



Open letter to my Dutch colleagues

You've got an exciting time ahead.

With less than a year to go until the election and what looks like the strongest bid ever for the Dutch parliament – the fact that the Netherlands doesn't have a parliamentary barrier to entry puts it in a great position to be a front bowling pin for other countries to learn from and follow – I thought I'd offer some hard-learned advice.

Over time in an organization that moves in a context as slow as politics, which is *glacial* speed by Internet standards, it's easy to get a culture that gradually sets. Things... stop evolving. Become static. It's the same people doing the same things. Challenge, fast pace and rough corners gradually get replaced by the comfort of the familiar. Building and learning by trial and error gradually gets replaced by strict processes and risk aversion. Running with wild ideas without asking anybody's permission gradually gets replaced by complaints that the right kind of process wasn't meticulously followed and meta-debates about processes, instead of executing the original wild idea.

As habits set, so do social relations in an organization forced by an external context to lie dormant for three years between election years. Some people like each other. Some don't. This is natural, but has a tendency to fester over time, breeding negativity and resentment, losing sight of the bigger goal, the vision on the horizon, the ability to change the world.

It only takes one country out of 196 to reject the current nepotist framework of legacy industries who are preventing the Internet's potential for that whole house of cards to come tumbling down worldwide, and every small win of votes is a signal to the current crop of offline-born politicians that they're not getting away with being lapdogs to the cartelized industry of the old world.



Therefore, I'd like to underscore how important it is to realize this is a fight for power. We may not see it as such. We probably don't see it as such at all. But make no mistake, those politicians we are trying to unseat to reach our goals for liberty, human rights, and a free Internet *very much* see it as fight for power, a fight for *their* power. We're the battleship coming in from the sea and challenging them with a strong command and an able crew.

We're the battleship that will take the power from the obsolete, offline-born politicians by force. Yes, this is important to realize: *voting is exercising force*, at the grassroots and individual level where it matters. It's a delegation of a monopoly on violence: the administration of a nation-state and its enforcement. The existing crop of politicians understand this all too well, make no mistake.

The Pirate Party was never leaderless. To the contrary, I underscore in my book *Swarmwise* that leaderless movements can never succeed, and why. Also, leadership is a state of group psychology – there is always a leader in any group and in any context, whether by formal or informal process. (The advantage of a formal leader is that there's equally formal accountability.)

The allegory with a battleship going into battle is an appropriate one.

On a battleship, people also like each other or don't. Some can't stand each other. That's normal in a group, after all, any group. But everybody on the ship knows there's a job to be done. And more importantly, when the time comes, your life on that battleship will depend on that person you absolutely hate on the other side of the ship doing their job flawlessly. And their life will depend on you doing yours. And so, everybody puts their differences aside when it counts, and does what's necessary to win, to pull through.

CORRESPONDANCE DE
RICK FALKVINGE



That's what this is about. Winning. There are no ice creams being handed out for good effort. Life isn't fair. In this game, hard effort without results is just mediocre inefficiency. You can break one or two rules of the game, you can bend a few more, but at the end of the day, the game we have chosen to play is about winning.

And I'm happy to see you've chosen a coach and a captain to lead you through this win. Ancilla van de Leest has all the charisma and more needed to play the election game by its brutal rules from the bridge of the battleship and win. But no captain can lead a battleship alone; at this point, it does require everybody to put their differences aside and lock their eyes on the prize by the horizon, working together on that ship under her command as the organization has chosen.

We can do this. We can do this together. We can keep writing history and add the Netherlands to countries where the Internet and online liberty – liberty in general, actually – has parliamentary representation.

Fair winds, my colleagues.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Falkvinge". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rick Falkvinge

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