

When success ruins the statistics?

In the context of outplacement, company representatives often ask me about statistics: How long does it take my coachees, on average, to find a new position? Does this figure say anything about the quality of my work as an outplacement consultant?

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I could give a somewhat flippant answer: "I don't trust any statistics I haven't manipulated myself." But even if the figures are accurate, how relevant are they when it comes to assessing the success of a consulting engagement?

I remember my early days as an outplacement consultant – and the pressure I felt to help coachees find a new position as quickly as possible. After all, I measured my own success by that standard. As a former personnel consultant, I know that those who are usually most successful in their job search are the ones applying for a similar role with a new employer. That keeps the statistics looking good and aligns with the interests of many employers as well as the unemployment insurance system.

The crucial question, however, is this: Is a quick solution always the best solution?

The individuals concerned come first

It is easy to lose sight of what outplacement should really be about: achieving the best outcome for the individuals concerned. Many of my clients use their period of unemployment as an opportunity for a personal and professional assessment. They want to understand which direction truly suits them professionally. Rather than taking the first opportunity that comes along, they

consciously choose a sustainable solution because they want to shape their long-term career development in a meaningful way.

Some even decide to deregister temporarily from the unemployment office to focus entirely on their career transition. From a career coach's perspective, this approach makes perfect sense. At the same time, it may extend the job search somewhat.

Success needs to be measured qualitatively

People who take this approach worsen my success statistics. This is even more true for clients whose job search is particularly time-consuming because of their background, their age, or the conditions in their segment of the labour market. And ultimately, these are precisely the people who need outplacement support the most.

If outplacement is to be guided by the needs of the individuals concerned, success must be measured qualitatively. A consulting engagement is not successful because someone finds just any job as quickly as possible. It is successful when the solution also makes sense for that person in the long term.

Neither the sponsor of the outplacement programme nor I as the consultant define what success means. Only the coachees themselves can do that. Therefore, as a sponsor, speak with your employees about whether they found the support helpful – and how they define success themselves.

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