

Storytelling - tell your whole story

Have you ever experienced the feeling of slight confusion after watching a movie that didn't make sense to you? The protagonists left you indifferent, their motivations and actions were incomprehensible. Yet, you can't let go of the film because something feels unresolved. Sometimes, I find myself in a similar situation with the stories of my clients, as the following example illustrates.

Peter Näf

Collaborating with a client in outplacement proved to be challenging. I couldn't get to grips with him, and even after several meetings, he remained oddly unfamiliar to me.

A brief overview of his story: After several years in an industrial company, he received a termination. The reason was a poor relationship with his supervisor and disagreement about the interpretation of his role. Before this position, he had led a larger team at a financial services company. I had the impression that his career had a break due to his previous switch, and I addressed it with him. He responded evasively. I couldn't understand his decision back then; his career path didn't make sense to me.

Sense is revealed in the overall picture

After some time, I provoked him by stating that his move to the industry had been a clear step backward. He agreed, and eventually, he told me the whole story: He had accepted the position back then for two reasons. Firstly, he wanted to leave the financial services industry and was willing to take on a less qualified role as an investment in his new professional direction. Secondly, his wife had increased her workload, and he had

taken on a larger share of childcare. Therefore, it suited him to be professionally less challenged for a certain period. Additionally, he and his future supervisor had discussed his partial overqualification in the job interview and agreed to enhance the position through challenging projects.

Sympathy arises through comprehensibility

Unfortunately, the position did not develop as expected. Due to a change in leadership, agreed-upon projects were not realized.

Now I understood his situation, and I could comprehend his decision. Through our open conversation, sympathy emerged, and the collaboration improved. My client also truly understood what had happened only now. Until then, he had avoided a critical examination of his professional past.

We then reworked his career story: On the one hand, he recognized that he had been unlucky due to the unfavourable developments in the company. At the same time, he had to admit that he had neglected to proactively seek a new position. By formulating what he had learned from this situation, the argumentation was complete.

Stories like these, where not everything goes according to plan, evoke sympathy because we have all experienced similar situations. And when the person involved shows that they have learned their lesson, a seeming failure can turn into a success story.

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