



13.4.06 (smz) - **MERKEL'S STYLE TO INSPIRE BUSINESS LEADERS**

Angela Merkel, Germany's new chancellor quickly grows into a role model for international CEOs who seek a balance ...

between the charismatic hubris-prone leadership model of the past years and the sober unimpressive management activity of today. Here are some style elements to consider:

- **Team:** Merkel appears to operate with a smaller team than usual. Some experts' complaints remain unheard. Decision-making seems faster and there is less discussion afterwards. A decision made is a decision made, see the planned sales tax increase. Sebastian Borger of Rheinischer Merkur notes "that she's able to look at issues very carefully and very calmly, make up her mind and then stick to them, but at the same time she's obviously now able to work together with the Social-democrats."
- **Alliances:** Whoever she is meeting with, she does it nicely and un-agitated. Be it George W. Bush, Vladimir Putin, Ehud Olmert, Jaques Chirac or Tony Blair. Merkel delivers her message unafraid and consistent. The US-based Christian Science Monitor describes her as an "independent partner of Russian president Vladimir Putin" who later demanded that Hamas recognize Israel.
- **Content:** The content of her presentations is described as relatively plain. The Financial Times writes about her presentation at February's World Economic Forum in Davos: "Merkel's message is simple – everything that seems wrong is indeed wrong, but we can overcome the problems with determination and imagination. She says that she doesn't yet know the answer, and even if she does she runs a coalition and may not be able to implement it." Imagine a CEO saying that.
- **Position:** She faces the public with a simple setup. In Washington she walked to the White House for her first official meeting with George W. Bush instead of using a limousine for a distance of about 200 meters. On many photographs her feet are firmly planted on the ground, her arms hanging down. No handbag, no attaché case, nothing. This behavior needs self-confidence, but Merkel is not the least bit self-centered. Even "News from Russia" comments positively that "where Schroeder favored personality-driven diplomacy that brought close ties with France and Russia, Merkel promises a more balanced approach that puts German interests firmly before friendship."

How this style translates into the business world, was demonstrated by Dr. Hubertus Erlen on March 24, when he announced on n-TV that Schering AG was to accept the offer of Bayer AG. In not more than 10 minutes he described the facts, including the

rationale of the deal, the ownership structure and legal side, employee questions, strategic impact and key negotiation points, such as the question of headquarters.

Some analysts argue that style is not instrumental to create results. I am not sure. Ralf Neukirch from German weekly "Der Spiegel" notes: "There is reason to believe that [Merkel] will change the country more than most of her predecessors in the chancellery." Business leaders will benefit from Merkel's style elements.

