion to go further. Absent a burning economic platform, personal development, potentially highly conducive to managers' overall development, is neglected. As an executive search consultant I can report that many hiring organizations have a somewhat narrow focus when filling upper management positions. They are more interested in a first class, formal academic foundation than in (permanent) development, perhaps because of their own shortfalls in the domain. This is still a soft market – and a vicious circle.

Time For a New Approach

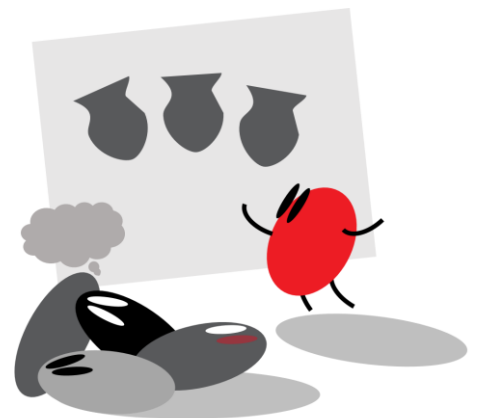
Senior managers have typically followed a range of internal and external trainings over their careers, in technical areas, or in management and leadership. They are weary of traditional training methods, and it's difficult to present them with anything new that appears attractive or meaningful to them. It's also hard to analyze which, if any, elements of earlier training modules are still applicable to practical business management a few years after the event.

Senior managers primarily build on years of rich experience and on-the-job learning. This needs to be built into the design of executive development. We explored executive coaching as a development resource in the 4th article of our Series (Principle III, Self-reflection, Self-assessment, Self-regulation). The arena of personal development is exactly where coaching finds its home. Relative to most managers' previous learning experiences, it is still a relatively new path to learning. It is pre-destined to become part of personal development.

Reflection, experience sharing and advisory support will foster new insights into people's learning and development needs and ignite their desire for additional development. Executive coaching in particular has become integral to the executive development on offer to managers. Yet is still under-utilized.

It's also important to point out that whilst coaching is an important and high-potential form of learning, it cannot replace other cornerstones of executive development. On one hand it can act as a stimulus and complement. On the other, it is key to personality development.

Senior Managers are weary of traditional training methods, and its difficult to present them with anything new that appears attractive or meaningful.



We cannot experience learning as an obligation or a duty, but rather as an irresistible journey of discovery, following multiple paths, to multiple destinations.



Personality Development

The primary concern of Personal Governance is not further education *per se*, but personality development.

This particular Personal Governance Principle pulls sharply into focus the forms of learning and further development that cover a manager's aptitude for personal reflection. Coping strategies, for example, communication behaviors, interaction with others, ethical sensibility and so on. It's also worthwhile keeping in mind the all-important connection with Self Reflection (Principle III).

Learning and personality development are never far from reach, but they do have to be practiced on a lifelong basis.

Lifelong Learning - a Fact of Long Life

Lifelong learning is a common catch phrase and may seem more like a short lived fad than a durable learning theme. However, demographic realities, as mentioned earlier, will heighten the importance of *lifelong learning* and transform it into a *fact of long life*. Many universities are gearing themselves up for this and have installed Centers for Lifelong Learning, conducting research and preparatory conceptual work, and designing concrete educational options.

Lifelong learning (on-the-job, and in Personal Governance, primarily off-the-job) nourishes lifelong mental vitality and is based on our curiosity to discover new things. It demands the creative competence of personal renewal, one which also happens to be a pre-condition for powering innovation in organizations. Seen in this light, learning cannot be experienced an obligation or a duty, but rather as an irresistible journey of discovery, following multiple paths to multiple destinations.

Neither age, time pressure, nor any other perceived constraints should ever lead us to renounce experiencing these journeys of discovery - or missing out on the valuable insights with which they provide us. Yet this kind of recognition and learning can only happen when the learning contents truly interest, fascinate and spellbind us, spurring us onward to further discoveries still.

Learning, in form and content, must be based in a well-reflected self-assessment, moving into the realm of our life planning and striking the bullseye of our personal interests and resources.

Linked to this, the *incentive structure* of lifelong learning must be also be interesting content-wise. That way, we engage in the learning process in a way that we can credibly justify to ourselves, rather than being press-ganged into a mandatory program. Because of the position of influence they have reached, senior managers can claim the space to live out their 'interest-driven' self development - and inspire their entourage accordingly.

Ethics Can Never Be Taken For Granted

Finally, the bridge between incentives, lifelong learning, and Principle II (Ethics), deserves a mention. In my experience, the demand for the education or further development of ethical virtues is low compared to the demand for other competencies. Ethics are simply not part of the typically sought-after portfolio. Instead, it's quietly assumed that any coherent leadership profile will contain a reasonably developed set of moral virtues. So the demand for concrete development measures is, in my view, undercooked.

Demographic realities will heighten the importance of *lifelong learning* and transform it into a *fact of long life*.

Self-check Questions for Personal Development

Which activities do I engage in with a view to developing my personality?
What was my last significant development step (more than 2 weeks)?
What effect did this have on me?
What development step have I planned next, and how long will it last?
What steps have I followed in ethics and ethical management?
What do I imagine *éducation permanente* (lifelong learning) to be, what role does it play for me personally?

Good Personal Governance demands self care in the sense of lifelong, holistic, personal development. This leads to the development of colleagues and the whole company, via individual and collective learning processes.

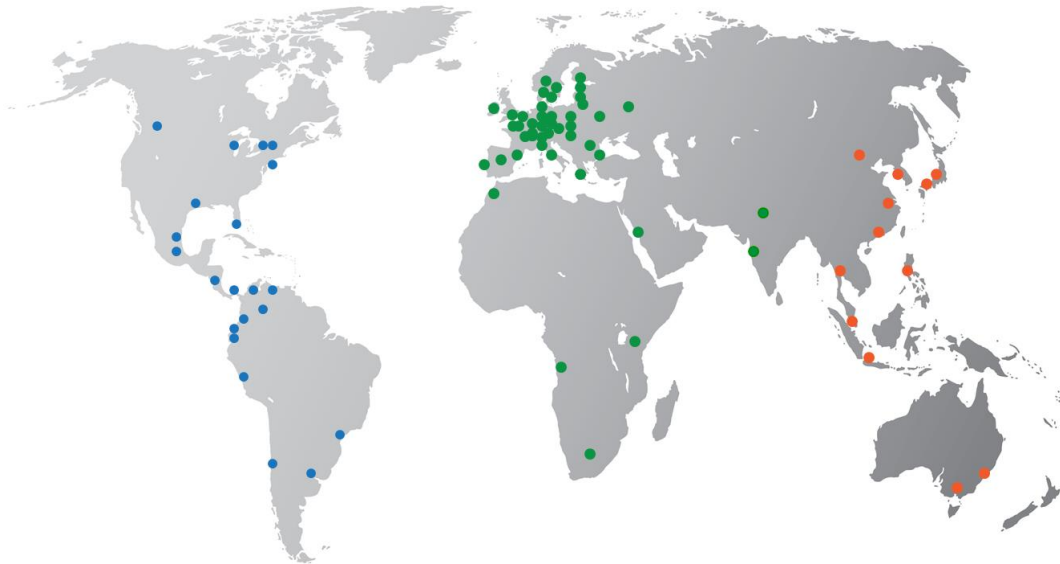
Credits

This series is based on 'Personal Governance als unverzichtbarer Teil der Corporate Governance und Unternehmensführung' – Fredy Hausammann, (Haupt Berne, 2007). It was translated from German and adapted with additional research by Steffi Gande, Amrop.

About Amrop

With over 70 offices in more than 50 countries, Amrop provides services in Executive Search, Leadership Assessment and Board Consulting. It is the largest partnership of its kind.

Amrop advises the world's most dynamic organizations on finding and positioning Leaders For What's Next: top talent, adept at working across borders in markets around the world.



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