

LIVE YOUR STRATEGY

STRATEGY EXECUTION . EXECUTIVE COACHING



ANNUAL BUSINESS AND EXPERIENCE REPORT

for the year 2024

IN THIS EXPERIENCE AND ANNUAL REPORT YOU CAN READ:**1. Strategy Execution**

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2. Cases from Executive Coaching

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With **LIVE YOUR STRATEGY [LYS]** I am active in the business areas of **executive coaching** and **strategy implementation**. I support companies, business units, teams and key people in achieving individual and corporate goals.

In addition, I work in the context of **critical corporate situations** that are characterized by external pressure and noticeable emotionality within the organization. Downsizing, restructuring and closures place the highest demands on the people involved, managers and owners. Supporting them in their efforts to stay on track both **mentally** and **entrepreneurially** is an important concern for me.

My customers include internationally active large and medium-sized companies, currently in the automotive, chemical, pharmaceutical, energy supply and mechanical engineering sectors.

1 FROM STRATEGY EXECUTION PRACTICE

„Pulled hard on it.“

HOW A LEADERSHIP TEAM GETS SOME BREATHING SPACE AND FINDS TOGETHER AGAIN.

The following is about what happens **beneath the surface** in leadership teams in the face of stress and pressure to act. The question is clarified as to how thinking and acting change depending on the situation, which **modes** can be observed, how teams succeed in managing themselves competently.

If there is one thing that triggers strong stress and no less strong emotions in daily business of the automotive industry, it is the **launch of new products**. Launch dates are not postponed for good reason, broken timelines are taboo; all actions of the players are aimed at having a functioning product, a process, a stable supply chain ready for the target date. The launch success is **being pulled hard on**.

It is true that creativity, professional, leadership and implementation experience are called upon here and thus **fun and self-efficacy** are generated. Nevertheless, the risk of failure resonates, sometimes more, sometimes less present. However, failure is not an option at all in the launch. Side effect: this worries and influences the **psychological safety** experienced by the people.

The current situation determines the mindset.

Leadership teams face the situation with an operational, **action-oriented mindset**. Things have to be accomplished quickly, partial results want to be realized; there is hardly any time for much coordination and reflection, decisions and action are taken, **not discussed**. There is a lot of „right“, there is a lot of „wrong“, but little „both“.

MENTAL STATE: ACTION ORIENTATION

In the **action-oriented mindset**, team members tend to work individually, everyone follows their own goals first, „hunted“ by the numerous subtasks that need to be done. You fight for the next right step - and for yourself. Depending on the situation, one develops little feeling for the **emotional state of the peers**. Assertion, mutual criticism and isolation „naturally“ take precedence over integration, compassion and tolerance for alternative approaches, as an **important figure of thought from psychodynamics** teaches. (see „PS und D-Modus“ in: „Entwicklungsraum“; Giernalczyk/Möller 2018, S. 32 f). Or as one team member put it:



It seems to me as if each of us is his own attraction in our circus.

So, something falls by the wayside. Just like in the management team, which met a few weeks after the successful (!) launch as part of an offsite.

The management team had set itself the following goals:

- > To be heard more for each other, instead of **losing sight of each other**.
- > We have to **grow together again**; we don't even know anymore who is struggling with which issues and needs support, what is actually going on with whom.
- > We have to **commit ourselves to each other again**.
- > We will become **a unit again**.

MENTAL STATE: SITUATIONAL ORIENTATION

A team that goes into a workshop with such an objective emphasizes the **mindset of situational orientation**. Here, emotionality, the call to communicate, interest in others, also self-criticism, careful illumination of other opinions, listening and tolerance for the situation of colleagues come into focus. What previously subliminally frustrated can now be shared.

And for the team to **find their way into this state of mind well and safely**, moderation is helpful. In one of the first workshop sequences, each team member shared answers on the following guiding questions:

- > „How have you experienced the past months and weeks (feelings/highs/lows)?
- > What (unexpected) challenges did you face and with which of your skills/resources/values did you master them together with your team?
- > Do you have a motto that will get you through hard times?
- > What really made you laugh?
- > What is your most important lesson from 2024?”

In the moderation, I made sure to bring calmness to the group, to **allow emotionality**, to give the thoughts and thus the participant the necessary space. After sharing each **inner view**, the group was asked what they took away from what they had just heard, from which they **could learn a slice**. A lot of valuable things came together.

What happened next was remarkable. The group „cleansed“ itself of the past months, knocked the „operative dust“ out of its clothes. Also tears flowed.

The team is now looking to the future with fresh energy, but without slipping directly back into **operational activity**. The group knows: this will come all by itself. The desire for **annual, two-day pit stops** arose and was agreed.

THE TUG-OF-WAR OVER ACTION AND SITUATIONAL ORIENTATION

Result:

Action and situational orientation are two very different **working modes**, i.e. willingness to interpret situations, to process them emotionally, to act and to decide. Leadership teams **oscillate** between these two mental states; they usually do so unconsciously or preconsciously.

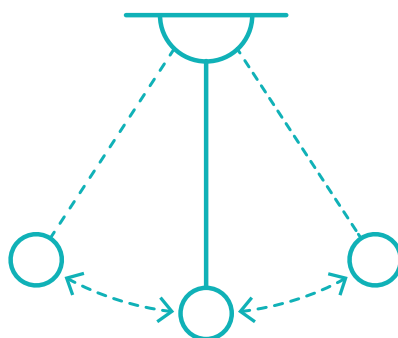
In order not to be disappointed by the other in **operationally dense situations**, it is therefore worthwhile to learn to simply accept the prevailing mental status of „action orientation“ as such. Those who are looking for team warmth will be frustrated, those who need support have to shout louder. Real team skills are **only rudimentary** here.



SO, IT IS NOT A PERSONAL FAILURE OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IF TEAM ORIENTATION IS NEGLECTED.

And fortunately, management teams can **oscillate** between action and situational orientation, as long as the corporate culture allows it (in doer cultures, commuting is more difficult; in highly reflective cultures as well).

However, it is not so easy to get from one state to the other. As is so often the case, it is helpful if someone from the circle of peers says: **stop!** audibly, along the lines of: „I think we are on the wrong track.“



So, it would be ideal if leadership teams were aware of these two modes. In this way, they could **regularly go into the helicopter perspective** and agree on whether the currently prevailing mode is still appropriate for the situation. It's good if they do this **consciously and regularly**, as in the example above.

2 CASE VIGNETTES FROM EXECUTIVE COACHING

„I've never had such a short fuse.“

WHEN MANAGERS FACE THEIR FEARS

Even if seasoned managers do not like to admit it. The partial closure of their plant is doing something to them. In one case, I accompanied the **management team of a production company** with the aim of processing the announced partial closure of their plant and – this is the reality – meeting the further delivery obligations in a binding manner. Three-quarters of the executives would lose their jobs at this location.

In two team coaching sessions, the group processed the situation, clarified what is irrefutable and what will still have to be shaped by the deadline. They said **goodbye**, shared painful things, mourned good times and accepted what had to be accepted. This was not easy, but it made the situation more bearable.

Each of the eight managers had the option of taking advantage of **five one-hour coaching sessions** on a voluntary basis.



In two of the individual coaching sessions, it became abundantly clear what impact the situation had on the coachees. One manager reported that she was increasingly oscillating between **severe** immediate **irritation** and a feeling of **being switched off**, both at work and in the family context. The business environment reacted to this with irritation. The manager began to reproach herself but also realized that she couldn't get out of her skin: „I've never had such a short fuse.“ She was feeling badly.

During the coaching, it became clear how much she was afraid of no longer being able to fulfil the **family role of the main provider** and – according to the rules of the game of the culture from which she came – the strong head of the family. It was bad enough that all her commitment to the company in recent years ended with a termination agreement; the consequences this had for her **self-image in the family** frightened her so much that she reacted with symptoms of burnout and depression. These are topics that can no longer be dealt with comprehensively in coaching. So, I advised to have the symptoms clarified by an expert. What this coaching led to, however, was the fact that the manager was able **to accept his situation** better or at all by going to the doctor.

Another manager reported that she increasingly developed feelings that she was **not good enough**, that she could do things better, no matter what it was. A **self-insecurity** familiar to her took up more and more space in the course of the closure process and led to **inner turmoil**.



I would like to experience that I become very calm and can just do my work without this constant feeling of not being enough.

In the coaching, the coachee experienced relief because she **knew how to** accept **her emotionality** and take it seriously by speaking it out. However, these emotional states cannot really be worked through, especially not in five hours of coaching. Further steps should then be taken with expert **psychological support**.

Result:

The coaching had helped both coachees to face the facts, to accept themselves with their vulnerabilities and to face their developmental tasks.

I have great respect for the company **that commissioned me here**, because it gave the affected managers the opportunity **to sort and process** the situation. Here, support was deliberately offered beyond the relevant **material severance offers**. In this way, **mental crash landings** could be avoided. The above examples underline that the coachees knew how to take the opportunity to take steps that kept them **on track personally and in their leadership role**, which had a **positive effect on cooperation** within the company.

3 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

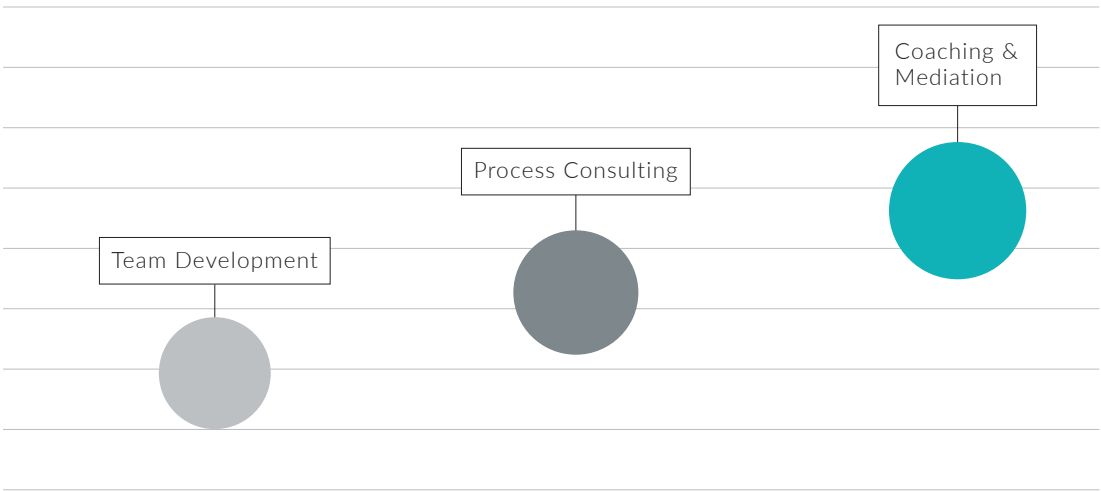
The majority of sales in the recent year have been generated with follow-up orders from the pool of long-standing existing customers. I was able **to gain new customers**, among others:

- > a consulting unit of a well-known international management consultancy with a focus on „**AI @Automotive**“ and
- > two medium-sized suppliers to the automotive industry, one of which can rightly bear the title **of Hidden Champion**, and
- > several **mediators and coachees** from the fields of research & development, agricultural chemistry, medicine and personnel services.



The recession sends its regards. **Sales** have not been satisfactory over the past 12 months, so I am not talking about real growth. The cake also got smaller for my business.

REVENUE BY INTERVENTION



4 FINAL REFLECTION

THE HAPPINESS LIES IN MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANIES

What strikes me is that while corporations in poor economic situations tend to close the **hatches completely**, launch austerity programs, etc. **Medium-sized companies**, on the other hand, behave rather lively and ask questions about how the **product or service range** can be expanded, how new business areas can be opened up. In other words, medium-sized companies deal more competent with **uncertainty**. So, does the happiness for the consultant lie in the medium-sized sector? In phases of downswing from my point of view, yes, it's **pretty safe**.

EYE-OPENER PSYCHODYNAMICS

As part of an intensive training course, I dealt with the **thinking figures of psychodynamics**, especially in their application for **team** and **organizational development** and for **executive coaching**.

This approach works with, among others

- > the **unconscious** in the company,
- > the (mostly repressed) **risks** that every work task entails,
- > the emotionality that the **work task** and the **cooperative relationships** trigger in the company (working together is also fun, of course),
- > the structures **and processes** in companies that provide special containment (the often scolded bureaucracy, for example; Why is it so difficult to reduce bureaucratic structures? I have an answer ...),
- > the oscillation between **action and situational orientation** in management teams as described above,
- > the sometimes bizarre collective and individual (reality) **defense strategies**

in the face of stress and uncertainty, not only in critical corporate situations, which is why there is a lot of talk about „psychological safety“ these days,

- > the **re-enactments** of personal life stories and family constellations in the work context,

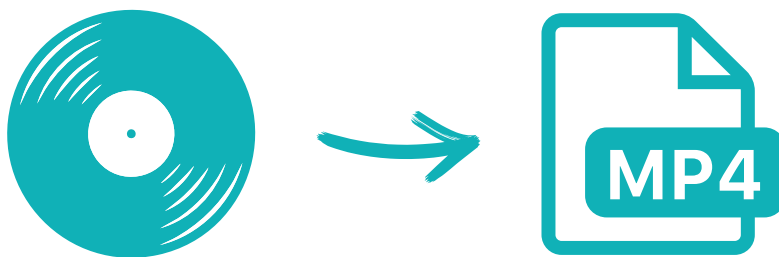
and much more.

Psychodynamics comes from psychoanalysis (understood here not as a form of therapy, but as **an applied science**), which for more than one hundred and thirty years has been dealing with the question of how we can **explain emotionality**. And if you know that **emotions** are the **tools** or fuel of **our motives** and intentions - especially in the professional role - then the conclusion is obvious:



EMOTIONS ARE THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND TO DESIRED CHANGE.

Psychodynamics has some **eye-openers** in store for me. And also, a kind of **permission**, namely, to ask for episodes from the life story of the coachees when it is appropriate; **always** with the consent of the coachee. This is not only for the purpose of finding resources (solution orientation), but also to **discover emotional patterns, vulnerabilities**, the „old records“ that are still running, whether with or without a jump - and how to transfer them, to stay with the metaphor - into a **current format**.



And so, I increasingly follow the motto in my work, freely adapted from Kierkegaard:



*Professional lives need to be understood backwards
but must be lived forwards.*

Past and future – as if they were organizing a tug-of-war inside us. Understanding this and sorting it out together creates a lot of **personal freedom** and allows managers to act more relaxed in conflict situations. I am increasingly experiencing this in coaching. This creates confidence in me.

This is exactly what I wish all readers of this annual and experience report for the year 2025!

With best regards from Cologne,
Andreas Liebrecht

Let's make it work.



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