

Wanted! Modern leadership.

In recent weeks I have been watching with some amazement some television series about the upcoming US presidential elections. "The Trump Show" and "The Choice" will linger for some time. Donald Trump is portrayed by friends and foes as "a character". I cannot blame them. The current US leader is described as someone who decides and acts quickly. He is also labeled "a killer", as someone who always wants to win. But are these qualities of a modern leader? If you ask the question in the U.S., the answer is certainly mixed, all the more so because specific cultural elements play a major role. And then there is that killer content! Do we expect a leader to be a killer?



First back to the character. Donald Trump is described as narcissistic, autocratic, extraordinarily direct, offensive, and capricious. In addition, he is an attention grabber who demands loyalty from those around him (read "expect submission") or, if not, views them as a potential rival. By the way, if you demand too much attention as an employee, you'd better go to the exit.

He has guts and goes straight for his goal. In debates with opponents he can hardly be thrown off balance. In discussions with supporters, he tolerates little contradiction. Besides, he doesn't want to surround himself with too many staff, generals or experts. These will stop him anyway. He himself determines the direction and speaks. The step-by-step plan and the correct implementation is for later. Apparently he always wants to take the top step of the podium, regardless of whether the other players are favorable or unfavorable to him.

It is surprising that someone with the above competences has become the leader of the US? Yes, and yet not!

American Culture

Those who dig deeper will find part of the explanation among the American pioneers (source "The Culture Map" 2014, Erin Meyer), who once fled the social hierarchy in Europe, away from oppression and in search of freedom. As these pioneers then moved further into the still unknown land, **values such as "speed" and "individualism" became key to a successful existence and success.** Get there first (or shoot first!), work hard and learn from your mistakes!

Even today, Americans apparently hate having too much time spent in discussions. That just stops them. They prefer a quick decision that everyone will support a little later. Because often few elements in the scales are discussed, a decision for Americans is also very flexible and adaptable in any case. After all, tomorrow may bring new insights ...

The answer to the question of who makes the decision is perhaps another explanation. Based on the individualism that is rampant in American culture, the decision is made quickly and preferably by one person. And that is often "the boss". As new information emerges, the boss is allowed to change his mind and the decision can be adjusted. Making a quick decision then goes hand in hand with an agile implementation process, which presents itself to the Americans as "progressive insight".

When we take into account the above (*), it should come as no surprise that Donald Trump has many supporters. Few Americans will really blame him for making false statements. Decisions, opinions and statements are simply subject to change. We can therefore conclude that from a number of cultural elements different expectations are set with regard to leaders in Europe versus the US.

(*) Quite different from the European culture where "cooperation" and "consensus" are an integral part of the decision-making process. It results in a certain slowness, but it leads to better decisions. On the other hand, it takes a little more effort and time to delay or adjust the further implementation.

Every1's a winner (1978, Hot Chocolate)

Does the above make Donald Trump a modern leader after all? I leave that judgment to yourself.

Personally, I do not like the word "killer", which does not evoke any positive connotations. The word usage also makes it sound like a crime. After all, it is difficult to respect a perpetrator. And when you talk about a perpetrator, there is always a victim.

By the way, if your boss is a killer, you as an employee realize that an initiative that turns out wrong could be quickly blamed. Regardless of what you do later on, you will always belong to the layer "not to be trusted". The layer "to trust" is therefore not very filled with a killer boss.

Even the more common "he is a winner" still raises some concerns. A leader who always focuses on winning at the expense of others, ignores the fact that social progress and prosperity can only happen if everyone benefits. **For a modern leader, winning is not a "zero sum game".** A modern leader strives to make the pie bigger for everyone, and to this end he uses positivism and optimism to build the necessary confidence in the future, create the necessary drive and unite opponents and supporters in a common interest. Yes, we can! This is still echoing now ...

*For any leader, "to win" is a verb.
Moreover, for a modern leader, "to win" is a collaborative verb.
(Alain Surkol)*



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