

## **Role play - an underestimated concept!**

William Shakespeare famously said to a protagonist in his play «As You Like It»: «All the world's a stage, and all men and women merely players...and one man in his time plays many parts... ». Because authenticity is so highly valued today, the concept of the role has fallen somewhat out of sight. A pity - because it offers a solution to many problems. What's more, role awareness and authenticity are not mutually exclusive.

### Peter Näf

We play many roles in our lives, usually without consciously realising it: We are son, mother, employee, superior, friend, etc. We behave differently in each role and only show part of our personality. Friedeman Schulz von Thun has created a beautiful image for this in his concept of the inner team: Depending on the role and the play being performed, we only send a selection of our inner ensemble on stage.

### **The role offers protection**

During the abolition of hierarchies in companies, roles are often inadequately defined in everyday working life. In addition, many positions require unspoken role changes on an ongoing basis: for example, line managers in projects are subordinate to technical employees, who in turn must take on leadership roles. In my consulting work, it is often the case that coachees no longer recognise their roles and gain security by clarifying them for themselves again.

The fact that consciously taking on a role offers protection is also evident in the application: In outplacement, I advised a highly qualified client with a specialised profile. As there were only a

few suitable positions for her, she kept receiving rejections, which put her under a lot of emotional strain. On the one hand, she had misinterpreted standard rejections, as I described in the article «Interpretation of standard rejections». But above all, she took them personally and felt rejected as a person. What went wrong?

### **Naked among clothed people**

Like most applicants, she applied for jobs as a whole person and the rejections also affected her as a person. I therefore suggested that she define herself as an entrepreneur in her own right and go to the labour market with her offer when looking for a job. She should therefore not sell herself, but her professional profile. A rejection means that her experience and skills do not fit. She as a person remains untouched. With this attitude, she was better able to deal with rejections. After all, the market woman does not feel rejected as a person if customers do not like her apples.

Even more important is taking on a role in the job interview. If job seekers go into the interview as Mr Müller or Ms Meyer, they are the only ones in the group without a role. Recruiters and hiring managers take part in the interview as role players. For applicants, this can feel like they are the only ones not wearing a costume at the masquerade ball.

So, taking on a role is not something you are not already doing. But if you do it consciously, you will be more successful and have more fun.

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