

# THREE QUESTIONS FOR ÅSA LUNDQUIST COEY

"ANYONE CAN EMERGE AS A LEADER IN A GIVEN SITUATION AND CONTEXT."

## HOW DO YOU DEFINE LEADERSHIP?

It is important to think about leadership in a local context. There are countless ideals around leadership often spiced up with stories around good or great leaders who are perceived to be in control of what employees are up to in an organization. In the science of unpredictability (complexity), there can be no single person controlling what goes on, we are all co-creating organizational life and outcomes. Thus the importance of relationship, situation and context, these three will decide how an outcome will emerge. This we cannot predict. Acts of leadership are taken place in our daily interactions from everybody involved and will always inevitably be characterized by power. If trust is present in a relationship between a leader and a follower (because there can be no leadership without followership) the follower is likely to use his or her power to do what they have agreed, without trust, the follower may not do that – only pretend that they do. Being a skilled player (as a metaphor) in the games we all are in is vital for leadership, that means taking relationships seriously.



## WHAT DEFINES A LEADERSHIP MINDSET, IN YOUR OPINION?

There is no “Leadership mindset” as such. It is a lot of waffle around “leadership” surrounded by evangelical ideals as to how a leader “should” be or behave. There are, however, people in relationships and human activity from which patterns, ways of doing things in the organization (culture) will emerge. We are all shaped by the context we are in and cannot easily leave the same. We can reflect on what we are doing and be reflexive when it comes to understanding how we always are interpreting different situations out of our own ideologies. Anyone can emerge as a leader in a given situation and context. Being a manager, however, well-meaning may be to exercise various manipulation techniques, trying to get people to do what we feel they ought to be doing (and even to like it!)

## WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GOOD LEADER AND A GREAT LEADER?

Again, it depends on the context. We may idealize certain traits in a leader given the specific time and context. Who is good or great depends on the situation, the context and the relationship. And the interpretation of all this. A good or great leader may have excellent intentions and it may not work out well in the long run anyway as we don't know what is causing “good” or “bad” things. It depends on who is doing the judging. What seems helpful is a more pragmatic approach to the countless situations a leader may find him/her-self in. A leader or manager is a powerful player in the organizational context, but he/she is only one player, there are other powerful players too: Practical judgement exercised in a local context, taking experience seriously and a fuller understanding of how anxiety and power (which is in every relationship) is being expressed. Also, an understanding that you as a leader are equally being played as you are playing the game, as we are trying to move forward together. Hence, qualities in leaders today are very different from earlier. Read more in my latest book: “Samspel och Rävspel – ideal och verklighet på jobbet”

## ABOUT ÅSA LUNDQUIST COEY

Åsa Lundquist is Sweden's first Doctor (PhD) in Management & Complexity with an M.Sc in Organization & Leadership and a background as a lawyer, educator and coach. She also lectures at the Stockholm School of Economics (Handelshögskolan), Executive Education where she belongs to the faculty. Åsa's specialities include communicative and relational work, leadership, employeeship, coaching, sustainability, conflict management, innovation, change and complexity.

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**+46 736 41 77 98** [info@move.se](mailto:info@move.se)