

A GUIDE TO
REDISCOVERING AND UPSKILLING YOURSELF

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ROBERT WALTERS

A guide to rediscovering and upskilling yourself

As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, businesses have acted quickly, requiring employees to work from home to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus. While we don't yet know the full impact of COVID-19, companies not only face the sudden need to effectively manage business-wide remote working arrangements, many have also found themselves in the positions where they need to implement employee pay cuts, or furlough and lay off staff to minimise operational costs.

Whether your job has been affected, this crisis presents a good opportunity to take a hard look at yourself – your strengths, skills passion and goals – and in turn, revisit your career journey. Where did you come from, where are you now, and where should you head to next?

Experts at Robert Walters and our friends at just add water, have devised a guide for anyone to rediscover their career and upskill themselves. We encourage everyone to make full use of the pockets of time available during this period of social distancing to recharge themselves, refresh their career plans, and hone their craft for a better tomorrow. Even as we are forced to adapt to a new way of living and working, we can always take back control of our lives and careers by rediscovering and upskilling ourselves.

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Rediscovering your career: The first step in upskilling

While establishing a clear understanding of yourself can be a tricky existential question, determining it remains crucial as a basis for any future personal or career plan. If you have been in the workforce for some time, rediscovering yourself and updating your career roadmap once every few years can help reaffirm your professional direction, especially during a crisis, and decide on potential tweaks or even pivots, as your life and career stages change.

Grab your laptop or a pen and paper, find a quiet corner, and spend some time to think and ask yourself four overarching questions. Refer to the [worksheet on page 7](#) for a helpful visual to guide you through the process.

1. Who do I want to be, and why?

Crystallising the purpose and intent of your professional career is the first and also, the hardest step. When you think of your career or even your life, what are the images that surface in your mind? Why do you do what you do? What drove you in deciding your past career moves and your daily activities? Think back to what made you choose your current career path – has it been all you thought it was supposed to be? What was the most defining moment of your career so far? Have there been any changes to your perspective and motivations? Do you still look forward to working at your current role, company, or industry?

When answering these questions, don't restrict yourself to your professional work – think about your interests and activities outside of work as well. Often, the meaning we find in our after-work hobbies can be translated to our jobs and workplaces too. For instance, if you enjoy baking and hosting parties for family and friends, why not consider being part of or setting up an internal employee engagement committee to better connect your colleagues and foster a friendly company culture?

2. Where am I now?

Taking stock of your current reality sets a foundation for you to work on. Look back at your career and update yourself (and your CV and social media profiles) on your strengths, weaknesses, skillsets, certifications, values, likes, and dislikes. It is important to realise that our perceptions of reality might differ from others. Tackle this issue by penning down what you think comes natural and



effortless to you, and seeking the honest opinion of trusted family members, friends, colleagues, or your professional recruitment consultant. Again, don't restrict yourself to work-based evaluations; commitments outside of work can provide you with valuable transferable skills too.

3. Where do I want to be, and by when?

Once you have a clearer idea of your career goals and current situation, work out your desired end state and timeline to get there. Think about how much longer you can realistically work for, and calculate backwards to figure out the amount of time you have left. Be open to exploring options that might not directly lead you towards your career goal, for example a horizontal career move or a change in location. The experience you gain through such roles sometimes places you in a better position for future progressions.

What if you remain unsure of your desired destination? Don't worry. It may be counterproductive to plan too far ahead for your career path – not only does it restrict you from being flexible and adaptable to different circumstances, the vast uncertainty of your future might cause you to freeze up in fear. Instead, steadily and methodically plan your career moves one step at a time.

4. How do I get there?

The final stage is to set out your own career journey plan to get to your desired end state. What are the practical actions you can take now to head towards your imagined finish line? We suggest first identifying the areas you

need to develop and upskill yourself, and listing out the resources you have on hand to evaluate if any are suitable to be tapped into. During times of crisis such as the COVID-19 outbreak, your government may have specially ramped up upskilling and career opportunities to bolster faltering economies – make sure you are fully aware of any such special schemes and utilise those that are relevant.

Before you go

These four macro questions seek to help you rediscover yourself and your career journey. Even after completing this exercise, take time to regularly reflect on your progress and career to further tweak and perfect your plans. Lastly, keep in mind that it is impossible to always be doing purposeful work that leads to your planned career goals. Studies have shown that we experience meaning in our work through brief, quick moments,¹ so don't be overly hard on yourself if some days just seem to lead nowhere. Take a breather and remember to have fun while you traverse your career journey.

The [worksheet on page 7](#) encapsulates the journey that we are on. Use it as a companion visual to help you rediscover your career.

¹Catherine Bailey and Adrian Madden, "[What Makes Work Meaningful – Or Meaningless.](#)" MIT Sloan Management Review (2016).



The journey that we are on



1 **Current reality**
Where am I now?

2 **Purpose and Intent**
Who do I want to be? Why?

3 **Desired Future**
Where do I want to be?

4 How do I get there?

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5 questions to help you identify areas for upskilling

Working from home can be a good opportunity to not only re-evaluate your current career direction, but also implement concrete actions to upskill yourself. Doing so will not only ensure you emerge from this crisis better equipped with necessary skills to make the most of any opportunity, it will allow you to take further steps on your overall career trajectory.

Keeping your long-term career goals in mind, here are five questions to help you identify relevant areas for upskilling during this period of uncertainty:

1. What am I interested in learning more about?

Getting started can be the toughest part of any journey, so it's good to begin with something you have always been interested in. Perhaps you're a HR professional with a strong interest in coding but never had the opportunity to learn it; or you might be interested in public speaking even though your job doesn't require you to do so.

List all the areas you have an interest in and do an online search to find resources you can tap into. Start with something that calls out to you – this can be a course, workshop, webinar, or podcast. Again, this doesn't have to be directly related to your work; you'll never know when these additional professional skills will come in handy.

2. What will make me shine at work?

Now that you've gotten started, keep the momentum going. For many, the best way to do so is to learn something directly relevant to your work, so you can easily see the immediate payoffs of your learning efforts. Identify areas of your work you're already good at, explore what will make you stand out further, and focus your efforts on improving yourself within these areas.

For a content marketer, this could be brushing up and keeping updated on the latest SEO and SEM trends to make sure your content is not only engaging but is also reaching out to the right audiences. While you may not become a specialist in just a few months, these skills will broaden your perspective and allow you to consider wider aspects of your work.

3. What will make me less frustrated at work?

Upskilling doesn't just have to be about learning new things – it can be about re-learning the basics too. Tackle aspects of your work you struggle with by taking some time to think about what frustrates you the most every day. Is it your overflowing inbox, or your ever-growing to-do list? Is it spending large amounts of time on tedious administrative tasks, or perhaps communicating effectively with others?

Once you've identified the 'weak links' in your daily work, find ways to improve these areas. This could include reaching out to a colleague to find out how they complete their administrative tasks quickly (they may have secret shortcuts!) or reading recommended articles on how you can manage your time more effectively.

4. What will help me develop a competitive advantage outside my job?

Even if you see yourself staying at your current role for the long-term, your career goals should not be tied to your job and company. In the long-run, what do you see yourself doing – and what are the skills needed for you to work towards your goals?

If you're a developer but have plans to become a manager in future, you will need more than technical skills to land the desired role. For instance, you will need to possess leadership skills, the ability to communicate across teams

and stakeholders, as well as manage multiple project timelines. By developing these soft skills that many companies perceive are lacking in technical professionals, you'll eventually find yourself with an advantage over your competitors, be it for a promotion for an internal role, or for a role in a different company.

5. Am I thinking holistically?

While it's good to have specific upskilling areas to work on, also make sure you're considering the bigger picture, and you're not leaving out any other opportunities for improvement.

Evaluate whether you are too focused on the soft skills and not enough on the hard skills, or vice versa. Are you exploring all the resources that you can be tapping into, or mostly just relying on a single approach, such as webinars? Are you challenging yourself enough – or perhaps challenging yourself too much such that it's unsustainable in the long run?

Upskilling yourself is a long and continuous journey, so it's best to make sure it's sustainable, personally interesting, and provides growth in various aspects of your professional life.





Resources to tap into for upskilling

After establishing a clearer understanding of yourself and your career journey, and identifying areas for upskilling, it's time to explore resources that will help you level up. The almost limitless number of learning resources available online can make eyes glaze over with indecision. To help you get started on improving yourself personally and career-wise, we have put together a selection of upskilling resources for you to easily tap into.

1. Online courses

Undertaking professional development e-learning classes is one of the most direct and simple ways to upskill yourself. Besides Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) such as [Coursera](#), [edX](#), and [FutureLearn](#), universities like [Harvard](#), [Stanford](#), [Yale](#) have dedicated sections on their own sites to list free, available online modules for anyone willing to learn. Looking for targeted or platform-specific learning? Try out [Microsoft Learn](#) or [Facebook Blueprint](#). Others such as [LinkedIn Learning](#) and [Google Digital Garage](#) aggregate a whole host of both in-house and external courses for you to choose from.

The beauty of signing up for online courses is that there is no mandatory commitment on the level of involvement or participation. Looking for an interesting topic to learn on the side-lines? Hop into one of the many bite-sized modules to watch several quick videos or complete a mini quiz. On the other hand, if you're seeking an in-depth professional certification to boost your career, you can choose to register for paid courses. Check with your manager if your company has access to a training budget you can utilise.

These will allow you to enrol in different linked modules, actively participate in in-class activities, exercises and tests with human feedback, and eventually receive a certified stamp of approval from a recognised university or course provider. It all depends on your learning interest and requirements.

2. Career advice

If you're looking for career-specific actions that you can implement right from the get-go, why not take a look at relevant career advice articles? From government-linked sources to popular business magazines like [Fast Company](#), [Business Insider, Inc.](#), and [Harvard Business Review](#), these sources all offer to keep you abreast of the latest industry data and happenings while providing key career boosting insights.

At Robert Walters, we tap into our expert professional recruitment consultants to curate useful career and hiring tips for managers and executives alike. During major upheavals such as the widespread remote working measures and economic uncertainties due to a global COVID-19 environment, why not [start preparing yourself for a new job](#)? Easy and quick first steps such as taking time to [update and review your CV](#), [polish your LinkedIn profile](#), [crafting an outstanding personal brand statement](#), and [practising your interview skills](#) can help better position you for new and greater opportunities when the market recovers.

3. Visual and auditory add-ons

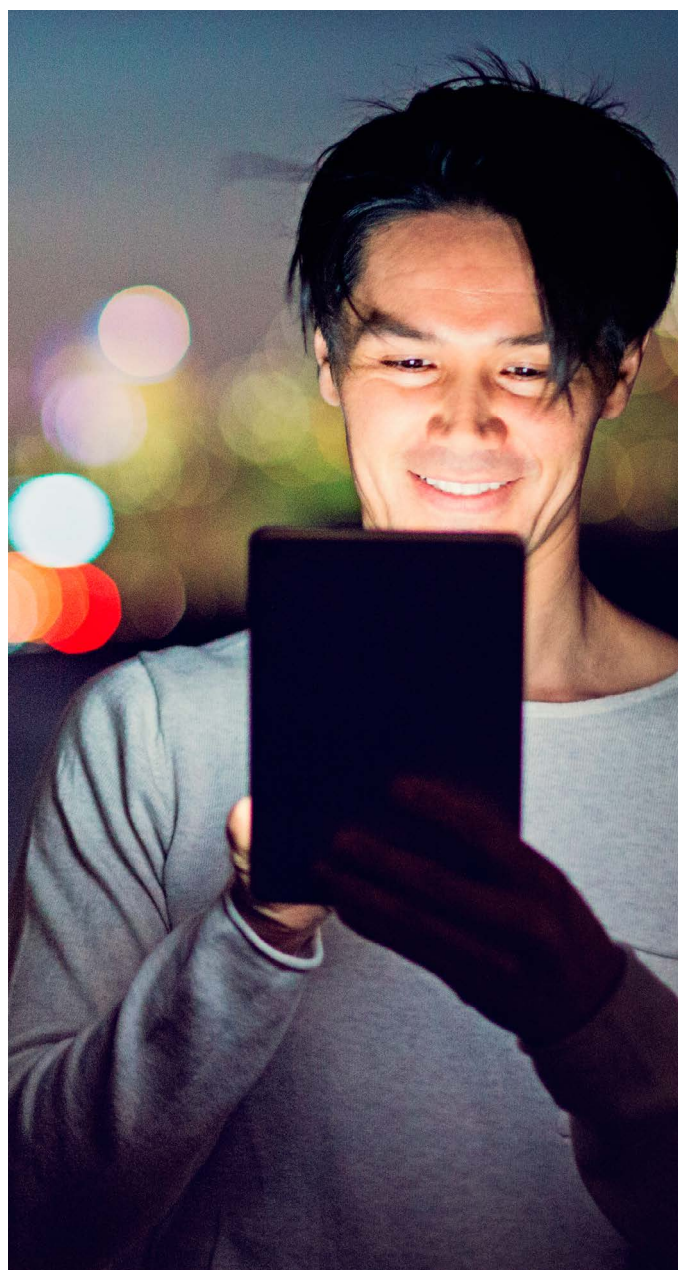
Sometimes we just don't want to be staring at yet another long page of text. Take a break and switch to other digital tools and platforms for your learning needs. Check out popular [webinars](#), hop into different Facebook or LinkedIn live sessions by career coaches, join in a conversation and network with other professionals in online social media groups, search for relevant career topics on YouTube, or listen to your favourite topical podcasts and [TED talks](#). The great thing about using these platforms is that almost all of them are bite-sized and available on your mobile, so you can literally upskill on the go, even if that means doing so while you're exercising, minding the kids, or just relaxing in the bath tub.

4. Personal well-being

Levelling up doesn't just have to be about your professional growth. It pays to devote time to boost your own physical, emotional and mental health as well, especially in light of the global COVID-19 outbreak. Besides your usual routine, why not take the opportunity to pick up activities that you have always wanted to try. Focus on regular exercise, be it [yoga at home](#) or a short run outdoors. Eat healthily and consistently – take a full break away from your

work during scheduled mealtimes. Keep to your planned work hours and stay away from working during your downtime. Reach out and communicate often and emphatically with your colleagues, extended family members, and friends – ask how they are doing outside of work. Listen to your favourite music and podcasts in the comfort of your home. Try mediating or journaling and practicing mindfulness during quiet moments, even if you think you don't need them – a good starting point is signing up for a free online meditation class or simply downloading an app or watching popular videos on it.

Looking for additional guidance and resources for upskilling? View the [webinar session](#) by Robert Walters and just add water. Additionally, remember to refer to the [worksheet on page 7](#) to pen down your career rediscovery process.



Looking ahead and reconfiguring your career

During this uncertain time, individuals have had to pivot to face unexpected business arrangements, economic conditions, and changing skills requirements. While some are pro-actively embracing this situation as an opportunity to rediscover their career paths and upskill themselves for greater prospects, others are unsure of how to proceed. Rediscovering and upskilling yourself need not be difficult if you leverage on the right questions and tools to re-establish your career roadmap, figure out the necessary skills, and tap into relevant resources to get you to your goals. It's never too late to start upskilling yourself for a better tomorrow.

Contact us

Rediscovering and upskilling yourself and your career doesn't come without its challenges, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with the Robert Walters team for help and advice on improving your career profile and implementing the next step of your career journey.



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For more leadership, cultural and career development advice, get in touch with just add water.

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