

## THE 5 KEY CAREER MANAGEMENT SKILLS

### Five fundamental skills to help you get the most out of your career.

They help you not only make the most of your career opportunities but also to create your own opportunities and develop the resilience required to navigate your career on an ongoing basis.

The skills are well cited in academic literature, notably Mitchell, Levin and Krumboltz (1999)<sup>1</sup> and we too can attest to their importance as we observe those we coach navigate the complex landscape that is career development.

These skills can be developed through both mindset and practice: making the decision (mindset) to approach your life-long career development in this way, and then finding ways to practise and build them.

When considering the five skills, we encourage you to adopt what is known as a “growth mindset” which says skills can be learned and developed, rather than a “fixed mindset” that says we are what we are born with. (See more on this from Carol Dweck at the end of this article.)

So, the big question is, what are the five skills?

### CURIOSITY – EXPLORING NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Instead of “indecision”, think about it as “open-mindedness”. Or an “attitude of curiosity”. This does not mean you just sit back and rely totally on chance. It is a combination of examining one’s career and also being open to opportunities.

For one of our clients, this is how curiosity came into play.

“CareerGrow.Coach re-ignited my curiosity. Since then, I have rediscovered my love of learning by watching TED talks and doing SkillShare classes. And I’ve discovered a tangible knock-on effect. The more curious I am, the more I want to learn. The more I learn, the more I want to (and do) seek out new opportunities to find and flex new mental muscles. And so it goes on, an empowering and enriching cycle of being curious and open, growing, and becoming more comfortable with change.” – CareerGrower

How would you rate your curiosity out of 5? If it’s lower than might be helpful, try the following.

### Strategy to build curiosity

Identify three times this week where you think you know what someone is talking about. This could be family or a colleague, and it might be something they talk about regularly. Keep your mind open and ask curious questions – questions that begin with what or how tend to open up the conversation ... and your mind. Even when you are practising, curiosity must be genuine and that’s where the mindset piece comes in. Showing real curiosity in someone or something is one of the surest ways to strengthen a relationship. Then note what happens. To you. To them. To the relationship.

**Learn more.** Watch. A TED talk from TED’s Curiosity playlists at <https://www.ted.com/topics/curiosity>.

Read. ‘Curious: The Desire to Know and Why Your Future Depends On It’ by Alan Leslie (2015).

## **PERSISTENCE – EXERTING EFFORT DESPITE SETBACKS.**

Just like day to day life, career exploration will throw up challenges. Persistence allows us to keep on working through barriers and apparent difficulties. Persistence can be measured as the time invested in staying on task, not just “hard work”. Being clear on what you want helps you persevere when things become tough, or even just a little cloudy.

“CareerGrow has been invaluable. As a freelancer, having a career GPS has helped me remain crystal clear about how each of my projects aligns to my needs and wants. And knowing why I’m doing what I’m doing has helped me persevere through the peaks and troughs.” – CareerGrower

How would you rate your persistence out of 5? If it’s lower than might be helpful, try the following.

### **Strategy to build persistence**

For one week, notice each time you are working on a complex problem to solve or a knotty issue to resolve and you reach a block or wall where you think “I’ve had enough” or “I can’t do this anymore”. Set yourself the challenge to do just five minutes more. See what happens. After a week, apply the same technique to anything to do with your career exploration or development – just when you are ready to stop, do 5 minutes more. We know that the brain grows new neural pathways, so it’s like building a muscle. The more we do it, the more we can do it.

**Learn more.** Watch. [‘Grit: The Power of Passion & Perseverance’ TED talk by Angela Lee Duckworth.](#)

Read. ‘The Art of Persistence: Stop Quitting, Ignore Shiny Objects and Climb Your Way to Success’ by Michal Stawicki (2015).

## **OPTIMISM – VIEWING NEW OPPORTUNITIES AS POSSIBLE AND ATTAINABLE.**

Optimism can be defined as expecting the best possible outcome from any given situation. It thus reflects a belief that future conditions will work out for the best.

“The CareerGrow process opened my eyes to new career options. I felt clearer, steadier, and more positive about my future, and was excited to find opportunities that aligned with my new career goals.

Two years later, I’m still excited as I continue to try new things. It’s not blind optimism – quite the contrary, it’s a kind of playful optimism. CareerGrow helped me see the possibilities while remaining centred – it’s a nexus between hopefulness and preparedness.”  
– CareerGrower

How would you rate your positivity out of 5? If it’s lower than might be helpful, try the following.

### **Strategy to build optimism**

Barbara Frederickson talks about how resilient people will find some silver lining in even the worst of situations. While they certainly see and acknowledge the bad, they will still manage to also see the good. They’ll say, “well at least I don’t have this other problem”. It’s not denying the negative but allowing it to sit side by side with a positive. During the course of one week, each time a negative thing happens, look for the positive. (See your local GP if you have low optimism and a strong sense of helplessness.)

**Learn more.** Google it. ‘Learned Optimism – Martin Seligman’.

## FLEXIBILITY – BEING OPEN TO NEW OPTIONS.

Being flexible helps us to be open to new options, to see things we may never have entertained if we were one-eyed about what might be available to us.

“I more readily embrace rather than resist change now. CareerGrow distilled my many thoughts into a list of ‘essentials’. So, I feel liberated to think braver and explore different options, knowing I have my GPS if I ever feel lost or overwhelmed.” – CareerGrower

How would you rate your flexibility out of 5? If it’s lower than might be helpful, try the following.

### Strategy to build flexibility

Given that change is inevitable, you are more than likely to experience some during the course of one week. When something doesn’t go according to plan – play a game. Ask yourself how many different options there are for a Plan B? Be as creative as you can and see how many you can come up with.

## RISK TAKING – TAKING CALCULATED STEPS TOWARDS GOALS.

This is probably the hardest skill for people to embrace because it sounds scary, and people tend to say either “I am a risk taker” or “I am not”. We remind you of the value of adopting a growth mindset here. Risk taking means taking calculated steps towards goals that you have set for yourself in the short, medium and longer term.

“While doing CareerGrow I moved into freelance work; a calculated risk, backed by legwork, savings, a very supportive partner, optimism, and curiosity. I’ve not looked back yet. I’m better with uncertainty and feel more resilient and positive. I’m confident saying “yes” much more (thanks to my GPS) and am learning that passion indeed follows action!” – CareerGrower

How would you rate your ability to take risks, out of 5? If it’s lower than might be helpful, try the following.

## Strategy to build risk taking

When presented with an opportunity to take a risk, ask yourself the following questions.

- What’s the worst thing that can happen?
- What would I do if it did happen?
- What’s at risk if I don’t take this opportunity?

**Learn more.** Read. ‘Take the Risk’ by Ben Carson M.D. and Gregg Lewis (2007).

### More on Growth and Fixed mindsets

“One of the most basic beliefs we carry about ourselves, Dweck found in her research, has to do with how we view and inhabit what we consider to be our personality. A “fixed mindset” assumes that our character, intelligence, and creative ability are static givens which we can’t change in any meaningful way, and success is the affirmation of that inherent intelligence, an assessment of how those givens measure up against an equally fixed standard; striving for success and avoiding failure at all costs become a way of maintaining the sense of being smart or skilled. A “growth mindset,” on the other hand, thrives on challenge and sees failure not as evidence of unintelligence but as a heartening springboard for growth and for stretching our existing abilities. Out of these two mindsets, which we manifest from a very early age, springs a great deal of our behavior, our relationship with success and failure in both professional and personal contexts, and ultimately our capacity for happiness.” – Maria Popova, 2014.

**Extract from ‘Fixed vs. Growth: The Two Basic Mindsets That Shape Our Lives’** by Maria Popova, Brain Pickings (2014). Full article available at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/29/carol-dweck-mindset/>

Reference<sup>1</sup>: Mitchell, K., Levin, A., & Krumboltz, J. (1999). Planned Happenstance: Constructing Unexpected Career Opportunities. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77(2), pp. 115-124.