

## How eagles learn to fly

A frequent topic of discussion with my clients is when to take the next step in their career. Despite their interest, many are reluctant to take on a leadership role, for example, because they don't think they are ready for it yet. They believe that they still need to obtain some kind of training certificate to be allowed to take the next step in their career. If you find yourself in a similar situation, you could possibly learn from eagles.

### Peter Näf

A few years ago, I spent a week hiking in the national park. One morning I struck up a conversation with the gamekeeper outside the hotel. With his telescope, he had an eagle's nest high up in the rocks in his sights and explained to me what was going on inside:

The stronger of the two young eagles had survived its rival, because a pair of eagles only raises one young. It would soon have reached the size where its maiden flight was imminent. Looking through the telescope, I could see its head and wings alternately appearing above the edge of the nest. The young bird was apparently trying them out and getting fit with dry runs.

### **You can't do it without jumping into the void**

I asked the gamekeeper how the eagle was now learning to fly; after all, trying it out with occasional crashes at this height was not recommended. He explained to me that the eagle parents would starve their offspring as soon as it was time for it to leave the nest. This would force it to

fly to its parents, who were waiting for it with food far below, but visible. The young bird was therefore not granted any flying lessons, but merely a leap into the unknown. As eagles are not extinct, this somewhat ruthless approach seems to work well.

### **Only the first step can be planned**

Even we cannot fully prepare for the practice and cannot avoid a first step into the unknown. Even though training is important, people only become good at their jobs through experience - practice is the best teacher.

During my coaching training, I practised many coaching conversations in the intervision group, among other things. This seemed like comprehensive preparation for practice. But my real-life clients behaved differently to my fellow students, who knew exactly what was important in coaching. The practical exercises in the coaching training programme were therefore just dry runs. I could have practised for years in training settings and would never have started my own coaching business if I hadn't dared to take the plunge.

And if we regularly reflect on our experiences in self-study or in targeted further training, then we achieve a sensible mix of theory and practice. After all, further training is most effective when it doesn't teach theory in a vacuum but is based on practical experience from our professional lives.

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