

# What you do does matter!

## Personal Development at the Dutch Railways

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*In this article we explore the way managers at the Dutch Railways (DR) work on their personal development in the broader context of the organizational goals. We describe how structural attention for personal development forms a platform for organisational development. With this we want to illustrate how such a process can be structured.*

*We begin with the reason to start a large scale development program within the Dutch Railways and the way organizational change goals are translated in the learning trajectory 'Destination: Customer in Action'.*

*In describing this trajectory, we elaborate on the most important, assumptions, the set-up and the learning activities, illustrated by experiences of the personal learning trajectory of a manager involved.*

*Finally we assess the contribution of the learning trajectory on the organisational change goals and on the personal development of individual employees.*

### **Destination: Customer, a new perspective on the future**

#### **The reason for starting**

From the start of the privatisation, the DR is working on developing a new strategy for the future. External factors that trigger internal change are: the growing dissatisfaction on quality of the service, the strong increase of customers and the discussion about competition on the railways. Internally, there is a strong need for a clear perspective on the future.

Based on the principal of *operational excellence* (Treacy & Wiersema, 1995) far reaching ideas arose on changes in the service towards the customer and on business process re-design. The DR encourage out-of-the-box thinking, beyond existing conventions (also see Buckingham & Coffman, 1999).

The concepts that are developed from this paradigm have taken form in the change program *Destination: Customer*. This program visualizes content changes in the products and services delivered (value to the customer), and the processes necessary (the so called 'working model')

The change track starts with informing all personnel on the new plans. During this process, personnel gets the opportunity to share questions, ideas and concerns with top management.

Parallel to this the almost hundred different projects of *Destination: customer* undergo an efficiency scan.

However, there is a lack of mutual agreement, plans do not go according to schedule, there is overlap between projects, in the cooperation is all but optimal. Management intervenes quickly and introduces a transparent project structure with clear management that should support cooperation.

A manager:

*“Structurally paying attention to personal development and the acquisition of skills is really necessary to deal with all the changes. I feel encouraged by the fact that top management takes the lead and are role models in the learning trajectory”.*

## **The goal**

Now that the content of the projects has been stated and a clear approach has been chosen, the 'how' question remains:

How do we implement the substantive changes throughout the entire organization?

The contents of the projects have to be implemented into the basic processes of the DR. Management throughout the past has proven to not sufficiently be able to implement new activities or results of projects. This means that the implementation power of the organization, both on the long and the short term, needs to be strengthened.

The executive board puts learning to implement *Destination: Customer* at the core of an extensive learning program called *Destination: customer in Action*. Therefore the goal of the learning trajectory is to make all employees competent in implementing *Destination: customer*.

The board has chosen to set the example in this learning process. The members of the board start by attaining the skills necessary to stay effective in a constantly changing environment, all 500 managers follow their example and do so as well. During the second phase the 2300 staff workers start with this learning program. Finally, the 10.000 employees working in the trains and at the train stations start a year later.

## **THE PYRAMID, focusing on the procedural and cultural level**

The concept (figure 1) that is at the core of (organizational) change skills is the communication pyramid (derived from Schein, 1987). The pyramid illustrates that communication always takes place on three levels: the content level, the procedural level and the cultural level. The cultural level forms the basis, and only when the basis is solid, effective ways of working can be agreed upon (procedures), that lead to working together on the content.

### **Cultural level**

The cultural level focuses on establishing common values and reciprocal work relationships. Examples of these values are:

- Customer focus takes shape through thinking from the outside in (what does the customer want, when is the customer satisfied, how can I contribute to that?);
- Working together is essential, both in realizing renewal as in doing the daily jobs.
- Every employee delivers added value to the primary process, in other words, what you do, does matter.

On this level the board states that there are three crucial skills to realize *Destination: customer*:

- Addressing colleagues
- Working together
- Being a role model

### Procedural Level

The procedural level in the pyramid is about using skills and instruments that help structure the content.

The board again here makes a selection of those skills that are most powerful in supporting change;

- Making plans
- Working according to plans
- Structuring the work model. This means that all activities must comply to 4 basic principles. The work process must be *easily organized*, *reliable*, *predictable* and *safe*.

The more able a manager is in these skills, the higher the quality of the content of *Destination: customer* will be.

### Content level

The top of the pyramid, the content is the most visible element that usually receives a lot of attention. In corporate terms, this are the results. At DR the explicit focus has long remained on the content. The base of the pyramid (the relationship between people and culture) received much less attention. To implement the changes inside and outside of the organization, management wanted to strengthen this base.

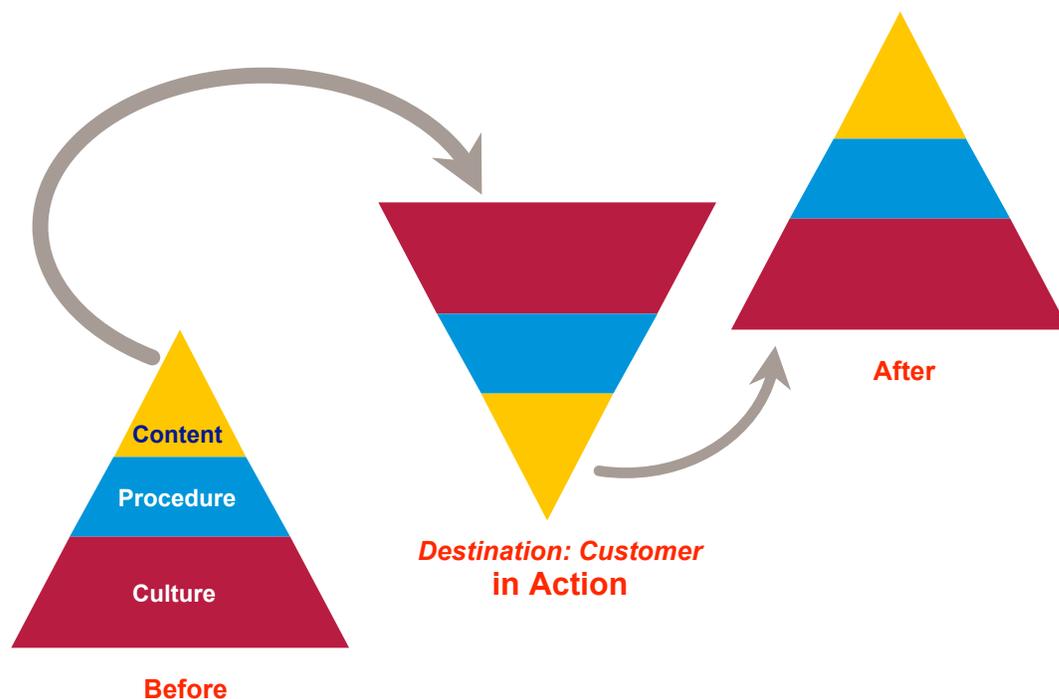


Figure 1 – the changing focus of the communication: from Content, via Culture to new Content

CEO Huisinga takes this line of reasoning so far that at the beginning of the learning trajectory he states:

*“ To show how serious I am in focusing on a common, effective way of working together, I will put the pyramid, figuratively speaking, upside down. This means it will stand on its pointy head, which is uncomfortable. It is not possible for a long time. But, by putting the pyramid upside down, I can show everyone how much I encourage colleagues, who realize Destination: customer from common values and culture. Working on procedures and content, based on our common values, and not the other way around!”*

## PRINCIPLES FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The DR wants a common framework to shape learning. Therefore, principles for learning and development are formulated so everyone can shape his or her own learning trajectory based on these principles. The principles work like design rules for all trainers, facilitators and learners themselves. Next we will describe these important principles for learning and developing.

A manager:

*“The principles for learning and development time and again support me to make my personal learning process very practical. The organisational goals are the framework within my learning takes place”.*

### **Personal development is the basis for organisational development.**

If the people in the organisation don't change the organisation itself certainly won't. However, the employees will have to experience and acknowledge the relevance and urgency to change before they are willing and able to see their personal development in light of that change (Verhoeven, 1997). The organisation should offer a framework in which this personal development can take place. “The manager can only create

the *conditions for the ability* to find an individual sense of value (and with that optimal development and performance)” (Sprenger, 1996).

### **What you do does matter: the relevance of learning is clear to everyone.**

An individual or collective learning process starts from a predetermined goal, motivation or relevance (Weaver & Farrel, 1998). DR has created this process by stating the mission of the organization and creating a framework for individual employees so they can develop their personal contribution and development in that process.

### **Competence has to be gained by the individual**

The competence to work effectively is a personal ability; nobody can do that for you or transfer it to others (Kessels, 1999). Where before professional expertise was the highest good, in a change process it is primarily about competence and application. This line of reasoning implies a way of learning where every individual is *personally* responsible for his or her personal development. The learners shape their own learning trajectory.

### **Learning together**

The learning process is strengthened if it happens with, from and for others (See for example Dibella & Nevis, 1998)

- Learning **with** each other offers the opportunity to make a real change as an organization and to create a new shared frame of reference.
- Learning **from** each other makes it possible to make use of the expertise of others and to do this continually in the daily work practice.
- Learning **for** each other based on the realization that the work process is realised together and that personal development, through 'teaching each other', contributes to the development of colleagues.

### **Daily work practice as a strong learning environment**

The working practice often offers the best 'nourishment' for developing (Bolhuis & Simons, 1999). That is where the issues are that really matter. By learning on the job the learner works toward results that make the daily work more effective, more pleasant and easier. This way, the motivation to learn strengthens itself.

### **Learning from mistakes and success**

An important condition for delivering results, is that throughout the entire organization a learning climate is developed in which it allowed to learn from mistakes and successes (Dirkse-Hulscher & Van Noort, 1998). To learn new behaviours successful experiences are needed. By focussing on these experiences, the learner feels comfortable to further develop this behaviour in practice. On the other reflecting on matters that didn't go well is also very valuable. Making mistakes and getting feedback on it is most educational when it is done from a positive mindset.

Dutch Railways puts a unique learning trajectory in motion. The learning trajectory has, through its form and content, the same unique characteristics as the work situation that is needed to implement: *Destination: customer*.

## **THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND STEPS IN PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Next we will describe the aspects of the 'learning environment'. We will discuss the course of the learning trajectory and offer a description of the instruments used. Which path has an individual employee taken in light of his or her personal development?

This path is as follows (see also figure 2):

- a. Reading the workbook and initial collective meeting: information on the trajectory
- b. Completing a self-assessment: what am I good at, and what are points of improvement?
- c. Making a personal development plan: how am I going to structure my learning?
- d. Attending collective meetings: what is the content about and how are others doing it?
- e. Going through individual learning activities: how can my learning become more profound?
- f. Putting together a portfolio: How can I demonstrate my development?

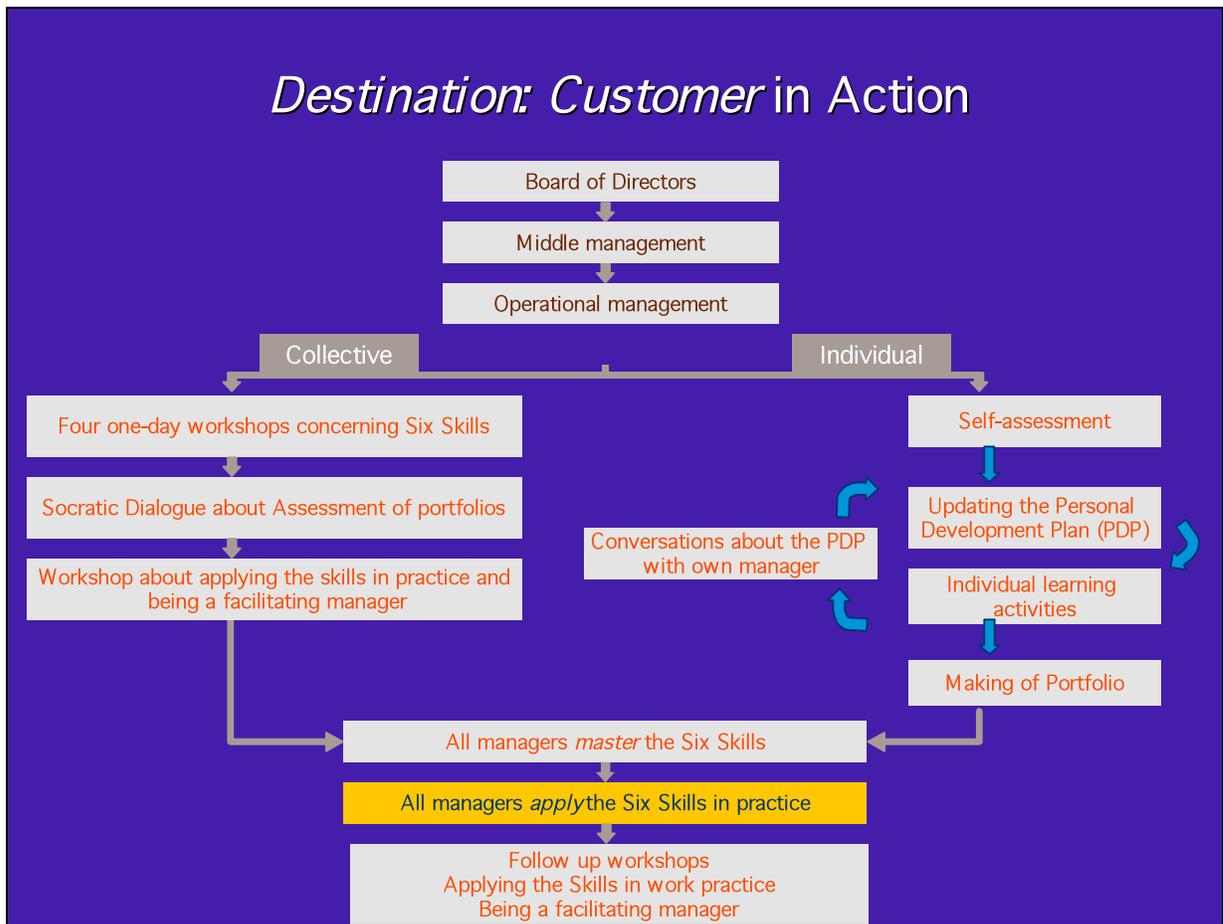


Figure 2: a schematic view of the elements of the developmental trajectory: *Destination: customer in Action*.

**a. Workbook and the initial collective meeting: information about the trajectory**

To be able to get a clear picture in advance of the learning trajectory and what it will entail for them, the employees receive a workbook including different materials that can support their learning process. During the learning trajectory, the workbook will be completed based on the wishes of the managers, the effects of the steps in the learning trajectory and an HRD-based needs assessment. Much of the content is put together by the NS, based on knowledge gained throughout the trajectory. The introduction of this workbook like the initial collective meeting is based on the theme: “Our organisation is about to change, what does this mean for you, en how are you going to change along with it?”. The participants received explanation on the six central skills of the learning trajectory and on the communication pyramid.

In the workbook the learners can find different materials that will be described in the following. Being structured the way it is, and by its content the workbook offers a framework for going through the learning trajectory independently. On the other hand, for some participants it leads to a sense of insecurity. For some people the elaborate workbook leads to questions such as: “This requires a lot of me, am I able to do this?”. Although the content of the workbook is adequate, the material has a limited stimulating effect.

A manager:  
*“The workbook offers me tools to shape my personal development. And not by prescription, but through inspiration and invoking own ideas and action”.*

It appears that especially the collective meetings are being regarded as moments for inspiration and motivation.

**b. Self-assessment: What am I good at and where is room for improvement?**

As we have indicated before, individuals' personal development takes place within the frameworks of the organization. An example of such a framework is the focus on learning the six central skills. These frameworks allow every employee to actively apply one's talents and giving focussed attention to the development issues.

A manager:  
*"I found the self assessment a hard job to do. You more or less have to do some soul searching. I am surprised to notice that it has had much added values to be supported by a fellow manager. This way you really can sharpen your learning goals".*

By completing the self-assessment every employee can conclude what skills can be categorized under internal talents and for which skills further learning activities need to be developed. In doing this, they discriminate between 'being able to' and 'really applying'

The learning activities are not only related to learning to mastery of the skills ('being able to'). Effectively applying them in the work practice ('applying') is the actual goal (Kessels, 1996). Learning together already starts in this phase because the employee is not the only one

who completes the assessment form, he or she also asks a colleague to fill in the form on him or her. Below a fragment of the self-assessment is included.

<b>Addressing colleagues</b>	Able to		Applying	
<i>a. Making a compliment</i> I regularly give my team members a compliment, making them feel valued.	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>b. Giving feedback</i> I address my team members about their behaviour, even when it is not about big issues; I address them 'on the corridor'. When I give feedback, I tell them what I've seen, what the effect of it was and how I would like to see it next time.	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>c. Confronting</i> I confront my team members with their behaviour by specifically stating what I've seen, what the effect what, and how I would like to see it the next time. When I confront, I clearly and concisely state my point (focussed on one situation). I focus my feedback on the future (don't ask 'why' something went wrong) and state at the end of the conversation what I like about the other and that I have positive expectations.	Yes	No	Yes	No

Figure 3 Fragment from the self-assessment, the cultural skill 'addressing colleagues'.

Assessing yourself proves to be a new activity for many people. It is especially difficult to use the six (then still relatively unknown) skills in this process. Also including colleagues into their own learning processes is very new for many employees. However, the learners do experience this way of working as effective to get a complete and reliable picture of their own competences and potential blind spots.

**c. A personal development plan: how am I going to structure learning?**

The moment that a learner has gained insight to his or her points of development, talents and explicitly knows what work results apply for him or her, the shaping and structuring of the personal learning trajectory starts. The personal development plan is a valuable instrument during this process, it is a 'growth document' that is continually adapted based on specific learning experiences.

The Personal Development Plan is based on the following format:

<p><b>A. Personal ambitions</b> For what elements in your work are you most motivated?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What personal ambitions do you have?</li><li>○ What aspects in <i>Destination: customer</i> appeal to you most?</li><li>○ What influence will <i>Destination: customer</i> have on your work?</li><li>○ What do you dread?</li></ul> <p><b>B. Talents and areas of development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What talents (skills that you are good at) would like to develop further in the coming period?</li><li>○ What skills would you like to improve would you like to improve?</li><li>○ What kinds of proof do you collect in your portfolio to show that you can master and apply your areas of development in your daily work.</li></ul> <p><b>C. Learning activities to realise a development plan</b> Describe what activities you plan to engage in to work on your points of development. For inspiration, use the list of learning activities per skill [not shown here].</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I am going to engage in the following activities:</li><li>2. I am going to focus my attention on the following elements of my work:</li><li>3. I will participate in the following projects/activities:</li><li>4. I am going to create the following work activities for myself:</li><li>5. Together with some colleagues /I am going to organize the following activities:</li><li>6. I will participate in the following workshops / training activities:</li><li>7. Other (learning) activities:</li></ol> <p><b>D. Ways of support</b> The before mentioned learning activities will only be successful when you receive support from your manager and colleagues. Please indicate what kind of support you need.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I expect the following support of my manager:</li><li>2. I need support from my colleagues, namely:</li><li>3. I will ask ..... to be my learning partner / buddy / personal coach. His or her feedback will be very important to me, because:</li><li>4. From the project organisation <i>Destination: customer</i> in Action I expect / I need:</li><li>5. I need material support, namely:</li><li>6. My own input to make this leaning trajectory a success consists of:</li></ol> <p><b>E. My contribution to the development of colleagues.</b> in the way that you need support of you colleagues, they also need you to support them. Please indicate below what you have to offer them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. I will organise the following activities in which my colleagues can also participate:</li><li>2. My expertise is in the field of ..... I am willing to offer coaching to my colleagues on this area</li><li>3. Other forms of support that I have to offer are:</li></ol>
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Figure 4: the 'format' for a personal development plan

Based on the personal development plan there are regular 'development conversations' between manager and learner about the content and course of the individual learning process. The discussion points are in line with the elements of the personal development

conversations take place roughly every two months. The se conversations evolve over time from points of es towards the portfolio and application in everyday rning, the learner takes the lead during the e manager the learner decides how the activities stated n can be realised. structure of the personal development plan offers a lopment. It is sometimes hard for participants to select ain learning goal. Participants experience this particu

A manager:  
*"It is fun to make the photo of Where am I now? and the photo of Where do I want to go to? with my boss in a one-on-one situation. The personal development conversations were real coaching sessions to me. And to be honest I don't need*

A network (region) organises a learning fair. At this learning fair people can learn about activities that colleagues are undertaking. Also, participants make clear what 'talents' he or she has to offer to colleagues. Of course questions can be raised to colleagues to ask for help on certain areas of development. This way an exchange is set up on talents and points of development. Participants also get the opportunity to explore other ways of learning, such as: external training, coaching and self-study packages. A selection of relevant literature is offered as well.

learning trajectory. Is it better to engage in training or to read a certain book? Is it better to follow a colleague during his daily activities or to form a group for collegial consultation? It is very important to spend the 'learning time' as efficient as possible. The employees are given ideas for learning activities and are enabled during so called 'learning fairs' to collectively think about choosing concrete learning activities.

The conversations concerning the personal development plans serve as way of support and as a stimulant for the learners. During the daily hectic, planning these conversations and actually carrying them out, puts a large strain on the managers.

During the start-up phase it proved to be not always easy to actually talk about learning: the content (read: work) is often put at the top of the agenda and consequently controls it. The managers don't have a large enough advance to stand above the 'work content'. During the course of the development trajectory the participants become more skilled and the conversations go according to plan.

#### **d. Collective meetings: what is the content about and how do others do it?**

Quarterly collective meetings support the individual learning trajectories. Every meeting carries both a procedural and a cultural skill as main theme. The second collective meeting, for example, was about systematic working (procedure) and working together (culture). Top Management is the first to experience the meeting and to make suggestions to improve it for the next groups, cascading down the organization. Several weeks later it is second-line management's turn to join the meeting. Top Management facilitates this collective day. To be able to do so, they have a preparatory moment. Again, several weeks later it is first-line management's turn to go through the meeting. This time, both Top Management and second-line management facilitate the meeting.

The sort of activities remains the same during the consecutive meetings, however the content is adjusted each time to the specific work practice of the target group. Every collective meeting ends with the possibility to adjust the personal development plan by what has been learned during the day.

The major effect of the collective meetings, concluded during evaluation, is the arising of a sense that the entire company works towards the same goal. Managers appreciate the meetings also because it is an opportunity to practice skills in a very 'open' environment. The meetings offer the possibility to reflect with others on the personal learning trajectory, to gain new inspiration, to see managers behave as role models and to talk to each other about changes that are wanted. During the meeting the attendants work on the preferred learning and working climate.

Active forms of working (training with actors, working in small groups, fun intermezzi and game simulations) give the participants energy and function as an iterative, stimulating element in the learning trajectory.

A manager:

*"The collective meetings are great! You sense that colleagues struggle with the same learning goals, and together you get better at it. It is fun, it is safe, useful, hard work and enjoyment at the same time. And also designing and preparing for those days triggers the best of me".*

#### **e. Individual learning activities: how can my learning become more profound?**

Based on the personal development plan, the conversations with managers and the themes from the collective meetings, every individual employee chooses additional activities. By doing this an abundance of custom-made learning trajectories (as many as there are employees) arise parallel to the collective learning activities. Participants act as directors of their own learning.

The DR allocated a personal budget to all learners, the personal development cheque. Spending this money does not require any form of approval. However, during the conversations about the personal development plans, manager and learning do come to an agreement on the effect that the budget spent should have.

The actual interpretation of the individual learning activities had great variance; we mention some of them:

- Consulting with colleagues
- Extra training sessions with the department one belongs to
- Hiring a personal coach
- Enrolling in external education
- Discussing procedure and culture during work meetings
- Studying books concerning the theme of learning
- Discussing the personal performance and functioning with a colleague
- Visiting other departments to exchange approaches and methods of working
- Teaching learned skills to others

As mentioned before, choosing the right learning activity is not always easy. However, the effect of the personal learning budget is that people go through this choice process very carefully. Central to this process are questions like: “What learning activity is most appropriate for the skill to be developed?”, “Will I receive value for the money I spent?”, “Can I organise this activity internally (without spending money) by involving colleagues?”, “Who would also like to undertake this activity and how can we create added value together?”.

#### **f. Putting together a portfolio: how do I demonstrate my development?**

A complex element of the learning trajectory is the portfolio with ‘learning proof’. Why does the DR choose to have all the participants put together a portfolio based on the six central skills? Some arguments:

- The learning trajectory *Destination: Customer in Action* supports the organizational change trajectory *Destination: customer*, therefore it is not without obligation. The six selected central skills are the core skills that are needed to implement the actual content of the change trajectory.
- Learning has to be accompanied by a goal. By working on concrete learning goals, which are determined in consultation with the manager, the learner himself creates the necessary excitement. The portfolio serves as a tool to make the development visible to others (just like an artist uses it), thereby also serving as concrete material in the during the conversations about personal development plans and the portfolio itself.
- Change is essential for the Dutch Railways. In this organization, people work with tight schedules. All participants have a role in the implementation of the changes. The learning trajectory therefore has a planning that is adjusted to the implementation of *Destination: customer*. The portfolio as a goal helps to link the learning to that schedule.

So, what does a portfolio look like in practice? An employee collects different examples of mastery and application of skills during his or her learning trajectory. This can be in the form of a conversation report, video images, written feedback by others, reports, self-reflections, work results / performance (products or services) or appraisal by constituents or managers.

A manager:

*"Putting together this portfolio really is something new to me. At first you don't know how to deal with it. What is accepted as 'proof'? How do I show this to my boss? Does it add up to my performance rating? Looking back on it I feel that the portfolio has helped me to concretely demonstrate my competence and skill".*

The idea is that these 'proofs' are included into a suitcase and at the end of the learning trajectory can bring these to the table for assessment and discussion. During the course of time the conversations concerning the personal development plans more and more take the shape of conversations concerning the portfolios. During these conversations the learners and the managers discuss the collected proof. This approach forms a hard task for many learners: how can the results of learning be made visible into proof? Doesn't this compromise the presumed own personal responsibility?

The next question also receives a lot of attention:

*As a manager, how do I do right to an employee, in judging his or her development?*

Based on this research question all management teams work in an Socratic Dialogue on a method to discuss and assess the portfolio's of their employees (see Bolten, 1998). At the beginning of the learning trajectory there aren't any set explicit norms or values formulated about the mastery of the six central skills. During these dialogues, agreement arises on what effective development steps are and on what adequate applications of the six central skills comply to. Based on this form of sharing knowledge with colleagues they all engage in the process assessing the portfolios of their employees. During this process collegial consultation meetings are held to share experiences and to repeatedly strive to get and keep the assessing principles clear and sharp.

The round-up of the learning trajectory consists of every learner having a concluding conversation with his or her direct manager on their current mastery and application of the six central skills. Possible follow-up activities are also discussed. This concluding conversation is used to come to agreements about learning and continuing the personal development plan conversations after the end of the formal trajectory.

### **MAKING UP THE BALANCE SHEET: results on individual and organisational level**

What are, two years after the start of the learning trajectory *Destination: Customer in Action*, the results? Has a learning climate been created in which learning initiatives are of benefit of both the change of the organisation and the personal development of the individual employee? What has worked and what hasn't, and what does that mean for the way in which we want to continue?

### **A new way of learning**

The way in which the learning trajectory is shaped, has been experienced as new by many of the employees. The pro's and con's of this we have already discussed above. Completing a self-assessment, charting why you have been 'ordered', trying to find learning activities mostly in the work environment, collecting evidence and conversations (with the direct manager) with the topic being yourself are not common practice over a night's sleep.

From the evaluations it shows that most employees have actively worked on their own learning trajectory. Especially composing the suitcase of 'proof' was input for a lot of discussions. The question 'what would you have done if we hadn't asked you to compose a portfolio?', was answered by many with: 'well, I would have probably treated my personal development plan a lot less seriously. To be able to incorporate moments of reflec-

tion into the daily work practice is seen as a gift. Individuals have the time to think about their own position compared to the changing work (what are my ambitions, how am I going to contribute to the organizational goals), but also to explicitly focus attention to how their work is related to that of others. The combination of one-on-one moments (conversations about the personal development plan with the direct manager) and more collective moments (the collective meetings, learning activities with colleagues) are regarded as inspiring and stimulating. The framework is stated clearly, but at the same time it is possible to individually shape personal development. By adding the fact that shared responsibility for work and learning results is taken very seriously, we can conclude that possible consumptive learning behaviour almost hasn't occurred. The relatively large freedom is experienced as a wanted freedom with an accompanying sense of responsibility. This appears from the fact that people ask themselves questions like: 'if this is the problem posed, then what do I need to get a step further to the solution, and, how can others support me, and how am I going to take care of that?'. A lot of people indicate that during the learning trajectory they have grown, both in their work as in their private lives.

### **A new way of working (together)**

The most important result of going through a learning trajectory with many people at the same time with a shared focus is that a shared view on the desired change direction and a common language arises. The insight that reflection and taking time together, is important to move on is becoming visible in the new way of working. Managers indicate they are better aware of what is needed from them, that they are finding recognition with fellow managers and are looking for help from each other. Jokes are being made like: 'I will now give you some feedback the way it is supposed to be done', conversations about the work processes are held in terms of, content, procedure and culture and management is looking for relationships and dependencies to work together. People are thinking more in terms of 'effects of my actions, of my behaviour'. The questions: 'what do we actually want to accomplish and how are we going to do that?', has become common practice. There is a greater appreciation of practicing together and employees are willing to put themselves on the line more. A lot of managers indicate that they feel strengthened during difficult situations in the primary process.

A final example: many of the projects of *Destination: customer* have been set up and implemented by staff personnel. The learning trajectory has so much specific attention for projects, working together and implementation that new work relationships have popped up between staff employees and line employees. The implementation of changes goes in many projects according to plan in many projects and, with much less resistance. The focus on new behaviour, new ways of working and the supporting methods and instruments of *Destination: customer* in Action have proven to be instrumental for the implementation of *Destination: customer*.

### **Critical success factors**

The large scale of the trajectory is an important factor: a critical mass is needed to accomplish a true change of culture within an organization. A group of over 500 managers with a shared language is large enough to accomplish this. However, we need to note that only during the course of time other groups of employees have tagged along for the ride. We recognize that a shared language (for the one group) can have an excluding effect on other groups.

What has worked well in the beginning was offering a framework and tight steering on the collective organizational perspective. A lot of attention has been put into collectively

sharing the organizational vision, and translating this to goals and results per management level.

Using the manager as a facilitator especially proved to be a powerful mechanism, because it changes the (content of) the relationship between learner and manager. Different from an external coach, the learning doesn't stop after a coaching session. It has become an inescapable element in the work relationship, through which a continuous feedback loop exists that heightens the chance of effect.

However, this can only happen through the qualities and skills of the manager. Not everyone takes the facilitating role as seriously; we also see great differences in mastery of these skills. Both aspects directly translate themselves into the learning trajectory of departments and employees down on the line.

This brings us to the fourth critical success factor, the ownership and role model behaviour of the managers. The choice to start at the top level and then cascading down the organization has a downside: the cascade is as strong as its weakest link. Especially the hectic of everyday work makes it difficult to give attention to the process of passing down the learned knowledge. Many managers ask for support to be able to 'work' with their people. That is why even after the learning trajectory they continue to be supported in their facilitating role (for example by professional facilitators and learning consultants). During collective meetings the learners practice on asking what they need from their managers (for example personal development plan conversations, and how to take the lead in them).

### **How to continue?**

Finally, an organizational culture change process is a matter of having a great deal of patience. That is why it is important now to organize the structural embedding of the effects through HRM instruments such as functioning and development conversation, introduction trajectories, performance assessment, training and the centre for mobility. Also, less structural methods and instruments like peer consultation, coaching, monitoring on the appropriate behaviour, feedback on personal and organizational level can make an important contribution to the desired culture.

All these powerful methods usually appear to be relatively easy to implement, but they are less easy to maintain on the long term. The DR believes that the learning trajectory can not be a one-time investment, therefore the management stays responsible and the P&O department has an important role in further supporting and developing learning.

## **WHAT YOU DO DOES MATTER**

In the learning trajectory *Destination: Customer in Action* the Dutch Railways links the personal development of the employees to six skills that are instrumental to the organizational change process. This may seem like a rigid mould, but the structure of the learning trajectory assures a sense of individual responsibility with the employee for his or her personal development. During the self-assessment the change goals offer a framework, however after that, it is up to the employee: Is this skill a talent or is it an area of development for me? How can I further develop myself in that skill and

A manager:  
*"I'm never finished with learning, I keep changing. Now I much more think about the things I do and plan learning activities when needed".*

how can I support others in their development? How can I demonstrate that I master and apply the skills?

Learning, self-development is the new norm. It has become normal to show what your talents and your points for development are, to ask for feedback, and to make use of the good examples of others. Translating organizational change into personal responsibility for working and learning is the essence. After all: what you do, does matter!

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