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**Humanistic
Management:
an alternative way of
organising**

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Guest Editors: Christina Schwabenland and Paul Harrison

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A message of support for the Humanistic Management Network UK Chapter

Ernst von Kimakowitz - co-founder Humanistic Management Network

A context

The launch of the Humanistic Management Network UK Chapter marks an important step in the development of the Network, and this present publication is as timely as it is relevant. I am therefore very happy to write this message of support to the UK Chapter and share some thoughts to contextualise Humanistic Management and what it means to me and to our work at the Humanistic Management Network (HMN).



We are a global network that lives, works and acts through local Chapters and collaborations in many countries around the globe. As Christina Schwabenland and Paul Harrison have written in their editorial, it was about time to explore the viability of a UK Chapter. I am much looking forward to seeing it develop and thrive. While there is a variety of activities in different Chapters around the world, the shared purpose of the global Network is to encourage, promote and support economic activities and business conduct that demonstrate unconditional respect for the dignity of life. It gives me great pleasure to know that the leadership we have in the UK is genuinely committed to that purpose. For what is organising and managing good for, if it does not aspire to be supportive of a life in dignity for all?

Our rationale

When contextualising Humanistic Management, our point of departure is a clear acknowledgement of the tremendous progress that variations of market economies have brought about in many societies. By and large, we live longer, healthier, safer and more freely today than ever before. Our work in the Humanistic Management Network is hence not driven by gloomy scenarios but by the insight that the success story of market economies is creating negative side effects we can no longer ignore; by the insight that turning market economies into market societies will not provide us with solutions to the challenges we are facing.

Two main challenges: environmental and distributional

As a global community, we are confronted with two main challenges: environmental and distributional.

The environmental challenge

First, the environmental challenge, where climate change forms the most prominent - but not the only - issue we are confronted with. A whole set of environmental challenges including, for example, contaminated or uneven distribution of water supply and increasing air pollution, the exhaustion of some natural resources or rapidly declining biodiversity, are demanding that we urgently step up our efforts to maintain the conditions for life on earth.

The distributional challenge

Second, we are facing a distributional challenge which includes growing inequalities in the distribution of income, and also more generally of opportunities in life. From the global level all the way to that of individual communities, in rich societies just as much as in low income economies, the foundation of social peace and cohesion is eroding, when more and more people rightfully feel they no longer are getting a fair deal. The worrisome rise of populism we currently observe around the world may well be just a first glimpse at what is in store if we do not manage to make our economies work better for more people.

How business can help: a concerted humanistic management approach

Both of these challenges we cannot expect to address successfully without the active contribution of business in co-creating solutions with other societal actors such as policy makers, government agencies, civil society, international and non-profit organizations. Consequently, it would be equally wrong to expect business to singlehandedly fix it as it would be wrong to expect we can do it without the active contribution of business.

To enable business to play a more active role in addressing these challenges, a paradigmatic shift regarding the purpose of business is required. This requires a rebalancing away from a relentless focus on maximising financial returns and towards embracing legitimate interests of a wide swathe of stakeholders. Being profitable for a business is an integral part of being sustainable, but it is a means, and not an end in itself.

Humanistic management as a business paradigm shift?

Aiming to promote an active debate on this paradigm shift, I have developed [the three-stepped approach to Humanistic Management](#), which is grounded in unconditional respect for the dignity of life. Its intention is to be both an anchor of reflection on business conduct as well as a summary of the main characteristics shared by organisations that demonstrate purpose-driven leadership beyond expediency, in ways that act to respect dignity. This approach was first published in the introduction to *Humanistic Management in Practice* (2011) the first book in our Humanism in Business book series at Palgrave Macmillan, in which a rich and varied body of knowledge has since emerged.

The three steps are

1. *Unconditional respect for the dignity of life* as the universal foundation and prerequisite for being an organization that is fit to gain public legitimacy.
2. *Integration of ethical reflection in management decisions* to depart from a corrective model where only public outcry following misdemeanor triggers corrective action.
3. *Active and ongoing engagement with stakeholders* to learn from and with each other and to mitigate risks from honest mistakes. Kimakowitz et al (Eds).2011]

These three anchor points can support organizations in developing strategies and practices aimed at the creation of sustainable human welfare with respect for the planet. They can help organizations reflect on their purpose in general and on their role in contributing to solutions to both of the aforementioned challenges we face as a global community. A desire to generate value for society at large is part of the DNA of organizations that embrace a Humanistic Management paradigm and it is also what we aim for at the Humanistic Management Network.

So please join me in congratulating the editorial team and authors of this publication and please engage with our growing Network in the UK and beyond - together we make impact towards a more sustainable and more equitable planet.

References

The Humanistic Management Network: Humanism in Business series.

<http://humanisticmanagement.network/publication/the-makings-of-humanistic-management>

Kimakowitz, E. et al [Eds]. (2011). *Humanistic Management in Practice*. Palgrave MacMillan

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About the Humanistic Management Network and AMED



The Humanistic Management Network (HMN) is an international group of practitioners and academics who share a concern that organisations exist to benefit society. Humanistic management is based on three principles; 1) respect for the dignity of each person, 2) ethical organizational decisions and processes and 3) on-going dialogue with multiple stakeholders. Humanistic management (HM) can be a driver for sustained business success and can reduce the cost of conflict, high levels of [Contents](#) stress-related absence, and the costs of raising capital. But HM principles are not shared by everyone and are increasingly under threat. As the newly-established [Humanistic Management Network](#) UK Chapter, we are very open to your suggestions and ideas about how we can develop and grow.

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