

## Professor Mats Alvesson

### The Stupidity Paradox: The Power and Pitfalls of Functional Stupidity at Work

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November The Edge Management Suite 2pm  
University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY

#### Professor Mats Alvesson

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**Abstract:** Functional stupidity means a narrow focus on instrumental thinking within the box. Functional stupidity means an adaption to structures, rules, expectations and norms without much reflection or critical thinking. There are countless everyday examples of organisations accepting the dubious, the absurd and the downright idiotic; from unsustainable management fads to the cult of leadership or an over-reliance on brand and image, structures and procedures. And yet a dose of stupidity can be useful and produce good, short-term and medium-term results: it can nurture harmony, encourage people to get on with the job, lubricate social relations and even drive success. This is the stupidity paradox. The talk tackles head-on the pros and cons of functional stupidity - a key aspect of contemporary organizations and institutions, including universities. The talk addresses how to make your workplace a little less stupid by challenging thoughtless conformity. It shows how harmony and action in the workplace can be balanced with a culture of questioning and challenge. The talk shows how anti-stupidity management can work. The talk is based on the presenter's recently published book: *The Stupidity Paradox. The power and pitfalls of functional stupidity at work*. Profile 2016 (with André Spicer).



#### BIOGRAPHY

Professor Mats Alvesson holds a chair in the Business Administration Department at Lund University in Sweden and is also part-time professor at University of Queensland Business School as well as City University London. He is Visiting Professor in the School of Management's International Centre for Higher Education Management at the University of Bath. He has done extensive research and published widely in the areas of qualitative and reflexive methodology, critical theory, organizational culture, knowledge work, identity in organizations, gender, organizational change and management consultancy. Mats has published more than 30 books with leading publishers and hundreds of articles, including in the *Academy of Management Review*, *Human Relations* and *Journal of Management Studies*, many of which are widely cited and used in higher levels of university education. He is a frequent key note speaker at academic and practitioner conferences.

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