

Dear colleagues and friends,

As I prepare to take on my new role as Chairman of our firm, I would like to combine a "very last" with a "very first". The very last is obvious: this will definitely be my last "e-mail to all" as your CEO.

As you know, in my e-mails to you I have always tried to be positive with an optimistic attitude towards upcoming challenges. But, by nature, the last e-mail is more about looking back and summing up experiences. It thus is a hard nut for me to crack, because looking back always goes along with the danger of putting oneself too much into the spotlight, and I've always tried to avoid this: we are a partnership, it's 'US', not me! And looking forward is also not easy here, because I don't want to challenge the new EC too much. That's why I have finally decided to start this e-mail as usual – with three hopefully inspiring starting points:

First: our V curve scenario is still valid – we have been right in saying that the economy will start growing again fast and significantly! Please forgive me for getting back to some economic views at the beginning of this e-mail, but you know, I think it is important as I believe that good strategy work in our complex world needs to be based more and more on economic and political thinking and scenarios. What I want to highlight is the following: it has turned out that our way of thinking about the economic development is better – no mainstreaming, no complex quantitative modelling, but an in-depth observation of fundamental developments, combined with our strategic insights in industries and our entrepreneurial thinking. And more important, our scenarios are a symbol of the way we act: taking a stance, willing to deliver a platform for constructive discussions, being willing to provide directions.

This leads me to my second inspiring starting point: the new Fink study shows how good we really are in the eyes of the market! As you know, Prof. Fink is a very well known and serious researcher on consulting – just appointed Research Fellow to the Oxford University – and last month the manager magazine published the most important results: only we improved our reputation, continuously, year on year! This is a result of consistently delivering our clients better and better results and strengthening content and creativity. In other words: it's a big compliment for all of us!

My third starting point for today is inspiring in two ways: as already laid out, our business is in good shape, growing significantly with 8% worldwide and with even 13% in our international offices. These results are impressive, but even more so is the story behind this development: we have turned our business around significantly, because a year ago we were shrinking by more than 13% and profits were down 50%. And we not only made it once, we made it twice: As many of you know, we were in some trouble in 2004, during the so called "consulting bashing", shrinking by 9%, in the middle of the year even by 14%, but we managed to navigate through these troubled waters as we have done it now again. It is true, a time, where self-confidence counts, where courage counts, where the willingness and the entrepreneurial spirit to give directions count, this time fits to us – and highlights the core values of our firm!

And between the two crises, we not only grew our firm significantly, but made it a truly international, very well reputed consulting firm. What we have jointly achieved – doubling our international business since 2003, having about 70% of all professionals working in international offices, positioning our firm very well in emerging markets – has been highlighted in Roland's memo to you. In addition, what makes me really proud of our achievements is how we have shaped the consulting landscape. Just remember the time at the beginning of this century: we had new kids on the block like Mitchel Madison, or First Manhattan, or Diamond Cluster, which claimed they would revolutionize consulting. We had Alix entering Europe, claiming only they know how restructuring works. We had Droege in Germany, claiming that it was the next Roland Berger. We had ADL, still playing a role, or Monitor with Michael Porter and Harvard in the background, or ATK, feeling very strong after their buy-out.

And today? Anything heard about Mitchell Madison? Or Diamond Cluster? Alix in Europe has become quiet, ADL is facing very tough times, Monitor as well. ATK is just slightly bigger than we are, but has twice as many Partners – you can imagine what that means. Of course, we still have McKinsey and BCG, being large and strong, and Bain or Booz, but it is especially us who not only have made it over the years, but who have positioned themselves as one of the most important and reputable (remember the Fink study!) players in strategy consulting. If anyone of us is still looking for a reason to be proud and self-confident, frankly, I can't help! The question is: what are the reasons behind the achievements Roland and I have been talking about? I can offer you two answers:

First: I'm completely convinced that we will always have a nice market place for good strategic advice. As I said before, the world is certainly getting more and more complex and diverse, economic and business views have to be combined, top managers need advice to find direction. This offers many opportunities for us – as long as we stick to some core values of our business: giving independent and objective advice, delivering outstanding quality, combined with entrepreneurial thinking and fast execution. And this is what we stand for!

Secondly: I don't know exactly what it is, but there is something special in our DNA. It has to do with the fact that we are a founders' company and that the founder is still active and supporting, it has something to do with our values – entrepreneurship, excellence and partnership – that have helped to create an environment for good results. A very special and unique mixture! And, of course, it has something to do with us and the way we work together. At one of our Partner meetings during the difficult situation in 2004, I asked the Partners some questions that were important to me: is the firm really the no. 1 choice for each and everyone of us? Do we really trust each other professionally and personally? Do we really have one common goal? At that time, honestly speaking, I was not sure about a "yes" to these questions. But today, I am! I am really proud we have come to a clear YES: it's a great story, and you are a great team! Thank you so much!

I believe that success depends on the good luck that rewards those who work hard and join forces, and it is my strong belief that it is always the result of teamwork. I've always tried to follow some values of good leadership. You know, not only as a result of the crisis, we have a lot of discussions about values or morality and ethics in business and leadership. This is

absolutely necessary, but I believe that these kinds of conceptual frameworks will not really change behaviour. What helps are personal commitments and attitudes. You all know my personal favourites:

- a cool head, because complexity needs analytical skills
- a warm heart, because I'm completely convinced that you need to like people – taking care! – to lead properly
- and working hands, because it's role models that give directions.

I've not always been successful in following my principles – life and business is complex! But you helped me a lot, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for working with me and trusting my leadership skills – and balancing out my weaknesses. Please forgive me for not mentioning individuals, but I know that I am indebted to many of you and hope to get the chance to thank you personally. I just want to make one exception: I'd like to thank Roland very much for everything he has done for our firm and me personally! Without him, we would not be such a successful firm, without his entrepreneurial spirit and drive and without his courage we would not have started that uphill battle against our American competitors to become an international firm, and without his trust and support I would not have made my way in our firm. Roland, thank you!

As you can imagine, this e-mail is a very emotional undertaking. I've always been proud of being your CEO, it has been a great honor to me and handing over a baby is always difficult. But I have great confidence in our new EC team – and now I'm moving to the "very first": my first e-mail to all of you as Chairman of our firm! I'm strongly convinced that Martin, António, Bernd, Charles-Edouard, Ralf and Tijo are exactly the right personalities to lead and manage our firm. They not only stand for the right balance between continuity and generation change we were heading for, they also stand for excellent consulting, international thinking and behavior, and they combine a rare thing in our profession: good consulting and management skills. Together with the Partners and me, the new EC has already initiated a new strategy process, heading for the right cornerstones: drive further growth, get a strong foothold in the emerging markets, foster international cooperation, set the right incentives. I don't have any doubts about the future of our firm!

First off, in my capacity as the new Chairman, please join me in welcoming the new EC team today. And please support our new EC members, and especially Martin as the CEO, as you supported me and wish all of them a cool head, a warm heart and the working hands that I find essential for leading an outstanding company like ours.

Yours,

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