



The pentagon of cooperation designing

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Both in our professional and our private life there is a great number of relationships, in which cooperation for every kind of question and theme is central. Lacking cooperations that work would mean that we would not only be less successful, but we just could not live in the long run. Some of our cooperations are with us for a long time, others are short, sometimes last only a few minutes. A number of our cooperation dealings are characterised by stability, trust and openness and we do not want to miss them; others appear to us to be rather fragile, changeable and unpredictable or tedious, dogged and full of conflict. Of course there are, depending on the situation, various circumstances and dynamics, which determine the quality of a cooperation dealing. In spite of the diversity of influencing variables, five very fundamental factors can be pinpointed, which in general determine the productivity of cooperation. These factors are:

- **Perception**

Presence, facing his counterpart, body language, sudden or gradual changes in the contact design, argumentation or dynamics, feelings and atmosphere – all these and much more give important indicators for the process of cooperation as well as the quality and relevance in the respective stage. Only the person who can perceive such phenomena, and perception here means most importantly also being able to perceive oneself, has a chance of being effective.

- **Appreciation**

Inner attitudes are central to interaction and cooperation – more than any artificial façade. The most important thing is the question, whether or not one appreciates his counterpart as a person and in his function. Appreciation is not at all something which is general or abstract, but rather shows itself in very concrete ways, for example in respecting one's counterpart, turning to him, taking him seriously and presupposing that his intentions are good (as long as there is no clear evidence to the contrary).

Without genuine appreciation, cooperations, especially long-term ones, tend to become problematic. Perception and appreciation are fundamental – at least when it is about long-term cooperation and productivity. But there are still several other functions of successful cooperation.

- **Giving an Impulse**

Positively surprising one's counterpart, doing more than was expected, intervening constructively, in order to dissolve deadlocked patterns, which increase one's personal openness – all these and similar impulses are required according to the situation, so that energy and drive emerge or complicated situations can be resolved.

- **Concretising**

In every complex cooperation there are things, which need to be made concrete and put into detail. These might be valuation of situations, aims, criteria, rules or perspectives and the possible reactions of relevant third parties. It is all about knowing when going into detail is necessary, to achieve mutual understanding and thus progress, and when it is unnecessary or even counterproductive.

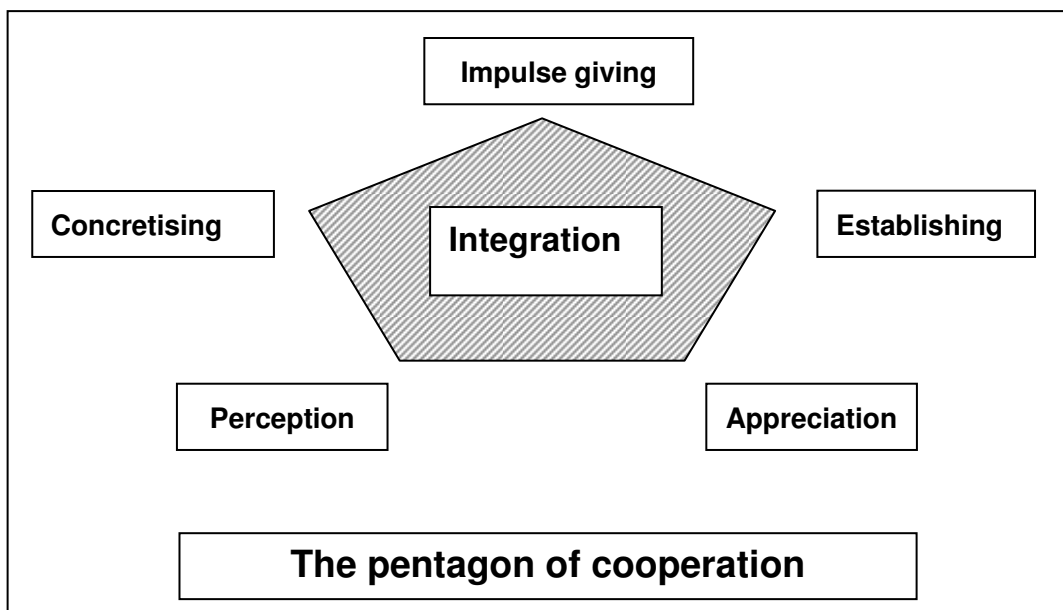
- **Establishing**

It is necessary for every cooperation dealing, which one wants to maintain in the long-term or even deepen, to "keep at it". It is not enough to come from time to time and to give some kind of fantastic impulse. What is necessary is continuity, caring about the relationship, looking after agreements and measures as well as ongoing attention, even when very little is happening on the scene at the time.

All these factors may sound simple. However, none of them is trivial. Quite often people do not perceive, what happens with their counterpart or themselves, or do so too late. It is usually in fact a lack of appreciation, indeed everybody demands to be appreciated but is not always willing to appreciate others – and then one wonders, why there is no success. Often everything remains just half-hearted and energy and vitality are missing. One is satisfied with slogans, that seem clear upon first glance but in actually fact are ambiguous and cause problems where in fact a much more deeper insight or the ability to make the thing more concrete is necessary. And ultimately it is quite often a lack of keeping at and paying the necessary attention to the relationship.

Integration

None of the above-mentioned points works just on its own, without being attended to. All of them have to be thought about, modified and integrated. Integration means to keep an eye on the respective cooperation situation and its specific necessities. The success of this integration depends on how clear one sees the respective relationship in view of the long-term aims and visions. In order to handle the respective cooperation effectively, it is useful to think about the consequences: Which will be the long-term consequences if I or we respectively, design this relationship in this or that way or not at all? And what do these consequences mean for what I or we need in the long run in our professional rolls and references. And to put the question more basically: What do these consequences mean for what I personally want in the long-term and what I do not want and what for me, my work and my life is of central significance.



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