4. THE MARK OF GOOD MANAGEMENT
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BOTTOM LINE: WHAT REALLY MATTERS

"I can't say whether things will be better when they change. But one thing I can say: They have got to change if they are to get better." In my opinion, this witty aphorism by Georg Christoph Lichtenberg very aptly summarizes the findings of my discussion of good management. So, what exactly has to change? And above all, how will things get better?

Let us briefly recapitulate the individual steps in our analysis and the conclusions we have arrived at:

◆ We began with the premise that uncertainty is increasing as people are no longer sure what is going on: because the world is changing ever faster; because it isn't flat, but is growing ever more rich in diversity; because ever greater leaps are being made in technology; because risks are increasing; and because markets are becoming more volatile.

◆ One consequence of this is that business "truths" that have become flesh and blood can suddenly turn out to be errors. If it is no longer possible to paint a realistic picture of future developments, then it also makes little sense to calculate a detailed strategic plan for the next ten years or to base investment decisions primarily on quantitative computations.

◆ Incidentally, this is not to say that we have to kiss goodbye to our business strategy and planning tools. What it does mean is that we must learn exactly what the limitations of our models and methods are, and critically examine the outcomes they deliver.

◆ My conclusion from the above points was that good management must once again become more enterprising, because the ability to calculate and predict everything is waning. It is important to say clearly what you are about, paint your own picture of the future and not go running after every new trend. What matters is the ability to reflect critically upon developments and show a willingness to cultivate an interdisciplinary mindset if political and social developments are to be factored into business decisions.

◆ I linked this conclusion to what I see as some good news: Corporate management is once again becoming more direct, more personal, more entrepreneurial. It