



Political and Business Administrative Roles During Crisis: An Interview with Gerald Huesch

Mar 26, 2020

“Leadership and Management are the two disciplines that are wired in the political system as much as corporate. Just, differently.” says the leadership specialist Gerald Huesch who is also the owner of the Global Leadership School.

To understand these roles in the political context, especially during these testing times when the world has come to a standstill, we tried demarcating and decoding the nuances of administration with this award-winning expert.

What’s your view on Leadership and Management in Corporate and Political Context?

Gerald Huesch: Most managers function by trying to match the tasks at hand with available resources. To be honest, aren’t we managers so often behind schedule in delivery of tasks, goals, products, services, information, budgets? That is why we focus + prioritize + organize = manage everything to catch up so we can be -àJours”- again.

Sidestep: And you know why do we end up in a situation like that?

Often, the reasons stem from unrealistic goals and un-clarity from the top-management. (You can check his article for detailed study here: [Superior Goal Setting and ClarityCycle.](#)) This forces the managers to be content-driven. So we end up running around trying to fill the gaps and organizing what is missing — just in the attempt to keep up. This is a story of any and

every manager. Now, looking at the political angle of this subject, allow me to introduce the term Political Manager & Political Leader.

According to you, how do we see Mr [Spahn](#), Madame [Merkel](#), Madame [Von der Leyen](#), or Mr Trump, or Mr [Johnson](#), and others, in this context?

Gerald Huesch: From my perspective, I strongly think that her range of behavior suggests that Madame Von der Leyen has the most potential of being a real Political Leader. My observations also say that her potential has not been used to its capacity. She is lacking behind miles and ages from her potential. Recently, she declared that [“We have underestimated the Virus.”](#) This statement coming from an authority like her is in itself a proof of failure in the system. She is again managing while she could and should lead. She is missing a huge momentum.

You see, the same observation applies to Mr Spahn- [his announcements, behaviors and results](#). He is running behind almost everything. Even if it does not look like it: According to my definition, he is still a manager in the political arena — not a Leader. On his hierarchical level, he should lead. He should see things coming and needs to be ahead of time — of everything! That is not that difficult. But more on that in another post.

Politicians are the assumed Leaders of a country. They should be able to LEAD us and our nation. But in my view, most of them behave more like Managers. We can call a top layer of a government as ‘Top Managers’ of the country. And, if you see through my lens, I can only detect very few leadership moments. Having said that, let me also tell you that even as a manager you can achieve a lot despite having only a few leadership moments. E.g.: Jack Welch was a ‘Top Manager’, but only for his inner circle — a true leader. For the rest, he was a tough heated-up chef in a hot kitchen. (If you are interested, we could elaborate on him in another article).

Could you elaborate on this line of difference?

Gerald Huesch: Yes. Coming back to our definition, I differentiate a Political Manager from a Political Leader; and similarly, a Corporate Manager from a Corporate Leader. Both managers, corporate and political, bounce back on their expertise and just that. More than often, they rise to the top of their league due to certain results that they have produced and

the merit they have earned. This, in the hope that they will be able to lead others to rise and perform equally or even better. But what goes unnoticed is that leading is a completely different set of behavior and insights. It requires more than running and managing a project. Hence, most managers stay managers even at the C-level or at the top of a government.

That is why Chancellor Merkel is often seen a bit too late on stage. Her “timing” as a leader is mostly some days off. But once she decides to speak, she powerfully garners attention. Undoubtedly, she has sparks of leadership- a quality that she could and should demonstrate more often — but even as we see some sparks, we feel a void at the edges.

So, usually, the corporate manager rises to the top because of their results due to their expertise — but they haven’t necessarily learned to lead. That is why even when they are upgraded to ‘Business’ or ‘First Class seats, they do what they have been doing before: management. They might create strategies, business plans, budget-plans, etc., but then they skip directly to the ‘structuring-the-organization’ part, and with even more joy to the “process-optimization”-part. If something goes wrong, they will press the button of ‘Strategies + Process’ again and leave the most important button aside, i.e. ‘Leadership and Collaboration’.

Can you explain the reason behind this?

Gerald Huesch: See, even as working on strategy and processes is a complicated thing, the complexity lies in leading truly. C-Levels run in these cycles for years and years trying to optimize the processes until a new strategy or business plan occurs. This is secured, tried and tested ‘zone of operating’ for them. They feel safe with this whole cycle because it is not complex, only complicated. Plus, new strategies and processes keep them another 3–7 years in their ‘First Class Seat’. Easy! And these cycles give the bad managers on the top of organizations or parties more than enough time to maintain hold of their positions!

So, are you saying that bad managers can stay longer at the top of an organization? If yes, what would be the easiest way to do it?

Gerald Huesch: If you need another 7 years to get a package of 70 million — what do you do? True Story: Restructuring every 3–4 years will keep you in

your seat, and nobody finds out that you do not belong there — “Peter’s Principle.” Unfortunately, it is that simple.

But what is complex is leading and cooperating, and collaborating across hierarchies, departments, silos, parties, countries, continents. Many are not trained to do this part and most of the time, they are left to trial and error or, to say it bluntly, left up to chance. But if you could lead or have a solid leadership-system in place for all leaders and managers -and that’s where the magic happens- you can create achievements that nobody would ever think possible. And that’s the point when you combine both the discipline- leadership & management.

Can you throw some light on how to detect a leader or manager in a workshop?

Gerald Huesch: Yes, there are many subtle methods of detection but a very clear one in workshops are ‘Performance Simulations’. You can distinguish leadership behavior and managerial behavior very clearly in these game-like challenges. All the managers tackle the problem towards a solution: Fast, intense and tough — if it is necessary.

If you want: They put their heads down into the subject. All leaders, in comparison, lift up their heads and assess to evaluate “How are we all doing now?”, “What can go wrong, if people roll their eyes while they listen to an idea of a more quiet person?”, “How are we collaborating now?”, “What if we allow this way of working to be the standard of all the other projects and meetings?”, “what if,...?”, “What if,...?”, “What if,....?”

Do you see the demarcation? Managers know how to get the task done and will start immediately, while the leaders know how to get the people on board who get the task done. You can spot one in the epicenter of the team. S/he would help them along not to oversee important points and would guide them systematically without overwhelming them, apart from keeping an eye on the team’s collaboration, spirit, and scope of new possibilities.

Does the same perception apply to political managers or leaders?

Gerald Huesch: While the disciplines of administration remain the same everywhere, the structure of politics is different from corporate. So, the implications can vary and they do.

Let's take this one thing as an instance, that I find bizarre, that someone from one resort just could move from one day to another to a completely different resort. From Family Minister to Defense — von der Leyen. From running a Health Commission to Health Minister — Minister Spahn. It's not climbing up or down the ladder; it is about changing the whole universe that one is supposed to be dealing with.

This is a major shift and would only work if their leadership skills, methods and mechanics are so rock-solid that they are capable of grasping the new content effortlessly. This is a nuance that must be considered before allowing such transitions. If not thought through, the Political Manager taking charge of another resort will fail with the highest probabilities. Gutenberg is a good example. (This, as well, can be another article!)

What comes to your mind in terms of leadership or management when there's a crisis like the one that we are dealing with currently?

Gerald Huesch: Two words: Unused Opportunities. With every crisis, comes the feeling of being lost, insecure, helpless and I can feel it myself. This feeling is so impactful that if it is not acknowledged and answered then it can cause troubles at many levels. And who can take this task? Proactive leaders. Political and Corporate Managers often miss this inherited opportunity to rise as a leader. They work from day to day, from situation to situation, trying to get 'àJour' again, to manage the things in front of them. But many, many opportunities go unnoticed and not chanced upon.

A big crisis gives you permission to step up, become a leader and then — besides the obvious — align conflicting parties, change the status quo of inefficient processes that includes non-alignment, unclarity, blaming, complaining and so on. Tapping this opportunity allows you to uplift your own department or organization if you are in a corporation and if you are in politics, the whole country.

Could you expand on the opportunities a bit and give us your evaluation on some current politicians?

Gerald Huesch: As I said, a crisis is a major opportunity for every manager and politician. Nobody, in my observation, has used it well until now. Merkel had two moments — that's it. Madam von der Leyen, as an elected leader of

the EU, could have forced now -with permission of the crisis itself- to change the modus operandi. She would have the permission to pull all leaders together, creating a unity which has never been the case before. She could create a new EU based on that crisis. This move would make it so strong and sensible that the UK would love to come back. Haven't we all seen how the European leaders came more together with Brexit than with this pandemic? At least that is the feeling from outside, isn't it?

There are so many missed opportunities that the list can go on!

In Germany, different people are putting their hats in the ring and want to head the CDU and be the Chancellor-Candidate and the second chairs, too. Could you give us your evaluation? Are they fit to be chancellor?

Sure. My assessment is based upon the behaviors that I have observed until now, but since the crisis is not over yet and stepping in can occur like a calling, the following assessment is subject to change.

- Laschet — *NOT at all! The best on Laschet is his speechwriter. Who is the speechwriter?*
- Spahn — *Not even the second one. He easily needs 8 to 12 more years before he gains the potential to be a chancellor.*
- Merz: *NOT at all! Did you see anything uplifting of him in recent times? Any symbolic leadership? Any insights? None. He is a Top-Manager, a Top-Consultant. That is his major and best role: Consultant. But I doubt if his ego would allow it.*
- Röttgen: *Same for him as for Merz: Where is Röttgen? Where is Merz?*

Lastly, if you could tell us who, according to you, would suit better?

Gerald Huesch: After studying their range of behavior, I have derived the best potential Chancellor according to my present perspective.

It goes as following-

- Madame von der Leyen- If she unfolds her leadership capabilities.
- Christian Linder- If he would be in another party, he would be a great candidate. Great potential. Hidden Champion.

- [Markus Söder](#) -tough political manager with potential to become a leader — like Jack Welch but would blossom if he would speak for himself and not have the CSU strings pulling him back anymore. Great Potential. Hidden Champion, taking the momentum.

Yours gratefully
Gerald



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