

„Switch-Happens“

Switch-Column by Monica Deters

How millions of people experience the switch into a new era.



## You can't fire Dignity!

When people lose their jobs, they often lose far more than their income.

But perhaps we are beginning to discover what truly defines a person's worth.



This morning, I was sitting at my kitchen table with a cup of coffee, scrolling through the news. Rocko was stretched out on the cool tiles, while Donnie watched two crows on the fence intently through the window. Everything seemed peaceful. Until I came across a short news item that stayed with me for the rest of the day: **A long-time academic is now driving a taxi to make ends meet.**

I found myself lingering on that sentence. Not because there is anything wrong with driving a taxi. But because I wondered what that first day must have felt like for him. Do you get into the car with your head lowered? Do you hope you won't run into anyone who remembers you from the office? Or are you simply grateful to be working again?

I don't know. But I think almost all of us recognise that uneasy feeling behind stories like this: **the fear of no longer being needed.**

### Our Professions Used to Define Who We Were

For decades, work was far more than just a job. It was a promise. If you studied hard, worked hard and took responsibility, you could hope for security. Our profession gave our lives structure. It gave us recognition, a sense of belonging and often a considerable part of our self-worth. There is a reason why, even today, we so often introduce ourselves by saying what we do for a living. Almost as if our profession were our name.

### The Free Fall Begins Much Earlier

When people lose their jobs, we usually talk about money. Severance packages. Unemployment



benefits. New job applications. But the real pain often begins much earlier. It begins the moment someone clears out their desk. When they hand in their access card. When the company phone is switched off. When "See you tomorrow" suddenly becomes "Take care."

It is the moment when some people lose not only their job, but also their sense of belonging. And suddenly, there is this quiet question that hardly anyone dares to ask out loud: **Was I only important as long as I was useful? Was I only somebody as long as I had a title?**

### **Perhaps We Are Facing a Much Bigger Change**

As we all know, the world of work is changing rapidly. Artificial intelligence is taking over tasks. Companies are restructuring. Every day brings new reports of long-established companies going bankrupt. Some professions are disappearing while others are emerging. This leaves many people feeling deeply uncertain. And understandably so.

But perhaps this time is also showing us something we have forgotten for far too long. We have tied our worth to something that can be taken away from us at any time. Our profession. The nameplate on our office door. Our position. Perhaps that was never a particularly secure foundation. Because **no employment contract in the world can give a human being dignity. And no dismissal can take it away.**

### **A Person's Worth Begins Where the Business Card Ends**

Perhaps we are witnessing the greatest social switch in generations. Not because work is disappearing, but because we have to learn to redefine what it means to be human. Perhaps CVs will become more colourful in the future. People will change professions more often. Start again. Learn again. Fail again. Begin again. And perhaps one day, that will no longer seem unusual.

The academic who is driving a taxi today has not lost his education. He has not lost his experience. His kindness. His ability to listen, solve problems or connect with other people. None of that lives in his office. **It lives in him.** Perhaps we should therefore stop judging people by what they do for a living and start seeing them for what they truly bring to the world. Courage. Life experience. Responsibility. Heart. Because these are precisely the qualities that will become increasingly precious in a world filled with technology.

### **Dignity Doesn't Wear an Employee Badge**

It goes to work with us every morning, no matter where the road happens to lead.

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### **The Switch Column by Monica Deters**

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