



The **ABCs** of
~~Career Development~~
Getting Out of
Your Career Rut!

(a FUN picture book for
a SERIOUS topic!)

REVIEW: *"One of the best mini e-books
in the world" - said no one, ever*

INCLUDES: zero B.S. (just the
unadulterated essentials)

By Dawid Wiącek | Career Fixer LLC

Action!

Honestly, you're probably better off putting this book down (figuratively, since it's an e-book) and getting real stuff done!

If you're at a dead-end job, you're underpaid, unfulfilled, or any other "un" at work... then why waste your precious life reading this book?

Get out there! Network. Ask for help. Talk to folks in different companies—different industries even.

Take a free online course. Go volunteer (online volunteering is a thing, so no excuses if you're an indoor animal). Do something—anything!

The point is, rather than reading yet another article about best practices blah blah blah, you're better off moving, doing. **Action** will teach you more than any book ever can.



My smile here is not fake. I legitimately love helping people find more fulfilling, better-paying careers.

Branding

What makes you, you? Why should others care?

Branding is not just for marketers and influencers. If you're a human being who wants something (e.g., a job candidate who wants to land a job or at least nab a juicy interview), ask yourself the following question:

When people look at my (average? amazing?) resume, or they see my (bland? engaging?) LinkedIn profile, what impression do they get of me? Is my story exciting, memorable, and relevant to what they want or need?

You can check out my [LinkedIn profile](#) to see what I mean. Your branded documents—resume, social media, cover letter, etc.—have got to tell a simple but compelling story.

It's difficult to write about yourself. I help America's top marketing executives brand themselves. Who can you reach out to for help to make sure your **branding** is on point? Are you hiding in the shadows in fear, or are you stepping out there and showing the world all the good stuff you're made of?!



CV (or Conciseness)

Bonus points if you know what **CV** stands for.

Many of my international (non-US) executive clients come to me with a long-form curriculum vitae, and my job is to condense it. Why take five pages to make your case when you can do it in two?

Some industries (scientific/academic) and geographies prefer the longer version, but thanks to technology and social media, our attention spans are growing smaller globally, so shorter US-style resumes tend to work well around the world (there may be exceptions, of course).

Why do you think I created this mini e-book instead of a 300-page book? Because no one reads.

If you ever interviewed a candidate for a job, did you ever salivate over a long-arse resume? Nope. Keep it short and simple. Focus on results, not tasks.



Do's and Don'ts

This is not an exhaustive list, by any means. But it's pretty darn essential. This is based not just on my personal opinion, but also on the professional opinion I have cultivated from having helped 100's of folks find sweet jobs at Fortune 500's, nonprofits, and cool startups...

Do's:

Keep an open mind. Reach out to old contacts (maybe avoid the ex). Reach out to brand new contacts. Try something new every day. Update the resume. Polish the LinkedIn profile. Scrub the social media accounts. Attend a relevant conference. Be kind. Volunteer. Donate. Exercise. Get good sleep. Finally sew on that button. Learn when to say no. Find a mentor. Be a mentor. Travel. Never stop learning. Read. Know when to stop reading (See: **Action**).

Don'ts:

Don't be an ass.



Elevator Pitch

As a job seeker, your elevator pitch is a short, sweet (and hopefully impressive) description of your value.

Do you have an elevator pitch? Is it impactful? Memorable?

Try to avoid formal and boring language.

Dull **elevator pitch:**

I am a passionate career coach with 10+ years of experience. I received my coaching certification from blah blah blah. I work with professionals in various industries. Some of the industries I focus on include blah blah blah...

Better **elevator pitch:**

It's simple. I help people find fulfilling, better-paying jobs. I often work with executives looking to make major career transitions, often from one industry to another, or from one geography to another—sometimes both! Do you know anyone who is unhappy with their job?



Facts

Sobering **facts:**

Up to 50% of Americans are unhappy with their jobs. Fortunately, my clients and I—we do something about it!

About 68% of women do not negotiate, versus 52% of men who don't. Please don't put the blame or onus on the women. There are social reasons and repercussions for this gender gap. If you're curious about it, [let's chat](#).

Many clients start with resumes that are very generic or abstract, or they focus on responsibilities and goals of their job. Instead, focus on results. Tangible metrics. Facts. This is what sells you to the recruiter or hiring manager.

Fun **facts:**

All worker bees are female. A bee produces a teaspoon of honey (about 5 grams) in her lifetime. Next time you enjoy a spoonful of honey, stop, savor, and appreciate the lifetime of hard work! And if you're a vegan, bless you for being more enlightened than I am.

Fact: nothing beats strawberries in Poland (my motherland)



Grit

If you're human, chances are you have good days at work, and you have bad days. Nothing problematic there...

But what if those bad spells last more than a few days? Are you someone who has suffered at the hands of a miserable job for more than a few months? I once had a client who was a lawyer for 20+ years and he admitted to me that he hated nearly all twenty of those years! What a shame. But it's never too late, and we worked together to carve out a new career path for him.

On a good day, the job search can be draining and costly (even if just time-wise). All that research, finding the right job postings, tailoring your resume and cover letter, hustling to get your foot in the door, sweating through interviews (in-person or virtual) and then there's the possibility of rejection... you know the drill.

You've got to have **grit**. Resilience. Thick skin. Persistence. Otherwise, the job search itself will cause a secondary burnout on top of the misery of your current job (or unemployment). So, tell me, what are you doing today to increase your level of resilience? How are you tending to your physical, mental and social health?



Honesty

You can lie to your boss, to your direct reports, to your spouse or lover or kids. You can even lie to yourself for a while, before it comes back to bite you in the arse (my non-British English spellcheck has underlined that last word as a typo; A.I. isn't as smart as it thinks it is).

Marshall Goldsmith (look him up, you'll thank me) says "what got you here won't get you there." At some point you'll have to be honest with the person in the mirror.

Why are you stuck at this job? Or: why have you been unemployed for so long? Focusing on external factors is nice for a moment (i.e., blaming others), but what decisions did you make to get you here?

What are you willing to do, what are you willing to sacrifice, to get yourself out of this pretty little mess?

Honesty is necessary but it isn't sufficient. You'll need a plan. And you'll need to act (see: **Action**).



Ire

That's right. Ire. Indignation. Anger.

Maybe something your coworker or boss or CEO did once just doesn't sit well with you... maybe it's not a grounds for a lawsuit but it does still affect your self-worth, morale, and performance in the workplace.

Are you thriving at work? If not, when was the last time you thrived?

Don't let that anger go to waste, though. Sure, you can hold a grudge forever, but that doesn't benefit anyone, it only hurts you. Channel that **ire** into something productive.

Regret not finishing that college degree? Okay, great, join the club. I was one year shy of my Master's... but decided to start working and haven't looked back. No one, not a single person, has asked me if I got my master's. And my clients are very successful...

If you're angry, use that emotion as fuel to do some good.



Joy

Some people treat life as a game, with winners and losers. Elon Musk himself said... well, let's forget about him. Today is about you.

If the concept of life as a game is too scary or just doesn't sit well with your conscience, think of it in terms of pleasure. Leisure. Rest.

I'm an immigrant, and culturally I was raised to see work as just a means to an end, a way to earn a paycheck. Pay the bills. Survive.

But as I grew older and rubbed elbows with professionals from all walks of life (6 continents, every industry imaginable), I learned that work can be a source of **joy**. Listen, I'm not saying every day will be a cakewalk--every job has aspects of it that stink a little--but it is possible that your profession doesn't drain your soul on the daily and make you shudder as you lay your head down to sleep.

Have you ever been jealous of people who say they don't feel like they're working because their job is so fun? I was jealous, once. Well, I'm finally at a place where I no longer envy others. It took a few misses, dead-end turns, and some tears. But I got there.

Do you want to get there? Do you believe you deserve fulfillment and happiness? My hope is that you do. But it's not up to me.



Karma

Karma is a Sanskrit word that literally translates to “action” or “deed.”

Obviously, certain thoughts often beget certain actions, but the overall idea is that if you do good, some good will come back to you, like a boomerang. Has anyone outside of Oceania ever played with a boomerang? I’ve only ever seen it in the media...

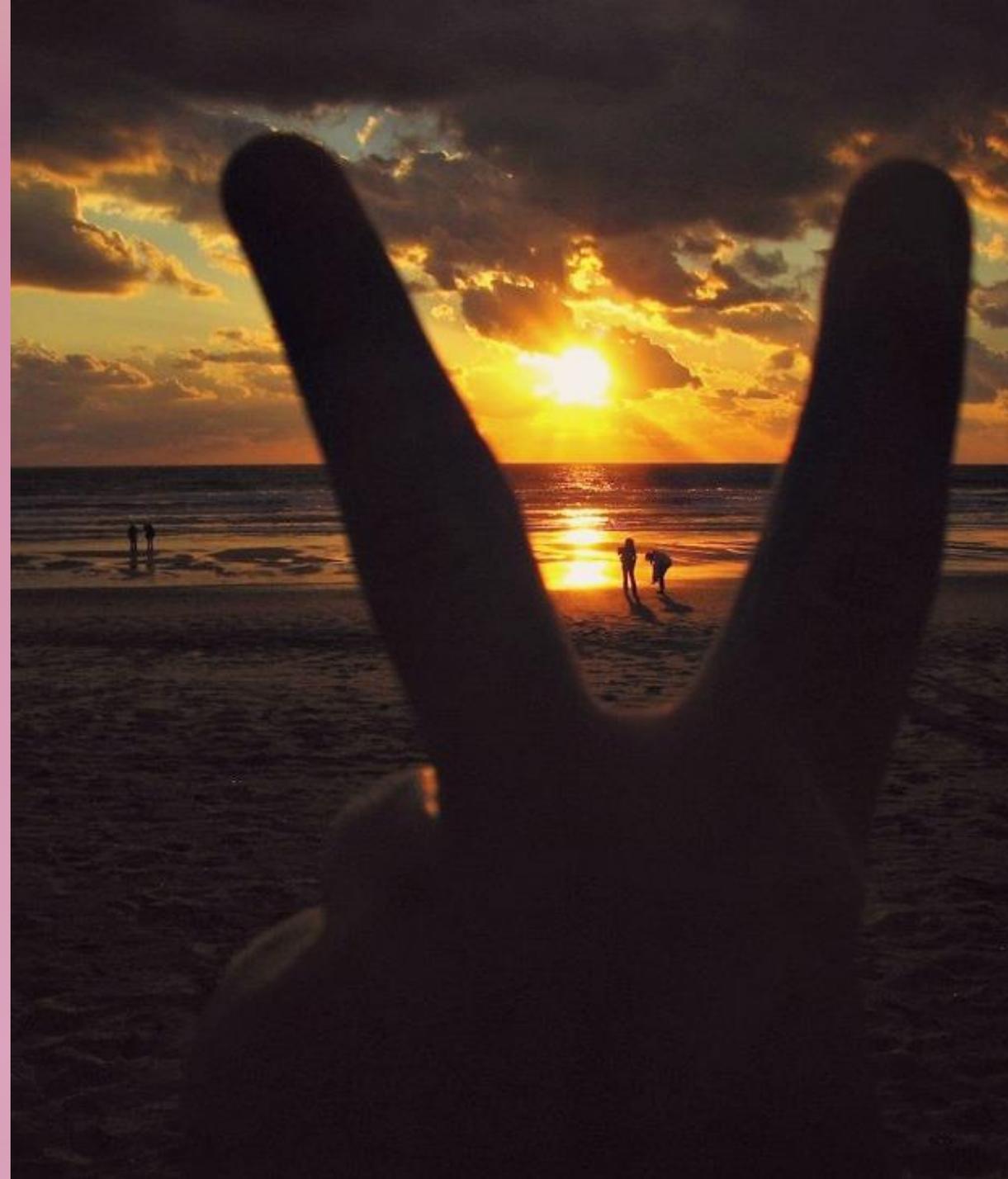
When you’re stuck in a career rut, are you someone who turns to complaining, blaming others, or doing nothing and ignoring it all?

Or are you perhaps someone who--despite their own unemployment or unpleasant job--still seeks to help others?

Volunteering may sound like the last thing an unemployed, exhausted person wants to do, but many of my clients have found that volunteering is precisely what gets them unstuck. It gives them purpose, energy, and fulfillment. I’ve had clients who have landed job interviews by networking (casually, organically) with fellow volunteers. Actually, it’s a low-stress/fun way to network.

And no matter where you are in your career (happy, rich, fulfilled or miserable and underpaid), please take care of your network. Be a mentor. Say yes to those requests for informational interviews. Write recommendations. If you hear of job openings, share them with your circles, etc.

If you’re mean and self-centered, **karma** can sabotage your career. Ask yourself (or your most honest friend): am I doing enough good?



Learning

Not everyone needs (or wants) to switch careers, earn promotions, move to a new city, etc.

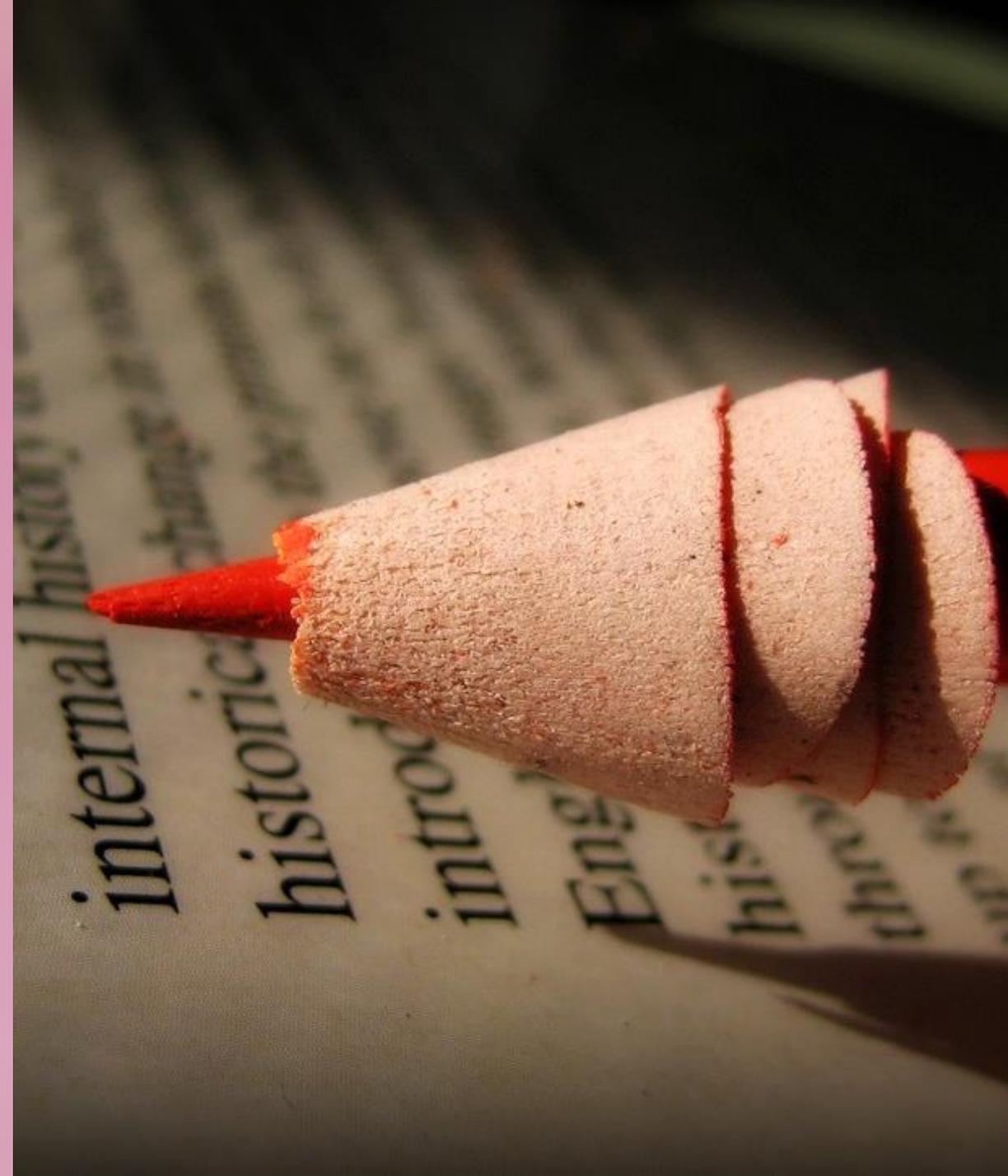
Plenty of my clients just want to be intellectually stimulated, challenged, or just slightly more engaged at their job.

Is that you? Are you in cruise mode, doing the bare minimum just to get by? Are you painfully bored? Is it seasonal and short term or has it persisted for years?

My challenge to you is this: what have you learned from your mistakes at work in the last year? More importantly, what have you learned outside of work in the last 12 months?

Have you taken up a new hobby or skill? Completed an online certificate course in a new area? Rekindled your love with a talent (or curiosity) you had as a youth but have all but abandoned?

If you haven't done any intensive **learning** in the last 12 months, why have you let an entire year pass by? The best way to feel old is by stopping to learn. Do you want to feel old? There was a 101-year-old yoga instructor teaching at a studio a block from my home. Ponder that for a moment...



Mobilization

“Motivation” is just so overplayed a word.

If you're not motivated, is a little e-book going to get you there?

I doubt it. But feel free to prove me wrong.

As I get older (and lazier aka “more time-efficient”), I have tended to think about it in terms of mobilization.

Chances are that you have some internal desire (motivation), whether you crave a more fulfilling job, a higher salary, a bigger intellectual challenge perhaps... so if you're not going after it, why not? Really, what's keeping you? Fear? Laziness? Netflix? Am I to blame?

I think of **mobilization** as the moment you stop thinking and start doing (See: Action, Karma). You may need the support from your social circles, but if your friends are not up to the task, consider hiring a coach (I know of an [exceptional one](#)), someone who can provide not just support but also give you a kick in the rear, hold you accountable when the tough gets tougher... because it likely will. So, what's it's going to be? Are you going to keep reading, or are you going to get started with the next chapter of your professional journey? Up to you.



Nixing

Nixing means putting an end to or cancelling something.

Do you find it hard to say “no”? Are you spreading yourself too thin at work or at home? Are you taking on too much administrative, logistical, financial, or emotional baggage?

I won't dance around it: do you need therapy but are avoiding it? Most (“normal”) people I know who have gone to therapy have said it was like a weight was lifted off their shoulders...

I often work with seasoned professionals (VPs, CEO's) who are already operating at a high level but want to go further...

This often requires sacrifice, sometimes short-term, sometimes for the long haul... if you're looking to find a job quickly... are you willing to spend a few weeks networking vs. chilling on the sofa and Netflixing? It requires **nixing** the things that don't add value to your personal and especially your professional life.

How important is that next step to you? Maybe it's not important! Maybe your spouse, friends and family expect you to want something, but you actually don't want that thing.

If it's important to you, please reach out for help. I can lend an ear, but I can do more than that. Whether you're looking to increase your salary, earn a title promotion, leave a toxic job, or become a thought leader, I can help. If you let me.

If you don't want help, how else might you get to that next step in your career? When you finish reading this booklet, what are you actually going to do?



Outlook

Nope, not the Microsoft email program.

Outlook. Mindset. Your view of yourself and the world.

Probably the singular most important aspect of your job search or career development journey.

Of the hundreds of people whom I've coached over the years, of the thousands of resumes and CVs I have reviewed (10,000+ by one rough estimate), the one thing that separates the successful ones from the not-so-successful ones is personal **outlook**.

Do you see yourself as the victim of a lousy career, or someone who takes control over your professional narrative?

When you stumble and fall during a performance evaluation or a job interview, do you ruminate and spend days or weeks in a depressed mood, or do you get over it quickly, make adjustments, and move on?

Do you learn from it? (See: **Learning**).

If your personal outlook is lousy, why is that ok? If it's not ok, what are you doing to change it today and this week and next?

Are you stuck in your outlook because you're constantly surrounding yourself with the same limited-minded, hyper-needy, and negative people in your life? Or are you reaching out to people you admire to improve your outlook, expand your horizons, and better yourself?



Perspiration

Whether you are naturally talented or not, the thing that can get you over a career plateau or hump is hard work (or at least smart work, which sometimes can be one and the same).

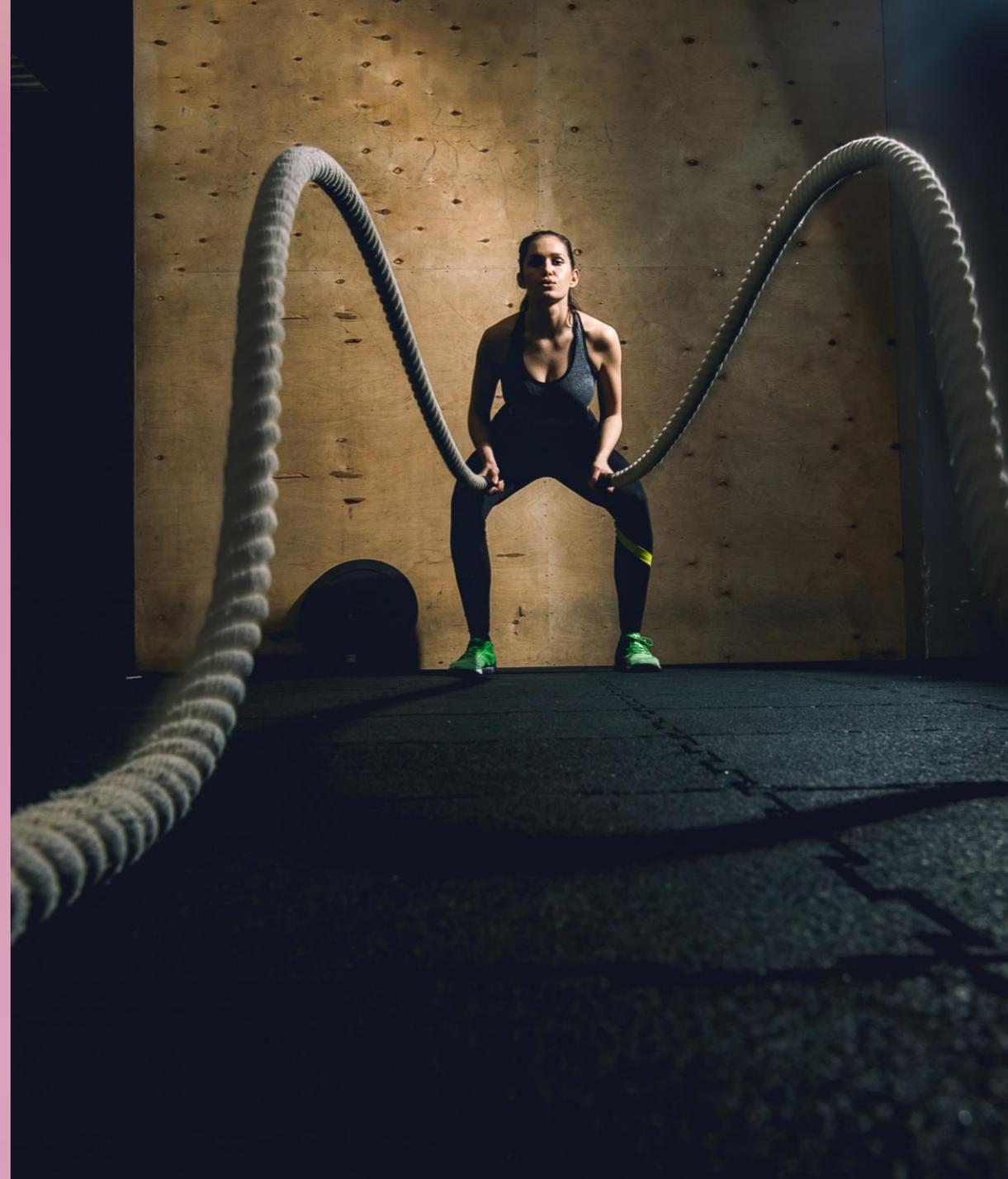
Persistence. Diligence. Call it what you will. When is the last time you worked really hard, you really engaged with your work? Or, if you're seeking a new job or career, when was the last time you really put in the effort to build new skills, practice your interviewing skills, and network like your life depended on it?

I get it, because I was (more than once) at a miserable job (and each time it was miserable for different reasons). At some point I said enough is enough. And I put a lot of work into taking some certifications, meeting new people, and applying to jobs outside of my comfort zone.

It's good to read. But is that all you're doing? Are you applying any of your lessons? Are you networking? Are you taking the time to customize your resume to each job? Are you posting highly engaging and relevant content on LinkedIn to attract recruiters?

If your goal is to become a thought leader, are you just daydreaming about it, or have you taken any concrete steps, however small, toward that end? If not, what's keeping you? Fear? Laziness? Netflix? Ignorance? Confusion?

If you're still in a rut, assess your physical and mental health. Are you exercising regularly? Are you breaking a sweat? Are you working out solo, or are you building a network by exercising with a group? **Perspiration** can bring a lot of good to your mind, body, and professional network.



Questions

Question everything.

Your current workflow at the office, even.

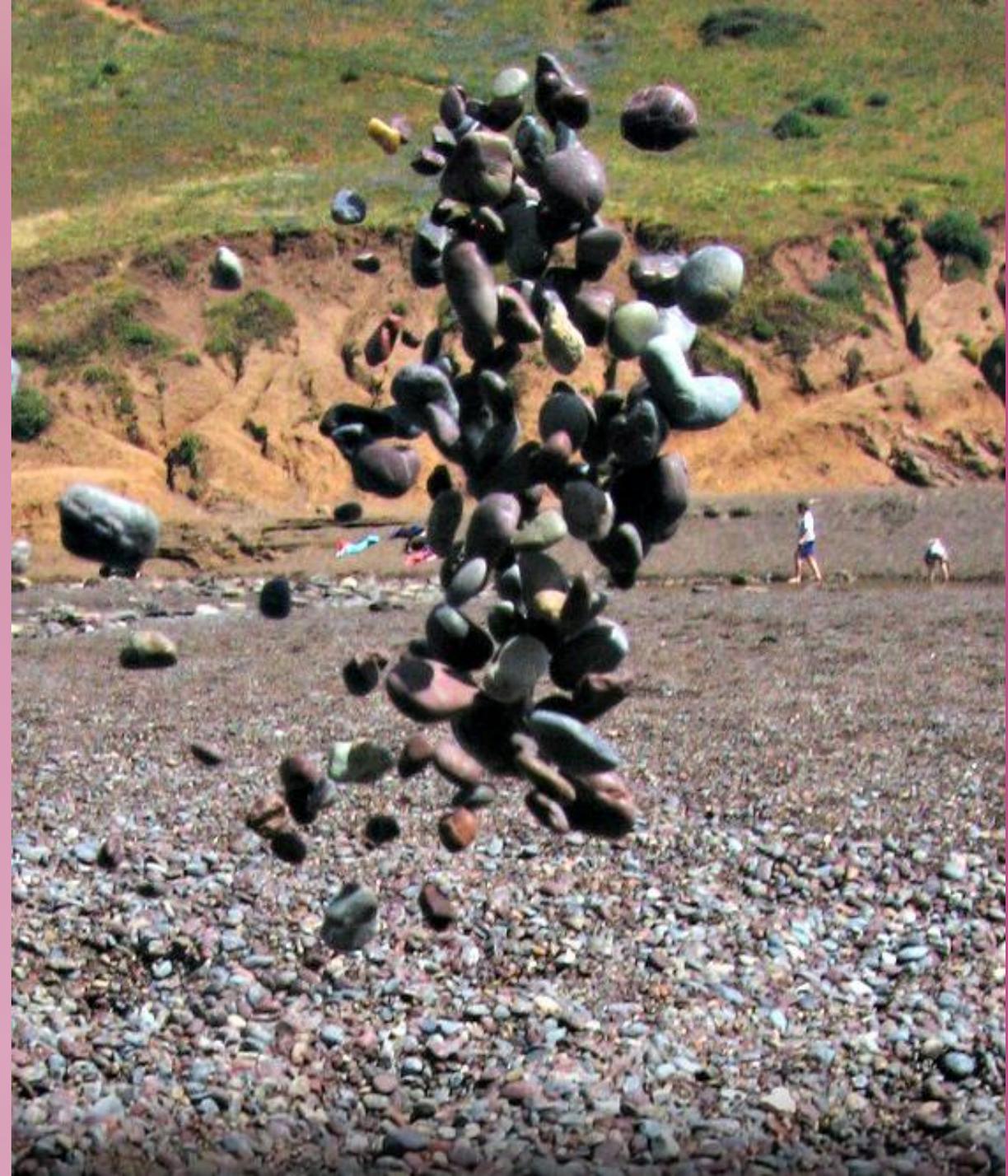
Yes, it's been done that way for ages... but is it the most efficient... is it even the most ethical way? There is always room for improvement.

Question the way you do things at home and at work.

Neuroscientists say that trying a new thing, like walking your dog via a different path, can help keep your brain sharp and can also make you feel like you're living longer. That's partly because a novel thing can slow the experience of the passage of time. Otherwise, you run the risk of going into auto-mode and not really paying attention.

Question what you hear from recruiters and hiring managers. They may paint an amazing picture of the company but do the research: talk to current and former employees. The reality might surprise you.

If you've been unemployed, underemployed, or unfulfilled at work for a long while, question why this is so. Is it entirely the fault of your family, friends, dog and marketplace dynamics—or, if we're being frank (See: **Honesty**) with ourselves, do you have more power than you think to improve your current situation?



Résumé

Yup, I went there, French accent marks and all.

But your resume doesn't have to be fancy. In fact, dirty little secret: it only needs to be good enough to get you in the door.

Sometimes a client tells me "I had a bunch of interviews, but I didn't get the job because my resume wasn't as strong as it could've been." I want to yell from the mountaintops: your resume doesn't land you the job, you do!

At best, a great resume will help you land a job interview. And then you need to wow them with your interview.

Even then, sometimes the most qualified candidate doesn't get the job, because they end up hiring internally, or the CEO's nephew gets the gig. C'est la vie.

All that said, if your resume isn't landing you any interviews, welcome to the black hole! What are you doing to dig yourself out? Ask a friend to read through your resume. Hire a **resume** writer. I know a few great ones.



Sabbaticals

Like a computer that's been on non-stop for a long time, sometimes you just need a hard reset...

Not everyone wants to (or can) take off a year (or even three months)... but perhaps you can afford to take a few weeks and do a mini-retreat... it can even be a staycation...

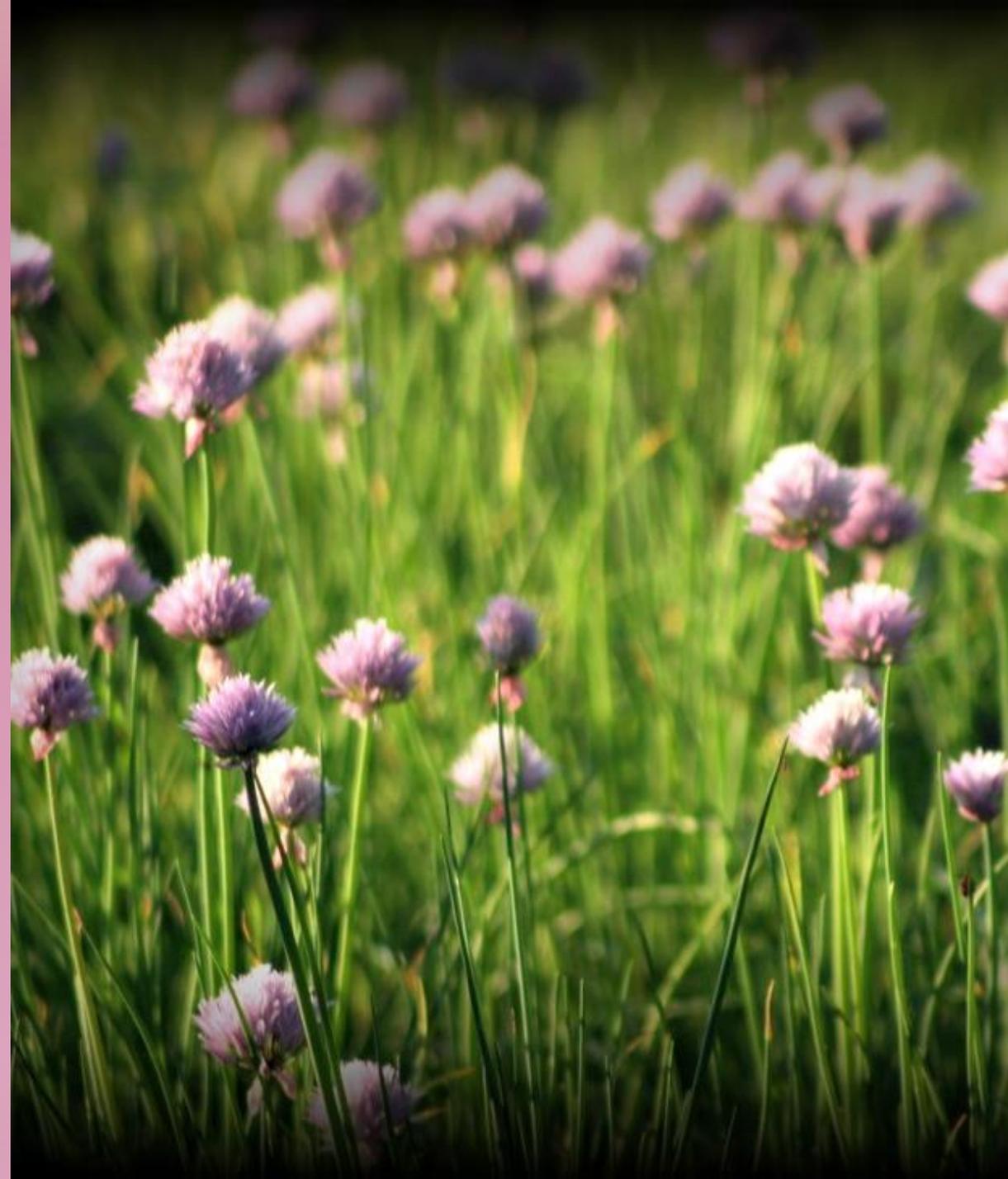
Focus on a new (or rekindled) hobby to reset the mind.

Like a crossword puzzle... sometimes your mind remembers and is sharpest when you step away from the problem.

Probably after I finish this page of the e-book, I'll walk my dog and do a crossword puzzle, and then my real workday begins (it's early morning). Between career coaching, interview prep sessions, and resume rewrites, my day fills up fast.

And as much as I love my work, and adore my amazing clients, I do take time off to recharge those batteries. This way I can be my sharpest and most energetic self for my clients. You don't need to take a super-long **sabbatical**, but one day, sooner or later, you will likely need to take some time off to make sure your mind, body and soul are good.

Burnout is terrible. Avoid it at all costs. But if you're already there, please reach out for help.



Targeting

The “spray and pray” method of job searching is rarely, if ever, successful.

Given how highly specialized most job functions are these days, positioning yourself as a generalist is (usually) not going to cut it. Sorry to burst your bubble.

If a job posting requires 8+ years of employee benefits and compensation experience, and you have “only” 6 years of that specialty, you might be better off applying to that job than a generalist HR professional who has 10 years of broad experience but doesn’t specialize in benefits / comp. and who therefore can’t speak to all the highly specific and nuanced technology, industry best practices, and trends that you can recite with your eyes closed.

Work hard to establish yourself as a specialist in a given field. Customize your resume (and LinkedIn, so there’s consistency and it doesn’t raise any flags) to align with **target** jobs. Post content about your niche. Once you’re in the interview, you can wow them with your specialized knowledge... yes, we all know most humans are actually generalists with cross-functional knowledge, multi-creative skills and diverse experiences, but unfortunately some recruiters are very linear, concrete and focused on finding specialists. So make sure your branded documents reflect your niche expertise.

If a client comes to me and insists they want three different resumes: one for sales, marketing, and one for operations, I respond quickly: do you also want to pay me 3x my rate and, on top of that, do you wish to confuse recruiters with three conflicting LinkedIn profiles? Most clients quickly “see the light.” Then we do some coaching and hard soul-searching around what they REALLY want to do, where their “zone of genius” exists... and then we can build a focused and much more effective (and usually faster/shorter) job search around that specific thing. Not easy. But it is simple.



Unity

"Shared sorrow is half sorrow; shared joy is double joy..."

Whether you're a solopreneur or a manager in a massive multi-national company, managing a business or team can sometimes feel like a lonely endeavor.

Rather than going at it alone, and avoiding the competition, it's helpful to interact with others who have been in your exact shoes (or at least in similar footwear).

"There is strength in numbers." "It takes a village." As a solopreneur, I often reach out to other career coaches, executive coaches and resume writers—not just to exchange ideas and best practices, but just to vent, or laugh, or roll our eyes at some of the wild things we've seen in our line of work.

Find your tribe. Surround yourself with some like-minded folks but, more importantly, find folks who may share some core values but will challenge your way of thinking (See **Outlook**). People whose business models or styles of management / leadership differ wildly from yours. You stand to learn the most from them, and them from you. Don't live your entire life in an echo-chamber. It's so dull that way. Challenge yourself. Spice things up.

Find your tribe. There is strength in unity. Take a group exercise class. Network with your fellow perspirers (See **Perspiration**).

Some of my clients are not just dealing with challenging career problems...they're also dealing with family problems, divorces, etc. Your community can help support you through the tough times, and you can return the favor when you're back on your feet.



Vanity

Vanity, vivacity, and verve.

On some level, you sort of have to already love yourself before you embark on a major career change. Either you are underutilized at your current job, or you're unemployed / underemployed, or you are being worked to the bone and underappreciated... either way, it's all about self-worth.

As for vanity... I'm not saying you have to be arrogant.

But there is an element of tooting your own horn on your resume, during interviews, networking chats, and beyond.

I am an introvert (becoming more of an ambivert), and many of my introverted clients struggle with self-promotion. A little bit of vanity can't hurt.

<https://westchestermagazine.com/life-style/business/networking-tips-for-introverts/>



Waves

Much like anything else in life (health, luck, the seasons), career success can also come in cyclical waves.

Are you thriving in a time of career prosperity and bounty?

Or have you been in that job rut for some time?

Is it time to get out of that rut, or are you really, really, really comfortable in that painful-yet-familiar coziness of your “sitch”?

No matter what your current circumstances are, please remember that you can always keep experimenting with your career, playing around, asking around, networking, building your network... so that the next time a new wave (opportunity) rolls along into your lap, you'll be more than ready.

Don't let your resume sit outdated, collecting dust in the nooks and crannies of your laptop... don't ignore your friends and professional network and only reach out when you need something--tend to them throughout your life and be generous always (See **Karma**).



X-factor

Honestly, I wrote this e-book just so I could have a page dedicated to “X is for xylophone”—since that’s exactly what I remember from children’s picture books.

But, since we’re on the topic of X, how about X-factor?

Do you have a unique skill or experience that is unique to you?

Do you get recognized by your boss or coworkers for this thing?

Is this **X-factor** being communicated in your resume and LinkedIn? In your interviews?

Are your friends constantly telling you that you should follow your passion in thing X or Y or Z?

Well, why aren’t you doing it? What’s stopping you, e**X**actly, besides you?

What are your e**X**cuses? List them on a piece of paper and cross them out and post them in a high-visibility area of your home as a reminder. Or crush them and toss them and forget about them and continue the status quo. The choice is up to you.



Yes(terday)

Saying "Yes" to activities (requests from family and friends) and projects or tasks (demands from your boss) out of a sense of guilt is not ideal. Saying yes to the little "busy work" can stand in the way of the bigger picture... your boss now expects you to do these things, you're enabling your boss to keep giving you more and more...

It's also an easy excuse, way too common: "I've put off my big life goal X because I'm constantly putting out fires at work, or I'm constantly running from one social engagement to another." Ok. What about it? What do you expect this little ebook to tell you that you don't already know? Be selective.

Say 'no' to what's holding you back (See **Nixing**). Demonstrate that you value your own time and know your worth. Show that you're a strong and formidable negotiator. There's something so attractive (to recruiters and prospective employers) about someone who knows their worth.

Saying no to the minutiae will allow you to say **Yes** to something new and bigger... that class you've been daydreaming about but putting off, that tough conversation you've been avoiding with your boss (or direct report, or spouse for that matter)... do it.

What you did yesterday got you to today, but if you want something drastically different in your life, you've got to change things up.

If you don't want your life to change, that is quite all right. No one is saying you need to change. But if you want your professional journey to improve, then, yes, you've got to do something different.



Zest!

Obviously, Z is for Zebra.

But it's also for Zest (See **Grit, Ire, Joy, Perspiration, X-factor**).

It's also for Zzzz's. Make sure to get rest. Good sleep hygiene helps you perform better at work, at home, during interviews, etc. Don't forget self-care. Just don't.

And if you are about to embark on a new career, may the end goal (the new job), as well as the path toward that goal (the job search and all that comes with it), be a **zest**-filled adventure!

Z is the last letter in the English alphabet.

So, with that said, let's call it a day.

If you need help with your resume, LinkedIn, or overall career goals, don't hesitate to reach out (details on the last page).

Thank you for reading and have an empowered life!

Gratefully,



A few thoughts:

Reality check: there's a lot to digest in this little ebook, but not everything may resonate with you. Take everything with a healthy grain of NaCl (salt). And if you're still feeling stuck, don't go it alone. Ask for help. Reach out to a friend. Hire a career coach. Do something. Act.

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Questions?

You can book a free, zero-obligation, no-headache consultation via the website below. Or just email me. I'm happy to lend an ear and help wherever I am able. I'm an executive resume writer, recovering (i.e., former) HR professional, and certified career coach.

Career Fixer LLC

WEBSITE: davidthefixer.com

EMAIL: david@davidthefixer.com



Thanks for reading... and have an empowered life!

CAREER
FIXER 