The stage is ours.
*From leader self-leadership to follower self-leadership as illustrated in the Marketing sector.*
“Give me but a firm spot on which to stand, and I shall move the earth.”
(Archimedes, n.y.a., online)
Statutory declaration

“I declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this Master Thesis myself and that I have not used any sources or resources other than stated for its preparation. I further declare that I have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This Master Thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for examination purposes.”

Date: 25/05/2016

Maria NIEDERWIESER
Acknowledgement

In writing this, I am finally placing the last sentence to this research project, which occasionally seemed, at best, like a Sisyphean task.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude towards my parents and brother. Thank you for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself. Thank you for keeping me grounded and for teaching me to work hard and to never give up.

Thank you to my mom - my best friend, most active listener, fan cheering in the front row, constructive critic, biggest supporter and inspiring role model.

Thank you to all my friends, near and far, for continually reminding me what life is really about, even during the busiest of times.

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Thank you to the Aztecs and Sufi monasteries of Yemen for discovering the indispensable power of chocolate and coffee: my staple diet throughout this research project.

And lastly, but most importantly, many thanks to my interview partners for their time, efforts and willingness to share their expertise, personal experiences and knowledge for this research.

Thank you!

Thank you!
Tack så mycket!
Abstract
The aim of this study is to broaden existing theories on self-leadership in response to unprecedented challenges and job demands in the emerging economy of the 21st century. The Austrian marketing sector is used as an illustrative example for gaining a more nuanced conception of leaders’ understanding and enactment of self-leadership within a creative environment. The approximation with grounded theory allowed gauging the gap in scientific research with respect to studying self-leadership within organisational settings, as suggested by other scholars. Perceptions on the current work environment and implications for business dealings and leadership at a broader level are disclosed firstly. The study then approximates the concept of self-leadership, underlining some of the dominant notions thereto, as may also be found in prominent research and proposing a conceptualized model for the multiplex relationship of viewing oneself as a starting point in leading others. Possible elements thereto are subsumed into the rubrics of behavioural, emotional and cognitive strategies, continuous learning, authentic role modelling and critical reflection, all of which allow leaders to transcend to an external meaning and ultimately inspire self-leadership among their followers. In the near aftermath, self-leadership shows a positive influence on work performance of both leader and followers, on developing creative potential and deriving meaning for oneself. The findings shall serve as a source of inspiration for leaders within their intuitive learning journey of self-leadership and encouraging the same among their followers. Furthermore, this research constitutes the base for future studies that attempt to shed more light onto the practical applicability of self-leadership within a business context.

Keywords
Self-leadership, leadership, marketing sector, creative talent, business environment, authenticity, shared leadership, meaning, followers
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1 Introduction

“You put yourself up there, higher than everybody else, so of course you have more demands on you” (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation).

Thursday morning 7.30 am sharp, person X is rushing to the office. Client meetings, presentations and pressing project deadlines are on today’s agenda. Among the first people in the office, person X makes him/herself a double espresso and turns on the computer. 33 new emails welcome him/her into this new work day. Last minute layout changes, inquiries by clients, meetings requests, reminders, and many more are lined up, impatiently waiting to be answered. Meanwhile, two more emails caused an uncomfortably familiar sound in the inbox. Waiting for the caffeine to kick in, person X is getting started on last minute campaign changes, as discussed with a client on the phone on his way to work. Losing track of time, he/she makes it to the team meeting just in time, which again takes longer than expected but ends with a desirable outcome. During the meeting, the company phone attracts person X’s attention several times as the missed calls go straight to the mailbox. Already way past lunch time, time pressure increases as another 14 emails have reach the inbox and work colleagues require ad hoc new and better creative inputs on a campaign, which is to be sent to the client the very next day. Following a telephone conference, the forwarding of new requests and adoptions for ongoing projects and a collective brainstorming for additional campaign measures, person X has a quick snack, while answering the most urgent emails in his inbox. The rest of the afternoon is dictated by presswork, phone calls, strategic planning, client meetings and discount negotiations with the media. One final and inspiring client meeting in the early evening and person X heads straight back to the office to work on the still overflowing email inbox, among them positive feedback from happy employees and even happier clients. The remaining chaos will be tackled on the weekend, without interruptions from day-to-day-business. Already past 8 pm, person X is on his/her way home, planning the to-dos for the following day (inspired by a diary template sent out to CEOs in the Austrian marketing sector as part of the research study, 2016) ¹.

As part of my work experience in the marketing sector, I too have been confronted with the pressure to be flexible and creative on the spot; to perform at full capacity, especially during busy times, and to continuously progress so as to not fall behind in the market. Within the current Zeitgeist and rapidly changing working environment, increasing strain is being placed on work performance, while the pace at work is continuously heightened. Particularly the marketing sector is having to adapt at full-speed; driven by pressure for time, money, innovation and cutting-edge concepts. During a personal conversation, one expert (n.a.a., as cited by Philipp-Sabelko, 2016) referred to a metaphorical description of working in the marketing sector: “Marketing resembles a biotope: it is beautiful and colourful, but, like in a biotope, if the pH-value changes by just a fraction everything collapses”.

The interest for this research project arose primarily from a desire to understand how executives in the agency side of marketing are leading the way in a world and an industry that have grown ever more dynamic and are accelerating in their complexity and ambiguity, unpredictability and contradictions. They are the ones setting the tone, leading the way, role modelling the desired behaviour and mastering the environment. Over the

¹ Due to a low return rate and insufficient data, the dairy templates were not used for further analysis in the research.
past few decades, several researchers have reported on the need to modify the very nature of leadership in order to successfully lead others and navigate the current business environment and, consequently to approach its dynamic process by self-leadership (Noda, 2004, pp. 17-18; Uhl-Bien, & Marion, 2009; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, as cited in Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012, pp. 216-217). Viewing it as a starting point and a resource in coping with the high job demands, self-leadership emphasises the notion that true leadership stems from inner qualities, rather than external ones, and in mastering the art of self-leadership, leaders may rise to leading others (Manz, & Sims, 1991, pp. 18-23). Consequently, unless leaders are enacting self-leadership, their ability to master the job demands and effectively influence others, is weakened at best (Pearce, 2007, p. 357). The resulting research focus has been placed on exploring the concept of self-leadership with the illustrative example of the Austrian marketing sector, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of executives’ interior experiences and meaning thereof.

1.1 Background of the study
Research in the area of leadership has yielded much “heat” in terms of styles, development and skills for success, offering step-by-step guidance on how to be successful. However, little light has been shed on its practical applicability and tailoring to a given context i.e. the marketing sector. Being confronted with differing realities about the realms of a ‘typical day’ spent in the agency side of marketing and an abundance of controversy about the scope, challenges and daily routines therein, led to the perception that executive positions in agencies within the Austrian marketing industry represent a promising research area in using it as an illustrative example to further broaden existing business knowledge. Being the intermediary between media and clients, and accordingly having to balance a multitude of requirements and wishes of various different stakeholders, places increased demands on social, emotional and cognitive skills of people working in agencies within the given industry sector. Therefore, the agency side of marketing is emphasized on, in order to investigate the concept of self-leadership therein, as a possible approach to coping with the demands. As the research offered multiple directions to focus on, an approximation with grounded theory was selected and the research was entered into with limited preconceived constructs and ideas regarding the main concepts and their interrelation. Having previously worked in the given industry sector, a complete distancing from the research topic was not possible. I nonetheless aimed to allow the themes and clusters to emerge during open-ended conversations and interviews with key players in the Austrian marketing environment.

1.1.1 Problem definition
“The skills that got you where you are, may not be the requisite skills to get you where you need to go” (H., as cited in Watkins, 2012, p. 72).

Accelerating demands and an ever-changing working environment (not exclusively but especially in the marketing sector) driven by the need for innovation and flexibility for customers’ needs, depict two factors which shape the agency side of marketing both in a challenging and exciting way. What is more, the dynamic business web we are surrounded by: including demographic and economic shifts, changes in the pension system, as well as cross-generational challenges; places more and more pressure on us, heightens the pace at which we must perform and switch jobs and impacts the short-term meaningfulness of our performance results in tremendous ways. Accordingly, if we have to work longer, more efficiently and strive for meaningfulness in our work places, in order to fulfill our
pursuit of rewarding and inspiring careers, the following research considerations arise: Which role does self-leadership play in managing the challenges within the current work environment? Which measures and tactics can benefit effective self-leadership within agencies in the respective industry sector? How shall personal resources be used? Which (new) self-leadership skills are helpful in navigating the stormy waters of business success? Where is the difference between theory and practice; between saying and doing? I address this research opportunity by integrating literature on (self-) leadership and organizational studies, HR tendencies, industry reports and psychology and by proposing that self-leadership can contribute to leaders’ abilities to manage their high job demands and achieve personal and organizational success.

1.1.2 Research relevance

Based upon a personal interest in the study at hand, a more profound understanding and personal engagement with the research was fostered. The aspiration to pursue a career within the (Austrian) marketing industry was a major determinant in the selection of the topic and help in the process of identifying with the objectives. The research results shall provide a resource for leaders and aspiring followers within the (Austrian) marketing environment, to redefine priorities, to better manage resources, and to lighten the mental map of possibilities and barriers of leadership approaches and job design within the given industry. As stated by scholars (Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 69; Carmeli, Meitar, & Weisberg, 2006, p. 78), there appears to be a gap in scientific research with regard to studies on self-leadership in organisational settings, as well as in industry sectors in which innovative behaviour is required. Not least, on a selfish note (corresponding to my planned future career path and work environment), I have selected executive positions as a research area, for which I seek to provide practical insights, to break misconceptions and ideally to help CEOs themselves reflect on their actions and words in leading and paving the way for themselves, their followers and for future leaders. The study shall make a theoretical contribution by offering insights into executives’ understanding and enactment of self-leadership as well as their defining interior experiences.

1.2 Research objectives and research questions

Scientific research on effective leadership within the marketing environment remains largely uncharted, while an abundance of knowledge and studies elaborate on various universal (self) leadership theories and concepts. Hence, the aim of this study is to combine these two elements as part of a business equation and to broaden existing theories and lighten the map of management practices and leadership concepts by contributing important personal elements and experiences to the subject of how to successfully engage in self-leadership within today’s interconnected and dynamic business web and specifically the Austrian marketing sector, as a starting point to leading others. In accordance with Bennis’ (2007, p. 2) argument that “leadership never is purely academic”, the findings shall aid in highlighting possibilities for and potential barriers to self-leadership and guide the future job design of executive positions within the given industry sector. The aforementioned problematization provides a theoretical base for navigating the proceeding empirical study, and the corresponding research questions as laid out below.

Applying the concept of grounded theory in combination with interviews/ conversations, in order to ensure profound results, the following research questions were investigated as part of the empirical study:
a) How do leaders understand the concept of self-leadership in regard to coping with the demands of today’s dynamic business environment?
b) Which are the possible strategies deemed effective in enacting the concept of self-leadership among leaders?

1.3 Chapter Outline
The five chapters comprising this Master Thesis are structured as follows: the first chapter provides an introduction to the research problem at hand, laying out the motivation for this research, including its objectives and relevance in a business context and concluding with a chapter outline.

The subsequent chapter sets out the methodology applied to answer the research questions. An overview of the research design and approximation with grounded theory is provided, alongside details on the data collection and analysis process. Furthermore, a personal statement on the author’s assumed role within this research study is given.

A further chapter illustrates the challenges and opportunities within the emerging economy of the 21st century and its development. Global forces impacting on the current work environment, as well as micro forces with respect to the marketing environment and various demands as well as perceived barriers and incentives to the Austrian market specifically, shall provide a better understanding for placing the research into context.

The major findings on the perceived understanding and enactment of self-leadership by leaders of agencies within the Austrian marketing landscape are presented thereafter. In following the principle of an onion model, an understanding of leadership and necessary competencies and skills at a general level are defined firstly, followed by a discussion on whether leadership within the marketing sector requires a distinct approach compared to other sectors. At the core, a conceptualized model on self-leadership shall illustrate the linkage between effective leader self-leadership and follower self-leadership, thereby broadening the initial definition of self-leadership as provided by Manz and Sims (1980, as cited in Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 205). Emergent key concepts on the effective enactment of self-leadership are subsumed into the rubrics of behavioural, emotional and cognitive strategies, continuous learning, authentic role modelling and critical reflection; which shall be seen as a source of inspiration for possible elements to self-leadership. Lastly, the implications for leading creative talent as a positive aftereffect of the primary concept are suggested, followed by personal recommendations to successful leadership by all respondents.

The final chapter aims to reveal the limitations of the research, summarizing the key findings of the empirical study, as well as emphasising the core issues associated with the central study phenomenon, followed by recommended measures of action, which shall inspire current and future leaders in the enactment of their roles as leading artists towards an uncertain future.
2 Research methodology

“Hearing what others have to say, seeing what others do, and representing these as accurately as possible” (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998a, p. 43).

As previously stated, a qualitative approach was undertaken, in order to gain a deeper insight into the various elements impacting upon the central study phenomenon. Building upon existing knowledge and theories by broadening these with a practical focus on issues closely related to the field of study, justifies the approximation with grounded theory, under the assumption that it provides multifaceted results related to the research topic. This assumption is further underpinned by the notion that leadership, being a social process of influence, should also be examined with respect to processual and social relationships (Parry, 1998, p. 85; Kempster, & Parry, 2011, p. 117), which again is reflected in the research objective of broadening existing theories on self-leadership, rather than testing them. The research findings shall therefore not constitute a new theory on leadership styles, but rather take a new look at existing ones and make these more relevant and approachable for current and future leaders (within the Austrian marketing sector). Since much of the research on successful leadership has “yielded much heat and little light” in terms of feasibility and practical relevance within the selected industry sector (particularly due to its fast-moving nature and other distinctive characteristics which require unique and tailor-made approaches to leadership), it was important to enter into the research with limited preconceived ideas on leadership qualities (Gibson, & Hartman, 2014, p. 33). Therefore, the approach with grounded theory aided in focusing on notable, individual self-leadership elements as a means of answering the research questions.

2.1 Research design

With support from Hatch, Kostera, & Kozminski (2005, pp. 44-67), I will present the elements of this thesis using the metaphorical illustration of a theatre performance. Based on the notion that the performing arts enable us to see further, hear better and experience deeper with regard to both our own selves as well as the events around us, the spotlight is placed on leaders as the main actors on stage, who, just as artists in the course of their development, enlarge their range of perceptions and expressions and transfer their learnings to their followers (Schein, 2013, p. 1). Similarly, Bennis (2007, p. 4) points to the fact that the importance of viewing leadership as a performance art (including its rhetorical power, implicit meanings and auditioned roles as leaders) is often disregarded. Inspired by the aforementioned intellectual approaches to leadership, I decided to apply metaphorical references to the research study whenever appropriate in order to deepen understanding and trigger critical reflection among the readers. In keeping with the initial work scene described in the introduction, the empirical results were aligned with appropriate metaphorical interpretations, as may be seen in the respective chapter headings and contents thereunder. The performance stage displays characteristics of the current work environment as well as industry specific features. The main act is essentially performed by leaders, expressing their leadership and reflecting on their approach to self-leadership, challenges, incentives and their development. Based on the lessons learnt, the closing act provides an outlook on future leadership within the respective industry sector, collated with recommendations to the target group.
2.2 Approximation with grounded theory

Strauss and Corbin (1998b, p. 8) describe the methodological approximation with grounded theory as aiming at generating theory, and to ground that theory, in the derived primary data. The theory building is defined inductively, whereby the researcher moves from specific to more general concepts. In contrast to this, the initial research question is designed in an obverse fashion, as it starts out in a broad manner, and is narrowed down as the researcher moves along the research process (ibid., 1998b, pp. 41, 88). Another characteristic is that the course of data collection and data analysis occurs in an alternating and iterative manner (ibid., p. 42), whereby the latter is focused not solely on describing data, but on providing interpretations to the derived concepts and their relationships (ibid, 1998b, p. 11; Wolcott, as cited in Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, p. 18). As part of this approximation to a qualitative study, the researcher must learn to strike a balance between the objectivity and sensitivity expressed towards the research, in order to ultimately arrive at a relevant theory (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, pp. 42-43). This is also suggested by Parry (1998, pp. 93-94), who argues that the difficulty in a grounded approach lies within the researcher’s ability to execute theoretical sensitivity, in that the researcher must hold a basic understanding of theoretical concepts before initiating the empirical proceedings, while this basic understanding must not prelude the emergence of some theory, originating from any other source than the primary data. This implies that the researcher should greatly withdraw from preconceived ideas, unless the expressed aim is to broaden existing theories, whereby a balance needs to be established between being guided by previous knowledge and being open to emergent concepts and relationships among the data (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, p. 12). Having prior work experience in this industry sector, I was naturally immersed in the research field, though not at a leadership-level, which eased the attempt to distance myself from the given research study with regards to preconceived theories.

2.3 Interviews and conversations

Turning to the aforementioned study area, a qualitative research method was applied, in order to satisfy the core categories of the research. Firstly, a set of semi-structured interviews was carried out, with the aim of exploring personal approaches to and perceptions of self-leadership among CEOs of agencies within the Austrian marketing industry. Secondly, expert conversations with external consultants were engaged in as a follow up, in order to reflect deeply on the empirical findings on a meta level.

According to Bjerke (2007, pp. 225-242), a perceptive differentiation between interviews and conversations and their respective purpose has to be made. While interviews aim at generating objective data without influencing the respondents’ truth in any way, conversations provide a rather subjective collection of data, in which respondents’ opinions, experiences and feelings are mined. Therefore, with regard to the form of the interviews, a semi-structured approach was chosen (involving the development of an interview guide) with a focus on the key questions to be investigated and subsequently adapted, based on the emerging themes and openness of the respondents. The sequence of questions varied somewhat from respondent to respondent, depending on the interview and given answers, while still aiming at gathering comparable data from all respondents (Dayman, & Holloway, 2011, p. 225). The overall approach was rather flexible and open, which allowed for the inclusion of emerging topics throughout the interviews (Atteslander, 2010, p. 135). As for the expert conversations, a likewise semi-structured interview guide was compiled, drawing upon the outcomes of the interviews, which were
summarized, filtered and presented in a reflective and exploratory fashion, in order to arrive at suggestions for existing and aspiring leaders.

2.3.1 Data collection
Guided by a set of semi-structured questions, the interviews and expert conversations were conducted during the time frame of January 4th, 2016 and March 18th, 2016, on a face-to-face basis, via telephone, via Skype and filled out individually by respondents when appropriate (SAI – self-administered interview). Under the assumption that communication in the respondents’ native language will bring about more detailed results and avoid language barriers, all data was collected in German, except for one expert conversation, which was held in English. After obtaining permission, the interviews/expert conversations were recorded, so as to ease the subsequent analysis of the collected primary data. The interview guide for the interviews comprised five main areas: investigating personal evaluations of the marketing sector, a personal understanding of leadership, a discussion on experiences and competencies of self-leadership, the effects on their daily work and their employees and finally a reflection on the past and any crucibles along the way, as well as an outlook on future leadership. The questions were structured in such a way to contrast the beliefs and individual approaches of the leaders, as well as to check for consistency among the answers. The interview guide may be seen in the Annex.

Thereafter, the protocols and audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded, following the information saturation principle (Glaser, & Strauss, 2005, p. 229). The aim was to derive concrete tailor-made statements from a general discourse, which could be analysed and interpreted to broaden existing theories. The reciprocal relationship between data collection, their analysis and theory development suggests a recursive process during the empirical study (Parry, 1998, p. 89; Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, p. 42). Therefore, interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim and analysed in a primarily consecutive fashion. Finally, the key findings were summarized and discussed with external consultants and coaches on a meta level, in order to manifest their relevance and arrive at recommendations to amplify strengths and better manage critical areas. The conversation guide followed the same five focal areas as the interview guide, whereby a deeper reflection through exploratory questions and concrete recommendations was sought. The complete conversation guide may be viewed in the Annex.

2.3.2 Qualitative sampling
Respondents were selected by means of a convenience sample, whereby appointments with leaders, who appeared to be delivering promising results, were arranged. The criteria for the selection of the respondents included: their position within the agency, their long-time experience within the sector, the specialization of the agency in order to ensure diversity and cover a base level, partially the ranking and success of the agency within the Austrian market (according to medianet, 2014, online), and the existence of an office in Austria. It was also an aim to produce a good mix of gender roles within the selection. Finally, the two external coaches were selected upon having personally experienced their competence and knowledge within workshops. Whereby, one expert, not familiar with the Austrian market nor the marketing sector in particular, was purposefully selected in order to arrive at an external view of the study area.

Table 1 below provides an overview of the respective interview partners, their position, name of the agency, as well as the specialization of the agency.
### Table 1: Interview and conversation partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beatrix Skias</td>
<td>Kobza Integra, PR</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petra Hauser</td>
<td>Media.at</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joachim Feher</td>
<td>MediaCom Austria</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>CEO Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Hörlezeder</td>
<td>Hello Wien, 6</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael John</td>
<td>LOOP, 100</td>
<td>Digital</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainer Reichl</td>
<td>Reichl &amp; Partner</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friederike Müller-Wernhart</td>
<td>Mindshare Austria, 67</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td>CEO Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietmar Ecker</td>
<td>E&amp;P</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Founder, former CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniela Philipp-Sabelko</td>
<td>Daniela Philipp-Sabelko. Training, Coaching, Consulting</td>
<td>External coaching &amp; consulting</td>
<td>CEO, freelance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mette Lindgren-Helde</td>
<td>Lindgren Helde Kommunikation</td>
<td>External consulting &amp; training</td>
<td>CEO, freelance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3.3 Data analysis

An initial microanalysis, followed by a three stage coding process, was applied to the data gathered through interviews and the expert conversations. As a starting point, a microanalysis: more precisely an exhaustive line-by-line analysis of relevant words, sentences and paragraphs, was performed, involving general to specific probing questions, so as to determine initial categories and their relationships to one another (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, pp. 57, 66). Within the first phase in the three stage coding processes (the process of open coding), data was conceptualized; namely individual items similar in character were grouped together, named, and data was reduced thereby. Furthermore, initial categories were defined and the connections among them determined (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, pp. 101, 121). Secondly, axial coding was utilized, whereby the relationships between the categories and subcategories, emerging from the open coding process, were determined (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, pp. 123-127). Questions including – “Why? How come? Where? When? How? With what results?” aided in increasing the depth and structure of the emerging theory (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, p. 142). Lastly, selective coding was carried out, in that “theory was integrated and refined” (ibid., p. 143), whereby a central category was detected and any excess data eliminated, as well as deficient categories revised with an additional round of questions...
to the respective respondents until the point of data saturation (ibid., pp. 146, 161). This information saturation principle implies that as many interviews were conducted and analysed until the core categories of the research were saturated and the conceptual framework formed a systematic theory for the problem at hand (Glaser, & Strauss, 2005, p. 229). Throughout the data collection and its interpretative analysis, comparisons were made and relevant questions asked to enhance understanding (Strauss, & Corbin, 1998b, p. 73). Upon completion of the alternating process of data collection and data analysis, journal articles, books, industry publications and white papers were examined, in order to underline and discuss the empirical outcomes. The reviewed literature and empirical findings are presented in an intertwined fashion, alongside personal reflection and discussion. By drawing upon the gathered data and derived theory, the research questions were answered thoroughly and a research report was compiled. All the relevant documentation of the analysis may be found in the Annex.

2.4 Author’s role within the research

There appear to be controversial views on the application and purposeful omission of personal pronouns in academic research in several disciplines, as discussed by Harwood (2005, pp. 1207-1231). The use of personal pronouns is deemed to be an infringement of objectivity, whereby it is noteworthy to quote Daudi (1986, pp. 131-136), who argues that a withdrawal from personal pronouns within the research may suggest an illusionary objectivity, as individuals’ frames of reference determine the direction and depth of their sense-making and ultimately their understanding.

Aligned with the metaphorical illustration of the research, I opted to draw away from an “author evacuated” presentation (Geertz, 1983, as cited in Harwood, 2005, p. 1208), and rather to take responsibility for my work, as opposed to presenting the findings as an external observer. In an effort to construct a unique, novel and notable (ibid., p. 1211) piece of research, I assumed the roles of both director and actor in this research.
3 Setting the scene

Sitting amongst the audience at a theatre performance, the first thing to attract our attention is the stage with its big, red, heavy curtains, separating the front from the backstage and preventing us from seeing what is yet to come. In similar fashion, leaders in the business world are confronted with ambiguous forces, which are not yet fully perceived and whose truthful development and impact are hidden behind storm clouds and silver linings (Adler, 2006, p. 491). Nevertheless, an immediate action and reaction to and anticipation of these forces is required. Discussing the macro and micro forces impacting the business world would produce a comprehensive study of its own. Therefore, this chapter aims at raising the reader’s awareness level of buzzwords thrown around in the context of work performance in the 21st century, which naturally implicate successful leadership in the marketing sector. On a more detailed note, specific requirements, challenges and opportunities in the Austrian marketing sector, as perceived by executives, are discussed in the subsequent chapter, alongside their reactions thereto. All of this shall set the scene for understanding the emergent concept of self-leadership and its effective enactment within an organizational setting.

3.1 Global forces

Taking in the broader context, five overall macro forces, which redefine the framework for doing business in the 21st century, may be pointed out; namely political/legal, economic, ecological/physical, social/cultural and demographic, and technological (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2009, p. 154). These major forces give rise to several fads and trends (Kotler et al., p. 154-155) or as Scharmer (2007, p. 1) refers to “painful endings and hopeful beginnings”. In short, the current business environment is and has for some time been characterized by change and transformation with regard to: political upheavals; economic shifts and western materialism; corporate scandals and best practice cases on how not to do business; technological advances beyond our expectations; and demographic changes (Scharmer, 2007, pp. 3-4; Schneider, Barsoux, & Stahl, 2014, p. x).

Moving on from the second half of the 20th century and the ultimate goal of outperforming the competition therein, a wave of greed, the-sky-is-the-limit thinking, high risks and deep falls (including the one in 2008) followed. The economic downturn of 2008 has ignited new definitions of successful business performance and an increased need for ethics in business (Ashby & Miles, 2002, p. xvii; Roe, 2014, p. 326). At the same time, globalization has had a fundamental impact on global economic interdependence, as has been witnessed over the past two decades (Ashby, & Miles, 2002, p. 3). In his book “the world is flat” (2007), Friedman provides a framework for better understanding global events, whereby he addresses three increments of globalization. According to him, the first phase of globalization, from Columbus till 1800, led to a shrinking of the world from large to medium and mainly took place on a country level. The second phase, from 1800 till the end of the 20th century, caused the world to shrink from medium to small, focusing on a company level. Finally, the current and third one, at the mark of entering the 21st century, continues to shrink the world from small to tiny, empowering individuals to both collaborate and compete on a global scale (ibid., pp. 7-9). As a result, it is fair to argue that globalization not only triggers increased competition, both among market players and internal company players (Adler, 2006, p. 486), but also causes new mindsets including “now that we can do anything, what do we want to do?” (Mau et al., 2004, p. 15, as cited in Adler, 2006). Particularly US companies certainly established bold visions and new
strategies matching these mindsets, whereby their joint efforts caused power to largely shift to the private sector (Adler, 2006, p. 489). Facebook for instance, being just one of the key players, connects more than 1.35 billion people across the globe, according to a recent study by Deloitte (2015, p. 1). Platforms such as Facebook, but also other technological revolutions and innovations have proven to be one of the most far-reaching forces shaping our lives (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 169) and communication in particular. Regardless of time, distance and location we can interact and work at an accelerated pace, which has changed our working patterns in profound ways, introducing the virtual world of social networking and web-based business (Roe, 2014, p. 326). Sorrell (2014, p. 4) even takes the discussion as far as arguing that digitalization is already such an integral part of our daily lives and business that still referring to it as a phenomenon would be old-fashioned. He continues in his argumentation that industry buzzwords such as ‘big data’ will be out-dated sooner than we think, as the industry’s capacity for reinvention goes hand in hand with its eagerness for new jargon.

On the whole, our social structures, safety mechanisms, traditional values and roles are being dissolved and radically changed, which requires people across generations to rethink and relearn how to do business (Malik, 2014, p. 21; Pinnow, 2011, p. 24). Another way of assessing the business context is given by Handy (as cited in Pinnow, 2011, pp. 32-34), who talks about nine paradoxes causing our world to be torn along a two-ended continuum on several dimensions: including work, productivity, time, wealth, organisation, aging, individualism and justice.

What researchers and society at large agree upon, is the apparent realization that the 21st century involves anything but business as usual (Adler, 2006, p. 488), which naturally also influences our immediate internal work places, where managing diversity, (across generations, across cultures) and internal restructuring, including flattened hierarchies is becoming increasingly important (Ashby, & Miles, 2002, p. 4; Robbins, & Coulter, 2012, pp. 124-128,150, 169, 420, 503). Moreover, “hitchhiking” may be regarded as the new career path, describing employees’ and executives’ increased likelihood of having different jobs in different companies and different industries throughout their careers (Pinnow, 2011, p. 26).

Being confronted with the aforementioned and many more forces, leaders are required to move from an individual level (micro), to a group interaction (meso), to an institutional (macro) and finally to a global (mundo) level in their expressions and actions (Scharmer, 2007, p. 20). They are confronted with all these transformational processes in a dual respect, having to carry and bear change within their own functions and immediate environment on the one hand, and acting as change agents in inspiring, leading and personally exemplifying change for their employees on the other (Pinnow, 2011, p. 21). Therefore, leadership plays a deciding factor in whether new perils will be withstood, complexity mastered, enormous opportunities seized and the further increasing pressure and pace on a personal level managed (Ashby, & Miles, 2002, p. xxi; Malik, 2014, p. 20). Within only a few years almost everything will be new and different: what we do, how we do it and why we do it. As a consequence this also changes who we are, as individuals, as leaders (Malik, 2014, p. 20). As much as artists on stage, leaders will need to improvise, to transform the triggers as they emerge on stage and to produce a new source of meaning for everyone to follow along in this unforeseen play. As a starting point thereto, the following chapters draw upon perceived challenges and opportunities within the
marketing sector specifically, in order for leaders to strengthen their awareness and initiate personal actions, reactions and anticipations.

3.2 The good, the bad and challenging marketing environment

“There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know here are known unknowns; there is to say, we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don’t know we don’t know …” (Rumsfeld, n.y.a. as cited in Carroll, 2007, p. 167).

The requirements, challenges and opportunities marketers are currently facing, are naturally dependent on their frames of references, on their perceptions and on their categorization into opportunistic and threatening forces. Actors on stage do not always know what is to come; they have to improvise and adapt in the moment and in case of a sudden change in either the setting or the other actors’ performances, they have to react or, in the best-case scenario, anticipate these changes. The same applies to leaders in the given industry sector, whose role requires them to act, react and proactively approach the events around and beyond them. While reminiscing about person X from the introductory scene, it could be argued that just one changing element in the course of his/her work day may disrupt the entire sequence and would require him/her to adapt his/her performance accordingly. The aim of exploring executives’ evaluation of changes was to arrive at a cluster of immediate influences that shall guide readers’ in better understanding job demands and at a later stage the specific measures and tactics employed in order to manage these.

The findings reveal executives’ multifaceted assessment and perception of the currently influencing forces, ranging across a number of dimensions, such as technological, economic, educational, company-internal and behavioural aspects.

Skias (2016, personal interview) refers to the fact that we have been and still are subject to a process of rapid changes on several dimensions, some of which concern changes in consumer behaviour and their media consumption. This shift naturally requires marketers to reconsider and rethink the channels employed, in order to reach, influence and activate a diverse group of savvy and empowered consumers (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). As Hauser (2016, personal interview) argues, big data need to be combined effectively in order to turn them into deep insights, as is confirmed by the marketing 2020 study on characteristics of top/high-performing organizations in marketing (De Swaan Arons, Van den Driest, & Weed, 2014, p. 57). When integrating data on consumers, it is essential to explore the reasons governing their behaviour i.e. their basic drivers; a process which is enabled through a multitude of technological advances (ibid., p. 54) and further causes a shift in the selection and number of channels used.

At the same time, the fragmented media landscape, with an exponential shift in technological developments, can result in uncertainty regarding the countless possibilities of when, where, how and how long to invest in a budget that is already condensed and requires increased efficiency, pin-pointing, and, even more so, tracking and legitimation for its investment and loosely defined end results (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Furthermore, while financial demands are pressing and the view of marketing as being a singular discipline has shifted to an embedment in economy, we have
simultaneously experienced a shift in redefining success not solely based on economic terms, but on achieving a competitive advantage in the market (Reichl, 2016, SAI). Skias and Reichl (2016, SAI) thereto reiterated the need for marketers to generate the best consumer experience with the right content as a means to achieve a sustainable lead in the market. Nonetheless, Caplinska (2014, pp. 2-3) warns about the difficulty thereby, in that ‘storytelling’ from a go-to platform only works if the audience neither intervenes in the course of the story, interrupts nor responds. Therefore, in the midst of fragmented media and elusive customers, marketers should offer what matters to the latter.

It is fair to say that innovation and technological transformation are characterizing the industry, whereby its rapid development may be attributed to the rise in online advances, which also provides an explanation as to why marketing has developed faster than other sectors (John, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI). Classical marketing means, which were used 5 years ago, have largely suffered in their effectiveness and new knowledge on the functioning and proper application of online measures, especially Social Media, is required (John, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Without an appropriate understanding of the shift from a one-way to a two-way communication and the role of digital media therein, marketers cannot successfully perform integrated marketing strategies (John, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). The resulting demand on marketers thereby is to learn and to adapt at a tearing pace and to not miss out on any of these changes, as well as to develop a delicate understanding of the old and new, of analog and digital media and how to best integrate them, so as not to fall behind (Ecker, 2015, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview).

Overall, one may refer to the impacting forces as a means of elevating risk levels, blurring boundaries, and extending distribution channels; all in an effort to cater to customers’ continuously shifting preferences (Marciniak, & Budnarowska, 2009, p. 6). Moreover, as Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) suggests, leaders are in the front line of events within this fast moving, highly competitive and demanding environment. Leaders’ performance is thus greatly influenced by the job demands they are facing, as well as the degree of control they have over these, which impacts their leadership development, effectiveness and satisfaction (Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007, pp. 374-375).

3.2.1 Austrian market

While these influential forces may be placed on a global scale, it was likewise insightful to explore executives’ perspectives on the Austrian market specifically, whereby they agreed widely on different consequences based on the market size and cultural influence. While it may not always be reasonable to realize certain marketing measures within the Austrian market, especially due to financial aspects, the limited size may still provide a model by using Austria as a test market for new ideas and innovations (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview). On the downside, John (2016, personal interview) also points out an extreme gap between the know-how and standards of Austrian compared to international organisations. He sees a pressing need to try to catch up to higher standards and rejuvenate and better align the age range within marketing departments and marketing agencies. Furthermore, culture and country specific aspects effecting media selection, effectiveness and consumption shall be highlighted (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview).
In summarizing the above mentioned events and requirements, Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) referred to “digital transformation”, a specific but rather overstretched keyword in this context - as only certain facets of the digital transformation are included. At the same time, she argues that we have to critically question this term in its correctness, as a transformation somehow suggests a beginning and an end to its process of change, as if we were to move through a phase until its completion. Because the dynamic structures governing the environment and the fast changing nature will not come to end, a more preferred and accurate description would reflect the disruptive era. Within this disruptive era, we are required to likewise think in disruptive terms; to pause, to reflect and to question whether the current business models will still lead to success in the near future. Marketers not only have to think in terms of the next product line extension, but in replacing product categories. Consequently, a great deal of the described process of disruption has to take place in the mindset of people, but even more importantly requires new leadership structures, in order to successfully move forward. However, the current educational system is on the wrong track in developing these new leadership structures, whereby, as Reichl (2016, SAI) and Ecker (2016, personal interview) criticize, highly specialized marketers, who lack general knowledge and an overall understanding of the marketing philosophy, are produced. A further drawback in this regard, is the deficit in suitable leaders within the given industry sector, as many lack a broader perspective and vision for the future (Reichl, 2016, SAI; Ecker, 2016, personal interview). Professor of Business Administration at Harvard business School, Linda Hill (2008, pp. 123-125) even claims that tomorrow’s leaders will be discovered far from elite business schools and that we should not let explicit limitations and stereotypes to leadership, including politics, gender or entrepreneurial spirit deter us from realizing talent. Similarly, Adler’s (2006, p. 489) advice that leaders (now more so than ever) need to learn the creative skills, used by artists to develop innovative ideas, appears relevant because “organizations’ scarcest resource has become their dreamers, not their testers” (ibid., 2006, p. 492).

3.2.2 Industry dialogue
In navigating and managing the industry development, executives have likewise shared their interpretation of the corresponding incentives and constraints arising for their agencies. Whether benchmarking competitors’ practices is still valuable within this fast-paced environment is strongly questioned by Adler (2006, p. 489), who continues in his argumentation that “the most viable options need to be invented”. Supporting the need for new strategies and business models, the interviewed executives agreed at large that the variety of possibilities, including new and innovative approaches, may be seen as an advantage and a valuable, exciting opportunity in their work.

On a further positive note, being in the centre of these disruptive and transformational events, marketers can co-create, co-shape and co-design these changes and the type of organisations that will also enjoy future success. Being empowered thereby, marketers have to stay up-to-date and positively influence these processes, not least by developing new strategies and offering added value to their clients, while acting as navigators in this business environment (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Ecker (2016, personal interview) also points towards new positioning opportunities for agencies in demonstrating their competencies. In order to achieve this, however, leaders need to have the right people in the right places and bestow trust and responsibility on them by letting them run on their own and disregarding the role of formal processes, as these would rather constitute a barrier to success (Müller-
Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). On the flip-side, greater competencies are required and the increasing pressure placed upon leaders in navigating the at times chaotic structures, gets easily passed on to employees (Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016 personal interview).

Naturally, all of the above impacts leaders in two ways: the way they should lead and the way they actually do lead (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). When listing and reflecting on all the skills and competencies needed to cope, one could argue that leaders are required to be the supermen and superwomen of our time, experiencing increasing and at times overwhelming demands, especially on a personal level. In this context, Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) raises the awareness of the need to work with oneself, with one’s personal skills, in order to move forward and cope with requirements. Consequently, the concept of self-leadership, as a possible approach to cope with the demands, is systematically approximated in the subsequent sections, starting with general definitions of leadership, necessary skills and competencies and ultimately the conceptualization and enactment of the concept.
4 From leader self-leadership to follower self-leadership

“We're actors - we're the opposite of people!”
(Tom Stoppard - Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, n.y.a., online).

The goal of carrying out interviews and conversations with key players of the industry was to study these organisational actors in different settings, on different stages and at different points in time, in order to arrive at a reasonable conception of how they view themselves and their actions. The empirical results were aligned with the respective conceptualizations and related studies of other scholars. Consequently, the research builds upon the foundational literature on leadership, self-leadership, performing arts and management expressively, whereby empirical data were used to provide greater depth to the research area. The findings are illustrated alongside theoretical concepts, which support the emergent themes.

In presenting the main findings and gradually approximating the concept of self-leadership, I structured the gathered data into three main clusters; firstly I discuss leaders’ understanding of leadership, the necessary skills and competencies in order to cope with demands and the role of the industry sector therein. The findings thereto already show first indications for the benefit of engaging in self-leadership. Thereafter I reveal the theoretical model of self-leadership based on respondents’ valuation of the concept. In a second cluster, I portray their enactment of the conceptualized model of self-leadership, including behavioural, cognitive and emotional strategies, as well as possible sources for engaging in a continuous learning effort, approaches to defining an authentic self and to critically reflect on one’s actions; all of which provide personal insights into possible elements of self-leadership. Lastly, I refer to the transcendence to leading others as a positive aftereffect and interrelation of successfully engaging in self-leadership. Each chapter offers an overview on the state-of-the-art research firstly and proceeds with the empirical findings and a personal reflection at the end.

4.1 Approximating self-leadership

Leadership is an important element within the equation of business success and, at the same time, in the marketing sector, it is one of the most difficult ones, because of the very nature of the marketing industry, wherein people are the focal point and hence their emotions, cognition and behaviour need to be taken into account. De Swaan Arons, Van den Driest and Weed (2014, pp. 56-59) warn that while the nature of and approaches to marketing have evolved at an exponential rate, the organisational structures within marketing departments have failed to keep up with these developments. Therefore, they claim that “the key to inspiring organizations is to do internally what marketing does best externally: create irresistible messages and programs that get everyone on board” (De Swaan Arons, Van den Driest, & Weed, 2014, p. 59). This notion, however, requires a critical assessment of leadership and its role within a disruptive environment, whereby according to Noda (2004, p. 17) self-leadership may offer an initial step in understanding the essence of leadership and inspiring new realities. Noda (ibid.) further argues that self-leadership is supported by a comprehensive understanding of the nature of people, their behaviour, their world views, moving way beyond business schools and diving into various disciplines such as philosophy, literature and art. I hence attempted to methodically approximate the concept of self-leadership by investigating various basic meanings ascribed to leadership, its elements, winning competencies and indicators for
self-leadership already at a general definition. This shall aid the reader in developing a basic understanding of the meaning of leadership within the current set scene of controllable and uncontrollable forces, which were described in the previous chapter. Moving to the more specific, existing views on the meaning of and strategies to self-leadership as well as potential barriers thereto are suggested, alongside a proposed conceptualized model for self-leadership and practical approaches to its enactment.

4.1.1 The death of the classical leadership role
Following Stodgill’s (1974, p. 259) conclusion that the number of definitions on leadership equals almost the number of scholars attempting to define it, literature offers definitions based on traits, behaviours, influence, interaction patterns, role relationships and positional power (Yukl, 2010, p. 20). One commonly shared approach to defining it, however, is provided by Northouse (2016, p. 6) who broadly states that “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal”. Based on an extensive review of existing studies, Winston and Patterson (2006, p. 6) offer a more integrated and complex definition of leaders, as they claim that the multitude of existing definitions fail to describe leadership within a larger and adaptive context, emphasizing on relationships among selected variables only and not considering the bigger picture. The introductory statement to their concept emphasizes the following: “A leader is one or more people who selects, equips, trains, and influences one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization’s mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives”. (ibid., 2006, p. 7). While they shied away from a ‘holistic’ definition, Winston and Patterson (2006, p. 32) highlight the evolving nature of the definition of leadership, whereby a defined end is not in sight, as long as scholars continue to reveal new dimensions to it.

Sprenger (2012, p. 28) explains that the reason for the multitude of explanations and obscurity lies in the excessive valence that has been ascribed to the leadership term. He continues in his argumentation that everyone using the term leadership has a different interpretation of its meaning. In researching leadership, Malik (2014, pp. 36-37) even goes as far as stating that we need to rephrase the fundamental question we seek to answer when studying leadership. We need to move away from focusing on researching ideal leaders to researching effective leaders. Thereby, while still acknowledging that commonalities do exist, only the individuality of leaders, their unique qualities and characteristics which distinguish them from other leaders, shall be considered. I therefore attempted to research individual roles and qualities among executives which they perceived to have guided and continue to guide their effectiveness in the marketing sector.

The empirical findings of this study likewise reveal diverse understandings of the concept of leadership, whereby they are largely influenced by the requirements placed on leaders by the current work environment. Consequently, the establishing of a proper framework for work performance, in which employees are granted sufficient creative freedom and empowered to take on responsibility is highlighted as a key concept in this study. Redefined metrics of success and emotional intelligence further broaden the definition of contemporary leadership in the marketing sector.

In a personal interview, Müller-Wernhart (2016) argues that within an environment that is changing at such an accelerating pace, a classical approach to leadership, involving
hierarchical power, has fundamentally changed and that it is no longer reasonable to rely on formal processes which try to control and determine everything. Instead, it is important to exercise a new lead competence in aligning employees’ strengths with work tasks and letting them ‘run on their own’. Having the right people in the right positions already suggests the necessity for effective employee selection and at a later stage a strong focus on goals; whereby employees are encouraged to work in self-managed teams. Those are defined by Solansky (2008, p. 332-333) as being entitled to self-manage their team processes, whereby they are granted “the autonomy, authority and responsibility to manage how their team functions” (ibid., p. 333). Furthermore, rather than designating a formal leader governing these teams, they are allowed to decide themselves on who will take the role of their leader (ibid.) and as a result increased efficiency is achieved (Emery & Trist, 1960, as cited in Gilboa, & Tal-Shmotkin, 2010 p. 20). According to Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview), freedom with respect to how employees perform their work will ultimately result in an increased leadership competence. In line with this, John (2016, personal interview) attests to a change in leadership approaches, with a strong focus on the emotional component of leadership. He likewise refers to the process of an effective employee selection, during which equal decision-making power and critical selection is executed by both employers and employees. In a time when employees increasingly consider the type of leadership and management that are governing organisations, it is critical to redefine the leadership role and offer a new generation of employees what they need – support in their performance and achievements rather than classical governing. Within the process of supporting employees in what they do and what they aim to achieve, leaders should offer them the freedom to decide on the means and the backing in case of problems or doubt, which suggests once more the positive outlook on self-managed teams.

An alternate explanation to leadership is provided by Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) who states that leadership may be anchored on an interplay of two dimensions: the technical competence in order to be taken seriously and the social competence in order to gain acceptance. Also Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) defines leadership as a matrix, comprised of dichotomous elements: a short-term focus on the here and now and its implications for the future, and a long-term focus on goals and visions. Furthermore, leaders need to exercise task-orientation at the core of their business and a relationship-orientation among themselves and their employees, but also among the respective relationships of their employees. The constant reciprocity among opposing competencies is confirmed by Bennis (2007, p. 5) who declares an adaptive capacity as the foremost leadership quality.

What both Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) and Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) indicate in their definition is the importance of referring to the field of social neuroscience in specifying the leadership role. While the original authors (Mayer, & Salovey, 1997, as cited in Riggio, & Lee, 2007, pp. 420-421) of the concept of emotional intelligence refer to it as the ‘ability model’, comprised of four abilities – perceiving emotions, utilizing emotions, understanding emotions and managing emotions – Goleman (1998, as cited in Riggio, & Lee, 2007, pp. 420-421) augments this concept by adding the personality, motivation and social-skill component, leading him to arrive at the emotional competence model, including: self-awareness, relationship management, social awareness and self-management. Goleman and Boyatzis (2008, pp. 74-76) likewise attest to the importance of emotional intelligence in a leadership context, however, claim that “leading effectively is […] less about mastering situations – or even mastering social
skill sets – than about developing a genuine interest in and talent for fostering positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need”.

Aligned with their argument, they suggest the extension of a sole focus on the individual leader and his emotional intelligence to a more relationship-focused concept of social intelligence, in which interpersonal competencies inspire effectiveness among employees. In similar fashion, Ecker (2016, personal interview) focuses on an employee-oriented definition, whereby he ascribes to it the task of motivating employees and believing in them when helping them to develop their potential. While it is necessary to intervene at certain points in time and to draw clear boundaries, the expressed feedback should always remain constructive and never diminishing in order to increase their strengths and to lessen their weaknesses (Ecker, 2016, personal interview). Realizing the vital role of emotional and social intelligence in the context of leadership and effectiveness, Riggio and Lee (2007, p. 424) argue, however, that many of these skills are not acquired within the frame of leadership or HR development programmes. This may again suggest the importance of making a reference to artists on stage, who in their training and development are required to work excessively with emotional expressions and interpersonal skills, broadening the scope of perceptions and feelings they allow themselves to experience (Schein, 2013, p. 1), and their audience to witness.

According to Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) leadership first and foremost carries with it a certain responsibility in terms of having to provide answers to questions in the context of the market, the environment, the competition, the products offered and ultimately the people involved. In essence, leadership refers to the establishment of an effective framework for the successful and sustainable development of the organisation and the people in it (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Within this framework and guiding corporate vision, employees should be able to perform at their best, have sufficient creative freedom to develop their ideas and stay motivated to remain loyal to the company (Hauser, 2016, personal interview). The overriding principle naturally includes yet again social intelligence and the universal pursuit of success, which Skias (2016, personal interview) describes as having different definitions according to the individual and which, preferably, should be governed by realistic and shared goal setting.

In the midst of commercial results, shareholder value, employee satisfaction, innovation and other overriding shares of success, on a personal level Christensen (2010, p. 48) advocates setting a strategy for one’s life course, which should be considered as a roadmap in leading the way to personal success and this roadmap should not solely be based on monetary values. He further offers three vital questions that shall help one to arrive at a different perceptive on life and to use them as a guide in making decisions throughout various spheres of life: “How can I be sure that I will be happy in my career? How can I be sure that my relationships with my spouse and with my family become an enduring source of happiness? How can I be sure I’ll stay out of jail?” (Christensen, 2010, p. 48).

In summary it may be stated that what the respondents agree upon at large, in defining leadership, is the accumulative effect of certain competencies and skills in achieving individually defined metrics of success (Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Critical reflection on how to achieve these metrics is first suggested by Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation), who like a few other respondents referring to a more general understanding of leadership, provides the first indications of the need for self-leadership, reflected in emotional and personal abilities and skills. She declares that, in the end, it is
not only about delivering products to your customers, in whatever form that may be, it is also about making sure that you have the ability to deliver them (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). I consequently propose that leadership shall not be limited to any concrete definition, as different situations and different followers require different leaders and hence definitions will largely depend on personal concepts and demands faced. In similar fashion, a performance on stage may be defined and described differently by different actors, screenwriters and viewers, all dependent on their personal frames of reference. Heroic pictures and necessary skills which comprise leadership, have been highlighted by several scholars, but have not received universal understanding. For this reason, I suggest to let one’s own definition of leadership emerge and evolve through reflection and personal experiences.

4.1.2 The leadership honeycomb
Drucker (as cited in Sprenger, 2012, p. 30) argues that overall leadership performance is comprised of several individual parts. While other researchers propose a multitude of skills, competencies, approaches and winning characteristic, I attempt to focus on the sector and situation specific ones by drawing upon the empirical findings, which supports the aforementioned adaptive definition of leadership. Hence, within this chapter the individual parts of leadership: the competencies, values and skills as perceived by leaders in the marketing sector are examined. The sum of these may offer a valuable insight into internal and external attributions, individual competencies, personal and company values, all of which are directed at leaders themselves and their employees respectively. I present the findings in three stages, the opening one focusses on strategic competencies, proceeds with values guiding their leadership and concludes with personal skills and competencies that are closely tied to the concept of self-leadership. In the following section, a word cloud figure is displayed, which highlights the various leadership elements and their frequency of mention by respondents within this research, whereby technical competence in the respective industry sector is taken as a given and not explicitly mentioned.
Figure 1: Leadership elements

Source: by the author

Principally, as may also be taken from the word cloud above, appreciation, trust, motivation, goal-orientation, proper communication and various forms of emotional intelligence predominate respondents’ understanding of essential leadership elements, which align with the previously given personal definitions of leadership, circling primarily around establishing an effective framework for employees’ performance and exercising social and emotional intelligence in order to have everyone live up to their potential.

When asked about essential competencies at a leadership level, Skias (2016, personal interview) referred to a client’s statement, which to her is a guiding incentive towards success. The client declared that he appreciated an agency based on their ability to delight and surprise him in any way favorable. In order to provide such value for clients, John (2016, personal interview) suggests working together with clients rather than for them.
He continues his explanation in describing a scenario familiar to marketers, in which a lot of agencies wait trembling about whether a client will approve of the sent proposal or not. Trying hard to avoid such a scenario, John (ibid.) states that as an agency they want to be able to send out five different suggestions to a client, while still upholding their responsibility and right to honestly and openly propose their specific recommendations as well as any objections to the client’s decisions. The principal goal is to make the best of the given requirements and to add great value for clients, while avoiding a movement towards performing based solely on a contractual and accounting basis, but rather to foster collaboration as opposed to a servant relationship. As experience has shown, a collaborative and joint approach in developing marketing measures has proven its worth, as according to John (ibid.) the marketing departments of his international clients appreciate the given approach. On a more broadly defined level, Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) likewise attests to the importance of enacting one’s responsibility and duty as a leader of raising one’s honest opinion and reversing a decision when necessary.

Further essential competencies that affect both corporate and leadership effectiveness, include the ability to realistically and correctly assess stakeholders as well as developments in the market, the company, clients and employees (Hauser, 2016, personal interview). Such strategic competence is similarly highlighted by several other respondents alongside the need for effective decision-making. Furthermore, Ecker (2016, personal interview) points to the importance of aligning the company vision and goal with a transparent and favorable image for employees to follow and to likewise inspire motivation for jointly assessing areas in which to change and to improve. In the midst of strategic objectives and responsibilities, however, John (2016, personal interview) argues that it is crucial to engage in operative work at the same time as not to lose connection with the core and essence of the business. If leaders are to focus solely on strategic aspects, they are performing within a theoretical framework and the given industry sector is changing too quickly as to remain in a sphere that is purely theoretical (John, 2016, personal interview).

Values guiding the leadership enactment are naturally dependent on the type of ownership of the respective agencies, whereby two CEOs among the respondents are leading agencies which belong to an agency network, within which values are set at a corporate level and transferred down to a regional level. Frequently mentioned by respondents and in line with the previously defined role of leaders, is that creative freedom may be regarded as one of the primary values guiding leadership in the marketing sector (Reichl, 2016, SAI; Hauser, Hörlezeder, Feher, 2016, personal interviews). When establishing such a framework for work performance, respondents confirmed the need to bestow trust on employees for them to deliver results and express appreciation for their performance in a less strict environment. Reichl (2016, SAI) further highlights fun, autonomy, performance and individual responsibility as key values in leading creative talents in the marketing sector. In this context, Ecker (2016, personal interview) repeatedly underlines an effective employee selection as a starting point for jointly delivering performance, based on team-spirit, respect, cooperation, honesty, goal orientation, fairness and equality; whereas Skias (2016, personal interview) adds commitment and loyalty as additional values. In the midst of all competencies and skills appropriate for leadership, John (2016, personal interview) stresses eyelevel as the principle value in leading others. He affirms that formal positions and job titles are no indicator for superiority and that leaders should avoid hubris, but rather focus on supporting their followers in their development. At the same time, Ecker (2016, personal interview) reminds leaders not to lower their authority to a ‘buddy’ function as this would
diminish leadership effectiveness. Closely connected with eye-level, humanity and humbleness are additionally mentioned by John (2016, personal interview), who relates these to maintaining their existing corporate culture, characterized by friendship and support. Particularly, if a company is growing really fast, the risk of accidentally destroying the corporate culture through enlarged egos or people only performing in pursuit of collecting bonus points for their CVs, is heightened. Hence, yet another reference may be made to also effectively selecting people in leadership positions, who truly want to inspire, support others and do something meaningful, rather than moving up for career reasons only (John, 2016, personal interview).

On a personal level, several competencies emerged, which are considered valuable in coping with the industry and leadership demands and may serve as first indicators for the ability to engage in effective self-leadership. According to John (2016, personal interview) leaders should, broadly speaking, possess all characteristics and qualities one would look for in good friends or good colleagues, which further highlights the supportive corporate culture within his agency. Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) underlines the ability to quickly prioritize, classify and manage a variety of complex, urgent and important issues, to ensure that all can be achieved and completed successfully. This naturally requires a great deal of stress resistance, out-of-box thinking and passion for one’s job, which intrinsically motivates performance results (Skias, 2016, personal interview). Aside from intrinsic motivation and a positive attitude, there appears to be a need for the ability to reflect, learn, embrace new things and trust one’s intuition in empathizing with followers and authentically enacting a role model function for them (Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). In this regard, Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) explains that it is not only important to have leaders set an example for what they expect their employees to do and be, but also that they help employees handle processes and interactions among one another, following the principle of “facilitation is the new black for leaders”.

A relevant summary of the skills and competencies required from leaders within the marketing environment is provided by Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) who refers to the ability of decision making, which also entails the ability to delegate, to assign responsibility, to empower, to encourage and to entrust employees, as leaders cannot be effective when intervening at the deepest operative level. She further mentions the ability to empathise with people, the ability to effectively translate meaning across a diverse group of employees, which is reflected in appropriate communication patterns, whereby one has to consider different ways of conveying the same message in order to effectively reach everyone. Among all this, resilience proves to be valuable considering also that leaders will not always be liked by all followers in each situation, but still have to endure. Overall, three main competencies are at focus: visionary foresight, empathetic interpersonal skills, as well as exemplary actions and designing of processes.

On the whole, I believe that, in a way, leadership resembles the ice berg model, in that not all elements of leadership are visible at first, but recognized once experienced. Leadership embodies a honey comb, whereby all elements are intertwined and keep the whole together, but are in no specific order or rank, then again of equal importance. Furthermore, I conceive that different contexts and different groups of followers require us to be different leaders. Still, one thing that shall always remain true, no matter the
contingencies, is that leadership is about inspiring oneself and others to follow a joint vision, along a shared path of trust and appreciation. Leading the way involves empowering others, helping them to learn, to grow, to evolve, to be successful and to achieve their goals, by considering oneself a starting point in paving the way to success.

4.1.3 Different stages, different acts

One argument that may be raised in regard to the research focus is the question of why I am specifically researching the marketing sector as an illustrative example? And what makes me perceive that this sector requires a distinct approach to leadership compared to other industry sectors, who are likewise impacted by disruptive forces? The notion on which I based my research objectives and the proceeding research study is my personal – still limited – work experience within this sector. With the intention to uncover practical and relevant inputs from key players in the industry who have gained their fair share of experiences, I asked for their controversial perceptions on whether leadership in the marketing sector differs from leadership in other sectors. Whether they have to lead significantly differently and if so based on which reasons. As previously stated, no definition of leadership is set in stone, no universal assumption governs this role and no preliminary set of skills will guarantee success. While the leadership role is well researched (Bryman, 2004, pp. 729-769), necessary competencies repeatedly listed (Yukl, 2010; Pinnow, 2011) and discussions enjoyed more than ever, I propose to add value by exploring this topic on a micro level – within the marketing scene.

According to Skias (2016, personal interview), fundamental leadership skills do not vary significantly across sectors, but are required in every one, whereas leadership styles differ in that people working in marketing tend to be more informal and unconventional in their roles and actions, while still providing a necessary structure for work performance. The assumption is supported by Feher (2016, personal interview) who likewise attests that essential leadership skills, such as described in chapter 4.1.1 - The death of the classical leader - are shared across all sectors, while routines and especially routine tasks tend to be scarce goods in marketing.

Offering an additional understanding of the different approach required in marketing, Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) points out that leaders need to be faster, more adaptive, more communicative, somewhat more scientific, more straightforward and less formal, in order to manage the disruptive environment. On the contrary, Ecker (2016, personal interview) appeals to the actuality of not being able to single out a sector which is not affected by rapid transformation. He further reminds us that we are living in a decade characterized by extensive change in our economic systems.

The marketing sector offers a variety of possibilities for performing work, while other sectors often have distinct rules and clearly defined processes and routines for fulfilling tasks. Following these predefined rules will guide one to achieve an ideal end-result. In marketing, processes are rather an exception, due to the numerous possibilities one has for implementing ideas and delivering performance results (John, 2016, personal interview). To illustrate his argument, John (ibid.) referred to the example of developing a new campaign for the launch of a new product among his clients, whereby no predefined process will describe the means to this project. Therefore, instead of a leadership role that often aims at securing processes and procedures, leaders in marketing need to compile the right team of individuals, who are motivated to break new ground and feel confident in not having clear rules. Thereby, leaders in marketing also need to inspire and empower employees to develop their full potential, which is further confirmed by Hauser (2016,
personal interview) and Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) who advise granting employees creative freedom in their performance, as this receives even greater importance in marketing, wherein distinct personalities and creative talents are at the forefront. Reichl (2016, SAI) continues with this understanding that within this knowledge intensive industry, leaders have to better interact with and nurture their talents, whereby other sectors may still learn a great deal from marketers in this regard.

Overall, the majority of experts have reinforced my notion that the marketing sector requires a distinct approach in leading their creative talents. As a universally successful style of leadership does not exist, Pinnow (2011, p. 78) suggests that leaders instead command several different styles and just as actors on stage select the right act depending on the respective scene. Thereby leaders are required to strike a balance between the unconventional and the traditional, flexibility and planning, structure and creative freedom, saying and enacting in coping with the demands. As a potential means to mastering the demands and balancing act, individual concepts of self-leadership are examined in the following chapter alongside possible barriers thereto.

4.1.4 Self-leadership – at the heart of learning

“All people are the same. It’s only their habits that are so different”

(Confucius, n.y.a., online).

As mentioned previously, the work environment has changed and continues to change, which causes a simultaneous shift in commonly known forms of leadership, where top-down, clear hierarchical structures are no longer effective (Uhl-Bien, & Marion, 2009; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007, as cited in Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012, p. 216). Rather, the concept of leader self-leadership and inspiring followers to lead themselves (Pearce & Manz, 2005, as cited in Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012, p. 217) is promoted as a means to successfully master the dynamic environment and demands therein. While leadership at a general level is rather concerned with the achievement of external goals in a joint effort with followers, self-leadership may be seen as one possible element within the leadership honeycomb, which focuses on the personal development and the achievement of personal success of the leader him/herself as a means to enhance overall leadership performance and at last inspire employees to follow the lead.

The concept of self-leadership has received significant attention and was ascribed a plentiful amount of research during the past decades (i.e. Drucker, 2005; Manz & Sims, 2001; Neck & Manz, 2010; Further, Rauthmann, & Saches, 2015). Introduced first by Manz and Sims (1980, as cited in Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 205) self-leadership was deemed to substitute formal leadership and aimed at broadening the concept of self-management (Manz, & Sims, 1980, as cited in Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 68). Manz (1991, as cited in Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 188) offers the following differentiation among the two related concepts: “self-management is a process and set of strategies that primarily address how work is performed to help meet standards and objectives that are typically externally set […] (it) tends to rely on extrinsic motivation and to focus on behaviour”; whereas self-leadership is defined as “a self-influence process and set of strategies that address what is to be done and why as well as how it is to be done […] (it) incorporates intrinsic motivation as has an increased focus on cognitive processes”. Alternatively, self-leadership may be defined as “a process of
behavioral and cognitive self-evaluation and self-influence whereby people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation needed to shape their behaviors in positive ways in order to enhance overall performance” (Neck & Manz, 2010, as cited in Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012, p. 217). The formal definition builds upon the following three complimentary strategies, which comprise self-leadership:

- behaviour-focused strategies
- natural reward strategies, and

The first aim at raising one’s self-awareness and managing essential, yet, at times unpleasant tasks. They include the competences of self-observation, self-goal setting, self-motivation, positive self-feedback, self-reward and self-coaching (Manz, & Neck, 2004, as cited in Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 70; Carmeli, & Weisberg, 2006, pp. 76-77). Natural reward strategies place a focus on inherently positive aspects of tasks and the process to complete them, whereby work performance is viewed in a positive light as being rewarding, which shall contribute to one’s competency, self-control and intrinsic motivation. Thirdly, constructive thought pattern strategies emphasize an optimistic outlook and its positive influence on performance (Manz, & Neck, 2004, as cited in Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 70).

In the past, self-leadership has been subject to several critics in that it is not clearly distinguished from other theories, as it builds upon and is applied within the context of motivation- and self-influence theories (Houghton, Dawley, & DiLiello, 2012, p. 220). New research by Furtner, Rauthmann & Sachse (2015, p. 121), however, claims that self-leadership may be clearly differentiated from closely related theories and that it further proves to have a positive influence on job performance, as well as on stress management, personal fulfillment, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and career success (Neck, Houghton, Sardeshmukh, Goldsby, & Godwin, 2013, p. 475; Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, pp. 193-194). Mastering effective self-leadership is also viewed as a necessary starting point, if leaders want to lead their followers in ways that uncover their full potential (Manz, & Sims, 1991, p. 23). Carroll (2007, p. 51) confirms this fundamental understanding when claiming: “if we intend to lead and inspire the best in others, we must first trust the very best in ourselves – permitting ourselves to be fully who we are – permitting ourselves to be fully human”. Hence, self-leadership within its organisational and social context is viewed as a first step in leading others, as likewise based on the support of their followers, leaders are able to enact self-leadership and both their efforts and vision will be in accordance with one another (Noda, 2004, pp. 17-18).

4.1.4.1 Understanding self-leadership

In order to deepen the above summarized theories, I researched leaders’ views on self-leadership to gain a more nuanced understanding of individual strategies and possible elements to the given concept, which resulted in a conceptualization of self-leadership at the core of the findings. It is important to highlight that any findings presented in the proceeding chapters may be regarded as a source of inspiration to self-leadership, because just as there is no universal approach to leadership, there is likewise no universal approach to self-leadership, but only individual experiences.
In summarizing the multifaceted concepts of self-leadership as held by respondents, a certain structure and interplay among possible elements emerged, as may be seen in Figure 2: Conceptualization of self-leadership below. At the core of it all, the individual’s personality structure plays a significant role in his/her ability to utilize an interplay of emotional, behavioural and cognitive strategies. These strategies provide the base for engaging in a continuous and conscious learning effort as well as differentiated actions and reactions, all of which may, at a higher level, contribute to the individual’s search for meaning, self-transcendence and ultimately the ability to effectively lead employees and inspire self-leadership among them. An ongoing personal reflection throughout is required in order to ensure that leaders enact self-leadership in the best possible way, learn from their past, evolve over time, stretch the limits of who they are and want to become and improve their overall leadership. The various empirical findings underlining the conceptualization of self-leadership are discussed in line with the transcendence from leader self-leadership to follower self-leadership.
In line with existing studies (Forster, 2008, p. 76), empirical data have revealed that leaders’ personality structures (including personal traits and values) have a strong impact on their ability to perform self-leadership effectively, whereby existing literature has shown that a high level of conscientiousness causes individuals to engage more in self-
leadership than those with a low level of conscientiousness (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 203). In the first instance, one’s personality affects the ability and willingness to develop and apply emotional, behavioural and cognitive strategies, which likewise provide a deeper insight into further possible elements of self-leadership. Similar to the definition of Manz and Neck (2004, as cited in Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 70), I have clustered the emergent elements among three complementary dimensions (emotional, behavioural, cognitive), whereby certain elements may be attributed to more than one dimensions or even be the result of an interplay of two or all three dimensions respectively.

Strategies for self-leadership on an emotional level include, among others, the ability to control and regulate one’s emotions. Similar to an actor on stage, a leader who can express his/her emotions, adds depth and authenticity to his/her words and actions. However, there is a fine line between controlling emotions and being governed by emotions (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Moreover, a positive attitude towards work and life in general, as well as the ability to empathize with others are crucial in that we, whether we intentionally want to or not, reflect our feelings to the outside, which are in turn mirrored by followers (Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezder, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview; Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 202). Furthermore, personal intuition (the sum of previous experiences) and emotional intelligence may be highlighted on an intermediate level between the emotional and the cognitive dimension of self-leadership (John, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Emotional intelligence, as previously referred to as the ‘ability model’ (Mayer, & Salovey, 1997, as cited in Riggio, & Lee, 2007, pp. 420-421) is defined by Salovey (1990, p. 189) as “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions“. Therefore, it may be argued that emotional intelligence can further facilitate cognitive and behavioural strategies of individuals and their continuous journey of learning to enact self-leadership.

Moving to the cognitive dimension, the following strategies were drawn from the empirical findings: self-motivation, trust in oneself and in others, self-discipline, humbleness and self-awareness (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Particularly the latter two are essential if leaders wish to provide their followers with the creative freedom they need, as it requires them to know themselves well enough to give up parts of their power, control and glory (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) further emphasizes the ability to maintain focused on the future, while acknowledging past events and putting closure on them. Effective thinking patterns have also shown to raise the level of self-efficacy of individuals (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, p. 203), which is defined as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the
motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands” (Shepherd, Covin, & Kuratko, 2009, p. 593).

As a final addition to the trio, the behavioural dimension refers to inherently personal acts and strategies for managing personal resources, processing inputs, balancing work and play, and generally coping with the demands, which aids leaders in being effective and successful. In a way this may be seen as the physical enactment of self-leadership on a personal level, mostly the backstage, whereby differentiated actions and reactions, in contrast, represent the authentic role modelling character on a broader level that is purposefully taking place on the front stage. Some of the first are described in more detail in the following chapter on self-leadership enactment as possible elements to this dimension, which provide a source of inspiration with a practical focus. According to Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) an interplay among the three dimensions may also be viewed with regard to how individuals take care of themselves. While maintaining sight of one’s goals (i.e. an increase in salary, introducing new product offering etc.) is key, at the same time, one needs to manage progress towards those goals and ensure that he/she has ability to make progress and perform. Consequently, self-leadership on an emotional, cognitive and behavioural level is seen as critical so as not to over-use personal resources.

Upon an interplay and effective enactment of the aforementioned strategies, leaders consequently engage in continuous learning efforts, whereby not only learnings from personal experiences, but likewise learnings from others’ experiences are considered valuable. In order to maximize learning opportunities, one has to demonstrate the willingness to improve and the curiosity to explore and regard each experience, positive and negative, as a learning experience (Ecker, 2016, personal interview). Aligned with a conscious learning effort based on the three dimensions, leaders simultaneously engage in differentiated actions and reactions, based on their experiences and assessment of what the respective situation requires. In contrast to the behavioural strategies, differentiated actions and reactions take place on a higher level, in a more public setting with the aim of setting a visible personal example for inspiring self-leadership among followers. At this point, leaders shall keep in mind how they wish to be led and follow that vision in presenting a role model for followers (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview). Being a role model however, bears the burden of being observed constantly, front and backstage, no excuses, no timeout. Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) emphasizes the importance of a role model function, which she compares to a parent-child relationship in that followers and children alike will not always listen to what leaders and parents say, but they will always observe their actions. Hence, remembering the timeless words “actions speak louder than words”, actions and reactions shall always be guided by a conscious effort in inspiring behaviour among followers and based on the individual’s value spectrum.

At the highest level, self-leadership contributes to and is motivated by leaders’ search for meaning, which as stated by Viktor Frankl, provides the primary motivation and main driver for human beings (Malik, 2014, p. 397). Meaning cannot simply be granted to someone, an individual has to actively search for it him/herself, whereby three main paths
are described in research: meaning in work performance, the love for another person or the bearing and mastery of hard fate. The first is concerned with work achievement, execution and performance, a contribution made externally rather than within oneself (Malik, 2014, p. 397; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). In the given context this implies a transcendence of personal boundaries in the pursuit of meaning, whereby leaders inspire self-leadership among their followers by encouraging them to take on responsibility and decision-making power, which shall aid them in their own pursuit of meaning. According to John (2016, personal interview) empowering followers depicts one of the greatest motivators that leaders can provide them with – the belief and framework for them to develop their full potential (John, 2016, personal interview).

Reflecting on a meta level on the concept of self-leadership, Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) argues that above all, it is about the capacity to self-transcend. Whereby, it should not be misunderstood and misinterpreted as a form ego-leadership, within which leaders are dealing merely with themselves. The key lies in an individual’s ability to be at peace with him/herself and to possess the necessary self-awareness to not take him/herself too seriously, but to transcend to an externally attributed meaning, whether that be the commitment to an external cause or another person. In order for that to happen, however, it is necessary to be aware of and reflect on one’s own value spectrum, which again refers to the very base of self-leadership: an individual’s personality (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Throughout the course of engaging in self-leadership, critical reflection on one’s actions, expressions, learnings, strengths, weaknesses, success and failure was underlined repeatedly by respondents (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Reichl (2016, SAI) suggests that self-leadership is also about finding answers to fundamental questions including:

- Who am I?
- What are my strengths?
- Where do I belong?
- How am I performing at the moment?
- How do I want to perform in future?
- Which contribution can I make?

Noda (2004, p. 17) also refers to the need for seeking answers that define the purpose of one’s life in order to help derive values which may guide (self-) leadership.

It is fair to argue that self-leadership has no distinct boundaries to where it starts and ends; it represents an iterative, life-long journey through which individuals inspire greatness in themselves and their followers. As Skias (2016, personal interview) argues, self-leadership is about the need to continuously work with oneself. In this chapter I have attempted to provide a nuanced view on the empowering concept of self-leadership in relation to inspiring followers to lead themselves and seek meaning in their lives, based on an effective role modelling character, the individual’s learning curve and personal strategies to self-leadership at an emotional, behavioural and cognitive level, all of which is governed by the ability to continuously reflect. The following section aims at disclosing possible barriers to this concept.
4.1.4.2 The dark side of personality

While possible constraints to self-leadership are not prominent in existing research, the danger of having one’s personality deter individuals from engaging in effective self-leadership emerged from empirical data. In line with the previously presented model, self-leadership begins and ends with an individual’s personality. It is the very starting point and the deadly end to the successful enactment of self-leadership. One challenge lies in allowing for change and engaging in continuous learning as an individual grows older and his/her personality becomes strengthened over time, forming a personal narrative. This may potentially hinder one’s flexibility to learn and develop in pursuit of acting in patterns in order to reduce risk (Skias, 2016, personal interview). As part of the ability to learn and develop, it is likewise necessary to allow for failures and develop a culture in which the fear of making mistakes is minimized (John, 2016, personal interview).

Another danger is seen in leaders who only strive for self-expression and consider themselves superior based on formal positions, which may quickly result in a downfall and negative effect on corporate culture (John, 2016, personal interview). Therefore, it is important to emphasize intrinsic motivation and the pursuit of doing something worthwhile rather than chasing an ideal self-image (John, 2016, personal interview). Particularly the glittery and creative aspect of the marketing sector causes individuals to view themselves as epigones of Andy Warhol, raising their confidence beyond being conducive and igniting their pursuit of defining themselves based on success and image (Ecker, 2016, personal interview). In this context, Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) refers to the concept of “prima donna leadership”, which has its origin in the performing arts. Guiding principle is the, at times, (over-)sensitive behaviour of creative talents, requesting a great deal of acknowledgment and appreciation for their performance. Especially since legitimation is critical to marketing efforts and investments, individuals seek to validate themselves through overconfidence and ego highs (Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Morriss, Ely, & Frei (2011, p. 161) likewise affirm the barrier of overemphasising one’s own image and relentlessly pursuing a self-composed ideal script for leadership. This can deter leaders from enacting their role in its entirety in that they will only engage in actions that support their ideal image, rather than those that are required in any given situation. A further negative implication in this regard may be seen in the negative effect on the empathy and perceived authenticity of leaders (Morriss, Ely, & Frei, 2011, p. 161). A corresponding lesson thereto may be found in the Icarus paradox in Greek mythology, in which the character Icarus was blinded by his overconfidence in being successful. The tale tells the story of Icarus who built wings with beeswax and feathers in order to escape from an island. Succeeding in the beginning, he was then “flying too high” which essentially resulted in his downfall as the sun caused his wings to melt away. The very thing that makes us successful can quickly turn into our self-defeat unless we work against our personal biases (Vermeulen, 2009, online). While maintaining a certain humbleness is critical to one’s learning curve, it is likewise important to avoid building on a plateau of accumulated success and to reflect on ways to keep improving in order to continue to be successful and avoid a downfall (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Also Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) reminds us to maintain close contact with oneself as an anchor to not getting carried away with thoughts and actions in the midst of the fast pace, money and glory.
4.2 Self-leadership performance

Scholars have elaborated on theoretical frameworks for self-leadership at length, however, concrete illustrations of the given concept in a business or organisational context have been disregarded. This chapter therefore attempts to provide possible strategies and tactics which shall inspire leaders in how they can proactively approach self-leadership or improve their existing means of doing so. Based on the conceptualized model of self-leadership (as illustrated in the previous sections), this chapter aims at presenting a practical approach to how leaders effectively enact this concept on a day-to-day basis as illustrated in the marketing sector. The importance of motivation, strategies for processing inputs, views on integrating work and play, as well as sources for continuous learning and authentic role modelling emerged as the prominent areas of respondents’ enactment of self-leadership. While the previous chapter discloses the theoretical foundation for a more nuanced understanding of the concept and its immediate interrelation to leading followers, this section shall be viewed as a source of inspiration in mastering the industry demands, maintaining curiosity and engaging in a continuous learning effort, all in an attempt to transcend to an externally attributed source of meaning and ultimately to lead followers to engage in self-leadership themselves.

The art of self-leadership is more of an intuitive learning journey rather than a formal process (Skias, 2016, personal interview). In a way it may be looked at as a means of marketing oneself, positioning oneself on the base of one’s core values and an extended identity, which covers all areas of one’s life, professional and personal; this also refers to leaders’ positioning within the mind of followers as an authentic role model, which causes a twofold impact: on one’s own fulfillment of meaning and followers’ own self-leadership journey. As Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) states, the basics of self-leadership enjoys a universal understanding, while differences naturally exist in the concrete enactment, also with regard to the country and industry sector. Some of the basics may hence be attributed to industry sectors as well as the time of transformation and change we are currently living in. Within sectors that place value on innovation and creativity, self-leadership may facilitate the inducing of such skills. Therefore, the following section presents proactive approaches to how respondents stretch the limits of their self-leadership, aligned with the succession of the conceptualization of self-leadership as presented in the previous chapter.

4.2.1 Behavioural cognitive and emotional strategies

In the opening scene of this research, person X was struggling to cope with the numerous demands he/she was facing on the given day. Throughout the chaos and stress he/she did not lose sight of his/her vision (self-motivation), but could possibly improve the strategies according to which he/she is managing work tasks, emails in particular (processing inputs) and take a closer look at the amount of time he/she is devoting to relaxation phases (balancing work and play). These three areas are described as the emergent dominate research themes in the rubric of emotional, cognitive and behavioural self-leadership.

4.2.1.1 Self-motivation

Achieving the state of intrinsic motivation – that is the attribution of motivation to the inner self – stands in strong relationship to personal fulfillment and the search for meaning of the respective individual (Reich, 2016, SAI; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal interview). Alongside the conceptualization of self-leadership, I propose that at the highest level of self-leadership, leaders find meaning in their endeavors when they transcend to a greater meaning beyond themselves, which provides the reward,
motivating them to engage in self-leadership effectively and ultimately inspiring the same among their followers. Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) confirms this proposal by stating that self-motivation goes hand in hand with meaning in that if an individual’s work provides a source of meaning to him/her, he/she is intrinsically motivated. While leaders continuously have to trigger their intrinsic motivation, it should never be faked, or else followers will realize it (Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview). Consequently, Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) advises answering the following questions in determining a personal meaning: What am I passionate about? What do I want to achieve? Answers to these may also be jointly derived with a coach.

Intrinsic motivation is also closely related to one’s desire to continuously improve, optimize efforts, simplify demands, increase efficiency and to satisfy one’s curiosity to try something new (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Moreover, an awareness of what good leadership can effectuate, inspires leaders to determine a guiding vision and goals that are shared across the organisation (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview). A further essential aspect of intrinsic motivation describes an individual’s positive attitude and joy about his/her work (Feher, 2016, personal interview), or as Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) refers to it, whether someone sees a glass as half full or half empty. A practical approach towards showing a positive attitude is given by Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) who shares the story of her ‘golden folder of happiness’. In an effort to focus on positive aspects, she started compiling a folder which contains a variety of sources for happiness to her. Together with her employees, she collects success stories which shall act as a motivator during rough periods, but also serve as an active reminder on small and big achievements, which otherwise may easily be forgotten in the midst of multiple different projects and the fast pace of the industry. At the end of each year, traditionally at the Christmas party, she shares all the success stories from the respective year with her employees as a means of jointly reflecting on the positive elements and inspiring motivation. Including negative elements (such as losing in a pitch to a client) in the folder as well, allows Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) to make sense of these happenings in retrospect and eventually view the positive in subsequent developments despite or sometimes because of the given failure. She established a culture in which employees contribute in collecting the success stories and inspires them to start a happiness folder of their own.

In conclusion, Malik (2014, pp. 151-152) argues that even with sufficient knowledge about and practice of self-motivation, it still requires a great deal of prevailing and effort from the respective individual. Being intrinsically motivated does not imply that one does not experience the state of defeat, frustration or any form of depression, it rather suggests that one does not persist in the subsequent state of sorrow and self-pitying. Individuals who are self-motivated possess the necessary resilience to inspire change in problematic situations, because they want to change something; they want to proactively do something worthwhile (Malik, 2014, p. 152; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview).

4.2.1.2 Processing inputs

“Time is an issue everywhere. [...] it is like an unconscious culture in our work life today that it is good to be busy and I am worth something if I am very busy” (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation).
According to Malik (2014, pp. 325-326), inputs include the increasing stream of hourly and daily information, requests and other sources, which are accumulated at executive level, irrespective of their relevance, importance, value or format (paper, bits and bytes). Leaders have to develop a personal system for processing the multitude of inputs, which is driven by the need for structure and prioritization (Malik, 2014, pp. 325-326). Therefore, this chapter subsumes a number of different strategies to cope with inputs in an effective manner. Our continuous effort to reduce stress, enhance efficiency and ultimately better manage time provides an interesting paradox to the amount of technological advances available, which should help us with just that but effectuate maybe the opposite. With all the developments in knowledge and technical resources, our own ways of managing inputs and time effectively have failed to keep up and are diminished in a relentless effort to work harder (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). Naturally, the dominant focus lies in structuring, prioritizing and classifying inputs into short-term, long-term and seasonal inputs, as well as in balancing strategic and operative tasks and meetings (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI; Skias, 2016, personal interview). While IT solutions may favour this process, Reichl (2016, SAI) warns that an excessive use of these will ultimately destroy creativity, whereby he recommends going back to the basics in using pen and paper. The big question now remains: how to process all these inputs and how to prioritize them?

One possible approach to structure inputs is explained by Skias (2016, personal interview) who sets out a rough structure for each consecutive week on the weekend before, including the main weekly and daily to-dos. In the midst of realistic plans, however, one should maintain a certain degree of flexibility in order to adapt to the respective situation when necessary. Weekly and daily plans also require the ability to realistically assess the time needed to move from one calendar post to the next, as well as sufficient time to be able to concentrate on other things in between. Writing daily to-do’s on post-its allows visibly and tangibly eliminating tasks upon completion and can further provide structure (Skias, 2016, personal interview). An alternate approach is offered by Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) who gains an overview on all inputs by sketching a mind map and prioritizing the respective elements accordingly. She further suggests working against an overflowing email inbox by printing out all emails and categorizing them by means of a colour coding system regarding urgency. To her this represents a way of eliminating virtual chaos and experiencing inputs in a haptic form, which provides structure and increases effectiveness (Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Moreover, introducing an email policy with set hours for strictly processing emails while avoiding keeping up with them throughout the entire day, suggests an additional means for increasing effectiveness and efficiency (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). One of the biggest barriers to processing inputs lies in a false prioritization, whereby individuals get caught up in urgent, but often unimportant matters. Thereby Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) refers to the benefit of applying the Eisenhauer matrix, which classifies inputs according to two dimensions: urgency and importance as may be seen in Figure 3: Eisenhauer matrix below.
By categorizing inputs according to their degree of importance and urgency, individuals are able to prioritize important matters and avoid focusing on urgent but unimportant ones. If one is to make the latter a priority, there will not be sufficient time in the day to effectively tackle important tasks. At a level of both low importance and low urgency, leaders should delegate the respective inputs or even consider eliminating them. The goal is to systematically declutter the multitude of inputs and demands, which are at times holding us back. Leaders may even go as far as organizing an annual decluttering party with their employees in order to jointly eliminate any unimportant resources, information and other inputs. Such assessment requires leaders to constantly move into reflection mode and question the value of tasks as well as the use of their time. They must learn to manage their time in a healthy way, incorporating time for relaxation (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation) and determining where they need to be, what they should do that no one else can do, and which support they need in order for them to be able to fulfill their role as leaders (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation).

4.2.1.3 Balancing work and play

Even though the prominent focus of this research lies within a professional context, self-leadership covers all areas of life. As previously stated, it has no limitations to its field of applicability within one’s life, but shall rather be viewed as a holistic approach to intuitive life-long learning with and about oneself. This naturally includes aspects aside from leaders’ work places as well, which explains why I investigated different perspectives on balancing work and play. I purposefully do not refer to these as ‘work life balance’, as in my understanding such a strict definition misleadingly suggests that individuals are not actively living their lives while performing their work and that an even ratio of 50:50 is aspired to, causing stress in individuals in fulfilling an imaginary goal of parity. This thinking pattern is also greatly shared by respondents. As approaches to balancing work and free time are highly individualistic, based on an individual’s desire to compensate for high job demands or extend an active lifestyle also to their free time (Skias, 2016, personal interview), I attempt to provide an insight into their views on separating versus integrating
the two. The research reveals several personal strategies and different focal points for balancing work and free time, whereby the most prominent ones involve family/partner, sports and hobbies/interests (Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview). Also, controversial views on whether a clear separation between work and free time is necessary, possible or even desired is discussed.

Perceptions range from the need for purposeful work-free weekends and the willingness to work longer during weekdays in order to ensure them (Hörlezeder 2016, personal interview), to combining work and play, without the need to draw a clear line of separation (John, 2016, personal interview). Creating a positive and creative work environment, including creative outlets, international business trips and the ability to set own working hours, allows John (2016, personal interview) to blur the boundaries of work and free time. He further argues that an integrative approach works well for him by eliminating unnecessary frustration in a relentless effort to include more of the ‘life’ aspect into a balanced equation. Rather, he tries to focus on a holistic approach in seeing both as one element, all aspects of life included and no clearly scheduled periods set aside for either work or free time, but approaching both with great flexibility. While the approach to balancing work and free time is generally a matter of personal discourse, it is likewise heavily influenced by the type of work individuals are engaging in, whereby international work, including business travels and exciting projects, may provide a source for combining one’s interests with an exciting career and hence contribute to blurred boundaries in the lives of the respective individuals (John, 2016, personal interview).

What respondents agree upon at large, however, is the need for relaxation phases as a means to compensate for the demands of everyday work and to clear the mind (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, persona interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation; Skias, 2016, personal interview). In more detail, Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) refers to a life wheel which individuals should keep in mind and attempt to maintain balanced. She states that in order to deliver a good performance and be happy as an individual, one needs to reflect on how much time is spent on work, sleep, relaxation, spiritual work and fun activities and whether this wheel feels balanced for the individual. The critical reflection on one’s own happiness also requires individuals to ask themselves how much longer they are willing to accept an unhappy or unbalanced state and when to check for improvements thereto at a future point in time. While it is not always possible to immediately change dissatisfactory aspects within one’s life, as this is greatly affected by an individual’s current life stage (career move, parenthood, international work project etc.), they need to develop a good self-awareness and engage in a dialogue with themselves, listening to their current needs and carefully observing possible indicators in their immediate environment for a need to change. However, according to Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation), constantly mixing work and free time, without a distinct sphere for relaxation is a bad investment in one’s life, as in the long run this would undermine the fundamentals and be a misuse of personal resources. Also, Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) attests to the importance of entering into a neutral state from time to time, similar to the course of Formula One with pit stops along the way. Therefore, she recommends actively placing specific “me, myself and I” time periods in one’s calendar, as a means to inspire creativity and compensate for highly productive phases at work. During the times of relaxation, it is likewise recommended to practice
single-tasking and engage in mindfulness, in order to strengthen one’s own self-awareness (Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). A common point of criticism often includes the excessive demand that is placed on individuals by the nature and environment of their work. Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation), however, argues that this is merely the result of individuals engaging in meaningless, rather than meaningful work. While she also does not believe in a clear separation of work and free time, she nevertheless indicates a need for antagonism in our lives. In the same fashion that we experience night and day, active and passive periods, we also need relaxation phases in contrast to cognitively demanding time periods. Therefore, no matter which side of the work/leisure continuum one is looking at, individuals need to prescribe themselves time to relax the mind, even from meaningful, joyful and fun activities in our free time. In the end, balancing work and play is a question of how an individual decides to spend his/her roughly 5800 waking hours per year. If such a decision is not taken, individuals are not managing their time, but time is managing them; they are not being effective, but are drifting away (Malik, 2014, pp. 323-324).

4.2.2 Sources of learning – the big rise
As stated previously, the willingness and ability to continuously learn is facilitated by an interplay of behavioural, cognitive and emotional strategies of the individual. While intrinsic motivation may generally be referred to as a major driver in this pursuit, it is likewise important to have sufficient emotional control, particularly when learning from failure, and conscious actions to prevent engaging into old patterns. Sources for learning are extensive and yet once more dependent on the individual in question. However, there are also common barriers to engaging in a continuous learning effort. Provided that actions are effective and results ideal, individuals may not aspire to improve their self-leadership. Rather, personal routines and strategies for everyday challenges and demands are applied (Dietz, 2011, p. 106). The psychologist Carol Dweck (as cited in Gino, & Staats, 2015, online) proposes that also a fixed mindset may act as a barrier in suggesting a limited belief in the power of learning. In her research she differentiates between the fixed and the growth mindset, whereby individuals governed by the former belief that intelligence and talent are predominantly dependent on genetics and that publically displaying one’s mistakes will suggest their incompetence, which explains why these respective individuals engage in a relentless effort to perform well and avoid mistakes at all costs. In contrast, individuals who approach life with a growth mindset, regard challenges as learning opportunities and aspire to take risks and continuously learn. Becoming aware of their own mindset and actively embracing a growing approach shall help leaders in maximizing their sources of learning (Gino, & Staats, 2015, online). But how shall one overcome the fear of making mistakes and more actively approach life with a growth mindset?

While a natural tendency to fear the negative consequences associated with failure is almost inevitable, one shall still develop an attitude wherein mistakes are viewed as a valuable source for learning and improvement, more valuable than success, as is confirmed by all respondents (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview, Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview; Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI; Skias, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Research suggests six direct areas wherein failure has an immediate impact: financial, emotional, physiological, social, professional and entrepreneurial, all of which suggest spheres that may be affected by
personal loss or personal cost (Cope, 2010, pp. 7-9). Being aware of these already provides the first step in preparing for failure and being able to better assess possible consequences in advance. In order to further diminish the fear of making mistakes, leaders must personally understand the value of learning from one’s mistakes and establish a company culture which supports this assumption. Being thrown into cold water or pushed to new limits allows individuals to grow, to strengthen their resilience and to better prepare for new challenges (Skias, 2016, personal interview). Once the value of failure (that it is not all negative) is understood and failure itself is accepted, one must develop a personal strategy for moving on from it. Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview), for example, strongly believes in personal mantras such as “all will work out in the end” and she actively keeps track of her achievements and mistakes in order to avoid lying to herself. Her list on “despite knowing better” features her progress and performance, whereby she keeps track of negative repetitive behaviour, in order to concretize and define sources of mistakes and ultimately move on from them, by determining areas for improvement. When faced with an immediate failure situation it is likewise important to keep looking ahead and to assess how the respective mistake can be minimized or compensated for in the given situation (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Skias, 2016, personal interview). Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge whether and how personal actions have caused the failure, rather than attributing it externally, which is commonly referred to as the attribution bias, according to which failure is attributed externally and success to oneself (Gino, & Staats, 2015, online). In overcoming this bias, one has to honestly look at the source of the mistake in retrospect and draw conclusions on how to prevent it from happening again in the future (Hauser, 2016, personal interview).

Moving from the personal level towards inspiring followers, leaders need to establish a culture in which employees are not afraid to make mistakes, which is especially important when the aim is to foster creativity. In establishing such a culture, leaders should engage in value-based work, developing a culture, explaining the values to all members and establishing a policy according to which mistakes are handled (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). This may even include unconventional measures such as electing a ‘mistake of the month’, which can then be shared across the entire organisation for others to learn from as well (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). As a second step and again at a personal level, leaders need to be an active role model and set a personal example of this culture for it to be credible (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Just as Winston Churchill claimed “success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm”, leaders must learn from the crucibles and embrace all opportunities, positive and negative, as a source for learning.

While failures represent a valuable ally for learning, several other sources were confirmed in the course of the research. In contrast to failure, success likewise allows individuals to learn as much as it motivates them and contributes to their level of self-efficacy. As discussed previously, the danger of building on previous success and developing an overly self-confident attitude should be avoided, else individuals’ mindsets will be limited and they run the risk of self-defeat as opposed to continuous learning and effective self-leadership. Respondents (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Feher, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; John, 2016, personal interview; Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Reichl, 2016, SAI; Skias, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation) have also referred to mentors, role models,
colleagues, employees, bosses, family members, consultants as well as older and younger acquaintances as opportunities to learn. Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) advises engaging in a joint reflection with any of the above to help further develop oneself. Coaches and consultants in particular may help individuals to determine meaning in their lives, to learn to control their emotions, process inputs and reflect on their actions (Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Hörlezeder, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Such conversations with coaches provide an outlet for engaging in a self-dialogue within a frame and location far away from everyday life. Having an external view from a coach and a distance to one’s daily life is considered valuable in allowing individuals to receive new reference points and new perspectives. Role models and mentors are likewise considered to be influential on one’s personal development, by offering advice and support.

Scholars also refer to the benefit of utilizing training in order to facilitate self-leadership and ultimately overall performance, whereby it is interesting to note that people with a lower level of conscientiousness tend to derive a greater effect from training in self-leadership, whereas individuals with a higher level of conscientiousness naturally have a higher tendency to engage in self-leadership on their own (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011, pp. 203-205). While a conducive personality structure exists, which affects the natural propensity and ability to enact self-leadership, certain strategies may still be acquired through training and may enhance overall performance (Manz, & Sims, 1991, p. 30). Pearce and Manz (2005, pp. 138-139) argue that without proper training individuals may lack the necessary skills, whereby areas of communication and conflict resolution should also be included in such training. The question arising now alludes to the form of these training programmes, as Hill (2008, pp. 123-125) claims that tomorrow’s leaders will not be developed in schools of business. It is more important to integrate several other disciplines into training programs on self-leadership, one of which may be the studies of performing arts, which may provide an outlet for creativity in expressions and actions as well as various emotional experiences.

Self-leadership cannot take place without the individual’s ability and willingness to learn and adapt. Inspiration for learning may be found in various forms and people, and is highly dependent on the individual and his/her mindset, whether that be fixed or focused on growth. This chapter suggests measures to promote a growth mindset as a means to maximize learning opportunities and outcomes, while also highlighting common barriers and how to overcome these. In line with their learning journey, leaders are simultaneously seen as role model when they perform differentiated actions and reactions in accordance with the respective situation, more of which is discussed in the subsequent subchapter.

4.2.3 Differentiated actions and reactions

While the previously mentioned strategies refer to measures on a more personal level, which do not necessarily take place on the front stage of the self-leadership performance, the differentiated actions and reactions point to the role modelling character of leaders. Based on their personal strategies towards self-leadership on an emotional, cognitive and behavioural level, as well as their continuous learning effort, leaders should engage in conscious and authentic actions that inspire their followers. Setting an example for what is expected from followers, requires leaders to start with themselves and become what they wish their followers to become. Hence, if leaders expect their followers to be flexible, they should likewise be a flexible role model for them (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation). In similar fashion, if leaders wish for followers to be enthusiastic
about new opportunities, they need to be so themselves (ibid.). The engagement and attitude set by leaders, has a major impact on followers, particularly in creative sectors. It is therefore critical that leaders find outlets to nourish their creative side in the midst of high job demands, as else they will not succeed in inspiring creativity among their followers (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation).

Whenever leaders are seen as role models, the term authenticity is used as a golden standard for the successful enactment of such roles. Several respondents referred to the need for authenticity in their actions as leaders. But what does being authentic really mean? According the Feher (2016, personal interview), it involves the ability to show weaknesses, whereas for Ecker (2016, personal interview) it includes actively setting an example and encountering employees on the same level, such as enjoying a celebratory glass of wine together or playing a game of foosball after lunch, in order to create an interlude in everyday work life. Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) argues that authentic leadership shall not be equated with being an immaculate leader, but rather having leaders admit mistakes, take responsibility and offer solutions, and actively live what they preach. Diving into more scientific definitions on authenticity, controversial views and theories prevail. Considering Bennis’ (2007, p. 4) proposal that “perhaps because the idea offends our somewhat puritanical notions of authenticity, we tend to forget that leadership often involves acting as if one were a leader”, what does it say about the boundaries to authenticity? Are leaders able to show weaknesses, ask for help, not know the answer, adapt to the situation, change their viewpoint - in the course of their leadership, or would such behaviours diminish their authenticity? Scholars (Shamir, & Eilam, 2005, as cited in Roe, 2014, p. 151; Yammarino et al., 2008, as cited in Roe, 2014, p. 151) advocate that authentic leadership builds upon an individual’s perceived authenticity and, consecutively, a leader’s perceived authenticity, as may be seen in Figure 4: Pyramid of authentic leadership below.

*Figure 4: Pyramid of authentic leadership*

![Figure 4: Pyramid of authentic leadership](Source: based on Roe, 2014, p. 151)
The pyramid suggests again the need to start at a base level, at the core of oneself, in order to lead others authentically. Formally defined, authenticity refers to an original, not a copy of something else (Ibarra, 2015, online). Ibarra (ibid.) claims that overly rigid definitions of authenticity (as may be seen in Figure 5: Three definitions of authenticity) hinder leaders’ efforts in being effective and successful. Three common definitions including: being true to oneself, being consistent in ones actions, expressions and feelings as well as making value-based choices are outlined below, alongside with their implications. Adopting a more practical view, Ibarra (ibid.) advises loosening definitions and experimenting with different selves, rather than being stuck with an outdated life story. More specifically, she recommends learning from a number of different role models, striving to improve rather than remaining static, as we cannot always succeed first time around, and lastly to let one’s story evolve, by acting as the editor of one’s screenplay (Ibarra, ibid.)

![Figure 5: Three definitions of authenticity](source: Ibarra, 2015, online.)

Being an authentic role model does not mean that leaders need to have all the answers, rather that they are evolving as individuals as they learn to effectively enact self-leadership. Acting as a realistic and sustainable role model goes hand in hand with being authentic (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, persona conversation), hence it is up to the individual leader to start at his/her core and develop an authentic self as a starting point for inspiring followers as an authentic leader.

### 4.2.4 Reflection

An inherent element of self-leadership is the ability and willingness to critically reflect on personal strategies, the effectiveness of these, on personal learnings, on areas for improvement and potential pitfalls, on one’s differentiated actions and reactions and whether they still comprise an authentic image that shall guide followers, on one’s meaning and sense-making, and on one’s ability to inspire self-leadership among others. Critical reflection provides an important source for learning; by assessing and making sense in retrospect, individuals can determine their future course of action and stretch the limits of who they want to become. Even though reflection should be a continuous effort throughout the course of self-leadership, similar to an individual’s learning, high job demands often deter them from entering into a reflective mode, but instead push them to fire-fight rather than pause and assess the status quo and future vision (Lindgren Helde,
A wise recommendation in this regard warns: “don’t avoid thinking by being busy” (n.a.a., as cited in Gino, & Staats, 2015, online), as reflection can help us to better understand and improve our performance. Critical reflection provides a source of information about oneself that may not always be obvious at first sight, but requires a greater degree of self-awareness, in getting to know one’s personal boundaries and reassessing strengths and weaknesses, by repeatedly stretching one’s mind and answering critical questions. Moreover, it can help individuals to put closure on the past and focus their energy on the future, which is especially important in the current fast-paced environment (Müller-Wernhart, 2016, personal interview; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation).

Proactive approaches to personal reflection may include coaching sessions with consultants, journaling as well as discussions with one’s network, as a means to further develop emotional intelligence and (re-)assess the alignment of one’s development and goals (Ecker, 2016, personal interview; Hauser, 2016, personal interview; Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation; Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) likewise highlights the importance of practicing mindfulness in our daily lives, living in the moment, and only focusing on one single task, element or person. As we are living in a fractal, multitasking world, the ability to, for example, only focus on the conversation one is engaging in in a given moment, sends a powerful message to the conversation partner and helps to enhance the emotional competence of the individual (Philipp-Sabelko, 2016, personal conversation). Scholars (Gino, & Staats, 2015, online) recommend scheduling time for reflection in one’s calendar each day, even if it is just a few minutes to rethink the events of the respective day. As the overall goal is to learn and possibly arrive at a new reference point, individuals need to be completely honest with themselves and should avoid biases by looking at a given situation from several perspectives, rather than just one’s own (ibid.). Reflection demonstrates a powerful tool for learning and reassessing behaviours, thinking patterns and attitude, however, only if one actively practices it on a regular basis.

In summary, I propose that the variety of strategies and tactics that are applied by leaders when engaging in self-leadership, suggest a multiplex relationship with regard to possible elements of self-leadership as well as its positive influence on leading followers to enact self-leadership themselves. This section offers an insight into the diverse practical applicability of self-leadership within an organisational setting and shall encourage readers to engage into their own self-leadership journey by viewing the presented elements as opportunities to learn.

4.3 Follower self-leadership

“Give a man a fish and he will be fed for a day.
Teach a man to fish and he will be fed for a lifetime”.

As the previous sections revealed both the understanding and enactment of self-leadership, this chapter highlights the positive aftereffect thereof: inspiring self-leadership among followers. I propose that the leader’s values and traits affect his/her application of emotional, behavioural and cognitive strategies in self-leadership, which in turn inspires differentiated actions and reactions in the given situations and continuous learning. Aligned with critical reflection, this provides the foundation for leaders to find an external meaning in inspiring self-leadership among their followers. Self-leadership
has likewise shown a positive influence on leading creative talent, whereby respondents argued that by encouraging self-leadership among their employees, these enjoy greater responsibility and decision-making power, which proves to be beneficial for them to develop their full potential. Other scholars have also suggested a positive relationship among self-leadership and innovative work behaviour (Carmeli, & Weisberg, 2006, pp. 85). Self-leadership is therefore considered to not only have a positive influence on the leader him/herself, additionally on leading creative talent by encouraging those to engage in self-leadership themselves. Also because one of the principal benefits of leading others towards self-leadership is based on a decrease in unnecessary demands that the leader is facing (Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007, p. 379), which may likewise increase his effectiveness. In addition to the prominent concept of self-leadership among leaders and followers, the benefit of a shared approach to leadership was derived from empirical data, as is likewise confirmed by existing studies (Pearce and Manz, 2005).

Given the disruptive work environment and increasing power on the side of the employee, leaders need to look for new ways to keep talents engaged, motivation high and creativity flowing. As already stated, self-leadership describes a possible first step in meeting these demands, whereby the respondents of this research also indicated the need to provide sufficient creative freedom without formal leadership roles. They further attested to the benefit of a sharing approach to leadership in combination with self-leadership, whose positive relation was also proven by Pearce and Manz (2005). Several scholars have similar views, whereby Pearce and Manz (2005, p. 132) argue that a higher level of education in the workforce naturally affects their desire to offer their knowledge in making a meaningful contribution. Pioneer Peter Drucker, suggested, already back in 1968, that the era of knowledge work depends on the voluntary contribution of skilled individuals (as cited in Pearce, 2007, p. 355). All of this requires a new approach in contrast to classical leadership theory (ibid.). Hence, encouraging employees to engage in self-leadership themselves by inspiring from the top may be very rewarding. Especially in sectors where a high degree of creativity and innovation is required, a combination of self-leadership and shared leadership may be very beneficial in having creative talents live up to their full potential (Pearce, & Manz, 2005, p. 136). However, it is crucial to align formal company reward- and other systems in ways that support a combination of the two approaches, or else the desired benefits will not be obtained (Pearce, & Manz, 2005, p. 138). One inspiring example for this is found in the digital agency LOOP, wherein John (2016, personal interview) withdraws from using formal performance indicators so as not to destroy the supportive corporate culture, and has introduced a variety of highly effective motivation programmes for his employees, including sunny hours (granting employees additional time off during the summer to enjoy the sun), office hopping (among the five offices in Salzburg, New York, Berlin, Sydney, Copenhagen) and others.

A formal approach to encouraging self-leadership among employees is also suggested by Manz and Sims (1991, pp. 22-30) in their concept of super-leadership. It describes the development of becoming an effective self-leader to promoting self-leading employees, whereby power is shared among the two parties. The authors suggest seven consecutive steps accompanying this transformation, which may be seen in Figure 6: Follower self-leadership below.
The role of the super-leader within this transformation process lies in inspiring self-leadership also among followers (Manz, & Sims, 1991, pp. 30, 33).

Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) points to a few other key aspects when encouraging self-leadership among followers; Leaders have to have trust and confidence in their followers, as this enables them to grow and reach higher. Furthermore, if leaders aspire to lead creative talent within the above presented approaches, they need to start with accepting differences among talents, because the main benefit of creative talents lies in their source of diversity, which cannot be obtained, if they try to fit everyone into the same box. Moreover, leaders should determine how they can best support creative talents in order for them to actually live up to their creative potential. This also affects the necessary structural framework, including administrators and the organisational environment, which should inspire, stimulate and reflect creativity. Essentially, it is not only what creative talents do at the work place, but also how they feel there, which has a big impact on their performance (Lindgren Helde, 2016, personal conversation).

“There are two ways of being creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish”. Warren Bennis

More specifically, Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation) suggests staying away from the traditional and instead include small areas for discussions, for moving around and expressing creativity.

In conclusion, many parallels among this research and studies by Manz and Sims (1991) as well as Pearce and Manz (2005) were identified. Consequently, in line with other scholars I propose that self-leadership positively influences the work performance of
leaders by better managing personal resources and reducing unnecessary demands, which can be assigned to followers. Secondly, self-leadership is beneficial in leading creative talent as leaders who act within their own self-leadership, inspire followers to the same concept. Thirdly, self-leadership may be integrated with a sharing approach towards leadership, whereby followers are empowered to develop their potential in learning to take on greater responsibility, and ultimately enact self-leadership themselves. Lastly, I broaden this view by suggesting that in addition to improved work performance of both the self-led leader and his self-led followers and enhanced creativity, long-lasting meaning may be found by both parties in the course of engaging in self-leadership.

4.4 Dear future leaders

When researching the individual leadership acts of the respondents in different settings, on different stages and in different points of time, I asked them to offer advice to aspiring leaders in conjunction with the joint reflection based on the interviews and conversations. Their recommendations and experiences on how to successfully lead others are illustrated below.

Starting out with a strategic perspective, Müller-Wernhart (2016, personal interview) reminds us of the importance of aligning client and company goals, providing the necessary structure for work performance, while simultaneously withdrawing from the desire to perfect everything the first time around, as certain puzzle pieces fall into place and certain issues resolve themselves over time. Most important to her, however, is the awareness of one’s own active attention span in that given the current madness of comprehensive information flows, developments, competing goals and innovations, one cannot control everything, but has to learn to entrust others to do their best on their own and to intervene only when necessary, without losing sight of the ‘big picture’.

Aligned with his understanding of leadership and the essential competencies thereby, John (2016, personal interview) likewise refers to the need to lower controls and to express more application towards followers. Overall it is crucial to signal to followers that leaders are no different and no better than their employees merely because they hold superior titles and formal positions. He concludes that being the equal of one’s teams and discarding hierarchical thinking goes a long way.

According to Reichl (2016, SAI), the key to a successful and effective leadership enactment lies within the ability to bestow trust on followers and to believe in young talent.

Hauser (2016, personal interview) advises viewing oneself as a starting point in learning to lead oneself by working with one’s own personality and only as a second step leading employees by forming the right teams and providing them with the creative freedom they may need and the help and backing when desired. In the meantime leaders should keep the big picture in mind and provide a clear direction for others to follow.

Similarly, Ecker (2016, personal interview) also attests to the positive effect of leading oneself, as well as to continuously reflecting on personal deeds and mental constructs, while sustaining perseverance and respect.

As a guide in one’s career, Skias (2016, personal interview) points to the ability and willingness to consciously learn as a driver of success and effectiveness, which goes hand
in hand with the ability to reflect and to allow for criticism. Also, being focused on a clear goal and proactively approaching it rather than taking too many detours shall ensure success.

In his advice, Feher (2016, personal interview) emphasises always bearing in mind the leader’s core function of being an inspiring role model for employees, which also entails the ability to show signs of weakness, making leaders all the more authentic and human.

Hörlezeder (2016, personal interview) encourages aspiring leaders to make sure they are happy on a personal level as this happiness will transfer onto their followers and contribute to their happiness.

Having gained her fair share of experiences as a consultant, Philipp-Sabelko (2016, personal conversation) quotes management guru Peter Drucker in her advice. She recommends critically reflecting and moving to a meta level in asking, which type of leader one would wish one’s children to follow and to act according to this vision.

“See yourself, host yourself to host others, lead yourself to lead others. You are the starting point. It comes from you and it all comes back to you” (Lindgren Helde (2016, personal conversation). Lindgren Helde (ibid.) concludes with the necessary and positive relationship to self-leadership and its impact on successfully enacting ones’ leadership role. She further advises developing a strong sense of perseverance in response to the demands and troublesome or uncertain times leaders are faced with. Leaders have to be the captain on the ship and maintain course no matter the conditions – rough sea, storm or calm waters. This also requires leaders to stick to their values and to never compromise their soul, to use them as an indicator in taking decisions, no matter what opponents or tempting opportunities they may face.
Figure 7: Advice from leaders

Source: by the author
5 Conclusion

“We know what we are, but know not what we may be” (William Shakespeare).

The overriding purpose of this study was not only to identify and analyze theoretical foundations for self-leadership, but to bring into focus a more expanded and practical view on leaders’ understanding and enactment of thereof. I used the Austrian marketing sector as an illustrative example to gain a more nuanced conception of the core research concept within the emerging economy of the 21st century. Diminishing resources, technological advances and high cognitive demands characterize creative industry sectors and require an adaptive approach in contrast to classical leadership theory. I hence proposed two research questions which analysed the concept of self-leadership as a means to cope with industry demands and identified possible strategies for its enactment.

In answering the former, I systematically approximated the core concept by first revealing the forces which impact today’s dynamic business web and obtaining perceptions of a general definition of leadership, as well as competencies and skills required at an executive level thereafter. I then proposed a conceptualization of the life-long and intuitive learning journey of self-leadership, with the leader’s personality structure at the core. Based thereupon, an interplay of cognitive, behavioural and emotional strategies contribute to a continuous learning effort and authentic role modelling character of the leader, which allow him/her, at a higher level, to transcend to an externally attributed meaning and encourage followers to likewise engage in self-leadership. In answering the second research question, I attempted to shed light on practical approaches to self-leadership such as fostering intrinsic motivation, prioritizing demands, adopting a growth mindset, defining an authentic self and engaging in critical reflection. The findings provide a source of inspiration for current and aspiring leaders to maintain curiosity, improve performance and engage in continuous learning. Finally, I proposed the positive relationship to self-leadership at the executive level and follower level, as well as shared leadership as a valuable approach in leading within sectors that require innovation and creativity. I suggest that self-leadership may have a threefold influence: on enhancing the leader’s performance, further developing the potential of creative talents and inspiring meaning among leaders and followers.

I view self-leadership as an art by which an individual is able to achieve fulfillment in all areas of his/her life, if done effectively. Sources for that personal fulfillment differ from individual to individual and imply that no universally applicable strategy exists, but rather a multitude of possibilities and personal experiences that may offer a kaleidoscope perspective. The idea that everyone has to determine his/her personal self-leadership approach represents the challenge and beauty to this concept in that because self-leadership is at times hard to conceive, one may engage in a lifelong learning journey, guided by inspirational inputs, and stretch one’s idea of who to become in the future. Sharing this empowering thought construct with followers in order for them to enact self-leadership themselves, underlines the principle idea of leadership. As in essence, leadership is and always will be about people, because people are the ones who make us a leader and people are the ones who require us to be a leader.
5.1 Leadership implications

This research contributes to leadership development in creative industry sectors by offering inspirational examples and a critical reflection on coping with the demands of today’s work environment. On a further note, the concept of self-leadership suggests a multiplex relationship within which leaders encourage follower self-leadership. This relationship is further mediated by situational forces as well as personality structures and the values of leaders and followers. In order for leaders to act as an encouraging role model, they first need to themselves master the art of self-leadership. With support in research, it may be argued that self-leadership training provides a valuable ally for leadership development. However, the question regarding its form and contents enjoys great controversy. As other scholars have already proposed, integrating self-leadership trainings into education may help leaders to better cope with demands (Neck, Houghton, Sardeshmukh, Goldsby, & Godwin, 2013, p. 475; Andressen, Konradt, & Neck, 2012, p. 78). Linda Hill (2008, pp. 123-125) however, claims that we need to look beyond business schools in developing tomorrow’s leaders. Therefore, given the elusive nature of the core concept, several dimensions shall offer opportunities for learning, including among others studies of performing arts. Training in facilitation, conflict resolution and practicing mindfulness would also be recommended. While self-leadership inherently refers to working with oneself, it is still valuable to receive an external perspective, particularly when reflecting critically on one’s actions and attitude.

Once leaders master the art of self-leadership, they can inspire others to engage in the same mastery. At this point, establishing a beneficial and creative environment is considered important, if the goal is to inspire creativity and innovation among followers thereby. Taking a deeper dive into the follower side of self-leadership would provide greater insights into the requirements thereto as perceived by employees. This would allow a better assessment of the importance of work environments and other aspects in the context of transforming self-leadership to “follower” self-leadership. Further possible allies for subsequent research are suggested in the upcoming sections.

5.2 Personal recommendation

As part of my leadership studies at the Linnaeus University in Kalmar, I was asked to write a personal letter to my future self, reflecting on my future leadership role and providing recommendations for my performance on the leader stage. At this point, I would like to share one specific paragraph of this personal letter as I believe these words to be applicable to many other aspiring leaders as well:

“Archimedes (n.y.a., online) once claimed to “Give me but a firm spot on which to stand, and I shall move the earth”. I know that you have not yet climbed this firm spot, that you are not yet ready, that you do not yet feel qualified to step into a female leadership role and that you still have a long road ahead of you. At the same time, I dare you to never fully be qualified and prepared for your role and to avoid building on a plateau of accumulated and reaffirmed success, or else your mindset and learning will be limited (Wiseman, 2014, p. 4). Nonetheless, I wish for you to have the courage to fail and to take on daunting opportunities, the passion to ensure commitment among your followers, the proper selfishness to go your own way and to not let society pressure you into categories and norms, the emotional intelligence to establish a network of trust and collaboration rather than separation on the base of differences, the communication skills to differentiate when to use powerful words and when to let your actions speak, and the strategic vision...
to guide you through the business map of hidden opportunities and threats (based on leadership key attributes by Ashby & Miles, 2002, pp. 215-217). Finally, I wish you to continue to believe in yourself and to never stop believing.

Yours,
Your aspiring female follower"

5.3 Personal learning
This research has required a great deal of energy, perseverance and strength, but at the same time, it has given me the same in return, in that it opened my eyes to my future career path and made me discover a viable approach to leading myself.

During the past couple of months I was frequently approached by colleagues, friends, and acquaintances on how I manage to juggle the variety of projects, responsibilities and demands and still end up with a positive bottom line. My answer was mostly reflected in my approach to coping with demands in general in that instead of asking how to do things I just do them. As Tina Fey (n.y.a., online) is famously quoted “Say yes, and you’ll figure it out afterwards”. There is no perfect strategy for one’s personal learning curve and development. I have certainly pushed myself to new limits and have risen to a new level of self-motivation, but in the midst of inspiring interviews and conversations with leaders, substantive examination of best practice approaches to self-leadership and the best possible network of followers, fans and supporters, I have discovered my very own approach to leading myself. It is fair to say that I have tried my fair share of productivity tools, personality assessments, physical compensation, culinary motivation (hello valrhona noir caraibe hazelnut), binge coffee drinking and management practices and all of them proved to have had a somewhat positive impact on my learning and development. However, I believe that it all comes down to developing a core strength, positive attitude and perseverance to guide us throughout all the chaos and ambiguity, stress and downfalls, failures and exhaustion, but also happiness, joy and success.

Reflecting on this research journey, I have to admit that aside from minor details concerning the timeframe for conducting interviews and conversations, I would not have proceeded much differently in regard to the execution. Regarding the methodological approximation with grounded theory, it was, on the one hand, valuable in allowing me to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of self-leadership and its positive relationship to leading others; on the other hand, it was often times difficult to maintain a clear focus and to not get carried away with the multiple themes that emerged, as this would have exceeded the scope of the research and blurred the discussion. Being a strong supporter of a certain degree of structure, I found it troublesome, at first, to embrace grounded theory and to not have a specific goal in sight when entering into the field research, which was also reflected in the first interviews I conducted, during which I was not yet sure in which direction the research would unfold. In the end, I was able to see the benefit of using this approach to broaden existing theories and to allow the personal narrative of the respondents’ to emerge without the researcher’s formal guidance.

5.4 Limitations
Due to its inductive nature, qualitative research naturally inheres certain limitations and challenges (Daymon, & Holloway, 2011, p. 55). While internal validity is usually ensured through the in-depth nature of interviews, external validity (i.e., the application of
findings to other areas of research) is often more difficult to obtain (Veal, 2011, p. 251). In retrospect, however, external validity was not aspired to as one of the research objectives, as this would stand in strong contrast to the dynamic and individualistic nature of the research topic. In order to shed light on the practical applicability and illustration of self-leadership through the Austrian marketing sector, I had to withdraw from the idea of a generalizable outcome that would satisfy all leadership categories, which in my opinion does not exist anyhow.

A major part of the study is based upon statements by executives from agencies within the Austrian marketing sector, since their understanding and enactments of self-leadership was at focus. While these executives were selected based on a convenience sample, recruiting international interviewees for future interviews/conversations, both on a leadership and consultancy level, might produce interesting results to be compared to the current findings. A further shortcoming in this regard may include the absence of an observational study to serve as a contrast to statements expressed by the respective executives. Aside from exceeding the research scope, the primary goal hereby however, was to acquire a basic understanding of the study phenomenon and to not let inaccurate deduction (merely based on observational studies), falsify the interpretations, but to rely on the acquired understanding in order to, at a later stage, better describe and ultimately explain the main research elements, possibly through a sequencing observational study. With similar reasoning, a survey among employees of the respective agencies, in addition to the interviews/conversations with their executives, would have gone beyond the scope of this research. Hence, the study placed a focal point on the leadership side of the continuum, with the role of self-leadership of leaders at the core, whereby I would encourage to research self-leadership among employees as a means to further broaden the view on the given concept and research results.

Self-leadership, in my experience and as confirmed by several researchers, is an inherently personal, life-long learning journey which takes place on several dimensions and shall not mistakenly be linked to solely the strategies presented in this research. Self-leadership has no boundaries and limits as to where it starts and ends, still the research covers only a fraction of the entire process, as holistic analysis of self-leadership would require a close observation and continuous dialogue over a longer period of time. Given the qualitative nature of the research, the depth and scope of information I was able to collect, was dependent on the rapport I had previously established with the respondents and their willingness to share personal information with me. For that reason, a great deal of the outcome is naturally based on the professional part of self-leadership. Nonetheless, this part of self-leadership has proven to be particularly valuable in exploring how executives in the marketing sector perceive their environment and both their role and enactment of self-leadership as a means to inspire follower self-leadership. The research intention of investigating the understanding and enactment of self-leadership among executives in handling all the demands, and coping with the pressure, was looked at from the agency perspective of marketing. As, particularly on the agency side of marketing, one is constantly in between seats with media and brands and has to wear several hats e.g. messenger, solutions-provider, idea-generator, facilitator, conflict-solver and many more. On the contrary, researching the client side of marketing might produce valuable insights for broadening the current research findings with a different perspective.

Being an inherent part of public debate, leadership and particularly self-leadership has received a substantial amount of attention over the past two decades, which shall further
prove its relevance in coping with today’s work environment, though individualistic approaches thereto have often been disregarded. No matter the outcome of this research, I believe that a simple blueprint for leadership is neither existent nor useful. The topic is an inherently personal one and requires tailoring to each individual, each organization and each industry. Therefore, this research may be regarded as an illustrative guide, a source of inspiration, a scene of critical reflection and a theatre for personal experiences.

5.5 Future research directions
The previous section discussed conceptual challenges and some shortcomings of the given research study, which may be challenged by future additions to the research. Likewise, I find it worthwhile to consider how alternatives may be developed in future research. From my perspective, there appear to be many avenues for future research on both the leader as well as the follower level. Therefore, future research could improve in terms of the depth of the study and taking its dynamic nature further into consideration. Possible further investigations may involve, for example, a focus on carrying out an observational study, accompanying executives in their roles and performance over a longer period of time and describing their enactment from an external perspective in contrast to their personally expressed perception thereof. Particularly the research indication on the potential for self-managed teams would benefit from a contrasting research of interviewing employees on their impressions, perceptions and actions in context with creative freedom and structure at the work place. Further, research on the relational perspective among self-leadership and health could provide valuable information. Designing appropriate work environments in which people are inspired, motivated and encouraged to thrive, develop and deliver, all in accordance with the principle of self-leadership from the follower perspective may be viewed as yet a further possible research direction.

To conclude on a personal note, I argue that the research on leadership theories enjoys a spotlight in a replete field of study, which requires a great deal of critical thinking and reflection to filtering out key concepts applicable to the individual. Because leadership is such a complex and situational phenomenon, there are likewise unlimited possibilities for researching elements therein. Hence, I recommend not chasing down a popular road of leadership success, but being open to newly emerging ideas and concepts and to learn from areas, relevant and inspiring to one’s personal leadership approach and learning, while stilling allowing for an authentic enactment thereof.
“Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. It is precisely that simple, and it is also that difficult. “
(Bennis, n.y.a., online).

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Appendices
Appendix A Interview guideline interviews

Marketing environment | impacting factors, characteristics
- Which current demands do you see in the marketing sector?
  - Any specifics within an Austrian context?
- What do you find particularly challenging and what rewarding for your agency?
  - Both internally and externally – industry changes, working with clients, etc.

Leadership | sources
- How do you define leadership?
- How would you describe your personal approach to leadership within your agency?
  - Which are important values for you?
  - Which are common constraints and incentives for you?
  - Please describe how you deal and interact with clients and employees.
- Please name essential traits and skills that you believe leaders in your position should possess?
  - Do you see any differences between leadership within the marketing sector and other sectors?

Self-Leadership | sources, defining frame of reference
“...A process of behavioral and cognitive self-evaluation and self-influence whereby people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation needed to shape their behaviors in positive ways in order to enhance overall performance” (Neck & Manz, 2010).

- Please comment on that within the context of your work and agency:
  - What could be incentives and constraints in the context of self-leadership?
  - What could be done to promote and ultimately achieve self-leadership in the context of your position?
  - What does your approach to self-leadership look like within your agency?

Adapting leadership approaches | contextual differences in marketing to other industries
- Please name some challenges that you are confronted with on a regular basis in your position.
- What do you find particularly helpful and what not in organizing your day?
- How do you structure your day, which tools do you use?
- How do you ensure an efficient communication flow within your agency?
- How do you balance your career and personal life?

Vision on effective leadership styles | recommendations, further development, possibilities for future job design
- Which moments have defined your style of leadership?
  - Attribute to success and failure.
  - Which do you perceive to be your greatest lessons learnt?
Who have been your role models and mentors throughout your career and why?
What advice would you give those aspiring to effectively lead others?

Appendix B Interview guideline conversations

Marketing Sector
Experts have described the marketing sector as currently being characterized by a fast pace, dynamic structures, pressure for budgets and efficiency, changes in the media consumption and landscape, rapid technological advancements, accelerating growth of the digital sector and the need to combine big data.

In how do you think these demands impact on the leadership within agencies in the marketing sector?

Leadership
- How do you define leadership?
- Given the current demands, which do you believe to be essential traits and skills of leaders within this industry sector?
  - Do you see any constraints thereby?

Leaders frequently mentioned emotional competence as an element of leadership that is receiving more and more importance.

- How can leaders further develop their emotional intelligence?

Leaders mentioned different key words in the execution of leadership such as “support function versus lead function”, “knowledge workers”.

- Which role do you think job titles play in this context?
- Which role do company-internal hierarchies and structures play in this context?
  - How could they be gradually lowered?
- Which role does age play among leadership within the Marketing Industry?
- What would be your recommendation for leaders within this industry sector to better manage the demands described above both externally and internally? (effective approaches)

Self-leadership
“A process of behavioral and cognitive self-evaluation and self-influence whereby people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation needed to shape their behaviors in positive ways in order to enhance overall performance” (Neck & Manz, 2010).

- Which elements do you believe to be essential for self-leadership within this industry sector?

Leaders mentioned the importance of making mistakes in order to facilitate learning.

- How can they establish an environment in which people are not afraid to make mistakes?
• Does the art of self-leadership within the marketing sector differ from other industry sectors?

Adapting leadership styles within the marketing sector
As the marketing sector is a people focused business in which creativity is seen as a must.

• Which would be your recommendations for leading creative talent?

Motivation (to motivate oneself, but also employees to lead themselves within this dynamic industry), trust, transparency and appreciation are among the most frequently mentioned elements in regards to leadership and self-leadership.

• What would be your recommendation for improving and supporting these respective HR areas?

Especially in the context of self-leadership, it is critical to enact a positive role model for others.

• What would be your recommendation in order to convey a realistic and sustainable role model?

Within the marketing sector, freedom for creativity is an important facet.

• How shall leaders best establish a balance among creative freedom and control?
• Which tools would you recommend for leaders in order for them to more efficiently structure and limit their everyday tasks?

Leaders expressed diverse views regarding a balance among career and personal life. Some said it is not possible, others said it took them a long time to establish a balance and yet one other claimed to not require a balance as the line is blurred and as he integrates both in his days.

• What would be your recommendation in this regard for leaders within the marketing sector?
• What would be your recommendation to frame the communication within an agency as effective as possible?

One expert argued to not make use of performance indicators, nor to try and improve efficiency as means to improve employee performance.

• What is your opinion on applying performance indicators to improve employee performance?

Vision on effective leadership styles
• Which factors do you believe to have the biggest impact in shaping leadership styles?

Experts addressed the importance of mentors and role models throughout their career.
• In how do you believe that these have influenced their career development?
  *Consulting an external coach in order to further develop leadership skills and competencies and to improve internal communication is likewise frequently mentioned.*
• What is hindering, what beneficial for you within this process?
• Which advice would you give those aspiring to successfully lead others?