

### Culture eats strategy for breakfast – How to ensure values are translated to daily behaviors

How often do you experience that there's a difference between "the words" and "the actions" of your leaders? To be fair, it's not always a conscious choice. Quite some years ago, supporting a multinational company, the defined values were "future, solution & motivation-oriented". Still, in the first workshop with top management of that company the unconscious bias to find mistakes, blame and trigger defensive reactions popped up already at the start; one manager showed up a minute late; naturally the CEO asked "so, why are you late?". Nothing wrong with asking that, you might say. After all, he was late. At the same time it was clear this was a golden moment to check the match between words and actions, so I asked the CEO how he felt his action matched with his daily preaching that we all need to be "future-, solution and motivation-oriented"? He was first defensive, explaining that it's important to be on time. Then I asked, so what was the goal of your question? His answer; "well, I want to know his excuse for being late!", well, then I suggest we should change "future, solution & motivation-oriented culture" to "we need to prepare good excuses culture". Is that what you want? Clearly, his answer was no. This was actually a great start of the leadership training, an example of a great man contradicting his words with his actions. In a gesture of greatness he then asked his management team to remind him every time they discovered this gap between his words and his actions, and we spend a full day training on how to give future, solution and motivational feedback, as well as giving correctional feedback in case someone repeatedly breaks the rules (for instance by being late!) in a way that ensures more action forward than excuses. In the months after this workshop the top 200 managers of that company (size approx. 40.000) attended this training. End result; a better link between words (stated company culture) and daily leadership behavior.