

## **A career is more like a golf tournament than a tennis match**

Do you know that nagging feeling of dissatisfaction because you think you could have achieved more in your career? And do you sometimes look really old when you compare your career with that of others? Welcome to the Club!

Peter Näf

The reason for dissatisfaction is comparison, which according to Mark Twain is the death of happiness. But since we're doing it anyway and we're driven by healthy competition, let's take a closer look at the comparison. Because it makes a difference how we compare.

Let's look at competitions in sport: in a tennis match, absolute performance is measured. The player with the higher score wins. To ensure fairness, different classes and age groups are defined. Nevertheless, this absolute comparison seems to me to be unfair and not differentiated enough for a career assessment.

### **We start with unequal conditions**

Let's take the example of a person who has come from a precarious family background with minimal schooling and has worked his way up to a leading position through perseverance, a willingness to learn and unparalleled commitment. Isn't he or she more successful than someone who has achieved the same from a privileged starting position?

As a career coach, I am repeatedly confronted with impressive careers of the first kind. I often find that these people lack pride in their achievements, as they only see the results of their career and compare it with that of others. However, results say little, as I described in the article «Why success does not speak enough for itself».

We could also say that people with

unfavourable conditions have a handicap in their career. Handicap is a term from the game of golf, where success is measured differently.

### **What is your handicap?**

In amateur golf tournaments, there is a gross and a net score. The gross score determines the absolute winner, i.e. the player with the best (in this case lowest) score, like tennis.

In the net ranking, on the other hand, the winner is the person with the best performance, considering her handicap, i.e. the level of play achieved up to that point. The participant therefore plays against herself and is rewarded for improving her performance in view of her personal starting position. In short: the winner is the one who has made the best of her situation. This approach makes far more sense when evaluating career success.

We can define the term handicap even more broadly: It is a handicap if I demand quality from my work and don't do every job that brings in money. If you don't want to jeopardise your health or neglect your family, you also create handicaps for yourself that must be considered when assessing your success. Or I, for example, voluntarily handicap myself by the fact that I want to achieve something in my job and express myself in addition to my economic well-being (article: «What do you want: salary, impact or self-expression?»).

I remind myself of this when I'm struggling with my career again and I'm immediately satisfied with what I've achieved.

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