

## Workshop Trieste 1-3 April 2016: "Leadership & Lifelong Learning"

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### "Voluntary work - democratic culture - salary work – require different leadership competences"

Leadership in BPW requires special competences. Common leadership trainings teaches leadership competences which fits the business world. But leading voluntary workers using democratic rules is quite a different task. Therefore it is important that BPW leaders are aware of the differences between behaviours in a voluntary working organizations compared to a salary work environment. In addition, in a company the power structure allows very different leadership rules compared to an organization with democratic rules.

The following comparisons should

- show BPW leaders the numerous and important differences
- support them to lead using realistic facts and not illusionary ideas
- increase successes and avoid disappointments

### 1<sup>st</sup> Comparison: Leadership in salary and voluntary work

The following two tables show criteria where leadership tasks differ in a salary work environment compared to a voluntary work environment

Comparison: Salary & Voluntary Work

Criteria	SALARY Work	VOLUNTARY Work
Motivation	By salary (deal) and interesting tasks	Only by tasks & successes (vote, prestige)
Priorities	Tasks have to be fulfilled in well defined working hours	BPW has 3rd priority 1st priority = profession 2nd priority = family
Working conditions	Good working climate is suitable, handling difficult situation is part of the job	Good working climate is vital
Tasks	Get ordered and paid	Get offered
Not fulfilled tasks	Consequences if contract has not been fulfilled	No legal contract, any activity relays on goodwill
Resignations	Replacement organized and paid	Very difficult to find replacement, no capacity to introduce a new person

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### 1.1 Motivation

Compensating someone's performance with money is what we are used to. For a leader money means power. For example if board members have to work only out of their own motivation, tasks and working climate have to fit very well. Board members who want a position for prestigious reasons are very quickly

disappointed, their motivation to work fades away and they become a burden for an organization. Therefore it's vital that voters look carefully at the true motivation of any candidate.

## **1.2 Priorities**

Each BPW leader has to become aware that for members and even for board members working for the organization BPW has only 3<sup>rd</sup> priority. The professional life has first priority followed by family duties. This is a fact, even they are very uncomfortable to accept. It needs a lot of time and requires an extremely flexible and innovative leadership style.

## **1.3 Working conditions**

A good working climate and efficient time management are basic and a real challenge. Blaming each other when something goes wrong or telling again and again the same old stories of disappointments only distract everybody from the real tasks and should be avoided.

## **1.4 Tasks**

Board members or members fulfil their tasks as long as the motivation fits. In fact in a voluntary working organization a successful leader is a person who is able to attract and "collect" people with the required motivation for performance.

## **1.5. Not fulfilled tasks**

If an officer is no longer motivated to accomplish a task, pressure seldom leads to success. An open exchange and a new solution in the long run will yield the best results.

## **1.6 Resignations**

Where in a business replacements gets organized and are paid, a resignation in a voluntary working organization brings a special challenge for each leader. It can happen that a board member accepts the role to organize a function and overestimates her competences, and then tries to blame others for her difficulties and finally quits shortly before the event. In such situations a leader has to be able to step in and take over the task because introducing a new person would cost more time and energy than doing an additional job.

## Comparison: Salary & Voluntary Work

Criteria	SALARY Work	VOLUNTARY Work
Changes	Can be ordered	Have to be negotiated, very time consuming, have to fit motivation
Tasks which nobody wants to do	Salary compensates lack of motivation	What to do if nobody is available for a task ?
Team partners	A good team is favorable, but working with difficult partners is part of the job	A good team is vital. Not fitting partners costs a lot of time and energy and can block work
Conflicts	Stress by conflicts are part of the job, bosses can give orders	Can kill motivation and end work
Critics	Paid staff has to tolerate or accept critics	It is like criticising the gift a voluntary worker offers
Appreciation, thank you	Mainly by salary, appreciations are welcomed	Satisfaction by successful results, Appreciations and thank you have to compensate the salary

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### 1.7 Changes

Where changes in a salary work environment changes are ordered and managed, they have to be negotiated with voluntary workers. This is not only a time consuming task but finally the new task has to fit the motivation of the person concerned. Therefore voluntary working organizations are not very flexible and changes often need a lot of time.

### 1.8 Tasks which nobody wants to do

If performances get compensated by a salary, persons can get found for any job. But if motivation and task have to fit, there are always tasks which get passed around and impede or even block a whole team. Here too, sometimes to accomplish a task oneself costs less time and energy than looking for somebody who is willing to do the job.

### 1.9 Team partners

If a president cannot choose her executive board members, good knowledge of human nature and psychological competences become essential. Working in a team with elected members can be a big challenge for any team member. Accepting the task to work in a team in which members can hardly work together is a very efficient training field. One has to learn lessons which one never would accept in a salary work environment. Several presidents say very openly that after their presidency they were a different person than before. I'm one of them. I underestimated the challenging task but also the personal maturity which develops by accepting such challenges. Finally, this personal maturity was more valuable than any salary.

### 1.10 Conflicts

BPW is a wonderful place to become a competent conflict manager. In a voluntary working environment people are more open and yet more honest. To feel comfortable they realize that they have to be true to themselves which again triggers more conflicts.

### 1.11 Critics

As a voluntary worker offers her performance as a gift, criticism is very difficult to accept. Who likes to be criticized for a gift? As criticism cannot be avoided, it has to be formulated very cautiously. BPW is a wonderful training field for practicing constructive criticism.

### 1.12 Appreciation, thank you

Good results, successes and a personal satisfaction have to compensate for the missing salary. Therefore appreciation, recognition, awards and thank yous are imperative for voluntary workers.

## 2 Working in a DEMOCRATIC culture

Many BPW board members are not aware that leadership in a democratic culture differs tremendously from leadership in a business. Leaders a democratic environments have to know that

- decisions go slower
- information is very time and energy consuming
- and terms ignore valuable know-how and experience

### COMPARISON: Working with or without DEMOCRATIC culture

Criteria	NO democratic culture	Democratic culture
Leader and her team	A CEO chooses his own team, characters which do not fit will not get hired	A BPW president has to work with elected board members even the characters do not fit
Terms	CEOs, experts, employees quit not along terms and can use their experiences for years	If board members are well installed in office, they have to leave ► big loss of know-how
Decisions	A CEO can give orders and his team can take quick decisions	Important decisions have to be voted and voters have to get informed = very energy and time consuming
Dismissals	Everybody can get fired at any time	It is nearly impossible to fire an elected board member who does a bad job

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### 2.1 Leader and her team

Working with an elected team is a big challenge. Leaders have to be aware that such teams work less efficient.

## 2.2 Terms

On the one hand, terms give the opportunity to train leadership for many members, which is a very important experience for women. On the other hand, an organization suffers because a lot of knowledge and experience gets lost by terms. This loss can be partly compensated by involving past board members in special tasks. The new BPW concept "Member initiated Taskforces and Projects" ensures that competent experts do not have to leave after terms but can continue working in their fields of expertise as long as they are motivated to do so. With this strategy BPW can keep competent experts who support the performance of the organization.

## 2.3 Decisions

Important decisions have to be voted on and voters have to get informed. This information is a very energy and time consuming process and needs a lot of sensitivity as the delegates have to understand the real issues. This is very tricky especially in an international organization where only 20% of the members have English as their first language. On the one hand leaders have to be aware of this fact but on the other hand our organization still doesn't use the new media sufficiently for an efficient information.

## 2.4 Dismissals

It is nearly impossible to fire an elected board member who does a poor job. Members want to know why somebody should leave and very easily members invest their time and energy in fights and gossip instead of constructive work. Competent leaders will find ways to bypass a difficult executive board member.

## 3 CONCLUSIONS

**As common leadership books do not mention these important differences, they should become part of workshops for future BPW leaders.** Successful leadership in voluntary working organizations with a democratic culture requires a lot of emotional competences. Where manipulation is a common tool in the business environment it seldom works in a voluntary working environment in a long run. Good expert knowledge, flexibility, true respect and empathy are competences which bring the best long term success.

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