

# Workshop: Sabotage – Collaborative and Non-collaborative Behavior GPM Hamburg

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# Context

- 1** Cross-cultural Management
- 2** Leadership/Management/Senior Management Expectations
- 3** Sabotage – Collaborative and Non-collaborative Behavior
- 4** Customer- and Process-Orientation
- 5** Digital Transformation / Culture



# Today's Agenda

- 1** **Intro / Change Management**
- 2** **Examples: Mona's and Christa's Story**
- 3** **Example's Review and Analysis**
- 4** **Sabotage Strategies**
- 5** **Outlook**

## Introduction: Why at all? (1)

- **Maybe, you'll recognize some of the following – but you never put it in context**
- **E.g., are there good and bad meetings?**
  - People emphasizing the exceptions – not the rules
  - “Every single transport (or order, or product, or customer) is different...”
  - Often played by a group of peers
  - “Never ask your hairdresser whether you need a haircut.”
- **In case you feel bad and confused after a meeting, maybe somebody (or a group of peers) applied some of today's material to you**



## Introduction: Why at all? (2)

- **Today's goal:**
  - Make you less vulnerable
  - Provide a reconnaissance toolset
  - Learn about early signs and hidden patterns to change your perspective and recognize non-collaborative behavior
  - Develop counter strategies



## Introduction: Why at all? (3)

- **A mature manager needs to know how to apply sabotage, because she**
  - Needs to recognize it when she sees it
  - Develop counter strategies
  - Protect her people
  - Backing by management is crucial
- **A matter of maturity**
  - Personal development



## Enemies of Change

- **Which are the enemies of change?**
- **Which are the things difficult to change?**



## Resistance to Change (1)

- **Usually, people have accepted an organization as it is**
- **And have made their peace with it – albeit complaining**
  - Organizational drift
- **Re-accepting new rules is somehow inconvenient**
- **And there is indeed some personal uncertainty related to it**
  - But: You are part of the solution – or part of the problem
  - Never strongly link your personal well-being to a particular position, product, or service





## Resistance to Change (2)

- **From a business standpoint, every business has to change**
- **Otherwise it will become obsolete one day**
  - “Wer nicht mit der Zeit geht, geht mit der Zeit.”
  - There is no business operating according to the same rules as 50 years ago
- **Needless to say: business and private drivers differ**
- **Expected changes often come with negative emotions**



## Resistance to Change (3)

- **However, there are some rational concerns about change:**
- **Old ways of doing business didn't cause disasters**
  - Being successful can be the enemy of change and innovation
  - Even customer-orientation can be dangerous
    - Customers can be as much attached to their old world as you are
    - The Innovator's Dilemma
  - Dilemma: the new way still has to prove it
    - It's nothing but hope by that time



## Resistance to Change (4)

- **People tend to link personal achievements and past business performance**
  - They personally contributed to business success
  - And are proud of it
  - So, they take it personally in case old ways are criticized
  - This is an underlying emotional problem
  - You can hardly address emotions with ratio
- **History of former change initiatives can kill willingness to contribute and participate**
  - “Been there, done that”



## Resistance to Change (5)

- **Be aware of the 20/60/20 rule**
  - 20% will be enthusiastic
  - 60% are mainstream
  - 20% will be reluctant and inhibiting
- **Which group should you concentrate and target at?**



## Resistance to Change (6)

- **Be aware of the 20/60/20 rule**
  - 20% will be enthusiastic
  - 60% are mainstream
  - 20% will be reluctant and inhibiting
- **Which group should you concentrate and target at?**
- **At those**
  - Who you don't need to convince?
  - Who are not sure yet?
    - Among them, address the opinion leaders/catalysts
  - Who you can't convince?
    - Quite often, much time is wasted on this!
    - And, more dangerous, if you make concessions, this signals to others that it's worth to resist



## Resistance to Change (7)

- **The problem is: you rarely see the enemy**
- **There are many subtle ways to undermine change!**
- **For all things we do there are always two reasons: the honorable one and the real one**
- **Let's have a look at some subtle tactics of sabotage!**
- **Or, more politely speaking: the differences between collaborative and non-collaborative behavior**



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## ■ ■ ■ ■ Example: Mona, 29, MBA, Finance (1)

- **Me: reporting to CFO**
- **Task: define business requirements**
  - Process model
  - Data model / entity relationship diagram
- **Job not yet finished, but going to be replaced by Mona**
- **Will she be happy with that job?**
  - Never in a life time!
- **Will the business be happy with the outcome?**
  - Never in a life time!
- **Should I sabotage her for her best interest and that of the business?**
  - Yep, definitely
- **How to proceed?**





## ■ ■ ■ ■ Example: Mona, 29, MBA, Finance (2)

- Again, how to proceed?
- Not information hiding – do the opposite: **INFLATE HER WITH MATERIAL!**
  - Gazillions of pages (never heard of a project that has a shortage of documentation)
  - The more complex it is, the better
  - The less structured it is, the better
  - The less context and navigational aid is provided, the better
  - Finally, add some subtle pressure
    - “This is self-explaining, isn’t it?”



## ■ ■ ■ Example: Mona, 29, MBA, Finance (3)

- **FIRST MISTAKE: DO NEVER SIMPLY BUY WHAT'S THROWN TO YOUR FEET OR SOMETHING INDIGESTABLE FORCED INTO YOUR THROAT**
- Don't buy it without navigational aid
- There is no shortage of material
- You can read all night – I'll be happy to provide more tomorrow
- Never go to the battlegrounds of an expert
- You will be paralyzed for weeks
- If you can't be the winner – don't play!
  
- **Could anyone accuse me of being non-collaborative?**
  - No, I opened all my sources and my heart
  - If it's complex by nature, it's not my fault

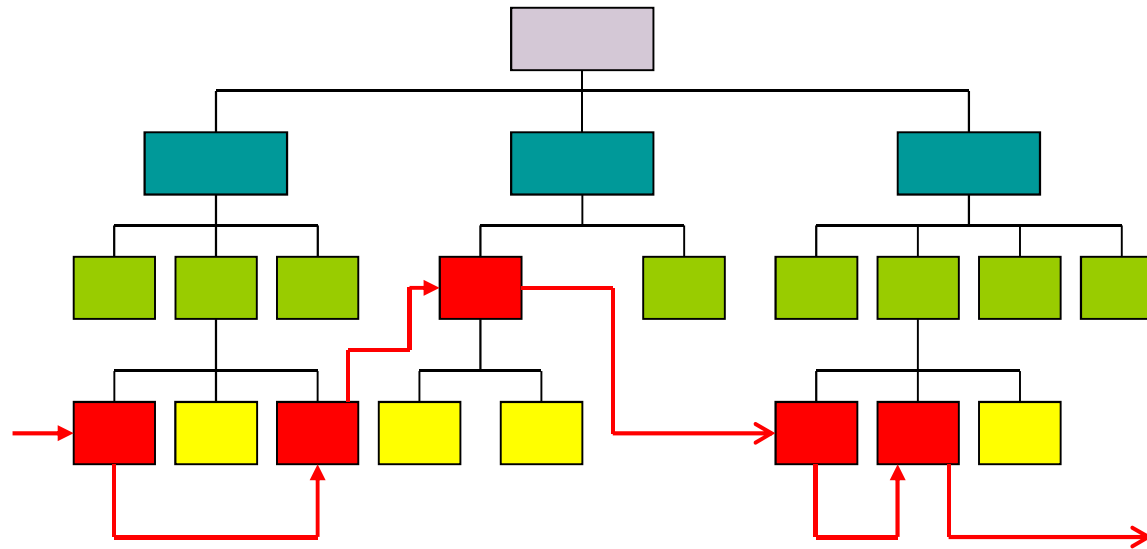


## ■ ■ ■ ■ Example: Mona, 29, MBA, Finance (4)

- **So, what did Mona do?**
- **Well, she did the foreseeable (what most people would do):**
- **After a harmful and restless night, she pulled her boss into the complexity**
- **She put the material on the CFO's desk, asking for his opinion**
  - "Here it is – how do you feel about it?"
- **Guess what a CFO will do in such a situation?**
  - "Bofff, hmmm, maybe we should keep Ralf to bring it to an end."



## ■ ■ ■ ■ Example: Christa, 32, Telco Expert



- **New skills required when climbing up in the hierarchy**
- **Do not desperately apply the concepts that brought you there**
- **If you fall back to your operational attitude, you are easily sabotaged**
- **Management attitude and personal development required**



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## Review Mona (1)

- **What was Mona's problem?**
  - Overwhelmed by complexity
  - And an immature boss (to be explained)
- **Which options did she have?**
  - As she actually did (and most people would do)
  - Understanding the game and directly accusing me for not being collaborative (e.g., because she attended this workshop before:-)
    - I would have been impressed and would have had to comply!
    - But this option requires strong management backing
  - In case of lack of courage for direct confrontation: ask the CFO talk to me: "Ralf, stop fooling my people. You sabotaged them. I can clearly see it. I'm on your eye-level. I did it me myself before. Been there, done that."



## Review Mona (2)

- **How to distinguish friends from enemies?**
  - Who actually provides help in navigating through a complex environment?
  - Who is trying to reduce complexity by providing background, identifying patterns and structure?
  - Who is providing digestible pieces?
  - Who is providing guidance and orientation?
  - Friends often act top-down rather than bottom-up
- Who is increasing complexity?
- Who is continuously emphasizing the exceptions – but not the rules?



## Review Mona (3)

- **In sum, you will be really in trouble if you don't realize you are subject to sabotage and you have an immature boss at the same time**
- **Being backed by a mature manager is a valuable asset**
  - And you yourself want to take over some responsibility one day, right?
- **If it's on your agenda to become a manager yourself, better learn**
  - How to sabotage
  - How to uncover sabotage
  - How to protect your people
- **The CFO did not understand my game – nor did he understand Mona's game (pulling him into her problem)**





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# ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Characteristics of Sabotage (1)

- **A look at what „sabotage“ is – or not?**
  - The „saboteur“ is difficult to identify
  - But even if he is, it's somehow difficult to make a reproach
  - Results have to be effective & efficient
  - Hidden & clever
  
- **The following strategies are not only non-collaborative, but also not elegant**
  - Information hiding\* – or manipulation
    - Most people think of this by instinct
  - Blaming others for lack of competence; finger pointing
    - Never talk bad of colleagues – it will fall back on you
  
- \*BTW, information overflow is much more effective



## Characteristics of Sabotage (2)

- **Both former attitudes are**
  - Too obvious, transparent, and easy to identify
  - Will leave a trace to the saboteur



## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (1)

- **Strategy #1: The discussion and analyses are overloaded by complexity, deriving out of the rich business experience of the ‘saboteur’**
  - Complexity is a powerful and natural enemy of change
  - If you can’t overview all details, you won’t have the courage to change
  - You will be reluctant to change what you don’t understand
  - The same applies to its implications
  - In any case, the perceived level of uncertainty and risk increases
  - At least, it takes much time and can be very paralyzing



## Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (2)

- **Observed tactics:**
  - Focus on exceptions, not on rules
  - “No, it will not work.” (statements, supported by many examples, referencing to someone else, but little reasoning)
  - “My experts tell me it’s not possible...” (increasing the uncertainty level by neglecting other options)
  - “We have been trying this for years – and are willing to share our insights, of course.” (referencing to unsubstantiated knowledge)



## Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (3)

- **Observed tactics (cont'd):**
  - “It’s always on the shoulders of my people...” (becoming emotional)
  - Just positioning statements, not solutions
  - Well-managed eruptions of anger
  - People in sending mode
  - Bottom-up approaches: getting lost in details



## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (4)

- **What you will not hear are statements like this:**
  - “Ok, understood, here is what I propose to solve your problem.”
  - “Here are our options with pros and cons. I now recommend...”
  - “Let me/us look for ways to balance out that problem...”
  - “Here is my path... Let’s do it step by step.”
  - In sum, ways to reduce complexity
  - People in solution-solving mode
  - Top-down approaches: structure, from the generic to the specific
- **Now put yourself in the shoes of a decision maker!**
  - Who is, by nature, usually not an expert in this particular field
  - Would *you* be willing to take the risk?



## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (5)

- **Why do people tend to emphasize complexity?**
  - They are lost in complexity themselves
  - They don't know better
  - They are strongly attached to the past
  - The business actually is complex
  - They do it deliberately; they don't want no change
  - And it feels good, because:
- At the same time, such behavior increases the importance & influence of the saboteur
  - Side effect: "Hey, can't you see how clever and important I am?"
  - Can't resist that temptation





## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (6)

- **Just ask yourself:**
  - Who increased the complexity of the subject?
  - Who contributed to my confusion?
  - Who brought the confidence level down?
  - Who repeatedly emphasized the exception rather than the rule?
  - Who threw fog grenades?
  - Who opened „Nebenkriegsschauplätze“?
  - Who inflated the discussion with complex examples deriving from his rich experience?



## Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (7)

- **At the same time ask yourself:**
  - Who tried to reduce the complexity of the subject?
  - Who tried to navigate through the complexity and provided guidance and orientation?
  - Who actually provided navigational aids?
  - Who signaled confidence?
  
- **This distinguishes friends from enemies**



## Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (8)

- **So, what can you do against it?**
- **First, measure and verify**
  - For example, you can measure how many process occurrences do not follow the normal pattern
  - This usually uncovers much insights about the drivers of your business
  - And many surprises
  - Having accurate (and new) figures can be very charming
  - And very convincing



## Sabotage Strategy: Complexity (9)

- **Second, identify fog grenades – and those who threw them**
  - Since it happens in a hidden manner, you will suddenly find yourself lost in complexity
  - Then you have to make a step back from the symptoms to the causes
  - Ask yourself, who added to all this complexity?
  - And: whose position is strengthened by all this?
  - Mostly, you can identify the issuer
  - If you know him, you can better address him



## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Delay & Dilute (1)

- **Strategy #2: Delay and dilute input that you formerly happily committed to deliver**
  - There are always many excuses
    - why this & that can't be done right now
    - why it doesn't make sense anymore in the new context
    - why it requires overhaul and doesn't stand as such anymore,
    - why one has to set other priorities
    - and why one will deliver later
  - Critical resources (as I am) always work on other errands, which are even more important



## Sabotage Strategy: Delay & Dilute (2)

- **So, what can you do against it?**
  
- **Helpful measures**
  - Escalation procedures
  - Regular meetings
  - Regular steering committee meetings
  - Accurately maintained and tracked action item lists with clear assignments, responsibility, task description, and termination dates
  - Tight management
  - Tight senior management involvement
  - Management backing



## Sabotage Strategy: Delay & Dilute (3)

- **But at the end of the day, you need access to top management and backing**
  - Generally, you won't be in the position to educate managers and enforce delivery of results
  - Top management has the right toolset to re-confirm the ranking of priorities
  - They can “punish” or “promote”
  - But you are really in trouble if senior management is not that „senior“
- **However, you won't make many friends in middle management by asking top management to enforce something**
- **External consultants can help**
  - You have to stay in your company
  - They don't



## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Position and Leave (1)

- **Strategy #3: The saboteur positions himself as being irreplaceable by**
  - Demonstrating his expert knowledge and/or by
  - Voluntarily taking responsibility for critical functions (such as being the interface to decision makers) and/or by
  - Taking responsibility for connecting/communicating to and with critical stakeholders and/or
  - Pursuing further complex or whatever mission-critical questions
- **After having taken responsibility for these key jobs, he disappears by referencing to other mandatory obligations or workload**





## ■ Sabotage Strategy: Position and Leave (2)

- **Further characteristics of this type of manager:**
  - Claims to be wired to everything, everybody, and all
  - Does not really accept any kind of “R” (Responsibility)
  - But somehow loves “A” (Authority) – as long as it is not connected to “R”
  - Always busy with errands of great importance
  - Can be observed at dusk and dawn
  - But not in the heat of the day
  - Very shy, disappears immediately when his position may be located
  - Or danger of being ‘cornered’ arises
  - Comes out of the forest immediately at feeding times and for merit sharing



## Sabotage Strategy: Position and Leave (3)

- **So, what can you do against it?**
- **Apply his own strategy against him himself!**
- **Keep your own hidden agenda**
  - Give him a job of minor importance and let him go, having the feeling of being assigned to something of importance that he is happy to dilute
  - Don't assign mission-critical tasks to him
  - Isolate and circumvent, if possible
  - Look for other sources of business knowledge
- **Direct access to top management is of great help**
  - Usually, they know their guys better than you might think



## Sabotage Strategies: More (1)

- **Strategy #4:** New ideas and concepts are blocked by pointing at the most probably expected resistance of (not clearly identified) others
- **Strategy #5:** Sensitive insider information finds its way to stakeholders (such as unions) by leakages; the information content is deliberately biased, and/or the timing is dangerous
- **Strategy #6:** At the end of the project, she declares that she perfectly stands behind the results, but has severe concerns whether it can be implemented → a self-fulfilling prophecy



## Sabotage Strategies: More (2)

- **Strategy #7: Clay pigeon shooting**
  - Dangerous in a professionally managed environment
  - The naivety even of executive management can be astonishing!
  - Don't forget! They are not judges, but involved participants
- **Strategy #8: Promote or eliminate...**
- **Strategy #9: Information hiding**
- **Strategy #10: Information manipulation**
- **Strategy #11: Blaming others for lack of competence**
- **Strategy #12: The Snake**



## Sabotage Strategies: Summary

- **Keep in mind that change has 3 major enemies:**
  - Success
  - Complexity
  - Time
- **Mostly, you will observe a mix of several strategies**
- **The ‘complexity strategy’ is the most subtle and efficient one**
  - And very difficult to address when played professionally
  - And very exhausting
  - In particular when combined with the ‘delay & dilute’ strategy
  - Since this combines both complexity and time
  - Which paralyzes over a long period
  - And sucks much energy out of any change agent



# ■ Sabotage Strategien: Übertreibe ich? Nein!

## Ein Beispiel aus der jüngsten Praxis (1)

- **Komplexität**: Komplexität erhöhen, bzw. keine/wenig Navigationshilfen anbieten; auf schriftliche Rückfragen nicht antworten; im persönlichen Dialog wenig Zeit haben; auf vorherige Aussagen nebulös oder aggressiv verweisen („...das habe ich doch schon gesagt!“); wechselnde Antworten geben; Anforderungen täglich ändern (Datenmodell); unscharf bleiben; knapp und kühl sein; niemals schriftlich festlegen; Druck ausüben; enge Zeiträume setzen.
- **Kommunikationskanal**: Er war der einzige. Wir haben in 9 Tagen keinen anderen Kollegen kennengelernt.
- **Kommunikationsmedien**: Verbal, niemals schriftlich! Bloß keine Aussagen dokumentieren. Wir haben in 2 ½ Wochen vielleicht 3-4 Emails (ohne inhaltliche Anmerkungen) erhalten. Man ist gut beraten, Tagesergebnisse schriftlich zu fixieren – und ihn über den nächsten Tag zu informieren. Dann kann er ja widersprechen...
- **Zeitliche Konsistenz**: Morgen andere Aussagen als gestern (wieder Datenmodell). Dinge werden in Abrede gestellt.



## Sabotage Strategien: Übertreibe ich? Nein! Ein Beispiel aus der jüngsten Praxis (2)

- **Situative Konsistenz**: Opportunistisch; Aussagen und Stil je nach Gesprächsteilnehmer; nach oben wird gebuckelt, nach unten wird getreten.
- **Verwirren**: Abends Dinge erwarten, die man morgens *nicht* gefordert hat. Zum Glück waren wir beide im Doppelpack unterwegs.
- **Autokratisch**: Er fordert, gibt aber keine Begründung bzw. Kontext. Da er dabei unscharf ist, bekommt er dann ggf. etwas, was er nicht wollte. Dann wird er richtig sauer und persönlich.
- **Unwahrheit**: Ist kein Problem für ihn, es wird je nach Bedarf gelogen, verzerrt, verunglimpft: „Das Meeting morgen mit Herrn XYZ findet nicht statt.“ Das Prinzip „Say what you do – and do what you say“ findet keine Anwendung.
- **„Mobbing“**: Man wird ignoriert und nicht ge- und begrüßt. Er ist Meister im Weggucken. Kinderkram. Echt.
- **Aggressivität/Persönliche Angriffe**: Sehr scharfer Ton. Zögert nicht, persönlich anzugreifen: Datenbankenentwicklung: „Als Senior müssten Sie das eigentlich können!“

## ■ Sabotage Strategies: Übertreibe ich? Nein! Ein Beispiel aus der jüngsten Praxis (3)

- Opportunismus: Kritisiert scharf & gern. „Ich lege Wert auf die Tatsache, dass dieser Task nicht von mir stammt.“ Sobald sich aber Dinge als gut herausstellen, will er dann aber mehr davon. Kommt also zur Fütterung gern aus dem Busch. Aber nur für Meriten. Und er erschießt gern den Boten für die Nachricht. Und hasst es, wenn Informationen für ihn hinderlich sind; hat Angst, dass etwas zum Management durchdringt.
- Erwartungshaltung: Braucht keine Berater, sondern zombiehafte Bodies, die ihm einfach folgen. Motto: „Wasch mich – aber mach mich nicht nass!“
- Loyalität/Leadership: Nicht in seinem Wörterbuch.
- Positive Eigenschaften: Man kann ihm Intelligenz, Aktions- und Ergebnisorientierung sowie Schnelligkeit nicht absprechen.
- Persönliche Hobbies: Frösche aufblasen, Tauben vergiften, Omas den Krückstock wegstücken, Kindern den Lolli wegnehmen.
- Fazit: Ein unangenehmer Mensch. Selten so etwas gesehen.







**Thank you!**



# Introduction

## ▪ **Ralf Borchardt**

- Diploma in Industrial Engineering of University of Hamburg
- MBA from GSBA – Graduate School of Business Administration Zurich
- DBA from ISM – International School of Management Paris
- Now striving for the PhD at ISM
- In business since 1978
- In project management/IT since 1986
- Various management positions at James Martin Associates and Texas Instruments
- Various CEO and senior executive positions held in the past and currently
- International project management
- Lecturing assignments in Paris and Hamburg

