

Leadership Live Experience

"First of all I was frightened by horses due to an experience approx, 40 years ago. Before we started the session we had a talk about horses with one instructor, who was training her horse. This conversation and at the same time being so close to a horse helped me and basically it is just as in an organisation, that if you are afraid of somebody or something you have to obtain more knowledge to find out how to solve it.

The exercises were split into four stages:

Introduction – I should introduce myself to the horse, who has the name *Change*:

- I approached Change straight away at a slow speed and without any sudden movements. I told Change my name and that I was basically afraid of horses while at the same time ate mule and neck.
- I spoke in Danish, as my native language.

Reflections:

- Also the trainer we meet upfront told me, that horses can react strongly if something unexpected happens.
 - Also in real-life and with people you have to approach in the right manner given the concrete situation, so you actually obtain the result that you are aiming for.
- I considered speaking English or German, but as Change is a Dutch horse then wouldn't probably understand anyways. I spoke Danish as here I feel 100% comfort with all kind of words and didn't have to search my memory for the right wording in English.
 - This also as a leader gives you more comfort in solving the situation you are in as fewer parameters to focus on, or opposite that can go wrong.



Get Change to follow me – without having a line tied up on the horse:

- I was using the fact that I ate mule and neck and tried in a calm voice to explain that we were going to move from current position and 5 meters to the right. Twice I tried to walk slowly a meter away, but each time I had to come back.
- Then Barend asked me to come to him without the horse, so I went to him, and then Change followed.

Reflections:

- I felt like having created a contact/relationship, so that I could move Change the 5 meters.
- I wasn't clear in my leadership what I actually wanted as went a little away and came back. This became very clear when Change followed me after I went to Barend.
 - Remember in your leadership to be very clear what you want and if having created the right relationship your employees will follow you – no matter distance.



Show Change around – as a new colleague – and introduce to the company and colleagues:

- At this stage Change had line on and I was holding the other end securing it never touches ground.
- I went around in the fold and introduced Change to new colleague, which office going to sit in and where the coffee machine and toilets are.

Reflections:

- I made two observations:
 - I was on the left side of Change and I had difficulties get Change turning right
 - I tried to avoid using the line, but twice I had to tighten it and then let go again
- Concerning turning, then it is just as mentioned previously that have to be clear what I wanted and when turning I went in front of Change to turn right, but should in this case just have slightly turned staying on the side of the head.
 - In other situations in real-life I might or shall be in front, but in this situation I should have used my leadership skills and approach as two equal parties on the same mission.
- Concerning line then sometimes it is right to use the line and then let it go again. As I was introducing Change to the new location and colleagues then sometimes Change didn't want to move, so I had with this clear move to show that now we are moving on.
 - When introducing new employees to an organisation then you might also from time to time be standing and talking to long time at one spot, so also here you as the leader has to state or inform that now we are moving on. Again this shall only be used if other options fail as best if both parties are having same understanding.

Finishing – Say goodbye to Change and tell what I had experienced:

- Again I spoke Danish as during all 4 stages and thanked Change for having reduced my afraidness for horses and for following me around in the fold.

Reflections:

- Remember to tell positive strikes and constructive feedback with arguments to employees
 - Also when busy/hard time as perhaps most needed here as the greatest uncertainty

Overall reflections:

Working in this session also gave some flash back in time to my leadership career and concrete examples where you can see what you have done right or wrong in areas like:

- Do we have the same common understanding
- Do we have a real relationship
- I'm I to far out compared to my employees
- Have I approached this situation correctly
- Etc.

In such a reflection you can also see yourself with outside-in view and hereby learn from your experience to the next challenge – but no matter what make sure you are clear in your leadership of what you want.

- Of course you can do this at all times, but such a session with a horse, that don't understand what you are saying, can't talk and weight approx. 600 kg – then you really get it highlighted."



Ole Keilberg (CFO International Companies) guided by Barend Gerretsen, June 2018.