

MANNAZ ARTICLE

The Naked Leader

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THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

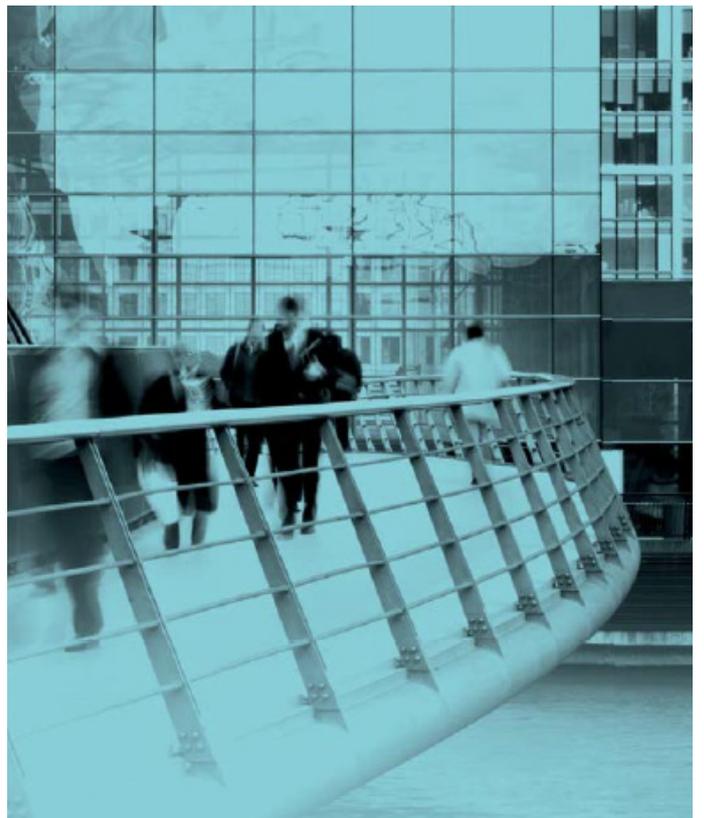
Many of us have heard of Hans Christian Andersen's short tale called The Emperor's New Clothes and how it takes a young child who does not understand the importance of keeping up a pretence to shout out "But he is not wearing anything at all!". The story is about a situation where no one believes, but everyone believes that everyone else believes.

We believe this story has some resonance for business. Recent failures in major organisations, and the banking sector in particular, demonstrate that the leaders of these large organisations were somehow playing out the story of The Emperor's New Clothes on a grand commercial stage. They seemed to feel omnipotent and were altogether blind to the nakedness

and vulnerability of the scene that they were part of. If we are to assist these organisations, and their leaders, to regain their commercial strength, we will have to help them to give up on the illusion of control and the vain belief that they were wearing clothes and did know the answers.

70:20:10 IN-ROLE MODEL

We believe that as learning, leadership and organisational development practitioners that we too have colluded in the story line, in the way that we have designed and delivered learning interventions. We thought we knew how to create world leaders, presenting them with theories and models that rested on the importance of knowing rather than true learning.



70%

10%

20%

At Mannaz, we have more recently been working with a number of clients in the co-creation and co-delivery of new learning and leadership architectures - what we now call our "70:20:10 in-role model". This concept and practice really brings to life experiential learning by taking into account the leader's reality within their global context and organisational system.

In our experience, what works in terms of the 70:20:10 in-role model is:

- Linking it to the strategy, vision and values of the organisation
- Meeting leaders where they actually are and engaging their unique resources
- Focusing on business challenges that leaders identify, rather than 'cooking up' strategic projects
- Prioritising the exposure and extraction of learning from an integrated organisational eco-system
- Only doing face-to-face what can only be done face-to-face
- Facilitating rather than teaching and being willing to work with emergence
- Engaging the line manager in the learning process to build sustainable learning
- Creating a continuous red thread to ensure linkages

Most of all as practitioners, we need to battle against our deeply ingrained design mindset and recognise that traditional forms of knowing are no longer an adequate defence for us and nor are they for our leaders, their organisations and their markets. We will add more value if we stop colluding, overcome our own illusions of omnipotence and start focusing more on co-creating the emergence of learning and leadership with the very leaders we are seeking to develop in the context within which they find themselves.

ADAPTING TO THE CHALLENGE OF NOT KNOWING

What does this mean for us as leadership, learning and organisational development practitioners? If we really do not know all there is to know about the emerging reality of leadership, can we still enable better leaders in the world? Yes, we can. However, not without reviewing traditional approaches to learning and leadership in general.

Our industry has typically designed and delivered impressive face-to-face programmes with the latest in clever theories and models, delivered by academic, expert and behavioural faculty who supposedly know the answers. We have told our leaders that all will be well if they apply these models and theories in their day-to-day activities. Our mistake is that we have filled their heads while ignoring their reality and the significant resources they bring to their role. We have also failed to factor in the real and deep uncertainty and anxiety that they contend with at a personal level.

This is important because the new reality of business is increasingly about leaders being able to embody and defend purpose, work with interconnectedness and demonstrate real values and trust. They need to be able to continuously let go of knowing and live in the world of emergence, a place they have not been before. Our learning and leadership development programmes need to reflect this paradigm shift rather than purport to do so.

THE NAKED TRUTH

There is the story of the man who read a book on maths and became a mathematician. Then he read a book on physics and became a physicist. Finally, he read a book on swimming and drowned. The point being that the book on swimming could only ever be a guide and the real learning must take place in the water. So too, it is true of learning and leadership.

Models and techniques are but guides and the real learning and discoveries take place when the leader allows them to take him/her deep into the water and experience whatever might arise in terms of new insights and discoveries. In our view, this is a great metaphor for in-role development - both the being and doing of leadership on a day-to-day basis - the true learning that is not constrained or contained within even the best of leadership development programmes.

Given the new reality, we believe that there is no longer any designated path in terms of learning and leadership. In truth, leaders make their own path by walking it. We need to stop insisting on people looking outside of themselves for wisdom; to expert theories and models to the exclusion of their own experience and without reference to the reality of what is

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taking place for them within their own unique part of the business and the world. Maybe as in nature, each of us have all the resources that we need to meet the challenges that lie ahead but these need to be sourced from within; from the nakedness of our own context and our own knowing.

THE REAL VALUE ADDED

The real value of in-role development can be easily missed if it is used as a cost-cutting device designed to reduce the costs of face-to-face interventions and more especially if and when leaders are required to do the learning activities on top, rather than as part, of their strategic and daily deliverables. At most, any additional demands on their time should constitute no more than 1-2 hours of activity, enabling them to embed new practices to address opportunities and challenges in different ways. They must become the architects of their own learning on the job, blending their learning and performance, so they are better able to deal with the issues that naturally occur in their day-to-day work.

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Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by. And that has made all the difference.

If we invest our time in supporting our leaders by ensuring they are exposed to valuable learning experiences and provided with effective learning tools, then we will have surely done our job as leadership and learning professionals and practitioners. By doing it this way, we will be preparing them to learn, rather than to know. This combined with engaging the leader's line manager further reinforces the power of in-role development through building stronger more trusting relationships and increased resilience across the business.

PIONEERING A NEW WAY OF BEING

At Mannaz, we have a long-standing heritage of co-creating and co-delivering with our clients. We have always believed that effective collaboration is critical to the successful implementation of our leadership and learning programmes. This has enabled us to pioneer new approaches to co-created learning with potential leaders. We have now gone beyond the frontiers of making the 70:20:10 in-role model a reality, from concept through to learning extraction.

THE JOURNEY

It has been a challenging journey for us at Mannaz and as Robert Frost said in the Road Not Taken, 'two roads diverged in the wood, and I – I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference'. However, the journey has been well worth the trouble because we firmly believe that our 70:20:10 in-role model is the only way to affect deep change in terms of mindset, behaviour and outcomes in the new reality. It is of its time and arguably the only possible clothing to wear. Anything else is an abdication: a 'plug in' learning experience and one that will be quickly found out as the Emperor's New Clothes.

Ita Dureke (left) and Catherine Berney are both organisational psychologists and thought leaders in the field. Ita is Executive Vice President at Mannaz A/S and Catherine is a Client Director in the Leaders Business Unit, and her book 'The Enlightened Organization' will be released by Kogan Page in May 2014.



Mannaz A/S is an international frontrunner in leadership development. Every year we design and deliver programmes for more than 10,000 executives, project leaders and specialists. Using our innovative and efficient learning methods, we empower people and organisations to improve performance and business results. With offices in Copenhagen, London and Hong Kong and an international network of experts and facilitators, we work with clients across the world.



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