

Future Proof Your Career

If you are at the time in your career where you need to consider your next steps, start building the bridge to your idealised future, advises **John Fitzgerald**

The most powerful of all influencers is our mindset. But our most powerful force is often also our most limiting one. Think about your last school year. Who was the most talented and intelligent in the class? Now look up where they ended up in their careers. The most intelligent are not necessarily the most successful. The ones who will have made the greatest strides will be those who have learned to use their most powerful force – their mindset – to overcome many of life's challenges.

It is often a burning platform, like losing a job, that creates the stimulus for behaviour change. We rarely change until we need to. My experience is that people do not put enough focus on creating their own future. Somehow, they believe this is beyond their control. Instead, they depend on agents like recruiters or online job matching sites to find them work that doesn't engage them.

They fear creating their idealised future because a memory tells them not to be so stupid. Who are they to think they can make their dreams come true? If only we became as committed to pursuing our dreams as we are to dismissing them out of sight, who knows what we could achieve?

Bridge To Success

There are three core elements to building a bridge to your future career.

Structure: Describe the structure of your ideal role. This is the first element you need when you set out what you want to do next, and why. This is your vision of your idealised role.

Skillset: The second element is skillset – having the required skills to excel in



John Fitzgerald advises executives about their career strategy

your dream role. If you are serious about moving towards your ideal role, start working on developing through practice, experimentation, mentorship and learning from the best in your field.

Mindset: The third element is having the mindset to believe you will achieve your idealised future role when you have developed the skills you require. Unfortunately, the majority of people give up as it feels like too much hard work.

The greatest challenge with the future of work is that we don't see change coming as soon as we should. A century or so of industrialisation and routine manual and cognitive work has frozen our minds to become lazy. We prefer being told the answer rather than having to work out the answer ourselves and come up with

alternative solutions. But we can unlock our fixed mindsets and become free.

The fixed mindset is lazy. The growth mindset searches for new solutions and seeks to make new connections in the brain. This is much harder to do at first and requires practice. We have the ability to build new connections in our brains to find new answers and ask new questions.

Aversion To Change

Changing your mind is much harder than you may think. We all have set rituals, habits, comfort zones that we have created for ourselves over time. To effect transformational change, you need to let go of everything you may have been associated with in the past. There is a certain safety in what you know, so letting go is difficult to do without a safety net to protect us.

In the future of work, we will be required to take more risks and let go more often. We will not know for certain if it will work out or not. This new world of work requires us to create our own futures. We have the power to influence our future, but we previously ceded our power to the corporates we believed offered us job security.

In exploring new opportunities, we need to let go, but this is often where the inner voice of fear kicks in. This is where we become vulnerable. When we do not have complete knowledge of something, we fear we may get it wrong and appear foolish. When we do not have control anymore, it is because we have let go.

In attempting anything new, we create new neural pathways in the brain. Visualising the experience over and over again strengthens the emotional memory just as exercising strengthens the body. Your career journey is one of sensing the next chapter and increasing your knowledge about areas you never had the time to explore before.

If you are at the time in your career where you need to consider your next steps, start building the bridge to your idealised future role because it takes time.

Your Second Half

The first half of your career I see as being from age 20 to 44, and the second half as the period from 45 to 70. I see many people work hard in the first half without any thoughts for the second half. This leaves them ill prepared for change.

In my experience of working with corporate organisations, I have seen the reality of the tap on the shoulder to leave

when employees become too expensive in their mid-fifties. As people's lives are turned upside down by the change in career and financial circumstances, it can be a time of great stress. Alternatively, it can be a time of opportunity if they ready themselves to take advantage.

If you have any inkling there may be change ahead in your organisation, get busy working on your plan B while continuing to work full-time in your day job. Embellish your CV with new internal projects before you move on so it's fresh with current achievements. Accept it is just a matter of time before the changes catch up with you and ready yourself for the next chapter.

Your next move may mean you earn less money for a while, but if you focus on skill building you will become more valuable in the long run. It may not make sense to leave your current employer without a severance package, but keep active in building your brand in the external marketplace.

Three Year Projects

Whatever your career history to date and whatever age you are now, it is not your current job title, salary grade or length of service that will make you valuable in the future. It will be the value of your current skillset in the open marketplace and having a growth mindset that sees change as a natural cycle.

See your career lifespan from now as a series of different three-year projects that will enhance your mind, spirit and career. These projects, roles or jobs may be within one organisation or with a series of new employers. The key is that you are

always learning, so think about your future career as a pipeline of opportunities to grow, rather than a period where you become old and stale.

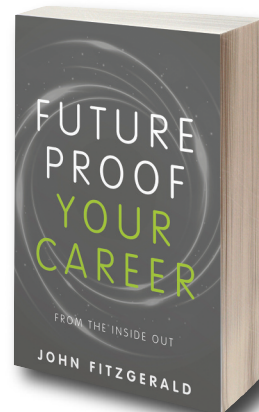
The end of your working life should now be more of a gradual winding down period on your terms rather than one final retirement day. Work should bring you enjoyment and fulfilment, and if it doesn't right now, then hopefully you will have learned in this book how to create opportunities to make it so.

Realignment sounds better to me than retirement. Realignment of your time to spend more of it on leisure pursuits and giving back, and less working to earn financial reward. The amount of time you can realign is linked to your financial readiness to realign.

I have never met anyone during my coaching career who I didn't believe had the potential to achieve greater things. The only competitor in your field is your own hardware and software. AI and automation will change the world, but you have the power within you to change your world.

*Adapted from
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*Author John
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