

What I learnt as a waiter for coaching

«Range: how generalists triumph in a specialised world». In this book, which is well worth reading, David Epstein describes how we can benefit from experiences from other life or work contexts in our everyday professional lives. He therefore advocates not specialising too early. This contradicts today's tendency to specialise already in certain subjects at school. Epstein cites analogy as a transmission belt for the transfer of experience from other areas.

Peter Näf

Reading the book reminded me of my beginnings as a coach: I was in two minds about whether and how I should prepare coaching sessions. During my training, I had learnt how important it was to get involved in the coaching process and not to control or even hinder it through planning. After all, even in the middle of an ongoing coaching process, I cannot know what concerns my clients will bring to the next session. And yet I felt uncomfortable if I didn't prepare myself.

I had already found it difficult to prepare myself in other contexts in the past. I wanted to be able to react to the unpredictable and feared that preparation would rob me of my flexibility. And yet the lack of planning has always been my downfall.

Analogies move us forward

As I was pondering this topic again, I had an intuition: mise en place! In the restaurant service industry, this refers to the preparation of everything that might be needed when customers arrive

later: Setting the table with the crockery and cutlery expected to be required as well as providing rechauds, spare cutlery, table linen, cone pullers, etc. The arrangements were independent of what I would need later. I didn't tell the customers what they had to consume. But I made sure that I could react quickly to their wishes, as I had anticipated at least some of them.

So, I can only make the most of my gift for improvisation if I give it a structure - improvisation without preparation turns into chaos under pressure. I was able to use this analogy from the catering industry in coaching.

Waiters are masters of work technique

I have learnt even more about working techniques as a waiter: never travelling empty-handed; constantly keeping my eyes open to recognise customer needs early on; working ready for the day and tidying up in the evening so that I can start the new day without any avoidable pending tasks. These are all working techniques that I still use today.

I had worked as a waiter for the fun of it and because the earnings were attractive for financing my studies. But I would never have dreamed that I would learn things that I could later benefit from in completely different contexts.

[#career](#) [#coaching](#) [#lifelonglearning](#)

Please find further articles on career topics on my homepage
<https://karrierecoaching.ch/en/articles/>

