



Lucilius Interim
Dr. Dietmar Scheja

Radically Positive in St. Peter-Ording

A Lucilius Interim® Memo
on the use of Explicit
Leadership Principles
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Explicit **leadership principles** tell others and ourselves what kind of leader we want to be. Making them **explicit** gives natural structure: Distinct phases of **Definition, Application, Monitoring & Contemplation** unburden our day-to-day working life and deepen our awareness of our true colors. ❖❖ Inspired by a rare example of **imaginative political leadership** in this country, here's a brief memo from the windy North Sea shores on how explicit leadership principles have worked for me so far.

St. Peter-Ording, at the sandy tip of the Eiderstedt peninsula, may be more beloved by kite surfers than by seekers of seaside solitude, but easily caters to both. Along with other destinations in Northern Germany, it has been part of an initiative to re-open, in a Covid-proof form, for tourism. A rare example of **Boldness** and **Positivity** - principles largely absent from our political leaders' response to the pandemic. What better reason to travel north and see how things have worked out, while enjoying the sea and the wind – and while reflecting on the principles I try to follow in my own work as a business leader.



A year ago, Stefan Homeister¹, my coach at the time, discussed the value of leadership principles and how making them explicit can help you become a better leader. At the end of our program, thanks to his perseverance, I had written down and clearly explained the seven principles which I thought most relevant to my work as a leader.²

What is it they achieve?

First, they **express what I stand for**. What's written down takes on a distinctness and reality which something half-articulated hovering inside your head does not possess. To ourselves and others, explicit principles say in a way that implicit ones never can: "This is what you will get with me as your leader. This is what I want from you as my team. This is how I want us to work together. And this is how we should treat each other."

¹ www.stefan-homeister-leadership.com Go and visit his site. He's great.

² See my website www.lucilius-interim.com for more on these.

There's more: Being respectful may come naturally to me but giving clarity on expectations takes a conscious effort again and again. An effort in which I do not always succeed. So, my leadership principles also have an aspirational component. **They express what I think I need to do, so that I might eventually deserve to be called a good leader.** The aspiration and the degree to which I succeed are out there for everyone to see. So is any failure. The explicitness signals commitment. It takes a bit of courage and, in that sense, it's an exercise in positivity and confidence - like the SPO tourism businesses have been engaging in.

You need to work with your principles, and their explicitness also makes this part easier. It allows you to differentiate clearly between distinct stages: Having written down your principles, the **Definition** stage ends, and **Application** begins.

Be respectful of your new principles: Try to do what you said you would be doing, nothing more, nothing less. Don't try to improve your principles on the first day or question their validity. You have given it your best Definitional shot, now allow some time to work with what you've got. Let the Principles guide you. Apply them faithfully.

At the end of every day, or on the way to work the next morning, **Monitor** your behavior: step back and rate how you did. What has gone well, what hasn't? "Where did I succeed, where did I fail? On what promise have I not delivered, and why?" Comparing your actions against something crisp and clear, not some hazy proto-concept, makes your gaps very clear and lets you become your own mental gym.

Looking at my own score card, for example, I may not have communicated my principles prominently enough to achieve optimum impact when I took over the team I'm currently leading – a key consideration for any interim executive.

Then, **Contemplation**: "Am I on the right path, do I feel at one, have I missed something I now feel is vital? Now that I am putting my principles into practice, is the person who is revealed the person I want to be? The best I can be?" And also: "Do I get the results I need?" This requires focus, detachment. The windy SPO beaches are perfect for cancelling out the noise that so reliably makes Contemplation difficult in our day-to-day environment.

Having dug in, you may find that your principles warrant amendment. For example, what has resonated with me is the notion of **Radical Positivity**. It was part of a set of corporate values I came across a couple of weeks ago. Unlike most I've seen so far, this one sounded distinct and powerful: Positivity that is not superficial, not ostentatious, or simply annoying; doesn't



Aired, not shaken.

have to be, because it's fundamental, underlies everything one does, always; emphasizing the joyfulness of a tenet I have always deeply believed in: to focus fully, at every turn, on 'what is up to us'. A bit like Nathaniel Rateliff live on stage.

Keeping **Definition, Application, Monitoring, & Contemplation** separate frees us from a tendency many leaders trained in economics have internalized: wanting to optimize every single decision on the merits of its consequences. There is no room for weighing tradeoffs, such as the one between personal convenience and a commitment to sustainability, when we are dealing with personal coherence, with how close we come to being the leader we aspire to be, with the expression of who we are. Deviating from our principles even in small degrees destroys them fully. The point is to apply them. While making sure, during Contemplation, that they're good.

So then, how has the pilot initiative in post-Covid tourism worked? It has provided insights and confidence which were valuable for the broader opening in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein a few weeks later. But its real achievement, I think, was simply that it was started; that the leaden restrict-and-shut-down mentality prevalent in our political circles was overcome; that a courageous attempt was made to work with Covid in a way that generates, rather than consumes, income; that it created a conduit for entrepreneurial energy, not for state subsidies which future generations will have to repay. And that it gave room to simple, light-hearted joy.

Well done, SPO!

Looking forward to being back.

The end of the year should provide space for a thorough review of my seven principles, and I can I imagine that **Radical Positivity** might make a great addition.

Written in St. Peter-Ording, in May 2021.

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