

Three reasons why every leader should be an optimist

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Disruption in business, economic slowdown, social imbalance - there are many reasons to be a pessimist today. However, I believe that we have never lived in a better world than today and that it is worth looking optimistically ahead.

The [Swiss Economic Forum will focus in 2019 on the topic of The Optimist Code](#) - the conscious saying of yes. As the SEF writes in its announcement of the event, a yes is positive, opens up space for possibilities and alternatives, takes the world as it is and finds opportunities in it. I agree with this point of view, and am firmly convinced, for three reasons, that it is worthwhile being an optimist.

1. Optimism is a prerequisite for innovation

I believe that innovation is a long-term driver of growth and prosperity. Innovation requires a good dose of creativity, as well as the willingness to approach new things boldly and to dare to try them. Visionary optimists such as Nicolas Hayek, Warren Buffet and Steve Jobs have proven this and have been extremely successful.

[In my experience, innovative people have an optimistic and entrepreneurial attitude.](#) They are not deterred by statements like “That’s not possible”, “That has never worked” or “We’ve always done it that way”. On the contrary, such statements make innovative people even more determined. They motivate them. Such people simply get going and jump in at the deep end, even if not all the data and facts are available to make a final decision. They try it and are often successful, contrary to all forecasts.

A company benefits from supporting such people. They thereby create the basis for optimism, which in turn is the cornerstone of innovation in my view. For companies, this starts with the recruitment process: Does the person have a good degree of curiosity and the necessary level of optimism? Is he or she brave and ready to take risks?

2. Bringing things to fruition with optimism

Successful optimists believe in their ideas, but also remain sufficiently realistic. They see opportunities where others primarily see problems and challenges. Optimists have a clear vision and follow their path unwaveringly. Their positive attitude and the prospect of success drive them on. They tackle things and bring them to fruition. They take defeats and setbacks

in the implementation phase as an opportunity to improve the product and further develop the team.

From an outsider's point of view, it is often forgotten that discipline is also an especially important requirement in the implementation phase, because only with discipline can new ideas be brought to market success. The prerequisite for innovation is therefore a combination of three factors:

Innovation = creativity + optimism + discipline

3. Optimists attract optimists

It is a known fact that like-minded people are drawn to each other. It is the same with optimists – or, as an optimist, would you wish to work with people who only see problems and have a negative attitude? In my experience, optimists in professional life get more opportunities than pessimists. I mainly attribute this to two factors:

For one thing, the world has become increasingly unpredictable. Changes are occurring rapidly, and companies have to react to them at lightning speed. The environment has to be prepared quickly, because only then can any required changes be implemented in practice. You have to see the positives in order to bring change in a company and to persuade your colleagues to embrace it. Let's be honest – would you entrust a strategic change project to a person who does not have much optimism?

By the same token, [it has been proven that managers fill their teams with employees who share both similar values and a similar attitude](#). It may therefore be toxic for a company to promote people with a rather pessimistic attitude to managerial positions. Because the same applies in the opposite direction: People with negative attitudes also build teams with employees who have similar values. That is how a negative corporate climate is created.

Summary

Optimistic people provide inspiration and help to take new business ideas through to market success with creativity and discipline. Optimists get more opportunities in life. Do you agree? Are you also a yes-sayer? How do you handle those notorious people who say, "That's not possible"?

[Zühlke is a partner of the Swiss Economic Forum SEF](#). The Forum takes place on 23 and 24 May in Interlaken.