

Restoring meaning to work in response to the challenges of modern life: New Work and co.

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A few days ago, while watching the video of a conference addressed by neurobiologist Gerald Hüther, I found the answer to a question I had been considering for some time. He was referring to results that researchers and experts in artificial intelligence had presented to a congress in Houston (Texas, USA). They noted that they were no longer “making progress” and were reaching the limits of their developmental work. They called this a “ceiling effect”. The exponential developments and progress they had been experiencing had suddenly come to a halt. The reason was simple. Machines, however intelligent they may be, have no needs.

According to Professor Hüther and the teachings of neuroscience, without needs there can be no possible representation of such needs, and “necessity is the mother of invention”. In other words, decision-making, intentionality and creativity are not possible for robots as they are for us human beings. This confirms, if it were ever necessary, that one way and another we human beings have fantastic brains, and we shall remain central and important despite all the major changes going on around us. According to Gerald Hüther, to ensure our survival in this brave new world, a world undergoing digital transformation, we as a generation must face up to the greatest challenge that humans have ever experienced: finding a new ordering or structuring principle.

Taking the human brain as our starting point, the basic principle is simple. It is a principle of coherence (see one of my earliest LP3 articles, on the notion of impact). Having a network structure, our brain always tries to use the least possible energy (energy saving, efficiency), which results in a certain stability. Whenever this coherence is achieved, pleasurable hormones are released, rather like fertilizer for ourselves and our development. In this way, new, more efficient connections are established in our brains and less efficient ones are shut down.

Our brain develops continuously, even when we are ageing. It is now proven that we can continue to learn and develop throughout our lives. On this subject, you might like to read my article “The agile manager”, which gives the example of an elderly lady who, aged over 80, practises acrobatic dance and ends her workout by doing the splits.

The last point my article makes is that we are not made to live alone; we are social beings. Belonging to a family, tribe, team or social network is essential to our development. It is through interaction that we develop.

Unfortunately, our modern society, with its principles, excesses, uncontrolled exponential use of new media and the often negative experiences of young and old alike (often the result of out-of-date approaches to training and personal development), engenders often negative attitudes on the part the individual: “I’ve no desire to do that!” “I don’t care!” “That’s pointless!”.

All this takes away the desire to work and to learn. It leads to a loss of meaning, to a kind of social, personal and human “suicide”.

We need to restore a sense of worth to the notions of work and learning. In combination, these two activities bring enjoyment and a deep desire to discover, to achieve, to build and to be enterprising.

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Let's be a source of inspiration (real leaders) for our employees, colleagues and friends. **Let's create a framework within which this enjoyment can grow and take shape.** Let's allow and encourage positive experiences. Let's restore people's courage (on this subject, please read my article: "Affirming courage").

It is important that people receive positive emotional stimulus once more.

That's what all of us LP3 trainers, myself included, have been doing since we got started in this field. That's our heart's desire, our passion, our vocation. The three values of LP3 SA are therefore:

emotionally stimulating – simple – powerful

To develop this new attitude, we need to mentor people, enable them to meet others and share their experiences. Most development takes place when people are in the presence of others. Sharing, interaction and dialogue with those around us are key to fostering this attitude and to promoting this sort of development. Of course, social media and digital aspects can be helpful in this. And of course, a lot of the work can be done through self-reflection, on one's own, in isolation, but the key factor will always be discussion, debate, in real situations, sharing on a daily basis with one's colleagues, team, friends and family.

In recent years, we have seen the emergence of the term "New Work". It was developed by the professor and social philosopher Frithjof Bergmann, who has also defined ways of achieving this new balance, this new sense of enjoyment. It is not just a matter of new types of work or new workplaces, but rather of a new attitude we need to adopt. Restoring meaning to work.

From the outset, he constantly asks the same question:

"What do you really, really want?"

He deliberately repeats the word "really" to make his point crystal clear. This is a question that should guide us for as long as we live. It makes us discover ourselves, discover what gives us inner strength, the burning desire that is the driver of development and success.

And speaking of success or performance, have you ever asked yourself this question: "What do success or performance mean to me?" Should I always be wanting more?

Ask yourself this question. Discuss it with your colleagues, your boss, your employees, your friends and family. It opens the door to a rewarding dialogue, full of new discoveries.

As the philosopher Richard David Precht puts it, the jobs of the future will include "empathetic professions", because sharing, meeting and being human will continue to be important.

To develop this new attitude, discover what we really, really want, we need people to support us, a network, friends and other people, so that we can create a society in which we belong, where we listen and are listened to, and where we smile at one another.

Welcome to this new world, the world we are building together, for you, for us and for our children.

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