



ANTIFRAGILE

The book with the subheading THINGS THAT GAIN FROM DISORDER has set many people thinking, especially managers! At our symposium in 2015 Rainer Bopp presented the basic concepts of this very controversial book. The book is on the one hand unreadable, and on the other hand, an impertinence to every intellectual. Nassim Taleb was paid an advance of 4 million US dollars for the book by his publishers. He is an excellent self-promoter and will no doubt recoup that money through provocations, personal insults and many original lines of thought. Nowadays the only way to write a non-fiction bestseller is in black and white. Moreover, many of the repetitions in the book (stretching to 600 pages) are calculated, too. A bestseller must be demanding and therefore not written in a way that can be read or understood by everyone. Nassim Taleb has studied the non-fiction market as intensively as the New York stock market. He has been successful in both fields. Few managers who we know have read the whole book. Most of them stopped at around page 150. Unfortunately, it is not a guide to anything ..., but is worth digesting in full!

Nassim Taleb's definition of antifragility. Following on from his global bestseller "The Black Swan", Nassim Taleb tries to develop a great practical and philosophical blueprint for the challenges of uncertain times (2013, btb Verlag). In these days of great changes, such as digitalisation, energy transition and the integration of people in saturated societies, he hits the nerve of the time of many people who today bear responsibility. In management circles this increased complexity has been discussed for some time under the acronym VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity). For approximately 20 years now markets have been considered unpredictable and economic developments almost impossible to forecast. Only 10% of all companies still make global strategic plans. Instead reputable companies now tend to work with risk scenarios under labels such as Business Continuity Management and Incident Management to find certainty in a world that managers can neither understand nor control.

Taleb's answer is to BE ANTIFRAGILE and, according to the publisher, to convert random events and uncertainty into strengths instead of trying to avert them at any price. Companies should avoid business models that are fragile, weak, non-robust, non-resilient, susceptible or vulnerable as social systems. Yet how are managers supposed to do this? Taleb distinguishes between fragile, robust and antifragile systems

Welche zwei passen zusammen?
Eine Frage von Nassim Taleb



and illustrates it with this picture question. The answer he gives is that the refrigerator is a complicated system and factories and cats are complex biological or social systems. Robustness as opposed to fragility is enough for complicated systems to survive (try destroying a modern refrigerator!). He thinks, however, that only the antifragile can ensure the continued existence of complex systems and that anything that is not antifragile will disappear. Thus, according to the author, “antifragility” defines a new way of thinking for a world that will never be predictable, despite all the progress that has been made. To sum up: Fragile is something that is destroyed when subject to large stresses and strains, wears out over time through use or is gradually simply no longer needed and consequently disappears! Robust is something that can withstand large stresses and strains and whose design is either simple or complicated (rock, refrigerator)! Antifragile is something that gets stronger or improves under stress. A prerequisite of antifragility is that the system is either living or complex, which is probably true of virtually all management tasks nowadays.