

Into the Unknown Effective leadership in trans- formations

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Into the Unknown

Effective leadership in transformations

This book provides leaders with a helpful approach and describes steps that significantly increase the opportunities for a successful transformation. We focus on the way in which leadership can effectively support transformation. In this process, this book illuminates how leadership must also transform itself in order to open up new ways forward. With thought-provoking impulses, exercises and reflections, we dare leaders to venture forth on a highly personal journey of discovery.

Impulse

"Something has to change. We won't succeed any more if we go on like this!" If such voices are raised in an organization, it is time to get moving. Many organizations that we have assisted and supported have sensed that a radical change is necessary, but without knowing exactly what should change and how. Many things were or still are unimaginable. However, sitting around and waiting is not usually an option.

Starting and leading a transformation process without knowing exactly where the journey should go is like an expedition into unknown territory and has challenged us as consultants for leadership and collaboration. Our "toolbox for change" has repeatedly reached its limits during these far-reaching reinventions.

This has spurred our firm to undertake intensive research and development efforts. With great curiosity, we set out to better differentiate transformation from change, to understand the dynamics of this process and to be able to support it in a more profound way.

Into the Unknown
**Effective leadership
in transformations**

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Foreword

As consultants at Coverdale, an international consulting firm that focuses on leadership and collaboration, we have been supporting change projects both large and small in a wide variety of organizations for many years. In the course of our consulting activities, we have developed a change toolbox that has proven to be highly effective and works well in a variety of initial situations. Increasingly, we are encountering the need for alterations in enterprises where the desired future vision and the path to be taken to achieve it are unclear and not easy to clarify at the outset. The affected leaders and employees are confronted with an impenetrable wall that obstructs a meaningful realignment. This triggers fear and feelings of powerlessness. In such situations, a new approach is required, which – when viewed through the lens of our everyday activities from the perspective of our current work processes – can be disturbing and irritating. This means that the leadership team of an enterprise must also take a different approach.

► It takes courage to confront one's own powerlessness, along with a willingness to allow oneself to be "set adrift" in order to see things from a completely different perspective and embark on radically new paths. ◀

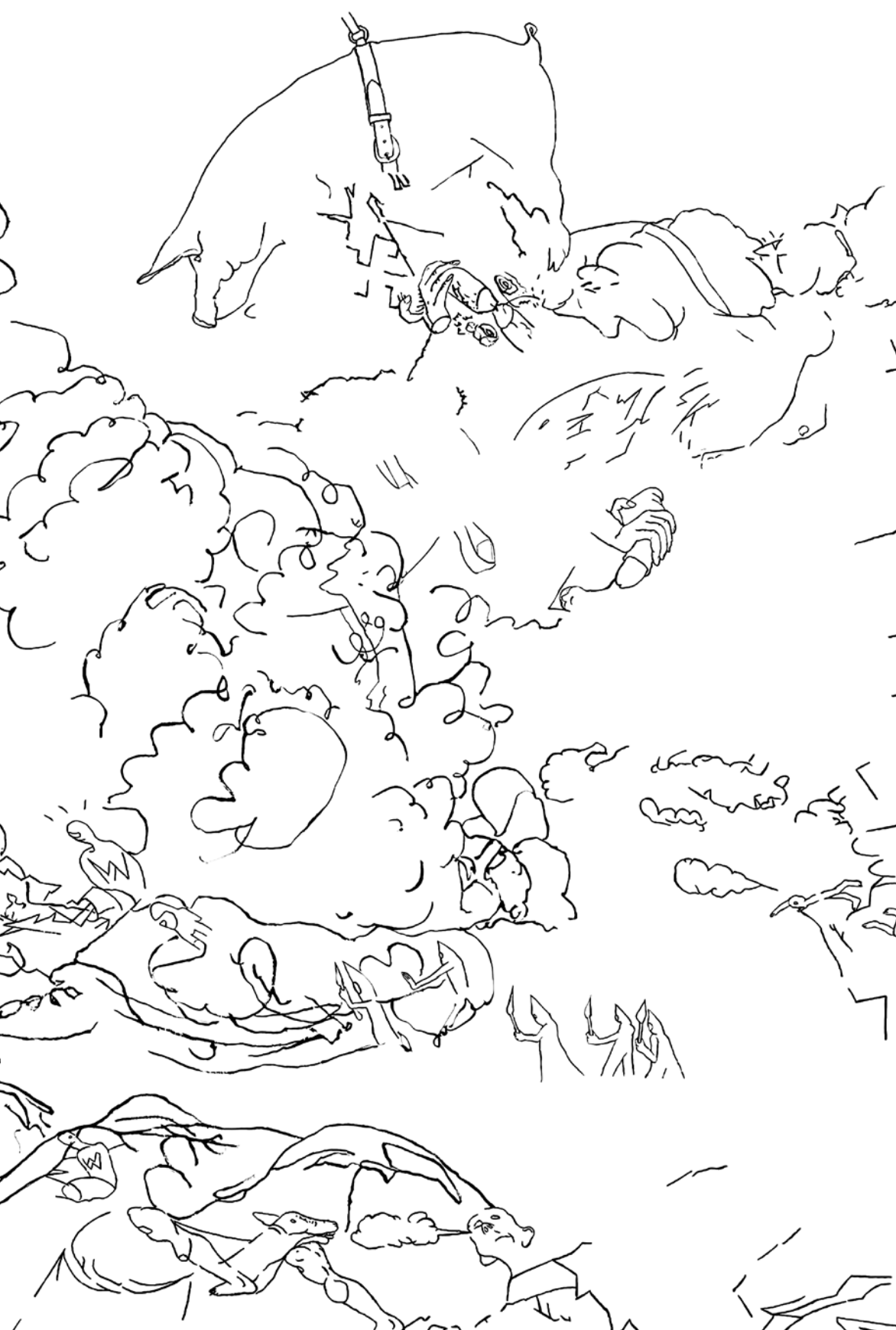
In this book, we describe our experiences with such situations and illustrate what we have learned from them, while also adopting recommendations from numerous experts.

We cordially invite you to join us on a journey of transformation and let yourself – and your concept of leadership – be remade. Be inspired by the illustrations in this book. Three artists have provided us with works to appeal to a further sensory level.

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where shall the journey take us?

The world as we know it is undergoing radical change. Ecological and social tipping points are looming ominously. Previous certainties, beliefs, mental and action frameworks are becoming less and less effective. Acronyms such as VUCA or BANI are attempts to name these developments. Organizations that we are currently supporting and have assisted in recent years are often faced with the challenge of channeling major, radical upheavals at all levels.

Both in business and in society at large, the term "transformation" is being used more and more frequently. Society and enterprises must fundamentally restructure themselves to enable a path to a successful future. In our experience, traditional management and approaches to change projects are no longer sufficient to master these challenges. Something about the current situation and the upcoming challenge has changed drastically, and therefore leadership and its methodologies must also change dramatically.

The complete **transformation of a living system**, such as an enterprise, an organizational unit or a person, represents a fundamental change in its identity. The self-understanding, behavior patterns and relationships within and outside the system change permanently. Our view of the world and how it works is fundamentally altered. A profound and comprehensive realignment is taking place, the necessity of which is often felt by some of those impacted even before it begins.

► In our view, there are significant differences between change and transformation. We have observed that a transformation places different demands on leadership and the process than the professional management of a change project. We do not see change and transformation as opposites, but as two forms of relevant evolution. ◀

This means that evolution also requires novel leadership approaches. However, current management approaches do not have to be consigned to the "dustbin of history"; instead, depending on the dimension of evolution, new mental frameworks and patterns of action for leaders are required. They enrich and expand existing leadership qualities.

We have reflected on our experience in facilitating change and transformation processes and in German and international leadership development. From the very beginning, we realized that leading and shaping transformations requires a **radical transformation of leadership**. We would like to share these insights here. So let yourself be inspired to discover new things in order to be able to lead profound changes (transformations). Time and again our experience has shown that a successful transformation begins with people. It is the people in an organization who transform themselves and their organization, thus making a new reality possible.

What does this mean in concrete terms?

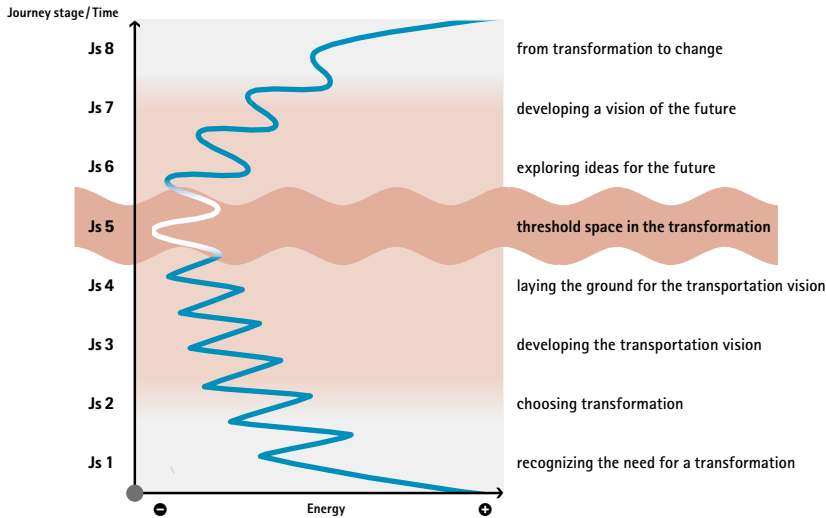
In this book, we describe in detail the path through a transformation. We show which leadership qualities are needed in each of the different stages of the journey. Proven leadership behavior and familiar leadership tools can be used, especially at the beginning and end of the journey.

In the middle of the transformation path, stage 5, your current ideas of leadership will not see you any further. This will force you to leave your comfort zone and critically question all your previous ideas about how leadership works.

This **middle part of the transformation process** is a completely unfamiliar path for most of us, one which in our experience can only be mastered by transforming how we think about leadership. At Coverdale, we call this evolved frame of mind the transition mode. If you (and your team) succeed in changing your previous mental framework, you may discover solutions, opportunities or ideas in these sections of the path that cannot be grasped with the previous mental framework. Or, as Einstein aptly put it: "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking that created them."

Towards the end of the journey, familiar leadership behaviors and practices once again take the place of the transition mode.





Prior, after and during a transformation a system experiences different energy states with more or less power available.

If we have given you the impression that a transformation process is a clearly defined path with a start and a clear destination, we would like to avoid disappointment right now. The path will likely lead in recursive loops, possible setbacks are part of the process. From time to time, shortcuts will appear that you will be tempted to take; however, they often lead to a lack of real breakthroughs and surprising solutions, delivering simply more of the same at the end of the shortcut.

At the end of each stage of the route, we will invite you to pause briefly to reflect on your own situation and the experiences you have gained. This allows you to compare your personal observations with our findings. Perhaps your own initiatives will then emerge and ideas will develop that can be incorporated into the next stage of the journey.

We hope you will enjoy walking unknown paths and discovering new leadership qualities – perhaps beyond what is imaginable at this very moment.



Journey stage **1**

recognizing the need for a transformation

**“There are so many reasons to leave everything
as it is and only one reason to finally change
something: you just can’t stand it anymore.”**

Hans-Curt Flemming,
Der Brandherd

In our day-to-day leadership with all its complexity, it is not easy to tell whether a change or a transformation is imminent, especially as mixed forms are also encountered frequently. In addition, the terms "transformation" and "change" are often used interchangeably. In practice, however, there is a big difference between how an organization manages or fails to manage change and how an organization manages or fails to manage transformation. Change management is needed for a transformation, but it is not enough by itself.

Given the fact that a transformation lacks a clear, unambiguous picture of the future and/or that the path to the future is unimaginable, how this is seen within an organization can vary greatly. For some, the future seems clear, while others are unable to see the picture.

In this stage of the journey, we present signals that can be observed in day-to-day work and explain in detail the difference between the two organizational changes.






Is a transformation imminent?

When an organization is undergoing a transformation, various phenomena can be observed. The people in the organization experience feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness. This is uncomfortable, so they try to avoid these feelings. They consequently show behaviors typical of such a situation, which can serve as signals.

Symptoms at the transformation barrier:

- Acceleration of existing patterns
- Uncoordinated, chaotic activity
- Search for scapegoats
- Hiding and ignoring
- Relapsing into old, already discarded patterns of behavior

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