

## Does career advancement always mean more stress?

Many people fear career advancement in the expectation that the stress of moving up a level is inevitably greater. If they feel overwhelmed in their current position, they even tend to downgrade. Is the assumption that the workload always increases in line with the hierarchical level correct? I have my doubts.

*Peter Näf*

There is a widespread hypothesis that more work means more stress and that work at a higher hierarchical level is inherently more stressful. However, employees don't usually reach their limits because of the amount of work.

More common reasons are that they find their work unsatisfying and meaningless or that it does not match their inclinations and talents. And above all, employees suffer when they feel externally controlled, lose their time autonomy and are unable to work in their own personal mode.

The following example shows that working one level higher could even be easier:

### **Are you already doing the job one step up?**

A client worked in industry with extensive responsibility for a business unit. She was developing successfully, and the company had offered her the next higher position, which she had previously turned down.

In the personal and professional assessment, she told me that she suffered from the constant availability that her superiors expected of her. In addition to her extensive range of tasks, she had also repeatedly launched initiatives to make work easier for herself and her team and to further develop the business area. I suspected that these

initiatives were the responsibility of her superiors, which she confirmed. In other words, she had already voluntarily taken on some of the tasks of the next level up in the hierarchy. I often see this with coachees who are not confident about taking the next professional step.

The reason for my client's current overload was therefore not her current job description, but the unofficial extra work she was doing from a more difficult position.

### **Boreouts are just as stressful as burnouts**

I therefore surmised that her professional life would be easier if she took on the next higher position at the next available opportunity instead of compensating for the negligence of her superiors from the lower position. She underestimated the possibility of organising her environment according to her ideas one level higher, which would make her work easier. For example, she was convinced that by improving the organisation, employees would not have to be available in their free time.

Whether the level higher would be more demanding for my client therefore depends on what the tasks require and to what extent they match her talents and inclinations.

The idea of applying for a lower level is not advisable because of the risk of being underchallenged. This is just as stressful as being overworked. I reckon that boreouts are as big a problem in today's working world as burnouts.

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