



LEADERSHIP LIVE EXPERIENCE

HORSE ASSISTED
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA COVERAGE

G&K HorseDream GmbH
Seminars for teams and managers Am Berg
21, D-64711 Erbach (Odenwald)

Managing Directors:
Gerhard J. Krebs, M.A.
Karin C. Krebs

Phone +49 (0)6062 608826
Fax +49 (0)6062 608827
Mobile +49 170 327 81 81
and: +49 172 746 00 01
Email: office@horsedream.com
Website: www.horsedream.com

There is considerable media interest in this seminar concept.

We have compiled the most detailed reports about us from the multitude of articles in the press, radio, and television.

We would particularly like to highlight the articles by Bärbel Schwertfeger (wirtschaft & weiterbildung, April 1999), Dagmar Deckstein (Süddeutsche Zeitung, September 2000), Peter Theisen (ZDF, May 2001), Elisabeth Hussendörfer (management & training, October 2002) and Gudrun Bergdolt (Handwerk Magazin, July 2003).

Please note that the copyright for these texts belongs to the publishers, editorial offices, broadcasters, or authors, and that distribution in any form is not permitted.

Contents

Hessischer Rundfunk. Presence and intuition	2
handwerk magazine. Horses as teachers	3
Management & Training	5
High potentials (BR alpha)	7
VOGUE Business	8
Campus & Career (Deutschlandfunk)	10
Radioladen (Hessischer Rundfunk HR4)	11
Mona Lisa (ZDF)	13
Drehscheibe Deutschland (ZDF)	14
Meridian (Hessischer Rundfunk HR1)	15
Süddeutsche Zeitung	17
WirtschaftsBlatt (Vienna)	20
Economy & Continuing Education	21

Presence and Intuition Personality training with Friesian horses. Contribution by Kathrin Fischer

Introduction:

Intuition or unconscious perceptions, as we have learned, accompany us constantly. Because we are not aware of these perceptions, we ignore them and their effectiveness, and thus also an important resource within ourselves. Naturally, many people want to make use of this resource for themselves, their lives, and their work. Can intuition be learned? That is the big question. The answer: with the right teachers, yes.

Narrator:

Here they come down the stable lane, the four mighty teachers with black coats and long manes: their names are Benny, Bosse, Benetton, and Lüttje. They are Friesian horses, and their sign intuition and communication teachers.

Bruno:

For me, the exciting thing about working with horses from the ground is that it opens up whole new dimensions of communication.

Narrator:

Bruno is in his late forties and a riding instructor. This means that he does not necessarily belong to the clientele that the Krebs couple's company, G&K HorseDream GmbH, generally targets. Gerhard and Karin Krebs train executives at Fenwick Farm in Erbach in the Odenwald region. Their seminars are called things like "Presence and Intuition," "Experiencing Leadership," "Demonstrating Competence – Maintaining Personality," and "The Power and Powerlessness of Trust." Riding instructor Bruno also comes not for the athletic aspect, but for the personality development aspect.

Bruno:

I come here to gain clarity about myself. Situations where I feel I tend to put too much pressure on myself.

I don't just do this when riding, I also do it with my children, my wife, my colleagues, and my employees. Ultimately, I behave in exactly the same way towards them. I bring my unreflective behavior here and the horse plays it back to me: hello, you do this and that and that. When I see that in the video, it's like scales falling from my eyes, so to speak. I didn't see myself that way, but then I see it very clearly and that triggers a process of reflection.

Narrator:

Manager training with horses? Can you imagine anything more absurd, the layman naturally wonders. But the concept works.

Gerhard Krebs:

When you use horses as a means of personal development, on the one hand, as a manager, you can naturally learn sensitivity. On the other hand, I learn to assert myself in situations where my leadership is required, but not to assert myself with force, rather in a way that allows people to be human beings and does not attack or hurt their personality.

Narrator:

Horses mercilessly expose weak leadership, says Gerhard Krebs, because dominance over horses consists in the art of small, confident gestures. If you want to get a horse to cooperate, you have to know exactly what you want from it. Diffuse gestures, vague hints, indecision, or aggression are either ignored by Bosse, Benetton, Benny, or Lüttje, or they react with resistance. Since horses do not know politeness toward humans, they reflect their behavior back to them very directly. Behavior that humans are generally not even aware of.

Gerhard Krebs:

This has a lot to do with intuition, because I very often react from the gut and only realize afterwards that what I intuitively decided or how I intuitively behaved is influenced by an experience that is rooted somewhere in my past life.

Speaker:

Gerhard Krebs doesn't have to do much to give his seminar participants amazing insights into their own selves. Very simple tasks are enough.

Bruno:

I'm supposed to lead a horse from behind, but the horse won't move. Do I now go ahead and take the horse by the reins and lead the way, or do I insist on staying behind and maybe give it a little help with the whip? I have these freedoms, but when you interpret yourself, you come to some amazing conclusions.

Narrator:

Intuitively and very concretely, participants experience aspects of themselves that they were often not even aware of rationally. In any case, there are many moving scenes, tears and moments of realization, or simply the joy of being able to control such a large animal as a horse for the first time.

Petra:

Ah, my knees are shaking, it's incredibly difficult, but also incredibly great when you manage to follow the course you had in mind – fantastic!

handwerk magazine, July 2003

Leadership training Horses as teachers

By Gudrun Bergdolt

Whether staff actually cooperate depends on many factors. In HorseDream's leadership seminar, horses show entrepreneurs what is lacking in their leadership style.

This is not about horses, but about people. Gerhard Krebs repeats this sentence almost like a mantra during the nearly one-and-a-half-day leadership training seminar with horses in Erbach in the Odenwald. The six seminar participants, including three self-employed entrepreneurs, do not seem entirely convinced. Gerhard Krebs presents them with tasks

that they are to complete with horses in the riding hall of Fenwick Farm, far away from the constraints of ties and the sleepy, familiar seminar atmosphere.

"There are no tricks you can use to get horses to do something," says Krebs. Communication with horses works on a different level and without regard to the person; "horses don't care who is standing in front of them."

Expectations of how the horses will react to each individual are rising. "What if the horse ignores me?" some ask themselves. A little uncertainty spreads. Added to this is the fact that most people last sat on a pony as a child.

But Krebs reassures them. He has been offering his seminar concept for seven years. It is as carefully structured as the leadership method he promotes. "Leadership means empowering employees to pursue a goal independently, courageously, and with a willingness to take risks," is his credo. And in his view, the leader, whether boss or manager, has the task of creating the appropriate environment for this.

On the evening before, Gerhard Krebs and his wife, co-seminar leader Karin Krebs, discuss different leadership models with the participants. This allows the Krebs couple to get to know the diverse group.

The next day of "HorseDream Classic," as the seminar is called, begins with paperwork. The participants list their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with employees or as private individuals, report on leadership mistakes, and assess themselves. This is followed by practical exercises in the riding hall.

Practical exercises

First, everyone observes the four horses—Benny, Lüttje, Benetton, and Bosse—and tries to figure out their pecking order. The majority guesses Benetton, the most beautiful of the four proud Friesian horses. "Many people are impressed by his demeanor," says Karin Krebs, "but the real leader is Benny, who is much calmer and smaller."

The first practical exercise: the participants must first establish trust with one of the horses and lead it around the four posts in the hall. Gerhard Krebs films the exercise.

In between, there are visual demonstrations. What the 53-year-old seminar leader shows seems very simple. He moves almost dancingly in front of the horses. And regardless of whether they have a rope on their halter or not, they follow him to the right or left

, just as he signals to them with his body language alone.

But this doesn't work for everyone. Some seminar participants seem to be weighed down by the approximately 700-kilogram Friesian horses. Afterwards, everyone watches the recordings. In most cases, it is very clear to see why an exercise works or doesn't work.

The best explanation comes from an entrepreneur whose cell phone rings during an exercise. "My thoughts immediately turned to my company," he says later when evaluating the video. As a result, he lost his concentration on the goal. The horse stood still.

The horse as a mirror

Before the afternoon exercises "Distance and Proximity" and "Goal Orientation," the Krebs couple once again prepares the participants for their tasks. "I can only gain respect if I respect others, take them seriously, and listen to them," says Gerhard Krebs. And the goal? "If you don't know exactly where you want to go, you unconsciously show that to your employees," he says. "the horses are just a mirror of that."

And lo and behold, when fully focused on the other party—in this case, the horse—with a clear goal in mind and unambiguous communication, which is reflected in body language, the horses can be willingly led over obstacles. In the final exercise, the horses walk over a tarpaulin laid out on the ground, stand on it, or just sniff it, depending on what their companion wants them to do.

The mood during the final analysis in the late afternoon is mixed. There are enthusiastic reactions, such as "there's nothing like this seminar," but also more thoughtful comments: "I need to let this sink in first." Everyone is fascinated by the method, "because you immediately notice how you are and also get immediate feedback from the horses." For follow-up, Gerhard Krebs sends each participant a compilation of the recorded exercises.

HM INTERVIEW

"No one has learned to lead"

hm: How did you experience leadership in your own professional life?

Krebs: For a long time, I had a patriarchal boss who also allowed me a lot of freedom.

. That had a big impact on me. At the age of 34, I started my own business.

hm: What shortcomings do you see in the leadership behavior of entrepreneurs?

hm: Do you know the reasons for these shortcomings?

hm: Do you know the causes of these shortcomings?

Krebs: At no stage of their training do they learn how to lead. There are hardly any courses that teach or train social skills.

hm: Many entrepreneurs simply don't have enough time or are under constant pressure.

Krebs: Time is a question of priorities. If people are not a high priority, then firstly I don't have time for my employees and I don't even notice them. As far as the current economic pressure is concerned, some entrepreneurs also have the wrong objectives, such as expanding into a market where it simply cannot work.

hm: The solution?

Krebs: Entrepreneurs need to have different leadership styles. For example, they need to know when to take firm control.

hm: There is hardly any theory in your seminar. Why is that?

Krebs: There are countless leadership theories. We deliberately avoid them and don't consider them necessary, because this is a pragmatic approach.

hm: What is the learning effect?

Krebs: In general, the seminar improves social skills. But there is no uniform learning objective, because everyone has a different personality or is in a different situation.

Better leadership, better results

Six months ago, Michael Berner, who runs a building materials and natural stone business in Lorch, Württemberg, attended the Hor-

and is still enthusiastic about it. The exercises worked "relatively well" for him. "If you don't give clear directions yourself, the horses simply don't understand," he says.

How has his leadership style changed since then? "I used to just give my people quick instructions," says the 32-year-old. The result was predictable. Take cleaning the storage area, for example: "It was still messy afterwards, because all I wanted was for it to be clean." Today, Michael Berner takes much more time. As a result, his employees are more receptive to his instructions and work more thoroughly, "and the result is simply better."

The building materials dealer also feels that the pressure is very high at the moment. "But if I'm unsure and simply pass the pressure on to my employees, then that's just a weakness on my part," he says. He attended the seminar with his wife Petra out of pure interest. "It's really good when your partner is there and you get to know each other in a completely different way," he says. He himself has attended many leadership seminars. "Mostly pure theory," he sums them up. "With horses, you see the results immediately."

management & training

Issue 10/2002 (October)

Seminar test

Author: Elisabeth Hussendörfer

Horses that help managers develop a better leadership style? How does that work? This is a question asked by many seminar participants who come to the Odenwald for leadership training with horses and allow themselves to be observed by Gerhard Krebs and his four black geldings.

Horses as a mirror of character

It usually takes less than twenty minutes for even skeptics to be convinced: yes, these four-legged animals can reveal a lot about our behavior. They mirror insecurities and expose acting tricks—in a way that is more sophisticated than almost any human trainer can manage.

Seminar day one, second exercise session. Benetton isn't interested. "Why should I run around the stand when there's another way?" he seems to be asking. His hooves, one might think, are made of lead and the ground is a magnet. Ke i-

The gelding moves forward a few centimeters. His eyes are wide awake, his ears are pricked up—and he is alert to everything around him, except Sarah. Sarah is 33, a marketing manager in a large industrial group and a participant in the intensive seminar "Leadership Training with Horses." She pulls on the rope, she loosens it, she talks to him kindly, she pats him affectionately – no reaction. Afterwards, she will say that Benetton stopped because she wasn't mentally focused for a moment. "Basically, it's very similar to my employees," she believes. "When I give them my full attention, the collaboration works. When I'm somewhere else with my head and my heart, communication problems are inevitable."

Horses sense a person's character

Communication – a big word. It's the old story of sending and receiving. If the wrong signals are sent, misunderstandings arise. When working with horses, this becomes clearer than almost anywhere else. "The four-legged animals don't behave right or wrong, but according to their nature," explains Gerhard Krebs, who is a manager himself and conducts the training sessions on weekends together with his wife Karin. Six years ago, the couple developed the so-called "HorseDream concept" on their own, independently of the horse whisperer wave that only much later spread from the USA to Germany through the movie of the same name. Many companies here still find it difficult to pay for their employees to attend the seminars—the idea of training managers with the help of horses seems too exotic to them.

Around a hundred executives visit the Krebs couple at Fenwick Farm every year. The seminars are suitable for non-riders as well as riders, for individuals as well as entire departments of a company. Gerhard Krebs has not specifically trained his four black Friesian geldings for the exercises. "Everything that happens between them and the participants is pure communication," he explains.

The concept of the training sounds simple: as flight animals, horses are very sensitive. They fight for their place in the hierarchy within the herd, but willingly submit to the one they trust to lead them based on their character and mental qualities.

Conventional means and methods of verbal communication? They are of no help when dealing with four-legged animals. Name, title, position in

Companies? Who cares about that? "Horses can tell whether a person is naturally confident or insecure, self-assured or hiding behind a mask," says Gerhard Krebs. "Their feedback is honest, unbiased, and prompt." It's quite possible that a horse will treat an overly energetic manager who is internally restless and unfocused as if they were invisible. On the other hand, a manager who is not nearly as boisterous but has a strong presence will only need to give a mental command.

Horse hierarchy

At Fenwick Farm, where over forty horses live in spacious stables and endless pastures, it is easy to observe the laws governing the hierarchy among these four-legged creatures. Gerhard and Karin Krebs' co-trainers, Bosse, Lüttje, Benetton, and Benny, have just been brought in from the paddock and led into the riding hall. "Who do you think is the boss here?" asks Gerhard Krebs. It must be Benetton, because he is the largest and most elegant and repeatedly stands up on his hind legs to impress the other horses. Gerhard Krebs shakes his head. "Benetton is showing off, his behavior is a sign of inferiority. Benny is in charge." Benny? He's small, fat, and spends most of his time standing in the corner. But he has charisma, and the other horses respect him, that's true. "The leader doesn't always have to be at the front," says Karin Krebs.

"Just as you don't have to be authoritarian to have authority."

This becomes very clear during an exercise designed to build respect and trust. In the picadero, a ten-by-ten-meter area, the participants drive a horse around in circles with a flag. Important: walk upright, raise your arm. If the horse is willing to cooperate, it lowers its head. Uwe, a 55-year-old personnel consultant, has had Benny walking around him for less than two minutes when the animal stretches its neck toward the ground. Uwe drops the flag on the ground, and Benny stops, turns around 180 degrees, and runs toward him. But that's not all: when Uwe starts running, the gelding joins him, following his every step.

Leading without a leash

An impressive situation. "You can also lead without a leash," comments Gerhard Krebs. Later, during the video analysis, he explains: "Uwe has gained Benny's trust. He has shown the horse his dominance and appeared credible." Uwe is happy, because that is exactly what he defined as his main goal at the beginning of the seminar: he wants to be a role model. He wants his employees to trust him because of his personality. Through the medium of

horse, he seems to have come a little closer to his goal.

Video analysis works wonders. When you play back the footage in slow motion, you notice details that you would never otherwise be aware of. A 40-year-old management consultant wants to lead Lüttje onto a plastic tarpaulin and does not look at the animal once while doing so. She has pulled the lead tight, but that does not help her because, apart from this lead, she has no contact with the horse. The other participants had already guessed that Lüttje would remain standing in front of the sheet before the exercise actually went wrong. The management consultant admits that she has a similar problem at work: "I demand something from an employee, I have a clear goal in mind, but my head is already somewhere else while I'm giving my instructions."

Looking for mistakes in yourself. Getting away from thinking "it's the others' fault" is what the seminar is all about. Of course, the behavior of horses cannot be transferred one-to-one to the behavior of employees in a company. No human being reacts as directly to weak leadership as they do. Nevertheless, no other animal can hold up a mirror to humans as well as they can. "Horses don't flatter, they aren't polite, but they are almost always cooperative," says Gerhard Krebs.

Self-awareness is important

At first glance, the four geldings appear to be the main protagonists of the HorseDream seminars, but on closer inspection, they only play a supporting role. "The horses are a medium," explains Gerhard Krebs. "They nudge us with their soft noses to all kinds of blind spots in our self-perception." This self-perception is a very important aspect of the seminar: "It's not about someone telling the participants what they're doing wrong. It's about the participants recognizing themselves."

Gerhard and Karin Krebs are convinced that a person's professional competence stems from their inner nature and character. Every person is different and every person leads differently. It makes no sense to copy certain tactics from other participants, because the horses immediately sense when someone is acting. That is also the reason why careerists are out of place at Fenwick Farm. Anyone who talks about social skills and emotional intelligence but is really only interested in their own advantage is immediately exposed by the behavior of the four-legged animals. Games that may work in individual situations

— tricking, bluffing, scheming — remain ineffective.

"The horses show us that those who lead must actually serve others. They must serve the community, the company as a whole," says Gerhard Krebs.

Overall score for the seminar: 1.7

High potentials

Bayerischer Rundfunk BR alpha

TV report by Elke Hardegger, June 26, 2002

Friesian horses are dominant and headstrong animals. Nevertheless, they are also sensitive, honest, and attentive. They follow a person, regardless of rank or name, who is clear in their instructions and whom they trust. This makes them ideal co-trainers for managers.

Heike Käferle, managing director of a software company and boss of 50 employees, wants to embark on this adventure and review her behavior in a one-on-one training session. The four untrained Friesian horses are her partners at Fenwick Farm, in the middle of the Odenwald forest. She sees working with the horses as a unique opportunity.

Quote from Heike Käferle: "You simply have the opportunity to get a more direct reaction to your behavior, and an unvarnished reaction—without expressing yourself verbally. You also notice when you're not fully focused, when you're not quite conveying your persuasiveness. And also when you're fully engaged, how that comes across. Just what goes on in this non-verbal realm is really reflected here."

But enough is enough. Horses have a mind of their own. Sometimes nothing works anymore. Pressure doesn't help either. Sensing this is an essential criterion in dealing with humans and animals. Nevertheless, you don't need any previous experience with horses to take part in this seminar.

Gerhard Krebs says: "Horses are majestic animals. And when I put someone who has never had anything to do with horses in front of one, it's a unique experience for them. Why do I organize seminars like this for managers? Anyone who wants to develop genuine leadership skills can use horses to see how far they've come."

The next exercise is called "The Power of Inner Images." It requires some preparation. Heike Käferle: "Yes, it's about a goal I want to achieve and the obstacles I have to overcome to get there. I now have to think about the five obstacles I face and symbolically represent them in the hall with slats, fences, and other objects, and then I have to overcome them."

Negative thinking, self-doubt, and financial constraints are recurring obstacles that one encounters in everyday professional life. This exercise aims to reveal how confidently and purposefully one can overcome these obstacles. The horse is guided with the help of reins. It is led through a narrow passage or over slats to the finish line, which is symbolized by a tarpaulin. The co-trainer reacts very sensitively to the instructions given by the position of the reins, which indicate the direction to be taken.

The challenge then increases as she continues on the horse's back. Heike Käferle last sat in the saddle twelve years ago. After just a few hours of working with the horses, she is now given the task of steering a second horse at the same time. This exercise can only be mastered with a great deal of courage, concentration, and self-confidence. It's easy to forget which obstacle symbolizes which problem.

But the feeling of being able to overcome all difficulties is an important experience that can also be applied to professional life.

However, a horse cannot be compared to an employee. Someone who can lead a horse is not necessarily an ideal manager. That is not the intention of the seminar. The experiences are more relevant to a project that needs to be brought to a desired conclusion. The seminar leader emphasizes this association in the concluding discussion with the help of a video recording that replays the entire day.

Gerhard Krebs says: "Movement and balance are two things that belong together. Balance without movement is basically inconceivable. You have to be at peace with yourself, you have to be balanced."

After a long day, it's back to everyday working life. Heike Käferle takes away insights about herself above all else. And new ideas on how she can successfully complete projects in the future.

Hurdle race

Vogue Business, Fall/Winter 2001

Horses are honest, sensitive, attentive. In seminars, they are now supposed to show managers the way forward. Katharina Rieger has put her trust in them.

It's suddenly there. That comforting feeling when uncertainty gives way to trust—because you're sitting on a horse, completely carefree. The last time I "rode" was as a child on a merry-go-round horse, now the little gelding Benny is carrying me. No saddle, just a crocheted patchwork blanket. Only when the animal senses that I'm sitting securely does it start moving. I was suspicious about what this was all about with the horses. Now I feel it: feelings like trust and uncertainty, which I rarely pay attention to, are suddenly very close.

The intensive seminar "Leadership Training with Horses" brought me to Benny's back. It's intensive because, apart from me, only multimedia project manager Norbert is participating to explore his own unconscious leadership behavior. Norbert has owned a horse for four years, a gelding named Eddy, whom he adores.

I usually keep a distance of five meters from horses, just to be on the safe side. But according to the website of the company "HorseDream," you don't need "any experience with horses." HorseDream is run by Gerhard and Karin Krebs. For five years, the couple has been organizing seminars "with horses as a medium" for managers of all kinds. At first, computer expert Krebs gave IT courses, and horses were just a hobby. "But the participants also wanted to ride," he says, "so we developed our course concept."

They were the first in Germany to use horses as co-trainers to make managers aware of their weaknesses and strengths. Soft values such as emotional intelligence are central to this, not the extreme experiences of tough survival training. HorseDreams is based at Fenwick Farm in the Odenwald. Surrounded by dark green forests, at night a sea of stars in the sky. The city, the stress, the traffic jams – all that is miles away.

Being an authority without being authoritarian

For two days, Norbert, the energetic project manager, and I, the editorial manager, will let the horses hold up a mirror to us. Why horses, actually? Gerhard Krebs says:

Intuition, body language, and concentration are also important for leadership, but only a few bosses pay attention to them. With horses, sensitive flight animals, attention is focused on whether and how well one masters these strengths. "Being authoritative without being authoritarian," says Karin Krebs, "is also important with people." Doesn't sound so difficult.

We are standing on the wooden grandstand of the riding hall, where soft daylight streams in through large upper windows, as the four animals run into the hall. Three black Friesian geldings—Bosse, Lüttje, and Benetton — , and Benny, the small Tinker gypsy horse—roll around uninhibitedly on the soft peat floor. First task: Who is the boss? It must be Benetton, the biggest and most elegant. But Gerhard Krebs later says: "Benny is the boss." The smallest one, of all people! "Benetton is the lowest in rank, our teenager." At least Norbert guessed wrong too. Lesson one: Don't be fooled by appearances.

Then we are supposed to lead the horses past obstacles in the hall using a rope. Bosse trots alongside me, I praise him, he follows me. Lüttje, the retiree of the gang of four, also obeys. I am a born leader! Until Norbert advises: "Don't talk to the animals!" Because he walks ahead in silence, and every animal follows him. So I try that with Benny. After a few meters, the rope tightens and the horse stands there as if petrified. I tug tentatively at the lead. There is mockery in Benny's eyes. I talk to him, stroke his mane until he continues walking. Later, during the video analysis that follows all the exercises, I see a woman walking stiffly in front of a small, fat horse. Lesson two: don't change your leadership style abruptly, no one will buy it.

The amazing thing about working with horses is that they immediately sense when a person is not being authentic or focused—and refuse to cooperate. But if you are mentally present with them, praise them, and motivate them, everything works like clockwork. "This cannot be transferred 1:1 to humans," says Gerhard Krebs, "but working with horses makes you aware of your own intuitive behavior in surprising situations."

Practicing patience

This is demonstrated by the next exercise: we are supposed to build trust and respect with the animals. In the picadero, a ten-by-ten-meter area, we drive a horse around in circles with a flag. Important: walk upright, raise your arm. Until the animal shows humility by lowering its head and approaching us. Each of the four horses lowers its head, but none of them approaches me. I lead the animals with gentle coaxing.

It is only later, when I watch the video, that I realize how impatient I am.

Even horse expert Norbert reaches his limits. Because he expects the same from Benetton as he does from his Eddy (namely a 180-degree turn), Benetton goes on strike. A misunderstanding. Lesson three: conflicts arise from misunderstandings. And: leaders need patience. The insights gained from the seminar may sound simple, but they leave a lasting impression on everyday working life. No one reacts to mistakes as directly as a horse – which makes you recognize your mistakes.

Never let the reins slacken

"Horses are inconsiderate," says Karin Krebs. That's hard to accept when I'm supposed to guide Bosse through an obstacle course with the reins in front of me. I want to go left, he goes right. He goes in circles, I want to go straight ahead. The secret: I have to tighten the reins. Lo and behold, I'm steering the animal without loud commands. Lesson four: Keep the pressure constant, never let the reins slacken too much.

"As soon as the participants are sitting on the horse, the knot bursts," says Gerhard Krebs later. I felt the same way—one ride on Benny was enough for me to accept the animals as trainers. On the second day, I even ride two horses. I sit on Benny, Bosse stands in front of him, all the reins in my hands. Gerhard Krebs leads the way, and I follow easily with the two of them. Wow! Admittedly, the euphoria disappears when Gerhard Krebs leaves me on my own and the animals get tangled up in front of me.

I didn't want to learn horse riding either, but I realized that four horses are four characters that I have to adapt to if I want to achieve something. Hierarchy means nothing to them if the signals are unclear. I now know that I should be more patient and that I can sometimes say loudly where to go. But, final lesson: what you learn here can only be experienced.

To try it yourself

G&K HorseDream offers two-day seminars for managers about once a month. Contact: www.horsedream.de or tel.: 0 60 62 - 60 88 26

Campus & Career

Deutschlandfunk

Contribution by Riccardo Mastrocola, November 21, 2001

Sommer: "I just let him run, don't do anything else, that's what I learned today, just show who's boss every now and then, like now when he wants to run ahead, but otherwise you don't need to do anything else."

Matthias Sommer has never stood in front of such large, proud Friesian horses before. But he has stood in front of many decisions, projects, and important planning meetings with his employees. The 36-year-old owner of a mechanical engineering company in Kassel has 50 employees and a lot of stress. Even before the seminar, he knew that he made many mistakes in dealing with his employees. But which ones? Now, in the evening, after many exercises and insights, and while the horses are comfortably cooling down in the riding hall, many things seem clearer to him.

Sommer says: "My big mistake is that I am impatient, I put my employees under pressure, sometimes even using below-the-belt tactics. That is a major shortcoming of mine and ultimately, as a team player, I get my way, and that is certainly something I will work on reducing in the coming weeks and months."

The Friesian horses at Fenwick Farm in Erbach in the Odenwald region are usually kept in paddocks and ridden, but they are not trained as sport, leisure, or school horses—instead, they develop natural strength, a kind of self-confidence, and their own character. They may not be alternative conversation partners, but they communicate in a direct way. They do not care about the names, positions, or professional achievements of the participants. The managers therefore have to rely entirely on their personal charisma during the exercises, says course instructor and horse owner Gerhard Krebs. The courses take place twice a month. In his main job, he is a product manager at a telecommunications company.

Quote from Krebs: "The first exercise, where participants are confronted with the horses, looks completely mundane from the outside. We lead a horse around four pillars in the hall using a 6-meter-long rope. We say: please circle every second pillar once with the horse. When the first circle around a pillar comes and the horse stops for whatever reason, we see how the participant reacts. Does he try to pull? Does he pull on the rope? Does he change direction?"

? Does he pull on the rope? Does he change direction?"

During the video analysis, the participants are shown their leadership style again. Even food chemist Gabi Manger, although she already has experience with horses, is surprised. She heads a working group at the city of Bochum.

Quote from Manger: "There was a key moment when the horse signaled to me that it would go with me, but I didn't want to believe it at first and urged it on anyway. The participants also gave me feedback that I had indeed been too harsh in some cases and could have reacted differently."

Of course, you can't draw direct conclusions about leadership from communication with horses. But horses reflect the actions of managers with corresponding reactions.

Quote from Krebs: "There are four very different horses. They have very different personalities, and if I drive a horse around me in a central exercise because it appears to be lame, and then act with the same dominance in another exercise, the horse will run away from me. And we then transfer such behaviors to the situation in the company, for example, where I can deal with one employee in a certain way that causes another to run away. And I lose that employee without really knowing why."

The ideal leadership style: that is what Gerhard Krebs focuses on in these seminars. However, he does not impart psychological formulas or overload his participants with leadership theories. Instead, he relies on the managers' own experiences with honest horses. None of them can yet really articulate what this will mean for employees in the future. They have too much to process—the day has made a lasting impression on them.

Radio shop

Hessischer Rundfunk HR4

Interview with Ingo Lücke on November 10, 2001

Ingo Lücke: In Erbach in the Odenwald region, there is the G&K HorseDream GmbH Private Academy for Horses, Leisure, and Communication. An interesting title. On the phone is the managing director of this company, Mr. Gerhard J. Krebs. Good morning, Mr. Krebs.

Gerhard J. Krebs: Good morning, Mr. Lücke.

IL: You have to tell us about this: horses and leisure go together. How does communication fit in?

GJK: There are actually very few animals that have such developmental significance for humans as the horse. In the past, horses have always been used to train leaders. This has to do with the character traits of horses. Horses don't flatter you, they don't react like dogs, but they are almost always cooperative.

IL: You'll have to explain that in more detail. So you invite managers to spend a day exercising authority while working with horses. How did you come up with this idea and how does it work in practice?

GJK: We started working with horses twelve years ago and developed this concept about six years ago, and we've been offering these seminars ever since. I have to say that these are not seminars for careerists. Don't get me wrong. Anyone who is only interested in their own advantage will probably leave the seminar feeling very thoughtful. Among other things, we ask why you should lead through intimidation, fearmongering, deceit, or intrigue when there is actually a completely different way, namely through trust, reliability, helpfulness, and honesty.

IL: And how does that work now? How can I learn what you just described by working with horses?

GJK: The prerequisite is that you approach the horse with a certain attitude. And we want you to approach people with a certain attitude too. Those who lead must actually serve others; they must serve the community, the company as a whole. Perhaps an example: one of the practical exercises illustrates the relationship between closeness and distance. Will I succeed in gaining the necessary respect without losing trust? Or will I perhaps scare the horse away by being too dominant? Could I lose some employees in a similar way?

IL: What does this practical exercise you just described look like in concrete terms?

GJK: The participant stands with the horse in a ten-by-ten-meter square,

known as a picadero. We give them an instrument of power, which can be a flag or a lunge whip, and they have to drive the horse around them. In other words, they have to command respect. However, during this exercise, they must ensure that they maintain a connection with the horse and that they do not jeopardize the trust they want to build with the horse by driving it too hard. When they release the pressure, the horse approaches them and they are able to lead the horse through the picadero without a rope.

IL: That is a specific practical exercise that you have just described. The seminar lasts one day, if I have read correctly. How many of these practical exercises can you teach in one day, and what is the subsequent success rate?

GJK: There are four exercises that we complete one after the other. In between, there are video analyses and feedback rounds. The success for the participants lies in the fact that they receive exceptional feedback on their personal leadership style. And some may discover unexpected leadership strengths. But what also happens is that many are confronted with their leadership weaknesses.

IL: How do these people deal with that afterwards? So you have been able to gather experience from managers who have completed such a seminar with you, how has that affected their everyday working lives afterwards?

GJK: We have received a whole range of feedback from participants, some of whom have become very thoughtful. That is, they have realized that they treat their employees in a way that lacks any intuition. And this reflection, this return to one's own intuition, is one of the greatest successes we have in the seminars.

IL: I have to ask again. I can't imagine it being that easy, at least for people who have never had anything to do with horses before. They first have to get used to the horse itself and, yes, become a kind of trainer. How much time does that take?

GJK: It happens relatively quickly. Some people start the exercise with a certain amount of fear, but then they see that the horse is engaging with them. The horses are not trained for these exercises. However, through daily interaction with them, they are trained for this communication training. Of course, they also know the

individual exercises, which are performed one after the other. They complete each exercise with a different person. And they adapt to this new person. And his or her very individual way of dealing with them is the real core of this cooperation.

IL: Do I now have one person, one horse around me all day, or, if I have a business, do I also have several people around me whom I am supposed to lead?

GJK: We have four horses in use. These horses also have very different personalities. At the beginning, for example, we ask the question: who is the leader of this group of four? And then we see whether people react to outward appearances. Some say that the biggest, the most elegant, the most beautiful must be the leader. Unfortunately, that's not the case. So we then ask what the real leadership qualities are. How can we tell who is suited to being a leader and who is perhaps not suited, or who needs to develop certain qualities in themselves in order to become a leader?

IL: If we have sparked interest in anyone, where can they register? When do these seminars take place?

GJK: The next seminar is next Monday. Then there will be a two-day intensive training course at the beginning of December. All dates can be found on the internet. We have a website at www.managerspiegel.de. Alternatively, you can contact us by phone at 06062 608826.

IL: And since this all happened so quickly, we have of course provided our address, telephone number, and website address to HR4 Hörertelefon. Anyone interested can contact our colleagues there. I believe the HR4 listener hotline number is relatively well known: 069 for Frankfurt, 155 40 44. Leadership training with real horsepower. That was from Fenwick Farm: G&K HorseDream GmbH, Gerhard Krebs. Thank you for talking to us.

Mona Lisa (ZDF)

Competence training with horses Female managers discover their intuition

A contribution by Madeleine Schulte Langforth, edited for ZDF.online. Broadcast date: May 6, 2001

Introduction: The sixth sense of human beings is also being considered in the executive suites of companies. In the best case scenario, leadership means being recognized for your professional expertise and leadership qualities. But many managers have become so top-heavy that they no longer perceive the signals from their employees and only send out vague messages themselves. Training can help here, and horses are the co-trainers.

Ears pricked, eyes alert and clear. Despite weighing 700 kilograms, Friesian horses are extremely sensitive. They are people-oriented, and advertising manager Annedore Klinksiek knows that they react with great sensitivity. But Benetton the horse simply does not understand her commands. He does what he wants. She is supposed to lead the horse by a rope, getting him to do what she wants without coercion. At a "horse seminar for managers," the boss of eleven employees wants to learn to listen to her feelings again. She calls herself a head-driven person, but wants to make her decisions from the gut again in the future. She is sure that she once had this intuition. It has just been lost in the course of her everyday working life.

Learning to trust

The four Friesian horses are sensitive creatures. Not only do they constantly interact with each other, they also enjoy communicating with humans. And that is the first exercise of the seminar. Who feels drawn to which horse and chooses to work with it, and how does that happen? At this stage, it can really only be a gut decision. Experience is completely lacking when it comes to first impressions.

The next exercise: placing trust in others, believing in their abilities. One participant sits on the horse but is not allowed to lead it herself. She must trust that the horse, like the horse handler, will do the right thing. Training leader Gerhard Krebs explains the purpose of the exercise: "We are dealing with two different elements here. We have the person in front leading the horse, and we have the horse that I am sitting on, which is carrying me. You could say

that the horse is middle management. It is being led, and at the same time it is carrying me. She should experience how wonderful it can feel to be able to rely on someone who is walking in front of you and guiding you." Annedore Klinksiek was skeptical at first, but then she was able to enjoy the ride. Perhaps it will soon become easier for the boss to delegate responsibility and have more confidence in her employees.

Horses as a mirror for humans

Fenwick Farm is located in the heart of the Odenwald forest. Fifty horses call this place home. Many of them are retired here, and the farm also breeds horses. Karin Krebs developed the concept for this training program together with her husband Gerhard. The seminars only take place on weekends, as Gerhard Krebs is a manager by profession. He deliberately chose the four Friesian horses as co-trainers: "Horses have a characteristic that other animals do not have to the same extent. They are a crystal-clear mirror for humans. I stand in front of the horse and see its reactions immediately. It responds to what I do, who I am, and what I say. I can't imagine a clearer mirror than a horse."

The next exercise: In a confined space, the horse runs around in circles continuously. A flag is used as a means of pressure. In this exercise, the person should observe how resilient their counterpart is. The person must intuitively grasp how long Benetton the horse enjoys the game and when it becomes too much for him. If you ask too much of the horse, he simply ignores you. However, if the participant is attentive, senses Benetton's sensitivities, and gives him her full attention, he is happy to cooperate and willing to work together. Just as every manager wants from their employees. Training manager Gerhard Krebs puts this into perspective: "Of course, you can't make a direct parallel. I can't say that if you can lead a Friesian horse, then you can also lead a person. It doesn't work that way, but I always find points of reference that make me think about myself. Where I feel that I am uncertain or am getting too close to the other person."

You have to send clear signals

The next exercise: leading the horse over a tarpaulin lying on the ground. The problem with instructor Elke Nölting is that she sends unclear signals. On the one hand, she has a goal, but on the other hand, she doesn't believe she can achieve it. Benny senses this and refuses to step onto the tarp. He is unfocused and teases the instructor, just like the children at school. Meanwhile, Annedore Klinksiek and her horse Bosse are a perfect team. She manages to motivate him

motivate him. She says that her rediscovered intuition helped her by setting the goal beforehand and then forgetting about it. She simply stopped thinking about it and relied only on herself. Thanks to the horses, Annedore Klinksiek was able to perceive her feelings again. Now she has to transfer her horse experiences to her employees.

Drehscheibe Deutschland (ZDF)

Manager training with horses

By Peter Theisen. Broadcast date: May 3, 2001

First attempts at rapprochement between animals and humans. What can managers learn from horses? First there is incredulous head-shaking, then a healthy dose of curiosity. Studying the animals, observing them closely and assessing them is the first lesson. Soon the realization follows that not all horses are the same. Some need more pressure to get them moving, others less.

Gerhard Krebs, manager trainer: "When I am working with a horse and it does not do something the way I want it to, I have to be able to ask myself: where did I go wrong? Horses are perfect creatures; they do not make 'mistakes'—the mistake always lies with the human. And if I am able to reflect on leadership situations where decisions did not go well and look for the mistake not in my employee, but in myself or my leadership style or wherever else, then we have achieved the goal of our seminar."

How do you get your four-legged friend or colleague to cooperate constructively? When do they follow, and when don't they? How much affection is necessary? Can I give them a long leash, or do I have to keep a tight rein? Why do horses sometimes obey those who lead with a gentle hand and refuse to obey those who are dominant? The nine participants from various industries are visibly pondering these questions.

Gerhard Krebs: "I don't need to be involved in a specific line function to exert the necessary pressure on employees. I don't have to be a 'general or captain' to make it clear to my 'subordinates' what they should do for me if I can do so through the power of my personality."

The central task of the seminar takes place in the picadero, a fenced-in square. It is about closeness and distance, trust and control. Gerhard Krebs: "The participant is given a leadership tool, or I would also say 'instrument of power,' and chases this horse around the picadero. At some point, the horse signals that it is ready to cooperate with the person. The person must therefore have the sensitivity to respond to the other party and must be able to recognize the signal that it is sending to cooperate and then work with it."

It is a very intense experience, because the horse senses every uncertainty and, unlike many employees, clearly shows what it thinks of the leadership style.

Ute Meisel, senior physiotherapist: "And I also notice parallels with my everyday life, in that I simply give certain instructions, but my mind is already elsewhere, and I actually lose control a little bit over the person I'm expecting something from. And I think that's a shame. But I think it's very good to see this mistake very clearly here."

Elke Kunze, freelance interior designer: "You definitely change your behavior and pay much more attention to what you yourself radiate and to the accuracy with which you use it."

In the final video analysis, the participants clearly recognize their strengths and weaknesses. Horse training for managers is an unusual but also very exciting method of improving leadership skills.

Meridian (Hessischer Rundfunk)

Meridian tells us something about horses:

Managers should learn from interacting with horses what they may be lacking in their interactions with colleagues. Observation, assessment, interpersonal skills, and competence—these are all learning objectives in the seminars, in which the horse serves as a medium. Meridian talks to the organizer of the horse seminars for managers.

Studio interview with Rainer Witt on June 29, 2001

Rainer Witt: If you book Gerhard Krebs' seminar, and I quote, "Dominance Training for Managers," then you will be on site and

I don't just deal with him, but also with fully grown Friesian geldings. The company HorseDream in Odenwald, which is the name of the company, GmbH by the way, works with people and horses. A training day based on the motto "Dominance training for managers" costs 890 marks plus VAT. I'm not one, I don't want to become one, but let's pretend for now. I'll come to you now, dear Mr. Krebs, what are you doing with me and the horse there?

Gerhard J. Krebs: Yes, you arrive the evening before, we sit down together for dinner at 8 p.m., do a little introduction to the program, and finally watch a Friesian video, "The Symphony of the Friesian Horse," and if you've never had anything to do with horses before, you'll go to bed feeling like, "Wow, I hope I can get through the next day!"

RW: The next day we'll be in the hall, the riding hall, perhaps?

GJK: Well, we start with a theoretical introductory round. It's not just about working with horses, but of course we want to transfer what we learn to our everyday working lives. That's why we start with a collection of questions that clarify the personal leadership issues that people have brought with them to the seminar. Then we go into the hall and let our four horses in, play some background music, and things start to develop. The participants stand at the top of the grandstand, watch, have a catalog of different character traits of the horses in front of them, which they are supposed to assign, and will notice that these character traits have something to do with the character traits of the people they encounter in their company or in their team.

RW: So you equate the horse a little bit with the subordinate you are training there.

GJK: Well, that's perhaps a bit too simplistic. We don't equate the horse directly, but we say, "The way you behave toward the horse in this seminar is the way you behave in everyday situations—in unfamiliar ones, perhaps, but also in completely familiar ones—perhaps even toward your employees." In other words, we try to sensitize participants to their own leadership behavior.

RW: So they don't ride?

GJK: No, they don't ride; the seminar has nothing to do with riding.

RW: So they stand there in their pinstripes or blue jeans with these Friesian beasts—which are pretty powerful animals—in an area measuring ten by ten meters, as I read on your website. Then you get a riding crop or a flag in your hand and then...

GJK: Yes, that is the central exercise of the seminar. We call it "distance and closeness," and in this exercise we "control" the dominant behavior of the individual participants. This becomes apparent as soon as I drive the horse around me with the help of the lunge whip and wait for the signal—as Monty Roberts describes, for example—that the horse says, "Stop driving me away, I am happy to cooperate with you." We determine whether the participants recognize this signal, and then we determine how they react to it: does the horse stop, does it even come to them, and are they then able to lead the horse through the picadero on the rope?

RW: And the animal welfare association doesn't come and say, "Okay, Mr. Krebs, that's enough, now we're reporting you for animal cruelty"?

GJK: No, this has nothing to do with animal cruelty. But I do think it's not easy for the animals to communicate with eight different participants in one day. That's hard work for any horse.

RW: Now there's this old teaching that stallions, but mares as well, react to the alpha animal, i.e., the lead stallion, or in other animals, the lead goat. Do your managers take over, or do you get them to adopt this lead stallion, this alpha animal theory and represent it?

GJK: Personally, I don't think much of this alpha male theory. If I were to walk into a herd of horses and act as if I were the lead stallion, the alpha animal, and I were to encounter a stallion, that stallion would mercilessly put me down. This means that I must instead play on my natural authority, so to speak, as a "predator human" vis-à-vis the "flight animal horse." I have to show myself to the horse for what I am: namely, its enemy. And I then have to make it clear to the horse that it can still trust me, so I have to try to establish a relationship of trust from this position.

RW: The managers who leave your training after one, two, or three days, do they have more experience in dealing with people, or do they have more experience in dealing with Friesian horses? That's the exciting question.

experience in dealing with people, or do they have more experience in dealing with Friesian horses? That's the exciting question.

GJK: Of course, they have no experience with horses afterwards. Our horses are not specially trained like others. I can ride the horses, and I can also drive them. But the entire interaction with our horses is based on pure communication. This means that in the seminar, we reduce the communication that takes place in the company to what communication actually is. We try to find our way back to original communication. And only when the participants are able to apply this original communication to the horses will they be successful in the exercises.

RW: It's difficult to describe on the radio. You'd probably have to be there to understand. Now we can say right away that you also accept private individuals. Occasionally there is a place available in the course, in the training program, and people can contact you. I don't know if you're a horse whisperer, if you're Monty Roberts' successor, I have no idea. It's all difficult to judge. But it's definitely an interesting project. We wanted to introduce it. There's also a lot of positive feedback about what you're doing. Would you like to leave your phone number in case anyone is interested?

GJK: Anyone who is interested can find more information online. We have two websites: www.managerspiegel.de and www.horsedream.com, where they can also find all the phone numbers and send inquiries by email. There is also a short video that was filmed for television some time ago.

RW: If necessary, they can call Meridian, and we will be happy to pass on the information.

Süddeutsche Zeitung

ECONOMY, Tuesday, September 12, 2000

Some managers find "bosses" laughable

Dominance training with horses

The rediscovery of intuition: How four-legged friends mercilessly hold up a mirror to their two-legged management colleagues

By Dagmar Deckstein

If Benny or Bosse, Benetton or Lüttje could speak, they would say something like this: "You constantly talk about how important leadership skills are in your new economy, you talk a lot about so-called social skills and emotional intelligence. And then when you have to clearly, attentively, and concentratedly make it clear to just one of us to follow you from one end of the riding arena to the other, you have an incredibly hard time doing it. In truth, it's us stupid four-legged creatures who are leading you."

This could well be the kind of horse whispering with which the four Friesian geldings amuse each other in the paddock in the evening after another informative seminar day for all participants at Fenwick Farm in Erbach in the heart of the Odenwald. At least the two-legged seminar participants would not be surprised by such additional communicative skills on the part of their training companions. After all, throughout the day, the four Friesian horses had repeatedly held up a mirror to them, nudging them with their soft noses to all kinds of blind spots in their self-perception, leading them to all sorts of surprising new insights and sending them back to their usual management routine feeling very thoughtful. Yes, this is a "story about horses," but it is a true one.

Leading means following voluntarily

"The horse as a medium: How managers are intuitively encouraged to address their own leadership deficits." Newspaper editors sometimes receive rather bizarre messages for the purpose of blatant self-promotion. And this one from Gerhard Krebs and his wife Karin, operating under the name G&K HorseDream GmbH, sounded particularly shrill. Leadership training with horses?

It's enough to make you neigh! Yet another esoteric guru riding the now meter-high wave of management training offers. Yet another dubious method for cultivating and motivating the newly discovered "most important resource, people," in the name of corporate success. "What can be concealed from trainers and participants in management role-playing games through skillful acting comes to light with horses as a medium: insecurity, arrogance, lust for power, unwillingness to compromise, overzealousness. How can I get managers to reveal their unconscious leadership behavior, recognize it, and draw conclusions from it? Clear, unambiguous, and timely feedback is of the utmost importance for determining one's own position. No one can escape the feedback from horses.

. It is direct, absolutely unambiguous, and above all, it is free of any ulterior motives." What Krebs-Familien-GmbH has put down on paper certainly arouses curiosity.

Seminar morning at Fenwick Farm. Our friend is eight-year-old Benetton, the youngest member of the Friesian herd. Most of the seven seminar participants choose him and think he is the boss: reserved, perhaps a little cool, he gives the impression that he has the rest of the herd under control. The other three horses roll around on the straw in the riding hall, roughhouse with each other, jump playfully around each other, and kick their hind legs out again and again in anticipation of the seminar day with the funny, helpless two-legged creatures that they all cherish so much.

This is the first mistake: Benny, who seems the most playful, is the boss here. Not the cool Benetton, who is lowest in rank. This very first encounter with their horse "media" promotes moments of realization among the group of participants on the platform: If we identify the weakest here as the leader, that speaks volumes about our everyday experience with leaders. Restraint and enthroned at the top in the lonely refuge of the executive suites, that's what "being the boss" means to us: autistic forms of non-interference.

After this initial introductory exercise, "Observing and Assessing," we move on to the second of four seminar exercises for the day: "Leading and Being Led." The task for the seven of us is to lead the horse around the area marked by four white posts in the hall, circling the first and third posts together. "Leading ultimately means that the horse follows you voluntarily," explains Gerhard Krebs. He gives us a leash about ten meters long, but says we don't necessarily have to use it. "Approach the animal with open arms and an open heart, be highly focused, clear, and authentic, and let the horse know that it can trust you and should follow you, then you'll be able to do it without a lead rope." Yes, that sounds great. Let's dive right in and enjoy these magnificent, beautiful horses, with whom we can now finally make contact.

But what's this? Even Benetton, who has been exposed as a confirmed non-boss, has his fans, who were most likely to identify with him in the first exercise, standing by his side with pounding hearts and stage fright. It feels just like it did before his first public appearance. How unknown and exciting new situations can make one's ego feel so small and mushy. It's funny,

funny, considering we took these four Friesian horses into our hearts right away. But with a shoulder height of 1.65 meters and a live weight of 700 kilos, they stand there more seriously and oppressively than, say, 300 reverently listening employees at a company meeting.

The seminar participants, four women and three men, therefore take the reins as a first aid measure and lead Benetton, Benny, and Bosse through the hall one after the other, more or less without resistance—but contrary to Krebs' suggestion and demonstration, most of them keep the reins very short. "You always think that you have more control that way," explains Gerhard Krebs, "but in reality, you're just limiting yourself."

Strangely enough, women seem to find it easier to lead the horses. Benetton does pause after circling both pillars halfway, but then we make use of our knowledge of rituals that are also quite effective with stubborn and equally close fellow human beings: coaxing, flattery, approaching him and stroking his nose, patting his cheeks. Benetton is already moving forward obediently again.

Trust in the giants

We are already gaining greater confidence in these Friesian giants who, as Gerhard Krebs and his wife Karin say, "have not been drilled like riding or circus horses to perform certain movements on certain commands." Instead, they have been raised in relative freedom and encouraged to develop a certain degree of self-confidence – just as horses in the wild learn to do through the natural authority within the herd hierarchy. Natural authority. Who's the boss here?

The seminar group finds the answer that suits each individual in the following two exercises. On the topic of "distance and closeness," the Friesian gelding is trotted or galloped around the picadero, a ten-by-ten-meter square. After a few laps, the "leading" two-legged participants should pay attention to signals from the horse—such as lowering its head—which indicate that it has had enough of running and wants to make contact. Then it's time to call Benny, Benetton, Bosse, or Lüttje over and walk a few steps with them through the picadero.

There are impressive demonstrations of power and powerlessness to be seen. Roland, a manager from the marketing industry, throws his riding crop into the corner in exasperation after 20 minutes. Bosse

hasn't even given him a glance, but has instead shown Roland his backside from his stable position in the corner of the picadero. "I have a strong suspicion," Roland then says during the analysis following each exercise with the help of the video recordings, "that my employees also quite often show me this 'LmaA' attitude, albeit not half as clearly as this horse." But the manager also realizes that he is not the victim of stubborn horses or employees here, but that he lacks clear signals of trust and credibility – not only in this particular training case in the riding hall.

Just don't act

"When working with horses, you learn to look for mistakes in yourself," summarizes Gerhard Krebs. Anyone who is not fully focused on the task at hand, who does not show other people their full attention and presence, comes across as untrustworthy. "Leadership means that not only the horses, but also your human colleagues follow you willingly," explains Krebs. But by now, none of the seminar participants need to be convinced of such truths, which are so directly reflected by the horses. Everyone has now learned that there are no hierarchically helpful, predetermined leadership structures behind which the company boss can hide. Here, bosses make it abundantly clear to the boss that he, the four-legged gelding, finds the hesitant and indecisive bossiness of the two-legged manager a reason to run away.

The final exercise, with the task of "goal achievement," once again separates the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, in terms of leadership skills. Using the experience gained from the previous exercises, we are supposed to lead the horse—in a focused, present, and confident manner—through a narrow corridor in the hall marked off with ribbons onto a plastic sheet. This rustling plastic surface is deeply suspicious to horses like these, so we have to make sure that they trust us two-legged creatures completely. Otherwise, we will not achieve the goal, which is for both of us to be standing on the tarpaulin at the end of the exercise.

Only three of the seven of us manage to do this flawlessly. Our colleague, a manager who is a former trained actor and now heads the PR department of a company, almost dropped out during the last task. However, his sporting ambition enabled him to complete the last seminar exercise – again with the same sense of failure. "It's no use. When I'm excited and tense

, I put on an actor's mask. Some people are impressed by that, but the horses here are not at all."

These are the kinds of impressions and experiences that "completely stupid" horses give their training sparring partners to take home with them to their everyday work and leadership lives. All participants are impressed at the end of this seminar day, even those who ride regularly or even own their own horse. "I have never met a horse that is so self-confident," says Renate, an executive assistant from southern Germany. "Horses are usually trained for specific purposes or accustomed to specific commands, which they then stubbornly carry out, just as many 'subordinate' employees are accustomed to carrying out their bosses' orders."

When does anyone in their everyday professional or managerial life ever receive such honest feedback as that from a horse? At the end of the seminar, all participants leave in a relaxed mood, some euphoric, some pensive, regardless of their successes or failures in horse management. "I have learned that I could achieve much more if I didn't always approach my employees in such a tense and distant manner. I now feel much more courageous...well, how can I put it: to show more of myself than I have dared to do so far."

Horses lack politeness

Krebs, product manager at T-Online, runs the family-run "leadership training with horses" business only as a side job. "We couldn't expect the four horses to endure these intensive training days more than once or twice a week at most." But if such uninspiring leadership performances affect horses after just one day of training, how frustrated must employees feel who have been led to believe for many years that they are essentially foot soldiers carrying out orders for the glory of their boss? Quite a few two-legged creatures seem to be more resigned to such a role than more self-confident four-legged creatures. The latter are free of calculation, cunning, scheming, and sycophancy. They lack politeness—and this fact alone throws many a self-assured manager off balance.

WirtschaftsBlatt (Vienna)

WB Issue No. 946 dated August 21, 1999

PROFESSION AND CAREER, page E1

German seminar provider uses four horses as trainers for managers

Horses reveal weaknesses in managers

There is little difference between stubborn horses and difficult employees, says German seminar provider Gerhard J. Krebs.

Brensbach. "Horses ruthlessly expose managers' leadership weaknesses," claims Gerhard J. Krebs. He is the head of the German seminar provider G&K HorseDream, an exotic addition to the seminar landscape: the management seminars do not focus on people, but on horses, and the air-conditioned seminar room is replaced by a horse stable. The reason for this unusual setting is that managers are supposed to recognize their own leadership style when interacting with horses. True to Krebs' motto: there is little difference between stubborn horses and difficult employees—neither always want to do what the boss wants.

At the same time, Krebs, the inventor of the seminar, warns against excessive euphoria: "Just because you can lead one of the horses doesn't mean you're a leader. But everyone who has completed the exercises knows where their strengths and weaknesses lie." Riding skills are not required, quite the contrary: "Anyone with riding experience is in for a big surprise. Riders find it much more difficult than horse novices because they have internalized certain behavior patterns and no longer approach the animals with an open mind."

The one-day seminar "Dominance Training for Managers" is divided into four exercises. The first task is to observe a group of four horses with different characters and then choose one horse that you feel comfortable with and one that you feel less comfortable with. Krebs explains: "The situation is comparable to when you join a new team as a boss. You have to observe and put yourself in different roles. For example, how does a dominant manager react when he encounters an equally dominant employee?" In the second exercise, the participants

use a flag to drive a horse in a circle in front of them. Krebs says: "At some point, the horses signal that they have had enough of this exercise. Just as employees indirectly show that they need a break. The trick is to figure out when that moment has come."

Building trust

The final exercises focus on trust: participants form pairs. One participant sits on the horse, while the other leads it. "Leading does not mean moving the animal from one place to another. It is about voluntary following," Krebs points out. All exercises are recorded on video and then evaluated: What kind of person must someone be for me to submit to them and let them lead me? Which participant made me feel safe, and which made me feel less safe?

The most difficult exercise, however, is to convince the horse to trot over a plastic sheet – or in other words: can the participants get the animals to trust them blindly? "Some succeed by talking to the horse nicely, rewarding it or leading it purposefully. In the workplace, this means: does the manager put pressure on their employees or do they motivate them with praise?" explains Krebs.

Krebs recalls a manager who lost his temper when a horse did not react as he had expected. Krebs: "If the horse trusts the participant, it will recognize them as a leader. However, if they show uncertainty, indecisiveness, or abuse the horse's trust, it will withdraw. If you communicate your goal clearly, the horse will follow you on its own."

Those who prefer to test their management skills on horseback rather than in traditional role-playing games will have to pay 790 marks for a one-day seminar. Depending on the size of the group, in-house seminars cost between 2,500 and 4,000 marks per day. Companies such as IBM, Audi, and BMW have already sent their employees to the stables for management training. Austrian marketing expert Daniela Bucher also attended the seminar in April and is enthusiastic: "Although I have been working with horses for 25 years, the connection between leading horses and leadership behavior was new to me."

Four more seminars will follow before the end of the year. The horses are specially trained for the seminars, but not dressage trained, as Krebs emphasizes: "Dressage horses always respond to specific commands and, for example, run automatically."

They walk obediently alongside on a leash because that's what they've been taught to do. With our horses, on the other hand, you can't achieve much with a hand gesture or spoken command because they always see the person as a whole."

Author: Kathrin Gulnerits

Economy & Further Education

Copyright 1999 by Bärbel Schwertfeger.
Reproduction and distribution not permitted.

Economy & Continuing Education 4/99 (August 1999, pages 64-67)

Seminar report

Leadership training with horses

Behavioral training with horses is designed to ruthlessly expose leadership weaknesses. The four-legged animals serve as "incorruptible" feedback providers for the seminar participants. What may sound crazy at first glance can actually make perfect sense in practice, as Bärbel Schwertfeger explains in her seminar report.

"Dominance training with horses"—have seminar providers finally lost their minds? Or is a particularly clever trainer just cleverly capitalizing on the success of "The Horse Whisperer"? Even the seminar description reads like a piece of real-life satire. "The trainers," it says above the horse photos. Below that, the "trainer qualifications" are described: "Benetton, Friesian, 7 years old. He shows who has leadership qualities at first contact internalized ." or

"Lüttje and Bosse, Friesians, 13 and 12 years old. Their training focus: leading with goal agreements." After talking to Gerhard Krebs, my initial skepticism receded somewhat. It was probably mainly the calm and matter-of-fact way in which the organizer and trainer talked about his seminars. "Horses are absolutely clear mirrors of personality and therefore ruthlessly reveal leadership deficits," he explained. According to Krebs, it's not a problem if someone has nothing to do with horses.

"A horse only responds to clear signals. You just need to know what you want and express it clearly. Then it will follow you automatically."

Back in 1996—before the "horse whisperer" craze—Gerhard Krebs founded his company G&K HorseDream GmbH in Herdwangen-Schönach on Lake Constance. The idea had been slowly maturing. Ten years ago, the managing director of a small software development company drove to

On vacation in Austria, he rode a horse for the first time and was thrilled. Six months later, he and his wife had already bought their own horses. They chose Friesians. "They are the most sensitive horses," says Krebs. They are people-oriented, intelligent, and full of natural strength, suitable as workhorses, but by no means as sport horses. The couple took a lot of time for their horses. "We wanted to build a partnership from the very beginning," says the horse lover. "Our horses should not submit. We accept them as equal partners. That's why they don't respond to pressure." Inspired by the employees of his software company, Krebs slowly developed the idea of horse training. Eight seminars were held in 1998, and twelve to 18 are planned for this year. "We are just getting started," says Krebs. However, capacity is limited. He does not want to subject his horses to more than three training sessions per month, nor does he want more than eight participants. "This will always remain a very exclusive thing," says the horse trainer. In addition to the open one-day seminar "Dominance Training for Managers," there is also the option of multi-day in-house seminars, but only after detailed consultation with the human resources manager.

The one-day seminar consists of a total of four exercises with the horses. These are followed by a brief reflection session. All exercises are recorded on video. At the end of the seminar, participants have the opportunity to watch individual video sequences. "It is important to create an atmosphere of trust," says the trainer. He therefore attaches great importance to ensuring that no one is "put down" and that everything is voluntary. To get everyone in the right frame of mind, the participants are first asked about their expectations: What do they want to take away with them for their everyday working lives? Outline your personal leadership model.

Lesson: Approaching horses openly

Before we go into the stable, there are a few brief introductions. Horses are flight animals. They never attack, but always retreat. Horses always act for the overall good of the herd. Because alone, a horse is lost. They automatically always join the strongest. That's why there are no fixed roles. "It is important that you always approach a horse as a confident personality," the horse trainer tells us. There are five of us. I am the only horse novice. The others have had riding lessons before, and one participant even has his own horse. But experience with horses is not necessarily an advantage. "Those who are used to normal riding can be in for a big surprise," claims Gerhard Krebs. Riders therefore often find it much more difficult

than horse novices. This is because they have usually internalized certain behavior patterns when dealing with horses and therefore no longer approach the animals with an open mind.

Then we head to the riding hall. The horses are standing in their stalls, eyeing us curiously. They're pretty big, I think to myself. 1.60 meters tall and weighing 700 kilograms—if they don't want to, you really don't stand a chance. It's fascinating to watch how naturally Gerhard Krebs interacts with the animals. There's no intrusive petting, no harsh tones, no "I've-got-everything-under-control attitude." He leads the five horses into the hall. They run around, sniff each other, roughhouse a little, and groom each other. Our task: First, observe the group as a whole, then choose one horse to observe and evaluate closely. We then use a list to tick off the behaviors and characteristics we have observed. The purpose of the exercise is to train our powers of observation in unfamiliar territory. We are also asked to consider which horse we can most or least identify with.

After observing the animals from above, Gerhard Krebs takes me, as a horse novice, to the horses. It's a strange feeling to suddenly find yourself face to face with these large and majestic animals. After all, they could easily trample you. The trainer hands me a flag. I am to hold it up and slowly turn in a circle. The horses start to run in front of the flag. The faster I turn, the faster they gallop around us. I change direction and the horses follow. The flag seems like a magical instrument. At some point, Benetton stops. Apparently, he's had enough. Slowly, the horse approaches us and sniffs the flag.

The first round of reflection: Observations vary. Everyone observed different things and, in some cases, evaluated them differently, and everyone chose a different horse. The marketing consultant from Vienna chooses Lüttje because "he's the boss's friend." "He's in the boss's slipstream, and that's where I like to be," she explains. "Because you don't get so much flak there." The coaching expert from Munich wants to work with Anton. "He's very curious and reserved. He tends to stay in the background," she explains. "That suits my personality." I choose Benetton. After all, I was impressed that he just stood still.

In the second exercise, we are supposed to lead our horse around four posts with a rope, with the horse circling each post once. "Lead

does not mean moving the animal from one place to another. Leading should encourage voluntary following," according to the instructions. "You don't actually need the rope, because the mental connection is what matters," adds Gerhard Krebs. "The horse has to want what you want." But how do you build a mental relationship with a horse? I stand facing Benetton, take a few steps backward. That's uncomfortable. So I turn around and drag him behind me. That doesn't work. I shorten the rope and pull. That doesn't work at all. The horse just stands still. So I walk beside him. But after just a few meters, the horse is leading me. So I go forward and backward again. Eventually, I figure it out, walk diagonally behind him, and loosen the rope. By the third pole, we're in sync. Benetton walks obediently around the poles.

"The rope was too short for everyone," Krebs analyzes our first attempts at leading. "You always think that you have more control that way, but in reality you're just limiting yourself." Actually, the mental connection is enough, and the trainer wants to show us that again. But the horse doesn't want to. It is visibly confused by the many people and voices. Gerhard Krebs tries again, but again without success. The animal doesn't budge. We stand around indecisively for a few minutes. Then I decide to leave, turn around, and head for the exit. The horse follows me unwaveringly, without letting itself be stopped. Everyone laughs. "The horse was just happy that someone finally knew what it wanted," Krebs comments on the scene.

Reflection phases ensure learning transfer

In the reflection phase, we are asked to define "leadership tools" and explore analogies to everyday working life. How do I lead? How flexible am I? What do I do when my leadership tools don't work? The next exercise takes place in the picadero, a circle marked out with plastic tape measuring ten by ten meters. We drive the horse away from us with the whip in a circle until it signals that it has had enough and makes contact—a reaction that every horse shows. If you react correctly at this moment, the horse accepts your leadership. So it's about distance and closeness. The first part works quite well. The horse gallops around me. Then it nods its head briefly, and I lower the whip. It comes a little way toward me. But what to do now? Approach the animal? Talk to it? Stroke its head first? Or simply turn around and walk away, hoping that it will follow? Hesitantly, I take a few steps. But

The horse stands still. Helplessly, I look at the trainer. But he doesn't say anything either. That's how you experience powerlessness firsthand. Of course, the horse has noticed my hesitation. Later on the video, you can see that clearly.

Another participant fares even worse. He was already annoyed when he led his practice horse out of the stall because the animal was reluctant to cooperate. While driving it around, he accidentally touches it lightly with his whip twice. That's enough. The horse breaks out of the enclosure, scurries into the corner, and remains there. The consultant is stunned. In retrospect, it is clear to him why it couldn't work. "I was simply annoyed and didn't understand the horse," he says, recognizing the parallel to everyday leadership. After all, a leader also needs to be present in the here and now. If you're not fully engaged, you won't be convincing. You always have to concentrate fully on the horse and be authentic, adds the trainer. The horse takes on your own thoughts, so to speak, and reflects them back. "When working with horses, you learn to look for the mistake in yourself," says Krebs.

In the last exercise, we are supposed to lead the horse to a plastic tarpaulin. It should approach the tarpaulin, sniff it, and step onto it. Again, it's all about trust. How well am I able to build trust? I set off determinedly. But the horse stops in front of the tarpaulin. I carefully lead it around the tarpaulin, let it sniff it, and start my second attempt. No chance. The animal refuses. It works with the other horses.

The seminar is an impressive experience. Everyone has gained more clarity and experienced power and powerlessness firsthand. "I have gained a clear awareness of my leadership skills," says one participant. "I have experienced how

important it is to respond to the skills and abilities of those being led," sums up another. She was afraid of embarrassing herself the whole time, and sure enough, that's exactly what happened, says the coaching expert. Horse training does indeed require a good deal of courage, and because the usual reaction patterns don't work, managers in particular quickly find themselves in a tailspin.

Experiencing power and powerlessness firsthand

Gerhard Krebs recalls a manager who completely freaked out because the horse refused to do what he wanted. In internal company seminars, Gerhard Krebs therefore makes sure that no one is embarrassed in front of the others. In addition, each participant is assigned the horse that suits them best.

"It should always remain an inner sense of achievement," emphasizes Krebs. But what about its transferability to everyday working life? Of course, people are more complicated. They pretend, they are calculating, and they manipulate others. A horse only reacts to clear and authentic signals. But it is incorruptible, and when do you ever get such honest feedback at work? The reflection phases were pleasantly short. Everyone talked about their experiences without having to engage in lengthy psychological discussions. "The process should take place within the participant themselves and not be talked to death," emphasizes Gerhard Krebs. That may not be enough for some people. However, the limitation is also in the nature of the matter. After all, anyone analyzing feedback should always ask the person giving the feedback. But horses are not very accommodating in that regard.

Bärbel Schwertfeger