

## Holding out for a hero\*ine

Don't we all wish a hero\*ine would come and save us from time to time? More of us probably do in these RUPT (Rapid, Unpredictable, Paradoxical, Tangled) times. But what do we expect them to do exactly?

The hero\*ine archetype embodies almost superhuman properties of some sort— courageous, all-knowing and invincible. This fantasy we have sheds an interesting view on the origin of this wish: our feeling of powerlessness.

When we feel powerless and fearful, many try to go at things alone and be the solo hero\*ine of the company! We also see leaders habitually jump to more command and control styles of managing out of fear. They think the answer is being more directive as leaders and steering a tighter ship. By tightening the belt and implementing more stringent financial or performance controls. Since we aren't hero\*ines, these seem like the reliable options, or at least the ones we know.

The repercussions of this course of action, however, can be far-reaching and more unhelpful than you think:

- Fear based decision making at a leadership level keeps the status quo alive
- Sluggish approval processes and micromanagement hinder adaptive market behavior and create revenue loss
- Teams under directive leadership are less creative and take less ownership (think of all the unborn ideas)
- Leaders trying to do it all alone are more susceptible to burn out and organizational isolation

## What if we're already hero\*ines?

It makes sense we think we need to be hero\*ines. After all: How *do* you get an entire organisation of thousands of people to make faster decisions or take more strategic moves in the market? How *do* you ensure your company's relevance in this rapidly changing environment and avoid insolvency in this economic climate? It almost seems impossible for leaders of today to do it all if they don't possess some superpower.





While some leaders try to be the hero\*ine or revert to command and control in times of powerlessness, we also encounter those who are waiting out for the hero\*ine. They don't think they can be it or don't want to be. We hear things like "We can't risk it," "I don't have the power to make this decision," or "that's not my responsibility" even at the most senior levels.

You see, usually any organization has many many hero\*ines in their ranks already. Okay, maybe not the supernatural kind. Hero\*ines nonetheless. Systems usually have an inherent wisdom comprised of all the knowledge, experience and skills each person brings to the table. It's really about molding a space in which these riches can be leveraged. What would our companies gain if our stories about leadership were about the group of heroic leaders around us and not a story of a single person? What if you and your colleagues are the hero\*ines you are seeking? What might you accomplish together?

Together with our clients, we have found some really neat and practical ways of giving up on the hero\*ine narrative and living a more collective leadership story:

- Cross-functional design sprints comprising members from marketing, sales, customer service, and IT to brainstorm and prototype new customer engagement strategies
- Process Improvement Workshops with manufacturing and logistics staff members below managerial level to give input and shape strategy for operational efficiency
- Leadership Development Programs which emphasize moving from an individual (independent) to a collective (interdependent) leadership culture
- Strategic Working Groups composed of leaders from different functional and regional areas to solve their company's toughest challenges
- KPI Re-designs to develop KPIs that measure team performance and quality of collaboration rather than individual achievements

If you're curious about what would happen if you and your company could achieve by letting go of the hero\*ine narrative and leveraging the collective wisdom in the company, reach out any time to Annie Faulkner at [annie.faulkner@lead.berlin](mailto:annie.faulkner@lead.berlin).

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