

A Leader's Voice

Listening to the voice of Jimmy, on rapidly increasing organisational flow in times of high pressure - by slowing down

The intention of this paper is to share the voice of Jimmy: A leader in a global R&D organisation. Technical leader in a department of 500 people, consisting of 67 product development teams, developing embedded SW for the automotive industry.

We wish to share his way of pausing and listening, to shape co-awareness, applying the Cycle of Co-Emergence in times of extreme pressure, and the remarkable effects showing in the organisation in very short time.

Enjoy your read.

/Karin & Niklas

Interview

Hi Jimmy! You mentioned that you had a bit of a story to share, inspired by insights grown in the leader program. Do you want to share? .

Yes, I feel I want to apply the learnings from the program in different ways, in my daily life. And this is a really exciting, and counter-normative story. It is about slowing down, listening, making space for co-sensing and co-awarenessmaking, in an organisation under heavy pressure that usually just runs faster and work harder.

A story telling the beauty of new facets and perspectives showing when we take time to slow down. Perspectives that has been there all along, but to which we have been blind when just running. Perspectives that shifted the flow of the entire organisation. With close to zero intervention.

Exhilarating! Please give us a brief context. The challenge. The mission of the organisation.

We are 500 people developing a technical platform. Like the brain of our product. This has never been done before It's BIG. It is the most complex and challenging development this company have ever taken on. And we have run in to technical challenges. We have gone from 140 to 570 engineers in 2 years. I think that's how it started. We now experience lack of flow in the organisation. Things are stuck. And the timeline is critical. And the pressure from the organisation is huge.

This sounds like an extreme situation. So how did you take this on?

I strongly felt that we needed to do something differently. Running faster, working harder, will not solve this. I thought about the insights from the Cycle of Co-Emergence model from the program and decided to use it.

We do quarterly in-depth SWOT analysis at my department. These meetings have helped us to spot the cracks. But we always look at each product area separately. Each keeping their perspective, presenting their own SWOT. And when I looked at the SWOTs, they all pointed

to that the flow was broken, that things are implemented without requirements etc, that the flow in the organisation is not connected. But there was no co-awareness on the larger whole.

No co-awareness on the whole. That is a vital insight. So how did you shape this differently this time?

I invited this product leadership team to a full day. With the intention of so-sensing. With the invitation not to try to make a plan, not to try to fix things. This was challenging. I mean, how can I say that in the middle of this extreme pressure?

I booked the same room as we've run the leadership program in. To enter that space. Into that energy. We brought all material we had. With the intention to sense and let co-awareness shape.

How did you set the space? I mean, this must be a very unusual thing to do.

I set the stage as facilitator for this day. We set a clear intention: up until lunch, we'll just dwell around in the material. Talk about it, see what we see, but we shall not reach any conclusion or go anywhere. We'll just be there. Sensing, and writing down what we see. "This is what we see".

This is a beautiful example of the importance of a clear, mutual intention. And how deeper sensing needs space. And you spent the first 4 hours in just sensing. In emergent dialogue. Staying with the questions. What happened after lunch?

We had agreed on not arriving at anything before lunch. And it started to emerge things in the dialogues. Things started to stand out. We started to see the disconnects in the material. Small but vital steps started to emerge that could connect the ARTs together and ensure that the needed dialogues that until now was lacking, would take place.

After lunch something was born. Some kind of co-awareness. We had some mutual revelations and asked ourselves: what can we do now. What do you want to do? What can we do? Quite a few items came up.

And we all saw the same thing. And that never happens. Ever! There were no "I don't agree with what you see" as it otherwise always is. Not this time. Everyone had landed in the same realisation. Yes, this is what we need to do, We see the same thing.

And it all emerged in the dialogues. What stood out for us. What felt right: a small step that takes us in the right direction. A step that connect all the ARTs together and forced the dialogue across dependencies. Just by making one simple change.

That is quite astonishing. It sounds like you really reached co-awareness. Deep coherence. What emerged from there?

Having that coherence created an energy. The power that was formed from that...Amazing! We decided on one simple change, finished all the materials before we went home, and were able to present this to everyone the coming week. The day resulted in a small change leading to a huge impact where everything is connected in a completely new way.

The typical action is otherwise to decide for someone to be responsible, or a task force, to execute the issues and follow up, top down. But it was no need for that. This is a 'first time'. We have never made a change and got it out this fast before

How did this land in the organisation? You mention that you communicated already the following week.

When we presented it, we built it on all the material we went through. We built it on their own material. And just showed that “you guys are saying the same thing”. It’s been awesome. I’ve been getting responses from around the organisation like “wow, you have really understood my situation.” And now we’re starting to see the results of it. Already. Only weeks later.

What results do you begin see?

That the products are coming together. That we understand how they are connected and above all that communication starts to happen. A dramatically positive shift.

That is not a lot of time to observe actual effects! What is your take on that?

A key here is that we are building from that power of co-awareness. Not only in our group, but in the entire organisation. “This is what we see, we all say the same thing”, this is the organizational tension which we must address right now. From that co-awareness, things just happen. And it goes fast.

The power of it all is absolutely enormous. It is so cool to experience this. And to apply what we learned in the program. With such effects!

It is enough that you, as the facilitator, have a deeper understanding of the process and insights behind?

Yes, I really think so! This case proves that. We felt that it was fantastic to do this. And we have done it for another case as well.

So, from here going forward. What are you up to?

The latest co-sensing that we have initiated is around our meeting culture and information flow. We’ve seen some effects from it already, but we need more than one sensing session.

So now we try to do a sensing within the entire R&D as well. So, we try to expand it a little. It won’t be enough that we change ‘only’ our 500 person organization, that’s a part, but we also need to change the big thing.

Letting it grow into the organisation. Making initiatives that are fruitful spread. Slowly changing the system for the better. Any final or additional comments?

Yes! This program really holds transformational power. For the organisation and for me as a leader. It has given me so much! So much insight. It has changed me. How I behave, what I feel. Like everything is possible!

And one more thing. Another eye-opening and cool experience from the program was when I couldn’t join with my own cohort for one session and attended a sister cohort. All new people. And it was the same feeling. Same connection between people. Same open, vulnerable, creative space. That was awesome. It really is about the space. And to intentionally shape it.

Jimmy, thank you so much for you story, and your time.

Thank you! I am very grateful.

Closing Reflections

This is a story about presence. A story of stopping, sensing and moving forward addressing the right things. Having created space to listen to the organisation, sense and let co-awareness shape. And in that co-awareness, how the small changes have big effects in short time.

Jimmy story is a beautiful example that we miss what is right before our eyes if we don't take the time to see, sense and make sense together. That speed is about slowing down, and really tend to the right things. And that everything is part of a bigger whole. And that a social system is defined by its relations.

It is also a beautiful application of the Cycle of Co-Emergence, using existing data from within the organisation in the sensing. It does not have to be so complicated. Often, we have the answers withing reach, if we just take the time to listen.

Also, it is a beautiful example of how we need to navigate a complex system. By probing – sensing – responding. The SWOTS function as the probing, sensing is done in emergent dialogue, and the response shape big effects in very short time. As it is when we address the right thing in the right way.

It is also a story of the immense importance of including people. To really listen to the marginalized groups. To find ways to make everyone heard. And to make everyone recognise their part in the whole. Because when we do, a small change will shape great change. As we see proven in this article.

Love

Karin & Niklas

About us:

We, Karin and Niklas, hold a range of global certifications in developmental coaching, vertical leader development, the relational organisation, sustainable change of social systems, vertical organisational development, self-organising structures and so on... But this is not the primary reason why we are really successful in what we do.

Many others use this research to compete. A fit right into our Achiever paradigm. "The more developed the better", "Later is greater", "We need to develop", "We must..." And so on. The problem with this approach is that it actually seems to inhibit the very growth and development aimed for. Striving for consciousness expansion is a great hinder for the same. We learn to say the right things, but on the inside, nothing really changes. It is hurtful. And we have seen it closely.

We have found another way. A holistic way. Free from competition. Free from better or worse. We use this research to meet ourselves. To meet every part of ourselves with an open heart. With compassion. With love. And when we do, we start to integrate ourselves. Our consciousness opens up for expansion. We heal. And we grow from the inside out. In a dialogue we had with Bill Torbert on this he said something like: "Trying to expand your post heroic figures without having properly integrated our heroic stages is like trying to climb a staircase nailed to the floor. It hurts. And it is impossible."

So, in all our work, we work holistically. And people attending our programs and workshops are actually moved. Touched by meeting themselves, through others. For we are all beautiful. And deep inside, we know it.

Get in touch:

We want to share what we, by experience and validation, know have transformative effect within the field of personal and leader development for the emerging future.

Get in touch if you sense that our paths may cross, or if you are curious of what we can do together.