



Higher Level – for Controllers, for Controlling

by Jens Hofacker

Controlling has become more important in recent years. Yet some controllers still feel underestimated or undervalued. They think that they are not **enough appreciated** personally as well as professionally. In this case, it is useful to critically examine our personal contribution to controlling, cooperation with other controllers and cooperation with other company branches.

The following questions provide advice on how to carry out a personal assessment and how to improve oneself!

1. Are you a team player? Growing demands make successful controlling effective only in a team. Criticism within a team is necessary for development, criticism of individual colleagues destructs the basis of cooperation. When did you last time help – actively and unasked for - a colleague with something?

2. Do you meet the standards? Controller tasks can be described using two criteria: **quality and quantity**. Quality always remains subjective to a certain degree, quantity does not. That is why all appointment arrangements should be kept. When did you last time fail to keep your appointment arrangement? Did you have an excuse or did you make one up?

3. Do you constantly improve your skills? With the fast changing tasks it is indispensable to give a high priority on further education in order to avoid the risk of becoming expendable. We are not talking here so much about fundamental questions as about concrete command of certain tools. Also superiors need to know about the tools which are used by their staff. An important report should not be abandoned because a colleague has gone on leave and his/her stand-in is ill. Which controlling tool not already used last year do you use today?

4. Are you constantly engaged in improving yourself? Not more, but better information is required. Special reports should not be changed quarterly, however ongoing suggestions can be collected for a yearly adjustment. Tasks are seldom documented and learn effects recorded. When did you last time improve standard information?

5. Do you complete special tasks quickly with a report? After the information has been collected and evaluated, the report recipients should receive first results after three days, at the latest. In two weeks' time the final results should be ready and possible measures implemented. Are all special tasks accomplished or is there still need for clarification and improvement?

6. Do you hold your convictions and values on every hierarchy level within the company? Especially by critical questions

which cannot be wholly quantified the top management accepts as equal only contact persons having clear convictions. When did you last time represent the views of a minority group?

7. Who do you work for? Each staff member has superiors, controlling reports usually to company management. But what is the relation to the units that accompany controlling in everyday business? Only those who regard themselves as **real partners and service providers** will gain confidence and also find and carry through joint solutions. Where do you simplify tasks, where do you complicate facts?

8. Do you cooperate with other company branches? It involves working **with each other** and not just alongside one another. Tasks can in consequence last longer and result in higher costs, but the skills and contacts to be gained from that will in longer terms more than make up for it. Which other staff units did you help and when to improve their own performance?

9. Do you place highest standards for cooperation with other parties? The reputation of the department as well as of the individual persons requires it. Not only the promises are to be kept, but also the personal friendly relations with our contact persons and the quick and clear reaction on inquires are to be defined and it has to be guaranteed that they will be kept. **How long does it take you to react** on a question?

10. Do you set high standards? Best individual achievement pales when compared to the average results of the next task. The **recognition** of the individual controller is inseparably connected with the department.

This affects our performance not less than the results of our work. Are the standards defined and does regular verification take place?

11. Do you always provide top performance? Controllers work together with manifold company hierarchy levels. A controller that provides the recipient of the information with value-adding information is not left long disregarded when interesting tasks appear in the company. After realizing that controlling is a good springboard, the attention of potential candidates increases and a self-reinforcing cycle develops. When did you last time provide unexpected **added value for the top management?**

12. Do you treat your partners in a polite and respectful manner? We are not talking about the information recipient from the top management, but about colleagues in the company units. Unfortunately, bad behavior becomes more often the reality of everyday work. Nothing makes long-lasting enemies as good as belittling somebody or, even worse, belittling somebody in front of other parties. Certain things can remain unnoticed in the thick of the action. That is why controllers should give also each other feedback. Is there zero tolerance for personal belittling?

13. Do you notify your information recipients regularly about your tasks and results? Both the superiors within the department and the company management want to know what controllers do, what the aims of their actions are and what these actions result in. It is not enough to deliver standard reports. **Ongoing communication** enables controllers to also adopt once in a while a different method, look for new solutions and communicate openly a possible

failure. Do your service recipients really know, what you are doing?

14. Are you ready for changes? Many professionals have been working in controlling for many years, without losing the necessary enthusiasm and they still infect their information recipients and colleagues with their engagement. However, it can still be the case that we lose the enthusiasm. Then you should allow your profession, colleagues, and most importantly yourself a favor and grasp for a new task. When did you last time assess your **personal engagement?** How has it developed in the last three years?

Let us invite you to download this extensive checklist from our homepage

www.controllermagazin.de

as a word-file, so that you will be able to complete and design it according to your needs.



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