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Chapter 9.

Co-leadership:

Leadership as collective initiative

Thomas Andersson and Stefan Tengblad

In many ways, traditional leadership research has reached a dead end by equating leadership with what a manager thinks and does. In this chapter, we argue that leadership consists of coordinated activities carried out by people who are in a dependent relationship with each other. Our approach means that we highlight that the formal leader is dependent on his employees just as much as the employees are dependent on their manager. It also means that all employees should be seen as co-producers of leadership, regardless of whether they are active or passive. This view of leadership can also be applied outside the domains of working life, such as in association life and in social interaction.

The fact that we want to break the strong connection between the formal manager and leadership does not mean that we see this as unnecessary and redundant. On the contrary, the difficulties in introducing and maintaining well-functioning leaderless work groups show that there is a need for formal leaders. Although there are many examples of organizations dominated by strong professions that work independently and independently, such as lawyers (Winroth 1999), veterinarians (Andersson 2005) and university teachers (Tengblad et al. 2007), we see several disadvantages with this. A disadvantage is often that organizations lose most of their strategic ability as strong professions tend to be disobedient to attempts to lead in a direction which does not align with their professional agendas.

Another disadvantage is that strong professional values can contain a lot of historical ballast. An example is the nonchalance (sometimes bordering on penmanship) that less experienced professionals are often exposed to and that is captured in concepts such as "the first dog years" or "learning the job the hard way". That professional cultures in general are characterized by collegial consideration, justice and solidarity is a romantic idea far from a more crass and cold-hammered reality. For us, being professional means that you possess deep professional knowledge that you are prepared to use and share with the aim of achieving good outcomes rather than belonging to a group with a strong professional identity or high status.

The chapter is arranged as follows. Initially, a somewhat in-depth description of the shortcomings in traditional leadership research is made, followed by a presentation of the theories and research used to justify the view of leadership as collective initiative. In the second half of the chapter, our approach is illustrated with the help of ongoing research on employee engagement and the relationship between formal leaders and employees. A close interaction between managers and employees that dissolves the boundaries between leadership and employeeship is described as ideal. In what we call leadership, employees can be so involved in the decision-making and progress of a business that they can be seen as co-leaders as much as employees.

Leadership as individual behaviors and characteristics.

When we as researchers go to companies and organizations and ask what they would like to collaborate on, leadership is often presented as an area they want help with. Leadership is seen as something of a "magic formula" that can solve most organizational problems, as long as it is possible to get hold of the right leadership personality. It's the same in the airport's bookshelves, where there are plenty of books describing the success recipes of various business managers, researchers or management consultants. The myth of the heroic leader who single-handedly turns the tide in companies is also reproduced in business magazines

l such as in leading journals such as the Harvard Business Review. What is regularly missing in these hero stories, however, is to what extent good ideas have come from people other than the top manager or to what extent the success was due to the initiative and ability of the employees. In our culture, top managers can freely take credit for the achievements of others: "Look here - thanks to my leadership skills, sales have increased by 25 percent." The leader in question may not have sold for a single penny himself but may still be considered a sales genius. Managers' overconfidence in their own importance and ability can also be fueled by luscious flattery and general condescension. In the leader's sometimes pleasant incubator - which is formed when the manager makes himself impervious to criticism - speed blindness and carelessness often develop, which can lead to serious crises.

There are several reasons why leadership research has ended up so skewed. One of the reasons is the excessive psychologization of leadership, i.e. a focus on the leader as an individual with more or less good mental skills and personal qualities. A considerable part of consulting activities focused on leadership also drives the psychologization of leadership with test batteries that categorize managers into different leadership types. But anyone who has been in a leadership position knows that there is quite a bit a manager can do on his own; it is about interaction with the employees if something should happen. Even brutal and powerful dictators depend on the consent of those around them. If no one wants to do the dictator's bidding, his power is swept away as quickly as a leaf in an autumn storm. It is also not about whether employees are willing to let themselves be controlled or not, but also whether they are willing to take initiatives that go beyond formal orders and instructions. A company manager can perhaps effectively lead an organization of a maximum of 100 employees if he is really skilled, but if the organization is larger and exposed to competition, delegation of responsibility and initiative is required. In many cases, companies that are led by business leaders with an excessive need for control perform poorly already when the first employee is hired. Effective leadership is about achieving effective interaction with other people where initiatives are encouraged as well as creative and constructive responses to such initiatives.

The unfruitfulness of a psychologizing view of leadership can be further underlined by the fact that several decades of research have not been able to identify what are the decisive "leadership qualities" (e.g. Fiedler 1996). What proved successful in one case does not work under other conditions. The only thing the researchers have actually managed to find is that "generally competent" people - those who are a little more intelligent, a little more communicative, a little more social than average and so on - seem to become more successful leaders. However, such people also become more successful as, for example, economists or engineers, so this is not about any qualities that are specific to leadership. Despite this, many of the models popular today and used in recruitment and training contexts are still based on the assumption of specific and personality-bound leadership qualities.

Separation of management and leadership

Another reason why we end up crooked is the unproductive separation between management and leadership (see chapter 1). It was the relatively unknown Abraham Zaleznik (1977) who wrote the article in which the distinction was first made, and the division became widely known when Warren Bennis (Bennis & Nanus 1985) and John Kotter (1990) praised leaders and leadership over managers and management. Kotter believed, for example, that leadership was the positive thing that would lead organizations forward, but also what was missing in organizations. Highlighting leadership as a phenomenon was certainly important, but it should have been presented as a complement to or an aspect of something already existing. Instead, the consequence was that the concepts were pulled apart in a radical way, and the division between managers and leaders became a goldmine for the consulting industry, which would now "transform managers into leaders". What was missed was that leadership is not a personal trait or even a role – leadership is instead a social process in which the manager normally has the main role, but it is not a question of a one-man theatre.

The impact of the leadership discourse led to ordinary managers with an administrative orientation starting to emphasize in interviews: "I don't want to see myself as a manager but as a leader" (Andersson 2005). Leadership began to be seen as something ugly, something that no manager should really be dealing with. But in reality, it is difficult to be accepted as a leader if you mismanage important aspects of leadership, such as representing your employer or keeping routines and administration in order. Employees actually appreciate both good management and good leadership and that this is combined into something of a comprehensive practice:

A manager who is only busy with administrative routines has problems with failing employee motivation and cohesion, while a manager who only coaches and motivates without directing creates an organization where employees pull in different directions. In practice, employees expect that managers can both give straight and clear messages and at the same time listen to and take on board employees' points of view, as well as that the manager is in order and aware of the administrative routines without acting squarely for the sake of it. Employees also value that decisions are based on facts and logic as well as emotionally motivating. (Tengblad et al. 2007, pp. 47–48)

The positive thing that can be said about Bennis, with several emphasizing the importance of leadership, is that it can counteract the tendency towards re-bureaucratization that is going on in many of today's organizations, both private and public, where the administrative burdens are growing at the same time as new IT systems with an almost infinite appetite for information is installed. But shelves of policy documents and administrative systems can hardly create commitment or stimulate innovative thinking or job satisfaction. A well-functioning leadership can do this if it is clearly relationship-oriented and with a focus on involving employees in problem solving and the progress of a business.

Shifting the focus from the individual to the relationship

Leader and leadership have, as a result of the separation of management and leadership, become mainly discursive concepts.

Leadership becomes an important part of managers' identity work rather than something that managers actually "do" (Alvesson 2006, Andersson 2005, Sveningsson & Larsson 2006). Some researchers, such as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), therefore claim that leadership as a phenomenon may not even exist "beyond the discourse", at least not as everyday managerial behavior (see also chapter 2 of this book).

We agree with Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) that leadership is primarily a discursive concept, but we believe that it also exists as a practice and phenomenon. What makes leadership "invisible" is that it is still linked to the leader instead of to the relationship between leader and employee. Without leadership and co-operation in constructive collaboration, there is not much a manager can do alone. It is possible to imagine two extremes of the relationship. The one extreme is that the business is completely connected to the leader and his actions and that the business becomes paralyzed and almost stops when the leader is not in place. The other extreme is about the employees taking care of themselves and the leader not having any particular influence on how the business is conducted. The normal case lies somewhere between these extremes, but with a striking side to one of the sides. In this chapter, we will illustrate different situations of co-leadership with different emphasis on leadership and co-operation, as well as different prerequisites for a constructive collaboration in these relationships.

In research on Scandinavian management (Jönsson 1995), researchers have shown that Swedish leadership is largely based on delegated responsibility and great trust in employees. Instead of controlling employee behavior in detail, goal management and various forms of coaching have become characteristic of the work of many Swedish managers. It has also been relatively common in Sweden (as well as in other Scandinavian countries) to let employees participate in decision-making. This is to ensure good decision quality as well as commitment in the implementation of the decisions.

It is therefore perhaps not so surprising that the term employee is of Scandinavian origin and that there are no direct English-language equivalents. The employee concept removes some of the focus that has been on the leaders and what they do and focuses instead on how

employees relate to managers, employers and colleagues (Tengblad 2003, Hällsten & Tengblad 2006, Tengblad et al. 2007, Andersson et al. forthcoming). In the later research on employee engagement, the manager and leadership are seen as central, and the authors above believe that it is relatively pointless to study these phenomena in isolation from each other. Leadership and employees exert a constant mutual influence on each other. Leadership and collaboration can be exercised more or less constructively, and co-leadership has been created as a concept to describe when there is a constructive collaboration.

Relationship between Leadership and employee-ship

To shift the focus from the individual to the relationship, we need to change our approach to what is studied when we study leadership. This can be summarized in three main points. First, we need to focus on what managers and employees do in their everyday lives, that is, their practice and approach to each other. Second, we must complement a functional/analytical approach with an understanding of the symbolism of actions. Managers are often good at analyzing a problem and coming up with ideas for a solution, but then when the solution is to be implemented, they underestimate the symbolic interpretation of what they are doing, such as what feelings it arouses in employees and what signals it gives regarding trust, competence and more. Managers thus often underestimate what happens in the relationship when they implement things. It could be expressed as "leadership is what happens behind your back when you are busy talking about leadership" (cf. the discussion of organizational culture in Alvesson & Sveningsson 2008).

This brings us to the third point. If leadership is about what happens in a relationship, it is possible to ask what kind of activities leadership is constituted by. As we see it, the core of leadership is an ability to take initiative, linked to a developed sense of responsibility. The Swedish word for responsibility can be divided into the words *svara an*, which shows the active origin of the concept (Johansson 1998).

Answering can also be linked to the English word answer. Even the common English word for responsibility, responsibility, can be connected to respond to, which is clear in the Swedish words *respons* and *responder*. Responding, or the even more active "taking initiative", is what creates creativity and development power in organizations. Responses or initiatives can be about both answering a request and coming up with new proposals in a long chain in an ongoing interaction between cooperating individuals.

Highlighting the importance of employees does not therefore mean that we see leadership as less important. This is something that can be learned from what happened in the working life of the 1990s. During this decade, management concepts focused on employees taking on greater responsibility gained great influence. Empowerment became perhaps the most famous concept. The basic idea of empowerment was to empower employees by distributing responsibilities that previously rested with managers. The increased employee responsibility would be motivating, and at the same time demands could be made that the employees really took their responsibilities. It was therefore about a "giving and taking/requiring" of responsibility. Setting the tone for developing and conveying this idea in Sweden was Jan Carlzon's book *Riv pira miderna!* (1985) through the flat organizations he advocated. A direct consequence of this was that many managerial positions were removed in connection with so-called flat organizations being fashionable, not least during the 1990s.

While the basic idea of empowering people is good, these ideas had effects that may not have been fully intended. We are still living with something of a hangover from the 1990s, where investments in flat organizations resulted in organizations with few managers. It has not been unusual for managers to have personnel responsibility for 50 to 100 employees or even more. In elderly care, to take an example, the entire management level was removed. Superintendents were replaced with HR managers with responsibility for several superintendent areas. These managers quickly became overloaded with administratively oriented tasks such as budgeting, invoice handling, payroll and recruitment. The Municipal Union, which was initially positive about self-governing work groups, changed its position at the beginning of the 2000s. In their action program from 2003 entitled "Cheer the Boss!"

emphasized that Kommunal's members were unable to Create a good working environment on their own. Instead, problems with overload, cooperation problems, frustration and resignation increased. The action program therefore emphasized the importance of the manager and employees working together to create workplaces that combined high efficiency and a good working environment.

A problem with managers-less organizations is that the opportunities for contact between employees and managers become limited, and thus communication between managers and employees also becomes sparse and formal. Often, the organization is also paralyzed in action by the fact that decisions shared by the organization have little impact, as well as that employee initiatives do not take root as a result of insufficient financial and organizational support. Organizations with too few managers therefore provide poor conditions for both well-functioning leadership and good employee relations. The idea of co-leadership thus differs from empowerment on one crucial point. It is based on active and present managers and on a strengthened relationship and improved cooperation between managers and employees, not solely on the delegation of former managerial responsibilities to non-managers (Andersson et al. forthcoming). The manager is thus a key resource in the creation of a constructive workforce, and a constructive workforce is a prerequisite for successful leadership.

In order to avoid creating a further division similar to manager/leader, we therefore want to emphasize that the reason why we focus on employees more than leadership is that employees are less known, researched and established. Collaboration does not replace leadership – it is rather a prerequisite for good leadership, and the concept clarifies that it is about relationships rather than individual behaviour.

Employeeship as a descriptive and normative concept.

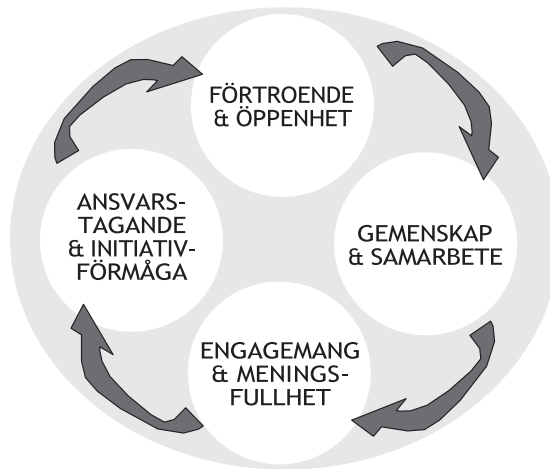
If we start from the definition of employeeship as the practices and attitudes that employees develop towards their managers, the employer in general and colleagues, employeeship as a descriptive concept is thus about describing the employeeship that exists depending on different conditions and traditions.

See, for example, the "employeehip ladder" in Tengblad (2003) and an alternative version, the "employee map" (Tengblad et al. 2007).

Employeehip as a normative (prescriptive) concept is instead based on the prerequisites required for constructive employeehip to arise. Constructive means that it is positive for both the organization and the employees. A constructive partnership can only develop when both parties (management and employees) take responsibility for the relationship. The ideal here is a positive relationship between managers and employees and that the employees become co-producers of the leadership while the manager strives to create good conditions for such co-leadership.

Co-leadership: Leadership as collective initiative.

Now we want to give examples of how co-leadership is practiced and can be practiced in Swedish working life. To describe important dimensions of co-leadership, we use the model "collaboration wheel" (Hällsten & Tengblad 2006), which consists of four interacting pairs of concepts (see figure 9.1).



Figur 9.1. medarbetarskapshjulet.

Before we go into more detail about the various components of co-leadership, it may be appropriate to mention three prerequisites that need to be met for a co-leadership to be created.

- Patience - it takes time! As co-leadership is about attitudes and human relationships, they can be difficult to change, as the existing attitudes may be unconscious or taken for granted. All work to create co-leadership thus requires persistent work.
- Both leaders and employees are responsible for the relationship between them working, and both have important parts in the development of genuine co-leadership! It cannot be emphasized enough that it is about developing the relationship and interaction between leadership and employees. This places demands on both leaders and employees. Trust, for example, is not only about other people being trustworthy, but also about our willingness and ability to trust other people (Andersson 2006).
- In many cases, a fairly substantial dose of thought development is required in the workplace in order for co-leadership to develop. There are in many places strong cultural attitudes that characterize the behavior of both leaders and employees. In many workplaces, it is therefore more appropriate to start by developing employees' general ability to develop responsible professional roles and to be able to communicate and collaborate more effectively. Attempting to introduce co-leadership should therefore only be applied to workplaces with well-developed professional roles and abilities, where there is receptivity to the approach and an ambition to continue to develop.

With these three prerequisites in the back of our minds, we will now describe the four conceptual pairs of co-leadership. There is a point in calling the model the employee wheel, as the pairs of concepts are in practice closely integrated and influence each other. In other words, it is not possible to concentrate on just one of the pairs of concepts, but all the conditions must be met, otherwise the development work will be "sloppy".

Trust and openness

Of course, it is important that employees feel trust in each other as well as in their managers and the employer as a whole. In many cases, trust is the opposite of control – if there is trust, you can enter a situation "unprotected" without having to have control over it. Trusting relationships can therefore be used to carry out actions that go beyond compliance with conventions, as the following quote can illustrate:

"I have confidence in him ... so I usually have a positive basic attitude towards what he says and does. It's not the first time we've done something together, but I know from experience that what he says is well founded... and it never gets stuck in 'a lot of talk and a little workshop', but he has an ability to get things out of his hands." (Veterinary)

The quote is taken from an employee in the organization Alfa when she was asked to describe what was the best thing about her boss. It shows that trust can be seen as a positive resource in that it tends to influence the outcome of a situation in a positive way (as long as it is not blind and unwarranted trust). The quote also shows that trust is something that develops over time when people interact.

Trust is generally about trusting someone or something over which we really have no control. Mayer et al. (1995) captures this in their division of trust into person trust and system trust respectively. Personal trust is linked to trusting specific people and is defined as a person's belief that the other person will act benevolently towards him/her. System trust, on the other hand, is about expectations about how some abstract aspect (for example, money) affects a social context. In an organization, both types of trust become relevant: personal trust in the personal relationships that exist in the workplace and system trust more linked to functions, such as managers and employees in general, as well as to formal rule systems, for example labor law rules.

Trust is not necessarily about liking each other, but rather about trusting each other's professionalism. In the following example, an employee was asked if he had confidence in his boss, and he answered:

"We're very different and easily on a collision course, but ... I still think he always delivers ... and I'm never worried about telling him openly what I think. Well, I probably trust him, but I would hardly hang out with him if we didn't work together." (It consultant)

As the example suggests, openness is important for trust to develop. How else is it possible to understand how the other person acts and thinks? Understanding the other is often a basis for trust, which leads us to another important condition for trust to arise, namely empathy. It is difficult to trust a person who lacks the ability to take into account the consequences of their own actions for other people. By caring about other people, it is possible to build strong bonds of trust if the "concern" or consideration is mutual.

Community and collaboration

Collaboration is another key word for the emergence of co-leadership. It is about cooperation within groups, between groups and between managers and employees. When it comes to cooperation within groups, it is important that the individuals cooperate in a non-prestige way (Quinn et al. 2003). This means that group members help each other because it is "their joint task", not to "have something good" for someone else. A downside of strong and close-knit groups can be that the better they tend to be at cooperation within the group, the more difficult it can be to get them to cooperate with other groups or to take an interest in things outside the group's area of responsibility. Boundaries between groups are not only created by the division of the organization into different departments and groups, they can also be created by different occupations and functions.

In healthcare facilities, doctors often feel a greater sense of community with doctors from other departments and even from other hospitals than with nurses from their own department. It is therefore difficult to create good cooperation in multiprofessional groups (Andersson & Liff 2007). Often, however, the management can create structures that enable even multi-professional groups to work well together. The following examples come from the interdisciplinary department of Industrial Economics at the University of Skövde:

"The daily coffee break was the solution! The department was created by bringing together a number of business economists, data scientists, engineers, statisticians and behavioral scientists under the same roof. I didn't even have the sense to realize that it could be difficult. Pretty soon we worked very well together. We early established shared coffee at ten o'clock and three o'clock every day, which became almost obligatory, and it almost replaced our formal meetings. As we got to know each other as people during the coffee breaks, the labels of engineer and economist disappeared quite quickly." (Prefect)

The prefect illustrates something that a manager and management team can actually do to avoid battles between different professional groups: create arenas where the people get to know each other. It is almost a matter of "forcing" these groups together so that they start building personal relationships. Because the fact is that many professional conflicts are not based on personal experiences but rather are part of the professional identity. When personal relationships take over, conflicts created by the history of different professions rather than personal experience will no longer be an obstacle to cooperation.

Commitment and meaningfulness

Employeehip is essentially an organizational concept, and in other words it is about what it means to be a good employee and not just a good teacher, nurse or machine operator (Andersson et al. forthcoming). In the profession/occupational identity itself, there is often a relatively well-defined definition of what is required of a good professional within the respective profession.

Employeeeship is also about taking responsibility for what is good for the organization you belong to, taking an active part in the development of the workplace and having a constructive approach to colleagues, managers and others. If the task itself is experienced as interesting, it is naturally easier to feel commitment and meaningfulness in one's work. Now, however, it is not so good that all tasks automatically feel stimulating. In such situations, it is all the more important that the management takes responsibility for making the work feel meaningful.

There are a number of motivational theories that provide important insights into how work can be organized in order to feel more meaningful. Examples of motivational research from the 1960s that are still relevant are Herzberg (1966), Vroom (1964) and Adams (1965). Herzberg's two-factor theory divides factors into two groups according to how they affect us. Hygiene factors concern how employees are treated in the workplace and how they perceive their external working conditions such as well-being, safety, working environment and salary. Hygiene factors actually mainly have a negative potential. If they are not fulfilled, we tend to become less motivated, but if they are fulfilled, we do not become more motivated if we get even more of that factor. Motivational factors have a more "direct relationship", where more of the factor tends to increase our motivation. This includes responsibility, self-realization and other inner driving forces such as having a job useful to society and being able to help other people. It is important to be aware that motivation is something very individual. We are motivated by different things, and we are also motivated by different things during different phases of our life and even depending on the shape of the day and the situation.

Vroom and Adams focus on the importance of the situation as they focus on how we are motivated rather than on what motivates us. They thus describe the motivation process itself. Vroom states that our expectations largely control how we become motivated. Simply put, it is about whether we can see a connection between our work effort and the results we achieve, further if we expect our results to bring a reward and finally if we expect the reward to be something we desire.

In other words, Vroom shows the importance of trying to create a whole in the work, which enables employees to see the results of their work effort. Adams highlights the influence of the justice aspect on motivation. We are not only motivated by what we ourselves are rewarded for, but also by whether our reward feels fair in relation to, for example, colleagues' rewards. If I see that my colleague takes significantly less responsibility in his work than I do, but still has an equivalent salary development, equivalent benefits, development opportunities, etc., this affects my motivation negatively.

All motivational theories show how important it is that the manager works in every employee relationship to try to understand each individual employee. If the manager does not know his employees, there is a risk that he or she starts from simple connections, such as that more responsibility is always motivating. Rather, responsibility is motivating for some and burdensome for others. It is only by understanding each individual employee that the manager can try to influence meaningfulness and commitment to work.

A common manager's mistake is that the manager tries to convince his employees in various ways that they should get involved in the issues that the manager himself thinks are important. The methods for this – be it charisma, persuasiveness, whip or carrot – are often ineffective. Who really allows themselves to be seduced by the charisma and visionary thinking of their immediate boss or a few extra hundred bucks in their wallet? What can be effective, in addition to leading by having good personal relationships, is first and foremost to capture what employees find engaging and meaningful. A school leader of a school where successful development work has been carried out compared her current supportive and employee-oriented leadership style with how she behaved as a newly appointed head (Bennich-Björkman 2002, p. 135):

"[It is] very important to participate and not to act like I did before, like a locomotive trying to start a lot of wagons [...]. It was thought that development work was being started. Then they turned around after six months and looked. There was not a single carriage left. Everyone had disconnected. It was not their project ... they were not involved."

Responsibility and initiative

Responsibility is a concept that is closely linked to action (Johansson 1998). The person who feels responsible in a situation is often the one who sets things in motion to solve problems and more. The fact that responsibility and initiative are placed here in a conceptual pair is therefore due to the fact that they are so closely integrated. The active attitude to responsibility by taking responsibility/responding is in a way synonymous with initiative-taking, but since initiative-taking does not have to be linked to responsibility, there is reason to make a distinction between the concepts.

As we have mentioned before, the working life of the 1990s was characterized by the delegation of responsibility to employees, and there was a belief in a proportionality between increased responsibility and efficiency. However, there were several problems with this. One was that the insight that we all have an individual approach to responsibility was missing; many are motivated by increased responsibility, while others find it merely burdensome. Many companies and organizations also missed that employees want financial compensation for their responsibility. This is also how senior managers want to justify their higher salary, that they have such a burdensome and pressing responsibility to bear. A third problem is that many workers find it difficult to say no to more responsibility even when it starts to have negative effects for them. Most of us are motivated by increased responsibility and become more efficient, but this only applies to a certain limit. In the long run, we risk stress and burnout. Here there is an important role for managers to play, namely to help employees set limits to their responsibility by having knowledge of how they work.

Responsibility is socially constructed (Johansson 1998) and thus given different meanings by different people. In other words, when someone takes a responsibility, it means that that person has constructed their view of what the responsibility entails and should lead to in the form of attitudes and actions. An example from Volvo in Flöby:

"I don't just run the machine, I'm responsible for it... that means maintenance, cleaning, yes, a lot of things besides running the machine... Most people here know their machines, but of course there are people who just run their machine... Sooner or later that machine will crash." (Machine operator)

It is easy to see the potential in machine operators' willingness to take long-term and broad responsibility for "their" machines. A prerequisite for employees to be able to take responsibility is that they have both the will and ability to do so. It is not a matter of course that individuals have the ability to take responsibility – support and training may be needed. If we continue to use Volvo Floby as an illustration, it becomes clear that management has an important supporting role for employees to want to take on a great deal of responsibility:

"Our guiding principle has been to never punish initiatives. It is invaluable to have a problem-solving organization where individuals take responsibility and initiative. Better than that sometimes an initiative is taken that leads us astray, because in the end we have such a great advantage from having operators who take responsibility and try to solve a problem instead of having coffee and hoping someone might fix the machine until they get back." (Supervisor)

The management at Volvo Floby has realized the symbolic aspect of leadership and thereby shows with their actions that they have confidence in their employees and that it is better to dare to take responsibility and initiative than to wait and avoid the risk of making mistakes. The example also illustrates that trust and responsibility are closely integrated.

Just as when it comes to commitment and meaningfulness, it is important as a manager not to always be the one who knows best so as not to stifle responsibility and initiative. In connection with another research project (Tengblad 2004), a successful company leader recounted the following episode from when ABB's then almost divine manager Percy Barnevik visited a local divisional management that the company leader then worked within:

"We had prepared very carefully and were happy to have the opportunity to present our strategy to Percy Barnevik. But after a while Percy got up and walked over to the whiteboard and said, 'You should do this instead...' In 20 minutes, he redrew our entire strategy. It was a very impressive performance. We also became convinced that he was right. But we felt quite happy and relaxed afterwards. We had thought we had come up with a good strategy." (Told on a road trip Oslo–Stockholm in 2000)

It is widely acknowledged that Percy Barnevik was a visionary and persuasive business leader. In the example above, he succeeded in selling "his" strategy. The price, however, was that the employees' ability to take initiative and self-confidence were negatively affected. In this case, his strong leadership meant that the workforce was negatively affected. Instead of interaction, it became a "one man show".

The next example of the importance of initiative comes from the police. They do not have individual salary setting, but what determines the salary is the position level and number of years in service. How well the police do their job does not affect the salary. The absence of an incentive structure contributes to a low willingness to take responsibility:

"Actually, it is only your own conscience that determines how much or how little you do. As long as you avoid misconduct, you can rest easy. So if you never do anything, nothing will happen to you, but as soon as you take initiative, you take a risk [laughter] ... There are actually police officers who think that way." (Policeman)

"There are no problems when there is an emergency. I can guarantee that there is not a single police officer who is not doing his job then. The problem is between the alarms... Actually, they create their own job then, but if you investigate something suspicious, you risk creating more work for yourself. My feeling is that a third of our officers would rather stay in their car than investigate something that could lead to more work." (Chief of Police)

The structure creates neither requirements nor incentives for responsibility and initiative. Indirectly, the structure creates a passivity, and the only thing that can break this is the employees' own conscience and desire to do a good job. The fact that the organizational management leaves it entirely up to the employees to take responsibility if they feel like it creates little prerequisites for the emergence of co-leadership.

Examples of co-leadership as personnel policy

An important aspect for creating good co-leadership is to succeed in going from words to action. There are often many good thoughts collected in management policies, personnel visions and similar documents. The only problem is that they are more often shelf warmers than actual guides for the leadership and employees in the organization. A common trap is that the policy is seen as a product in itself, but it is the actions it leads to that are important. It becomes particularly problematic if the policy formulation only involves a few experts. Organizations usually achieve better results when the product (the vision) has become a result of the process (working on the vision). It is also important that leadership and employee visions are not seen as "magical documents" that should "infect" the business with the right leadership and employeeship, but that they are used as tools to maintain a line in the development work around leadership and with - workerism.

We have come across such a way of working at Kristianstad municipality, which has been working for several years to develop a new employee policy. The municipality of Kristianstad is located in north-eastern Scania and has approximately 75,000 inhabitants and 6,500 employees. The new employee policy was adopted at the beginning of 2008 and clearly connects to the form of interaction model between managers and employees that has been described in this chapter. Work has been started so that managers and employees together take responsibility for developing their respective workplaces.

From Kristianstad municipality's summary of personnel policy guidelines and policy documents

Collaboration and co-determination

Local collective agreement on co-determination

The starting point for collaboration is that as many questions as possible are dealt with by those who are directly affected by their work. [...] The individual's work affects and is affected by the work group and the immediate management. There is a dependency between the employee, the workplace and the organization as a whole. Communication between the different levels in the collaboration system is therefore of decisive importance.

Leadership policy

Listen – Lead – Learn

Leaders in Kristianstad municipality are passionate people who feel commitment, joy and pride. To lead is to exercise powerful and humble leadership with high integrity. Responsiveness, listening and reflection are the basis of a business that is close to people. [...] As a leader in Kristianstad municipality, you work to ensure that all employees feel a personal sense of employeeship.

Employee policy Listen - Learn - Influence

A successful workforce is based on the employee's understanding of his own task, the responsibility for taking his own initiative, the ability to see himself as an important part in and of the whole, and to take responsibility for development and quality by LISTENING, LEARNING and INFLUENCE.

In every workplace, it is important that the dialogue between employees and manager takes place so that all employees have the opportunity to express their opinions. This happens partly in daily work and partly through regularly organized conversations between employees and manager.

Employees must participate in change work and work for good health and a working environment - "WE ARE EACH OTHER'S WORKING ENVIRONMENT".

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the chapter, a view of leadership has been presented where the manager exercises his leadership together with the employees. According to this approach, leadership consists of a shared responsibility and initiative that is exercised by both the manager and the employees.

The manager's role will be to have the overall responsibility for the workplace, by involving the employees in essential issues relating to the workplace and its development and by creating the conditions for the employees to have the will and ability to share responsibility. This work should ideally be characterized by trusting relationships, a sense of community and an experience of meaningfulness and commitment.

Achieving this is not easy, but it shows a more genuine leadership compared to a leadership that is based on the manager having superior intellectual abilities to make decisions, persuade others and, through reward/punishment systems, ensure employees' compliance with the decisions. Our perspective can help managers and prospective managers develop a healthier approach to management and leadership. It is a common mistake, especially by less experienced managers, to think that it is the manager's job to figure out what needs to be done and make the decisions himself and, at best, make an effort to try to justify his decisions. By seeing leadership as a collective ability to take initiative, the manager's role is to try to strengthen this process by encouraging new initiatives, to support cooperation between group members and to create conditions for taking responsibility and individual development. By working to ensure that an adult workforce arises (Johansson 2001, Tengblad 2003), the conditions are also created for an active co-leadership to develop through mature employees becoming engaged in finding constructive solutions to the problems the business faces. In the presence of mature employees, the manager should concentrate his leadership on strengthening the employees' will to continue to act maturely and not by disempowering them by acting as a self-righteous decision-maker and egocentric leadership figure.

Recommended reading

This chapter draws heavily on research on employee engagement that has been conducted at GRI, a research institute belonging to the School of Business, University of Gothenburg. If you want to know more about how co-operation is practiced in different types of organizations, the book *Co-operation in practice* (Hällstén & Tengblad 2006) can be recommended. In the book *The competent employee* (Tengblad 2003) co-employment is described from a historical and occupational science perspective. *Employee engagement: From words to action* (Tengblad

etc. 2007) is a third book written in connection with the research on employee relations, and here, as the title suggests, there is a focus on the development of the roles of employees and managers. We also want to recommend the book *Shared leadership* (Pearce & Conger 2003), which from an American perspective in an exciting way sees leadership as a collective interaction, something that has great similarities with this chapter.

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