



# THE APPLICATION OF COLLABORATION TOOLS DURING CHANGE PROCESSES

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“Change happens. Veränderungen gehirngerecht gestalten”

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# 1 COR-ESSENTIALS: Important Qualities for Shaping Your Change Process

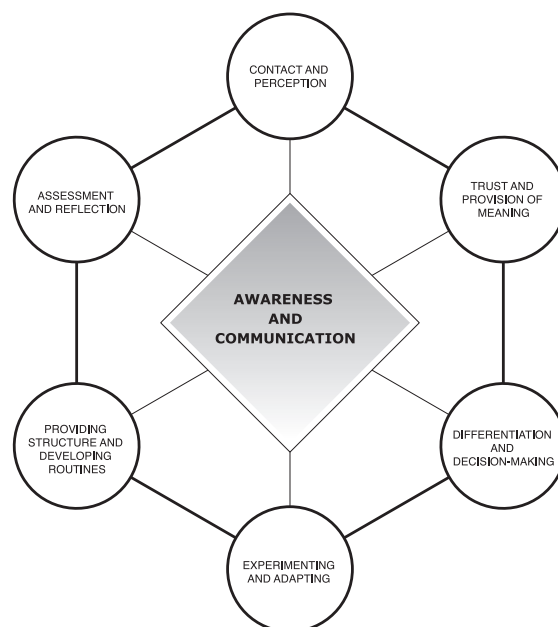
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Just as the title of our book – *Change happens. Veränderungen gehirngerecht gestalten* (Change Happens. A Brain-Friendly Approach to Change) – already states: You cannot plan everything. Change happens. You cannot attribute the cause of change to a single person or a group of people who in hindsight may be referred to as courageous, careless or clueless. Change is a joint communicative effort of the entire organization. It is a social process, which consists of:

- Variation of decisions: “How about if we do ... instead?”
- Selection: “I accept this idea. Let’s try it.”
- Retention – Repetitive confirmation of the selection: “It works, so let’s repeat it again and again until deselection.”

Change in a VUCA world (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambivalence) means: being attentive, inquiring, observing and getting ready to be assessed by others through observation. It means opening up to dialogue, being aware of the needs of others and of your own needs, negotiating, giving in, being prepared to disappoint others, and consciously letting the fulfillment of your own needs take a back seat. Not all wishes can come true. Sometimes, renunciation is necessary for the greater good of the whole or of future generations.

Change is only possible through successful interaction. The world is too complex for an individual or a favored few to make things change on their own. There is also no guarantee that any change is successful. Yet, in our experience, it is possible to increase the likelihood for successful interaction through conscious and purposeful development of distinctive change qualities. According to our definition, COR-ESSENTIALS are those qualities indispensable for individuals, teams, and organizations in their efforts to complete a change process successfully and with individually measurable results. For this model, we adopted Luhmann’s systems theory in combination with insights from neuroscientific research. Additionally, we drew from our vast experience in leadership and change management to identify what is necessary for increasing the success potential of a change process. Our model is also embedded in the change process models by Schein (1995, referring to Lewin 2002), Kotter (2012, 2012) and many others whose work has been referred to as a source of orientation for decades.



© COR-ESSENTIALS Model, Cormens, 2015

The COR-ESSENTIALS model does not represent reality, but moves the focus of our observation and provides orientation, thus enabling us to discuss observations, hypotheses and potential future scenarios with our clients and coworkers in an accessible way.

At this point, we provide you with an overview of the model so that it will be easier for you to assess our observations and questions, hypotheses and suggestions from the upcoming chapter about the usage and application of collaboration tools. In our book, we provide a detailed description of the exact derivation as well as the neuroscientific and system theoretical base of our model.

- **Contact and Perception:** We define this as the conscious creation of contact opportunities shaped by the diversity of observers as well as by focused attention outwards and inwards. It is about sharpening your senses, about making perceptible what has previously been unobserved, and having the courage to share these observations with colleagues, coworkers, and superiors.
- **Trust and Provision of Meaning:** We attribute meaning to the people and situations we encounter, thus orienting others and ourselves. We construct this meaning by employing the three dimensions described by Luhmann: the content-related dimension, the time dimension and the social dimension. Where we find a lack of certainty and predictability as well as incomplete information about things and people, we compensate for it by choosing to trust competent people and by having confidence in the expedient combination of our capabilities, while risking being disappointed and hoping for validation.
- **Differentiation and Decision-Making:** Active differentiation keeps businesses and business units as well as teams and individuals operational while considering them not just to be important resources to each other, but also linked on a structural level. Decisions keep organizations and their “sub systems” (teams, communities etc.) functional. For this, it is imperative to include the right people, in terms of situation and context, be it as author, addressee or subject.
- **Experimenting and Adapting:** In the wake of a decision in favor of evolutionary change, it becomes important to focus on the new without carelessly losing sight of the old. During revolutionary changes, looking back and sideways or a melancholic “What could have been?” may prove to be counterproductive; what is called for here, is getting off the beaten path, not just changing directions. Whenever possible, we try, we learn, we adapt before taking the next step of incorporating measures of change in our process routine. In times of crisis, though, it may occasionally be necessary to jump on board and go on without a return ticket. Even then, testing in advance – even if just as thought experiment – is still essential.
- **Providing Structure and Developing Routines:** Decisions and behaviors embed themselves into the deeper structures of organizations, teams and individuals by repetition. They provide orientation and replace old habits. Routines and structures provide orientation; examples being programs, instructions, and thought patterns as well as trusted people and the coordination/consideration processes. Therefore, it is crucial to follow a phase of restructuring and instability with a phase of re-stabilizing to secure the economic operability of the business.
- **Assessment and Reflection:** Action is supplemented by observation: It is necessary to assess and reflect, if those actions that have become our custom, have turned into structure and routine, and have manifested themselves in organizational and neuronal highways are still valid. In this case, the “I as organization” needs to get some perspective: Figuratively speaking, I need to look down to Earth from outer space and face the consequences of my decisions and actions in the cold light of reality. The results of such assessment and analysis processes can turn into documented *Lessons Learned* as well as *Good Practices*, which may become very useful for further optimization and new change projects.

- **Awareness and Communication:** As children, adolescents and even as adults, we reinvent ourselves every day – more unconsciously than consciously. By this process, we become aware of which of the newly encountered daily surprises we integrate and, furthermore, from which impulses provided by our environment we distance ourselves. Biologically speaking, awareness is “exchange of information throughout the whole brain” (Dehaene 2014, p. 380, transl. from German), which cannot be pinpointed to exact locations within our brain, but is based on a “tight network of interconnected regions of the brain” (Dehaene 2014, p. 247, transl. from German). This is expressed by an inner dialogue, which gives an inner voice to the “members of the inner team”, the self-references, the separate states of the ego. In this case, we use language to cheer ourselves on, but also to depreciate ourselves. It helps us to control ourselves in self-regulation conversations and in developing our dogmas. Language is a medium of communication with others. Within mental systems and during the interaction of mental and social systems, language makes potential meaning, interpretative patterns, and social interactions possible as a triad of “information – message – acceptance”. Luhmann calls this triad communication.

## 2 The Application of Collaboration Tools during Change Processes

*By Margret Klinkhammer, Stephan Rathgeber, Michael Schneider and Christina Bruns*

During our search for businesses actively using collaboration tools within their organization to support their teams and communities, we became aware of the project “Google Apps for Business” (short: Google Apps) of the ManpowerGroup. Using our COR-ESSENTIALS model as a backdrop, we initiated a dialogue with the German project managers Stephan Rathgeber, Michael Schneider and Christina Bruns. Our goal was to identify insights and success factors as well as obstacles and yet unsolved problems. From observations made by others and ourselves, we developed a set of hypotheses as the basis for the next phase of our exchange with the project managers. From our outside perspective, we have rarely seen so clearly that individuals, teams, and organizations form a unit of survival. Moreover, this unit of survival can only succeed in its change process if it is highly aware of its environments – focusing on economy (e.g. market, customer, profitability) and ecology (e.g. the private and family life of their employees, their own mental and physical health).

Our hypotheses do not claim to be the whole truth. We agree with Schlippe and Schweitzer (1998, p 117, transl. from German): “It is not about finding the one right hypothesis. On the contrary, diversity in hypotheses leads to a diversity of perspectives and possibilities.” Hypothesizing is merely a technical tool for “keeping up an approach of curiosity” (Schlippe and Schweitzer 1998, p 121, transl. from German). We hope that our hypotheses may help guiding your own observations and considerations if you are – stricken by curiosity – planning to use collaborative tools or want to reflect on their application.

### 2.1 The Project Mission: A Collaboration Tool for the ManpowerGroup

MAPS: This acronym stands for Manpower Annual People Survey, an internal survey of the more than 34,000 ManpowerGroup employees worldwide. Results of this survey in 2012 and 2013:

- Employees as well as executives are not satisfied with their outdated and inconsistent systems.
- Change is handled badly within the corporation.

- Communication is insufficient.
- The natural synergies within the ManpowerGroup brand family cannot be developed to their full potential.
- Outdated processes and technology nurture silo mentality.

It is part of the ManpowerGroup vision to be an open organization in accordance with the “People, Knowledge, Innovation” canon of ManpowerGroup values, thus enabling optimum performance by Collaboration, Agility and Simplification. The organization is goal-oriented, appreciates and trusts a diversity of perspectives, creates room for conflict and acts on the premise that they do not need to invent everything themselves.

The gap between vision and reality leads to the following journey: The ManpowerGroup needs an organization with optimized interconnection and collaboration throughout all business areas, functions and regions. A new technology needs to be deployed, with the goals of simplifying operations as well as communication, reducing costs and increasing speed, productivity and performance. Moreover, the solution is supposed to be fun, and it needs to enable real-time cooperation across all borders and boundaries. In addition, it is supposed to be state-of-the-art as well as to satisfy the needs of the users worldwide. Of course, it needs to be cost-efficient and meet the standards of a modern service enterprise.

During the fourth quarter of 2013, the *Global Information Systems* team assessed different technology platforms to find the right solution. In cooperation with the executive management, they concluded that *Google Apps for Business* (today: *Google Apps for Work*) is the solution that best meets the needs and demands of the ManpowerGroup. Google Apps was selected because of its central platform, which is already a familiar sight as well as easy to learn. Moreover, it offers a broad spectrum of interactive tools. It is cloud-based and enables its users to communicate easily and to share information from their own computer or from a mobile device based following the motto “anywhere on any device”.

In a first step, ManpowerGroup started a project named “Go Google” for the implementation of the interconnected core modules Google Drive, Google+ and Google Hangouts:

- **Google Drive** enables users to share and work on text documents (docs), presentations (slides) and spreadsheets (sheets) in real-time. This way, all colleagues access the same version of a document; the save button becomes obsolete and, even better, disappears altogether. Moreover, it becomes extremely easy to create and automatically evaluate surveys.
- **Google+** is a public social network, which – through a special set of settings – can also be used as a private network within an organization. It allows for the creation of a personal profile and for searching, finding, and contacting colleagues from all over the world directly. Communication is based on “brain-friendly” posting (short texts, ideally supplemented by an image) as well as on commenting, sharing, and “liking” of texts, images and videos. The network also provides the opportunity for topic-oriented cooperation within communities.
- **Google Hangouts** provides voice and HD video-conferencing as well as instant-messaging technology for fast and easy communication from all devices.

The introduction of *Google Apps for Business* came as a complete surprise for the German organization team, especially the lack of a detailed project plan. Such a plan simply did not exist. That was new. Based on the principles of “Trial and Error” and “Collaborative Learning”, the whole system was supposed to be rolled out globally along a rather rough timeline.

## 2.2 Hypotheses about Working Effectively with Collaboration Tools

Speaking from the CORMENS and ManpowerGroup Germany perspective: The lessons learned from this massive cultural change within the global organization of the ManpowerGroup can be incorporated successfully in the implementation of other change projects.

This is what the authors of this essay intend to prove within the next couple of pages based on pointed hypotheses and examples from corporate practice.

Together, we employed the COR-ESSENTIALS model (see introduction) to assess the change experiences. We recorded and analyzed the conversations. From their consultant perspective, CORMENS formulated hypotheses, which we in turn discussed extensively. Some of the results of this discussion are documented in this text, which was created as a shared document – as a documentation of the actual state of the project containing potential fields of action for the ManpowerGroup Germany: for the organization and the project team, but also for every single executive and every single employee.

We are well aware that the hypotheses and our discussion reflect not only the consultant and organization perspectives, but also the diversity of perspectives of several generations: the baby boomer generation (interviewer) on one side and the generations X and Y on the side of the project team. This was a conscious decision with the goal of representing the diversity of the ManpowerGroup employees.

Google Apps was launched in Germany in July 2014. For months, enthusiastic individuals have been very active in using it in their daily work and thus became *Early Adopters*. They are supposed to pave the way and become the pacemaker for the entire organization. According to our observations, they profit from their natural curiosity, their interest and their familiarity with social media, with which they have basically grown up.

For transferring the *Early Adopters'* enthusiasm on to other parts of the organization, they used tried and tested methods – for example the well-known and accepted format of educational webinars by Christina Bruns – to communicate this innovation to their colleagues and familiarize them with it. During the webinar phase, the Adoption Rate increased significantly.

For the majority of employees and executives, Google Apps still is just a tool that they can choose to use or not use, even after the release of a company-wide agreement making the use mandatory. The reason for this is that, for the time being, both systems are still in use (the legacy system, Microsoft, and the new system, Google Apps); yet, all stakeholders are aware of the fact that only abandoning the legacy system will lead to the economically necessary synergy. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important, during the next few months, to convince the majority of employees and provide them with the necessary skills through training and one on one conversations. Occasionally, it may become necessary to motivate an employee to use Google Apps by an individual target agreement.

While Google Apps is actually “just” a tool, its implementation changes the ways of formal and informal *Collaboration*. It increases the speed of organizational life and focuses more and more on the personal responsibility of employees.

The top management already provides an excellent example for cooperation and communication across business areas, hierarchies, countries, and cultures; they have already created accomplished facts by introducing the new, globally interconnected IT system. Yet, this understanding for Cultural Change is far from being an integral part of the thought and decision-making processes on all organizational levels.

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### Hypothesis 1

Without exception, all executives and their representatives are role models – for adopting virtual contact and relationship building, but also for holding on to traditions.

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Google Apps provides the global possibility of seeing and being seen. Through the system, it becomes transparent:

- Whether executives, their assistants or representatives use the Collaboration Tools to organize their own work.
- If they, by being present and active in Google Apps, provide and look for contact opportunities across corporate hierarchies.

- If they are willing to face public debate and assessment and give proper importance to the culture of collaboration in terms of content, time and social interaction.
- If they save time by corresponding through Hangouts instead of using expensive phone conferences.
- If they use elaborate PowerPoint presentations or reduced slide presentations.
- If they share documents with others instead of sending out large email attachments.
- If they post messages themselves or actively seek contact with colleagues across business areas by “liking” the postings of others and marking them with a “+”, by sharing them (making others aware of them), and by providing “encouraging comments”, (a Following that emphasizes on the core messages).
- Last but not least: If they publicly join discussions in subject-oriented communities.

In a nutshell, it becomes easy for everyone to see which executives really embrace the change to Google Apps, have internalized it, and made it part of their self-organization – and which executives do not. Until every executive, without exception, uses Google Apps, employees can use this fact as hierarchical legitimation to stick to their old procedures. Today, unlike in the old times before the transparent virtual world, not just the direct superiors are role models; every executive on every organizational level and from every business area – nationally and internationally – becomes visible and accessible to anybody. They become role models with impact in every direction; they enable or stall change through learning by imitation. Their position on Google Apps – as a tool and as an epitome of collaboration – can easily be identified through the topicality and attractiveness of their personal profile, their number of *Views* (visibility within the network), their “+” ratings, and their *Followers* (their postings are shared because they are regarded as important for the organization). There is no turning back. The IT system has been implemented globally. That is why remaining on the sidelines and waiting does not make sense anymore. Instead, every executive is challenged to create their personal way of using Google Apps.

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As a matter of self-interest, all executives have to decide for themselves how present they want to be with regard to subjects as well as communities, and in which situations; their goal being the continuous visibility as a person of influence (determined by their number of *Followers*). They also decide from which subjects and from which individuals they distance themselves.

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As executives often need to participate in meetings and staff appraisals as well as to spend time with customers, their assistants and representatives play an even more active role as communications control centers than before. Therefore, it becomes a high priority to train especially them in the use of Google Apps and sensitize them for the wanted and unwanted effects of virtual communication (see Hypothesis 2). Enthusiasm for technology is helpful, but by far not enough to move around competently in a virtual network. Communication in social networks has to be accessible for enthusiasm to become inspiring and infectious to others. It has to be attractive for many observers, and needs to respect the needs of a very diverse group of employees (in regards to age, gender, education, and cultural background). This requires thorough training and sensitizing of *Influencers* as well as a respectful feedback process, which allows discussing and adjusting inadequate behavior through *Experimenting and Adapting* while enabling everybody to save face (see Hypothesis 4).

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Without exception, every executive and their representatives – for example their assistants – become visible with a focus on the use of Google Apps. Not just for their employees or for their peers within their circle – they become globally visible. Through their way of using Google Apps, all executives position themselves with regard to the collaborative approach and make the subjects of their attention visible. If they do not want to get out of touch, but to open their teams for a culture of collaboration, they have to define actively their use of Google Apps; for example, by implementing personal “Google routines and times” for keeping the virtual communication within the constantly growing Google Apps network going and up-to-date.

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In 2015, the project team has already planned many measures to support the internalization process of Google Apps and to sensitize all executives; other measures will soon become integral parts of the project plan because of this reflection:

- After the successful launch in 2014, the focus of 2015 is clearly on “Google in Action” – the automatic integration of Google Apps in the daily work routines; currently, this measure mainly targets executives as role models.
- We are convinced that strong personal involvement of all assistants and representatives of executives (from C-level down to team leaders) through training and by regular direct contact with the project team and other *Influencers* will create social resonance within the organization. This includes giving respectful feedback as well as giving advice for implementing Google App routines and contents.
- In special cases, either per request of the manager or because of a project team initiative (e.g. in cases of noticeable non-usage), individual support in a one on one learning environment will be provided. Learning directly from a competent user of the system is essential for the successful implementation in the daily work routines, especially when collaboration tools are used in social contexts.
- ManpowerGroup is thinking about expanding its mentoring program based on direct learning. The basic idea is that digitally savvy *Young Professionals* offer their conscious and unconscious knowledge of the tools and, in exchange, are mentored by experienced executives. This way, and depending on situation and roles, learning becomes a two-way street.
- Collaboration, and therefore Google Apps, has been given top priority within the ManpowerGroup. It has become a top-level issue. Herwarth Brune, CEO and Regional Manager DACH, promotes this issue aggressively and, even more importantly, is an active user of Google Apps. Being a role model, the “Social Imperative for CEOs” (Webeshandwick 2015), helps increase the *Adoption Rate* and eliminates excuses on all organizational levels.
- The closed Google+ community formed by members of the extended senior management and the deliberate inclusion of *Collaboration* topics regarding Google Apps (including best practices as well as criticism) in the agenda of the semi-annual *Management Off-Sites* support the acceptance process within senior management.

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## Hypothesis 2

The personal responsibility of employees increases considerably. Through self-monitoring and self-development, it becomes possible to create and sustain a professional personal identity – visible to everybody in the digital world, but extending beyond it.

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Through Google Apps, employees become globally visible as well. In theory, everybody can connect with everybody, create contacts, start and participate in discussions and activities. Now more than ever, everybody is responsible to provide a face to their own professional ego identity, to position themselves with regard to meaningful subjects, and to create successful virtual encounters. Personal responsibility also includes the establishment of boundaries in terms of time and space, the structuring of work, and the establishment of self-control with regard to safety standards and to the newly emerging, and not centrally specified, etiquette for communication and contact in a virtual environment. It does not matter which virtual identity you decide to take on: today, everything leads to social ranking of yourself, your community, your team and your organization within the corporate social network. This ranking is independent from hierarchies, functions and location. It becomes possible to see and measure the activity within the network, which is recognized (“views”) and appreciated (“+”) by others. This, of course, also includes a lack of activity.

## Abolition of Traditional Working Hours

As a result of global cooperation, traditional working hours become increasingly obsolete. In principle, everybody is available for contact through Google Apps around the clock (24/7): “Ongoing online on all devices” – occasionally, this also means “lost in communication”. Everybody is responsible (a responsibility that needs to be learned) for controlling his or her responsiveness, to set boundaries with the goal to find time for themselves or their family; yet everybody has to keep in mind that, because of the principle



of the Google Apps system, immediate responses are implicitly expected. In a globally active corporation, instant response to spontaneous questions will increasingly become the deciding factor in winning a client order. This means that all employees have the responsibility to identify the urgency of a request and play their part inside and outside of traditional “9 to 5” business hours. This is one of the reasons why the ManpowerGroup started a change process, integrated and controlled by Google Apps (among others), which will replace the “time stamp clock principle” by trust-based working hours.

It may become possible that topics that originally had a higher priority are left unattended because an executive may be unaware of a new Google Apps request. In this case, the employee makes it his or her own responsibility to reprioritize his or her tasks with the risk of knowingly disappointing his or her manager. This requires self-confidence and a thought-through self-concept. Moreover, the manager needs to trust his employee – not just in terms of time, but also with regard to content. This probably means that future professional discussions between manager and employee will become more of a mutual exchange based on questions and curiosity and less of a pre-structured conversation with a clear agenda, in which schedules are set and delegated tasks are checked for completion.

### **Involving Friends and Family**

We also assume that active involvement as well as setting clear boundaries may not just be necessary in interaction with executives but also within the employees’ private surroundings. People around them may not understand the *Collaboration* approach and the *Collaboration Tools* and they may not share the fascination: Friends and family under certain circumstances – lacking knowledge or understanding – may frown upon the co-entrepreneurial decision to respond to a late-night Hangouts message from another continent. That is why it is important to include family and friends, the private surroundings, in the change process and to build understanding. At the same time, it becomes necessary to use exactly the support from your private life to set clear boundaries with regard to work, in order to spend the “Google-free” time with family or – as a matter of self-interest – to create personal time for recreation. Our brain needs resting phases to find the time to process experiences, as neurobiologists specializing in stress research continue to tell us (on the topic of stress research: Seyle 1950 and others).

### **Employees Control Access Rights and Information**

The employees themselves control who receives which information, who gets access to documents, folders and links – and who does not. This includes the management of their own cloud folder, without an IT department providing security and support by defining clearance and access rights. The legacy system is still used for sharing vital information, and some messages are additionally sent out as emails for security reasons. However, there is no guarantee. Departments have fulfilled their obligation to provide information by doing so either through the old or through the new system. It is the employees’ responsibility to make sure they actually receive the information. Even if they do not use the new system for active information sharing, they must be aware of the increasing possibility that new information may reach them solely through Google Apps. The fear of missing something, of breaking the rules, will creep in if employees do not dare to make the jump to the new system under their own steam, yet supported by executives or by *Change Guides*. *Change Guides* are important as they provide their expertise to their colleagues – by phone, in person or through FAQs and communities. While doing so, they try to address the requests of individual user groups in a differentiated way, depending, for example, on age, gender, functions, or on how much they use Google Apps.

### **Users Become Responsible for How They Communicate**

It is within the users’ personal responsibility to decide if and how they react to messages from high-ranking leaders, if they build their own globally active network of followers, or if they follow other network members for content-related, personal or power-political reasons. The way they address public questions, corrections and accusations, affect their reputation, which can be damaged very easily by an inconsiderate remark – possibly even visible to the entire organization – because there is no censorship.

Google Apps demands self-censorship. That is why it is worthwhile to be aware of your own needs and your trigger buttons, to know what drives and upsets you. This way, everybody will be able to control themselves, especially in times of stress (Bauer 2015).

### **Employees Become Empowered to Control Their Own Professional Development**

More and more employees see themselves as being personally responsible for building their own social network as well as for their own personal and professional development. For this, they have to see their levels of acceptance within the corporate social network as different from their “value” to the organization. They learn that they themselves are responsible for how they distinguish themselves in which environment. Some experiment very actively. They use the network to create a cross-functional connection to a peer by using a request for coaching or mentoring based on the motto “I’d like to pick your brain”. This search for advice happens across all countries and continents, bypassing all executives as well as the coaching and mentoring programs provided by HR.network as well as for their own personal and professional development. For this, they have to see their levels of acceptance within the corporate social network as different from their “value” to the organization. They learn that they themselves are responsible for how they distinguish themselves in which environment. Some experiment very actively. They use the network to create a cross-functional connection to a peer by using a request for coaching or mentoring based on the motto “I’d like to pick your brain”. This search for advice happens across all countries and continents, bypassing all executives as well as the coaching and mentoring programs provided by HR.

### **Social Ranking on the Internet is Independent from Corporate Hierarchy**

Employees as well as executives build their social ranking within their Google Apps community (their teams and project/specialist groups) as well as within the global organization. Depending on the individual privacy settings, every profile shows to everybody the number of people interested in the short profile, the number of views (including by whom), the quality rating of postings, and the list of followers. It becomes very clear that employees as well as executives do not define their influence within the organization themselves. In fact, those who follow them visibly by clicking attribute the influence to them. The more active Google Apps network users are in creating attention by high-quality postings, the higher their potential influence. Michael Schneider has experienced his growing influence firsthand during the implementation process and, based on his measurable social ranking, has become an *Influencer* within the ManpowerGroup, whose influence reaches far beyond the social network in providing motivation. For example, Jonas Prising, CEO of ManpowerGroup worldwide, recognized him spontaneously during his visit to the German offices and asked him about his experience with Google Apps.

### **Social Recognition on the Internet is Transient**

Depending on their own activity or the quality of their own network, users automatically receive more notices and messages from a constantly growing network. This way, the “Google Value” of a user increases because of his or her interconnectedness. The catch: This “Google Value” changes constantly. Social recognition within the network is transient. Earlier activities are rated lower than recent activities. You have to stay active; you have to contribute constantly in a way that is meaningful to the organization; otherwise, your social ranking goes down. We cannot rule out, though, that some will accept this in a conscious decision after reflecting on and analyzing their earlier Google Apps activities.

### **Inclusion of Employees for Whom Google Apps Is Not Very Important**

Like every other organization, ManpowerGroup has many employees who – because of their age, their education, or their stance on social media – are still not familiar with Google Apps, even a year after its introduction. Moreover, many employees are so busy with their daily operations and their local customers that it has become necessary for them to lower the priority of Google Apps. Some of them feel overwhelmed by the wealth of information, as their value to the organization is determined by other factors than their network activity, for example by sales numbers or on-site visits to customers. It will be the greatest

challenge for the change team to support them in the next couple of months, to familiarize them with Google Apps and to show them and especially their executives that by not using Google Apps they risk getting out of touch with the organization as a whole. We have already won over the enthusiastic *Early Adopters*. At this point, it becomes important to reach the *Tipping Point*: to win over the *Early Majority* to “tip over” the organization towards the use of the new system. To achieve this, we have to create a visible benefit for the daily work of the majority of employees. We have to show and prove to them how they can reach their personal goals considerably more easily with Google Apps. For this, and as a supplement to traditional change communication, we use activating games as a part of *Gamification*, competitions with self-made videos and *Google Connection Points*.

### **Increasing Autonomy of Employees**

Employees accept more personal responsibility than before, for example by making their own decisions in terms of boundaries and involvement, by defining their working and response times, and by building and expanding their networks. For this, they have to keep an eye on their organizational environment as well as on their private surroundings. Self-guidance, self-marketing, and distinguishing yourself through your short profile becomes extremely important – for everybody. In a world with fewer boundaries (different from the traditional, well-confined world), traditional norms, rules and structures become less important. Many issues are solved by experimenting. Alternatively, they are negotiated on an individual level – between manager and employee, between the members of a team or a community, and between employees and their private environment. It is important for all users to know that virtual interaction is processed by the same brain areas as real social interaction. This demands a high sensitivity and awareness of everybody involved with regard to comments as well as inclusion in or exclusion from communities, if they do not want to run the risk of hurting or insulting anybody. At the same time, it is essential to employ self-guidance as not to feel hurt or insulted by inclusions or exclusions; it becomes necessary to trust that not being included by colleagues has professional/factual reasons and is not an act of personal exclusion.

The intended digital self-image becomes the regulatory factor of your own actions – including the requirement of continuous, regular updates if you sustainably want to meet your self-set targets with regard to social ranking. In order for as few employees as possible to get out of touch with the rest of the organization, it becomes necessary for the majority of employees to support them by offering benefit for daily operations and by providing the kind of help that reduces inhibitions. Communicating the “What’s in it for me?” is essential, especially for the promotion of new forms of collaboration and organization.

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### **Hypothesis 3**

*Share, be accountable, trust and respect* – these are the necessary qualities for successful collaboration.

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Sharing everything – information, ideas for change, decisions, and even leadership – may be a very smart strategy for an organization, in which employees constantly feel that they have too few resources for too many tasks. Because of tight staffing levels and equally tight deadlines, project members – brought together by Google Apps communities – often take on responsibility for subjects with which they are not a hundred percent familiar. For them to be able to develop ideas for feasible solutions, it is essential to have good communication and open discussions, to be willing to share knowledge – and also to address a lack of knowledge –, and to have the courage to interrupt traditional thought and response patterns. This is the only way to create decisions within the community, all the while running the risk of being corrected publicly and needing to admit mistakes. Therefore, all participants have to trust themselves and the organization and realize that it is acceptable to experiment and make mistakes. In the best-case scenario, every mistake is made just once. This leads to the development of a specific culture of collaboration, expressed by different perspectives and activities.

### **Self-Organized Learning within the Community**

“Let’s ask Google” is a common statement by colleagues in a community who do not have access to the necessary information to solve a certain task. They ask questions in Hangouts or in Google+ communities – short and concise questions, informally phrased, and without any form of address – and forward them to third parties whom they or others have heard may be able to help. Independent from regular processes, subject matter experts from all over the world can provide answers. Based on their network, algorithms automatically bring the questions to their attention – if that is what the community wants, which is not always the case: Every member of the community needs to consider very carefully if he or she should really use a simple Ping in a public forum to ask for other people’s time and efforts.

Therefore, questions are mostly answered by the community. The Community Lead participates as a member of the group, more frequently at the beginning, later less and less. Over time, members of the community answer the questions themselves, thus developing a process of self-organized learning. Ideally, the group supervises the learning progress by itself.

### **Community Decision Making**

Decisions within the community become very transparent to the members because discussions are recorded and votes are documented. Even if – as a general rule – the subject matter expert has the right to express the final “volition”, members of the group can override him with arguments, but have to accept responsibility for their statements through their own votes. Members of the community usually can only say in hindsight if a decision was wrong or not. If it was, they correct the mistake, aiming to do better next time. This creates trust: Nobody is immune to making mistakes. Moreover, this creates self-confidence. Neurobiology tells us that very little creates more strength, tranquility, and satisfaction than a vote of confidence. Learning in communities creates accountability for results and votes; it does not allow for hiding or free-riding as every comment is documented. Lacking involvement, careless failures to veto a community decision, or non-performance become transparent. The community disciplines itself more and more, shares responsibility and holds itself accountable, as the Early Adopters have demonstrated consistently. Now, it is time for the majority of employees to learn this lesson as well.

### **Authority of Subject Matter Experts**

As a matter of principle, Google Apps is open to all employees. That is why the probability is rather high that a subject matter expert may be recognized as having more influence than his superior. This is something you have to learn to accept as an employee as well as an executive. You need to discuss this (Hypothesis 4) and consider how you want to define your own professional ego. Especially in Hangouts chats (e.g. within the team or about project matters), arguments and speed are valued more highly than power borrowed from your function. This does not imply direct democracy, but opens decision-making processes to a larger group.

### **Promoting Change Topics within the Community**

Change topics are promoted through communities as well. Their members look actively to involve themselves in the social network and promote social resonance. They engage in self-marketing, for example by carefully selecting their community members, primarily those with many followers. They make sure that their subjects are visible throughout the global organization; they build their own group of followers and deem it important to include their subjects repeatedly in postings important for daily operations. They behave in such a way that others become aware of their subjects and join the change process. In a globally active organization, this is only possible if the communities are diverse; its members need to feel at home in as many languages and cultures as possible. At the very least, everybody should be fluent in written and spoken English.

### **Traditional Etiquette and Hierarchies on the Net**

Through Google Apps, employees are much more extensively involved in decision-making processes than before. They act more autonomously and with higher degrees of freedom. At the same time, they learn to move around the social net with care, as it is still important to develop a good sense of when to take the

initiative and include executives in communities – a matter of respect for their experience or for their social ranking within the organization/social network. Therefore, there are still unwritten laws about how to deal with hierarchy, but they become more fluid and personal. For example, it is still a taboo to take the initiative to contact a superior about certain subjects without coordination. There is still a psychological barrier to comment on a post by someone above you in the hierarchy. The risk of receiving negative comments by other employees is (even) lower for executives than for *Peers*.

Leaders demonstrate trust by nominating employees for communities, providing them with access to the organization's social network, and by supporting employees from all levels and areas of responsibility, as well as fostering them publicly by liking (“+”) and affirming comments. This speaks to the reward center of the brain of the “liked” person – a “like” has the same effect as an affirming smile; it is highly motivating. As an employee, it is an extremely important to be careful with this demonstration of trust. Moreover, it is highly recommend for executives and employees alike to control the handling of trust occasionally by inquiring, by engaging in communities, by visiting them virtually, or by extensive one on one conversations (see Hypothesis 4). This gives the opportunity to provide management perspectives or immediate feedback on mistakes as well as for discussing misjudgments. This, in turn, strengthens the mutual trust and offers learning success to both sides.

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Employees as well as executives feel mutual trust towards each other and among themselves. Moreover, both sides regularly assess if the gift of trust is handled with appreciation and with the intention of adding value and provide feedback.

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#### **Hypothesis 4**

Based on mutual responsibility, executives as well as employees actively and carefully maintain their bilateral relationships and those within the team.

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#### **Contact and Perception**

It is not just work that is shifting into the net because of Google Apps. Contacts move to the virtual world as well. Employees as well as executives communicate more and more just via Hangouts chats or video-conferencing because they are either working from home or sit in a coworking space (*Collaboration Center*). They create presentations as shared documents, but work on them at different times. At the end of the day, the result counts, not the individual efforts. Those efforts in terms of time and coordination often remain invisible. *Therefore, many parts of collaboration are based on trust and mutual fulfillment of expectations.*

According to our hypothesis, executives as well as employees have to be very specific in planning their personal exchange for this to happen. Moreover, they have to use this uninterrupted *We Time* to discuss their relationship consciously. They need to turn implicit into explicit expectations. They need to talk about their respective personal situations in a personal conversation. They need to talk in general, for example about the topic of “demand and excessive demand”, as well as about impressions and feelings, e.g. about instances when each other's behaviors are sending a message of distrust, or about feelings of isolation.

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It is crucial to make contact, to create a relationship and to assess whether or not employees or executives demand too much of themselves, whether they find the right levels of boundaries as well as involvement, and if they pay sufficient attention to their private surroundings.

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Executives still have the duty of care for their employees. Moreover, we see it as part of cooperating as partners that employees have to look after their executives, too. Employees acting on eye level therefore have to be willing to discuss “soft” topics like loss of trust, implicit expectations or an excess of demands; the statement “My manager must have noticed that!” loses its validity in a virtual workspace.

It is advisable to use this We Time also for discussing the employee's – as well as the executive's – professional self-image concepts, not just in terms of the digital self-image (see Hypothesis 2), but also in terms of professional ego identity in general.

It is equally important to put the meaning of the digital self-image in perspective despite all the infectious enthusiasm. It is essential to note that not all work can be put into the focus of public observation. Just think about internal departments like revision, compliance or social counseling; these departments do invaluable work, but they rely on the highest level of confidence. Therefore, they cannot participate in the competition for individual Social Ranking; they can only distinguish themselves as a business unit, team, or department.

Executives as well as employees therefore have to take into account the different roles within the team, some of them with high public visibility, some without, but all of them important for the well-being and success of the team. This is what everybody has to pay attention to in order to avoid misjudgments, insults or exclusion.

We assume that employees get faster and more precise answers to their questions from the worldwide community. Leaders can support them along the way: not always publicly visible, but noticeable by the individual employee, they can create benefit by offering a platform for conversation for both sides to reflect upon observed behavior, and create a deeper understanding of personal needs. In addition, they can provide support with questions like these: What kind of professional ego identity do I want to show to the outside – online and during personal contact? What are observers supposed to base their observations on? How do I come across in my communications? With whom and in what way do I form a relationship? What other subjects do I want to engage in? From whom or from what do I distance myself? These questions – at least in our assumption – will be the topics of bilateral conversations between the employee and the executive without the executive taking up the responsibility for the further development of the employee. This responsibility stays with the employee – now more than ever. Yet, executives – just like Peers – can become respected sparring partners.

The demand to focus consciously on relationship building applies to the relationship between executive and employee as well as to relationships among team members. They need to pay attention to each other as well, to seek contact with all other colleagues in order to avoid the manifestation of dysfunctional subgroups and prevent the digital exclusion of individual team members.

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Team members will need to learn by experiment and reflection in order to provide feedback to each other without their respective managers as mediators, to distribute tasks among themselves and to demand the completion of these tasks explicitly and sustainably. Social Collaboration Tools, Seat Rotations, or open spaces are helpful in achieving this by providing an interactive change of perspectives and a better understanding of each other, be it within the team or across hierarchies.

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Moreover, team members need to negotiate the fulfillment of their respective individual basic needs (Grawe 2004) among themselves based on past achievements, family circumstances and personal plans.

One on one conversations will be less about professional topics and more about relationship building. Only by really being interested in the personal well-being of coworkers, team colleagues, and executives, is it possible to notice early warning signs of stress, impending isolation, subsiding performance and motivation as well as a palpable loss of trust. In our experience, consciously focusing on these subjects and not just dealing with professional topics needs to be learned. Many people – though not everybody – find it difficult to engage in and communicate about interpersonal matters. Leaders will define themselves less through expertise and more through relationship building; they will focus less on the “what” and more on the “we” with the goal of enabling not just cognitive, but also emotional bonds and social resonance.

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### Hypothesis 5

In structural change processes, the Social Network is also only globally effective through personal contact.

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Google Apps was introduced by jumping off a cliff into the unknown; the pioneers of Google Apps have learned collaboration in a state of experimenting. Nowadays, further change projects are launched through the Google application: Ideas are exchanged very quickly; projects and the necessary information are developed and revised together; early adopters test new processes in individual areas before these processes are implemented throughout the entire organization. In turn, others copy this behavior, creating a pull effect in the process (see Hypothesis 3).

Furthermore, projects are initiated that disrupt the traditional structure of country organizations by stating the shift of resources, competences, power, or budget as an explicit goal, for example pooling purchasing competences or standardizing marketing campaigns. The experience of the last couple of months show that especially in these project communities, collaboration works best if there is complementary personal contact. One example of this are the experiences of the project group for the expansion of Social Collaboration throughout Europe: The 13 members of the project group needed three days of extensive in-person exchange in London before their virtual exchange became vivid and sustainable as well.

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In-person exchange enables the unfiltered, direct personal perception of other people; it makes it possible to get a feel for each other and to develop trust and confidence through professional and private exchange.

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This way, the persons involved find it easier to delegate tasks because they know them to be in good hands. Community members are better able to rely on the competence and promises of others and have less immediate inhibitions to follow up by video-conferencing or Hangouts chats. They dare to provide feedback even in difficult situations without the fear of being hurt.

### **Objectives of Personal Conversations**

The dimension "Contact and Perception" from the COR-ESSENTIALS model (see introductory chapter) is especially relevant for working in virtual teams. During in-person encounters, team members pursue several objectives:

- Development of a common picture of the change task (COR-ESSENTIAL "Provision of Meaning") and keeping this picture up-to-date continuously during further meetings: Why are we here? What should our communication focus on? What do we consciously leave out and consider not being part of our assignment?
- Everybody gets the opportunity to showcase their hard and soft skills (COR-ESSENTIAL "Trust"), enabling the development of a general sense of who is part of the change community as well as getting an idea about what kind of community they can build. This also helps in determining what kind of external image the community can achieve (COR-ESSENTIAL "Differentiation and Decisions")
- Roles and their respective mutual expectations are negotiated: What has to happen during the project and who can take on which role? How do we negotiate giving and taking with the goal of matching mutual expectations to the different resources of the members (competences, personnel, budget)? Where do we expect solidarity and where do we tolerate acting in a self-centered way? Realistically speaking, what can we deliver at what deadlines without overstraining the organization or ourselves? Who takes on a leadership role within officially democratic structures by being present during personal exchanges in the *Social Collaboration Space* (COR-ESSENTIALS "Experimenting and Adapting" and "Providing Structure and Developing Routines")?
- Personal *Food and Beer Get-Togethers* provide space for the non-professional ego identity: What kind of sense do I get of the other community members? What is our individual one on one relationship supposed to be like? Moreover, as the results count and not the efforts: Which alliances do I need personally for being successful? Through personal exchange, community members learn what is important to the organization and to every individual member and what they can and cannot expect from each other (COR-ESSENTIAL "Assessment and Reflection"). Furthermore, they learn how to interpret writing styles during chats and responsiveness to chat requests, how to read facial expressions and gestures during video conferences, from whom to expect encouragement, motivation, in-depth expertise, or humorous "Just do it" statements.

They will also be able to see – based on a first impression, though being aware of the fact that such an impression after a three-day personal encounter may be wrong – of whom they cannot expect all that much.

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During r/evolutionary change projects, social media can best be fully effective by complementing virtual encounters in chats and videoconferences with in-person meetings. This way, you do not just hear and see your colleagues but also experience and sense them as individuals in their diversity. If this will always be the case or if this is just a matter of habit, that will only become apparent in the next couple of years.

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## 2.2.1 Conclusion

The new technology supports the basic understanding of collaboration across units, hierarchies, and countries, an understanding endorsed and embodied by top management. It enables transparent dialogue of change with rather demanding overall conditions and consequences for executives, employees and their respective private surroundings. It is our opinion that self-confidence and trust will play an even more important role in organizational interaction – especially in light of further digitalization and virtualization. To avoid overstraining, excessive demands, isolation, and information overload, every employee will need to be much more aware of how to handle information; he or she needs to select more carefully, phrase more cautiously, and inquire more rigorously. It will be necessary to assign tasks more diligently. Everybody needs to allow colleagues, employees, and executives to accept tasks more selectively; we also need to accept that others will complete these tasks according to their own understanding of what is essential, through their own efforts, and in their individual way. Yet, we do not need to invent everything from scratch: *Copy with pride* is an often-quoted motto. Eighty percent will still be good enough, as this is not about the perfect PowerPoint presentation but about practical, doable and – even more importantly – agile solutions, which have instant positive impact on the internal or external client's business.

*Early Adopters* are already working on implementing further change processes through Google Apps. Yet, many executives and employees still have to accept Google Apps. The speed of the organization cannot just be defined by the curious, creatively courageous *Early Adopters* (who also need to take a breath now and then even if rumors say otherwise).

Unreflectingly differentiating between those who use Google Apps and those who do not presents a danger to the entire organization. If the perceived difference between the groups of legacy system users and users of the new system becomes too big, the legacy system users will get a sense of losing touch; this may even lead to fear (Bude 2014). Core employees usually stay 6.5 years with ManpowerGroup Germany. It is important to keep them on and familiarize them with the Future of Work. Again, we say loosely based on Bauer (2007): "The strongest motivation of Humans are Humans."

The project team used the process of reflecting on their project according to the COR-ESSENTIALS model to identify still unresolved issues. All participants realized that the real work of the change team – implementing Google Apps throughout the entire organization – is picking up speed only just now. The conjoint "pit stop" during our talks helped with that. Moreover, during the reflection process it became increasingly clear to all participants: Even with all the positive attitudes towards the collaborative tool, it is just that – a tool. The aspired culture of (global) collaboration is much more important. This culture does not just live in the social network, but also locally in our daily interactions, desk to desk, in meetings, in the cafeteria, within team behavior and bilateral conversation. Because:

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Not everything important to the organization happens in the social network. Vice versa, not everything happening in the social network is important to the organization.

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For further literature especially about neurobiological research, we would kindly refer you to the more comprehensive bibliography of our book Change happens. Veränderungen gehirngerecht gestalten (2015).

## Author Profiles

**Dr. Margret Klinkhammer** has headed a broad spectrum of change projects on all individual and organizational levels. In her work as an Executive Coach and mediator, the passionate networker draws from her extensive experience as managing director in medium-sized enterprises (e.g. CORMENS GmbH) and as a member of supervisory as well as advisory boards. She provides consultancy services and supervision to leadership teams, workers' councils and corporate boards.

**Franz Hütter** has been working as a corporate coach, trainer and consultant since 1999. In 2010, he founded BRAIN-HR, a training and consulting institute for the practical application of substantiated brain research. His work focuses on effective transfer of latest insights from neuroscientific research to the work of executives, school and university teachers, as well as personnel development experts, trainers, coaches and consultants. He teaches neurosciences at several universities, is the author of several expert articles and a member of the CORMENS team of consultants.

**Dirk Stoess** is the founder and managing director of CORMENS GmbH. His work focuses on developing and implementing effective concepts for leadership, change and sales. For this work, he draws on his 20 years of experiences as an entrepreneur, consultant and executive. His specialty is creating highly effective solutions by combining latest research with practical expertise.

**Lothar Wüst** has been working in the field of change management for 20 years. His passion for the subject started during his sociology studies with Prof. Dr. Ulrich Beck, one of the world's leading experts for the research of change and globalization processes. As the founder and managing director of CORMENS GmbH Lothar Wüst is globally active in sharing his expertise and vast experience as an executive specialist and coach for change management through leadership programs and executive coaching.

**Daniela Dihmaier** worked in editing and directing, and in PR and Public Affairs; later she became a specialist for change management and marketing. In 2014, she founded her company FREIWASSER; she is also a member of the CORMENS team of consultants. She now passes on her expertise as a systemic trainer and mental coach for athletes. She combines her profession and her interest in competitive sports, for example, by qualifying for the IRONMAN world championship in Hawaii, a legendary triathlon competition.

**Dr. Anke van Kempen** works as a consultant, coach and trainer for communications and leadership. She mainly focuses on positioning as well communications during change processes and on organizational development. As a press officer and in her many years as director for corporate communications, she developed and implemented extensive internal and external communication and positioning strategies. In her consultancy practice AD REM and as a member of the CORMENS team of consultants, she develops individual strategies based on the combination of substantiated theory and well-tested practices.

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