



Thinking about your career

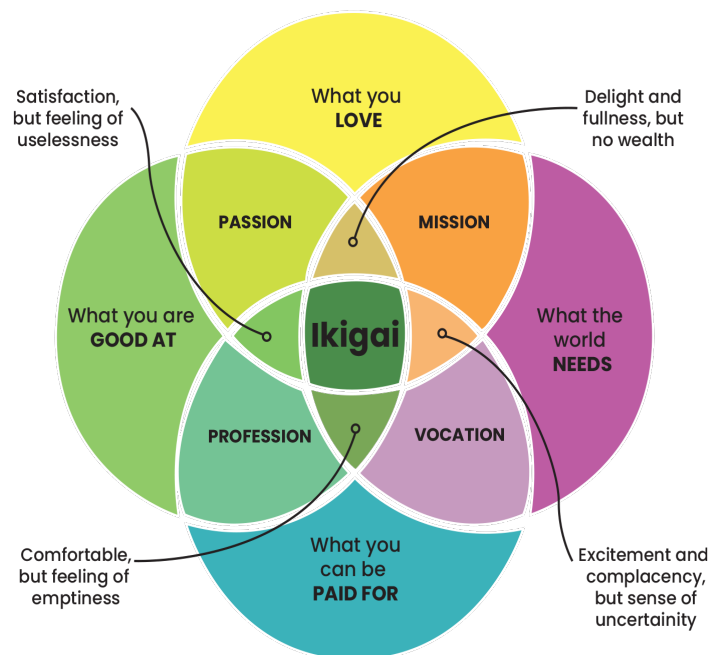
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Let's look at your career in three ways:

1. **Traditional**
Your ikigai, skills, strengths and motivations, etc.
2. **ABZ approach**
Learn by trying things out
3. **Career mosaic**
Sniper versus scientist

Your ikigai, purpose or firm persuasion

Your purpose, firm persuasion or ikigai are similar. Your ikigai is a Japanese idea; it's the art of doing something you love with extreme focus and joy.



For some people this is quite specific; for others it's more general.

So what are you good at?

Think about your strengths, skills and motivations. Here's a rundown of skills you can assess yourself against. They're in three categories: **skills with people**, **skills with data and ideas**, and **skills with things**.

Skills with people			
Initiate or lead	Supervise and manage	Follow through and get things done	Motivate others
Persuade and influence	Consult	Advise	Co-ordinate a group of people
Help people link up and connect	Tune into others	Show empathy and warmth	Interview and draw out
Listen	Raise others' status	Mentor	Coach
Teach	See others' perspectives	Build rapport	Have high EQ
Communicate one-on-one	Contribute to meetings	Bring people together	Present to an audience
Write clearly	Entertain and use humour	Speak another language	Negotiate and resolve conflicts

Skills with data and ideas			
Analyse data	Synthesise ideas	Develop fresh thinking	Innovate
Visualise	Organise and classify	See patterns	Break analysis or ideas into parts
See the bigger picture	Work with numbers	Solve problems	Think creatively
Innovate	Plan	Research	Create programmes of work
Compare similarities and differences	Study and observe	Compile, keep records	Use intuition
Think strategically	Political nous		

Skills with things			
Make, produce, manufacture	Manage projects	Repair	Construct
Shape, model, sculpt	Cut, carve, chisel	Operate, drive	Manipulate
Use hands, body, fingers with high degree of dexterity	Set up systems and processes	Organise things	Adapt quickly to new situations

Gallup's Clifton StrengthsFinder is a great tool for strengths and GEMA's tool to reflect on your motivations works well.



Let's add Scott Dinsmore into the mix

Watch his Ted Talk: [How to find work you love](#). He states: If you don't know what you're looking for, you're never going to find it. He's got three basic ideas:

1. Find out your unique strengths and what your soul is made of.
2. Reflect on your experiences: what went right and what went wrong and learn from them.
3. Surround yourself with people who are doing what you want to do and others who encourage you to do what you want to do. You are the people you surround yourself with who either reinforce, or ask you challenge your working identity. He quotes author, Jim Rohn: *You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.*

But do you really know what you want in the future and what you're capable of?

Your future self is not who you are today

I urge you to watch Shankar Vedantam's 2022 TED Talk: [You don't actually know what your future self wants](#). He talks about the paradox of the illusion of continuity. He states: When we look backwards, we can see enormous changes in who we have become. But when we look forwards we tend to imagine that we're going to be the same in the future.

We're not the people we were ten years ago and this has huge implications for our career choices and aspirations. Here's his advice, which I think is valuable:

1. You'll be a different person in the future, so spend time doing new things, expanding your horizons and staying curious.
2. You might disagree with your future self.
3. Be brave and take risks. You might not have the skills or capacity to do something today, but your future self may well be able to do it.

ABZ career planning

Related to this, and building on it, is the **ABZ** of career planning.

Can you predict what the world will be like in 10 years' time? Can you predict what your life will be like in 10 years' time? Unlikely.

Hoffman And Casnocha refer to the ABZ career planning.

A is what you're doing now. You learn and keep going on the career path you're on.

B is a pivot from what you're doing but in the same broad direction or sector. It's changing direction or your path based on what you've learned along the way. Once you get there, it's your new **A**.

Z is learning by doing. You won't know if a new role is for you or you hate something until you do it.

Hoffman and Casnocha: "Whatever the situation, actions not plans, generate lessons that help test your hypotheses against reality. Actions help you discover where you want to go and how to get there."

To change from **A** to **B**, try:

- reflecting
- talking to people in your area and others you're interested in
- gathering intelligence on what's happening in your skill area and sector
- asking for a secondment or shadowing opportunity.



To move to plan **Z**:

- think as broadly as you can
- get a mentor or coach
- be curious and talk to curious people
- court serendipity
- volunteer outside of work
- talk to people in different parts of your organisation, the wider sector you work in, or those in completely different sectors
- attend industry or networking events that aren't related to your work
- learn something new and unrelated to your present role or areas of expertise
- have conversations, build relationships and network. And remember the strength of weak ties.



Career mosaic: sniper versus scientist

This is another way of thinking about taking an experimental approach to your career.

As a sniper, you're taking aim at one particular job. As a scientist, you're exploring and experimenting all the time. You may not know what you want to work on or where you want to contribute until you trip over it.

Let's assume you're suddenly sent on an expedition to the South Pole, or asked to plan the new health system structure and how it'll operate. You may even have some ideas about what you'll discover once you get there and/or what needs doing. But once you're at the South Pole or the Ministry of Health, you'll need to observe what's happening and adapt accordingly. There's no right or wrong, only information.

You may find you hate the isolation of the South Pole, and love the complexities of health and the chance to work on equity issues. But you don't know until you get to experience it.

We learn by experience. We try things out and find out things about ourselves that reflection alone won't give us.

Your working identity

To take this a step further, Ibarra, similar to Vendantam, refers to our many possible selves. Rather than one path and one working identity, she argues our working identity is a process of experimenting, testing and learning about our future selves.

Your working identity combines:

- the sort of work you do
- the relationships you have with your organisation and those you work with
- the story you tell yourself about the work you do and how you got to be doing it.

To change this think through three approaches:

Craft experiments (we've mentioned this already)

Your working identity is defined by what you do: the activities you engage in.

Try out new activities and professional roles on a small scale.

Shift connections

Your working identity is also defined by the company you keep: relationships and professional connections.

Develop relationships with different people in different worlds. Look for role models and new reference groups.

Make sense

Your working identity is also defined by the formative events in our lives and the stories that link who we were and who we will become.

Find or create catalysts and triggers for change and use them to rework your life story. You can change your story and your narrative if you want to.

Thanks for coming!

From The Training Practice team - Dinah, Hilary, Kristen, and James

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