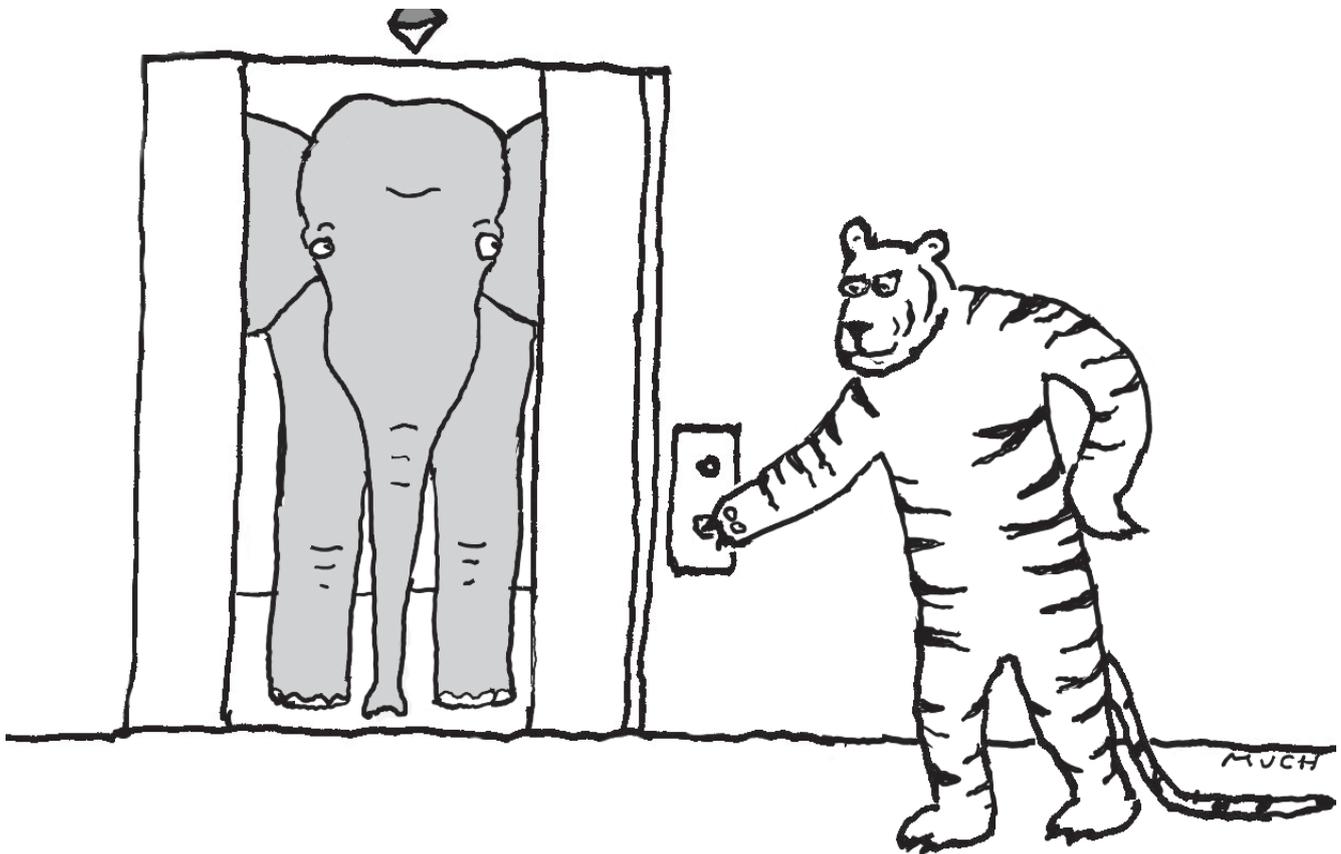


Elephants and Tigers



Do you know the story of how to squeeze an elephant into an elevator? Easy task. You need three moves: open the door, fit the elephant and then close the door. But, how to fit a tiger into an elevator? Same three moves? No, four moves: open the door, remove the elephant, put in the tiger and then close the elevator door.

An alternative solution would be to turn the elephant inside the elevator into a tiger. Did you ever think about that? Most probably not even plastic surgery could do the trick. Quite often, in Romanian public administration, the organizational structures look like ancient elephants with old-fashioned behaviors. Therefore, there is a challenging endeavour to transform an elephant organization into a competitive tiger one – challenging, but not impossible. It needs courage, focus, endurance and a double perspective.

On the outside

As an organizational tiger, you will have a new life: you will be much faster, more aggressive, you will act silently and efficiently, you will make decisions more quickly. Therefore, you need to change the processes and the decision tools accordingly. Here you can rely on the support of IT systems, which are a tool and integrator instrument but not a change driver. Sometimes, in order to establish new controlling instruments, it is good to leave the past behind and to search for fresh approaches.

A helicopter view, together with a perspective from outside the organization, could support a process mapping exercise, which is the first step towards a process optimization exercise. For instance, a typical process for optimization is financial accounting. Often it is purely an administrative process, imposed and over-regulated by the state, generating high costs and consuming resources. Therefore, it is frequently worth reconsidering, in order to provide more flexibility, as well as tools for management.

High optimization potential can also be found in the operational process, the one which brings the value into the organization. Frequently, there is a tendency to forget the core function of the organization in favour of secondary processes that are easier to execute but do not contribute much to the benefits. Multiple techniques and methodologies are available here: Business Process Reengineering, Lean, Six-Sigma. These optimizations can be done simultaneously to the implementation of management tools like Balanced Score Card, Performance Management, New Public Administration Controlling. All these techniques, carefully adapted to the specifics of the recipient organization, will create the agility and the competitive advantage of a tiger organization.

On the inside

You also need to bring change to the people. Frequently, the training programs in the Romanian public sector are merely formal and unaligned to the strategic objectives of the top management or to the real needs of the personnel. In order to transform yourself from an elephant into a tiger, you need a lot of hard workouts, a simple walk in the park will not do.

A tiger trains every day in order to assure its survival. So, you too need to train all people from all departments, balanced and directed towards the management strategic objectives. The tiger is fast and lean. It is strong, but at the same time it is also elegant. The same should apply to the operational processes. It is a mistake to favour just some functions or just the central headquarter divisions.

It is essential to initially provide intensive training and then follow up with constant training sessions. This will change the knowledge, the behavior, the work efficiency, the team spirit, and the performance. A person responsible for coordinating all company-wide training should be nominated, directly subordinate to the top management. This person should not only link the alignment of the training process to the strategic orientation of the management but will also need to internally communicate the importance of the training activities.

Mentally

The final goal is even more complex. We aim to create a tiger mentality. You cannot be a tiger with an elephant mentality. So the next step would be to foster the change of the organizational culture, as a catalyst for the overall change mentioned before. It may be the most subtle transformation but the most complex one, too, as this is the transformation that ensures the sustainability of the above changes. Here we can work to transform the mission, the vision, the values, the organizational symbols, the internal and external communication messages, the working norms and principles. These changes should be made with a long-term perspective, aligning the new values and principles to those arising from the construction process of the European Union that Romania is part of.

Welcome to the jungle! ●