



# Solstice newsletter N°10

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## In the spirit of the times >>> team tunes

**A**s I accompany various teams, in very different contexts, I'm gradually seeing how certain key elements make some teams closer and bring out their qualities. The differences between the issues which endanger operations teams, top management teams and project teams seem more and more distinct.

### **The sad chant of operations teams**

One of the major issues is clearly what we might call "living together": peacefully coexisting (or better, productively or creatively coexisting) over time. Because, apart from in companies which have made regular mobility a policy, it is not unusual to come across teams whose members have known each other for years or even decades, sometimes in the same or similar configurations. Not to mention teams in which certain team-members have become spouses or partners ...

As such, the human questions that people in these teams ask might be compared with those which families have to deal with: how can we continue to be together after all these years, despite our baggage (which tends to accumulate), our misunderstandings (everyday occurrences) and our clashes? But also, how can we move on together, with our differences and our similarities? And what are we heading towards; what in the future might provide stimulus for us all, together?

Teams often ask for help in recovering the simple ability to spend time together without clashing and also, sometimes, without collapsing. Sometimes mention is explicitly made of psychosocial risks (PSR), sometimes not.

Additionally, in terms of operations, production teams have to cope with the question of flexibility: how to do *differently* things which have been done just so for so long? How, and especially why, give up on routines which work (if they're still there they must still work) in favour of new practices whose impact are by definition unknown?

Operational teams are at risk of rigor mortis, boredom, wars of attrition or getting submerged with the dailies. These are the recurring themes which slow down their melody.

### **Top management teams: between silence and solo performers**

Here we have a quite different style of music... Team-members who merely pass like ships in the night. Once a week or maybe less, they meet for so-called sharing time. But in practice their shared experience is actually quite limited. When they do 'share', it's usually to check on general objectives and to monitor KPIs ...

Their first challenge is therefore to find a good reason to be together, when shared time is sometimes perceived as simply *wasted* time: precious hours and minutes taken away from what really matters: *my own business, with my teams and my results.*

The second challenge is to go beyond the spirit of competition which reigns supreme between team-members in order to focus people's energy on a common goal and direct their fighting spirit outside the organisation instead of inside it...

It's nevertheless true that the very structures of co-operation between the members of top teams could be a powerful motor to develop an atmosphere of

emulation and surpassing oneself. Let's think about it: around the table we have power, potential, masses of intelligence, commitment, plenty of energy ... What's missing?

Often it's the very idea of the collective, of needing others in to reach a broader and more satisfying goal than those we can or want to reach alone ...

Top management teams are at risk of silo mentalities, subterfuge, budding or open conflicts, and fleeing headlong into monitoring and dashboards. These are the *themes* which make up their melody.



**The free jazz improvisation of project teams**

These teams are a special case in that they are temporary and made up of people who enjoy the inherent stress of projects. Often their overwhelming energy and individual contributions need to be directed, fitted together and synchronised.

This is music played hard and fast and unless the team-members develop their attention and their ability to listen, these talented soloists risk producing a cacophony.

**Team coaching: a big step towards harmony**

Whatever the team, team coaching leads team-members and their manager along a clearly marked-out path:

- Rediscover a common purpose, with everyone 'singing from the same hymnsheet',
- Discover what differences there are and learn how to talk about them,
- Restore trust,
- Recover the dynamics of giving (give in order to receive and vice versa)
- Practise respect for other points of view and assertiveness,
- Experience the power of collective intelligence,
- Deactivate the mechanisms which encourage competition rather than cooperation,
- Regulate tensions among the team as they come up and stop baggage accumulating,
- ...



**Getting the right pitch, making adjustments: this work is never done...**

Symphony orchestras and quartets are well aware that approaching collective perfection requires almost continuous regulation. That's why really mature teams who have experienced team coaching allow themselves time outs to regulate their relationships, two or three times a year (with or without a coach...). Team-members thus learn how to expand their range of pitch, rhythm and volume ... and how not to tune out from each other.

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Déliez vos nœuds ; tissez vos liens

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**Telex >>>Horse coaching: when horses become mirrors**

In children's stories, the evil queen asks the mirror to tell her she is – always - the most beautiful of all.

With horse coaching, the question is not the client's beauty, but as the client approaches the horse alone in the ring, (not to ride it), strangely the questions can run deeper.

I would almost go as far as to say that, through their silent but so explicit language, horses reveal to us who we are... But even without going that far, it's clearly true that horses give us crystal-clear feedback on what we do and the effect it has on others (i.e. on our social behaviour).

Horses are extremely sensitive and can capture (and instantly react to) the slightest variations and shades of our verbal and non-verbal communication. Which means I'm faced with a mass of nearly 500 kilos reacting to exactly the things I don't control, what I don't know I'm doing. As such the horse gives us an invitation to regulate our behaviour, to deliberately adjust these un-knowns and un-seens which so often define us, despite ourselves ...

A seminal experience for anyone wanting to develop a fair and accurate leadership style.

VP

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*