

Career - Planning or Design?

As a career coach, I am at times confronted with the desire of clients to plan their career far into the future. The literature also sometimes recommends that you should define the end goal of your career and then plan backwards into the present. Is that realistic?

Peter Näf

A client came to me for a personal and professional assessment with the aim of planning his entire career. He still had 30 years of work ahead of him before he was due to retire. And that's where the problem began: I asked him how certain he was that when he retired, his retirement age would still be 65 and not a more realistic 70? This was just one of the uncertainties we then considered.

A career is full of uncertainties

He had already made several changes in his career to date. On the one hand, this was due to newly discovered interests. On the other hand, external circumstances had helped shape his career, for example when he didn't get the job he wanted and had to reorient himself. If he had had a plan at the start of his career, it would have been cancelled out every time there was a change.

Similar changes will occur during his career: In addition to uncontrollable external circumstances such as economic and political developments, his personal needs will also change. My client was planning to start a family. What will be the impact on his life goals and values?

Compass instead of a map

And finally, existential events such as ageing, illness and death thwart our plans. For all these reasons, the most important prerequisite for planning is missing in a career: stability and reliability of the planning data. Why does a map function as a plan of the terrain? Because we can assume that the topography will change slowly enough for the plan to remain valid for a certain period of time.

Of course, we set ourselves career goals, but we prefer to leave the path to them open so that we can react to changes along the way. But even goals change. That's why we must keep checking whether our career development still corresponds to our needs, which may have changed in the meantime, so that we don't end up where we no longer want to be.

As we have no reliable data when it comes to career development and cannot find a clear solution using scientific methods, design thinking is a suitable method. It activates our creativity to find suitable solutions again and again under constantly changing conditions.

For most people, different career paths are therefore possible, and they do not need a map to navigate, but a compass to point them in the right direction.

[#career](#) [#personalbranding](#) [#coaching](#)

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

