



The properties of a chameleon...

Something you are doubtless well aware of. The chameleon, from the Ancient Greek word 'χμαιλέων', meaning 'ground lion', is a master of transformation and adaptability. It can change its body shape, its colour and survive under extreme temperatures – both hot and cold. In Africa, great intelligence is attributed to this creature and apparently it can strike with a lightning-fast lash of its tongue.

Are these characteristics not dissimilar to the requirements placed upon a company that has to fulfil ever-more individualised customer wishes in markets that are becoming more dynamic and global? So is there anything that can be learned from the chameleon – particularly during insecure and turbulent times with clouded vision of future customers and markets, as well as increasing competition and price cutting? When conditions are 'normal', there are many challenges to be faced by companies. High requirements for the individuality of products, flexibility in change, the increase of global flows of goods, strong interlinks between customers and suppliers and the reduction in 'time to market' or 'time to consumer', as well as increasing requirements in terms of service and parts supply bring many companies to their performance limits. Add the insecurity of a generally subdued economy and this can often lead to turbulence for companies. Particularly companies that were struggling hard at their limits really have to literally gasp for breath and often enough they fail. It is here that overextended supply and logistics chains, as well as their inadequate organisation and control – both internally and externally – also make a contribution. So what can be done to sustainably counter this?

It is particularly now that companies should re-evaluate their ability to innovate and to transform. Lightning-swift adaptability to changes in general conditions and appropriate scaling of flexibility, as well as sustainable orientation to the objective of the company's added value are key aspects on the path to long-term success and it is here that logisticians also have to provide their contribution. Increasing pressure also requires changes in logistics and consequently reconsidering the options of leaner processes and customised concepts. During the good times, it is possible that a moraine has formed like a glacier because of time constraints and it is now that it must be swept aside. Concentrate upon the strengths and core processes of the company or division, and avoid unnecessary energy wasting distractions. Certainly, the correct approach is not simple at first glance. Should one change strategically or optimise more at operative or planning levels? Whatever you decide upon, consider the fact that acting and thinking in the long-term and asynchronously – together with continued investment – will generate the advance that you need for when the green light goes, as business brightens up.

In this respect, I would like to encourage you. Certainly act carefully, but keep a weather eye upon the opportunities in front of you, looking ahead with optimism. Keep moving and use the diverse characteristics and skill of a chameleon. Good luck for the coming weeks and months.

Yours
Philipp Wessiak

Philipp Wessiak is a Consultant und Manager of the Region West at x|vise innovative logistics GmbH in Lauterach/Vorarlberg.