

# STRUSS & CLAUSSEN

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

## **Right from the outset**

What best guides young people in choosing a study or career path

## **In the midst of life**

Why professional decisions not only affect work, but all areas of life

## **On every level**

How companies can promote personality development and enhance potentials

# How we become who we are

**Understanding and developing your own personality – in your job and in your life.**



## Dear readers,

these questions may sound elementary, but in fact they are abstract and complex. Asking them is the starting point of our work at Struss & Claussen Personal Development, answering them individually is our aspiration. Our job is to find an “if” for every “then”. Or as we say: the right place for everyone. Where this right place could be is a question that young people ask themselves after graduating from high school, as do mothers and fathers after parental leave, managers before their next career step, and entrepreneurs during the transition from one generation to the next. As different as their life situations are, they are all equally on the lookout. The approach that we take with them at Struss & Claussen is therefore also the same.

Regardless of age or circumstance, most people feel an intrinsic motivation to develop. What is meant here is the desire for personal growth, for fulfillment. Never have the possibilities for development been so great, never has the decision to pick a path for “the self” been so difficult. The challenge on the way there is the inner detachment from expectations, from external pressures and compulsions, in order to penetrate to what is at the core. We support you in this with our in-depth personality analysis.



For young people, taking a look at themselves helps them to focus on the internal rather than the external world in order to “get direction” and gain a sense of security (p.18). Even those who have already made their way and gained life experience benefit from engaging with themselves on a deeper level. It can become a catalyst for all areas of life. Just like a mobile hanging over a crib, personal development, family, health, partnership, career are interconnected. When one of them starts to move, the others swing along with it (p.30).

However, engaging or dealing with oneself does not only have an individual component, it also has a social one. After all, those who know, understand and appreciate themselves can be more understanding of others. This is where the potential lies for managers, owners, executives and employees. Should the leadership personality be strengthened or should the cooperation be enhanced? Should motivation be increased or should a replacement be found? Examples show that our approach opens up new perspectives and is suited even to the most diverse levels of personnel development (p.50).

Our work is only possible thanks to our clients, who give us their most precious asset: their trust. With our team (p.58) we demonstrate each and every day that we are worthy of it. Because we too are constantly challenging ourselves, Struss & Claussen is constantly evolving (p.6, 64). Our driving motivation is to provide services that help you grow both on a personal and an economic level. We would be honored to accompany you on this journey. ♦

Ragnhild Struss,  
Founder and Partner

Johann Claussen,  
Owner and Partner

Who am I when I am truly myself?  
What is the right fit for me as I realize my potential?  
What does my life look like when it suits me?



Right from the outset

- 16 **The agony of choice**  
The career orientation phase stands for many things – opportunities, dreams and visions – just to name a few. But there are also big question marks surrounding it as well.
- 20 **Everything from the beginning**  
Making decisions remains a recurring challenge. Each training step brings new options.
- 68 **Step up! Karrierewege**  
The support program shows socially disadvantaged young people a professional perspective.

In the midst of life

- 30 **Time for a “why” and “what for”**  
More and more people are allowing themselves to question their path even in the middle of their professional lives – and to open up new possibilities.
- 32 **“It’s a gift”**  
*Cover image:* Kirsten Lindemann was looking for a profession and found her calling – in a job she didn’t even know existed. A feature story.
- 36 **At any cost**  
As a judge, Marcus Mohr is used to making judgments of others. In the consultation, he took himself to court. A testimonial.

On every level

- 46 **From personnel to personality development**  
For companies and organizations to be successful, many things have to be in tune – from leadership and structures to team spirit.
- 50 **Case studies**  
No matter what the challenge, it’s always the people that they have to deal with that are at the heart of the matter. Different cases illustrate how Struss & Claussen provides support.

Sections

- About Struss & Claussen**

6 Between psyche and performance: An interview with Ragnhild Struss and Johann Claussen

12 Struss & Claussen milestones: Change in steps

58 Unity in diversity: Voices from the Struss & Claussen team

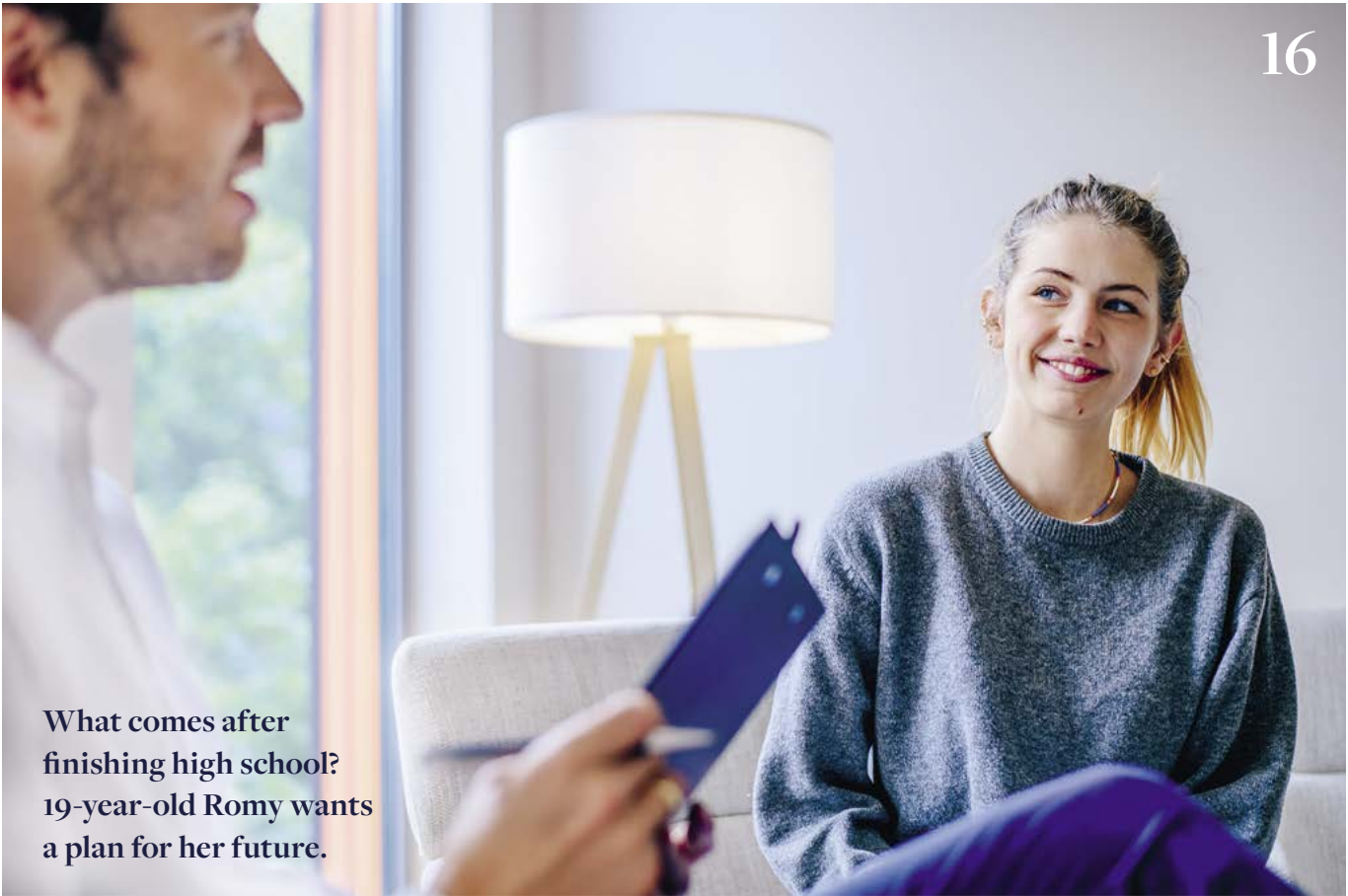
70 The world of Struss & Claussen in figures
- From the net**

22 Am I “too nice” to have a career? Blog post.

38 My boss is annoying – what does that say about me? Blog post.

64 On the air: The Struss & Claussen podcast

72 **Imprint**



What comes after finishing high school? 19-year-old Romy wants a plan for her future.







# Between psyche and performance: Personality in the context of achievement

## An interview with Ragnhild Struss and Johann Claussen

There are opportunities to question oneself at every stage of life – whether after completing school or university, in the course of one’s career or before taking major decisions. For Ragnhild Struss and Johann Claussen, they are more than just opportunities: both see it as a mission to shape and structure life in all its components in such a way that it corresponds to

the individual’s own personality. This mission applies both the individual and to their company, *Struss & Claussen Personal Development*. They explain how they provide support, what issues they are concerned about and what they are doing to drive them forward in their kitchen chats at the Struss & Claussen offices.

**The company has been operating since 2003. What has changed since it was founded?**

**Ragnhild:** Constant change is something rooted in the company’s DNA, but what has remained the same at its core since the day I advised my first client virtually in my living room is that I still feel an incredible sense of gratitude for my job. I consider it a great privilege to be able to work with the human being as an object of knowledge. Back then I was just a one woman show, today we have a fantastic team of more than 20 colleagues. Among the most radical changes was the relocation to Moorfuhrweg. With the move into new premises in 2008, we laid the foundation for further development. Johann’s arrival as managing director and then co-owner from 2019 has given the company a whole new direction. We see ourselves as a learning system, continuing our education and always using new diagnostic procedures. We have also digitized our service offering and can advise customers from all over the world, regardless of their location – in German and in English. So, everything continues to be different.

**How did “and Claussen” come about?**

**Ragnhild:** Over the years we have become more and more diversified. From a content perspective, this means that we now advise private individuals of all ages, companies and institutional clients, and offer lectures, workshops and coaching sessions. In terms of personnel, this means that our team has grown enormously, putting high demands on quality assurance. We aim to provide all clients with equally professional and sound advice and therefore place a strong focus on the internal training of our employees. The larger the range of services and the team became, the more I had to manage, and the less time I had for what is dearest to my heart: the consultations themselves. That’s why I decided to share the management of the company.

**Johann:** At the time, I was faced with the question of whether I should do a doctorate, continue working as a scientific director and lecturer in business psychology, or change careers. In other words, a question that customers bring with them to our office. Into this consideration came the suggestion from mutual acquaintance to meet Ragnhild, who was looking for someone to manage the business at the time. I subsequently experienced the consultation day for myself, completed the testing procedures, gained insight into the work and realized that it’s a fusion of everything – scientific, analytical, human and entrepreneurial. That’s when I knew the deci-

sion was made. When we realized that we complemented each other well professionally and could imagine developing the company together in the long term, it was a logical step to become co-owners.

**“For us personally, personal development also means that we can grow with and alongside our customers.”**

**How do you live the “personal development” concept internally?**

**Ragnhild:** All members of our team undergo the same psychological testing procedures as our clients. In this way, each individual – and we too, of course – know where their individual strengths and areas of development lie. With our type of leadership, we want to help everyone enhance their strengths and fully develop their potential – including cross-functionally. For example, consultants can provide support in marketing or sales if they have talents in this area, i.e., if they are particularly outgoing and have strong communication skills. “First the person, then the job” is one of our credos.

**Johann:** “Personal Development” means that we don’t only pursue development on an individual level, but also on a corporate level. We are expanding our methodical approach, designing new products and opening up new areas. For us personally, “personal development” also means that we are able to grow with and alongside our clients. In our daily consulting work, within an appreciative and trusting space, we are also always challenging ourselves and trying to establish a constant process of our own development. ▶

**What is the most beautiful moment in the consultation? When has it been successful?**

**Ragnhild:** I am particularly interested in gaining an understanding of my counterpart. I want to recognize who is sitting in front of me. To try to see the world of the other person through their eyes and to describe it with their words, to meet them where they are and to look from that place to their future development, is something that is important to me. I experience our work as being particularly beautiful in those moments when I sense that my counterpart feels recognized and is therefore open to this step. When someone reflects back to me that they have opened a door inside to a new space that they may have suspected existed, but had not yet found the key to, then my day as a consultant has been a complete success.

**Which consultations have been particularly memorable for you?**

**Johann:** Every consultation is special in its own way. Of course, there are some that are particularly emotional, involve a profound realization, or initiate a big step. But such “magic moments” do not set the standard. On the contrary, sometimes it’s the smaller changes that make a big difference. A new hobby, for example. Most of the time it continues to “work” in our clients after the consultation, so we don’t always experience what the analysis and recommendations trigger. And then we are delighted when, for example, a postcard arrives from the pilgrimage we recommended for a sabbatical, or a letter with a business card from the same employer but for a new position.

**Struss & Claussen combines humanity and clarity, emotional depth and pointed analysis. What is the appeal of this range for you?**

**Johann:** For us, these are not opposite polarities, but complementary aspects within the context of a dynamic wholeness. We allow ourselves to think across disciplinary boundaries. Placatively, one might say that we think holistically like alternative practitioners and deliver results like management consultants. Ultimately, our work is always about personality in a performance context. That’s why we must look in both directions: at the psyche and at performance, at those soft factors that pay off hard. It is important to us that both are in balance.

**When was the idea to start your own business first conceived? And how did you get there?**

**Ragnhild:** Anyone who knows me knows that challenges motivate me. When I joined a fellow classmate for career counseling during university, I immediately thought: this can be done better! So, I drew up a business plan as part of a seminar paper and, thanks to the many supporters I had, the idea matured. After that, I went to an accountant with my plan and made a pitch, like an elevator pitch, for him to advise me. And then I just started doing it while I was still at university. Many found this step very courageous at the time, but courage is really only needed when you have to work against fear. And I didn’t have any. For me, the move felt completely natural, exactly what my inner voice told me to do. Plus, I was young, had few commitments, and a low height to fall from.

“Courage is really only needed when you have to work against fear.”

**How do you find your inner voice?**

**Johann:** The answer is simpler than the way to get there: with self-awareness. The basis for this is a detailed self-analysis, so that we can recognize unconscious personality traits and capture conscious ones in words. We can only control what we know. The degree of self-awareness provides information about how well a person knows their own personality, values, and goals. Stable self-confidence stands for the inner security of being able to rely on one’s own value and personal abilities. A positive sense of self-worth is an important prerequisite for taking inner impulses seriously. Often, we only listen to and trust our inner voice if we also consider it valuable and important and if we treat ourselves accordingly. Following our inner voice should not just be an option that we might come back to at some point. It’s self-enforcing to increase our own life satisfaction and sense of fulfillment.

**What is your favorite top tip for young clients?**

**Ragnhild:** I don’t think I would offer a tip, but I would express a wish, namely that young people have the courage to make decisions from the inside out. There is a right place for everyone and everyone has the right to live a fulfilled life. Searching for the needle in the haystack of seemingly endless possibilities is a task that absolutely cannot be downplayed, but can in fact be burdensome. I wish that no report card, no financial limit, no family or social responsibilities would dictate what someone chooses to do. But rather solely the personality and individual potential.

**Johann:** At 17, it’s certainly not yet so easy to grasp, but basically, it’s about the relationship you have with yourself. In order to have a good relationship with myself, I need to know myself. I may acknowledge what I am good at, and I must reconcile myself with what I reject or am even afraid of. The confrontation with oneself does not only take place as a process alone in a silent room, but can be something that happens naturally in interaction with the surroundings. Everyone can practice being honest with themselves and others, giving honest feedback, treating each other with respect and judging each other less in their circle of friends. That’s the first step.

**What advice do you have for adult clients? Does work always have to be fulfilling?**

**Johann:** What is experienced as “fulfilling” is a very individual, subjective feeling. Fulfillment occurs when you can pursue that which corresponds to your being in its values and desires. Work can cover some of that. In our view, the individual is involved in a complex system of many components, such as family, relationships, work, leisure, all of which are interconnected. All areas and the different roles contribute to fulfillment. Only when all of them are cared for to an adequate extent can there be an inner balance. Of course, priorities shift at different stages of life. But a fundamental attentiveness to all the pillars of life is something that endures.▶



**Ragnhild Struss**

Founder and Partner  
Struss & Claussen Personal Development

**Training**

Studied International Business Studies at the European Business School as well as Master of Organizational Psychology at the Kurt Lewin Institute of Psychology and the Open University of Hagen

Studied abroad in Nice, San Francisco, Miami, Paris

**Further qualifications**

Psychotherapist (state license according to HPG)

NLP Master (DVNLP)

Application and trainer licenses for Gallup Strengths Finder, Big Five, Profiler of Personality, Motivator Analysis, Reiss Profile, Enneagram

**Authorship**

Author of scientific publications on topics such as the work-life balance of people in positions of leadership, and the way people perceive themselves and the way they are perceived by others.

Author for the Struss & Claussen career blog and columnist for SPIEGEL online, podcaster

**Favorite projects**

Founder of *Toni Knows* (online study selection test)

Founder of *Step up! Karrierewege e. V.*

Mentor at *Teach First Deutschland*





## Johann Claussen

Owner and Partner

Struss & Claussen Personal Development

### Training

Apprenticeship as a shipping agent with subsequent employment in London (UK)

Studied Organizational and Cultural Psychology (B.A.) in Potsdam and Organizational Psychology specializing in business and human resource psychology (M.A.) at the BSP Business School Berlin

### Further qualifications

Systemic consultant (isb Wiesloch)

Analytical Intensive Consultant (BSP Berlin)

Application and trainer licenses for Big Five, Motivator Analysis, Enneagram

### Professional experience

Several years of work in qualitative and psycho-analytic market research

Organizational psychology projects in start-ups

Scientific director and supervisor at the BSP

### Authorship

Author of scientific publications including on corporate culture and cultural psychology, and author for the Struss & Claussen career blog, podcaster.

### Involvement

Vice-Chairman of *Step up! Karrierewege e. V.*

**Ragnhild:** It is of course possible for someone to seek their fulfillment in a hobby rather than a profession. Let’s say someone is a passionate kite surfer, for example. Maybe he or she then “only” needs a job that gives him or her enough time and money to pursue the hobby. The job doesn’t have to be salvation. But it also must not hurt or be self-harmful in the way that it requires you to bend over backwards. Not being able to be yourself causes discomfort and dissatisfaction in the long run.

### What do you say to people with professional experience who doubt that they will learn much new in the consultation?

**Ragnhild:** I don’t want to proselytize anyone – that’s not our approach. Rather, I invite people to get to know themselves anew and to give themselves permission to continue to grow. Everyone wants to increase their levels of joy and reduce or avoid suffering. And so, early on in our childhood, we are engaged in working toward just that with our behavior. Unconsciously, we develop patterns and adaptive strategies, some of which are no longer necessary or helpful in adulthood. That’s why when counseling clients with professional experience, it’s important to ask the question of how you actually became the person you are, which parts of it you want to maintain and which new ones you want to supplement. And – very importantly – how to discard dysfunctional patterns in the future.

**Johann:** We all have blind spots. Perception is focused on what we want to see. With the consultation for professionally experienced clients, we try to broaden the view again a little, to illuminate what has remained in the dark – to bring unconscious parts more into consciousness, and thus to make new proposals for how the world could perhaps also look.

### In your opinion, can anyone pursue a career?

**Ragnhild:** The term “career” is often associated with success in a one-dimensional way. In our view, this falls short of the mark. After all, I can also be very successful at something without feeling satisfaction. We meet clients who, from the outside, are embarking on a seemingly meteoric career, but still feel empty. So, it’s not actually just about traits that supposedly have a better chance of success than others. There is no such thing. It is about career concepts that fit one’s own characteristics, are satisfying on a personal level and so promise success. Everyone can – or rather should – make his or her own career. And it starts in the mind with the understanding of a career.

Because the question is often directed to us, and it is particularly important for us to look at careers differently, i.e., individually, and free of any evaluation. I have written a blog post about this (p.22).

**Johann:** Almost everything is possible for everyone – the only question is at what price. If we recommend that someone not become an ER surgeon, but rather an anesthesiologist, that individual can of course still do that and be successful. It is just very likely that they will have to make a greater effort to adapt, i.e., work more often on their own development areas instead of on their strengths.

### What are the challenges when you are counseling in companies?

**Ragnhild:** We are approached by a wide variety of companies. The spectrum ranges from international corporations to family-owned businesses and start-ups. Delving into the particular setting and understanding the structures and relationships are the first challenges we face. Our corporate clients are just as diverse as the concerns that they bring. Whether we are training managers, supporting team building or looking for a suitable successor in the family: no two tasks and no two proposals are ever the same. We do not deliver a standard model, but a special solution for each individual. And that’s what makes it so appealing to us.

**Johann:** Another challenge is presented by the classic three-cornered contract. In most cases, it is the owners, founders or personnel managers who request a service from us – not those who should or are permitted to participate themselves. This means that before we can start working with participants, we have to agree on a common goal with all of them. Change requires intrinsic motivation – not an imposed HR measure.

“The things that trigger us usually correspond to an inner development opportunity.”

### Who are your role models?

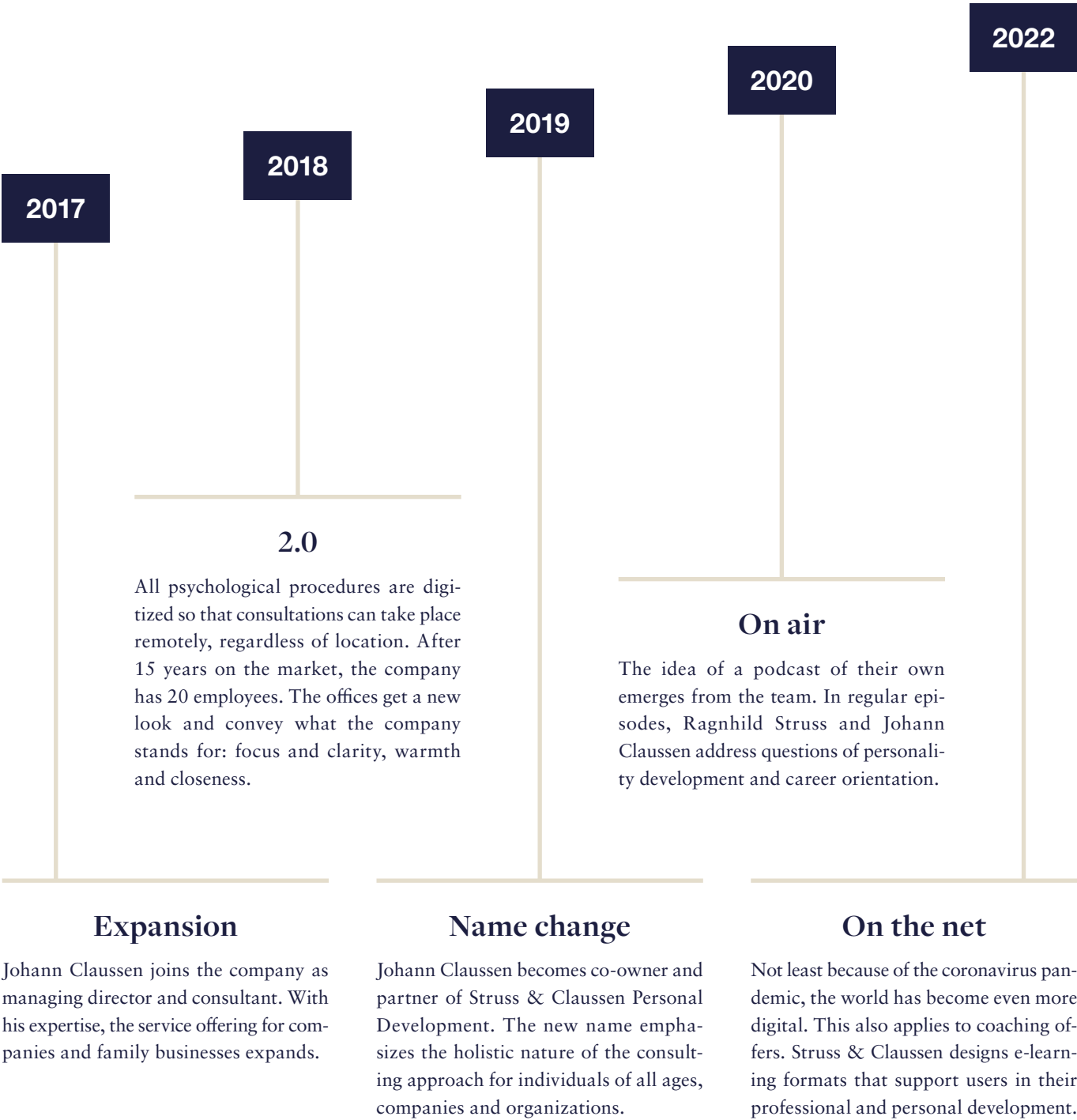
**Johann:** In our understanding, role models are people who appeal to us because they put us in touch with our own – often un-lived – potential. This doesn’t always have to be positive, sometimes we get annoyed with people who basically mirror our own unrealized talents. We always encourage our clients to ask themselves who impresses them and for what reasons. The things that trigger us usually correspond to an inner development opportunity. For example, if I am someone who holds back in their opinions, pleases others rather than themselves, and is never concerned with their own self-interest, I may very well be triggered by the people who exhibit the very qualities that I exclude. These “role models” hold up a mirror to me and challenge me to think about which aspects I am envious of, which aspects I have perhaps been deprived of or discouraged from. These are then suppressed aspects that would actually like to unfold on the level of potential development.

**Ragnhild:** It’s also a nice exercise to ask yourself: what do I find great about the people around me or even about famous personalities? This positive focus is a bridge to your own potential. What touches me about other people, but also, for example, about the protagonists in films or novels, are memories of their own hero’s journey, their own development, their own path in life, with the opportunities and potential that reside in each individual. Personally, I don’t have just one or two role models, but a whole collection of things that I value in others and try to live myself. ♦

# Milestones

## Change in steps

Founded in 2003, Struss & Claussen Personal Development is one of Germany’s leading career consultancies with around 20 employees. The company has taken many small and large steps along the way. They illustrate that the “Development” in the name also represents their own history.





What comes after finishing high school?  
19-year-old Romy wishes she could  
finally have a plan for her future.

# Right from the outset

Anything's possible, nothing's a must: The career orientation phase stands for many things – opportunities, dreams and visions – just to name a few. But there are also big question marks surrounding it as well. Struss & Claussen supports school students, university students and graduates in trading them in for inner exclamation marks and positive perspectives.



# The agony of choice

Young people often feel challenged by the question of what to do after school. Seldom has this question been discussed as broadly as it is today, and never have the options been so numerous. In contrast to the past, family jobs and expectations have become rare. Many parents just want their children to be happy. Freedom and support on the one hand require personal responsibility and initiative on the other. So how do I become happy? Romy and Oscar, who each spend a day at Struss & Claussen, ask themselves the same question.

Many young people are not really used to dealing specifically with themselves and getting to the bottom of their own personality. The fact that the focus is more on the outside than the inside has various causes. The market of opportunities entices with scintillating offers. Social media shows what others are doing, how beautiful and colorful their world is. Exploring your own is something for which there is little time amidst the busy and rigorous learn-

ing schedule many young people have to manage today. At home, the boundaries are often blurred; the relationship with parents has become more friendly. But the lack of friction paradoxically does not always make it easier. After all, being up against something can also help you find your own point of view.

This makes the agony of choice a burden for many. In a survey conducted by the German Centre for Higher Education and Science Research (DZHW), almost half of

the students stated that they had difficulties half a year before graduation. In Germany alone, there are over 20,000 bachelor's and master's degree programs and more than 300 different apprenticeships to choose from. And new ones are added every year. What's more, the range of disciplines is becoming increasingly broader. What used to be business administration is now a far-reaching subject that ranges from international management to e-commerce. When you also look abroad, it can become difficult to keep track of what's on offer. It's no wonder that young people are increasingly opting for time off after graduation. To first take a deep breath, find themselves – and best of all, an idea for the future. More than a third

“I am curious about what is to come!”

now choose the gap year path. But even in the gap year, this question does not resolve itself. The desire for guidance is therefore great and leads young people like Romy and Oscar to Struss & Claussen.

After finishing high school, Romy actually wanted to go traveling. But like many of her classmates, her plans are derailed by the coronavirus pandemic. Sooner than she had bargained with, things are now starting to get “serious” for her. She is looking forward to her consultation at Struss & Claussen with both excitement and anticipation. “I am curious about what is to come!” the 19-year-old says as the morning finally gets underway. First of all, there are many questions waiting for Romy. In the end, it will be more than 1,000. The various testing procedures that are used identify what motivates her and what drives her to perform, how she communicates and interacts, and in which areas talents are invested. Exercises that involve drawing, thinking and sorting punctuate the work on the computer. The variety of diagnostic test procedures ena-

“A lot of questions got me thinking.”

bles the consultants from the Struss & Claussen team to obtain a nuanced picture of their clients' personalities. Interpreting and classifying results is what personal conversations are for. In the structured in-depth interview, the focus is placed on understanding the other person's world, their view of themselves, others, and life in general. No one test procedure alone can measure an individual's perception of career, happiness, and fulfillment. What exactly does someone mean by being successful? To what extent do the professions of other family members play a role?

What meaning does work have any way? This is why Struss & Claussen consultants are trained in psychological and systemic interview techniques.

Together, we take an appreciative look at the strengths that our clients bring with them. Often young people can easily name what their weaknesses are, but not what sets them apart, what they are better at and what is meaningful to them. “A lot of questions got me thinking,” Romy admits in an exchange with her advisor. Only one topic is left out: personal ideas for training or study. Sometimes young people already have an idea of where the path might lead them. But they should keep them to themselves throughout the day, so that the analysis is really what it is supposed to be: objective and honest, professional and personal. ▶





While Romy is forced to stay, Oscar wants to return to Germany. He spent his last years of school at a boarding school in England. Now he would like to study or train in his home country. But what is possible with his qualification here in Germany? And which of these options suit him? He learned about the consulting services at Struss & Claussen through acquaintances. “I’d be happy to get some direction,” he says, describing his expectations for the day. “I want to find something that’s meaningful to me and to know what’s coming.”

The morning flies by for Oscar as well. Still, he is glad when he can take a

“I feel validated.  
It gives me  
certainty.”

breather during his lunch break after talking to his consultant. After lunch, further tests are on the agenda. Customized tasks are compiled in the afternoon to test suitability for certain directions. After all, becoming a watchmaker or studying dentistry, for example, are only really appropriate recommendations if they match your personality and skills.

For Struss & Claussen, however, cognitive performance tests – including those on spatial awareness – are not a decisive criterion, but merely an indicator of what is likely to be easier or more challenging. Indeed, experience shows that many hurdles can be overcome if the incentive and motivation are great enough.

At the end of an intensive day there is a presentation of results. Clients are encouraged to invite people to accompany them for this part of the day. Often these are the parents, partners or close confidants. For the final discussion, Struss & Claussen consultants bring together all results and put them into a format that



makes recommendations comprehensible in the context of clients’ personality. The guiding principle is what characterizes clients in their nature. “I completely recognized myself in the way my personality was described,” Romy says in astonishment. The process of applying it to possible options is both individual and concrete at the same time. The question of where, at which university and under what conditions a course of study can be taken up and who offers suitable training is just as much a component as the outlook on what follows – on industries and working environments, activities and development opportunities. “I feel validated. In the run-up to this process, I already had some initial ideas. I was relieved when some of them were among the recommendations, and understood why others were excluded. That gives me certainty,” Oscar sums up his impression. Romy leaves the office with new impetus: “I had never even heard of some of the majors and programs before.” She is now more positive about the time after finishing high school. “For the time being, nothing will come of the trip. But I got a lot of tips on how to make great use of the gap year anyway.” Something has also changed with Oscar: “I now know what’s ahead. And that’s good.” ♦

## Parent interview

### With what expectations did you approach the day?

A family friend had recommended the consultation to us. So, we already knew roughly what was coming and what we could expect. We were just hoping for the same clarity that our friends had got.

### How did you find the final discussion?

It was very positive and encouraging. For me as a mother it was tremendously pleasing to see that my perception of my son coincided with what was revealed in the analysis.

### What surprised you the most?

I was amazed at how someone who was a stranger could gain an understanding of Oscar so quickly. Something I’ve been striving for as a mother his whole life. It was fascinating to see how many little puzzle pieces came together to form a complete picture.

### What has changed with Oscar as a result of the day?

I find him more motivated and confident. It is noticeable that he had become keen on what could follow after school and this prospect has spurred him on.

### How would you sum it up?

Our personal verdict is that we will definitely come back with our younger daughter.





# Everything from the beginning

As one milestone is reached and comes to an end, the next is just on the horizon: making decisions remains a recurring challenge as you move into the professional world. Each training step brings new experiences and options. Struss & Claussen therefore supports not only school students, but also trainees, university students and graduates.

## For trainees and students

Would have, should have, could have: people who have decided to train or study have taken a big step forward, but are not always free of doubts. Was it really the right choice? Or is there something that suits me better? Should I go through with it? Or cancel it after all? Struss & Claussen advises young people who have embarked on a course of action and helps them regain the sense of certainty that they have lost.

## For graduates and young professionals

Get on board with something or switch? Continue on or pursue further education? This is what counseling for graduates and young professionals is all about. Even after completing apprenticeship training, a bachelor’s or master’s degree, the options are diverse. Should I apply for a job directly? And how do I find the right one? Maybe a completely different direction? Or specialize? Take a gap year? Struss & Claussen develops individual career paths that correspond to personal goals.



### Georgina, aged 25

**wanted to find the right profession after her bachelor’s degree and is now self-employed**

*“At Struss & Claussen, I was encouraged to consider all options – no matter how unconventional they seemed initially. Individuality and authenticity are very much in the foreground during the consultation, it helped me to find my own individual path. Twice even! After graduating from high school, I started studying literature in England thanks to the counseling and gained valuable experience for myself. Graduation once again presented me with a directional decision. Struss & Claussen showed me how to combine my passion for the intellectual with my love of helping others. This has encouraged me to take the step into self-employment as a mindset coach.”*

**Website:** [www.georginaries-mindsetcoach.de](http://www.georginaries-mindsetcoach.de)  
**Instagram:** @georgina\_ries



### Heinrich, aged 28

**dropped out of two courses of study and is now in an apprenticeship training program as an office management assistant**

*“Indecisive because of all the possibilities, I tried different things – without being sure what really fits my character and my strengths. The consultation at Struss & Claussen gave me clarity and led me to reorient myself and take up an apprenticeship instead of studying. Being part of the Struss & Claussen team myself now, and in turn helping others find their way, is something that gives me great joy.”*

### Magdalena, aged 24

**changed field and degree format and is now studying midwifery science in a dual degree program**

*“Struss & Claussen sorted out my inner thoughts on career aspirations. The counseling helped me to better understand my own strengths and pointed out directions in which my needs would be met. The analysis at Struss & Claussen inspired me to combine practical work and studies directly. Now I’m an aspiring midwife and for the first time I feel like I’m in the right place.”*



## Cooperation with schools and universities

Finding out what really fits is a job that educational institutions also help out with. In Hamburg, for example, career orientation is a mandatory part of the curriculum and engages not only students and parents, but also teachers. Struss & Claussen makes a contribution to this “finding phase” and brings in experience from almost 20 years of study counseling. Whether in teacher training, on project days or at parents’ evenings: we provide tips and suggestions on how career orientation can succeed in informative lectures and practical workshops.

As soon as studies have started, the questions shift: Struss & Claussen provides information at universities in the framework of open days or campus talks, e.g., on career entry, job applications or salary negotiations. Different formats for small groups or whole year groups are possible both on site and online.



# Am I “too nice” to have a career?

#Career

Blog post by **Ragnhild Struss**

If you want to be successful, you have to be a tough authority figure, always asserting your own authority and, in case of doubt, “walking over dead bodies”? Personality traits such as dominance, assertiveness, and fearlessness are commonly associated particularly strongly with a high-powered career, while sensitivity, friendliness, and restraint are sometimes even seen as a hindrance. Justifiably? Or are the gentle qualities perhaps the secret “career boosters”?

**T**he mistake essentially already begins with outdated associations with terms such as “success” or “career”. Because both of these are ultimately a matter of personal definition. While one individual might strive to reach the position of CEO of a large corporation, success for the other might mean acting as independently as possible and opening a small private practice, for example. And a different individual again may find fulfillment in any combination of multiple different activities – such as part-time employment, creative hobbies or community service. Just as these jobs and definitions of success vary from one another, so also do the demands which they place on people. Depending on the position and work environment, different qualities, skills and strengths are required. What might be considered a disadvantage in one profession is a real “career booster” in other fields. This means that there is no one personality type that is a guarantee for success – and there is also no one characteristic that is a fundamental obstacle to a career.▶



## Career starts in the mind

It can be worth it to take a step back and examine your own beliefs. What leads to the assumption that you might be “too nice” to have a stellar career? Is this belief system actually your own? Often it is the conventional and unquestioned “wisdoms”, such as “Only the tough are good enough”, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” or “It’s dog eat dog”, which have been anchored in our minds like mantras since our childhood days and suggest to us that only toughness and daring will get us ahead. On top of that, there is a tricky self-sabotage mechanism; if I keep thinking “I’m a wimp, I’ll never amount to anything,” I’m sharpening my perception – whether I want to or not – of situations in which I’m supposedly not acting tough or assertive enough. Bit by bit, I continue to strengthen my belief in this way until I am absolutely sure that I’m too nice to have a career.

This will get you nowhere! Therefore, the first step is to define an individual concept of career and to fundamentally revise and optimize the outdated focus of thought and perception. After all, the mechanism described above works just as well on a positive level: our thoughts control our feelings. The more I focus on positive experiences and think optimistically, the more possibilities will catch my eye – and the more likely I am to find ways to achieve success based on my own personal definition.

## The strengths of sensitivity

Many people find it difficult to identify where their personal strengths lie. On the one hand, this may be due to successful self-sabotage according to the pattern outlined above – but on the other hand, it may also be due to the fact that we have taken our strengths for granted since childhood. We have become so accustomed to them that we think they are nothing special and do not perceive the professional potential that lies behind them. Or – and this is the perfect worst-case scenario – we not only overlook them, but also denigrate our wonderful character traits as weaknesses. This is usually the case when we consider it to be a hindrance in a particular context, while suppressing the other circumstances in which this characteristic could be beneficial.

It is the same with you, if you felt the title of this article spoke to you, probably with qualities of “kind”, “sensitive”, “compassionate” or “gentle”. Let us inspire you to rethink! You can use all your wonderful character traits as strengths to set the course for your professional success:

## Team players

Your peaceful, balanced and impartial nature makes people like you born team players. People like to have you on board because you create a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere. You can read the desires of your fellow human beings from their eyes and make sure that everyone is well.

Make use of this strength by consciously taking on the role of mediator in meetings. If your more dominant colleagues push ahead with their opinions, talk themselves into a rage and cannot find any common ground, you can intervene as a mediator, empathize with the different perspectives and create consensus. This makes it easier for everyone involved to work together and establishes you as an important part of the team.



## Service providers

The customer is king with you and in order to fully accommodate their request, you are not above doing anything. You can instinctively anticipate their needs and serve them perfectly. You always work hard and do a thorough job.

Use your keen intuition for the needs of your customers and your high level of service orientation to make yourself indispensable to your employer. Make sure that your good performance and the high satisfaction of your customers are both visible: talk about your successes and celebrate them!

## Networkers

Do you always have an open ear, both for the professional and private concerns of your colleagues? With your empathetic and outgoing nature, you share in successes as well as failures and like everyone to be appreciated equally for their strengths and weaknesses. This makes you the go-to person in the company for many different concerns.

Are you aware that you manage to deal with a wide variety of people because of your sensitive nature? Whether department heads, demanding customers or complicated colleagues – you empathize with everyone and strike the right tone. You can use this skill to build a large, positive-minded professional network. Being popular and respected is known to be of enormous advantage in professional contexts.

## Supporters

Thanks to your empathic strength, people like you recognize the performance potential of each individual. In business, it’s never just about numbers or profits for you – it’s always about people. You see yourself as a developer of potential, a motivator and a coach who encourages other team members to take the initiative and wants everyone to be able to perform at their best.

You can use this strength in different ways. If you are not already working in a therapeutic or coaching field, you could, for example, work as a mentor in a large company alongside your main job and support new employees during their induction. This would give you additional authority and prestige within the company. What is more, this strength is evidence of ideal leadership qualities. You can bring out the best in teams by delegating tasks in an optimal, potential-oriented manner and, thanks to your empathy, always have the right, motivating words for your employees.▶



## The right working environment

Have you already tried to take the above tips to heart, but can't find any ways to implement them in your work environment? If you feel that your soft qualities and skills are not valued at all and that you are constantly in conflict, you should think about whether you are in the right place.

As a rule, particularly sensitive, empathic and giving people prefer to work for, with or on people. An open and trusting work environment in which they are personally needed, there is closeness and an appreciative interaction among colleagues, where it is also possible to discuss private matters, and they can perhaps take on a service-oriented, teaching, protecting, caring, advising, selling or supporting role, has a particularly performance-enhancing effect on them. Often, occupations in the social sector are also an option. Perhaps you are particularly concerned about educationally disadvantaged groups, would like to save endangered species or fight for better food prices for small farmers in Africa?

## Focus on your own needs

The strong focus on people around them often leads very empathic people to put their own needs in the background and forget what THEY actually want. Therefore, consciously take time for yourself and think intensively about your personal requirements for your job. For example, ask yourself: Do I want to be in a leadership position? And if so, why? Because it would fulfill me personally? Or because I feel like that's part of a successful career?

Step away from stereotypical ideas, comparisons with others, and questions like, "Am I 'too this' or 'too that'?" Because once you find your personal definition of success that is aligned with your attributes, skills and potential, you will realize that you are good the way you are – and thus have the best prerequisites for a fulfilling career. ♦

## More from Struss & Claussen available online



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Using your own potential: after parental leave, Katharina Bittel wanted to change professionally – and remain personally loyal.

# In the midst of life

Much achieved, but much still to come. As the years go by, it is often not only work and life experience that grows, but also the desire to give oneself more space. Struss & Claussen advises clients with professional experience on taking the right steps to open new doors.

# Time for a “why” and “what for”

More and more people, even in the middle of their careers and with many years of work experience, are allowing themselves to question their path – and discover new opportunities.

**H**appy in your job? According to surveys, most employees can only shake their heads in response. The reasons for this are as varied as the concerns of our professionally experienced clients. “Hard facts” such as salary or responsibilities are by no means the only drivers for a desire to change. Interpersonal issues also evoke thoughts of change – from poor colleague relations to lack of recognition. And sometimes life just gets in the way. Those who, for example, take care of their offspring, take time off or care for

relatives often have a different view of their career afterwards and want to reshape their future. It is never about the job alone, but always about an all-round fulfilling life plan in which work finds the right place.

Once you have entered professional life, a certain degree of automatism often sets in – the next job, the next project, the next position. You settle in, become more confident, get into a routine. This was also the case for Jonas Schulte. “Suddenly I felt myself in the grind of what working life is. I watched the years go by fast-

er than I would have liked. And then I asked myself how I got to this point in the first place and whether I actually wanted to get there,” he says looking back. He should be getting a promotion right now, which is actually a good thing. Still though, he was unsure, in need of a stock take. Professionally and on a personal level. “My goal in the consultation was to prepare myself for the challenges of the new position: What can I do? What do I have to work on? I also wanted to know how I could develop personally. Not just on paper in terms of a new job.”



Katharina Bittel was also promoted – to the position of mother. After her parental leave, she was keen to try something new but pick up where she left off, combining career and family. “As a gallery owner of many years, I have built a very good network in the national art market. I find the combination of art and business highly exciting and it drives me. However, with my financial goals in mind, I saw many hurdles ahead in this market. Start your own business? Or be employed? What options are there for my personality structure in light of the fact that I would also like to reconcile a return to work with my family?” This is how she summarizes her thoughts before the consultation.

Both come to Struss & Claussen with different expectations, go through testing procedures and interviews. “I felt

like I was being examined by a mental scanner,” says Katharina Bittel, describing her impression of the day. Beforehand, she says, you have an idea of what to expect, and yet “live” it is amazing how extensive and profound the approach, how multi-layered the exploration of the self is.

**“Not only has it made me more efficient and productive in my day-to-day work, but most importantly, I’m having more fun doing it.”**

Both are then equally surprised by the outcome of their respective consultations. “A mirror is held up to you and you see yourself as you know yourself, but in a whole new light,” says Jonas Schulte. He is still overwhelmed by how accurately the analysis applies to him today. “What I found exciting is that competence is increased by professional experience, but ultimately personality structure is much more important for achieving successful orientation,” adds Katharina Bittel. If she had to describe her experience at Struss & Claussen in one term, it would be self-efficacy. “My consultant said to me: ‘These are the paths I see for you. The decision about your future is up to you. You can meet them with a lot of confidence.’ It gave me a good push to take matters into my own hands and confidently get down to business.”

For Jonas Schulte, too, it is individual thoughts in addition to the recommendations and tips that still have an impact on him today. He often recalls an analogy from his final presentation and quotes his consultant: “Imagine your skills, talents and what you want from your job driving a car. Right now, the attributes that are important to you, but don’t make you 100 percent happy, are at the steering wheel. On the back seat are those that are much more in line with your being, but get less space from you. You’re not supposed to ignore the points in the front seat, but make sure that the points in the back seat are allowed to drive sometimes and are given the appropriate priority.” This image helps him to “readjust” his priorities again and again. “I’ve been able to adjust my focus at work to focus on things that better fit my talents and personality. Not only has it made me more efficient and productive in my day-to-day work, but most importantly, I’m having more fun doing it.” ♦





## “It’s a gift”

Kirsten Lindemann was looking for a profession and found her calling – in a job she didn’t even know existed.

Photos: Philip Eggers

It’s early in the morning on a Saturday in June. While others are still asleep, Kirsten Lindemann is already wide awake. She packs her things for the day – a dress, a microphone, a bottle of water and of course: her portfolio. The folder is bound in matte tissue paper with her name on it. The sun is shining, the weather forecast promises temperatures of up to 26°C. Optimal conditions for her current assignment. For almost two years the day was meticulously planned, but the weather can still mess things up. She gets in the car. She is setting off from Hamburg and heading for the Lüneburger Heide, she will be there in around two hours. Her eyes light up. “Let’s do it then!” she says. It’s no day like any other. It’s a wedding day.

Five years ago, the 37-year-old from Hamburg decided to seek advice from Struss & Claussen. “To me, a job has always been more than just a job. I wanted to reach my full potential, to be successful with something that suited me completely,” she says. After studying literature, media and theatre, she joined a TV station and worked for many years as an editor for well-known TV formats. But she was still restless. A job with a shipping company for luxury cruises brought her to tourism, and tourism eventually to city marketing. Dream jobs – or were they?

“In my early 30s, I just felt empty. As if I had always been very close, yet always in the wrong place.” She initially struggled with the idea of seeking counseling. “Asking for help made me feel like a failure, like I couldn’t take control of my own life.” And still she was stuck and didn’t want to waste any more time complaining about the unchangeable: the company, the boss, the tasks, the lack of this and the bother of that. “I didn’t want to feel powerless anymore,” she says looking back. So, she picked up the phone and made an appointment.

The offer sounded enticing: one consultant, one day, one way out of the impasse, all presented on a silver platter. Too good to be true. “During the written tests I felt like I was taking my high school finals, in the one-on-one with my consultant a little like I was having a medical history interview, and after the many hours of utmost concentration, like I was climbing a very, very high mountain peak. I don’t know what I expected,” she says, smiling. But today she can say that it was worth it. “Of course, I particularly remember the presentation at the end of



the day. When have you ever had a complete stranger stand at a flip chart in front of you and talk to you about you?”

The heather stretches to the right and left of the country road, not a cloud to be seen in the sky. “We’re right in the middle of a nature preserve. If you make a wrong turn here, you get a ticket,” she says. It’s not her first visit to the estate. The traditional thatched roof ensemble from the 1920s is a permanent fixture in this region.

“It was a well-intentioned, if relentlessly honest, look at me. It hurt, too, of course. But my consultant was on my side, you could tell at every point,” she recalls, shifting down a gear – while driving. “I felt seen and recognized. He

made me aware of strengths that I was not at all aware of, despite previous realistic self-assessments. And he exposed me in terms of the issues that had kept coming up in my work environment that had made me unhappy. Most importantly, he didn’t leave me alone with these insights, but took me on a journey toward a new vision for the future.”

**“My consultant took me on a journey towards a new vision for the future.”**

In Kirsten Lindemann’s case, two sets of issues emerged that needed to be clarified for her professional future. First, there was the very basic decision: regular employment or self-employment, security or freedom? Based on her personal circumstances, she had good reasons for both and needed a compromise. On the other hand, it was a question of the “what” with regard to her job. She wanted to produce visible results, but was looking for a higher purpose than was offered by ordinary corporate goals. And last but not least, it was also about showing herself no longer standing in the second row, but rather showing off her skills. “I remember exactly how it felt when the word came up. The adrenaline rush, that kick.” ▶



Indeed, what her consultant had recommended to her was anything but ordinary – a wedding officiant. Still a relatively new job in a wedding industry that has matured and become highly individualized since the 2000s. “I had never heard of the profession, never experienced a secular wedding ceremony as a guest. But I’ve always loved weddings. Suddenly it all made sense. It was as if the blinkers literally fell from my eyes,” says Kirsten Lindemann triumphantly.

That same year, she introduced herself to a well-known team of female speakers in Hamburg and was accepted. She accompanied her colleagues to weddings, learned about routines, received voice and stage coaching. She didn’t have to learn how to write, the words just flowed out. “My own

first wedding ceremony was indescribable. I enjoyed it immensely. And the feedback was overwhelming. There’s nothing like it in any other profession.”

“My first wedding ceremony was indescribable. There’s nothing like it in any other profession.”

Five years later, she founded her own small business alongside her main job,

which continues to give her the security she needs. PRETTY LITTLE WONDERS stands for modern wedding ceremonies in the premium segment. From Sylt to Lake Starnberg and even Mallorca, she has asked couples the all-important question and is always overwhelmed by the atmosphere created during the ceremony and the gratitude shown to her. “A father of the bride once said to me: ‘It’s more than a job, it’s a gift.’” Unlike full-time speakers, she only offers up to 10 appointments a year so she can provide intensive support to couples and keep that special magic for herself. “I don’t want to have to live from that. Instead, I’ve found something on the side that gives me the freedom to be everything I’ve always wanted to be.”



After all, a speaker has many sides: she is a journalist, writer, psychologist, host and presenter all rolled into one. The time and effort required for a customized ceremony is extensive – and varied: intensive discussions with the couple, families, friends, followed by the secluded writing of the speech, and finally the big show where the written word comes alive, moves and deeply touches. “I like every part of the job. And the best part is: there are 150,000 words in the German vocabulary – that’s enough for any very unique love story. So, there’s never a dull moment.”

“You have reached your destination,” the navigation system announces as the car comes to a stop. Next to the thatched main building, the seating for the wedding ceremony is already being set up. The walk leads Kirsten Lindemann to the bride. “The tension before the wedding is enormous, of course,” she says. “That’s where you have to give assurance.” Her facial expressions are soft, her voice sounds warm. The job never felt like a business relationship; it was a service provided to the heart.

Kirsten Lindemann has always referred to the written documentation that was handed over to her after the consultation at Struss & Claussen. “It’s my ‘X-ray image’. Everything is there, laid bare, visible. I am able to remind myself of my sensitive points when patterns repeat themselves, or encourage myself when doubts arise.”

There remains only one question to be answered: why she herself does not wear a ring on her finger. “Honestly, I was just as restless in my personal life as I was in my professional life,” she admits. Perhaps the preoccupation with love would also help her with this topic, her advisor had told her at the time. She has now been living in a steady partnership for four years – completely unmarried. She laughs: “After all, you can’t write your own speech.” ♦

“I’ve found something on the side that gives me the freedom to be everything I’ve always wanted to be.”

**Website**  
www.prettylittlewonders.de

**Instagram**  
@\_prettylittlewonders\_



## At any cost

As a judge, Marcus Mohr is used to passing judgment on others. At Struss & Claussen he took himself to court for the first time – something that was a rewarding experience.

**H**e actually had something completely different planned for that afternoon. A private meeting in Berlin. But his family had persuaded him. In fact, Marcus Mohr regarded the consultation that his partner had booked for her daughter at Struss & Claussen as “completely superfluous”. But alright, he could understand the arguments. And arguments are something that work with him. So, he accompanied them. It was ten minutes before he asked himself: “When can I have that too?”

“I actually thought my partner and the counselor had colluded,” such was the accuracy of my partner’s daughter’s description. Fascinated, he listened to the analysis and recommendations. “I couldn’t have even imagined all the things that were possible in Hamburg.” New possibilities! While still saying goodbye, he made an appointment for himself.

“As a legal professional, you think classically,” says Marcus Mohr. Studies, traineeship, state examination. All with excellent grades. He then worked as a research assistant at Bucerius Law School and completed his doctorate with a distinction. As a partner in a major Hamburg law firm, he developed into an expert in labor law and was headhunted by a client. At one of Germany’s leading communications groups, he climbed the career

ladder to become a member of the management board. He changed departments, swapped legal issues for management responsibilities, led a team of 90 employees and managed billion-dollar deals. This was all until he eventually parted with his employer on good terms. “In the beginning, there is always a lot that is new and exciting. You get things done; you succeed. And then at some point after a few years, the same themes start to repeat themselves,” notes Marcus Mohr. “I just don’t enjoy routine; it doesn’t fulfill me.” For him, it was time to get out and look for a new challenge.

**“I just don’t  
enjoy routine;  
it doesn’t  
fulfill me.”**

During the time off he wanted to take, he received a job offer from the Hamburg Labor Court. And so, the reformer and restructurer became “Your Honor.” From the very beginning, he was aware of the area of tension between the business world and officialdom, between performance and paragraphs. But it wasn’t meant to be the last stop. Two years

passed, three, then even four. And Marcus Mohr asked himself whether he should be at home in his secure position after all. Getting an answer to this question was his basic goal for the consultation at Struss & Claussen.

“After two minutes, we were through with the topic,” he grinned. “My consultant looked at me during the interview and asked: ‘Do you really want to talk about it?’” job done; focus changed. “After that, it was all about the issues that were actually behind it. Where are my strengths? What triggers me? What good can I do myself?” recalled Marcus Mohr. He found the interviews and tests to be “hard work on himself.” “Albeit in a great atmosphere,” he added with a laugh. It was an exchange on equal terms, in which he felt topics were properly addressed and listened to.

He followed his final presentation as closely as he would a trial. Him on one side, his consultant on the other. The argument of the other side was very conclusive: qualities, which Marcus Mohr also viewed critically in himself, are in absolute demand in the right context. Fighting hard for the cause, speaking uncomfortable truths and pushing through projects no matter the cost – all skills. The need to refurbish, reorganize and restructure is there in many industries. He should accept his talents, value them and

use them where others also value them. “That’s me,” he realized, “and there’s a fitting setting for that!” His judgment on himself was quickly established: “Basically,” he sums up without any disappointment, “I didn’t learn anything new. But I got things translated into professional attributes and, most importantly, opportunities. In three hours – conversation and presentation combined – there wasn’t a single sentence I couldn’t relate to.”

A few weeks have passed since the consultation. Marcus Mohr sits at his desk and looks at his folder from Struss & Claussen. “A lot of propositions have a resonance,” he confirms. What has happened since then? He smirks: “I have received my recreational boating license. That’s been on the list for a long time.” For him, the great added value of the consultation is that it is more than just

**“Who are you –  
as a person and  
professionally?  
This is something  
you should ask  
yourself every now  
and then.”**

career guidance. A stack of books lies beside him. Books that have been recommended to him. “If you have an interest in evolving, in changing, you have to stay on the ball. Otherwise, the daily grind absorbs you.” That is why he has chosen

a motto for the current year: creating opportunities. The consultation has given him different options, he knows what he is looking for and what he can rule out. Marcus Mohr is firmly convinced of something: “Things are going to change.”

There is one thing he has to plead guilty to after the fact: being preconceived. “A lot of the tests you know and you’ve taken them before in your professional life. The conclusions are often very general. The key point is, at Struss & Claussen they are just a supporting pillar. The main analysis takes place in the conversations.” For him, it is clear that this will not be the last time he visits the Winterhude office. “Who are you – as a person and professionally? What works? This is something you should ask yourself every now and then. Preferably with professional support.” ♦





# My boss is annoying – what does that say about me?

#Career

Blog post by **Ragnhild Struss**

Many employees do not get along with their superiors. Whether it's excessive pedantry, bossiness, or lack of organizational skills: some managers are just awful – aren't they? The fact that some of other people's behavior makes us see red reveals a lot about our own repressed character traits.

**W**e all have our individual quirks and perhaps strange-seeming habits. It is the same with our superiors, who are also only human. While we often turn a blind eye to other people's quirks, we can be particularly critical of our boss's behavior and sometimes react very emotionally to it. "Why did she or he ... again?", "How could she or he do ...", or "She or he always has to ...", and we get upset. But such intense reactions may indicate that the cause of our problem with this person actually lies within ourselves. In order to clarify this connection, I would like to begin with a small excursion into the psychology of C. G. Jung.▶



## The shadow of our personality

According to psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, our self is made up of two distinct parts: the ego, which is our conscious image of ourselves with which we identify, and the “shadow.” The latter contains all personality traits that we ourselves do not consciously perceive because they are suppressed, undesirable and repressed traits. Interestingly, other people can often see the shadow parts of us clearly, while we ourselves have a “blind spot” and have difficulty identifying them despite self-reflection.

The shadow contains character traits and impulses that were conveyed to us in childhood by our caregivers as being undesirable or “bad”. In response, we suppressed these parts from that point on so as not to lose the love of our parents. Later in our lives, too, our own experiences in friendships, partnerships or in our professional lives shape us and cause us to shift further parts of our personality into the shadows. If we do not consciously deal with our shadow aspects and try to integrate them into our self, they will make their way to the surface in the form of inappropriate behavior or as manifestations of illness. This can negatively affect our relationships, our health, and ultimately our life satisfaction.

## If you spot it, you’ve got it

But how do we recognize whether the intense annoyance with our superiors is the activity of personal shadow aspects? The easiest way to do this is to judge according to the motto “If you spot it, you’ve got it”: as soon as we “spot” a behavior in a person that upsets, angers, or moves us in some other intense way, we ourselves have an unresolved issue in our shadow on some level. The shadow aspects are not necessarily “negative” – they can be aspects that we reject in ourselves, but also things that we do not allow ourselves, that we are jealous of and that we still want to develop.

By identifying the aspects we strongly dislike in our superiors, we are thrust reliably toward our shadow parts. In this respect, it is precisely our “enemies” – competitors, “frenemies” and “terrible” bosses – who can support us in our own personal development. Basically, we project our shadow onto the other person. If we keep getting upset about our team leader’s know-it-all attitude, for example, we should ask ourselves about our own need to be right. Perhaps we claim to “know better” and therefore feel threatened by a counterpart who is supposedly bossy. Or we were rebuked as a child for being “lecturing” or “precocious” and now try with all our might to suppress that streak in ourselves. Another person who is “uninhibited” in this respect may trigger indignation or secret envy in us.



## How superiors trigger us and what we can learn from it

Why it is bosses, of all people, who can trigger violent reactions in us that are connected to our shadow aspects. It is due to their position. They are above us in the hierarchical structure – and unconsciously remind many people of the relationship a child has to its parents. Just as our first caregivers “forced” us to suppress certain behaviors as part of our upbringing, we have a certain obligation to the boss to relegate undesirable aspects of our personality to the shadows. Although theoretically every other person can trigger us in relation to our shadow aspects – with superiors, there is a particularly high potential for this due to the power structure that exists.

I would like to explain how you can identify your own shadow issues in your relationship with your boss and resolve them by reflecting on them, using two examples: ▶



## “My boss is so bossy”

It always upsets you to see the things your boss takes liberties with, how determined and directive she appears and how obviously she presents herself in her position of power.

### What that says about you:

The more you are bothered by another “having a lot of power” or acting dominant, the stronger this issue is probably at work in your subconscious. Ask yourself about your own power-seeking or dominant behavior. Maybe you haven’t even addressed it yet and it doesn’t seem important to you – while you secretly envy your superiors for doing the same. Reflect on the situations and issues where you would need to stand up for yourself more, put yourself first, or clearly communicate your opinion to others in order to realize your own (justified) quest for more dominance.



## “My boss’s organization bugs me”

From your point of view, your superior often forgets appointments, does not remember arrangements and often arrives late. He makes many careless mistakes in his paperwork and you get very annoyed with his poor organization of important issues.

### What that says about you:

First, be aware that this is a subjective assessment of your superior, and question whether these are really objective facts or your own personal assessment. Think about why this (supposed) behavior upsets you so much by identifying the core issue – in this case, “disorganization” – and reflect on how it engages your psyche. Now there are two possibilities. Either you are very strict with yourself and you don’t allow yourself any imperfection – then your criticism of your boss is really criticism of the part of you that would also like to loosen the reins a bit. You may envy your boss for “taking the liberty” of such behavior, while you do not allow yourself to act it out. Is the unconscious belief system “I am only lovable if I am diligent” at work in you? Perhaps inherited from your own parents – and does any deviation from this system therefore feel threatening? Or you may fear being fundamentally similar, but reject your own “screwed up” part within yourself and get mad at yourself every time you miss another deadline. If so, you’re basically ranting about yourself and not your boss. Try to open yourself up to all possible interpretations of your shadow aspects. The process can be uncomfortable, but your personal development can benefit greatly from it.



## Conclusion

On a final note, it must be said that you do not, of course, have to find fault with yourself whenever your boss behaves in a certain way. In cases of “bossing,” the deliberate bullying of an employee by his or her superior, you should take care to protect yourself and establish your boundaries. However, before you accuse your boss (or anyone else) of having a negative intention, always check first to see if your personal shadow aspects have been triggered by a particular behavior. Getting clear about your own share of conflict, miscommunication, and antipathy not only provides an opportunity for growth, but can also improve your relationship with your counterpart in the long term. And if it is not “your issue”, then you should think about changing jobs. ♦



In order to get the best out of themselves and the company, decision-makers are taking new paths.

# On every level

The sum of all parts: for companies and organizations to be successful, many things have to be right – from leadership and structures to team spirit. Struss & Claussen helps B2B customers to achieve added value. For themselves and the workforce, for satisfaction and the balance sheet.



# From personnel to personality development

Every day, potential is lost. According to the Gallup Engagement Index, two out of three employees do not always have the opportunity to do what they do best. It's time for a rethink.

The fact that only 16 % of employees are passionate about their work is just as fatal for employers as it is for personal job satisfaction. Fact: People bring their personality into the company. Their strengths and weaknesses as well as their special talents and blind spots, their values and their needs. This applies to owners, managing directors, specialists and managers as well as to all other employees. Identifying and recognizing each and every individual in this set's potentials free. Companies can promote personal

development and benefit economically at the same time – from increased motivation and loyalty to increased productivity. Soft factors that pay off hard.

What is required for this is further development of the human resources system. Well, to be precise: a deepening. People – no matter their level in the hierarchy – want to make a contribution that is personally meaningful to them. That is why it is worth starting here: with the inner motivations and motives. Looking at yourself and others in this depth is more

than a “feel good” measure. After all, the individual success of each person ultimately ensures the success of the company.

The issues for which Struss & Claussen has already provided support are as diverse as our B2B customers. Whether it's about employee retention in a doctor's practice, generational change in a family business, or leadership culture in a corporation: with our experience in organizational and personality psychology, we can create a matching proposal for every concern. ♦





Structure & Guiding Principle

What are we striving for? According to which principles do we act? How do we want to work? How should teams be organized? Struss & Claussen offers formats dedicated to the guiding principles and direction that companies and organizations want to take. Structures today are in flux: agile working and the new work model call for new areas of responsibility within which there is room for personal leeway. Struss & Claussen helps to develop ways that fit the nature and organizational pattern of the company. One focus is on the participation of all those involved, which allows a common vision to become lived practice.

Family Businesses & Entrepreneurial Families

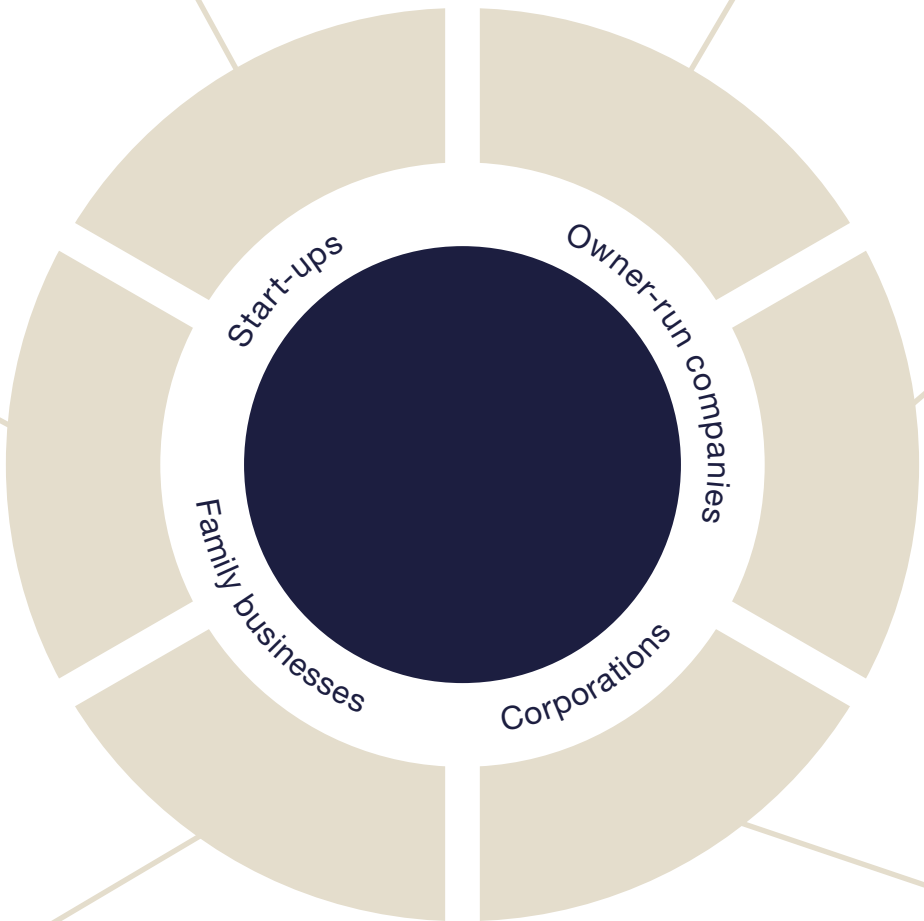
How do we combine family and business? How can we still separate private and professional roles? The family as the smallest communal unit forms its own system with structures and dynamics between the individual members. Recognizing and consciously managing them is a factor in the success of family businesses. Struss & Claussen supports entrepreneurial families in ensuring that all players perceive and value each other in their roles and personalities in order to work towards common goals with mutual understanding.

Teambuilding & Employee Retention

How do we work together? How do we function together? What do individual roles look like – now and in the future? Agile or classic, new or well-practiced, digital or physical. Whether teams work successfully depends to a large extent on how well each member knows himself or herself – in personality as well as in their communication and information needs. Struss & Claussen guides teams to find a “working mode” on an individual and collective level. In order to retain employees in the long term, we develop formats that give internal space to the natural desire for growth and development.

Leadership Style & Culture

What makes for good leadership? How can we work towards this? Leadership always begins with successful self-leadership. Struss & Claussen supports managers in recognizing their own strengths and challenges, patterns, values and motivators, in order to be able to develop more understanding for the individual differences of their employees while understanding themselves. Within companies and organizations, leadership style is part of their culture. Therefore Struss & Claussen also deals with the organizational psychological perspective on culture development.



Succession & Generation Change

Who should take over? Who wants to? How can a transition be made meaningful? Giving away a business or organization can feel more difficult than building it. In the process, changes offer the possibility to grow from them – as a system, a family and as an individual. In order to seize this opportunity, those involved must manage the balancing act of preserving the old and daring the new. The prerequisite for this is a high level of reflection and recognition. Struss & Claussen supports those involved in creating the basis for cooperation and further development.

Motivation & Communication

What drives peak performance? What do employees need? The connection is as obvious as it is crucial. The more motivated employees are, the better they perform and the more satisfied they are. Knowing individual drivers is therefore the key to more fulfilment and efficiency on a personal and corporate level. Struss & Claussen determines for individuals and teams which motives spur them on and help them get through lean periods. One of the influencing factors is how communication needs can be captured and served.

# Case studies

International corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises, owner-managed businesses, agencies, institutions or family businesses all face different challenges. But it's always the people that they have to deal with that are at the heart of the matter. All organizations are equally dependent on not only bringing the individual along, but engaging them to the best of their potential with regard to the company's goal. Various cases from our many years of work with B2B clients illustrate how Struss & Claussen provides support.



## Case #1: The new generation 50+

### Ambition

When a person's age passes the 50 mark, the need to reassess often arises. Retirement is still a long way off, and at the same time younger colleagues are creating doubts about how well you are performing. In private life, too, the question arises as to whether it's worth having another go, perhaps fulfilling a dream or trying something completely new. The client wants to support their employees of the "new generation 50+" in this stage of life and encourage them to focus on their own potential.



**FOCUS**  
Motivation & Communication



**CLIENT**  
A large Hamburg-based consumer goods company

### Approach

To live and work authentically and in a self-determined manner is a measure of one's own satisfaction, and satisfaction, in turn, is the motor for willingness to perform – regardless of age. In a one-day workshop, Struss & Claussen worked with members of the “new 50+ generation” to find out how they manage to:

- identify individual strengths and bring them into cross-age and cross-generational teams
- recognize and release previously unused talents
- identify motivators of their own and integrate them into their work
- overcome hurdles to tension-free communication
- reflect on expectations of themselves and the professional environment
- develop an individual vision for themselves

Beforehand, the participants go through test procedures of aptitude diagnostics and personality analysis. In the workshop, two trainers transfer the results to the private and working lives of the participants. Methods that address individual values and motives increase the insight gained with regard to personal and professional development. A folder with results and exercises encourages to “continue to think” about the impulses of the workshop. After 8 weeks, all participants are then followed up in person.

### Result

After the workshop, organizers and participants were asked for their impressions:

*“I think this was the best workshop in all my 25 years of work!”* — workshop participant

*“The workshop was eye-opening for long-standing employees and led to a lasting change in attitude.”* — HR Business Partner

The workshop will be repeated regularly.



# Case #2: Female Empowerment

## Ambition

Whether consulting, creating, management or HR – the work in a creative agency is multifaceted. The challenge here is not only to excel in one’s own area and “stand one’s ground”, but also to interact successfully with colleagues at the intersections between departments. The agency supports female managers with a mentoring program. The client would like to use a kick-off event to support mentees individually, to strengthen mentors in their role as coaches and to optimally adjust the tandems to each other.



**FOCUS**  
Leadership Style & Culture



**CLIENT**  
One of Germany’s largest creative agencies

## Approach

Profound self-understanding and knowledge of one’s own strengths not only form the basis for successful self-management, but also help to optimize interpersonal (work) relationships. A one-and-a-half-day workshop focuses on the empowerment of mentees and mentors. It is achieved by:

- a strong awareness of one’s own (professional) personality
- appreciation of own competences and recognition of fields of development in the professional role
- awareness of one’s own and others’ perceptions
- effective conflict management
- building a feedback culture
- courage for authentic self-presentation

Struss & Claussen carries out an individual assessment for each participant, provides comprehensive personality descriptions and suggestions on how strengths and talents can be optimally incorporated into the job. Development and support topics are worked out together with the mentoring tandem. Mentors and mentees then go through exercises separately. Struss & Claussen advises mentors on how to fill their mentoring role in a way that is profitable for all and how to design the roadmap for

positive mentoring. In order to transfer the impulses of the workshop to the daily work, tasks are distributed. Participants receive a “To-do Reminder” after some time after the workshop has passed.

## Result

In the follow-up, we received this feedback from the customer:

*“The feedback from all our participants was positive – from ‘sensationally good’ to ‘essential’. The two-day mix of theory and practice, filled with life thanks to the professional and personal quality of the trainers, was what made it a real asset for us. They provided each participant with a personal “deep dive” and all participants received a sustainable, very comprehensive and good basis for concrete implementation in their individual leadership roles. We want to make this coaching an integral part of our mentoring program.”*

— Managing Director

This format is now an integral part of the mentoring program and is carried out by Struss & Claussen for each intake.

# Case #3: Leadership in times of change

## Ambition

Hardly any other industry is subject to as much change as the world of media. Journalism has changed, as has the way media is consumed and the way publishers generate revenue. This results in challenges at different levels – from corporate orientation to collective and individual approaches to dealing with phases of upheaval. The client wants to support its new CEO and members of the board of directors and raise awareness of the issue throughout the company.



**FOCUS**  
Structure & Guiding Principle



**CLIENT**  
A Swiss media group

## Approach

The complexity of requirements not only calls for efficient self-management, but above all for a profound understanding of oneself. In other words: those who know themselves know how to deal with challenges. Struss & Claussen implements this leitmotif within the media group:

- an individual, one-day consultation for the CEO, members of the board of directors and the management team
- a detailed potential diagnosis with regard to entrepreneurial and personal challenges in times of change
- individual coaching sessions
- a keynote speech on the topic of change capabilities in front of a larger gathering

Struss & Claussen conducts the individual consultations following a multi-stage procedure: preliminary discussion, diagnosis, analysis, interpretation, recommendation for action and follow-up are separated from each other chronologically. In this way, knowledge can be efficiently condensed, deepened and transferred. Some of the cross-border cooperation takes place digitally, by video conference and in personal meetings, so that the quality of on-site counseling is maintained regardless of the distance.

## Result

The customer lets us know afterwards:

*“Struss & Claussen supports us through personal coaching sessions with experienced managers and members of the management team. We appreciate both the broad and differentiated detailed perspective on personal strengths and development areas, which are openly and very agreeably addressed. The insights gained are always greatly appreciated by all participants and have a lasting positive impact on professional and personal development. We also invited Ms. Struss to give a keynote speech, which received a lot of positive feedback in every regard.”*

— Head of Human Resources & Member of the Management Board



# Case #4: Networked together

## Ambition

How do you get everyone around the table when there is no table? International teams of developers working on joint projects at various locations around the world. At the same time, they all have different cultural backgrounds, communicative needs and language requirements. The customer wants to improve communication and understanding in order to make cooperation more harmonious and simultaneously more efficient.



**FOCUS**  
Teambuilding &  
Employee Retention



**CLIENT**  
A social network for  
professional contacts

## Approach

Engaging with oneself also makes the individual more sensitive to the otherness of other people. Struss & Claussen raises awareness of the individual’s own needs in the context of the team through:

- an individual personality analysis for each member
- looking at the communication behavior individually and in the team
- the examination of roles and role perceptions
- the development of forms of exchange and feedback

In the run-up to the one-day workshop, all participants complete test procedures from Struss & Claussen. In the workshop, two trainers apply the results to teamwork. Various exercises are used to work out together how the strengths and talents of the individual members can contribute to building communication structures and developing team spirit – even at a distance.

## Result

The participants received inspiration, both personally and for the team, on how to increase their satisfaction with their work (together) and how to shape the exchange of ideas.

# Case #5: Family tradition

## Ambition

Family businesses form the backbone of the German economy. But the components of “family” and “business”, which the term so naturally combines, are not infrequently experienced as a source of tension. How does it affect the relationship with each other when ideas differ? How can communication succeed when understanding ceases at the generational boundary? Two siblings from the next generation of entrepreneurs want support in becoming stronger individually and as a team during the transition so they can seize the opportunities that come with the hand-over. In the process, the roles assumed by the individual members within the family and the company will also be considered in a nuanced way.



**FOCUS**  
Family Businesses &  
Entrepreneurial Families



**CLIENT**  
A medium-sized manu-  
facturing company

## Approach

Each one individually and both together. Struss & Claussen addresses the issue with individuals focusing on it separately and also as a team with consultants working to:

- develop a strong awareness of each individual’s own leadership personality
- uncover individual strengths and areas of development in leadership
- build up sensitivity for self-perception and the perception of others
- develop strategies for dealing with conflicts in the (sibling) team
- compare the dynamics and roles in the family system and in the cooperation
- review traditions and structures that have been handed down
- preserve practiced values and, if necessary, reinterpret them
- create common visions for the development of the company
- successfully manage the company under dual leadership in the long term

The coaching process starts with a strength-based potential diagnosis. This is followed by an appointment dedicated to the case history and to analyzing the actual situation. Afterwards, consultants combine test results and findings from the personal exchange and derive concrete development recommendations for the individual leadership style, cooperation and organizational structure. The focus is not only on welding the siblings together, but also on building a bridge between the generations, between new challenges of digital transformation and old analog value chains. “Homework” provides a carry-over into everyday work. After two months, a first follow-up meeting is held to discuss the consequences and effects of the consultation. Struss & Claussen accompanies the client on an ongoing basis with further coaching appointments.

## Result

The successor generation’s siblings have received an exact position analysis, can now reflect on roles, distribute tasks according to potential and grow individually into the appropriate leadership function. Communication patterns are recorded when dealing with the “senior generation”. Impulses for change contribute to a better understanding.



# Case #6: Between yesterday and tomorrow

## Ambition

Knowing that their own company is in good hands – that is the main concern of outgoing managing directors. A successful succession plan takes time: time to break away, make room for the new, and find overlaps for the transition. This is also the case when father and son meet as senior and junior boss. The client wants to prepare this phase well, define and shape their own position and that of the successor.



**FOCUS**  
Succession & Generation Change



**CLIENT**  
A medium-sized company in the mineral oil and petrochemical sector

## Approach

Between appreciating yesterday and making a change for tomorrow lies a sore point. Overcoming it requires a high degree of sensitivity. Struss & Claussen supports the client and their successor in raising mutual awareness of the achievements and opportunities by:

- discussing individual personality analyses with each other in the presence of all parties involved
- combining individual and shared ideas of leadership
- defining core values together
- clarifying the understanding of roles and their distribution
- working out synergy effects
- creating a shared vision of the next 20 years
- placing innovations of the future alongside methods of the past

After separate preliminary interviews, the participants go through various personality analysis and aptitude diagnostics procedures. Individually, they engage in conversations with a consultant tandem. Co-consultation in this case serves to demonstrate impartiality, to emphasize a coexistence and balance of all interests. The consultants summarize the results and discuss them with all participants in a joint presentation. Subsequently, concrete measures and next steps are defined to ensure future viability in the difficult overall market situation of the industry. A roadmap for the handover is jointly adopted. A follow-up appointment ensures that findings are incorporated into everyday work.

## Result

Those involved have developed an appreciative attitude towards each other and have thereby created the prerequisite for successfully managing the phase of transition and ultimate succession.

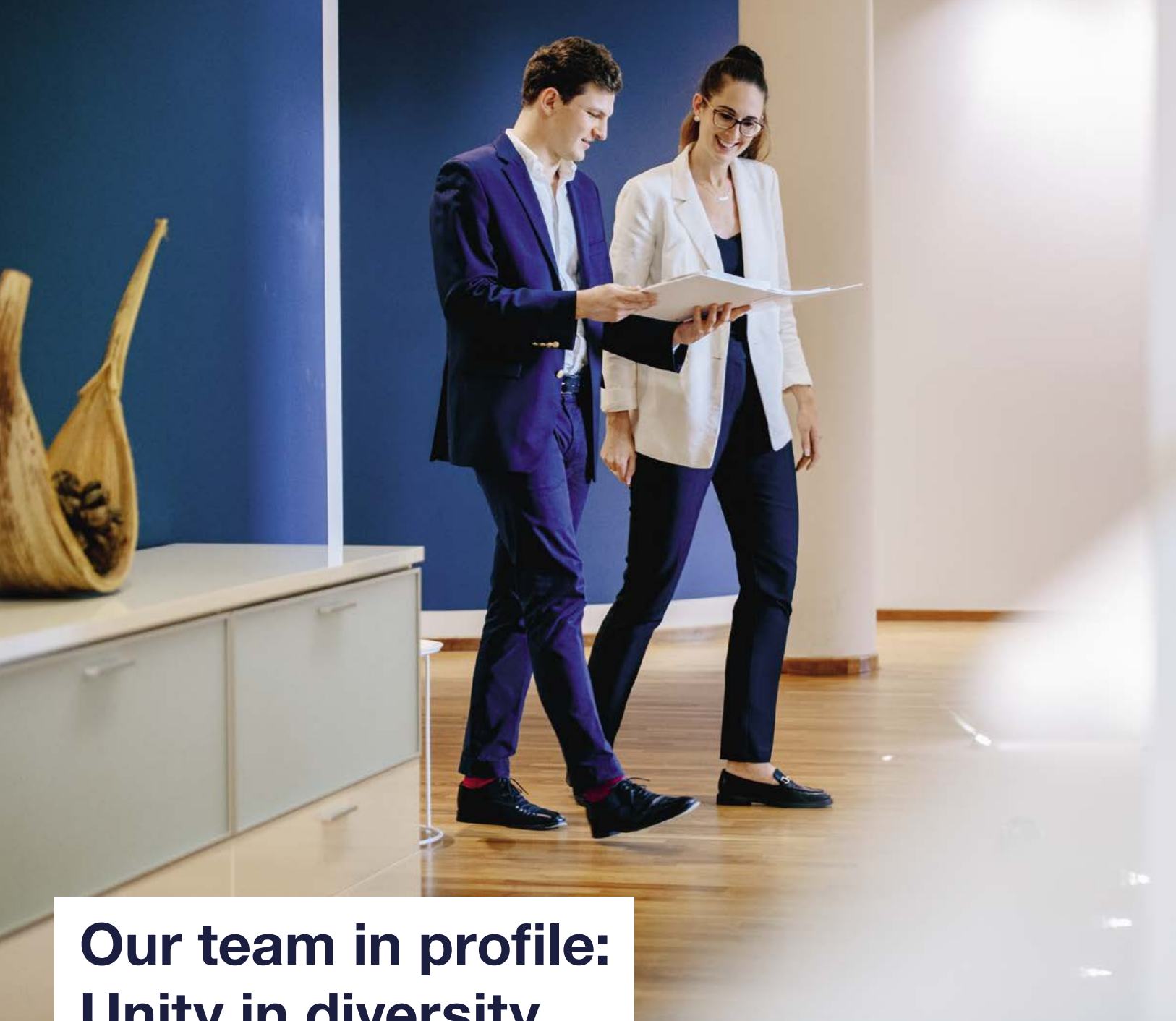


## Services offered by Struss & Claussen include:

- one-day or multi-day group workshops
- one-day individual consultations
- coaching by the hour for individuals or groups of people
- regular coaching sessions to accompany the process
- personality-oriented keynote lectures

All formats are also available online.





# Our team in profile: Unity in diversity

## Voices from the Struss & Claussen team

It is the guiding principle of our consulting and recruitment practices that career paths do not follow a linear principle, but can take a turn at any time. Struss & Claussen employs people with a variety of degrees from different disciplines – from psychology and education to history, philosophy and economics.

Before coming to us, our colleagues taught, managed and wrote in their jobs elsewhere. Today, they make their individual contribution in a range of tasks to making the consultation experience a positive one from the very first phone call. Four colleagues describe what their work at Struss & Claussen means to them.





“There’s a lot that sets Struss & Claussen apart from other employers.”



Jannike Teegen  
Assistant to CEO

Vocational training at the Dr. W. Blindow School Stadthagen as assistant for tourism and hotel management

Sound professional experience in the hotel industry at home and abroad

Several years of experience in operations and team management

**What makes your job at Struss & Claussen special?**

The sheer variety and diversity, the strong team, the daily challenges, the interaction with and contact to our clients. Plus, not a day goes by that I don’t learn something new.

**How did you first come to Struss & Claussen?**

I started out in the hotel business and wanted to change, to live out my service philosophy in a different environment. Then I became aware of Struss & Claussen and was instantly hooked on the company.

**What is different about Struss & Claussen compared to other employers?**

Many things distinguish Struss & Claussen from other employers: the wonderful team spirit, the fantastic colleagues, the well-functioning communication within the team, the exciting and varied working environment and the two bosses, with whom I have a very nice working relationship. This is especially important in my job.

**What did you want to be when you were a child?**

A teacher or a ballet dancer. At 1.85m, I’m a bit too tall for dancing, and as the person responsible for the trainees and interns at Struss & Claussen, I’ve become a kind of teacher after all.

**What do you think? What do your colleagues particularly appreciate about you?**

My loyalty, my helpfulness, my tireless efforts and my enthusiasm.

**What makes your job at Struss & Claussen special?**

The diversity! For sure. I research educational topics, write newsletters, work on our digital products and am also a data protection officer. This makes every day feel new!

**How did you first come to Struss & Claussen?**

When you study philosophy, as I did, you expect to be looking for a job for a while after graduation. When I read the job advertisement at Struss & Claussen shortly after, I thought it was a perfect fit! Now I am an in-house example of what philosophers can become.

**What is different about Struss & Claussen compared to other employers?**

The personal and warm interaction with each other. We know each other so well and are able to exchange ideas even outside of the professional sphere. You get exciting input here and there – every day.

**What is the most exciting insight you have gained at Struss & Claussen?**

That it is just incredibly valuable to know and reflect on yourself. I have already been able to observe this realization in friends and relatives who have been to Struss & Claussen. It is impressive to see how much it has changed and enriched them.

**What do your colleagues particularly appreciate about you?**

My joy in researching and most certainly that I am very persistent in technical matters! :)

“What women philosophers can become ...”



Ayda Pirmohammadi  
Knowledge Management & Digitalization

Degree in History (B.A.) and Philosophy with emphasis on human rights (M.A.) at the University of Hamburg

Practical work experience in a non-for-profit cultural society, developing education and communication for non-commercial purposes

Academic placement abroad in Lithuania

“At Struss & Claussen  
I was given the  
recommendation to apply  
as a consultant.”



**Felix Bornemann**  
Senior Consultant

Training as a hotel specialist and subsequent employment in the high-end hotel industry

Degree in Hotel Management (B.A.) from the Hotelfachschule Hamburg, with a focus on International Hotel Management

Academic and professional placements abroad in Australia, the US and Switzerland

Management Assistant at the surf school Surfschule Westerland GmbH

Systemic coaching training (coachingakademie)

**What makes your job at Struss & Claussen special?**

The diversity! Always attuning to a different counterpart leaves no room for monotony. The feeling of giving young people security through counseling and making them want to look forward to the future is just a great feeling to have each and every day.

**How did you first come to Struss & Claussen?**

First of all, as a client. I had a job-related crisis and no longer knew my place in the world of work, so I sought counseling from Struss & Claussen. They recommended that I apply for a job as a consultant myself. For me, it was a step into the unknown that now brings me an incredible amount of satisfaction.

**What is different about Struss & Claussen compared to other employers?**

The lived motto: be who you are, because that’s good! We maintain a very open relationship culture in our office. Everyone has individual strengths, but also room for development. And that’s a good thing!

**What is the most exciting insight you have gained at Struss & Claussen?**

There is rarely a single perfect path. Most of the time, a handful of options – some of them quite different – offer the chance to flourish.

**What does personal development mean to you in your job at Struss & Claussen?**

In the daily consultations I always learn something about myself and my own scope for development. Life is a process, and along the way it’s important to deal with the more stressful issues and not just focus on the things that are easy and fun.

**What makes your job at Struss & Claussen special?**

Clearly the variety. The clients I have the privilege of advising are totally diverse, ranging from school students and university students, to young professionals, young executives or people who simply want to reorient themselves. It’s a diversity that makes the job never boring.

**What is different about Struss & Claussen compared to other employers?**

At Struss & Claussen, you are allowed to express your personality in all its facets. This contributes to a high level of satisfaction and motivation. The boundaries between professional and private life are very fluid, which is still unfortunately not always the case in the traditional professional world.

**What is the most exciting insight you have gained at Struss & Claussen?**

I now know where my personal talents lie and I am able to develop them into professional strengths. Putting the focus on to personal talents provides a high level of inner satisfaction and is also much more promising than constantly dealing with the weak points.

**What does personal development mean to you in your job at Struss & Claussen?**

It’s not just about developing professionally and through the experience of consulting, but also personally – and it all works together. Over the years I have become the mother of two children. At Struss & Claussen I can fill this role and even benefit professionally from my experience as a mother.

**What do your colleagues particularly appreciate about you?**

I value my colleagues so much that I enjoy coming to the office in the morning for them alone. This usually puts me in a great mood and keeps me highly motivated. I suspect that my colleagues find this positive spirit very infectious.

“It’s not just about  
developing professionally,  
but also personally.”



**Jalée Gheiby**  
Senior Consultant and  
Podcast Moderator

Studied Marketing Communication (B.A.) and obtained an International Business Master of Letters at the University of St Andrews, majoring in corporate social responsibility, scenario thinking and strategy

Several years of professional experience in marketing for the SPIEGEL publishing house

Scholarship holder of the EU program Leonardo Da Vinci with stays abroad in London, Eindhoven and Helsinki

Completed advanced training course “Systemic consulting for junior professionals” (isb Wiesloch)

Volunteered at Caspalina Deutschland



# On the air: The Struss & Claussen podcast



#Podcast

Interview with the **podcast team**

A regular refrain heard in the corridors of the Struss & Claussen office is “shh, we’re on the air!” But especially when Ragnhild Struss, Johann Claussen and Jalée Gheiby record a new episode for the podcast “Von innen nach außen – Struss & Claussen”. The office quickly becomes a studio, the chat among colleagues becomes a talk show on tape. The three of them recount how this all came about during a recording session.



**Podcasts have been a trend for quite some time. What made you decide to record one of your own right now?**

**Ragnhild:** To be honest, the idea was brought to us from within the team a few years ago. At the time, looking back, we were a bit coy and thought we'd better leave that to others. And then we were increasingly invited to be interview guests on podcasts such as. "Kasia trifft ...", "Role Models" and "On the Way to New Work". This encouraged us to get involved in production ourselves after all.

**Why is it worth listening to the podcast?**

**Johann:** The "Personal Development" in our company name is more than a place holder. How personal development can be supported and what may also hinder it are topics we deal with every day. Not just professionally, but passionately. In the podcast, we have the opportunity to dive deeper and take a closer look at issues such as childhood nurturing, internalized beliefs, and blind spots. And in an "easy to consume" way, because that's our goal: to invite listeners and take them on a deep dive into their personality.



**What was the determining factor for you to meet in this configuration for the podcast?**

**Jalée:** We have known Ragnhild and Johann for quite a while now and have learned how much they have to say on the one hand, and how much you have to nudge them on the other hand to get them to step up to the podium, in front of the camera or the microphone. That's why it was clear that there would be an interview format in which we tease out of them everything that can be gleaned in terms of experience and knowledge. And by doing so, I'm fulfilling a childhood dream. Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be like Karla Kolumna, the enthusiastic reporter from Bibi Blocksberg. Which brings us back to the topic at hand.

**What's the significance of the title – apart from the fact that it rhymes so nicely with Struss & Claussen in German?**

**Ragnhild:** With it, we are echoing our conviction. In order for people to feel fulfilled in their lives, we believe that there needs to be a good fit with their own inner world. In other words, when I am doing what corresponds to my true core, then I have the feeling that I can grow and live my power.

**Johann:** In our consulting work, we often find that clients are dissatisfied because their lifestyle is not in line with their inner values and visions – often something they are not aware of. That's why we start on the inside to find the best way for it to be effective on the outside. In the consultation as in the podcast.

**How often does a new episode come out and where can you listen to it?**

**Jalée:** There is a new episode every three weeks. You can listen to the podcast on all popular platforms and apps – and of course on our website. ♦



# Step up!

## Careers have many faces

Ragnhild Struss experienced for herself what support means at the beginning of her career. It was clear to her early on that she wanted to return this help by offering it to others. In 2009, she founded the non-profit association Step up! Karrierewege with entrepreneur friends from her student days. She now chairs it together with Johann Claussen. Together they assume social responsibility for socially disadvantaged young people.

Those who are aware of their strengths and potentials are motivated for the future and have a desire to learn and discover the professional world. That is why Step up! is committed to showing young people from Hamburg a new perspective and encouraging them to trust in their own effectiveness. Especially in cases where there is a lack of educational role models in the family, advice and action are needed. This is where the Step up! career guidance program comes in. Participants are accompanied and comprehensively supported on their career path over a period of two years.

The program starts with a one-day professional study and career counseling session, which provides individual recommendations for the young person's personal career path. Once the direction has been determined, Step up! arranges mentors from professional practice to match. Over the years, the association has built up a network of representatives from a wide range of industries who are happy to share their experiences and establish contacts for internships or jobs. In addition, participants are supported with preparing job applications or "rehearsing" job interviews. An application portfolio check and individual coaching round off the program.

Hamburg residents between the ages of 15 and 25 who are attending school and who have already started, dropped out or completed an apprenticeship or course of study can apply to Step up! The crucial factors are the need for consulting and the level of motivation. Step up! is not an "elite scholarship", but closes a gap between programs for particularly high-achieving and low-achieving young people. Support is given to those who show bite, have ambition – and are unable to pay for the program's services out of their own resources. All in the spirit of equal opportunity.



**Janna**

*"All of these expectations and more have definitely been fulfilled! Finally, some professional advice I can do something with!"*

**Mika**

*"It feels good to have a plan. A plan that I will continue to give my all to over the next six months and that will constantly remind me why it was the right decision to apply to Step up!"*



In addition to this individual support, Step up! offers free lectures and workshops for schools. The focus is on educational institutions in low-income neighborhoods with high support needs. This is how Step up! wants to reach as many young people as possible and encourage them to recognize, appreciate and use their talents.

The association is supported by the voluntary commitment of the founders, mentors and a small team; it is financed by donations and grants. In order to be able to continue supporting young people like Mika and Janna, Step up! relies on donations and offers various options – from sponsoring a participant to classic donations to "donations instead of gifts".

For Struss & Claussen, Step up! is a project close to their hearts that will continue to grow in the coming years and pave the way for many careers. ♦

## More about Step up! Karrierewege e.V.



### Website

stepup-ev.de



### Instagram

@stepup\_karierewege\_e.v



### Phone

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### Donation

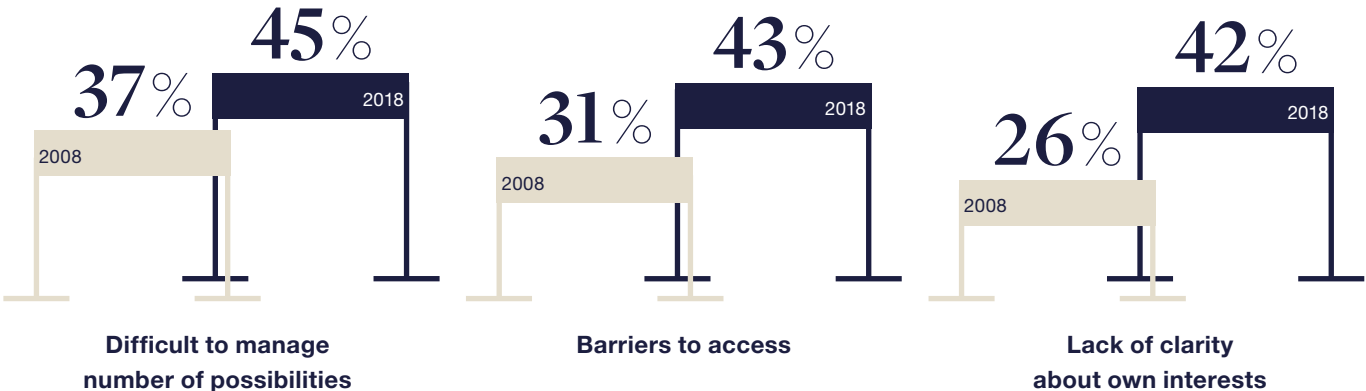
Keyword "Stipendium"

Step up! Karrierewege e.V.

IBAN: DE35 2007 0024 0400 2267 00

# The world of Struss & Claussen in figures

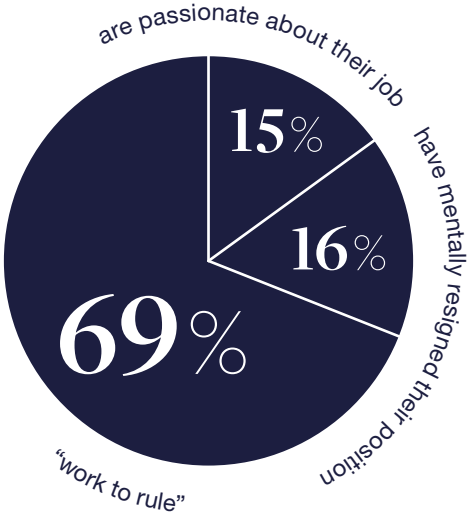
Percentage of students citing the following as challenges six months before graduation:



As a result of 136,890 students dropping out each year after an average of 4 semesters, the state incurs annual costs of that could have been spent on career guidance instead.

more than 1 billion euros,

Proportion of workers aged 18 and over in Germany in 2019 who ...



Percentage of employed people in Germany who cite the following reasons as motivation to change jobs:



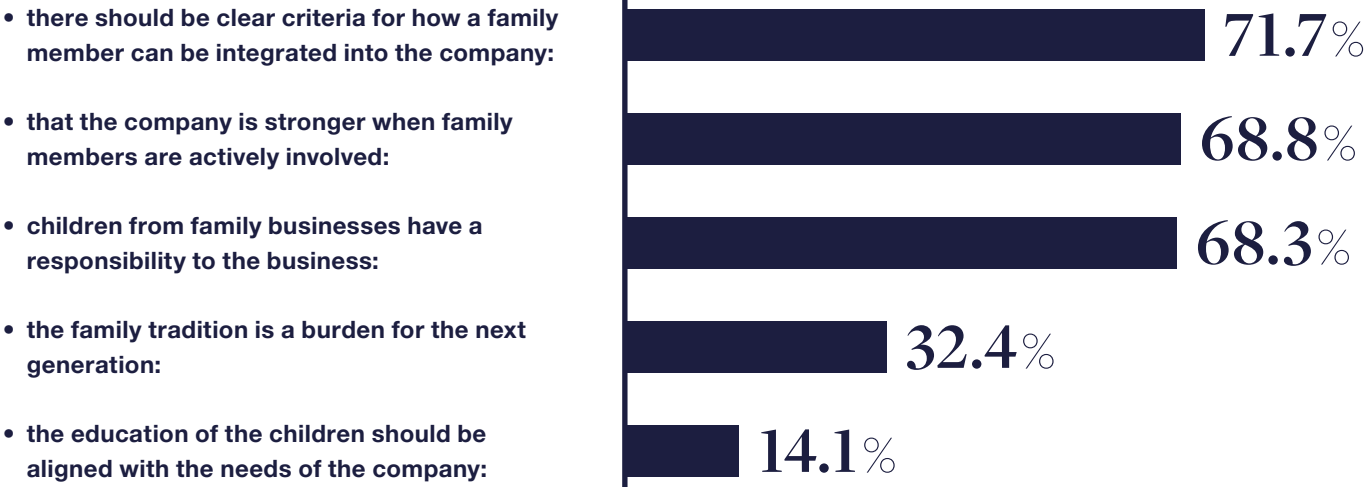
Proportion of family businesses that are concerned with the following issues:



Proportion of members of the next generation of entrepreneurs who cite these issues as a challenge:



Percentage of the next generation in family businesses who think ...





# Imprint

## Publisher

Ragnhild Struss und Johann Claussen  
Struss & Claussen Personal Development  
Moorfuhrtweg 15  
22301 Hamburg

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## Print

Hartung Druck + Medien GmbH  
Asbrookdamm 38  
22115 Hamburg

## Copyright

April 2021

## Design

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## Translation

Lingovo Übersetzungsbüro / [www.lingovo.com](http://www.lingovo.com)

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fauxels / Pexels  
Bantersnaps / Unsplash  
Maksim Goncharenok / Pexels  
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Andrew Neel / Pexels  
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## Sources “The world of Struss & Claussen in figures”:

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