

## **Help, I'm a Boss!**

**Being all of a sudden a boss: While switching into a superior position, many pitfalls lurk. With coaching, from the beginning, a neo-boss can place himself or herself correctly for achieving the goals.**

Technically the new one is undisputed, but will he also demonstrate competence when dealing with people? Soon his colleagues will realize, whether the “head hunter” made a good choice. If so, it was certainly rather a lucky coincidence: whether a high-level manager can lead employees, is still as criterion subordinate for the recruitment of leading positions in many firms. A mistake, in that respect, does not only cause human damage in the team, but also a financial damage: failure costs an enterprise at least the one and a half annual gross salary of the top manager, as the Viennese management advisors Eblinger & Partner calculated (see box on page 102).

But often newly installed superiors fail because of “quite avoidable initial difficulties”, knows Regina Jankowitsch, who, as a business coach, already helped many, to master the first hundred days as a boss without problems. Leadership, particularly important in difficult times, does not “come from nothing”, thus Jankowitsch recommends to entrepreneurs, to transform, from the beginning, new high-level personnel into efficient performers.

“A ship, which rolls, does not arrive at its destination”, underscores Claudia Schmied, emphasizing, why it is essential that superiors find to a strong point of view. Only then one can communicate to the colleagues reliably, where the journey should go to, explains Schmied, who for nearly one year sits in the executive committee of the Kommunalkredit. In cooperation with Regina Jankowitsch, the banker discovered the “power of reliability” and that “leadership starts with confidence in yourself”.

To find out, who one really is and what one really wants, are core topics for coaching. “I always place as the first questions to my clients: What do you want to realize through your occupation? To what want you motivate or inspire people”, explains Jankowitsch her mode of working. The energy-spraying woman continues to bore: “How do you want to connect with people? With which values should your name be associated?”

The answers to these questions lead to the “individual corporate identity of every leading manager”, describes the business coach: the knowledge, where one wants to arrive and for what one stands, “is the heart for all career planning”. The remainder, as Jankowitsch is convinced because of her experience of many years as a coach, “results then nearly from alone”.

But only few manage it “from alone”, to define that clearly their desires and goals. Faster and more efficiently one arrives at this self-realization with the assistance of a coach, who accelerates this process with focused questions. And if one wants to position oneself well, from the beginning, as a newly installed boss, the factor time is particularly relevant.

**Promotion as challenge.** Nobody should feel embarrassed, to experience in such a situation a strong burden of demand, ensures Maria Resch from Eblinger & Partner. “A new position always represents a challenge, because at first it is unclear, what will come”, says the management consultant, who also works as a coach. Primarily are the following challenges, with which the neo-boss is confronted:

- Positioning of the role as a leading manager
- Implementing a path for the own future and for the team
- Establishing the own style
- Creating new structures

- Leading reference function as a superior

Rather much at one time, because besides also the regular work must be completed. Therefore, a leading manager should be supported and coached during the first three months, as Resch recommends – and experiences open doors for that message: meanwhile most personnel managers of domestic firms are actually convinced that coaching represents a useful mean. What appeared six years ago as so exotic, so that Regina Jankowitsch thought to be perceived as something like “E.T.” – “Nobody could associate anything meaningful with the term coach, let alone that someone wanted to be coached” –, is now almost something like the state of the art.

**Sparring partner.** And this goes so far that some human resource managers, such as Markus Schaschinger from Microsoft, recommend to every leading manager the regular consulting of a coach as a prophylaxis against problems: “With the support of coaching you can perfect your abilities as a leading manager, because you reflect thereby your role and behavior again and again”, summarizes Schaschinger the advantages of the professional listener and advice-giver.

“In addition you learn to see your contribution for conflicts – and you have a neutral sparring partner, with whom you can discuss new ideas and plans”. With this the personnel manager chief of Microsoft also makes clear that coaching is not an instrument for balancing personal deficits, as some believe, but represents a highly professional measure for the development of a personality. “Who ignores the fact that he has a potential for development, gets stuck”, says Schaschinger: “No leading manager can afford this”.

But the danger, to become blind for routine, is great: most superiors are surrounded by humans, who believe that they have to support everything, which is being suggested by the boss. “There one easily loses self-criticism and does not know anymore, what really happens, and what the colleagues really think of one”, says Regina Jankowitsch.

**A coach is not a magician.** But the most experienced coach pushes inevitably to the borders of the possible. Exactly there, where the client faces his limits. “We are no magicians, who bring voodoo-like problems to disappearance”, explains Jankowitsch. Coaching is a professional support for displaying the best aspects of oneself, says the expert. Only what is inside of oneself, can be brought to appearance. “With the best will one cannot make from a snail an elephant”, describes Jankowitsch metaphorically. “But we can teach to a snail, how to appear large and strong.”

– **Susanne Rössler**