

Creating Constructive Cultures

Leading People and Organizations to Effectively Solve Problems and Achieve Goals



Using the Shared Language of the Human Synergistics' Circumplex to Increase Self-Awareness, Reduce Conflict, and Improve Company Performance

Chapter 4 from the book „Creating Constructive Cultures“ by Janet L. Szumal, Ph.D. with Robert A. Cooke, Ph.D., is about Spreadshirt, a global e-commerce platform on which individuals and organizations can buy, create, and sell their ideas and designs for print-on-demand clothing and accessories. Founded in 2002 in Leipzig, Germany, Spreadshirt is a market leader in Europe and is fourth in the USA, with 750 employees worldwide (as of 2017).

Spreadshirt Culture Journey started in 2015 when CEO Philip Rooke woke up one morning thinking „I don't want to go to work“—and he realized that he had been feeling like that every morning for a while. Since this should not be the case with a CEO, something was definitely wrong.

Rooke had been promoted to CEO of Spreadshirt in 2011—after he took the company from the brink of bankruptcy in 2009 by rallying its internal competing factions around a common goal and strategy. Under his leadership, Spreadshirt's performance rebounded and, within his first two years as CEO, its revenues nearly doubled. By 2014, the company had expanded its operations to nineteen countries, it offered more products and product lines than in previous years, and it had a much larger and more diverse group of employees. However, in the course these and other changes, the internal friction, fear of failure and fire fighting that had long been a part of Spreadshirt's organizational culture became more pervasive, negatively impacting communication, decision making, and performance.

After that early morning „wake-up call,“ Rooke quickly took action to steer Spreadshirt back on a productive path. He called in senior consultant Jochen Grotenhöfer from Transition Consult, who introduced Spreadshirt's leaders to Leadership/Impact® and the Human Synergistics Circumplex. Using the Leadership/Impact development tool, the company's leaders defined the „ideal impact“ they wanted to have on each other and on the organization to maximize its effectiveness. This ideal profile helped them to establish a shared goal of creating a more Constructive culture within Spreadshirt. The feedback from Leadership/Impact on their current impact and on their leadership strategies and approaches provided the leaders with a shared language for talking about organizational culture in relation to their own behavior and guided them to specific strategies for achieving their goal.

After only a few months of working together on their impact, Rooke could already see that the number of arguments and time spent on internal conflicts were substantially decreasing. There were visible improvements in communication and in the efficiency, quality, and acceptance of decisions. As Rooke and the other leaders continued to make changes both personally and to the organization to create a more productive workplace, the company's ability to adapt and to implement business strategies grew stronger, as did its business performance.

To learn more about how Spreadshirt's leadership team shifted their impact on culture and improved the company's performance, please contact us at info@humansynergistics.de and request your copy of the book.