

## Occupation & Career

### Politicians, Communication Coaches and Personnel Consultants about a Career in Politics

#### Dream Job Politician?

*From Eva Mandl*

- *Professional know-how is for a career decisive.*
- *Professional politics is not a job for the whole life.*

Vienna. Successful politicians with a different education and training: Ursula Stenzel, leading candidate for the ÖVP in the first municipality district of Vienna, was a TV journalist; Thomas Blimlinger, Green district party leader of Neubau, tobacconist; Vienna's party boss Heinz-Christian Strache, dental technician; and the red mayor Michael Häupl is biologist. The educational background of these politicians is as diverse as the first career steps of their political advancement. With the phrase "You still can count your silly frogs also later" – "*Deine depperten Frösch' kannst später auch noch zählen*" – did the then Vienna mayor Helmut Zilk call Häupl as environmental town councilor into the municipal government.

In principle, there are two possibilities for establishing oneself in politics: Either you are a well recognized name and you are being recruited as a

cross-enterer into politics, like the former ORF correspondent Stenzel; or – in case that your popularity is not sufficient – you follow the classical path by moving vertically from the base through the political semi-party organizations.

### **Like a “fireplace” career in business**

As in the case of Häupl, who engaged himself in the Young Generation of the VSSTÖ, became later member of the Vienna province parliament and municipality council, town councilor and finally major. Personnel consultant Andreas Landgrebe, acting partner of the executive search enterprise Ray & Berndtson CEE, compares the classical career path in politics with a “fireplace career in business”, where new generation talents move the career ladder quickly and directly upward.

Cross-enterer are mostly more independent and less conventional than professional politicians. But also they have shown their “color” before entering a political career or were recognized because of a close ideological relationship with a party. “If cross-enterer did not pick up a stable smell, they do not appear to be authentic, and their chances for a political top position are small”, stresses Landgrebe. Strache “never planed” for a political career in the classical sense. He met a dentist, who was politically active, and brought him “after long discussions to the FPÖ.”

### **To make oneself strong for concerns**

When you want to enter politics, it helps little to send letters of application to personnel consultants or parties. Also the will, to become a politician, is not sufficient. “Besides personal vocation and motivation are professional know-how, networking, commitment for a topic and high credibility decisive”, says Regina M. Jankowitsch, expert for Political Leadership.

The times have changed: ideologies and party programs decline in importance, what counts is the personal effect impact of the candidates.

Previously, parties were elected; nowadays, with increasing frequency, persons. In the media society no unskillful TV appearance remains unpunished. According to Jankowitsch, future politicians, therefore, need goals, topics and visions, to demonstrate credibility. Every engagement for a project or an initiative prepares for a political function.

Blimlinger's political career began in 1984, when the Greens formed up in Hainburg, and he supplied the demonstrators in the marshes with his "Ente" car. District councilor, legislative fraction leader, federal finance referee and district superior were his further career steps. "For me it was a growing into. I was motivated by the opportunity, to establish a new force with new ideas and actions", tells the graduated economist. "To make oneself strong for your concerns, immediately", this Häupl advises to all, who dream about a political career. For Strache is "the political vision the only criterion."

### **"Phase in one's life" occupation politician**

However, also the contacts outside the political networks are relevant. Here the politicians, who were interviewed by authoress Jankowitsch for her book "*Ich trete an!*" ("I run!"), agree. "Professional politics is no life-long job, but a specific life-period occupation", is the communication coach convinced. More and more people switch their jobs several times during the advancement of their professional career. Change equals challenges and opportunities. Particularly in politics. Because it is an above-average strength-robbing job. "Wear-out manifestations are more dramatic than in other occupations."

Around the clock the politicians are exposed to the public, and this powers out. Landgrebe and Blimlinger recommend a second occupational base. Political ascent should be enhanced with business and management competencies, complementary developed to the political ambitions. Because political careers are unpredictable – only a few achieve to move to the political top.