

PROLOG

READ, POST AND LEAD

*"There is no more B2B or B2C:
It's Human to Human #H2H."*

BRYAN KRAMER

Our lives are exciting, because the small things are writ large – and vice versa. We listen to keynote speeches about the impact of digitalization but feel both cut-off and queasy, because there is no network coverage in the conference room. We want to adapt work routines and organizational processes to our employees' needs, yet we get annoyed when nobody picks up the phone at nine in the morning. We talk about non-authoritarian leadership styles, but still find it weird that new members of the team know all about the competition and even which topic we wrote our dissertation on.

All the new freedoms and options offered by new technologies, new ways of thinking and cross-border working inevitably entail a degree of contradiction: more freedom requires more (self-) discipline, closer proximity requires additional boundaries, more choice implies greater narrowing down. And as a business leader, you are smack in the middle of it all. You sense that in order to be successful you not only you have to do a lot more than you did before, but also you have to do things completely differently.

For as long as there have been managers, there have been management consultants. They use books, lectures, magazines, seminars and podcasts to share tips on better

ways to motivate people, to develop and direct them. Novel approaches and new secrets to success are constantly being conjured up. Has leadership really changed? Certainly. And how? In the small things as well as the large ones.

While I was writing this book, two executives stepped down from two major global German concerns: after ten years as the CEO of the German software giant SAP, Bill McDermott switched to the smaller cloud provider, ServiceNow. T-Mobile US, a subsidiary of Telekom, also announced a change in leadership: in May 2020 the current CEO Mike Sievert will take over from the charismatic head of Mobile, John Legere. In the following pages, both John Legere and Bill McDermott serve as ambassadors and role models for a new form of leadership. One that is self-confident, open and connected. Both considerably increased the market value of their companies. The announcements by Bill McDermott and John Legere caused a flurry on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. The news crossed the globe in seconds, attracting a lot of attention and messages expressing approval, confusion and excitement.

In the past, these changes at the top would have been mainly dealt with by business journalists, who would have reported them on the basis of information provided by the management: a terse factual bulletin, some praise, some thanks, the outlook for the future and something about the successors, Mike Sievert at T-Mobile, Christian Klein and Jennifer Morgan at SAP. Followed by silence. Even if a crisis or conflict was not behind the change in leadership, communication was meant to be restrained. If a CEO left, they were not supposed to talk about it. A couple of months later, the interested public would learn that the manager had been hired by a new company, under a new flag and a new brand.

When Bill McDermott and John Legere left, things were done very differently. In their communications, neither of them showed the slightest trace of animosity or dissatisfaction. So Telekom took particular care to point out that this was a "soft leadership transition". Mike Sievert is anything but a stopgap successor. On the contrary, Manager Magazin views the COO, who has been on the T-Mobile management team

for seven years, as the backstage "Mastermind". On his LinkedIn account he mentions how pleased he is about the upward move: "T-Mobile is an incredible company with incredible employees – it's an honor be chosen to take our story forward". It is symptomatic of this kind of "soft leadership transition", which I feel reflects a new kind of leadership and a new way of speaking about leadership. There are no losers here. It is not a full stop but a new chapter. The new CEO has every reason to be happy while his predecessor posts his congratulations on his social media account. The message is not just dutiful and restrained, but loyal, friendly and effusive. Not ceremonial, more like a happening.

Neither did Bill McDermott waste the opportunity of sending his positive and very personal congratulations to Christian Klein and Jennifer Morgan (who is incidentally the first woman at the head of a DAX-listed group): "Every CEO dreams of handing an exceptionally strong company to the next generation. Today we did for SAP. I love the people of this company. I couldn't be prouder of what we did. Jennifer Morgan and Christian Klein will be outstanding. Now we start our next chapter!" In response, his team of successors published a follow-up post on LinkedIn, humbly declaring that they were "standing on the shoulders of giants" as the new CEOs. They have nothing but fine words for McDermott. "His leadership has inspired SAP to do what few ever thought we could achieve."

A few days later, when SAP announced the appointment of Thomas Saueressig as director of the newly created "Product Engineering" division, there followed a hearty standing ovation from his ex-boss on Twitter: "Congratulations! A brilliant innovator, leader & Winner!" Significantly, McDermott sent this eulogy from his private Twitter account, which is no longer emblazoned with the SAPO logo, but with the colors and logo of ServiceNow.

Bill McDermott and John Legere remain networked and involved even after leaving their social media accounts, as a visible sign of a "soft change" without any ill will or legal shenanigans. In my view, these two prominent changes clearly illustrate a new

kind of leadership and a new kind of communication: open, honest and, above all, appreciative and positive via social media, rather than stodgy, sober and factual by press release.

This kind of communication is new. However, the balance between the organization and the individual is also new. The message is not couched as "brand-name company dismisses manager". The message is: "New chapter for the corporate brand and new chapter for the CEO brand". The top manager's future role is just as exciting as the future of the company. For example, McDermott is remaining true to his carefully curated image as a "salesman" CEO at his new domain. That is a new chapter in itself. Not only have his decisions and evaluations given SAP a solid return over ten years, his own brand has also given the group a face, with its own character and expression. This CEO brand is now migrating to the next company.

McDermott is more than the ex-CEO of a German software concern. McDermott is McDermott. And John Legere is John Legere. The business magazine Capital calls him a "One-man marketing machine. He is one of the world's quirkiest managers, and also one of the most successful". No wonder countless tweets and internet posts puzzle over where this exotic managerial creature will end up next and which company will benefit from his uniqueness and appeal.

As different as these two CEOs are, one a smart salesman, the other a quirky maverick, both represent a completely new kind of leader. They do not communicate their successes. They are successful because they communicate. Their tweets, posts and videos are not a pastime, a bit of fun or an end in itself. They take every available opportunity to convey optimism, vigor and zest for life – and pleasure in the company, the products, relationships and anticipation of the future. So they find it easy to praise their company in the highest possible terms, even when they are about to be taken off the payroll. It is important to them, because they have realized how crucial it is to be networked in the 21st century. It is the most lucrative form of currency for executives.

More and more top leaders are realizing how much they themselves and their leadership style need to change if they want to succeed in the social media age. They feel they are progressively taking on the responsibility of attracting bright minds, building customer trust and maintaining the company's learning curve with a pioneering spirit and childlike wonder. It is becoming increasingly clear to them: their LinkedIn, Twitter or Instagram accounts are more than channels through which to distribute press releases. They are their own highly personal tools, which they can use to network and exchange ideas. Above all, they are their own personal leadership cockpit. They can tweak the controls and buttons that will prove decisive to their impact as leaders. Their charisma, enthusiasm, trustworthiness, their ability to learn and their distinctiveness. In short, their leadership brand.

As a top manager, you have to be a brand if you want to be heard, build trust and a following. Thus, the concept of "leadership branding" is becoming increasingly popular among managers, management coaches, trainers and consultants. Along with this, there is a rapidly growing range of books, studies and training courses being made available. However, the explanations and advice they offer are often abstract and generalized. Great in theory – but how exactly are you supposed to get 10,000 followers on Twitter? And when is the best time for a LinkedIn post? A lot of management consultants have nothing to say on these sorts of questions. Trainers and coaches just shrug their shoulders. On the other hand, a lot of marketing consultants offer good advice and practical guidance, but rarely bridge the gap between communication and leadership. However, these two elements are inseparable. For a social CEO, Twitter and other social media are leadership tools. That is the subject of this book: how to define, sharpen and use your social media brand as a CEO, top manager and business leader.

Much has been written about how social media is transforming our society, for better or worse. However, many of the studies, reports and commentaries do not do justice to the true nature of these new digital platforms, because they tend to describe the people who use them as an audience. We do not just use Facebook, LinkedIn and

other social media channels to get our news. We use it to express our opinions, to share our knowledge and to portray an image of ourselves. Perhaps even more importantly, we use it to try out a different version of ourselves. That is very powerful. And effective.

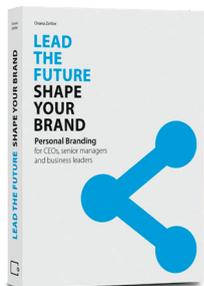
I have always been fascinated by everything digital and new trends. I would like to share this enthusiasm with you in the following pages. As the daughter of a research director, I got caught up in the magic of new technologies, PCs and software early on. I had my initial playful experiences trying out programming on our first Atari ST and moving up the different levels of computer games that the world of personal computers had to offer back then. These experiences have stayed with me ever since. They are still valid, even if Atari, C64, floppy disks and PacMan have long since been relegated to the museum of digital history. They have taught me that computers can offer us the valuable opportunity to try out new things, to experience ourselves afresh and to strike new paths. And, importantly, mistakes form a part of that. They take us forward.

I would like to convey this pleasure in trying out new things in the following pages. For Business Leaders, social media is a constant impetus to "become who you are". For a long time now, with my team at vision2brand I have been providing strategic support to top executives who have recognized the opportunities offered by the new media. We create an authentic online presence for them that allows them to consistently speak with their own voice and leverage the power of personal branding. We raise awareness of the importance of our own brand in wide-ranging discussions. Only when a clear attitude and conviction is recognizable behind a post and a tweet does it contribute to your own brand. Brand building does not happen overnight. But with the Internet it happens far more effectively. Many findings from these discussions and from collaborations with CEOs have found their way directly into this book.

Please join me on a tour through the new world of social media. Discover how, as a CEO, top manager and business leader, you can develop a new mindset, test out new

communication patterns and create a wealth of new partnerships. Take a look with me at the social media strategies of top CEOs, such as Satya Nadella, Adena Friedman or Joe Kaeser. Gather new ideas to make your social media accounts come alive. Make your expertise visible and give your company an important advantage. Join the conversation before others do: Shape your brand and make a difference! Success will come to you – writ both large and small...

Kind regards, Oxana Zeitler



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Oxana Zeitler is a brand strategist and expert in personal branding and digital communication. As an entrepreneur and founder of vision2brand Management Consultancy (Berlin), she and her team advise well-known CEOs and top managers from leading companies. She has extensive experience in the integration of digital technologies and the implementation of communication strategies in international groups. Her CEO branding approach helps top managers to align business decisions with social trends. She provides strategically oriented reputation management. Great brands are made!