

## RECRUITING FOR EMPOWERING LEADERS: WE ARE LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES WITH PREFIXES



I was recently involved in a discussion about the party leaders and the question in the room moved around: which candidate would be best equipped to be the Prime Minister? Regardless of political views or sympathies, the consensus of the group was: So far none of the candidates impressed throughout the campaign process in all number of topics; everyone had weak spots. This left me thinking: What are our expectations towards our leaders?

By Katja Book, May 2015

In our democratic political system we have the significant chance to take part and choose our leaders. Other than in organisations where a leading manager is often recruited by criteria, not consolidated with the team's opinion and the decision is actually part of the upper management, the recruitment process for our political leaders lies in the hands of the people who are actually affected by those decisions.

Yet it seems we don't embrace this power fully and instead, lean back. Whether we feel our decision doesn't matter enough or we don't feel any of the candidates are suitable, I find this movement interesting: Isn't today's ideal recruitment process for organisations about finding people who show initiative and are hungry to make a change and impact? Why isn't that transported into our political system which is shaping how our society wants to live together?

Leaning back is revealing an interesting conception: When we aren't recruiting for an organisation's purpose but make a personal decision about leadership, the main quality we are looking for in a leader seems to be the ability to take care of the unpredictable and unexpected situation, who has the capabilities to face critical situations and in whom we can trust to have the right intuition to make the right decision. Those are high hopes and expectations we have for the head of country and yet to me this reveals a high level of uncertainty: We need someone who supports us because we wouldn't feel capable to take this responsibility and make these decisions.

With English as a foreign language, I often try to find patterns to make it easier to understand and memorise the English language and recently I have been drawn to a group of verbs that I find truly magical and that speak to this need of support from leaders that we are seeking.

In a discussion around the question: Is courage a cornerstone for responsive leaders? I found out that interestingly just courage isn't enough. A leader needs to be able to take this trait further and

**ENcourage** the people around him to become active as well as have the courage to change things himself.

The same thing I found is true to the word power. A powerful leader in any organisation is not enough, if not dangerous. An organisation needs leaders that **EMpower** others by helping them reach their true potential.

Even the little term 'able', that is kind of the overall verb used to speak of when someone is capable of something, has this magical trait: Combine it with the syllable EN- and it gives a leader the ability to **ENable** the people around him to become better and take their development further.

To me, the little prefix in front makes all the difference: In a grammatical sense it forms verbs with a general sense "to cause (a person or thing) to be in a place, condition, or state named" (e.g. enslave; entrust; enrich; encourage; endear).

By supporting the people within an organisation to gain capabilities to be in a higher place, they will gain the confidence to make an impact that matters to them personally and moves the organisation forward. A leader's ability to not only share their wisdom and experience but lifting the people around him to a higher and even equal place to himself will make us trust in that person like nothing else. Because if they see capabilities in ourselves that we haven't even seen, they must have that intuition to make the right decision in critical situations that we didn't see coming, right?!

Therefore, it is probably time, that we concentrate on finding Leadership-candidates with prefixes who are able to transform not only the organisation and system but most importantly us, the people within.

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