

Speech

on the occasion of

Consultants meet Consultants

The Need of Customers in Relation to Changes in Europe

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given by

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The spoken word counts

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The most important need of our customers is indeed to have enough money to be able to pay for our services, Ladies and Gentlemen. After this joke I would like to come to more serious needs of our clients.

We are here in Udine at a place that was still the outskirts of Western Europe some time ago. Now this place, as well as many others, is suddenly the midpoint of Europe because of the opening of borders of former Eastern countries. And therewith I would like to come to the point what our customers need today.

It is not that we as management consultants have customers for example in Madrid or Cologne and that we don't have to worry about other things. Again and again I experience in my practice that our customers suddenly contact us with questions like: "We are looking for a production leader for our factory in Hungary." or "We would like to relocate our production to Romania." or "We would like to relocate a part of our production to Poland." Such questions are not only aspects that recently have played an important role in large companies or groups but now much more also rather concern medium sized companies. If we as management consultants are not able to help or to offer actual support we will also forfeit our customers in our home country, for example in Germany, Italy or Switzerland. The customers will have the feeling that we are not up-to-date and therefore can no longer help them in the future. Therefore it is very important that we are always in touch with the needs of our customers and not only anticipate but concretely identify in advance future developments. This is for example the reason why one of my companies had strong development in North and South Europe. We were able to give our customers professional support in this geographic area, which was strategically important for our customers.

Many of our customers have realised that due to the economic challenges that exist in parts in Western Europe, that Europe has enlarged and at the same time its midpoint has shifted to Eastern Europe. Economic growth in the countries who joined the EU on 1 May usually correspond to the unemployment rates in the Western countries. To this extent we are facing large challenges, through which we must support our customers. Our customers will adapt more and more their view not only with respect to marketing opportunities and/or markets in the East, but rather they will consider which parts of production and respectively administration could be relocated in other countries. And here naturally management consultants must also prepare in order to support their clients in these processes.

And therewith we come to the subject of our meeting here in Udine. Consultants themselves have to take care to act jointly in networks and respective cooperations in order to follow our customers and to offer the help of cooperation partners in other countries. This is because most of the medium sized and small consultancies are not able and/or it wouldn't be reasonable to open agencies or offices in far away regions.

In this context we should always keep in mind that we have to offer advantages to our customers. These are also the largest challenges facing cooperations. We must guarantee the customers a steady advantage with the same high quality in each cooperation with possible consulting partners. This is the only way to satisfy the customer and commit him to a longer collaboration with our companies.

Furthermore, customers are focusing more and more on the management consultants' expertise, quality and experience. The dividing line between "management consulting" (professional consulting) and "solution consulting" (industrial consulting) is becoming more defined. Customers have become more demanding and responsible and no longer accept standardised solutions or pure concepts.

Customers also expect full service, from design through implementation and operation. The customers' high expectations must be met by the consultants professionalism, ethical behaviour, their proven social competence and sector related experience.

Finally I would like to summarise the most important points for our customers:

1. High quality of the products and/or services of the products of our customers
2. High productivity
3. Implementation of the market changes and/or movements in Europe in their companies
4. Trustworthy employees who know very well the circumstances and culture of the respective region
5. Consultants with networks in the regions in which our customer also works or will work
6. Performance of consultants with high transparency and quality

And last but not least, Ladies and Gentlemen, what is the most important thing, what our customer needs? A high running sale so that his cash register is filled. Not only to pay for our services, as I have already said at the beginning as a joke, but to also invest in upcoming markets and market changes.

In this sense I wish you a very productive meeting here in Udine. I hope you will get to know other colleagues who are on the same wavelength with you. Only then can collaboration be offered and be worthwhile for all parties involved.