



# A to Z of Re-energising Your Career

*An Innovating Your Career e-Guide*



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# Welcome to the A to Z of Re-energising Your Career

For many reasons people fall out of love with their careers. Aspirations evolve; priorities shift; circumstances change. Recognising the signs and being aware something doesn't feel right are starting points for digging deeper and moving forward.

Full of tips and activities, this e-guide is designed to help you understand more about your current situation, re-connect with your aspirations, take action to re-energise your career.

Here's to putting the spark back in to your career adventure.



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## Awareness

Something doesn't feel right. Maybe a general feeling of frustration or dissatisfaction with your professional life. Maybe your career isn't what you hoped for or expected. Whatever these feelings may be, don't dismiss them, focus on them and dig a bit deeper.

Being aware that something isn't quite right for you and addressing it enables you to gain a better understanding of your situation. Plus it allows you to proactively approach your challenges, decide what you want to do and then take action to bring about the changes you want.

### Try It Today

1. Find a space where you can think and reflect
2. Relax and breath deeply
3. Without censoring yourself, write down everything that comes into your head when you think about your career at the moment
4. Now look at your notes, what resonates, what themes do you see?



## Blocks

You want to re-energise your career; make a change or ramp up what you're already doing. What's stopping you?

As everyone is different so are their circumstances and their career. This means that what could be blocking you is personal and unique to you.

We all have differing levels of perceived risk; and it's not purely financial. Consider these three main areas, security, meaning and novelty. When these three are in synch for us we're in the zone. When they're not...

Whatever's potentially stopping you, one thing that is true for everyone, the best way to address blocks is to identify them and take action.

### **Try It Today**

1. If you're having trouble getting started make an honest list of what might be stopping you; perceived blocks that are getting in your way
2. Decide what's real; what's false
3. Generate ideas and possible solutions
4. Come up with a plan to manage any risks in a way that works for you



## **Commitment**

Are you really going to do something about re-energising your career? Making a change or getting a fresh perspective on what you already have? Recognising there is something amiss is one thing; doing something about it is most definitely another.

I have met plenty of people who are very adept at talking about what they are going to do. Grand, glorious plans that could take your breath away and then... they keep talking about it...and talking about it....and...

Don't fall into the talking trap. Be someone who turns vision and ideas into results. Someone who has successfully re-energised their career.

### **Try It Today**

Create yourself a commitment pledge. This is your private and personal commitment to yourself and your re-energising your career adventure. Compose it in a way that works for you; using terms and references that resonate with you. Make it as visual as you like. This is for you.



## Dreams

It seems that some people, as they get older, decide that they have to put their dreams on hold or that there isn't time for any of that aspiration malarkey now they have serious responsibilities.

A successful career is built on a mix of aspiration, evolution and action so the dream part remains a key factor. As we change and our lives change our aspirations may change too. Shifting these aspirations is not a failure and mourning the loss of a changed or unachieved dream is counterproductive and limiting. Letting go and re-focusing help you to move forward and re-energise your career.

### **Try It Today**

1. Take some time away from your day-to-day activities
2. Relax and let your mind wander
3. Now imagine yourself in 3 years time talking to a friend
4. You are telling them about your life.
5. What will your life be like? What will your career look like?



## Explore

It's amazing how tightly we become locked in our own personal bubble. We maybe forget there's a big wide world out there or maybe we choose to ignore it. This disconnection has a direct impact on our career success and is an important aspect of re-energising your career.

Exploring beyond what you know, being curious and asking questions:

- increases knowledge and understanding
- enables you to find and create career opportunities
- encourages you to see things from the perspective of others

Fresh insights result. Unimaginable opportunities arise. Careers get the injection of energy they need. And sometimes... new friends are made.

### **Top Exploring Tip**

Speak to people; ask them questions, for their insights. Don't just rely on what you find online. People are generally helpful and happy to share their experiences. They are an excellent source of real insights.



## Flexibility

Your career is a very personal thing which means that conversations about it and making changes can be a challenge. Especially when you have set your heart and soul on achieving certain goals. How can you possibly let go of those aspirations and measures of success? You've spent so much time and effort getting to this point.

But what if it's not working? What if your aspirations or circumstances have changed? What if it's not what you expected? Holding on too tightly and rigidly is not the same as being focused and motivated.

Flexibility is your friend. In a world of constant change where the ability to be flexible is an asset applying the same attitude to your career will bring rewards and help you re-energise it.

### Try It Today

Create a fresh perspective by using the Anti-problem Approach. Think about your challenge and then describe it as the opposite. For example, ask yourself the question, 'how do I build a really unsuccessful career?!"



## Gaps

Instead of 'minding the gap', think about 'finding the gap'. Whether it's a gap in experience or knowledge needed for your next career stage, a gap in the market or a gap in an organisation's talent pool, gaps are great. They are where career opportunities lie. They are spaces just waiting to be filled by learning, new products or services, you and your amazing skills, capabilities and experience.

Deciding to re-energise your career will inevitably lead to you identifying gaps. It's up to you to compare them against what you are trying to achieve and deciding whether or not they are important to your success. Don't let them hold you back, use them as seeds for growth. OK, I know you probably think that's a bit 'cheesy' but it's true. My proudest moments and greatest successes happened thanks to the good old gap!

### **Top Tip**

If you genuinely find an important gap please do something about; come up with a plan of attack. Approach it; don't ignore it.



## Help

Being independent and self-sufficient are good traits in anyone...as long as it doesn't mean being closed off from others. There are occasions when everyone gets stuck, needs a sounding board or would benefit from an alternative perspective. Taking responsibility for yourself and your career mixed with a dash of outside help enhances your recipe for career success. There is a caveat. Be careful in selecting your confidantes and remember it's still your career and your responsibility.

### Tips for Selecting a Mentor

1. Meet or speak with prospective mentors to check compatibility. After all, if they irritate you things aren't going to progress well
2. Think about what it is you're trying to achieve by having a mentor. If you don't exactly know but just know that you need some support, that's fine. Good mentors will help you with this too
3. A mentor is there to challenge and support you but ultimately, you have to commit to, and take responsibility for, making any changes



## Inspiration

What are you motivated by; money, responsibility, status, power, challenge? We all have different motivations which vary over time depending on our circumstances.

To really motivate yourself to re-energise your career and turn ideas into action requires a little more detail and emotion than 'I want more money' or 'I want to be promoted' or 'my boss is an idiot and I need to escape'. What does addressing these things really mean to you?

Digging deeper, asking yourself why you want them; why they matter to you, starts to make what you're aiming for much more real and the thought of it becomes much more of an inspiration.

### **Try It Today**

Write your own manifesto. Think about what you want to achieve by when. Imagine what it will allow you to do; personally, professionally; for yourself, your friends, your family. Capture it, keep reading it, live it.



## Job...or Career?

When you are in the full flow of your career it's quite easy to loose sight of what it is..and what it isn't. Does this really matter? Yes, and here's why.

There is a difference between having a job and building a career.

Moving from one different, unrelated job to next with no thought of the future or striving for personal growth is not building a career.

A career is the connected, evolving, long-term progress you make within your work life. And it will most likely be made up of a variety of jobs, roles and accomplishments. It may also involve more than one career path. Careers harness learning, evolving skills and experiences; helping you to develop your work life into future. It's like a personal career snowball!

### **4 Elements at the Heart of a Career**

**Perspective:** Taking a longer-term view

**Progress:** Moving forward and developing

**Purpose:** Knowing aims and objectives

**Personal:** Unique to each individual



## Knowing

How well do you know yourself? Your value to organisations, the economy and society? It's not unusual for people to have lost sight of themselves in this way. Get through the interview, get the promotion, get the business off the ground then...

Whatever your track-record, to potential new employers or clients you're a stranger, to your current employer you might be a bit of a stranger too!

Whether it's a promotion, a new role, a complete change, it's not the responsibility of others to unravel what you offer; they need your help to see your awesome value and why you're an asset.

This is important because it helps people get to know you, boosts your self-confidence and reminds you of what you have already achieved.

### **Try It Today**

Create a richer picture of yourself by:

1. Take an honest look at your achievements
2. Be proud and enthusiastic about achievements
3. Capture examples of your skills and capabilities in action



## Leverage

Building on the subject of getting to know yourself better, re-energising your career starts to happen when you leverage what you have in your career treasure chest. By leverage I mean..

*...to use something to maximum advantage*

You didn't start out with what you have now. You learnt, evolved, gained experience from a standing start. Remember, re-energising your career is not throwing everything away and starting again even if you change career path completely. Your skills, experience and achievements demonstrate your potential. Help others to see that potential by the way you 'package' yourself; how you showcase what you have to offer.

### Try It Today

1. Imagine you are a product
2. Think of your target market (*new company, new role, new client etc*)
3. Write a list of your benefits to that target market



## Mindset

Being open-minded and creative, whether you realise it or not, are key to achieving real career success. This is even more so when you are seeking to re-energise your career. Change doesn't come easily to everyone. Getting a fresh perspective on your situation cannot be achieved with a closed mind. Adopting a more creative mindset helps you to stay curious, enables you to make progress, allows you to spot opportunities and means you will be able to deal more positively with any challenges.

**Important reminder:** Remember you are already creative. It's an integral part of you so embrace it. Being artistic is one output of creativity; not creativity itself! Creativity is a capability and can be continually developed

### 3 Mindset Boosters

1. Exercise is good for our brains. Movement improves thinking skills
2. Imagine what someone else would do in your situation
3. Stay curious. Ask questions. Explore beyond what you know. Comfort zones are not as warm, fluffy and safe as you think



## Networking

Sorry to bring up the 'N' word. I didn't mean to scare anyone or cause a cold sweat! Networking for career success is a positive and empowering experience. Yes, it can sometimes be challenging and frustrating and you meet the occasional 'bad apple' but in general people are friendly and helpful if you give them the chance.

Networking helps with gaining fresh insights, learning, exploring beyond your bubble. All of which support your mission to re-energise your career.

### **Thoughts on Networking**

Fundamentally, networking is all about people so be human and treat others as human beings too. Remember these three aspects...

- 1. Radar** – to start a conversation people need to know you exist
- 2. Rapport** – keeping the conversation going and building trust takes time and positive intent
- 3. Relationship** – not everyone you connect or converse with will lead to a professional relationship. Invest proactively in those that do



## Opportunities

Depending on your current situation or aspirations, re-energising your career might involve the hunt for new opportunities. This may mean creating them yourself, going and finding those that are already out there or a combination of both. Regardless of how you go about your opportunity hunt remember, you are looking to make a value match between you and the employer/customer. It's about them as much as you. Demonstrate how you will help them succeed or overcome a challenge; how you will help them and the organisation.

### Top Tips

1. Define what an opportunity actually looks like for you
2. Use a multi-channel approach to finding opportunities; the world is greater than the sum of online jobs boards

### Try It Today

Describe your dream role, what would it look like? Then see if you can find it. If you can't find it, think about how would you go about creating it? Who would you ask for help?



## People

Always remember that at the centre of everything there are people. Some we might like, some we might dislike. One thing is for sure that without them the world would be a lonely, boring place.

**Precious People:** When you're embarking on a programme of personal or professional change it's really important to know your true friends, allies, champions. They want you to succeed; together you can help each other.

**Pointy People:** Adrian Webster in *Polar Bear Pirates* (see [Additional Resources](#)) calls these people *Neg Ferrets*. Whatever you do they'll have something negative to say; pointing out everything that is or could go wrong. So when you're setting off on your career re-energising adventure don't be deterred by the Pointy People. And, looking on the bright side, sometimes their negative perspective might hold a nugget of something useful...or not!



## Questions

Picture the scene, you are at a conference, having a coffee during one of the refreshment breaks. As you sip your drink one of your fellow delegates says hello, introducing themselves as the Managing Director of a company you have dreamed of working for or supplying into. Apart from hello, of course, what would you say? How would you make a lasting, positive impressions?

When we go for job interviews we usually have time to prepare a few questions for the panel. When you're re-energising your career and on the hunt for opportunities you never know when and where these opportunities may arise. Being prepared with some well thought out questions is a valuable thing to do.

### **Personal Insight**

Since I became self-employed I'm always ready for those ad-hoc, random conversations and encounters. You never know who you might meet or what opportunities lie within your reach.



## Results

How will you know when you have re-energised your career? What do you want to achieve by when? A simple starting point to help make things happen. After all, if you don't know what you want to achieve, how will you know when, and if, you've achieved it?

In business, deadlines and outcomes are expected and part of everyday life. When it comes to our own personal aspirations and activities they can often be forgotten. OK, it might be because you get enough of all that blah-blah-blah in the workplace but setting goals for yourself will help you re-energise your career. Trust me. It's worth it.

### **A Few Words on Goals and Action Plans**

As an experienced professional I know you'll know all about SMART\* goals and action plans so I'm not going to go on about them. Just remember they might well help you on your career re-energising adventure.

\*In case you need it:

**Specific | Measureable | Achievable | Relevant | Time-bound**



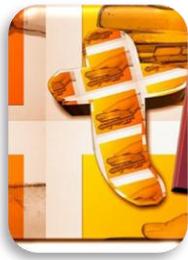
## Success

Measures of success, like our careers are very personal to each individual. You might crave a mega-yacht, while I might crave freedom to take walks in the countryside. Plus our measures of success change over time and with changes in our circumstances.

As you start re-energising your career it's important that you re-evaluate your measures of success. Are they the same? Did you have any in the first place (which may even be a source of your frustration)? Do they need re-defining? For years I was measuring my success against completely the wrong out-dated parameters. Getting the balance back was more motivating and inspiring than you can imagine.

### Try It Today

1. Ask yourself the question, "what does success look like for me?"
2. Write down everything you comes into your head. Don't analyse
3. Now channelling your most artistic self and using an A3 piece of paper, create a Success Board for yourself based on your notes
4. Use drawings magazine clippings, motivational quotes, whatever you can find to represent and create your picture of success



## Time

Don't hate me for stating the blatantly obvious...we all have a finite amount of time. Therefore how we use it is of major importance. This comes even more into focus when you are about to set off on your re-energising your career adventure.

Balancing what you are already doing with your re-energising mission will mean deciding on priorities and possibly sacrificing something on a short-term basis. Turning your re-energising aspirations into reality will need an investment of your time. How much is up to you. Remember to be honest with yourself and make the most of the time you have available.

### **Top Tip**

Work out the time you have available for your re-energising your career adventure and decide how you are going to allocate it to achieving what. With thought and planning you'll be amazed at what you can achieve



## Unique

Although some professions and organisations have certain defined career steps, everyone's career is unique to them. Your career is unlike anyone else's. There may be similar patterns of progression compared to others but ultimately your personal combination of learning, experiences, skills and capabilities mean your career is special to you.

I make this point because it can be easy for some people to become dissatisfied with their careers because they are misguidedly benchmarking themselves against others. When instead, getting their own house in order would be much more beneficial. Being overly concerned about other people's careers can be a powerful source of career frustration.

### **Top Tip**

Don't fall into the 'my dad's bigger than your dad' trap!

You really don't know what's happening with other people and their careers plus perception is a powerful thing. Concentrate on being your best and building the career you desire.



## Values

Your values are defined as..

*...your principles or standards of behaviour; your judgement of what is important in life*

Therefore, thinking about what matters to you and what you value are key elements in the re-energising your career mix. Not only does it help you take a fresh perspective on what you may already have, it enables you to identify if anything is missing and how important it is to you. Use this greater understanding in your re-energising your career plan.

### Try It Today

1. Ask yourself the question, "It is important to me in my career that I..."
2. Write down everything you can think of: e.g., type of work, environment, culture, ethos, management, leadership, responsibility, rewards, prospects, enrichment, power, status. etc, etc
3. Look at what you have written, which 5 things do you value the most?
4. Which do you have now? Which are missing?



## Workplace

Like people, every workplace is different. This is a fact that can sometimes be forgotten. It has an impact on your career because it is:

- factor in the process of making a match between you and an employer
- linked to your aspirations, interests and what you value

As your career has progressed you will have gained insights into which workplaces and working environments you prefer. You may not have thought about it but you have these insights. Appreciating these preferences is a key part of re-energising your career. It may actually be part of what is affecting you; making you feel frustrated. It will also have an impact on any changes you decide to make.

### Try It Today

1. Suspend reality for a moment
2. Imagine there are no constraints and anything is possible
3. Now describe / draw your ideal workplace
4. Look back at what you've captured, what aspects really matter to you?



## X-factor

No, I don't mean you need to go on a TV talent show to re-energise your career. Though if that's your aspiration, go for it! What I'm talking about here are any components that you are not prepared to compromise on when it comes to your career. Knowing your deal-breakers helps you find and create more opportunities that are right for you.

Plus, if you're in the process of making a change or you have a confidence wobble, you can easily lose sight of what matters to you. This in turn can lead to skewed decisions. Getting ahead with your deal-breakers means you already have a well thought out reference point if you need it.

### Try It Today

1. Set yourself a time of five minutes
2. On a blank piece of paper write down everything that you would call a 'deal breaker' with respect to your career
3. Don't censor yourself, let the words flow
4. Stop at five minutes and review
5. Sort into themes and decide on your top 3 deal-breakers; the things that you're not prepared to compromise on



## You

Who's the number one person you need to be able to rely on during the lifetime of your career? Not a trick question and a little obvious I know...it's YOU! You are the linchpin that makes it all happen. As you are the main protagonist in your career adventure remember to invest in yourself and be kind to yourself. This is especially true in times of change, like when you are in the midst of re-energising your career.

At this point I will happily make a confession. Although I'm constantly investing in my learning and development, I struggle with the 'being kind to yourself' part. However, I have made a promise to myself to get better at it and I am, at the time of writing, being true to my word.

### **Pause Pact**

No matter how buzzing you are and no matter how invincible you feel, you need to take a bit of time for yourself. Go for a walk, spend time with loved ones, listen to some music, visit a museum, get a group of friends together and share a couple of beers. Whatever works for you.



## Zeitgeist

Why does Zeitgeist find its way in to this A to Z? No, it wasn't because I was struggling to find something for Z! For clarification, Zeitgeist is...

*...the spirit or mood of a particular period of history as shown by the ideas and beliefs of the time*

We are in a time where we have the ability to find and create more career opportunities than ever before. Jobs don't have to be for life anymore which gives us freedom; portfolio careers are the norm which gives us variety; people are filling roles that didn't even exist a decade ago which demonstrates how the workplace keeps evolving.

This rich, changing environment is full of potential, giving you many different ways to re-energise your career. So why not cease the day?!

I wish you every success with re-energising your career and the dynamic evolution of your career adventure. You may not know what's round the corner but with the right attitude and approach who knows what exciting opportunities the future may bring for you.



# Additional Resources

## Books to help you take a fresh perspective

*Brain Rules* by John Medina

*Mindfulness* by M Williams & D Penman

*Playing Big* by Tara Mohr

*Polar Bear Pirates and Their Quest to Reach Fat City* by Adrian Webster

*You Are A Badass* by Jen Sincero

## Posts from my learning and development blog

Networking for Career Success - <https://elainehickmott.com/2018/11/08/networking-for-career-success/>

10 Creativity Boosts - <https://elainehickmott.com/2019/01/10/my-10-creativity-boosts/>

7 Pitstop Tips - <https://elainehickmott.com/2017/02/22/your-7-pitstop-tips/>

Creating Portable Personal Power - <https://elainehickmott.com/2018/02/06/creating-ppp/>

Change: Getting PREPared - <https://elainehickmott.com/2016/09/21/change-getting-prepared/>

## Innovating Your Career

It's fair to say I have had a varied career path. From researcher to industrial chemist to business leader to entrepreneurial experimenter and talent developer.

Supporting others on their career adventures is something that I have done for many years. Following our interactions and my personal successes (and shaky moments) I was inspired to create ***Innovating Your Career***; a practical framework for adopting the right attitude and approach to achieving the career success you desire.

Why not re-energise your career with my **Career Mentoring Package**? To learn more and get the conversation started please get in touch via [elaine@eh-enterprises.com](mailto:elaine@eh-enterprises.com).

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### About Dr Elaine Hickmott

When I'm not writing e-guides I'm an independent Talent Development Specialist and Career Mentor running my own learning and development consultancy which specialises in working with scientists and engineers. I'm proud to have helped thousands of people at varying career stages invest in their professional development and career progression. Stepping back in time, my adventure began with a PhD in chemistry followed by experience as an industrial chemist and working in commercial and business leadership roles. In a nutshell, a PhD in chemistry launched me. Manufacturing and business inspired me. Curiosity and pro-activity did the rest. I've happily gone from boilersuit to boardroom and beyond.

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