

The Inner Management Team

excerpt of Fischer-Epe, M. (2012): Das Innere Führungsteam.

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Summary

The “Inner Management Team” is an easily accessible model to address conflicting role and leadership requirements. Managers (and those in the process of becoming one) can thereby clarify their respective roles, adopt them and learn to act accordingly. The main role requirements are represented as separate team players, who need to work well together if they want to be successful.

Fields of Application

With the help of this model, questions regarding leadership and difficult leadership situations can be analysed holistically. Thereby, the coachee constructively deals with the not so well-loved aspects of leadership and his personal ambiguities. The model helps executives and people managers to develop skills of self-assessment and to enhance their role competence role determination and find solutions to difficult leadership situations appropriate arguments in conflict situations and difficult leadership conversations and i.e. prepare for difficult conversations.

Goal and Benefits

The “Inner Management Team” model helps executives and people leaders gain assurance and clarity in designing their leadership role. They’ll be able to understand and rationalise their behaviour as a leader from different angles.

Detailed Description

The “Inner Management Team” model is a variation of the “The Inner Team”, invented by Schulz v. Thun, integrating parts of psychodrama and gestalt psychotherapy (see Schulz v. Thun, 1998/2010). However, the two models are quite distinct: The “Inner Team”, as Schulz von Thun developed it, is a tool for self-clarification. The coachees explore aspects of their personality, that drive their behaviour in certain situations either unconsciously or consciously. The basic idea in using the “Inner Team” is that all identified parts should be accepted and have a reason to exist based on the coachees personal history. The client is encouraged to acknowledge, accept and take each individual part’s perspective into consideration.

The “Inner Management Team” is to some extent different. There’s no exploration of inner aspects, motives, voices etc. that the coachee discovers and names on their own. Instead, the “Inner Management Team” consists of four core team members:

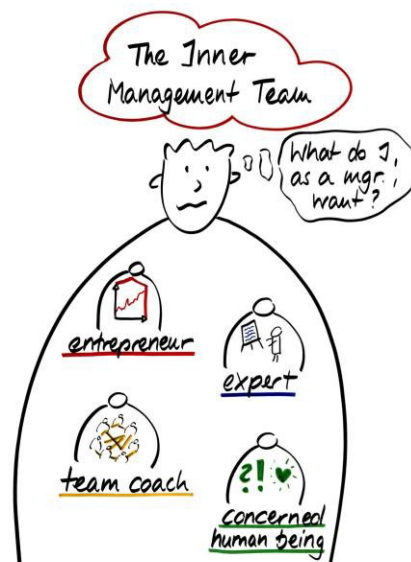
- Entrepreneur
- Expert
- (Team-) Coach
- Concerned Human Being

This shifts the focus from aspects of the coachee's personality to the different aspects of the leadership role. These might sometimes even contradict each other (in reference to Redlich, who used the idea of the inner team for the systematic reflection regarding role requirements in conflict; see Redlich, 2000 and 2009).

The metaphor of the "Inner Management Team" perfectly illustrates these four aspects of the leadership role and makes them emotionally tangible. It emphasises the fact that the executive has to accept and incorporate all four aspects of the leadership role, instead of picking just one or two of them.

Each member of the team (Entrepreneur, Expert, (Team-) Coach, and Concerned Human Being) are explored together with the coachee.

The coach explains the model with the help of the flip chart, asks probing questions about each part of the inner leadership team and captures the exploration's core messages by writing them down.



Entrepreneur:

Here the focus is on economic success and the company's interests. The coachees have to lead their department and area of responsibility in a way, that employees are able to contribute to the strategic goals of the company. The "Entrepreneur" deals with strategic goals, costs and efficiency, gains and losses. The coach might ask: „How do you perceive the situation from the entrepreneur's point of view? What are the entrepreneurial chances and risks? How promising is option A or option B regarding the company's goals? What do you have to demand from others as an entrepreneur?“

Expert:

The executive or people leader is also always an expert when it comes to developing work processes. He has to make sure that work is done well and efficiently. The coach helps to explore this aspect, for example by asking the following questions: „What would you consider to be quality? How efficient is the process? What kind of procedures have to be developed? What kind of qualifications do you need in your team? What do have to do to succeed?“

The entrepreneur's and the expert's role can easily contradict: Where the expert wants to optimise processes, the entrepreneur might prefer a 80:20 solution with an increase in profit as the overreaching goal.

(Team-)Coach:

Executives or people leaders have to create an environment for their team members that enables them to cooperate successfully and to get the work done. Like a (team-)coach, they have to ask themselves: „How can I support the cooperation in my department? What do the employees need in order to develop their strengths?“

But not everything that's useful for the individual is useful for the team – and vice versa. Additionally, the insights of the (team-)coach might conflict with the entrepreneur's and the expert's expectations. Maybe the entrepreneur focusses on performance, while the (team-)coach opts for a period of relief in order to cope with work overload.

Concerned Human Being:

Executives and people leaders have to consider their personal values, their health and capacity, their personal life. They not only carry functions within the company, but are at the same time human beings with individual preferences and characteristics, desires, values and emotions. They have to be prepared to take responsibility for their actions and to stand their ground.

The concerned human being might have completely different ideas and goals than the entrepreneur, the expert or the (team-)coach. Sometimes, as an executive it might be necessary to confront an employee strongly, even though one feels personally quite attached to this person. At other times an executive might be forced to voice management resolutions that he/she personally finds unreasonable or wrong and unfair.

Coaches will be led by the coach to become aware of their personal concerns in their leadership role. The coach might ask: „How do you experience this situation personally? What bothers you? Which inner voices are looking for attention? Why is this personally so important to you? What would you wish for, if everything went your way? What kind of proceedings could you support and cope with? How can you fulfil your role requirements without denying yourself? How can you find a balance between loyalty and personal credibility? What do you experience as personally challenging?“

This fourth perspective has a different quality. The so called concerned human being doesn't represent a role-oriented position, but a personality-oriented one. It is – consciously or unconsciously – tremendously influential for all different facets of leadership.

This part of the exploration is often challenging for executives and people leaders who tend to operate mainly rationally, but it is nevertheless important. It is essential to consciously reflect on emotions, values, positions and interests involved. Only then will the executive or people leader be able to consciously control their leadership actions in complex conflict situations. It will also enable them to deal with their ambiguities.

Field of Application 1:

Self-assessment and development of role competence

Executives and people leaders can use this model to reflect on how successful they are in recognising and integrating the four aspects of their role. This helps them understand which aspects come easy to them and which are perceived as more difficult – and therefore are maybe not properly developed. First, the coach explains the model and clarifies the criteria for the self-assessment together with the coachee. These criteria can either be developed jointly during the coaching session or can be explored with the help of questionnaires. The next step centres around the development of those leadership aspects that need to be strengthened and ways to achieve that.

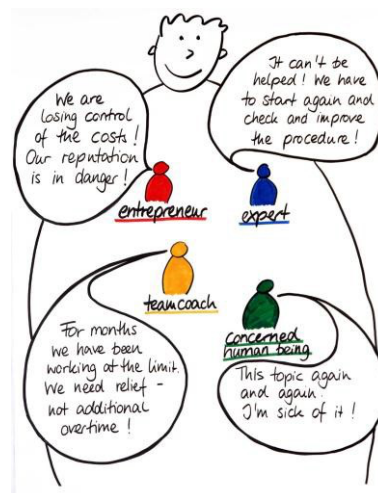
Field of Application 2:

Role clarification and decision making in difficult leadership situations

Exploring the following questions about the “Inner Management Team” leads to valuable insights when dealing with difficult situations: How does the coachee judge a certain situation as the inner entrepreneur, expert, (team-)coach and as a concerned human being? What are his/her conclusions? What goals and behavioural options can be derived from those conclusions?

At the beginning the coach encourages the coachee to voice everything that concerns him/her rationally and emotionally in regard to all four aspects.

The coach visualises the core messages and thereby helps the coachee to structure their thoughts. Then these messages are evaluated: What level of importance do the different arguments of the team members have?



Only after this valuation has taken place will the client decide how to proceed - regarding a certain behaviour or a specific procedure, that is justified by his role requirements or that he feels himself able to accept.

Field of Application 3:

Preparing for a conversation and a role-appropriate argumentation

After the coachee has decided on a specific approach, the coach helps him/her prepare themselves for a concrete situation: „How are you planning to conduct the conversation? Which arguments out of the four different perspectives would you like to present to your employees?“

Very often the answer or solution is that all arguments can be revealed, if phrased in the right way. By sometimes showing even conflicting thoughts to their employees, executives and people leaders demonstrate that they don't make decisions arbitrarily, but with responsibility and respect to their role.

Future leadership conversations can then be practised in role plays. The coach acts as sparring partner and pays special attention to how well the client succeeds in rationalising their decisions with regard to the four aspects.

Personal Advice/ Comment/ Experience

It is recommended not to be too dogmatic with the four aspects. There are a lot of overlaps. Sometimes the team members have to be re-named, i.e. manager, sales-manager, representative etc. Of course it is possible to enlarge the inner management team by additional members, but in terms of succinctness it is advisable to limit it to four.

Technical Information (Duration, Materials, Preparation)

As the four aspects have been adapted from the everyday experiences of executives and people leaders, experienced managers need only little time for explanations. It's often enough to give an explanatory sentence and draw the four team members onto the flip chart: „I suggest we analyse your situation from the main perspectives of your leadership role...“.

Younger executives and people leaders that are just settling into their role, tend to need a little more time. Because of the variety of application scenarios the duration of a setting can vary from 5 minutes to several coaching sessions.

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