



# Career Ambitions

## Career resilience

Katherine Wiid, Career Management Coach, shares the key to having a career that will outlive knock backs.

We'll delve into ways to build career resilience:

- \* adjust if you're faced with furlough or redundancy
- \* build confidence in what you can do with what you've got
- \* future proof your career to ensure you are ready to ride out times of change and uncertainty.

## Collective wisdom

We can't fight catastrophic scale shifts of the magnitude we have experienced such as the pandemic or an economic downturn on our own. Collective wisdom is how we are able to rise above and come out stronger.

Throughout this resource I will be sharing stories from some amazing people, as well as suggested further reading that will help us to learn how to navigate a tricky job landscape. Let the learning begin!

## Facing unexpected change

As a career management coach, I am accustomed to working with clients facing major career change that is often unexpected and not their choice. When I started Career Ambitions in the middle of the 2008 financial crisis, I was part of a 'Response to Redundancy' scheme offering support to hundreds of individuals facing redundancy across the East of England. Whilst everyone has a unique situation to deal with, I saw how some people were able to face the challenges of losing their jobs with a positive mindset. Others found it really hard, and couldn't move on, which severely impacted their ability to find another role.

What I learnt from those many different clients was the importance of resilience. Particularly in times of crisis.

In this resource, we will delve into ways to build resilience and overcome crises. Read on...

## ✎ What does the word resilience mean to you?



What is your definition of resilience? Grab a pen or type into the space below.

Resilience refers to how well you can deal with and bounce back from the difficulties of life. It can mean the difference between handling pressure and losing your cool.

Resilient people tend to maintain a more positive outlook and cope with stress more effectively. Our careers are an extension of

ourselves. Unlike a job that is transactional and gets us things - money, security, experience - a career is an emotional investment.

### Resilience:

“the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness”

- The Oxford English Dictionary

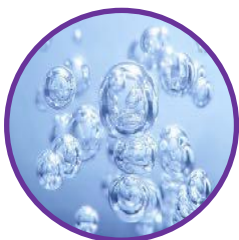
Something that we want to do and is fulfilling.

To enable us to develop resilience in our careers, it starts with us.

## ✎ The career resilience scale: Where are you?

On a scale of 1 – 5, how resilient are you feeling about your career right now? Let’s imagine that 5 is graphene, the most durable material known to man

that can withstand all kinds of pressures, and one is a bubble that could burst at any moment. We’ll revisit this scale at the end of this resource, so note down your answer.



Bubble



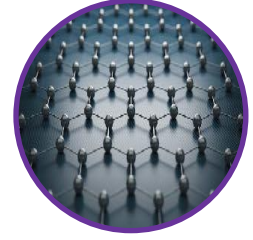
Talcum Powder



Wood



Diamond



Graphene

NOT RESILIENT

VERY RESILIENT

## ✎ How to build career resilience.

I'd like to share a story about personal and career resilience that really touched me. Nozi is 26 years old and lives in South Africa. Her mum was a single parent from a poor underprivileged background in apartheid South Africa where there were very limited career choices – nursing, teaching, being a domestic servant. She never had the resources to get where she wanted to go. Instead her whole life was spent in an effort to come out of poverty and give her children the opportunities she never had.

Nozi was the first of her generation to go to university where she studied geography. When she graduated she spent a few months at home thinking about her career choices in a country where job opportunities are scarce. And then her mum died. Suddenly losing her mum meant there was no place to run to. Survival was everything. Nozi got jobs in call centres working from 5pm to 4a.m. The environment she was thrown in was not ideal for a single girl - just cheap labour. All the people they hired in the call centres came from an array of adversity. There was an energy of desperation to put food on the table, they needed a quick income: "We were trapped. Either do it 11 hours a day or go hungry." Nozi was at the same time dealing with the loss of losing her mum. She says that during that period of mourning and adjustment she asked herself "What is important to me? Is it money? Shelter? Food? What will fulfil me?"

There are many of you who might be asking similar questions, feeling vulnerable, having been thrust into the precariousness of losing loved ones, or unexpectedly losing your job.

"We were trapped. Either do it 11 hours a day or go hungry."

## The first step to building resilience...

Take charge of your emotions and figure out what has happened, why, and what it means for you.

Psychologists call this sense-making. The process can give you back some sense of control in your situation – especially if what has happened to you takes place in the context of a much bigger crisis. As part of this process (just like Nozi went through), understanding what is important to you in your life and your work is the building block to a wider range of possible selves.

## ✎ What brings you a sense of fulfilment at work?

If there's someone near to you, get them involved and ask them to ask you the following questions (and note down your response). Or ask yourself the question - you might be surprised by your answer!

Our values can shift, especially when we have major turning points in our lives. Since the pandemic what is important to me has changed. I discovered that my top work-related value is Balance - ahead of Empowering Others which was always my main value. Lockdown brought me a gift. Not having a four hour commute some days and constantly rushing to catch trains, going to the supermarket before it closes... the equilibrium I now have working a hybrid working week allows me to be at my best. Nozi's sense making and questioning has given her a strong purpose and resilience to face the future: "I decided to focus on becoming the woman my mum wanted me to become. It would be a waste not to use that investment in me."

"I decided to focus on becoming the woman my mum wanted me to become. It would be a waste not to use that investment in me."

This brings us to...

## The second step to building resilience...

Having a sense of purpose. Nozi's purpose led her to her second step on the career ladder. She applied for many many roles to get out of the call centre and was eventually offered an interview for a receptionist at a belt manufacturer. In that interview the CEO Leon saw something bigger in Nozi that inspired him to create a role for her as Junior Sourcing Assistant. I asked Nozi: "What was that something more you had to offer?" And she responded: "The call centres taught me stamina - call after call. I would talk to people going through problems and who were full of anger. I learnt to speak and articulate better as I only had 30 secs to persuade a customer to buy, very fast. The experience helped me in interviews and to work well with people going through an array of emotions and backstories."

**What brings you a sense of fulfilment  
at work?**

**What does it give you?**

## The third step to building resilience...

Knowing what you have to offer that will transfer to another environment. Do you know how to identify your Transferable Skills? Nozi's transferable skills are stamina, clear

communication, rapport building to name just a few...

Here are a few examples of transferable skills - circle any that you think apply to you.

|                       |                       |                      |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| COMMUNICATION         | CREATIVITY            | CRITICAL THINKING    | DECISION MAKING |
| INNOVATION            | DRIVING INNOVATION    | EXECUTION / DELIVERY | FLEXIBILITY     |
| GOAL ORIENTATED       | INFLUENCING           | INFO GATHERING       | LEADERSHIP      |
| MENTORING             | ORGANISATION          | PERSISTENCE          | PROBLEM SOLVING |
| RELATIONSHIP BUILDING | QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS | STRATEGIC THINKING   | TEAM WORKING    |

An exercise you can do to highlight your transferable skills is to think about what you do in your work and then zoom in on how you actually do it. So many of my clients when I ask them to come up with their top 10 skills will often give me a list of technical skills.

One client recently said "coding using Python". I then asked him, "How do you go about coding in Python?" After several probing questions my recent client revealed some amazing attributes that set him apart from other developers:

- Humility in code reviews - he takes criticism particularly well
- Open mindedness - instead of having strong opinions about which tools to use, he is flexible and will use the best tool for the job
- Tolerant and sensitive to the social differences in those around him, values diversity

## The fourth step to building resilience...

Zoom out and see how you can add value to others - whether that's a future employer, economy, environment... What are the problems they are currently having? Why do they need someone in this role? I refer back to Nozi's wise words about how she goes about preparing for an interview: "When I go for an interview I think about 'Who would I want to hire? Someone able to work hard and adapt to the business? Or hire someone based solely on their skill?'"

Look for a company where you can have an impact. You give something and they give you something in return. At the end of every working day, I ask myself ‘What did I do to influence something good or leave something intangible behind?’. No wonder the CEO Leon snapped Nozi up.

Leon is a friend of mine and I learnt about Nozi’s story when I caught up with him on a Zoom call to see how he was managing in the pandemic. His biggest regret was having to lose the “super stars” in his team due to lost business. This text Nozi sent Leon brought a tear to his eye: Thank you Leon and Nozi for allowing me to share their COVID-19 story today. Attitude. Attitude is everything and I hope the four steps

*Hi Leon. I’m sorry I have taken so long to reply. I believe the panic and sadness of it all overwhelmed me for a long moment (then I remembered I was an adult) and I haven’t attended to my emails. I’ve read through everything and I cannot thank you enough for all you have instilled in me and the chance you took on having me in your team of workers. I appreciate it so much.*

*I learnt so much in such a short space of time, and I hope this disruption in the world is temporary. I cannot ever place into words the amount of appreciation I have to have been given a chance. Unforgettable. My views and navigation to challenges and ideas or sight for life has grown so much, every single person’s guidance has been life changing.*

*If you need anything, let me know. I am more than willing to try and assist where I can. I hope you are safe and well and your dreams, family and prayers out strengthen the changes that have taken place. God bless you forever Leon. And thank you once again.*

Nozi’s journey has outlined will help you to navigate what lies ahead in your career.

## What lies ahead of us in the world of work?

Let’s zoom right out now from where we are and get an idea of the new world we are living and working in.

We have the technological revolution that has already started alongside the societal shifts caused in particular by the pandemic. It uncovered the degree of precariousness our health, finances, careers and relationships are in and made us aware of our vulnerability. Some professionals who were once shielded from the effects of economic upheaval by comfortable incomes found themselves on furlough with no planned return, experiencing the same uncertainty as those whose finances are characterised by zero assets and zero-hour contracts. We are all in it together. According to Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott in a Sunday Times article New Ways of Living, this seismic shift in self-perception is affecting people in a number of different ways:

1. It has fundamentally changed our concepts of secure employment and this requires a rethink of our future path, both individually and collectively.
2. When we live longer, we inevitably have more transitions, and the introduction of a multistage life will require us to be 'self-authors' of our careers, rather than an employer choosing what we should be.
3. We are seeing the balance between work and family. Lockdown and social distancing transformed the relationship between work and home, professional life and family life. It has given us the opportunity to discover a more flexible, blended approach to navigate these different worlds. For example, Japan's Fujitsu announced a "Work Life Shift" Plan for its 80,000 workers where flexible working from home is the new normal!
4. We are changing our social narrative. COVID-19 completely upended what value means in our society. Lockdown has revealed the critical value of low-paid retail workers, delivery drivers and healthcare workers and exposed the areas where we have not invested enough, and revealed that saving human lives is more important than avoiding dramatic falls in GDP.
5. Age really doesn't matter. This was the first pandemic when the world's population consisted of more people aged over 65 than under five. It isn't just that there are more older people, but how they age varies enormously from person to person. We are struck by the irony of calls for restricting healthcare to those over 70, when at the same time we celebrated the fundraising achievements of the 100-year-old Captain Tom Moore.  
COVID-19 could kickstart a healthy ageing agenda.

These societal and technological shifts will see lots of up-skilling, as the nature of the work is changing. Different roles are emerging and new occupations are being created. And existing occupations are being reconstructed and reworked, where the routine part of the role is no longer and we move to an overseeing role (such as a radiologist who has a machine to perform the scan, but a human is still required to interpret the data).

The world of work is always evolving.

Let's look back at the last recession. What new jobs can you think of that were created in the last decade?

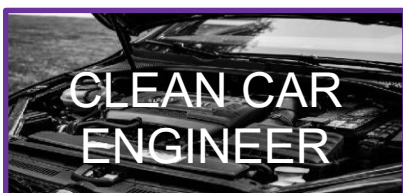
Here are a few examples:

|                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| APP DEVELOPER           | SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER       |
| SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER | CLOUD COMPUTING SPECIALIST |
| SUSTAINABILITY MANAGER  | DRONE OPERATOR             |
| SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER | CLOUD COMPUTING SPECIALIST |

### What jobs will be appearing in the next decade?

There are far too many to mention (and some we can't predict!) but let's just focus on the Green economy for now. Automation and AI will not replace humans. Artificial Intelligence AI is bandied about as threatening our jobs, when in reality it's a set of technologies that imitates intelligent human behaviour.

Most people talk about automation as AI – but automation performs on programmed instructions such as robots. Who will gain and who will lose job wise? Any job role that is not easily automated by an algorithm will not be affected – think plumbing and cooking. Both require a lot of contextual knowledge and understanding and won't be replaced by robots anytime soon. What are the kinds of jobs that could be created in the next decade in the environmental industry? National Geographic shared some fascinating suggestions...



## ✎ What skills will be needed in the new world of work?

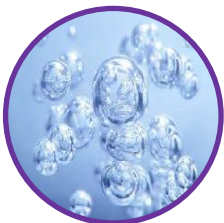
The key to being resilient is to figure out how to adapt, and be ready for whatever change comes your way.

And one way to do that is to have the foresight to develop transferable skills that will see you through - no matter how the world of work changes... Here are just a few skills that are needed.



## ✎ The career resilience scale

Going back to our career resilience scale, now how do you feel about your ability to make your career more resilient? I hope this resource has equipped you well, and you score higher than last time! We don't need a crisis to change our job, career, or lifestyle. Yet for many people, among the greatest challenges of making change are creating the time and headspace to think about it, and then finding the courage to make the leap.



Bubble



Talcum Powder



Wood



Diamond



Graphene



So for some, we do need a crisis to prompt change! For all that is painful about losing a job, it forces change upon us. If you have been laid off in this time of unprecedented challenge, take heart — this may be an unexpected chance to rethink what you want and who you are. Whatever we started doing in our career, it's guaranteed that we won't be doing the same thing in five, ten or fifty years. There are no straight lines in today's world of work - and to be resilient to change we need to be masters of our own careers.