

## **CEO Tip of the Month: How to Maintain Your Momentum Once You've Reached the Top**

by Guido Quelle

As the saying goes, it's lonely at the top, and every Speaker or Chair of the Senior Management, every Chair of the Managerial Board, every head of the Supervisory Board has at one time or another felt the truth of those words. Whereas, as the head of a department or division, or as a member of the Supervisory, Advisory or Administrative Board, you are still one of many people, this status immediately changes when you take on a leadership position. Your role changes and your former colleagues are now only "colleagues" in name only; the Supervisory Board appoints the Managerial Board, and the General Assembly appoints the Supervisory Board, but the seat at the top is always something unique. A CEO must act a bit more cautiously and has every right to assume that there are other parties working to undermine him or her—and often more than one at once.

Many CEOs have reported to us that they have to spend between ten and thirty percent of their time on political maneuvering, and in some cases even with safeguarding their own position, so as to avoid having the actions of others in their immediate vicinity intentionally or unintentionally torpedo their plans, or even their career. It's a horrible thought, especially when you consider that, aside from health, the time we have at our disposal is our most important asset.

Accordingly the question arises as to how you as a CEO can nonetheless manage to keep up your tempo at the top, how you can move forward with important issues, and how you can continue to use your own personal drive for the good of the company you represent; after all, you'll ultimately be judged by the results. Here are five tips:

### **1 Set your top priorities**

There are bound to be days on which using your "normal" priorities just won't be enough. Set three top priorities for which you'd be willing to drop whatever else you were doing in order to pursue—except for your private life. Write them down somewhere you'll actually see them, on a flipchart in your office or in your calendar, and make sure those who work closely with you know them as well.

### **2 Find opinion leaders and promoters**

If you want to ensure that the issues most important to you also move forward when you can't work on them personally, you need promoters and opinion leaders within your organization. Make sure they are dedicated to pursuing your goals and have them make regular progress reports. With a strong basis of facts, any attempts to undermine your plans are likely to fail.

### **3 Talk openly about disagreements**

If you're part of an unspoken conflict at the Management level, address it directly: "Mr. Miller, I believe this is another point we disagree on. Please explain your

arguments to me." Taking this approach allows you to keep the scepter in your hand and to remain in control of the situation.

#### **4 Always stay one step ahead**

If you have a great deal of personal drive and don't want to lose it, it's important that you think ahead so as not to become a victim of the daily grind. Which scenarios could arise? Which are most likely? How can I best respond to them? These are all relevant questions. We're not talking about trying to see the future here; instead you'll realize that the key is in trying to imagine and prepare for only a few critical scenarios.

#### **5 Find an external sounding board**

Seek and find someone you can talk with about issues and developments within your company, someone who has no personal interest in any one solution. You can always feel free to ignore their opinion if you disagree, but they should be independent and be able to freely speak their mind.

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