

Outplacement Success

A Coach 1st Career Transition Programme

Your Learning Journey

Coach 1st

ELEVATING CAREERS TRANSFORMING LIVES

About This Programme

How Outplacement Success Works

Outplacement Success is the online learning platform that sits alongside your Coach 1st one to one coaching. It is not a substitute for your coaching relationship. It is built to give you a consistent, thorough grounding before and between your coaching sessions, so that the time you spend directly with your coach is used to test, challenge and personalise what you have already learned here, rather than covering the fundamentals from a standing start.

Every participant on a Coach 1st programme receives five hours of genuine one to one coaching over six months, alongside full access to this platform. Work through the chapters in order where you can, complete the actions at the end of each one, and bring what you produce into your next coaching session so it can be reviewed and refined against your specific situation.

The Five Stages of Your Journey

The seventeen chapters that follow are sequenced deliberately, moving through five stages: understanding the market and building the right mindset, marketing yourself effectively, executing a structured search, performing well through interview and offer, and sustaining success once a new role begins. Each chapter combines current market data, real world worked examples and clear, actionable steps, so your progress through the platform is easy to track and directly usable in your coaching.

Phase	Chapters	Focus
Foundations	1 to 4	Understanding the market, mindset and running a structured search
Marketing Yourself	5 to 6	CV, personal brand and online presence
Search Execution	7 to 9	Channels, networking and the hidden job market
Interview and Offer	10 to 13	Interview performance, assessment and negotiation
Sustaining Success	14 to 17	Confidence, alternative paths, development and onboarding

What Success Looks Like For You

Success on this programme looks like a shorter period of uncertainty, a CV and online presence that genuinely reflects your value, and the confidence to negotiate rather than accept the first reasonable offer that comes your way. It looks like moving from feeling that your search is happening to you, to feeling that you are the one directing it.

How This Programme Works With Your Coaching

Coach 1st is built around ICF accredited coaching, which works differently from most career advice you will have encountered. Your coach will not simply tell you what to do. Their role is to ask the

questions that help you find your own answer, drawing on their experience to challenge and sharpen your thinking rather than to hand you a script to follow.

This programme exists to support that relationship, not to replace it. Each chapter gives you context, evidence and practical actions, which do the job an advice led resource does well: giving you a solid, well informed starting point. At the end of every chapter, you will also find a short section called Bring to your coaching session. These are open questions, not actions, and there is no correct answer to prepare in advance. They are there to give your coach something genuine to work with, rather than starting each session from nothing.

Used well, the two work together. You arrive at coaching having already absorbed the practical grounding, so your time with your coach goes towards what only a real conversation can do: working through what is actually true for you, testing your thinking against someone who has done this for decades, and finding your own way through, with support, rather than being handed someone else's answer.

Introduction

Outplacement Success is the online learning companion to your Coach 1st programme. It sits alongside your one to one coaching, not in place of it. Everything in this course has been built to be worked through in order, but you are free to return to any chapter as many times as you need, for as long as your access remains open.

This edition has been substantially developed to bring it in line with current global and UK labour market conditions, current best practice from the wider career transition and outplacement industry, and the practical experience Stuart Blake has gained from over forty years in senior recruitment leadership and more than seven thousand personal coaching conversations.

Each chapter follows the same structure. It opens with the context you need, sets out the wider industry and market picture, works through two realistic examples, flags the mistakes most commonly made at this stage, and closes with a short set of actions you can complete before your next coaching session. Bring what you produce in each chapter to your coach. The course gives you the framework. The coaching is where it becomes yours.

Chapter 1: The Global and UK Job Market

Where things stand

It is easy to form a view of the job market from headlines alone, and headlines rarely tell the full story. As of the most recent data from the Office for National Statistics, UK unemployment stands at close to five per cent, employment among sixteen to sixty four year olds is running at around seventy five per cent, and vacancies have fallen to their lowest level since 2021. Hiring has genuinely cooled in some sectors, particularly retail and hospitality, and youth unemployment has risen faster than the headline rate, reaching its highest level in around a decade.

None of that means there are no opportunities. It means the market has become more selective, and that being deliberate about where and how you look matters more than it did five years ago. Regional variation is significant too. London, for example, currently carries a higher unemployment rate than the national average, while other regions have held comparatively steady, which is a reason to research your specific location rather than relying on national coverage alone.

The bigger picture

The picture is similar globally. ManpowerGroup's 2026 Talent Shortage Survey of over thirty nine thousand employers across forty one countries found that seventy two per cent still report difficulty filling roles, even in a market that feels tighter on the surface. For the first time, employers named artificial intelligence skills as harder to find than traditional engineering or IT capability, ahead of healthcare, skilled trades and cybersecurity. LinkedIn's own analysis suggests that by 2030, seventy per cent of the skills used in most jobs will have changed, and the pace at which professionals are adding new skills to their profiles has accelerated sharply in the last few years.

The lesson for anyone in transition is not that the market is closed. It is that it has become skills led rather than title led. Employers are increasingly hiring for demonstrated capability, judgement and adaptability, not simply for the job title on your last payslip. This works in your favour if you present your experience in those terms, and it is the single biggest shift in hiring behaviour of the past few years.

In practice: Example One

Sarah, a marketing manager made redundant after twelve years in retail, initially read every headline as confirmation that her search was hopeless. When she instead looked at live vacancy data for her specific sector and location, she found a smaller but genuine pool of employers actively hiring for the skills she had, particularly digital campaign management and data driven reporting. Reframing the market from a single national headline to her specific niche changed how she approached everything that followed.

In practice: Example Two

Colin, an operations director in manufacturing, assumed his sector had stopped hiring entirely after reading about national vacancy declines. A closer look at regional data showed that while national manufacturing vacancies had fallen, his specific region had seen growth in advanced manufacturing and logistics roles requiring exactly his blend of lean process and supply chain experience. He redirected his search geographically within a fifty mile radius rather than nationally, and secured three first stage interviews within six weeks.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Treating a single national headline as the whole picture, rather than researching your specific sector and region.
- Waiting for the market to improve before starting a structured search, rather than adapting your approach to the market as it is now.
- Assuming a title led search will work in a market that has become skills led.
- Ignoring how quickly required skills are changing in your own field.

A note of support

If the headlines have left you feeling that your timing could not be worse, you are far from alone in that reaction, and it is an understandable one. It is also worth holding two things as true at once: the market genuinely is tighter than it was a few years ago, and people in your exact field, at your exact level, are still being hired every week. The chapters ahead are built to help you become one of them, regardless of the wider conditions.

What to do next

- Look up the latest employment and vacancy figures for your own sector and region, not just the national headline.
- Identify three employers who are actively recruiting in your field right now.
- List the skills that appear most often in the job adverts you are drawn to, and compare them honestly against your own.
- Note any skills gap you identify here, and revisit it again in Chapter 16.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What does the current market data change about how you are approaching your search, and what does it not change?*
- *Where might you be reacting to a general headline rather than your own specific situation?*
- *What would genuinely feel like enough opportunity for you right now?*

Chapter 2: Who is Stuart Blake

You are being guided through this course by someone who has sat on both sides of the hiring desk for over forty years, and who has spent the last seven years applying that experience full time to coaching people through exactly the transition you are going through now.

What follows is not a biography for its own sake. It is context for why the approach in this programme looks the way it does, and why the guidance you will work through in the chapters ahead is built on evidence rather than opinion.

A career built on both sides of the hiring desk

Stuart Blake has held managing director and chief executive level roles across a forty year recruitment leadership career, including at TMP Worldwide and Monster.com, Harrison Willis and HW Group PLC, and Spherion Corporation. At Greatfleet PLC, Stuart served as Chief Executive Officer, having listed two recruitment businesses on the London Stock Exchange, including acquiring Longbridge PLC by way of a reverse takeover and relisting on AIM. Stuart has led a global recruitment group spanning seventeen UK and European locations with more than one thousand staff, opened offices across the UK and internationally, and completed acquisitions and disposals both in the UK and overseas. Stuart has recruited at chief executive, finance director, operations director and legal partner level, which means the advice in this programme has been tested against what actually gets someone hired at the most senior levels of an organisation, not just what sounds sensible in theory.

That breadth matters practically. Someone who has only ever coached has to take an employer's hiring criteria on trust. Someone who has spent decades building, listing and running recruitment businesses, and who has personally sat on the hiring side of that desk at chief executive level, has watched those criteria play out directly, thousands of times, across almost every sector and seniority level. Across that career, Stuart has been directly instrumental in more than two thousand five hundred people successfully gaining employment.

Seven years of dedicated coaching practice

Stuart founded Coach 1st in 2018 on a simple principle: no one left behind. That principle is not a slogan. It shapes how every programme is priced and delivered, on the basis that a first jobber with no work history yet deserves exactly the same quality of coaching as a departing chief executive, not a lesser version of it. Since founding Coach 1st, Stuart has personally coached more than seven thousand people, spanning first jobbers and the long term unemployed through to chief executives and board directors, applying the same standard of personalised, confidence first coaching at every level.

Stuart holds ICF certification across professional, executive and career coaching practice, alongside certification in confidence and life coaching and in ADHD coaching, and Transformational Life Coach accreditation. That combination matters because career transition rarely arrives as a single, tidy problem. It often carries an executive dimension, a confidence dimension and sometimes a neurodivergence dimension, all at once, and a coach trained across all of them is better placed to work with the whole person in front of them rather than a narrow slice of the situation.

By the numbers

Measure	Result
Career spent in senior recruitment leadership	Over 40 years, at Managing Director and Chief Executive level
People supported into employment across that career	More than 2,500
Years in full time coaching practice	7 years
People personally coached	More than 7,000, from first jobbers to board directors
Client satisfaction across coaching programmes	94 per cent
Job offers within 16 weeks, career coaching programmes	87 per cent of job seeking coachees
Outplacement success within 26 weeks	90 per cent
Job outcomes, Coach Me programme for the GLA Digital Skills Hub	52 to 58 per cent, more than double the national average
International recruitment group led	17 UK and European locations, over 1,000 staff

Results that are tracked and published, not promised

Every Coach 1st programme is designed, written and delivered personally by Stuart, with outcomes tracked and published rather than simply promised. The Coach Me programme, designed and written for Generation UK and Ireland and the Greater London Authority's London Digital Skills Hub, achieved job outcomes of between fifty two and fifty eight per cent for long term unemployed participants, more than double the national average for comparable programmes. This group typically faces the steepest barriers to re-entering work, which makes the scale of that result particularly meaningful rather than a figure inflated by an easier cohort.

Across career coaching programmes designed and delivered personally, eighty seven per cent of job seeking coachees have received job offers within sixteen weeks, alongside ninety per cent outplacement success within twenty six weeks. As a career coach for Generation UK and Ireland, Stuart designed and wrote the Careers Support Programme as an integrated career bootcamp for more than two thousand participants, lifting engagement and job outcomes by combining twenty four hour access to an online platform with one to one coaching, weekly workshops and daily interview drop in sessions, the same blended approach this programme continues.

A coaching philosophy shaped by the hiring side

The recurring theme across all of this is that coaching content here has been pressure tested against real hiring decisions, not developed in isolation from them. Where the chapters that follow tell you what a hiring manager is actually looking for in a CV, an interview answer or a negotiation, that guidance reflects decades spent making exactly those decisions, not a general theory about how

hiring is supposed to work. Where the chapters address confidence and mindset, that guidance reflects seven years of watching, in person, what genuinely rebuilds someone's confidence during a transition, and what only appears to.

Global reach and trusted partners

Stuart has designed and delivered employability and career coaching programmes for international companies, universities and educational establishments, including delivery via Fourth Rev for the London School of Economics, King's College London, the University of Cambridge, the Bank of England and Google. Stuart has delivered career, executive and life coaching programmes across the UK, Europe and the UAE, and has supported chief executives and board directors through outplacement and redundancy for international corporations, including through Renovo. Through Recro Consulting, Stuart has reached participants with significant barriers to employment across multiple Department for Work and Pensions cohorts in London and the Home Counties, and has signed the Armed Forces Covenant, formalising a commitment to supporting service leavers and the armed forces community.

This range, from board directors of international corporations through to participants facing significant, longstanding barriers to work, is deliberate rather than incidental. It is the same range you will see reflected in the case examples throughout this programme, because the coaching approach genuinely does not change with seniority. Only the specifics of the conversation do.

Why this matters to you

Most career advice you will find online is generic. It has not been tested against thousands of real conversations with people going through exactly what you are going through now, and it rarely publishes the results it actually achieves. Everything in the chapters that follow has been shaped by direct coaching experience and direct recruitment leadership experience, not theory borrowed from elsewhere, and by a track record that is measured and shared rather than simply asserted.

Who is Tony Larcombe

Alongside the coaching expertise behind this programme, it is worth knowing something about Tony Larcombe, a longstanding friend and colleague of Stuart's, and the technology and strategic thinking he brings to how Coach 1st builds and delivers its platforms.

A career in technology leadership

Tony Larcombe is an experienced Chief Technology Officer, Chief Information Officer and business technology strategist, with thirty years of transformational leadership across Europe, North America and Asia Pacific. Tony and Stuart worked together thirty years ago, and remain friends and colleagues to this day. Their careers have since crossed paths again through shared history at TMP Worldwide and HW Group. Tony's own career has also spanned organisations including Logitech, Data Supplies, CSC, Texas Instruments, iRevolution, Accenture and FiveTen Group.

Tony's achievements include creating an AI candidate matching system built on Bayesian mathematics, achieving over ninety five per cent first time automated matching accuracy, building what is recognised as the world's first true SaaS solution, and successfully executing a management buyout, two initial public offerings, and numerous company acquisitions.

Current focus

Since stepping back from mainstream business in 2009, Tony has spent over sixteen years working in fractional Chief Technology Officer, board and advisory roles, helping organisations navigate complex technology challenges. Current roles include Chief Technology Officer at 4Square Capital, Chief Technology Officer and Founder of 4Square Innovations, and Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer at Demetech Global, alongside technology advisory work for multiple startups and Non-Executive Director and mentoring positions.

Areas of expertise

Tony's expertise spans technology strategy and roadmapping, executive leadership through complex technology decisions, business transformation and digital change, startup advisory from seed stage through to Series C, scalable SaaS platform development, and artificial intelligence and machine learning, including practical, ethically implemented AI applications such as recruitment automation and predictive analytics.

Beyond the boardroom

Outside his technology career, Tony is an experienced diver, instructor and public safety search and rescue diver, a background that reflects the same combination of technical precision and calm, methodical judgement under pressure that runs through his approach to technology leadership.

Chapter 3: Managing the Transition: Mindset and Resilience

Why this comes before the tactics

Redundancy or career change is rarely only a practical event. It is common to move through a sequence of reactions, including shock, frustration, a period of low motivation, and eventually acceptance and forward momentum. There is no fixed timetable for this, and it is not a straight line. What matters is recognising that these reactions are a normal response to genuine loss, not a sign of weakness or a reason to delay your search.

Losing a role is not a verdict on your worth or your ability. It is very often a decision driven by cost, structure or strategy at a level well above any individual's control. Several of the larger outplacement providers now treat wellbeing as a standalone part of their programmes rather than an afterthought folded into other content, which reflects how central this stage has become to a successful transition.

Building resilience deliberately

Resilience is not simply a matter of temperament. It can be built through specific, repeatable habits: maintaining a daily structure, staying physically active, protecting sleep, and limiting exposure to sources of stress that add nothing constructive to your search, including excessive news consumption or unhelpful comparison with others' progress on social media.

What the research tells us

Academic research, including a well known study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and University College London, has found that job loss causes a measurable and significant reduction in psychological wellbeing, and that moving back into work does improve wellbeing again, though usually not all the way back to where it was before, at least not immediately. That is not a discouraging finding. It is a useful one, because it means whatever you are feeling right now has a well documented basis, and is not a sign that you are coping unusually badly.

Practitioners working directly with people going through redundancy commonly describe two specific effects worth naming. The first is a loss of identity, particularly where a job title or professional role had become closely tied to a sense of self. The second is a drop in self-esteem, often accompanied by guilt, shame or a sense of having failed, even when the redundancy decision had nothing to do with individual performance. Naming these effects for what they are, a normal and well recognised response to a genuine loss, is often the first step in loosening their grip.

If low mood, disrupted sleep or a loss of motivation continues for an extended period, or begins to feel unmanageable, this is worth raising with your GP or a qualified counsellor alongside the support of your coach. Coaching is an excellent source of practical and motivational support through a transition, but it is not a substitute for clinical help if you need it, and there is no weakness whatsoever in seeking that help directly.

In practice: Example One

David had spent eighteen years working towards the title of Finance Director. When his role was made redundant as part of a restructure, he found that the loss of the title affected him more than

the loss of income. Establishing a simple daily structure, keeping regular hours, dressing for the day, and setting one small achievable task each morning gave him back a sense of control while the rest of his search took shape.

In practice: Example Two

Angela, a senior HR business partner, found the first two weeks after redundancy the hardest, marked by disrupted sleep and a loss of appetite that surprised her, given how composed she had felt in the meeting itself. Naming this to her coach early, rather than pushing through it alone, meant her first sessions focused on rebuilding basic stability before any CV work began. By week four, with a routine back in place, she was ready to move into the practical chapters with far more energy than if she had forced herself to start immediately.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Moving straight into CV writing and applications before addressing how the transition has genuinely affected you.
- Treating a difficult emotional reaction as a personal failing rather than a normal response.
- Isolating yourself rather than telling a small number of trusted people what has happened.
- Letting an unstructured day become the new normal for weeks at a time.

What to do next

- Write down what you are feeling honestly, without judging it.
- Set a simple daily structure for the weeks ahead, including a clear start and finish to your working day.
- Identify two or three people you can talk to honestly about how the transition is affecting you.
- Raise anything you are finding genuinely difficult with your coach early, rather than waiting until it feels resolved on its own.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What have you noticed about how you are processing this transition so far?*
- *What would genuine support from the people around you actually look like right now?*
- *Is there anything you are not yet ready to talk about, and what might help you get there?*

Chapter 4: Being Your Own Recruiter

Treat your search as a project

The single biggest difference between people who move quickly and people who stall is whether they run their search like a structured project or let it happen to them. A good recruiter works to targets, tracks activity, follows up consistently and reviews what is and is not working. You should do the same for yourself.

The bigger picture

Recruitment consultants typically work from a pipeline: a defined number of new contacts, applications and follow ups each week, reviewed against results. Very few job seekers apply the same discipline to their own search, and it shows in how quickly they lose momentum after the first few rejections. Treating your search with the same rigour a recruitment desk would apply to a live vacancy is one of the most reliable predictors of a shorter time to placement.

In practice: Example One

James built a simple weekly tracker with four columns: role applied for, date, method of application, and next action date. Reviewing it every Friday afternoon took fifteen minutes and gave him a clear, evidence based answer to the question that used to keep him awake at night, which was whether he was doing enough.

In practice: Example Two

Louise had been applying steadily for six weeks with no clear sense of what was working. Building a tracker retrospectively revealed that direct applications through company websites had a response rate three times higher than applications made through a single large job board. She reallocated her weekly time accordingly, cutting board applications in half and doubling direct approaches, and her interview rate improved within a fortnight.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Applying to roles reactively as they appear, without any weekly target or plan.
- Losing track of which applications are still live and which need a follow up.
- Judging progress purely on how busy the search feels, rather than on what the tracker actually shows.
- Abandoning a channel after one or two attempts, rather than giving it a fair, measured trial.

A note of support

One of the most difficult parts of redundancy is the sudden loss of structure and control that a job previously provided. Building even a simple tracker and a weekly rhythm restores a genuine sense of agency at a time when it is easy to feel that everything is happening to you rather than being directed by you. This is not a minor administrative benefit. It is one of the most protective things you can do for your own wellbeing during the search.

What to do next

- Build a simple tracker covering every application, contact and follow up.
- Set a weekly target for new applications and new networking contacts.

- Block a fixed weekly review slot to assess progress and adjust your approach.
- Bring your tracker to your next coaching session so it can be reviewed with fresh eyes.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What does treating this search as a project change about how you feel towards it?*
- *Where are you most tempted to let structure slip, and what tends to be happening when that happens?*
- *What would genuinely be enough effort this week, realistically rather than ideally?*

Chapter 5: CV Writing and Personal Branding

Your CV is a marketing document, not a record

A CV is not a historical record of everything you have done. It is a document built to get you an interview for a specific role. That means tailoring it every time, leading with achievements rather than duties, and quantifying impact wherever you honestly can.

Replace descriptions of responsibility with descriptions of outcome. Instead of writing that you were responsible for a team, write what that team achieved under your leadership, and put a number against it wherever possible. Recruiters and hiring managers typically spend seconds, not minutes, on a first read, so the strongest material needs to sit in the top third of the first page.

Personal branding beyond the CV

Your personal brand is the consistent impression you leave across every document and platform a prospective employer might see, including your CV, your LinkedIn profile and how you present yourself in conversation. Consistency matters more than polish. A CV and a LinkedIn profile that tell two different stories about the same career will always cost you credibility.

What the research tells us

Estimates of how long a recruiter spends on an initial CV review vary between studies, and it is worth knowing the range rather than a single scary number. A widely cited early study put the figure at six to eight seconds. A more recent independent study, tracking real recruiter behaviour in 2023, found the average sat closer to seventeen to forty six seconds, considerably longer, though still short. What is consistent across the research is that around eighty per cent of CVs do not make it past the first screen, and that only around one in ten applicants is typically considered suitable for the role applied for.

None of this is meant to be discouraging. It is the reason tailoring matters as much as it does. A CV built to make its strongest points within the first few lines, in language that mirrors the specific role, is working with how CVs are actually read, not against it.

In practice: Example One

Rebecca's original CV read: responsible for the customer service team. Rewritten with a coach, it became: led a team of twelve, reducing average response time by thirty one per cent and lifting customer satisfaction scores from seventy two to eighty nine per cent over eighteen months. Both sentences describe the same job. Only one gets shortlisted.

In practice: Example Two

Daniel, a senior IT project manager, had a CV that listed every project he had ever touched across a fifteen year career, running to five pages. Working through this chapter, he cut it to two pages, kept only the four most relevant and impressive projects for his target roles, and added specific delivery metrics, including budget managed and percentage delivered ahead of schedule. His interview rate more than doubled within three weeks of sending the revised version.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Sending the same CV to every role, regardless of how different the job descriptions are.

- Listing duties and responsibilities without any measurable outcome attached.
- Allowing the CV to run well beyond two pages for anyone below the most senior executive level.
- Using a generic opening statement that could apply to any candidate in your field.

A note of support

It is worth saying plainly: a CV that does not get shortlisted is very rarely a verdict on your worth or your career. Given how quickly the first screen happens, small formatting and tailoring choices carry a disproportionate amount of weight, often more than the underlying quality of the career itself. Treat each unsuccessful application as useful data for refining the document, not as evidence about you.

What to do next

- Take one target job description and rewrite your top three CV bullet points to speak directly to it.
- Identify three achievements you can genuinely quantify with a number, a percentage or a timeframe.
- Remove any generic opening statement that could apply to anyone in your field.
- Check that your CV and your LinkedIn profile tell a consistent story before moving to the next chapter.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What did rewriting your achievements reveal about how you see your own value?*
- *What feels hardest to genuinely claim credit for on paper, and why?*
- *What does your current CV say about you that you are not sure is still true?*

Chapter 6: Building Your LinkedIn and Online Presence

Why this now needs its own focus

LinkedIn is now the first place most recruiters and hiring managers look, often before they open a CV. A weak or inconsistent profile can undo strong CV work before you get the chance to make your case in person.

The essentials

Your headline should state what you do and the value you bring, not simply your last job title. Compare a headline that reads former operations manager against one that reads operations leader specialising in supply chain efficiency and cost reduction. The second gives a recruiter a reason to click through.

Your about section should read as a short, human summary of your career story and what you are looking for next, not a list of duties copied from your CV. Regular activity, including comments, short posts and genuine engagement with your industry, keeps you visible to the recruiters searching for people like you. A profile photo taken within the last two years, and a banner image relevant to your field rather than the platform default, both measurably increase profile views.

In practice: Example One

Michael had a complete but static LinkedIn profile that had not been touched in four years. Updating his headline, rewriting his about section and posting one short reflection on his industry each week led to two direct recruiter approaches within a month, without a single job board application.

In practice: Example Two

Priya, a finance professional, had never used the open to work setting, unsure how it would look to her current employer given she had not yet left. Once she was in a position to use it openly, she set it visible to recruiters only rather than publicly, added three specific target job titles to her profile, and began receiving relevant recruiter messages within days, several from roles she would not otherwise have found through job boards.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Leaving a profile untouched for years and expecting it to work as hard as an active one.
- Copying CV text directly into the about section rather than writing in a natural, human voice.
- Using an outdated photo or no photo at all.
- Never engaging with content, so the profile never appears in anyone's feed.

A note of support

Many people hesitate over the open to work setting because it feels like a public admission of something painful. It is worth reframing it. Redundancy is now a routine feature of almost every industry and almost every career, not a personal exception, and recruiters and hiring managers see it that way too. Being visible as open to opportunities is a practical search decision, not a vulnerable one, and you are in good company using it.

What to do next

- Rewrite your headline to describe the value you offer, not just your last title.
- Rewrite your about section in your own voice, ending with what you are looking for next.
- Set the open to work setting appropriately, and post or comment on one relevant piece of content this week.
- Ask a former colleague to review your profile and tell you honestly what impression it gives.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What holds you back from presenting yourself fully online?*
- *What would it mean, right now, to be visible about where you are?*
- *Whose opinion are you most conscious of when you think about updating your profile, and why theirs?*

Chapter 7: Fundamentals of Job Searching

Do not rely on one channel

Job boards are only one route into a role, and typically the most competitive, since every visible advert attracts a large volume of applications. A well run search works several channels at once: job boards, direct speculative approaches, recruitment consultants, your own network, and referrals from people already inside target organisations.

Balancing effort across channels

Not every channel deserves equal time. Track response rates honestly by channel, as covered in Chapter 4, and shift your effort towards what is actually working for your specific field and level, rather than what feels like the most obvious or comfortable option.

What the research tells us

Estimates vary by source, but a large body of career research consistently suggests that a substantial majority of roles, commonly cited in the range of sixty to eighty per cent, are ultimately filled through personal connections and networking rather than through advertised job boards alone. That does not mean job boards are worthless. It does mean that a search built entirely around them is, by definition, competing for a minority of the roles genuinely available.

In practice: Example One

Aisha initially applied only through job boards and heard nothing back for six weeks. Once she added direct applications to three target employers, re-engaged two former colleagues now working where she wanted to be, and registered with two specialist recruiters in her sector, she had three live conversations running within a fortnight.

In practice: Example Two

Robert, a senior engineer, assumed recruiters would not be interested in someone at his level and avoided the channel entirely. Once he registered with two specialist engineering recruiters and briefed them clearly on his target roles and salary expectations, one submitted him for a role within days that he would never have found through general job boards, since it had been kept confidential ahead of a public announcement.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Relying on a single job board and assuming that represents the whole market.
- Avoiding recruitment consultants due to a mistaken assumption they are not relevant at your level.
- Applying to roles that do not genuinely match your experience, which wastes time and dilutes your credibility with any recruiter you are working with.
- Failing to track which channel is actually producing results.

What to do next

- List every channel currently open to you: boards, direct approach, recruiters, network, referrals.
- Identify which channel you have been neglecting, and take one action on it this week.

- Track response rates by channel so you can see, with evidence, where your time is best spent.
- Register with at least one specialist recruiter relevant to your sector if you have not already.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *Which channel are you avoiding, and what is underneath that avoidance?*
- *What would trying the most uncomfortable channel actually tell you?*

Chapter 8: Networking and Building Connections

The most effective channel, and the most avoided

Across the career transition industry, networking is consistently cited as the route through which the majority of roles are actually filled, whether or not they were ever formally advertised. Estimates vary, but a substantial and frequently cited body of research puts the figure between sixty and eighty per cent of roles. It is also the channel most people are least comfortable with, often because they picture networking as asking a favour rather than starting a genuine conversation.

How to approach it

A short, specific message works far better than a generic one. Reference something real, whether that is shared history, a mutual contact, or genuine interest in what the person is working on, and be direct about what you are hoping for, whether that is a fifteen minute conversation or simply staying in touch.

Informational interviews, short conversations where you ask someone about their role, their organisation or their sector rather than asking for a job, are one of the most effective and least intimidating ways to build a network from a standing start. Aim to leave every conversation having asked for insight, not for a job, and let opportunities emerge naturally from the relationship rather than forcing the point.

In practice: Example One

Tom reconnected with a former colleague purely to hear about the industry she had moved into two years earlier. That conversation led to an introduction to her manager, which led to an interview for a role that was never advertised.

In practice: Example Two

Naomi, uncomfortable with the idea of networking, began by simply commenting thoughtfully on posts from people in her target industry rather than messaging them directly. After several weeks of genuine engagement, three of those contacts responded warmly when she eventually did reach out directly, because she was no longer a stranger asking for something. One arranged an introduction that ultimately led to her next role.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Sending a generic connection request with no message at all.
- Asking for a job directly in a first message, rather than starting with a genuine conversation.
- Only reaching out to people when you need something, rather than maintaining relationships over time.
- Giving up after one unanswered message rather than following up politely.

A note of support

If reaching out to people feels harder than it used to, particularly to people who knew you in your previous role, that discomfort is common and understandable. It often eases considerably after the first two or three conversations, once you have direct evidence that people are genuinely willing to help rather than judge. Most people remember what it felt like to be job searching themselves, and respond with far more warmth than the anxious anticipation beforehand tends to suggest.

What to do next

- List ten people you could reasonably reach out to, including former colleagues, managers and industry contacts.
- Draft one short, specific outreach message and send it to two people this week.
- Request one informational interview with someone working in a role or organisation you are curious about.
- Follow up politely with anyone who has not responded within a week or two.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What is the story you tell yourself about asking people for help?*
- *Who have you been reluctant to contact, and what is underneath that reluctance?*
- *What would it feel like to reconnect with someone without needing anything from them?*

Chapter 9: Accessing the Hidden Job Market

What the hidden job market actually is

A significant proportion of roles are filled before they are ever formally advertised, through internal promotion, referral or direct approach. This is what is meant by the hidden job market, and it is reached through the networking and direct outreach covered in the previous two chapters, applied with a specific target in mind.

How to work it

Identify organisations you would genuinely want to work for, regardless of whether they currently have an advertised vacancy. Research their structure, identify the person most likely to be your future line manager, and make a direct, well researched approach explaining what you could bring to their team. This will feel less comfortable than replying to a job advert. It also faces far less competition, since most candidates only ever respond to what is visibly advertised.

In practice: Example One

Priya had a shortlist of six organisations she admired but none were advertising relevant roles. She wrote directly to the head of department at two of them, referencing specific work the team had recently published. One reply led to a conversation, and eight weeks later, to an offer for a role that was created around her.

In practice: Example Two

Simon, a supply chain specialist, identified an organisation going through a period of rapid growth based on recent news coverage. Rather than waiting for a relevant vacancy to appear, he wrote to the operations director outlining, briefly and specifically, how his experience could support the scale up challenges the coverage had described. The organisation had not planned to hire externally at that level, but created a role for him within two months once the conversation had opened.

What the research tells us

Estimates of exactly what proportion of jobs go unadvertised vary by source and by sector, but multiple independent studies place the figure well above half, with some estimates for certain sectors running considerably higher. The practical implication is straightforward. Restricting your search only to what is publicly advertised means competing for a portion of the market that may be smaller than the portion you cannot see at all.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Waiting passively for a role to be advertised at an organisation you admire, rather than approaching them directly.
- Sending a generic speculative letter that could apply to any organisation, rather than one grounded in specific research.
- Approaching too senior a contact without a clear, concise reason for reaching out.
- Giving up after a single unanswered approach.

What to do next

- Build a shortlist of five to eight target organisations, whether or not they are currently advertising.
- Identify the likely hiring manager at each and research their team's recent work.
- Draft one speculative approach and send it this week.
- Review the response, or lack of one, with your coach and refine your approach for the next target.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *Which organisation would you approach if you were certain it could not go badly?*
- *What is actually stopping you from making a direct approach today?*

Chapter 10: Delivering an Outstanding Interview

Preparation is the differentiator

Most interviews are lost before the candidate arrives, through under preparation rather than lack of ability. Research the organisation properly, including recent news, its market position and, where possible, the background of the people interviewing you. Prepare specific, relevant questions to ask in return. Generic questions signal generic preparation.

In the room

Answer the question actually asked, not the question you had prepared for. Keep answers focused and structured rather than rambling, and be honest about gaps in your experience rather than attempting to talk around them. Interviewers consistently rate honesty about limitations, paired with a clear plan to close them, more highly than false confidence. Body language, pace and tone all carry weight too. A calm, measured delivery, with pauses to think rather than filling every silence, reads as confidence rather than hesitation.

In practice: Example One

Oliver prepared three detailed questions about the organisation's current strategic priorities, drawn from its most recent public announcements. The interviewer later told him it was the first interview that week where the questions had shown genuine research rather than being read off a generic list.

In practice: Example Two

Hannah, interviewing for a senior marketing role, was asked directly about a gap in her experience with a specific type of campaign. Rather than deflecting, she acknowledged the gap honestly, then set out clearly how she had closed similar gaps in the past and what her plan would be to close this one in her first ninety days. The panel later cited that answer specifically as the reason they offered her the role over a candidate with more direct experience but a less convincing plan.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Arriving without having researched recent news or developments at the organisation.
- Asking only generic questions that could apply to any employer.
- Talking around a gap in experience rather than addressing it honestly.
- Filling every silence rather than allowing a natural pause to think.

A note of support

It is entirely normal for interview nerves to feel sharper than they used to after a period out of work, particularly if this is your first interview since redundancy. A degree of anxiety is not a sign that something is wrong with your approach or your candidacy. Thorough preparation is the most reliable way to bring that anxiety down to a manageable level, because it replaces uncertainty, which fuels anxiety, with familiarity, which reduces it.

What to do next

- Research the organisation, the role and, where possible, your interviewers before every interview.
- Prepare two or three specific questions that could only apply to this organisation.

- Practise answering out loud, not just in your head, before the interview itself.
- Prepare an honest, confident answer for the gap in your experience you are most concerned about.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What do you want an interviewer to understand about you that a CV cannot show?*
- *Where does your preparation feel thin, and what is making it hard to address?*

Chapter 11: Delivering a Competency Based Interview

The STAR structure

Competency based interviews ask you to evidence specific behaviours through real examples, usually introduced with phrases such as tell me about a time when. The most reliable way to structure an answer is STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Set out the context briefly, explain what you specifically needed to achieve, describe the action you personally took, and close with the measurable result.

The most common failure is spending too long on the situation and too little on the action and result, which are the parts that actually demonstrate your capability. Aim to spend around twenty per cent of your answer on situation and task combined, and the remaining eighty per cent on what you personally did and what happened as a result.

In practice: Example One

Asked to describe a time she managed conflict within a team, Elena answered: a project was six weeks behind schedule and two senior team members disagreed publicly on the cause, which was affecting morale across the wider team. I needed to resolve the disagreement quickly and get the project back on track without undermining either person. I met with each individually to understand their position, then brought them together with a shared, data led view of the schedule slippage, focusing the conversation on the plan forward rather than blame. The project recovered its schedule within four weeks, and both team members later asked to work together again on the next phase.

In practice: Example Two

Asked about a time he had to influence without authority, Kwame answered: a new reporting process I believed was necessary sat outside my direct remit, and the team that owned it had no bandwidth to prioritise it. I needed their buy in without being able to instruct them directly. I built a short business case showing the hours the current process was costing across the wider department each month, and proposed a pilot with one team rather than asking for a full rollout commitment upfront. The pilot team adopted it within two weeks, and the wider rollout followed within the quarter, based on their own results rather than my argument alone.

In practice: Example Three

Asked to describe a time she had failed, a question many candidates fear more than any other, Louisa answered: I underestimated the time a system migration would take and gave a delivery date to stakeholders that turned out to be unrealistic, which damaged confidence in the project when we missed it. I needed to rebuild that confidence and reset expectations honestly. I went back to stakeholders early, before the deadline arrived, with a clear explanation of what had been underestimated and a revised, more rigorously tested timeline, rather than waiting until the date had passed. The project completed against the revised date with no further slippage, and two stakeholders later told me the early, honest reset was what kept their confidence in the wider team intact. Choosing a genuine failure, rather than a disguised strength, and showing what changed afterwards, is usually more persuasive than trying to avoid the question's intent.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Spending most of the answer describing the situation and leaving little time for the action and result.

- Describing what a team did collectively rather than what you personally did.
- Choosing an example with no clear, measurable result.
- Failing to prepare examples in advance and improvising under pressure.

What to do next

- Prepare five to six STAR examples covering leadership, conflict, failure, achievement and change.
- Write each one down in full before condensing it into a spoken answer of around ninety seconds.
- Practise delivering each example out loud until it sounds natural rather than rehearsed.
- Check each example ends with a clear, specific result, not a vague summary.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *Which of your stories are you proudest of, and why do you tell it less often than the others?*
- *What does the story you keep avoiding say about you?*

Chapter 12: Psychometric and Aptitude Test Preparation

What to expect

Many larger employers include some form of psychometric or aptitude testing as part of their process, particularly at graduate, corporate and senior levels. The most common types are verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning, logical or diagrammatic reasoning, and personality or working style profiling. These are increasingly delivered digitally as part of a wider career platform, in the same way several outplacement providers now build test practice directly into their own portals.

How to prepare

These tests measure a skill, and like any skill, familiarity improves performance under time pressure. Practising sample questions in the specific format you will face, under realistic time limits, is far more effective than general revision. Personality profiles have no right answer, but respond most reliably when you answer quickly and honestly rather than trying to guess what the employer wants to hear, since inconsistent or overly strategic answers are often flagged by the underlying scoring model.

In practice: Example One

Ahmed had not sat a formal test since university and was anxious ahead of a numerical reasoning assessment. Completing three timed practice tests in the format he would actually face brought his speed and accuracy up substantially, and more importantly, removed the surprise factor on the day.

In practice: Example Two

Fiona, applying for a senior leadership role, was asked to complete a lengthy personality profile alongside a logical reasoning test. Rather than trying to present an idealised version of herself, she answered quickly and instinctively, as advised by her coach. The resulting profile matched closely with how she saw herself, which came up constructively in her subsequent interview when the assessor discussed the results with her directly, rather than working against her.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Sitting a formal test for the first time in years with no practice at all.
- Overthinking personality questions in an attempt to guess the desired answer.
- Failing to check the time limit and format in advance, leading to unnecessary pressure on the day.
- Treating a single poor practice score as a fixed limitation rather than something practice will improve.

A note of support

If a poor practice score triggers a wave of doubt about your broader ability, particularly on top of an already difficult period, it is worth remembering explicitly what these tests do and do not measure. They measure performance on a specific task under specific conditions on a specific day. They do not measure your intelligence, your worth or your capability as a professional. Practice genuinely improves scores, which is itself good evidence that the underlying skill was always there.

What to do next

- Find out in advance which test provider and format the employer uses, where possible.
- Complete at least two or three timed practice tests in that format before the real assessment.
- Approach personality profiling honestly rather than strategically.
- Discuss any consistently weak area with your coach so it can be targeted directly.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What does test anxiety bring up for you beyond the test itself?*
- *What would it mean to trust your own instinctive answers rather than guessing what is wanted?*

Chapter 13: Negotiating Salary and Offers

Know your position before you enter the conversation

Research the genuine market rate for the role, your sector and your region before any offer conversation begins, using multiple sources rather than a single salary survey. Know your walk away point clearly, and understand that a negotiation is not only about base salary. Start date, benefits, bonus structure, flexible working and professional development budget are all legitimately part of the conversation.

How to handle it

Let the employer name a figure first wherever possible. Respond to an offer with a clear, specific and justified counter rather than a vague request for more. Silence after stating your position is a legitimate and effective tool. Most employers expect a counter and have built room for one into their initial offer. Negotiate with warmth rather than confrontation. You are not trying to defeat the employer, you are trying to reach a figure that reflects your value while keeping the relationship strong before your first day.

In practice: Example One

Given an initial offer eight per cent below her target, Grace responded with a specific figure supported by her research into comparable roles and a summary of the additional value she would bring in her first six months. The employer returned within four per cent of her original target, alongside an improved holiday allowance.

In practice: Example Two

Patrick received an offer that met his salary expectations but with a start date sooner than he could reasonably manage against his notice period. Rather than accepting the pressure, he proposed a specific alternative start date with a brief, clear explanation, and asked whether a modest signing arrangement might bridge any gap the employer was concerned about. The employer agreed to the later date without any further negotiation, having assumed, incorrectly, that pushing on timing was more contentious than it turned out to be.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Naming a figure first, before understanding what the employer has budgeted.
- Accepting the first offer out of relief or fear of losing the role.
- Focusing only on base salary and overlooking benefits, bonus and flexibility.
- Negotiating in a way that feels adversarial rather than collaborative.

A note of support

After a period of redundancy, it is natural to feel a strong pull towards accepting the first reasonable offer simply out of relief, or out of a fear that negotiating might cost you the role entirely. In practice, a calm, well reasoned negotiation very rarely costs a candidate an offer, and employers generally expect it as a normal part of the process. Your value did not disappear when your previous role ended, and it is worth negotiating from that position, not from a position of gratitude alone.

What to do next

- Research market rate for your target role from at least two independent sources.
- Decide your walk away point before any offer is made.
- Prepare a specific, justified response for both a strong offer and a disappointing one.
- List the non salary elements of an offer that matter most to you, before you are in the conversation.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What is your relationship with asking for more than you are offered?*
- *Where does the fear of losing an offer by negotiating actually come from?*

Chapter 14: Achieving and Maintaining Confidence

Confidence is a skill, not a fixed trait

Confidence during a job search is built through evidence, not willed into existence through positive thinking alone. A run of rejections can erode confidence quickly if you let each one stand as a verdict on your ability, rather than one outcome among many, most of which are shaped by factors entirely outside your control, including internal candidates, budget changes and shifting priorities you were never told about.

Building the evidence base

Keep a simple, honest record of your genuine achievements, positive feedback you have received, and moments where things went well during your search, however small. Reviewing this record before an interview or a difficult day does more for confidence in the moment than any amount of general reassurance.

When confidence dips further than expected

As covered in Chapter 3, research consistently links job loss to a genuine drop in psychological wellbeing, often including a measurable hit to self-esteem, so a dip in confidence during your search is not unusual and does not mean something has gone wrong. If low mood or a loss of confidence is persistent, or feels heavier than the day to day frustration of searching, it is worth speaking to your GP or a qualified counsellor alongside your coach. There is no weakness in seeking that support directly, and doing so is often what allows the practical work in this chapter to actually take hold.

In practice: Example One

After four consecutive rejections, Marcus began to doubt his suitability for his own field entirely. Reviewing a simple evidence log he had kept, including two strong pieces of interview feedback and a successful project delivered under his previous employer, gave him a factual basis to separate the outcome of four specific processes from a judgement on his overall capability.

In practice: Example Two

Sunita found her confidence dipped sharply after a strong first interview did not progress to a second. Discussing it with her coach, she requested specific feedback from the employer, which revealed the decision had come down to internal budget constraints unrelated to her performance. Building the habit of requesting feedback after every unsuccessful process gave her a factual, rather than assumed, picture of where she genuinely needed to improve, and where she did not.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Treating every rejection as evidence of a personal shortfall, without seeking the actual reason.
- Comparing your progress unfavourably to others without knowing their full circumstances.
- Neglecting to record positive feedback and small wins as they happen.
- Allowing a difficult week to undo weeks of genuine progress in your own mind.

What to do next

- Start an evidence log of achievements, positive feedback and progress, and add to it weekly.
- After any rejection, note one factual, specific reason it may not have been about your ability.

- Review your evidence log before every interview.
- Request feedback after any unsuccessful process, and record what you learn from it.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What evidence of your own value have you been discounting or explaining away?*
- *What would you say to a friend going through exactly what you are going through?*

Chapter 15: Exploring Self Employment and Portfolio Careers

A genuine alternative, not a fallback

Not everyone in transition is looking for another permanent role. Consultancy, freelancing, interim work and portfolio careers, where you combine several part time or project based roles, are all genuine paths, and several major outplacement providers now build them into their programmes as a standalone option rather than treating self employment as a last resort.

What to consider

Be realistic about cash flow, particularly in the first six to twelve months, and understand your tax and employment status obligations, including IR35 considerations if you plan to contract in the UK. Self employment also requires you to market yourself continuously, which is a different skill from job searching and worth developing deliberately rather than assuming it will follow naturally. Consider starting with a small pilot, such as one part time consultancy engagement alongside continued employed search, rather than committing fully before testing the model.

In practice: Example One

After twenty years in corporate operations roles, Helen chose to build a portfolio combining two days a week of interim consultancy with a small non executive advisory role. The transition took longer to establish financially than a single permanent role would have, but gave her a variety and autonomy she had not had in her previous career.

In practice: Example Two

Graham, a former IT director, tested self employment cautiously by taking on one short term consultancy project while continuing to apply for permanent roles in parallel. The project went well enough that a second client approached him directly on the strength of the first, and within four months he had a stable enough pipeline to commit to self employment fully, having tested the model before relying on it.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Committing fully to self employment without any financial runway or pilot period.
- Underestimating the time required to market yourself continuously, separate from delivering the work itself.
- Overlooking tax and employment status obligations until they become urgent.
- Assuming self employment is a lesser path rather than a genuine, deliberate choice.

A note of support

If part of what draws you towards self employment is a wish to never again feel as exposed to a single employer's decisions as redundancy has made you feel, that is a completely reasonable motivation, and worth naming honestly with your coach as you weigh the practical considerations in this chapter. Whichever path you choose, permanent role, portfolio career or full self employment, your value as a professional does not depend on which one you pick.

What to do next

- Honestly assess your financial runway if you were to pursue self employment or portfolio work.
- Research the tax and status obligations relevant to your situation before committing.
- Speak to at least one person already working in the model you are considering.
- Consider a small pilot engagement before deciding whether to commit fully.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What is genuinely pulling you towards independence: control, safety, freedom, something else?*
- *What fear sits underneath the caution you feel about this path?*

Chapter 16: Career Development

Beyond the immediate search

Securing your next role is not the end point of career development, only the next stage of it. Given that a significant proportion of the skills used in most jobs are expected to change within the next few years, continuous development is no longer optional for anyone who wants to remain genuinely competitive over the medium term.

Building this in deliberately

Identify the skills gap between where you are now and where you want to be in three to five years, not just for your next role. Professional membership bodies, mentoring relationships in both directions, and targeted short courses are all more effective when chosen deliberately against a specific gap, rather than collected generally. Revisit the skills gap you identified back in Chapter 1 and use it as a starting point here. Given that LinkedIn's own analysis suggests around seventy per cent of the skills used in most jobs will change by 2030, treating development as a one off exercise tied only to this search is likely to leave you exposed again in a few years' time.

In practice: Example One

Recognising that data literacy was becoming central to her sector, Fatima committed to one structured course per year alongside her role, chosen specifically against gaps she had identified with her manager. Three years on, it was the clearest differentiator in her promotion case.

In practice: Example Two

Ben, newly settled into a role after his transition, noticed that several job descriptions he had reviewed during his search had mentioned a specific certification he did not hold. Rather than letting that observation fade once he was employed again, he scheduled it as a development goal for his first year, completing the certification within eight months and using it to open a conversation about broader responsibility earlier than he otherwise would have.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Treating career development as something to pick up again only once the next crisis arrives.
- Choosing courses or qualifications based on general interest rather than a specific identified gap.
- Letting insights gathered during the search fade once a new role begins.
- Assuming development stops mattering once you are settled into a new role.

What to do next

- Identify the specific skills gap between your current capability and where you want to be in three to five years.
- Choose one course, qualification or mentoring relationship that closes a genuine gap, not simply an interesting one.
- Revisit this plan at least once a year.
- Carry forward anything you learned about market demand during your search into your development plan.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *Which skill are you most reluctant to develop, and what is behind that reluctance?*
- *What does staying relevant mean to you personally, beyond what the market demands?*

Chapter 17: Starting Strong: Your First 90 Days

The search is not over when the offer arrives

How you approach your first ninety days in a new role shapes the impression you make for a long time afterwards. Several outplacement providers now extend their support through this period rather than ending it at the offer stage, because a strong start genuinely reduces the risk of an early departure, for both the individual and the employer.

What a strong start looks like

Set clear, realistic goals for your first thirty, sixty and ninety days, agreed explicitly with your new manager rather than assumed. Prioritise building relationships early, particularly with people outside your immediate team. It is normal to feel some degree of doubt in a new environment, even after a successful search. That feeling is common and does not mean you have made the wrong move.

In practice: Example One

In her first week, Nadia scheduled short introductory conversations with every member of her new team and two key stakeholders in adjacent departments, rather than waiting for those relationships to form naturally. By day sixty, she had a clearer picture of the organisation's real priorities than colleagues who had been there for months.

In practice: Example Two

Andrew, moving into a new leadership role after a difficult redundancy, felt a strong urge to make immediate changes to prove his value early. His coach encouraged him instead to spend his first thirty days genuinely listening before acting. The credibility he built through that early restraint made the changes he introduced in his second and third months far more readily accepted by a team that could have easily been resistant to a new leader arriving with an agenda.

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Assuming goals for the first ninety days without explicitly agreeing them with your new manager.
- Waiting for relationships with colleagues and stakeholders to form naturally, rather than building them deliberately.
- Making significant changes too early, before genuinely understanding how the organisation works.
- Dismissing early doubts as a sign the move was wrong, rather than a normal part of settling in.

A note of support

It is common, after a redundancy, to carry a quiet worry into a new role that this one might not last either, or that you have somehow been fortunate rather than genuinely chosen. That feeling tends to fade as you accumulate real evidence in your new environment, which is exactly what the ninety day goals and early relationship building in this chapter are designed to give you. You were offered this role on the strength of what you demonstrated, not despite what happened before it.

What to do next

- Agree clear thirty, sixty and ninety day goals with your new manager in your first week.

- Schedule introductory conversations with key colleagues and stakeholders early, rather than waiting.
- Keep a short weekly note of what you are learning about how the organisation really works.
- Resist the urge to make major changes before you have genuinely listened and understood the context.

Bring to your coaching session

This programme gives you frameworks and actions. Your coach is where they become genuinely yours. Rather than arriving with answers, consider bringing these open questions into your next session and exploring them together:

- *What do you want to be genuinely different this time, compared with before?*
- *What old habits or assumptions are you tempted to carry into this new role without questioning them?*

Conclusion: Taking Ownership of Your Future

Every chapter in this programme has been built around the same idea: a career transition goes better when you treat it as something you actively direct, rather than something that happens to you. The market context in chapter one, the mindset work in chapter three, the practical tools throughout, and the guidance on starting strong in your next role are all pieces of the same approach.

You do not need to have every chapter mastered before you move forward. Revisit whichever sections are most relevant as your circumstances change, and bring what you produce here into your coaching sessions, where it can be tested, challenged and refined against your specific situation.

Ownership of your future does not mean doing this alone. It means being the person driving the process, with the right support around you.