

Sensemaking and Sensegiving in turnarounds: Conceptual considerations of management influence on meaning construction of employees

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A successful implementation of turnarounds requires - besides a sustainable concept - the support of all material stakeholders. Frequently, employees are getting low attention in turnarounds, although they play a significant role in successful implementation of the turnaround concept. It is a key responsibility of management to have a positive influence on employees, and their reactions, in turnaround situations so as to motivate a supportive behavior.

The foundation for influencing the reactions of employees is to understand how those reactions arise. To this end, this dissertation investigates employee reactions in turnaround situations from a sensemaking perspective. The author brings together findings from behavioral science research on sensemaking and sensegiving, attitudes and behaviors in turnaround-type contexts with turnaround and crisis research in companies.

Mechanisms of meaning construction that underlie human behavior are analysed and ways of sensegiving are examined for influencing sensemaking and meaning construction. Material influence factors and parameters for sensemaking, together with a conceptual framework are derived from theoretical and empirical literature. Alongside three concepts - change readiness, trust and justice - the content, actors, activities and phases of a turnaround are designed with regard to facilitating a holistic sensegiving that motivates positive employee reactions. As a result, recommendations of practical relevance are given that can serve as guiding principles for responsible (turnaround) management.