

How to Megaphone positive change? What you focus on, is what you get

BY JEANNETTE SCHONWILLE



Leo Borgmans

Keynote speaker Leo Bormans tells with passion and energy how to loudly broadcast the message. In his keynote speech he delivers the message that happiness is about being positive and optimistic as well about the problems, worries and feeling of sadness we have. It is about real life; about you and about us. Leo told the audience his story 'Happier societies don't just 'happen'. He asks the questions what can we do ourselves? What makes people move, what pushes them forward?

We all have our vegetable box

This story from Leo Bormans youth came up after he heard David Cooperrider saying: 'we have to stand up, step up and scale up'. This made him remember the vegetable box anecdote in his youth. With humor and gusto he knows in his story how to catch a core. He told the story of his father who was a salesman for small grocery shops. When Leo five years old his father took him to these shops, put a vegetable box upside down and asked to recite a poem which earned him afterwards an ice cream. He told everyone how reciting poetry trained his memory and still helps him while he is doing his speech on stage. 'I stand up on my vegetable box, doing my poem and afterwards I hope I'll get my icecream'. Everyone needs his own vegetable box.

What is your strength?

He told a number of stories about his own experiences. When he worked for the Ministry of Education he started a magazine for parents, teachers and students and published 1 million copies. He told of how much he learnt from a school director when he was told to stop the school magazine he produced because the teachers were against it. Leo saw in the eyes of the school director that he believed and trusted him which was very important for him. What is your main strength friends ask him sometimes. They know at heart the answer is that he is an optimist. To Leo, optimism is a combination of belief and behaviour. After his book about optimism, he wrote the World Book of Happiness. This book is based on onscientific research about happiness. Leo found that worldwide 3000 professors are studying happiness. He talked with 100 of them in 50 different countries. How to broadcast the message? By asking Herman van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, his book was distributed to all world leaders. In his letter Herman van Rompuy wrote, 'the cynics will immediately dismiss these proposals as naïve, but positive change is no longer something for drifters and dreamers. It is a possibility.

Why don't we choose hope?

We are living in a global environment. We are living in a complex world because we have never had so much information as now. What we actually need is inspiration. Nowadays we do not lack information but somehow we have lost our wisdom. 'Wisdom in knowledge and wisdom in information'. We are overwhelmed by an ocean of information but people have lost their direction. In this world we are driven by fear which prevents people from reaching their potential. We shouldn't live in a world to be afraid. Why don't we choose the road of hope? Leo introduces in his perspective two new words that we need. The first is Glocalization; global in spirit, local in character. This is what is needed in the welfare state, the media and the economy. The second is Infospiration. 'We need books to inspire people, we need people to inspire people'. Imagine what would happen if we were to be driven by hope instead of fear? This choice is fundamental. And people can make the choice themselves.

What you focus on, is what you get

What makes people change? What is the button that needs pushing to make people act? The key to this is in an experiment Leo demonstrated on the stage with a member of the audience. When pushing, pulling and asking people to move they will but immediately afterwards they go back to where they were. To Leo the key to move people is to be a coach. How do you do that?

1. Be a partner
2. Give positive feedback
3. Give structure and freedom
4. Show the direction and give space

In Nepal they use the word 'Namaste'. Namaste means 'I have seen you', 'There is a positive power in you' and 'I bow deeply to that'. People in Nepal say it a hundred times a day to each other. According to Leo, we need a mechanism within



us, a switch, that makes our communication process strong, warm, interactive, transparent, creative and with hope & humor. It is all about believing in the power of change, daring to dream, interacting with people, being open without hidden agenda's, giving colour to your personal interventions and your actions. Don't let routine take hold, focus on what can be and not on fears and problems.

So, do we need a megaphone for scaling up? Leo: maybe you can use a microphone for your own voice and give the microphone to other people. But when you really want to change your perspective in the journey of your life then use a telescope. A telescope changed the way we look at stars and the sky, it is just a matter of focus.

And focus is what we need. Optimists focus on all the possibilities on the horizon and are driven by hope and action. Pessimists focus on everything that will be a problem and are paralysed by fear and cannot act. If you are the (wo)man with the telescope you are the one that can always change perspectives. In our society we also have a word the same as 'Namaste' in Nepal. That is Enthusiasm.

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Video presentation Leo Bormans ▶

Wit(h)ness

Cees Hoogendijk

*Witnessing appreciation, from a position slightly detached
Connectedness experienced, mutuality in the air
With You*

*Witnessing tango, the standpoint freeing the generative step
Dancing is appreciative inquiry; I follow, my eyes are closed
With You*

*Witnessing Diana, bridging the auditorium with presence
Synchronicity inviting me to a performative 'wow'
With You*

*Witnessing the media crew, wholeness is our middle name
Opening up worlds with sparks of generative news
With You*

*Witnessing the other is entangled with co-creation
Let me be witness of an appreciative society arising
Co-creating Withness*