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Mastering Your Career Objectives: A Personal Journey

Setting clear career objectives can feel overwhelming. Where do you want to go? What path should you take to get there? And—perhaps most importantly—whose version of success are you chasing? I know because I've been there, caught in the churn of expectations, unsure which goals belonged to me and which I was pursuing simply because they sounded "right", and then I found myself in 2023 feeling "stuck".

So, with the help of a professional coach who guided me through a mix of personal exploration (such as understanding my values and passions) and self-mastery (like developing emotional intelligence and resilience) and a little help from neuroscience, I learned how to set intentional, meaningful career goals that aligned with who I am, not who I thought I *should* be.

Here's what I discovered along the way—and how it might help you if you are thinking about setting or resetting your career goals in 2025.

Redefining success on your terms

My career goals were shaped by what I thought was expected of me for a long time. I climbed ladders without stopping to ask whether the view from the top would even be worth it. It wasn't until I started working with the coach that I paused to ask the all-important question: *What do I want from my career?*

That simple shift in perspective was profound. Defining your goals isn't about accepting external benchmarks but uncovering what truly excites and fulfills you. And, sometimes, that means letting go of outdated definitions of success.

I have a question for you. When did you last ask yourself whether your goals align with your values and passions? This could be a good place to start if it's been a while.

Identifying (and silencing) your saboteurs

No discussion of career growth is complete without addressing the inner critic that lives rent-free in all of us. Most of you know the voice I'm talking about—the one that whispers, *You're not good enough*, or *You'll fail*, so why bother?

Through coaching, I identified my own "saboteurs." These weren't external barriers holding me back; they were internal self-limiting beliefs designed to keep me "safe." My saboteurs took the shape of procrastination. I was so focused on chasing more qualifications or certificates and completing new projects that I thought I needed to do to be ready that I was stuck in inertia. Our brains are wired for survival, not success. When faced with uncertainty, our minds often protect us by steering us toward comfort zones like procrastination, even if those zones no longer serve us.



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Here's where neuroscience comes into play. When I learned that self-limiting beliefs are essentially patterns my brain created to shield me from risk and discomfort, I realised something critical:

If I could identify and reframe those patterns, I could retrain my brain to support my career aspirations instead of holding myself back.

The power of a plan (and the science behind it)

Once I understood what I wanted and addressed the mental blocks, I created a plan to bring my career objectives to life. Neuroscience played a fascinating role here, too.

Our brains constantly scan the environment for information that aligns with our beliefs or focus. This phenomenon, known as the Reticular Activating System (RAS), helps us filter out irrelevant noise and zero in on what matters most. For me, having a detailed plan with actionable goals was a game-changer. Once I knew what I was working toward, my brain effectively "knew" what to look for—and opportunities that aligned with my goals started to stand out like never before. It's like when you are thinking about buying a red car; you suddenly begin to see a lot of red cars on the road. It's because you have prompted your brain to look for them.

Top tip!

Try to be as specific as possible when setting your objectives. Vague goals like *"I want to grow in my career"* are more challenging to act on and easier for your brain to dismiss. Instead, try something concrete: *"I aim to gain a leadership role in marketing within the next two years by completing a certification and leading a team project."*

Investing in self-mastery

This step cannot be overstated. Setting career objectives isn't just about defining where you want to go—it's about becoming someone who can get there.

I invested significant time in self-mastery. This meant developing self-belief, and I promise you that this skill can be built and developed when you work on it.

I worked on my emotional intelligence, time management skills, and handling setbacks resiliently because the world of self-employment can be pretty brutal. It was a marathon, not a sprint, but the personal growth I experienced along the way made me more confident and capable.

Another question for you?

What's one skill or area of personal growth you've been avoiding but know would make a big difference in your career?

Putting in the work

Here's where many people struggle. You can have the clearest vision, the most brilliant goals, and the best plans—but none of that matters unless you *do the work*.

Achieving my career objectives meant putting myself out there, doing things like this, writing this blog and sharing my journey and my vulnerabilities. Saying yes to challenges I once would have avoided, seeking feedback that stung but improved me, and sticking to my goals even when progress felt slow.

It wasn't glamorous work, but it was worth it. And here's something I've learned from both personal experience and observing others on similar journeys:

The gap between where you are and where you want to be is rarely about talent; it's about consistent effort.

Final thoughts—and your first step

Setting meaningful career objectives is profoundly personal work. It involved redefining success on my terms, confronting my inner saboteurs, leveraging neuroscience to rewire my mindset, creating a plan, and committing to daily action.

But here's the thing—it's not only possible; it's gratifying.

Take some time today to reflect on what you truly want from your career. What does success mean to you, and what steps will you take to get there? You might be surprised by the clarity and motivation this exercise brings.

If you need some coaching guidance to help define your career plan drop message me naomi.thompson@odelsolutions.co.uk I'm here to learn and grow with you.