

THE ULTIMATE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT FOR THE LEADER

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How to support our leaders' leaders? This is the question I was asked by the Head of Learning & Development of a major international group this week. Far from being an isolated demand, more and more organizations are wondering about this these days.

What is the next level of development for this top 200 or more, who went all possible internal and external training programs, who

has been evaluated or typed by one or more personality tests, who knows everything about the manager-coach, servant leader or empathic leader, who has been coached, individually or with their team? Those leaders the organization relies on, who know all the leadership recipes but only manage to implement a part of them, and who no longer progress?

Harvard researchers Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey spent 30 years studying how to close the gap between what people genuinely intend to do and what they are actually able to bring about. They uncovered a phenomenon called "*Immunity to Change*", a previously hidden dynamic that actively (and brilliantly) prevents us from changing. This is why our leaders, despite all possible support and goodwill, end up capping in their development.

And why this resistance? To preserve our beliefs and how we make meaning to our reality. The approach makes the distinction between technical changes, which require new knowledge or skills, and adaptive changes, which involve transforming the way we learn and understand the world. It is in the implementation of these adaptive changes that the natural and powerful mechanism of our immunity to change is activated.

Whatever the importance of a goal to us and our motivation to achieve it, our beliefs can create hidden resistances and act as a superpower that goes against our evolution. The good news is that, thanks to Kegan & Lahey's approach, we can overcome our immunity and implement lasting change, which is a real opportunity to develop the potential of our leaders.

This approach has 3 phases :

- 1- Map our immunity, to make the invisible visible. This unavoidable step of adult development is what Kegan calls the subject-object transition, where we manage to detach ourselves from what controlled us without our knowledge up until now. It is at this stage that we understand how our beliefs stand in the way of our own development.
- 2- Collect data. We explore how we built our understanding of the world, but we also see the energy we put into keeping it in place. This is where we realize the cost of this dynamic.

- 3- Change our immunity to change, just enough to achieve the goal taht was so far unreachable. By challenging our beliefs over several iterations, we grow our mindset to allow us to adopt new habits. It is at this stage that we free ourselves from the beliefs that prevented us from evolving.

Of course, the immunity to change approach is not reserved for leaders' leaders. It is a powerful technique for all leaders and organizations that wish to take a step forward in their individual and collective evolution. Because teams also develop beliefs that can stand in the way of ambitious changes, and this method applies to them with equal effectiveness. It is therefore not a surprise to see this Anglo-Saxon tool increasingly rolled out within European companies.

Organizations do not change, people do. To help them overcome their resistance is to allow the organization to stay one step ahead. Immunity to change is the approach that can help all managers and teams meet the challenge they face, in the service of tenfold performance and renewed commitment. *"Immunity to Change"* is the tool that allows access to the ultimate development stage for the leader, the team, and the organization.