

A wealth of adventures, experiences
and stories to tell
20 years of consultancy practice

LEADERSHIP IS NOT AN ILLUSION

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"My family is so tightly bonded that sometimes I have the feeling we are one person made up of four parts." ¹

Henry Ford (U.S. American industrial magnate)

Dear Reader,

Granted, we are not mega-industrialists on a par with Henry Ford. All the same, familial bonds are of utmost importance to us. After all, we are a family business.

Not only are the three of us leading the consultancy related, we are a relatively small enterprise with a total of four consultants (three men, one women) and a back office woman holding the fort. Like family, indeed. Also, our client relationships most often have a friendly, familial flavor, considering we usually work together over a longer period of time - with some, for twenty years. The bonding quality of our work makes for lasting relationships. We welcome you warmly.

We founded our business in July 2000. It's been 20 years! Unlike Bill Gates, Steve Jobs or our Paderborn neighbor business Heinz Nixdorf we didn't start out in a garage, rather in our dining room at home. About twelve square meters, not exactly glamorous. Still, we had enough space for a desk and computer apiece. That would do for starters.

Each of us brought his own knowledge, education and professional experience. Together, we covered hotel and gastronomy, lecturing and media distribution, foreign languages, fitness, health and leadership roles in health care. The required coaching and training licenses as well as other tools were accumulated. And still are today, as we see advanced education and life-long learning as a significant aspect of our work, for us and our employees.

We also take advantage of external guidance to continue growing and developing, a certain remedy against tunnel vision. For example, our initial name upon opening our doors was Team Liscia - Experts for Change. Since 2015, however, we operate under Liscia Consulting - creating LEADERS. Much more than a simple change of name, we made a conscious choice to direct our focus towards business leaders.

Prior to the change, we engaged strategy consultant Ben Schulz who made clear to us that the holistic approach we took in our work enabled us to support our clients with strategies, concepts and solid action. Our methods, so Schulz, are extraordinarily rare, as most consultancies focus on one of these three issues. "You, however, are leader-makers who paint with the entire palette," he explained.

From the word go, we have taken deep pleasure in supporting people's professional development - for us, there is nothing more fulfilling. Even after twenty years, encouraging a person's and company's progress and observing their development remains highly energizing and motivating. Or coaching someone, helping them out of a difficult professional situation. Since 2015, we do all of this under the header creatingLEADERS, meaning we concentrate our considerable energies on leader development - mind, body and soul.²

We set out on the journey by translating our client's company strategy into a leadership strategy, for which we developed the D.R.E.A.M Formula³:

- D** Dedication: Wholehearted commitment to mission, 24 hours a day
- R** Responsibility: Assuming full responsibility for your decisions, for your staff and for yourself
- E** Education: Ensuring you and your staff evolve
- A** Attitude: Living and communicating your personal mindset (philosophy) and values
- M** Motivation: Commitment as the foundation of all deeds

Working with people, or what we call People Work, is the mission of a leader. A leader must create a professional home for his employees, and a manager is the architect who builds the house. What differentiates a leader from a manager and how leaders can strengthen their leadership abilities is the substance of our work and the themes in this book. Fulfilling the D.R.E.A.M. Formula is to exercise living leadership, with passion. We call that D.R.E.A.M. of LEADERS^{®3}.

Our title, Leadership is not an Illusion, took root and grew from a seed planted many years ago. Back then, we were talking with a manager who vehemently maintained that company managers didn't have time to waste 'holding their employees' hands', as he put it. He also insisted that our understanding of leadership was nothing but an illusion. This book is our earnest endeavor to prove the opposite.

It is the essence of our years' long experience in leader development. The individual letters in the acronym are a specified checklist representing a leader's conception of herself, that is, how to grasp and embody leadership. Indeed, this is a highly complex and multi-layered topic!

Therefore, at the end of this book, we have compiled our understanding of leadership in ten compact leadership rules, as a reminder, so to speak. In addition, we have published a workbook for each letter of the D.R.E.A.M.

Formula® consolidating in detail our schooling content and techniques, with worksheets for practical application of knowledge gained.

So far, so good. This is where we had planned to close this preface, with a warm gesture of gratitude for our clients, employees and all those who have accompanied and supported us over the past twenty years.

And then came Corona. While planning our anniversary edition at the end of 2019, we couldn't possibly have foreseen that a mere few weeks later, a virus would turn the entire world upside down. Naturally, in the course of twenty year's business history, we have suffered and surmounted a crisis or two. Take September 11, 2001, for example, or the economic crisis of 2008-2009. You would think Corona is just another crisis to overcome, considering we work throughout Europe and our customary travels to clients are currently unthinkable.

For us, though, things took a different shape. Sure, like everyone else, our everyday professional (and private) patterns changed enormously since we could no longer work with clients onsite. Yet, in times like these, we are grateful to have had the foresight to implement digital media coaching at an early stage. That was thirteen years ago, when digital media was primarily the telephone. Colleagues were amused by our coaching sessions over the telephone, convinced they couldn't possibly be as effective as face-to-face, real coaching.

As technological developments grew, we launched video and web coaching and, for the last four years, offer online seminars and e-learning. In 2019, we began giving online workshops.

Now, in the Corona Era, we maintain daily contact with our clients - thanks to digital technology. Good thing, too, since crisis support is one of our strengths. How this will all end is a mystery. It could well be, that in five years, we will

recognize the Corona crisis as the digital accelerator; that home office has finally become a given or that solidarity among colleagues a fact. Not that we want to glorify Corona. We know all too well that many companies are on the brink. Nonetheless, many issues that have been thus far neglected, are now being earnestly addressed.

Then, eventually the crisis will have run its course, although no one can say exactly when that day will be. To be sure, when it does arrive, video conferences will continue to be advantageous because we now realize that you don't have to jet halfway around the world for a single meeting. Or I can use this time now to advance my education, preparing me for eventual challenges in the wake of Corona like, for example, a loss of employment. Our work and this book may contribute somewhat to providing for the time after.

Due to current developments, our anniversary celebration has taken a back seat. All the same, as initially intended, we wish to thank all of those who have followed our course over this time, who have given us their trust and support. After all, that a small family business can hold its own on this competitive market for twenty years is an undeniable achievement!

With the best regards!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janine Marcella".

Paderborn, in May 2020

¹ Non-specified quotes are taken from either *Book of Quotations* (Bassermann Publishing, 2013) or from digital quote collections.

² To facilitate readability, we forego simultaneous use of gender-specific pronouns (m/f/x). All personal pronouns, regardless if male or female, include all genders.

3/3 D.R.E.A.M. Formel® and D.R.E.A.M. of LEADERS® are protected trademarks owned by Liscia Consulting and registered with the German Patent and Trademark Office.



D - Dedication

*"Life is give and take,
in exactly that order."*

Gianni Liscia

"Yes, I do!"

What is the stuff of executive dreams? Business leaders dream of hard-hitting teams, of powerful teams, of dedicated employees. In today's working world, teams are often fragmented. Team members are scattered over the five continents, throughout various countries, embodying various cultures, speaking various languages. This is the reality of global leadership.

The question, then, for a managing director is, "How can I successfully lead my team under these circumstances?" An essential prerequisite for a company's growth and impact is employee engagement. Dedicated employees don't stand around waiting for instructions. They share the thought process, act independently, assume responsibility for the health and well-being of the entire enterprise. They are not only exceptionally good at their jobs, they also nurture teamwork and the work environment.

Yet, not all employees are equally committed. Within a team or department, you will find highly dedicated employees working side by side with colleagues who may fulfill their responsibilities, but only that, and no more. According to a 2017 Gallup poll, Germany suffers a decided lack of committed employees - a mere 16 percent, while 17 percent of employees are actively disengaged.⁴ How does an actively disengaged employee behave? He seizes every opportunity to ruin you and your business.

Later in this chapter, we will talk about Georg, an actively disengaged branch manager who fully intentionally sabotaged his company, incurring massive damage.

To eliminate sabotage from the start, we approach employee engagement as a nuptial agreement. No different than in a personal context, where two people promise themselves to one another, saying "Yes, I do!" You, the boss or superior, expect your future employee to enter an emotional relationship with you. You expect him to declare, "Yes! I love this company and will remain until the end of my professional life do us part."

When taking this approach to employee engagement - as an emotional commitment on both sides - then it should be directly reflected in the job description. For example, "Dear Prospective Employee, we expect you to love this company; to dedicate yourself to this company; to love your job and our customers, as we love you. We want an emotionally binding relationship. Only then, will we accept you."

Practically applied, the manager could say to the prospective staff member, "I expect more. I expect you to work 10, 12 or 14 hours a day. I expect you to be underway five days a week, in five different countries. I expect you to burn the midnight oil, polishing your presentation until two in the morning, perfecting it for the meeting the next day." Only a prospective employee acknowledging and (gladly) accepting these expectations should be allowed to enter the engagement and sign the employment contract. This emotional connection is the seed that grows into a team or company. Only emotionally bonded co-workers can be brand ambassadors for your business. They express themselves with convincing positivity when talking about their employer. They earnestly represent your company and its products. They automatically strive to be better; reach for more. It is very much worth the effort. Dedicated staff members are more productive, contributing to your

company's growth, while radically reducing work accidents, staff turnover and absenteeism.

Now, with this in mind, imagine three employees of a globally active enterprise. After a strenuous day at the trade fair, the trio decides to have a beer together in the hotel bar before turning in for the night. While sipping their drinks, they overhear a married couple speaking disparagingly about the company which employs the three colleagues. The employees' reactions couldn't have been more disparate, and clearly illustrates each one's degree of engagement.

The actively engaged colleague doesn't hesitate to join the conversation, defending his company passionately. He is a prime example of a brand ambassador. The moment the disengaged employee grasps what they're talking about, he grabs his jacket and leaves the bar, not wanting to have anything to do with the discussion. His actively disengaged colleague, however, also joins the conversation, but not to defend his workplace. He wholeheartedly agrees with the couple's negative opinion, providing them with further proof of the company's failings, confirming it is indeed, 'the pits.'

Many examples of internal sabotage, in both word and deed, have repeatedly been hot topics in the press over the past few years. Several mailmen were brought to court for deliberately refusing to deliver the mail, simply throwing their letter-bags in the garbage. The same was true of parcel service providers. The number of customer complaints rose dramatically - packages arrived opened, contents were either missing or damaged. If a recipient wasn't at home, carriers simply threw the parcel over the garden fence and signed the receipt of delivery themselves, or they left a failed delivery notice without bothering to ring the bell at all. In some cases, not even a notice was given, or the handwriting was illegible.⁵ Such employees thoroughly enjoy the consequences of their actions,

knowing full well they are ruining their employer's reputation, causing slews of customers to take their business elsewhere.

Another revolting example of active employee disengagement was related to us by a client, the CEO of a Northern Germany food chain. One of his branch managers, the aforementioned Georg, deliberately ignored the cockroaches and mice overrunning his store. He couldn't have cared less about the health risk the vermin posed to his co-workers and customers - he certainly didn't shop there or eat in the store's bistro. Eventually, the customers had had enough. It wasn't as though the cockroaches and mice restricted themselves to storage or other hidden areas. No, left to their devices, the creatures gradually gained in confidence and audacity, scampering over the shelves during business hours and crawling out of the toilet drains, sometimes taking a leisurely walk over the bistro counter. Even though reported in the local press, it was a long time before the 200-kilometer distant central office got wind of the infamy. (Which is why we immediately recommended generating a press clipping!) It took months before the branch manager's sabotage reached executive ears. He was, of course, immediately fired. It subsequently came to light that Georg had three company cars, but nary a driver's license...

During the first few months, the new branch manager also avoided shopping or eating at the store. The very thought turned his stomach. Understandably, when you think his first inspection turned up more than 60 dead mice, and over the next year he was obligated to get up at night twice weekly and open shop for the exterminators. The damage his predecessor had inflicted on customer relations wasn't as easily remedied. Regaining lost trust is always a painstaking process, especially in the foodstuffs and gastronomy areas. Effectively and ultimately successfully, we were able to help our client meet the challenge, which

included establishing new, company-wide communication and information structures.

These examples clearly illustrate the significance of employee engagement. Which brings us to the reciprocity of the emotional bond outlined at the beginning of this chapter. If a business is to be successful, its leaders must do precisely that - they must lead. They must be a shining example of dedication and enthusiasm. And there lies the crux. Our extensive experience proves there is a massive deficit in true leaders. The repercussions are devastating, as studies show.

"Emotionally detached and ready to move on, every fifth employee is internally preparing to resign," is the result of the Gallup Engagement Index. The study also reveals that commitment can be distinctively increased with the appropriate leadership approach. According to Gallup, direct superiors play the leading role, having a direct impact on employee fluctuation.⁶ In many cases, employees do not abandon the company, they abandon their direct bosses. In smaller companies, this can be one and the same person, but in larger enterprises, the choice of who's the boss is not to be underestimated. Boss-employee conflicts can sometimes be solved by a transfer to another department or team. When this is not feasible, the employee often has no other choice than to leave the company and seek another employer.

Yet, in these times of skilled worker shortage and demographic change, a company can no longer afford to lose its best employees. Furthermore, fluctuation is costly, resulting in lost knowledge and productivity, while training a staff member new to your company.

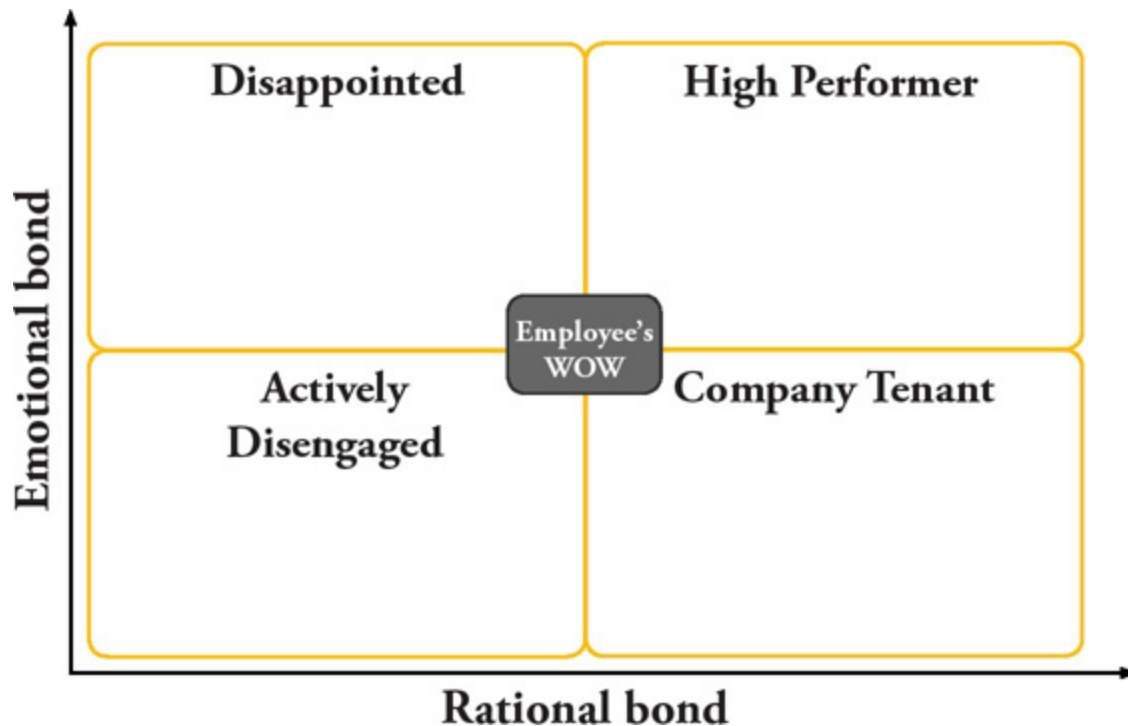
Showing the other side of the coin, the following example depicts a leadership style that negatively impacts, or even sabotages employee engagement. The enterprise in question is a Catholic clinic in Hessen, Germany which

changed hands some years ago. Most of the workforce was thrilled to learn that they would keep their jobs, but their joy was short-lived. Soon after the take-over, a series of directives made clear that the new owners were solely interested in the clinic's economic aspects. They wanted to milk as much profit as possible by rejecting investments in new medical equipment and tightly clocking patient contact intervals. How the staff reacted to or applied these dictates was secondary, there was little or no personal communication on the matter. But the radical change of course soon caused mutinous murmuring among the staff, who neither could nor wanted to uphold the new values. While under the church's guidance, patient care and philanthropy were priorities. Now, under the new management, economy, efficiency and occupancy rates were all that mattered.

With Andreas, Dirk and Sandra, three leaders working at the clinic since its church days, we will demonstrate how a direct superior influences employee engagement. We will also introduce our four-square diagram on employee engagement.

There are four different relationships branching out from the parameters rational and emotional attachment. We define an employee with a strong rational, and equally strong emotional, connection with his direct superior as an engaged employee, a high performer or a brand ambassador.

Andreas, the director of nursing at the now privatized clinic in Hessen, is such a high performer. He doesn't agree with many of the changes, yet his engagement remains steadfast. Andreas draws his motivation from his team, the people he leads, and not from his direct superiors, whose leadership methods do not offer him any source of orientation. It is only the collaboration with his team members that provides him with the motivation to continue performing well and with dedication.



Thus, he succeeds in creating a professional homeland for his employees, who were equally disoriented after the clinic changed hands. (The next chapter goes further into the topic of professional homeland.) Andreas works closely with his colleagues, enabling him to bring about the necessary restructuring in their interest. His drive to perform well is fueled by his employees' loyalty and admiration. This is an outstanding accomplishment for someone leading with passion yet led with indifference!

Dirk, the clinic's medical director, is just as unhappy with the new management as Andreas is. But Dirk is less able to ignore or off set his discontent and frustration since his motivation was always sustained by his direct superior, from his leader - which is impossible with the new management. The ethics and values projected outwardly are not in alignment with his bosses' leadership approach.

For Dirk, this contradiction is insupportable. Any and all of his suggestions or requests are consistently rejected by the new management. From Dirk's vantage point, he is denied the anticipated appreciation to which he had been

accustomed throughout the many years of church sponsorship. Severely disappointed, Dirk's engagement takes a dive. This disappointment and frustration are characteristic of people with a powerful emotional bond with their company, yet an insignificant rational bond with their direct superiors. Dirk still loves his workplace, but the massive letdown leaves the question "What am I still doing here?" unanswered. The well of the emotional bond has run dry, and he is not equipped to answer the question rationally. So, with a heavy heart, Dirk leaves the clinic, or better, he leaves his direct superiors.

An employee with a strong rational, but paltry emotional bond with his employer is known as a company tenant or job-hopper. His motivation for working where he works is purely rational and the moment something better comes along, he has no difficulty cutting the cord. There's no love lost between him and his employer. It is comparable with a tenant's choice of apartment. As long as the place is rationally attractive - affordable rent, close to work - he'll stay. But as soon as an even more affordable or better situated apartment comes along, he'll move out without a second thought. An emotional person responds differently. He is so attached to his home and the nice neighbors, he wouldn't move, even if he were offered a less expensive apartment or one that halved his commuting distance.

At the Hessian clinic, Sandra was a job-hopper. When she realized that the new management wasn't going to be a bowl of cherries, she was neither disappointed like Dirk, nor did she compensate by focusing on her team, as Andreas did. Without an emotional bond with her workplace or with her superiors, she immediately began looking for an alternative, with success. First, she became ward director at a hospital in Erfurt, moving on only ten months later to a geriatric home in Nuremburg. When, about six months later, her former employer in Erfurt proposed a better offer, she returned for a year and a half. After a short sojourn of two

months at a Thuringia health office, a higher salary moved her to accept an assessor position at a medical advisory services office in western Germany.

Apparently, soccer pro Dembélé's attachment to Borussia Dortmund (BVB) was also of a purely rational nature. After only one year in Dortmund, he received an offer from Barcelona. When BVB, refused to release him from his contract, Dembélé simply didn't show up for training, disappearing for days at a time. The club finally let their star player go, albeit under protest, demanding and receiving a record-breaking transfer fee, as was proudly announced at a press conference.

"They must have felt like a mere steppingstone, exploited by someone already harboring greater plans than Dortmund could offer. Dembélé says he has been a Barcelona fan since he was eight years old. While playing for Stade Rennes last summer, the Catalonians made him an offer, but he turned them down. "I'd only been playing professionally for half a year." It was too early on. Shortly thereafter, he came to Dortmund to play in the champion's league, "...playing an entire season with a good team, gathering more playtime and experience." Doubtlessly, it worked."⁷

These are classic hallmarks of job-hoppers or company tenants. Since, from the start, they do not establish an emotional bond with their employer, they chose their positions according to purely rational criteria, with their minds solely focused on what's in it for me. A wholly legitimate approach.

At the same time, job-hoppers are not especially interested in a company's values, which certainly can be criticized. Such as the quality management leader working for a global sanitary supplier, who switched over to the arms industry. His motto, "If the money's right, I could care less about company values. It makes no difference to me whether I control the quality of heating valves or of tanks."

A similar tactic applies to top politicians, who give the obligatory face-time before seamlessly moving on to the lobby department of a company or association - often leaving a nasty taste in the public's mouth.

Fortunately, among the leaders at the Hessian clinic, none of them were both rationally and emotionally indifferent. In our four-square diagram, these are the actively disengaged employees, what we call want-away bomb plotters. These people do everything in their power to sabotage their employer or direct superior, and when they finally do go away, it's usually with a bang. Remember Georg, inflicting enormous damage not only on his employer's reputation, but also on the company's returns, by ignoring the mouse and cockroach infestation.

⁴ Cf. Gallup Inc., *State of the Global Workplace*, 2017.

⁵ Cf. spiegelonline.de, *Wenn der Paketbote gar nicht klingelt / When the postman doesn't ring at all*, 20. August 2012.

⁶ handwerk-magazin.de, *Gallup Engagement Index: Innere Kündigung vermeiden / Avoiding premeditated resignations*, 07.04.2014.

⁷ welt.de, *Als Dembélé sich entschied, den BVB zu erpressen / As Dembélé decided to blackmail the BVB*, Sept. 4, 2017.

*"Leaders provide a professional homeland,
and managers build a house on it."*

Marcello Liscia

Manager or Leader?

Attending to the direct superior's role within the company, and whether she interprets it correctly, is decisive. Does she see herself as a manager or as a leader? Does she act accordingly? The precise differentiation of these two positions is one of the first messages we put across in our leadership training sessions. Our experience reveals that many companies are wholly unaware of the far-reaching consequences a misinterpretation brings about.

They are oblivious to the threat it poses to their company or project. Management manages - structures, numbers, data and facts. You could also say management primarily governs the factual-rational and analytical aspects. A manager maintains processes and systems.

A leader, however, and this is the crux of the matter, works with people, for whom she is responsible. She is accountable for their well-being, as far as it is within her power. She is required to create an environment in which they enjoy working, can evolve further and advance their team.

To give you a concrete example taken from our experiences with this complex topic, let us introduce you to Christian, a more rational specimen who was once plant director at a northern Italian furniture manufacturer. There was already trouble brewing when Christian assumed the position, first and foremost in production with the rather older workforce. One problem was an addition to the

product portfolio. A new, luxury series of lounge chairs, the standard model being upholstered in fabric, were to be covered in leather. Not an unsolvable dilemma, but still requiring more effort, as working with leather demanded more physical strength than textiles did. The, on the average, older production staff therefore needed more time to produce one chair than the company had calculated, much more time. The team lagged far behind the expected production tempo.

Plant director Christian's problem, though, was on another plane. He managed the factory almost wholly from his office, avoiding contact with the workers from the word go. He remained an unknown entity for his employees. The bulk of his communication was via email, or he called individual workers into his office instead of making the occasional trip to production to see the lay of the land for himself, listening to the workers' assessment of the problem. Christian is a manager per se, a man concerned with indexes and Excel tables, comparing data offered by the factory computer. These, not the people actually doing the work, were his decision-making methods and tools.

Of course, it didn't take long for the floodgates of accusation to burst open, claiming Christian was incompetent, unequipped to aptly communicate with his employees. Especially the older production workers were urgently in need of personal attention from their superior. There were many among them with disability IDs issued by the company physician, restricting activities due to, for example, a chronic illness or a weak back. These ID holders were prohibited from carrying out certain production tasks. This was one of the reasons the leather lounge chair model production proceeded at a snail's pace. And Christian actually believed he could solve these massive people-related problems from his desk chair, instead of seeking them out personally.

So, even though he listened to the accusations against him, it remained unclear as to whether he granted them validity. Unfortunately, we had very little time to work with Christian before he was transferred to a factory in China as a launch manager – certainly not enough time to help him make a substantial change. Thus, we were skeptical that the transfer would solve the furniture manufacturer's problems with their plant director, as launch managers, responsible for introducing new markets for all plants, must also work with people.

Unfortunately, lack of insight into the two terms leader and manager often results in leadership positions being filled by the wrong people. Thus, we periodically broach the subject in companies, "You hire a manager and send her off to master a leadership development program when what you really need is a leader. Have you ever considered hiring a leader and sending her to a management skills seminar?" Even in human resources departments, our line of thought often causes astonishment, as if we were out of touch with reality.

All the same, when taking a closer look, it turns out that the same errant placements had been made in the past, repeatedly. We then advise such enterprises to rethink their future recruiting strategy, examining more closely just who they take on for which position. Certainly, mistakes happen, but repeating the same mistake is avoidable. As Albert Einstein put it, "Insanity: doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results."

Therefore, HR departments should pay more attention to the skills required for a certain position. Do you need a manager or a leader? Instead, they only look at the candidate's trade-specific knowledge and experience. Of course, it is advantageous if a candidate has, for example, worked in Brazil for five years. Foreign experience always looks good on a résumé, although it rarely states whether the person had a leading or managing role. A more

significant question is what that person's precise duties were in Brazil, and whether they are relevant to the position you are looking to fill in your company.

The work with our furniture manufacturer in northern Italy instilled an innovative approach. Christian's successor was Matteo, a man we consider the prototype for D.R.E.A.M. Leaders[®]. In his previous position at another factory, Matteo was well-versed in the problems that can emerge in production. The decisive argument for hiring him as plant director, however, was the ease with which he moved from the world of management to the world of leadership. Matteo could read, compile and demand the fulfillment of criteria, while constantly aware that in the final analysis these indicators would be realized by people. On his first day at the plant, he immediately went to the people he would be working with and spoke with them. Within a brief period of time, he knew every co-worker and their needs. He was in a position to respond to each of them individually, instilling trust and thus, the basis for good, successful collaboration.

When defining the difference between these two distinct roles and their responsibilities, we like to use the following analogy: Leaders are responsible for providing a professional home for their employees; a piece of Earth where they feel comfortable and productive. The manager, on the other hand, builds the house on the land, since without a roof over one's head it's hard to feel at home. Both functions should work hand in hand. A company needs both a manager and a leader, so categorizing the two into stronger/weaker; better/worse is utter nonsense. The only important thing is to define very clearly which aspects are required for which position.

Yet not every enterprise has the financial means to hire two people. Above all, in small and mid-sized companies, the roles of leader and manager must often be enacted by one and the same player, even if he would rather