

Guts: heroic deeds or recklessness?

'Having guts' is a characteristic that we tend to applaud. Unfortunately, having guts does not always lead to a positive result; the bravest soldiers on the battlefield are generally the first to die. Being a coward, for that matter, is also not an option. You will never win the war with only cowards.

In the battlefield of companies and institutions, a healthy dose of guts is needed more than ever before. Competition is razor sharp and the crisis effect increases the pressure. In the corporate world, guts can lead to huge profits and success, but also to huge losses and complete failures. Based on the result, everyone always knows better in retrospect: the guts displayed was a heroic deed requiring great courage, or, as the case may be, a reckless form of irresponsibility. People can flawlessly mention the examples. On one end of the spectrum, we have the successful companies that had the guts to make clear and obstinate choices, consistently holding on and weathering the disappointments and criticism (Apple, Starbucks). On the other end are the wrecks: 'From hero to zero' can be a small step in this context.

In Dialogue III, we found a number of prominent representatives of leading organizations willing to cooperate in this edition with the theme of corporate guts. Which type of guts characterises these organizations in realising their objectives and what do people notice in reality?

From these contributions, it becomes clear that guts primarily means acting from a vision and conviction (gut feeling, perhaps) without having a guarantee of positive results. For example, NYSE shows guts by deciding against opening their shared services in a typical low-cost country; RWE/Essent does the same by sometimes not firing up the plant; Vanderlande discerns itself by standing out from the crowd, and Alliander by investing in alternative solutions. Risk management at Achmea recognises the risk of not taking enough risk, whereas Arcadis talks about the guts of 'leading' rather than 'managing'.

Also at the level of the individual professional, guts is a characteristic that can add great value to organizations. From our dialogue sessions this year, it has once again appeared that the guts to be vulnerable towards your peers leads to key insights. These insights can help you make better decisions as a professional.

The participants in the dialogue on challenges in respect of, for example, ethical sourcing, cyber crime and project and performance management will undoubtedly take these themes to the next level within their organization.

The insights in this edition of Dialogue Magazine will hopefully inspire you to make a difference to your organization. However, that is not a guarantee for success - you will have to show guts to act upon this inspiration! We challenge you!

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