

## A story about Mountains

### Part 4 - Leadership.

#### **The importance of good leadership for organisations and companies.**

Management and leadership go hand in hand. They need each other to achieve results effectively. If management on our mountain is depicted by its governing infrastructure (see Part 3), then leadership can be compared with the signposts, the planted vegetation and the general maintenance on our mountain. Beautifully maintained forests, meadows and fields with fine landscaped paths and roads, with good signposts and signalling are often an excellent tool to motivate and attract people to that mountain, such as hikers and tourists. It will definitely increase the activity on a mountain.

So, leadership can make quite a difference depending on whether our small mountain, with its forest paths, may or may not be provided with the appropriate signposts and signalling. In addition, if you have well-maintained forest paths and roads, everything can move smoothly on the mountain flank. A path that runs gently and which keeps your feet dry is so much more pleasant to walk on than obscure, unpaved carriage tracks with little muddy pools and protruding rocks. Before you know it you are slipping or stumbling over the bumps, falling to the ground. Such an event might be accompanied by all the negative consequences you can think of.

A well-maintained infrastructure with the right signalling incites people to advance swiftly and with ease. It allows for a more relaxed atmosphere on the mountain and it encourages you to go all the way, without any cause for trouble or sorrow. It allows the people on the mountain to progress in an enjoyable manner.

What is easier? To go with a group of travellers on our mountain hiking through the forest, following the unclear carriage tracks with their vaguely distinguishable side tracks, trying to avoid the mud on an irregular path, without the presence of proper signposts? Or discovering the beauty of the mountain using beautifully maintained forest trails with a clear network of sideways and alleys provided with accurate signalling and directions to the possible destinations?

Just as it is necessary to adapt the infrastructure to the size of your mountain and the expected traffic, so must the maintenance and signalling be adapted to your infrastructure. It is really not necessary to put up large highway signs on your little path in the woods and, vice versa, it is certainly not appropriate just to have a nice-looking, simple and picturesque little signboard to be placed on the highway. In both cases, they will not yield the intended result.

Accordingly, it is important to place the appropriate signposts and signalling at interesting or dangerous intersections and it definitely does not hurt to put a nice sign with explanations at special places. The people living on the mountain, hikers and tourists will feel more respected and appreciated. Thoughtful gestures like installing a bench alongside the tracks to allow people to rest and enjoy the view, are also something that can be very valuable when appropriately applied. Unfortunately, this is often not a common practice on mountains. Even though on mountains with well-maintained benches, this positive vibe attracts people like hikers and tourists, in no time and they will gladly return to it.

But once again, communication is crucial (see also part 2). In the dark or in the dense fog, you have no use for the beautiful landscape when you cannot enjoy the view, and signposts will become obscured or invisible. Benches, will probably be passed by unnoticed and you can call yourself lucky if

you do not take a wrong turn by mistake or if you do not end up in a danger zone. Certainly, in a dense fog it can be quite difficult to find your way. Even when a good and well-maintained infrastructure and decent signalling are in place, it will at least slow down the progress on the mountain!

Leadership and management go hand in hand and complement each other. It is clear, however, that they have one thing in common and that is communication. Good management and inspirational leadership make our mountain a potential paradise. But without the right communication it will still be difficult to attract people to live on the mountain, tourists will stay away and it will not be obvious for the hikers to reach their destination. It is all much easier and more pleasant when the sky is blue and the mountain is bathing in a bright sunshine.

**So, my questions are:**

**How well is your infrastructure maintained?**

**What signposts and signalling do you see?**

**And, how many benches do you discover on the tracks?**

*Peter Blekland*

General Manager  
BYAZ bvba