

7 Actions:

How to Activate
Your Agile Career



Welcome!

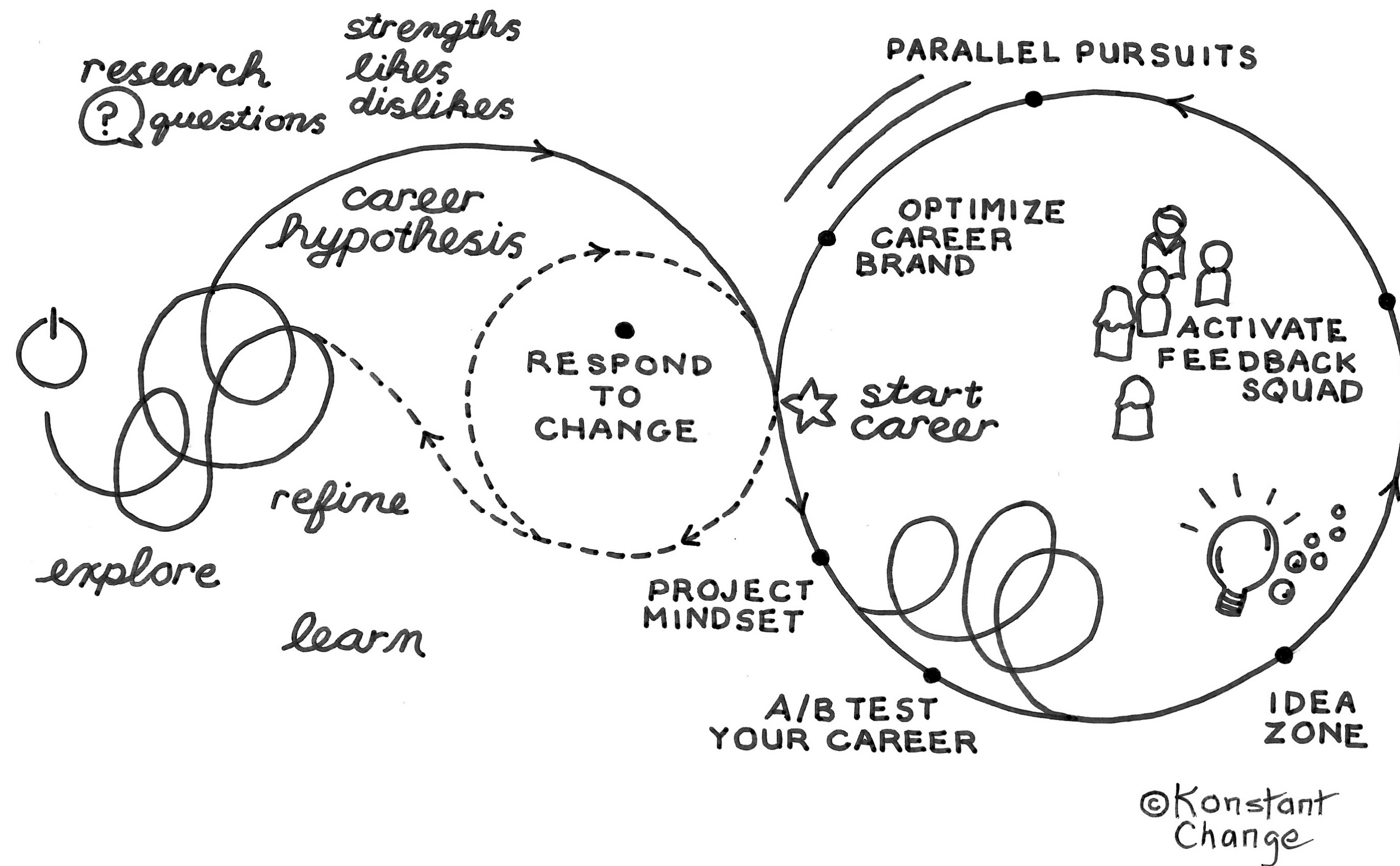
Ready to become an action figure?

Build your own story by flexing with the times and discovering what fuels your passion. Learn how an agile mindset puts you in command of your own career.

i'm going to

- ▶ *Walk you through the easy steps to Activate Your Agile Career*
- ▶ *Nudge you with questions to ask yourself*
- ▶ *Present simple steps to get you started and on your way*

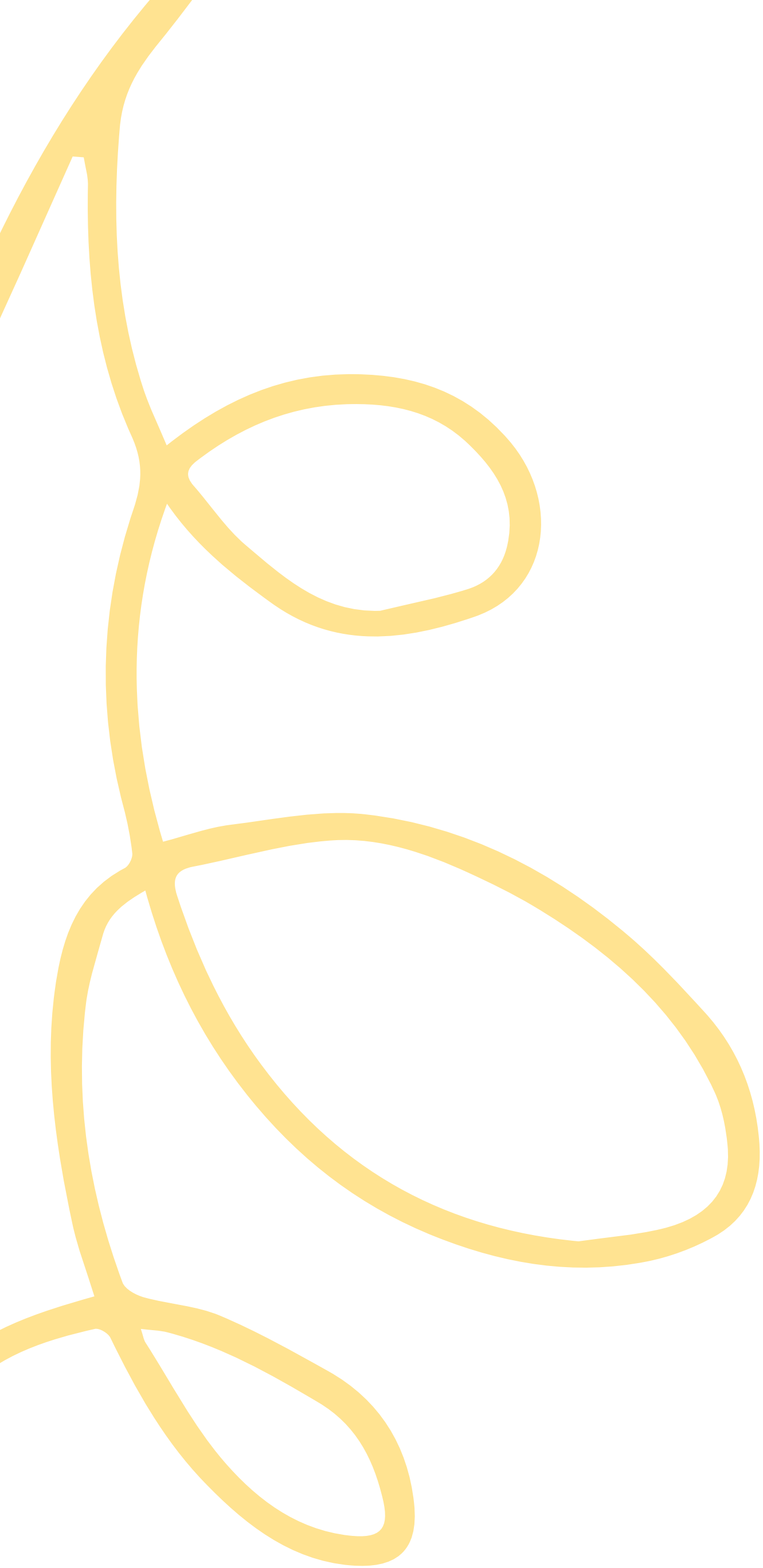
CAREER AGILITY MODEL



With the insights gained through dozens of interviews, custom survey research, and the study of agile methods applied across multiple industries, I developed the Career Agility Model. The model flexes with you and your workplace.

Consider the framework as your guide to the habits and actions on your path to gaining creativity, growth, and happiness in your life's work. This visual illustration of the agile career principles outlines the perpetual career pattern of workers whose skills and attitudes command workplace relevance.

The journey map, portrayed as a figure eight, kickstarts the 7-step action plan shown in the following pages of the guide.

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The Agile Careerist Project is the result of my personal journey, fueled by curiosity and questions about how some workers respond to change, while others resist. I became particularly interested in learning how people can build lives and careers they love.

The resulting philosophy is what I call Career Agility. This framework is part mindset, part reflection, part planning, and part action. I invite you to the Agile Careerist Project website (www.agilecareerist.com) to learn more. You will find tons of blog posts in The Idea Zone and get a view of events I'm participating in or leading.

Ready to go?

action

1. Create an idea zone

A friend of mine gets her best ideas while she brushes her teeth. That quiet, unstressed time is when she'd create her teacher lesson plans or brainstorm big ideas for clients in her new job as a writer.

The first principle in career agility is what I call The Idea Zone. The zone is a space in time, yet is also an archive of meaningful and inspiring ideas. Think about where you tend to let your mind wander, and engage it with purpose!

Commit to writing these ideas down. These concepts or observations may be breadcrumbs or half-thoughts, but you never know how they will influence your future paths.



ask yourself:

*Do you create
space and time
for ideas?*

get started

Create a digital document (Notes on your phone or a Google doc you can access from anywhere) or head to the store and pick out a small notebook you can carry with you. Instead of pulling out your phone to stare at social media on the train or bus...review your ideas or codify your new ones!



2. Pursue It In Parallel

Many innovators, inventors, and industry leaders will say their big idea or game changing career move was not rooted in their day-to-day work. Innovation and career growth evolved from the tinkering they did at home, the question they were curious about outside of work, or the hobby they loved so much as a side interest they turned it into their next role.

Most people have time to pursue passions and parallel activities outside of work. It may mean less time on Netflix, but maybe that's a good thing!

Perhaps you've heard the founder story of billionaire businesswoman, Sara Blakely of Spanx. She developed a product idea of footless shaping pantyhose because she wanted to look slimmer in clothes. What you might not have heard is that she

accomplished this while working in sales for an office supply company.

Or you may know someone like Colleen Cannon-Ruffo, who explored the education benefits of computers and software while working as a high school Spanish teacher. She turned her curiosity and love of the tech frontier into a summer side job showing teachers how to use technology in the classroom. Colleen is now working as an instructional technologist in her original school district. With a knack for parallel pursuits, she is also working on her Instructional Technology PhD.

Whether creating a billion dollar business idea, or simply heeding the call of curiosity, everyday people can uncover their passion through exploration on the side.

ask yourself:

*What do you
love doing that
you can't
imagine getting
paid for?*

get started

Pursue a skill or technique that makes you curious or catches your attention for the sole purpose of learning something new. Pick one or two from the following list: side gigs, freelance work, consulting assignments, education, or hobbies. Create pathways for creative thought, extra income, or future job opportunities. Expanding on your expertise in this way enables you to add to your burgeoning portfolio of talents.



3. A/B Test Your Career—Test and Measure

The average person will have between 10 and 15 jobs in their lifetime. That's a lot of options for figuring out what you are good at and what you love doing.

Examine your orbit of contribution and experiences: workplace roles, educational pursuits, and volunteer initiatives. Tally the mastery of tasks and responsibilities assigned to you. Consider the various cultures and how you adapted.

Increase your value by nurturing the relevant and less directly role-related (but equally valuable) skills. Take inventory and explore your strengths and capabilities to help you assess where you want to go.

When I worked as a designer and brand strategist in my own marketing communications company, clients often requested marketing and business strategy services. I quickly figured out how to retain these clients by collaborating with marketing professionals to deliver integrated programs. By fortifying my own knowledge with business school education and delivering more complete business services, I transformed my designer role into a marketing strategist.

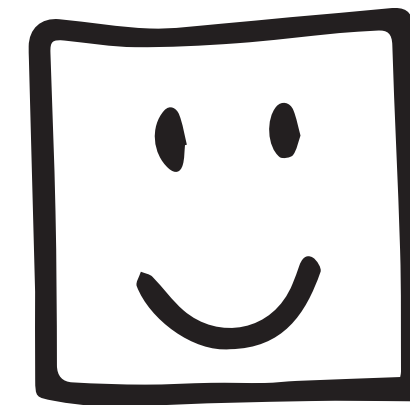
By giving yourself permission to test your aptitude for something new, you may surprise yourself. You may return to a field or role from a previous job or uncover a new best fit.

ask yourself:

*Which role do
you like better?*

get started

Jot down the jobs and volunteer opportunities you've pursued in your life. What did you like about and learn from each? Evaluate job attributes such as schedule, commute, processes, responsibilities, room for growth, travel requirements, ability to collaborate, and sufficient time to create during the workday. Where do these positions rank on your scale of creativity, growth, and happiness?



LIKE



LIKE
BETTER

4. Respond to Change

Changing fashion trends are fun. A new favorite restaurant or a new TV show is exciting.

Changing workplace trends, though, can feel overwhelming or even scary. While you may be quick to try a new social app or meal delivery service, it can be easier in the moment to resist accelerating technology and changes at work. Too much work, too much risk.

As part of your professional development, consider exploring and researching the trends in your industry or role. See how you can work in an interdisciplinary way with team

members. Or dive into exploring what a more advanced position requires skill-wise.

One web developer who successfully worked on his own for a decade learned to code bit-by-bit as part of a three-person graphic design firm. The firm realized the potential blending of design services with development. This developer, then a designer, stepped up due to job necessity and personal curiosity. Now, he positions himself as a developer with design fluency and sensitivity, which makes him an appealing partner to design studios.

ask yourself:

*Where do you
see change
happening in
your workplace?*

get started

Grow your skill set and create a more valuable “You” at your current job. Find a gap you can fill or an initiative you can propose through an engaging project that will enhance your career development. The story power of taking risks and accumulating accomplishments will attract attention of influential people during future interviews or performance reviews!



5. *Optimize Your Personal Brand*

Being good at a job is useful. But you are more than your job. There's a reason people are talking about personal brands on stages and via blogs. Building and maximizing your brand is a personalized ticket to work you love and towards enhancing creativity, growth, and happiness.

Beyond a resume or an online portfolio, your personal brand encompasses more than the sum of your work output or products. It includes your distinguishing characteristics and values. Your brand is the combined expression of your experiences, strengths, beliefs, and abilities. You are more apt to land or create a job aligned

with who you are and want to be if you understand and intentionally share your personal brand.

For one creative director, working on a sailboat in her early 20s informs how she works and how others see her. From time on the water, she's impressively calm under pressure. She works well on her own and in teams and has the stamina needed for long projects. She finds productive spaces to occupy in both volatile and quiet situations. Instead of simply saying she's good under pressure and is driven, which many may claim, her personal and memorable story sets her apart.

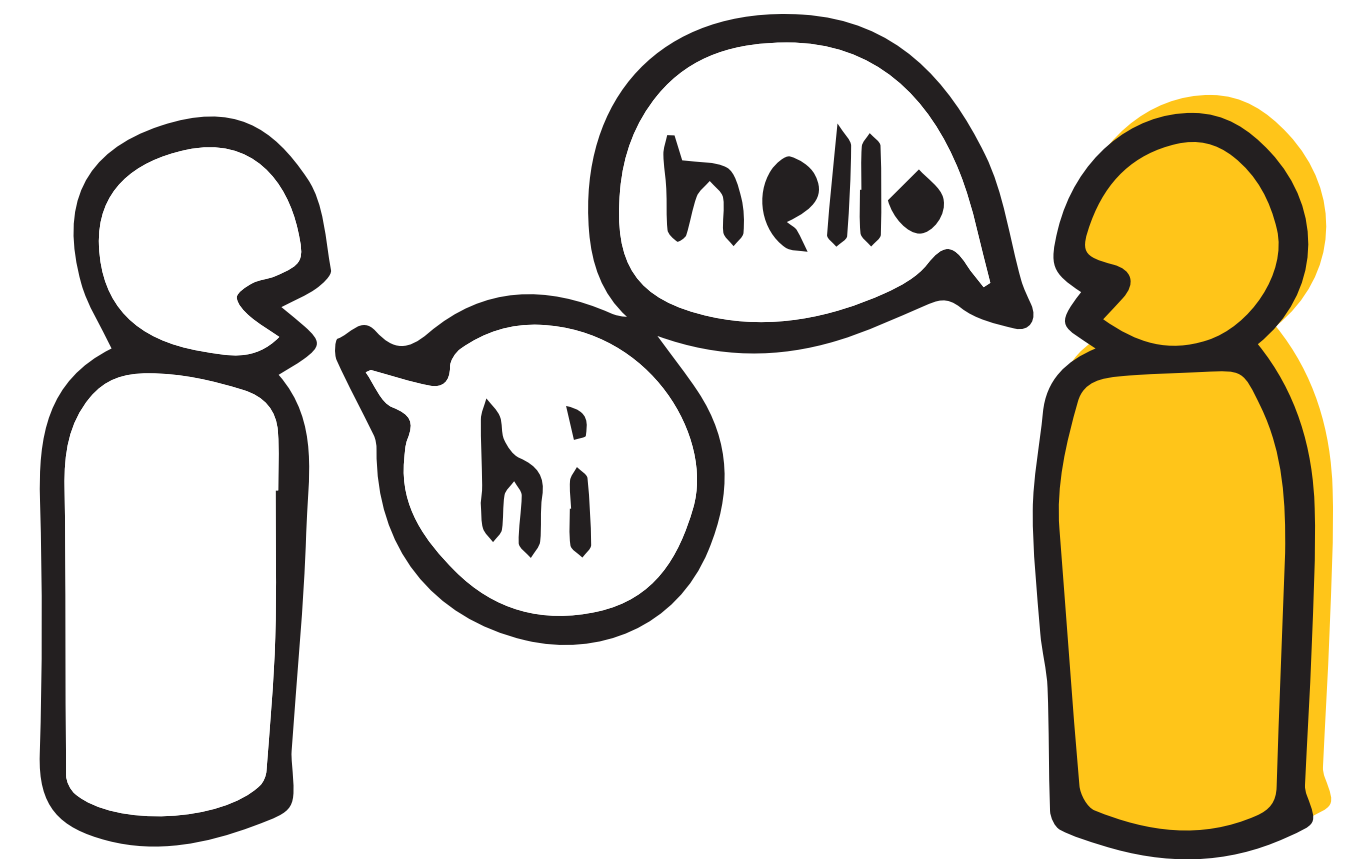


ask yourself:

*What is my
personal brand
story and do I
communicate it
consistently?*

get started

Ask friends, trusted colleagues, and former coworkers to describe you. What comes up over and over? What do they think your soft and tangible skills are? Create a story that fills in the blanks: I am the go-to person for _____. People work with me because of _____. I am happiest when I _____.

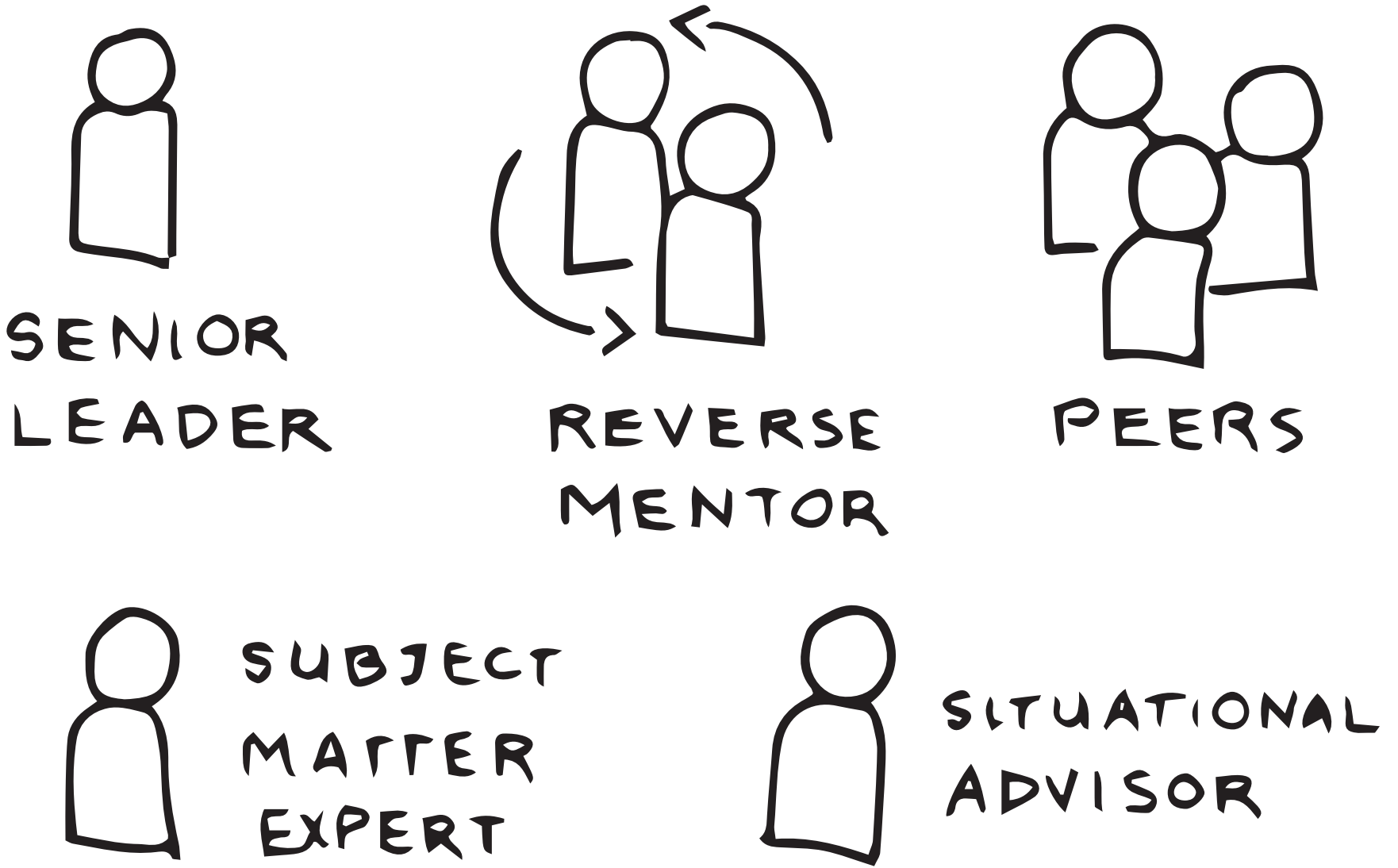


6. *Activate the Feedback Squad*

Feeling uncertain or uninspired about work can feel isolating. Instead of working on your career path as a solo pursuit, engage with people you respect or admire. Soliciting feedback from others shines a light on fresh perspectives and insightful guidance.

Formal mentor programs are not available to everyone. When I poll groups, over 80% of people would like to have a mentor, yet only 20% of them have had or been assigned a mentor. You can offset this reality by creating your own feedback channel. One-up a single mentor by activating a whole team of people. Whether you mastermind together or meet individually with these trusted friends, colleagues, and advisors, ask the questions you're dying to ask and answer the ones you may be avoiding.

Down the line or right now, you can go for a more formal arrangement and engage with a career coach or request advice via online channels. Bask in the collective wisdom available, while doing the preparation and follow-up work to make the most of those conversations.



ask yourself:

*Am I willing to reach out to someone whose career path I admire?
Are there people in my network, younger or older, who have expertise in an area of interest to me?*

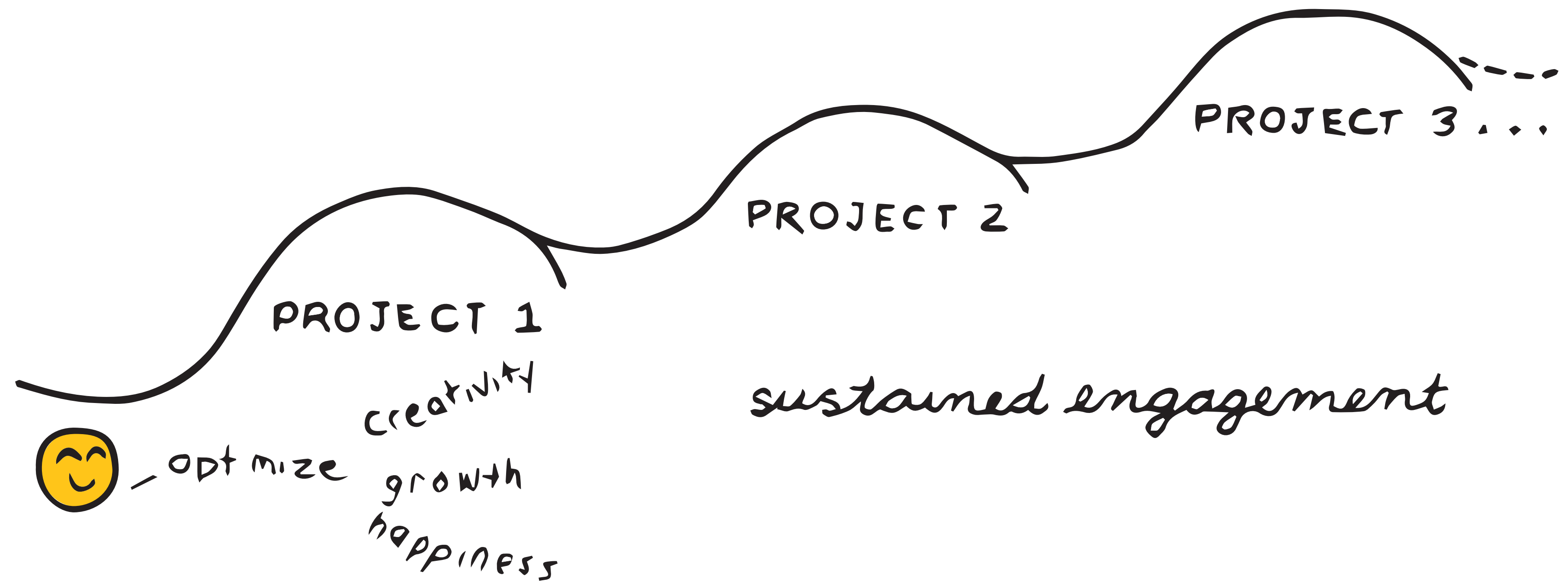
get started

Even if it's casual at first, seek out the advice of people you most respect. Posing a situation and a question in the following way is useful. "I am struggling to advance beyond my current role. Do you have some time to give me feedback on my approach?" Or "I am starting a new role, and could benefit from guidance on how to set the course for success in my first ninety days." Be sure to pay it forward by being a part of their personal feedback squad or in response to someone requesting your expertise.



7. *Think of Your Career as a Series of Projects*

In the 20th century, some workers stayed with one company and one role for an entire career. Job security might be appealing, but is it fulfilling? Are there other ways to experience work and maximize creativity, growth, and happiness?





Consider the following examples of a project mindset:

- ▶ Seth Godin, author, entrepreneur, marketer, and public speaker was at the forefront of launching personal projects as a career plan. When combined, this series of projects form an impressive collection of twenty books, business ventures, employee experiences, and online learning platforms.
- ▶ A mid-career friend of mine has a background that includes engineering and operations management, consumer goods brand strategy, vice president/marketing leader, and independent innovation consultant. She grows into each project or role through insistent curiosity, skills acquisition, and a mastery of networking habits.
- ▶ Richard Branson, founder of over 400 companies within Virgin Group, launched lines of business, including travel, hotels, airlines, mobile, and radio, to name a few. With each of his projects, he identified a problem and created an improved market solution.

More than 35 percent of workers are active in the gig economy. Whether you do project-based work or have a full time job, it can be beneficial to think of your lifespan of work as a series of projects, instead of a few extended engagements. If you are working long-term for one company, consider reframing your experience as navigating through multiple roles for the length of your employment.

Jobs are defined and measured by someone else.

Projects are yours to own.

future of work: job = project/role

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ask yourself:

If you knew your current job was a shorter-term project instead of a thirty+ year career, what would you want to accomplish?

get started

Think of your work as evolving job roles, even if you stay in the same position or within one company. Start by organizing a particular aspect of your current position into a high-impact project that makes the best use of your talents and interests. Engage with collaborators on your team on the path to completing a visible milestone for the company. You will create a record of measurable accomplishments.

Focusing on shorter projects and incremental knowledge can be fruitful and exciting. You get a consistent, fresh perspective, a sense of mastery, and build new competencies. You might just become the most eligible employee for promotion, the best candidate at a new company, or launch your personal startup project.

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When I first started exploring the genesis of the Agile Careerist Project, I was energized and developed an insatiable appetite for learning and personal growth. I wanted to talk to everyone I could about how they viewed their career and their future. I'm guessing you are feeling excited about the potential, too!

This was a quick review exploring the actions you can take to develop and nurture an agile mindset. You can dive into the principles more deeply in my

book, which includes workbook activities you can personalize to your experience. I invite you to read stories of others participating in the Agile Careerist Project on the Idea Zone blog.

Congratulations on stepping into your agile career, where creativity, growth, and happiness combine to serve as your compass. I look forward to joining you as you navigate your career landscape with confidence and great expectations. See you on the journey!

Marti



agilecareer.com

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