

**Gebhard Borck**  
unleash the power of auto-organization

# Whitepaper Adaptive Activator



We lead without directive and authority



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# What leads?

## Leading forces – yesterday, today and tomorrow

Are you a leader? If so, what's next on your training calendar? Servant Leadership? Non-violent communication? Agile? The Big Five for Life? OKR? Design Thinking? From colleague to superior? Women in leadership? Distance Leadership? Can you imagine that all of this is just about making money? Is there a small voice that asks: „What is leadership fundamentally about?“ I feed this question in this last part of my series about management with common sense. You will also learn what, in my opinion, will lead in the future. This time, we start with a paradigm shift in the role expectations of our entrepreneurs...

### Postheroic Management

Back in 1994, Dirk Baecker wrote a small book that shed new light on many concepts in leadership theory. He referred to the phenomenon that we can do without heroes in top positions. I still find that relevant.

However, my motivation to claim this is different from the usual suspects. From the fifties to the nineties, we had market environments that demanded leadership courage. Markets seemed unlimited. Basic needs were widely unmet. The waste produced was subordinate to the regenerative ability of the environment. The reserve army consisted of well-educated soldiers from medium-sized companies. The liberal market economy, with little state intervention, outpaced autocracies. These were times that called for shaping. In these times, it was about staking and defending claims. Heroic people logically formed the central leadership. They dictated what, when, how, why to do things. In return, they led their employees to prosperity. That was the deal.

The teaching on this was founded by Frederick Taylor with his second and third principle of scientific management:

- Second Principle: The separation of conception and execution.
- Third Principle: Specify and control every step of

the work process and its execution.

Today, we have internalized both so much that everyone immediately thinks of people when they hear the term „leadership“. This brings us to the second paradigm shift ...

### Back to the roots

In Wikipedia, you can find this definition for „force“:

*„A force is an influence that causes the motion of an object with mass to change its velocity, i.e., to accelerate. It can be a push or a pull, always with magnitude and direction, making it a vector quantity.“*

„Magnitude“ can be anything. Let me quickly apply this to leadership. This turns

- the state legislation into a leadership force.
- Competitors likewise.
- And customers, of course.
- We should also think of suppliers.
- Oh yes, limited resources as well.
- And, since we're on it, the now negative balance of waste produced to the regenerative ability of the environment.
- State subsidies are also part of this as well as
- Aid packages in times of crisis. No matter if it's a pandemic or war.

- And of course, the global comparability of almost everything economic. In other words, compared to the heroic times for human leaders in the second half of the last century, these have gotten quite a bit of competition. But even more so ...

## The double zero of scientific management ...

creates a dangerous perceptual distortion. When I used the term recently with a cooperation partner, there were big question marks in his face. So I explained it to him briefly:

*„Imagine two zeros one standing on top of another that is lying flat. The top one is management's. It forms a cycle between the vision and mission that the bosses want to achieve and the processes, incentives, and job descriptions they devise for it.*

*The bottom one belongs to the employees. They circulate from obedient execution to the measurement of whether they achieve their goals. The two are connected from the bosses to the productive workers via instructions, the success of which is reported back by controlling.*

(see graphic)

In a largely free stable market environment, the double-zero distortion is barely noticeable. Because the competing leadership forces coming from there are rather weak. In other words: „Human leaders dominate“.

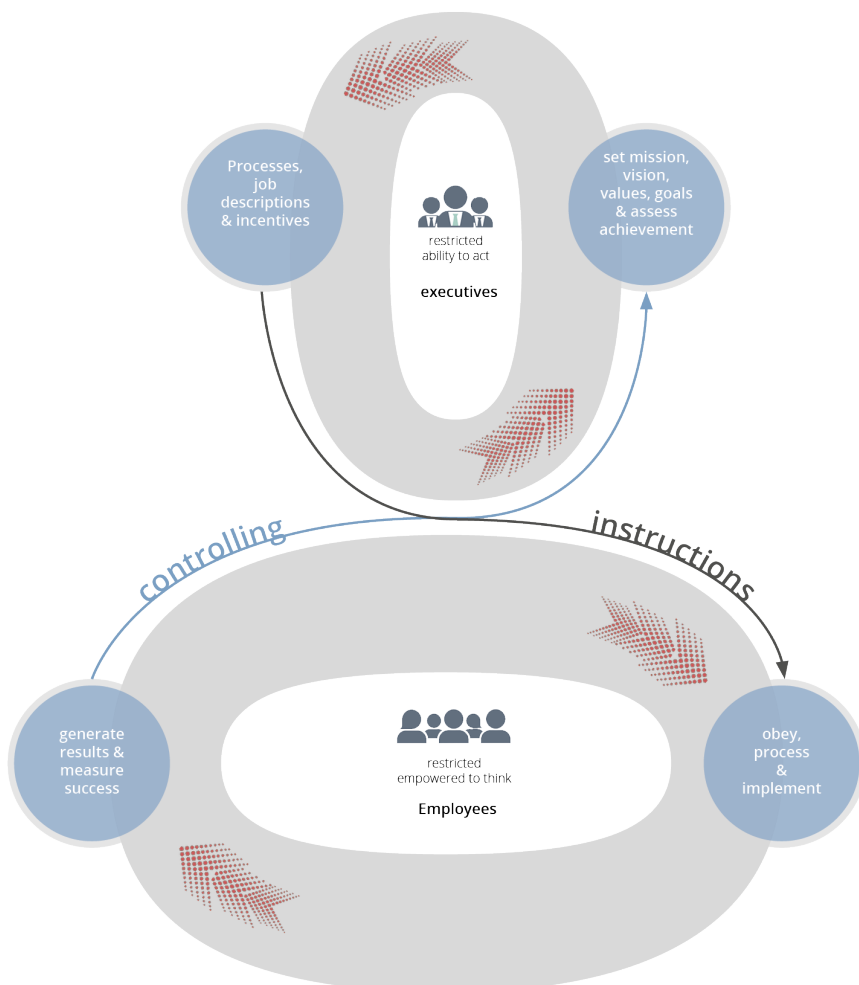
This changes as soon as factual uncertainties arise.

- These can be pandemics.
- Or wars taking place in the industrial north.
- Market fragmentations like Brexit are also part of this.
- And of course, the overuse of our environment.

All of these have a greater impact on the survival ability of companies in the short or long term than the Taylorian principles of the leadership force linked to people. The conclusion is that they always overtake the shaping leaders on the right, left, top, and bottom. As soon as those have thought of something clever and cast it into instructions, it is already obsolete. This creates an existentially critical distortion between the leadership force of the boss and the leadership forces of the environment. It's time for the next paradigm shift...

## From the double zero to the infinite eight

In the other white papers, I introduce you to the Adaptive Activator with its four Mind Tools. They enable any company to absorb the leadership forces from their environment and use them for the benefit of the organization. From the Taylorian double zero, a catalytically infinite eight is formed. It integrates reflectively, controls, and thinks including execution and monitoring. Directional human leaders switch from their formal role to natural relationships of effect. (see graphic)



## Are the leaders disappearing now?

Very clear:

«No!»

However, they will lose the ability to instruct others about their conception of the world. My colleague Francois Zietlow often puts it like this:

*„Everyone can lead now.“*

To ensure that this doesn't lead to the chaos often brought to us as a concern, we need people with catalytic competence in such companies. They enable many employees to contribute meaningfully to

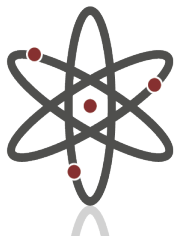
the structural and strategic design of the company parallel to their daily business. They are characterized by:

- not having directive authority.
- shaping the communication framework according to the catalysis design and
- staying out of the content.
- representing the company's perspective instead of a personal one when appropriate.

„Do you want to continue hiding behind the frosted glass pane of formal management?“ I know: „Getting into the flow with the leadership forces from your market environment makes you effectively meaningful.“

1 Harry Braverman; die Arbeit im modernen Produktionsprozess; Campus Verlag 1985 S. 93 ff.

## Catalysis-Design



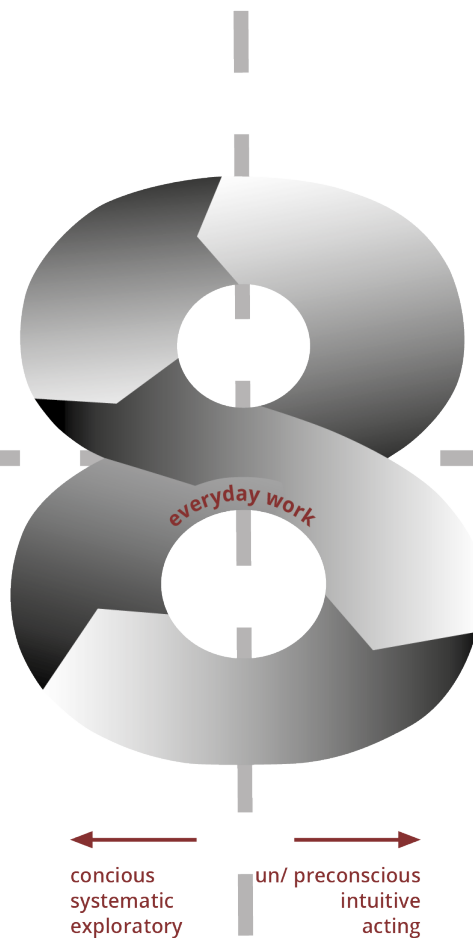
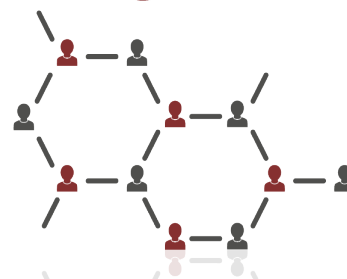
## Power of Ownership



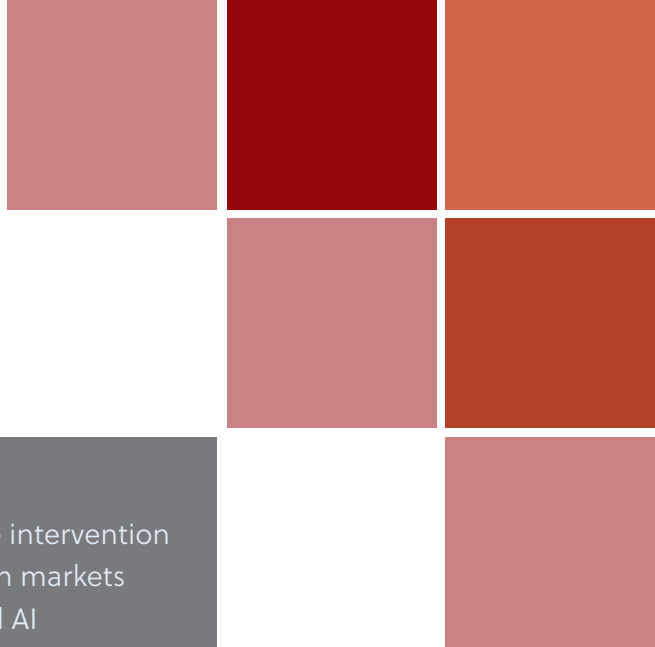
## Inner Compass / Company-DNA



## Decision Making - Design



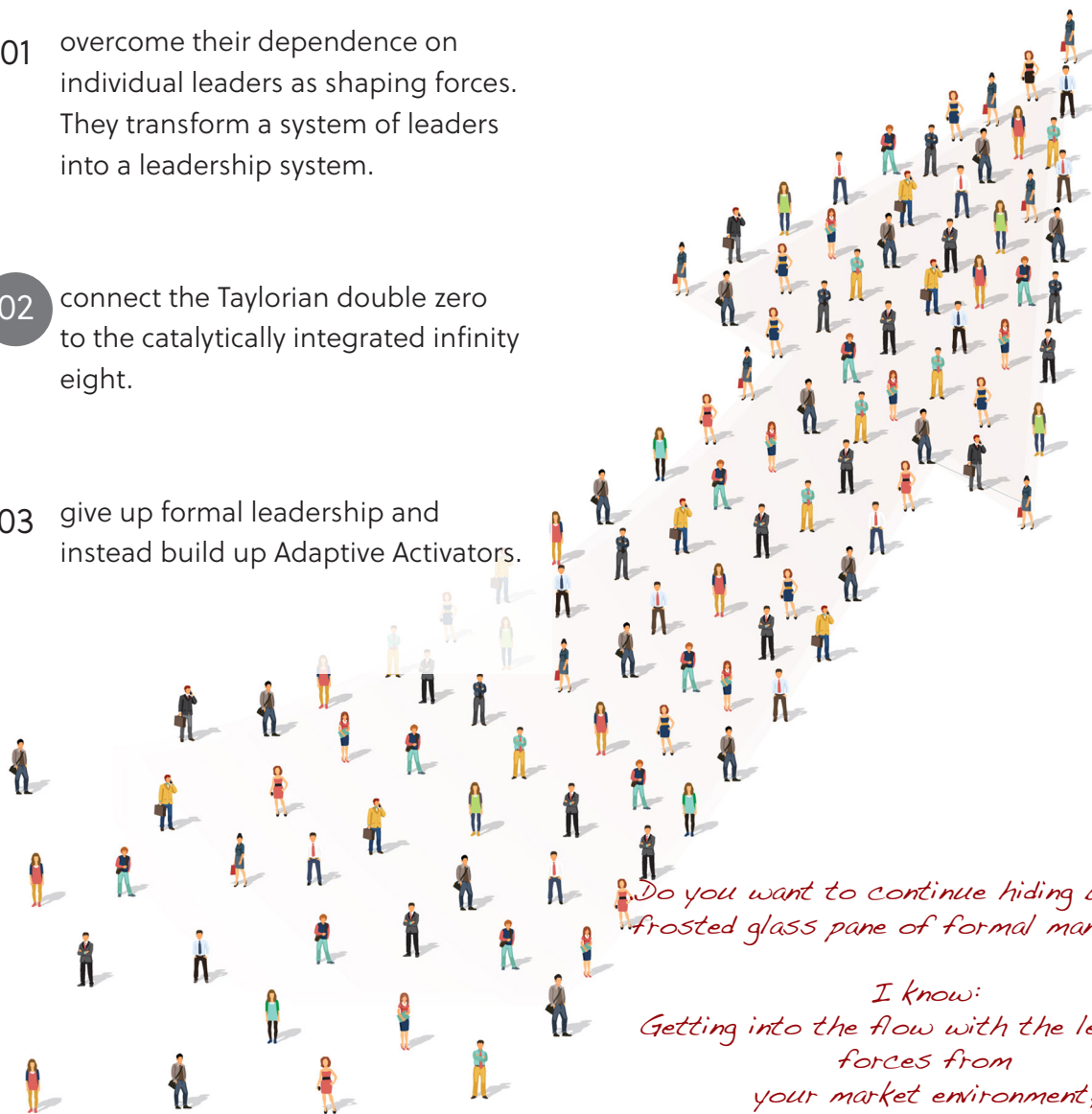
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### 3 paradigm shifts for successful catalysis

None of us knows the market conditions of the future. Will state intervention increase? Are recessions permanent? Are there still large growth markets somewhere? Will products that generate waste be banned? Will AI techniques eliminate productive work? Are we sinking into a third world war? It doesn't matter what comes how strongly. It also doesn't matter if I overlooked something in the list. I am sure. We-companies, which work with the Mind Tools of the Adaptive Activator, survive. They succeed because they:

- 01 overcome their dependence on individual leaders as shaping forces. They transform a system of leaders into a leadership system.
- 02 connect the Taylorian double zero to the catalytically integrated infinity eight.
- 03 give up formal leadership and instead build up Adaptive Activators.



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# Thank You



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