

Why are some people at the top of their careers – and yet never really feel like they have arrived inside?

Some people reach every outer level of success – and in doing so, they move further and further away from themselves.

Especially with successful managers, I often encounter a paradox:

To the outside world, they appear sovereign. They decide, lead and bear responsibility.

And yet some still orient themselves inwardly to patterns that are much older than their current role.

The real question is therefore not:

How successful have I become?

But:

How free have I become free and live my true potential?

"Freedom does not mean always being able to do what you want. Freedom means no longer having to do what you don't want to do."

1. The old feeling behind many careers

Children don't just compete for attention. They compete for something more existential:

the feeling of being loved and valuable in equal measure.

These early experiences often give rise to unconscious beliefs:

- Something is wrong with me.
- I'm not good enough.
- I have to do something to get recognition.

These beliefs don't just disappear later. They often manifest themselves in professional life:

- Perfectionism
- Control
- Competitive behaviour
- Need for harmony
- Permanent pressure to perform
- the desire to keep proving oneself

Quite a few executives are therefore fighting less against the market than against an old feeling:

"I'm not good enough."

2. Why many people live as a copy or anti-copy

Many people believe that they have detached themselves from their origins. In fact, they often still react to them.

Some become copies of their parents. The others to the anti-copy.

Some adapt.

The others define themselves through resistance. But both binds.

Those who live permanently in resistance to their origins often remain just as connected to it as someone who adapts completely to it.

In both cases, the past still determines the present. Man then does not live as an original.

He reacts.

Only when people understand and integrate their origins does the freedom to be neither a copy nor an anti-copy arise.

3. Many professional patterns are not weaknesses

Performance, control, perfectionism, adaptation, emotional distance. Many of these patterns are not weaknesses.

They were originally sensible protection strategies.

They helped a child to experience security, recognition or belonging.

It only becomes problematic when these strategies continue to run automatically decades later – even where they are no longer necessary.

Most people don't notice this.

They consider their protection strategy to be their personality.

4. Why gifted, highly sensitive and neurodivergents are particularly affected

Gifted, highly sensitive and neurodivergent people in particular often perceive tensions, contradictions and unspoken dynamics earlier and more intensively than others. Many develop extraordinary powers of observation, adaptability and performance orientation from this.

At the same time, they often feel different, misunderstood or not really seen emotionally for a long time.

Coaching shows again and again:

What has long been experienced as a flaw often becomes its greatest strength as soon as people begin to accept themselves.

5. Four examples from executive coaching

a.) The search for recognition

A board member once described that every presentation to the supervisory board felt inwardly like the attempt to finally get his father's recognition in the past.

The stage had changed. The inner dynamics are not.

Only when he understood that he no longer had to fight for fatherly recognition did he become calmer, clearer and more confident.

b.) Loyalty to his sister

A highly gifted partner of a large auditing firm made herself smaller professionally than she was despite her extraordinary competence.

In the coaching, it became apparent that she unconsciously withdrew from loyalty to her physically and mentally impaired sister.

Only when she understood that she had kept herself small out of love could she begin to assume her own greatness.

c.) Control as a survival strategy

A senior executive had grown up in a highly unstable family with financial extremes, loss, and addiction. Even as a child, he had to constantly assess risks, moods and uncertainties.

Control and independence became his survival strategy. Later, it was precisely this strategy that made him exceptionally successful professionally. Internally, however, he was permanently under tension.

Only when he understood that control had been useful and necessary in the past could he begin to take responsibility without remaining permanently tense.

d.) The permanent competition

A board member of a large corporation came into coaching with massive pressure to perform.

He had a twin brother and was constantly compared from an early age.

Professionally, he was extremely successful. Inwardly, however, he was constantly in competition.

He couldn't even relax while playing golf.

Behind his enormous urge to succeed was less the desire for success than the old feeling of having to prove himself again and again.

In the coaching, it became apparent that his permanent competition had much less to do with his current life situation than with the early sibling dynamics.

Only when he understood that he no longer had to prove anything to his brother could he begin to live performance no longer out of inner pressure, but out of real sovereignty.

6. Why change is so difficult

"Suffering is often easier than solving." Not because people want to suffer. But because suffering is familiar.

The feelings that the protection strategies originally protected against were often painful:

- Fainting
- Rejection
- Loss of control
- Insufficient

That's why people often avoid these feelings for the rest of their lives.

Paradoxically, this keeps them tied to exactly what they want to protect themselves from.

The solution therefore often does not arise in one's own head alone. This often requires an honest mirror from the outside.

The crucial question: What is change worthwhile for?

Many people recognize their patterns. And yet they don't change anything.

The decisive question is therefore often not:

What do I want to change?

But:

Why would I be willing to change my old patterns and face my fear?

This is exactly where I often start in coaching.

Do I want to set an example for my children to constantly adapt, to make themselves small, to have to be perfect or to define themselves exclusively through performance?

Or do I want to show them how a person lives who is connected to himself, trusts himself and goes his own way?

Do I want to continue to give other people so much power over my self-worth, my feelings, and my life?

Or do I want to start taking on this responsibility myself?

Only when people develop a strong personal why do they often develop a real willingness to change.

7. Why Success Doesn't Guarantee Real Connection

Many people want closeness, trust and real connection. At the same time, they often have little contact with themselves.

To their needs. To their feelings.

To their fears. To their potential.

"If you are not at home, you cannot receive visitors."

If you are not in contact with yourself, you can only be in contact with other people to a limited extent.

Only when people learn to understand and accept themselves – with their strengths, weaknesses, light and dark sides – do real closeness, connection and trust become possible.

8. Dealing with fear

(this often refers to fear of loss of control/powerlessness, shame, guilt or pain)
Change does not mean no longer being afraid.

"Courage is often defeated fear."

9. Conclusion: No wings without roots

Those who do not understand their origins often remain unconsciously controlled by it.

Those who live permanently in resistance to their origins often remain just as connected to it as someone who adapts completely to it.

Only when people understand and integrate their origins does the freedom to be neither a copy nor an anti-copy arise.

Then they no longer have to react.

Then they can begin to make conscious decisions.

Then they can begin to become their own original.

Without roots, there are no wings.