

## Think with your head, decide with your gut

In which direction do I want to develop my career? Should I accept the job offer on the table? Which training programme best matches my career goals? A career is full of decisions. Many people find them difficult – and even more hesitate to trust their feelings. A pity, because when it comes to career choices, the gut is often unbeatable!

Peter Näf

Because career decisions have far-reaching consequences and bind us in the long term, they create enormous pressure. We want to avoid mistakes at all costs – and often end up on the wrong path out of fear. One reason is the mistaken belief that there is only one right decision. There are usually several viable options, as I described in my article «Dream Job One-Trick Pony».

Another stumbling block: we rely almost exclusively on the organ believed to be the sole seat of reason – our brain. Of course, decisions should be reasonable. But good decisions always involve several inner instances.

### Overrating the intellect

Career questions are complex. We carry within us different, sometimes conflicting, inclinations. Deciding therefore resembles herding a flock of adventurous goats rather than following a structured process. Many try to tame this complexity with lists of pros and cons: arguments for and against various options are gathered, weighed, and the decision appears to emerge mathematically from the sum.

But this method only creates the illusion of accuracy and appears «more rational» than it truly is. It is riddled with subjective judgements: have I really included the most relevant aspects, and is the weight I assign them correctly?

### Our gut is intelligent!

Purely rational solutions only work with rule-based problems – as in mathematics. When questions are complex, involving lots of information and contradictory conditions, our subconscious – the gut – usually makes the better choice. Cal Newport also describes this in his book «Deep Work».

A gut decision, however, is not an emotional knee-jerk reaction. It is the outcome of a longer process, one you support with your intellect: collect information and, importantly, put it down on paper. Analyse and research, reflect, sketch and discard ideas, ask questions – and above all: allow time. Unlike the head, the gut cannot be bribed or rushed. Major decisions cannot be forced; they must ripen. And once you have worked sufficiently with your head, your gut will suddenly know the answer.

Our inner instruments are only as good as the use we make of them. So never neglect your gut. It is not for nothing that it is sometimes called our «second brain».

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