

Identifying and sharpening your insights

Your insights are the keys to opportunity. If you can bring a fresh, compelling perspective in an interview, a video or a meeting, you capture attention. You show the other that you know their world and that you have something to offer. Your confidence in your value grows.

What is an insight?

In the context of professional identity, an insight is a fresh perspective on a recognised issue or problem, that adds value by seeing the challenge in a new and fresh way – hence leading to better solutions for everyone involved.

For clarity, an insight is NOT:

- A subjective opinion, e.g. “I believe in a sustainable future”
- A solution, or proposed solution, though it may be the foundation of a solution
- Your methodology, though it may be part of that
- A statement of how you can help, though the conversation will often go there

Examples of Insights (from different domains)

“Hybrid working is creating new sources of stress for many people. So, any initiative about wellbeing needs to take account of new ways of working.”

“The content is less than 30% of any message. The imagery, tone-of-voice, language and emotive components are far more significant, in terms of the impact that the message has.”

“In the age of longevity, roles and careers change. So career-development is not just about preparing for the next role; it’s about being valued for who you are, whatever role you are doing.”

“Self-esteem is usually conditional on behaviour and performance. Self-worth, on the other hand, is a loyal state of unconditional friendship with self, no matter what’s going on.”

No matter where you are in your career – even if you are still a student – you have insights.

The difficulty is that we often don’t see them! Just as it’s hard to see our own face (or to cut our own hair), it’s often hard to see the real value that we bring.

While insights are often the product of your experience, you can also craft insights from the experience of others. This is particularly useful for students and young professionals.

Examples:

“Almost every job can now be augmented by the use of AI... but only if you know how to frame the questions that chatbots like ChatGPT can answer.”

“The key to success on social media is not content, it’s knowing how to build connections”



Five Ways to Identity Insights

#1: Notice the perspective you are bringing in day-to-day conversations. Do you naturally see things from the perspective of the customer or user? Do you spot evolution from the past to the future? Are you the person who notices the energy of the team? For what do people turn to you all the time, and why? Can you formulate these into insights like: *“It’s important that we see things from the perspective of tomorrow, not just today: what will this situation be in 3 year’s time?”*

#2: Look back over previous assignments: how did you add value? Most of us can readily think of problems that we solved. So what perspective did you bring that solved the problem? Are you the person who brings a detailed trace of transactions, or spots megatrends in data? Do you resolve conflict by refocusing everyone on common goals? Can you therefore craft insights like: *“It’s not just enough to have skills and competence: it takes dedication and commitment to...”*

#3: Ask people what they found most useful: particularly at the end of meetings, even interviews. Most of us have difficulty spotting our own insights. By asking people what they found most useful, I will hear things like: *“That question you asked about the future... we need to pay more attention to that.”*

#4: Notice the pitfalls you see other people falling into all the time. This is a very rich source for insights, wherever you are in your career. If you are notice that people repeatedly ignore something—and pay the price—then what is your insight?

#5: Where were you the first (or only) person to solve the problem? What perspective allowed you to do that?

So how do you know your insight is really insightful?

There is a simple test...they write it down!

Distinction: to be effective, your insight does not necessarily need to be wholly original. What’s more important is that it be **useful** – that your perspective is relevant to them and their challenges.

Benefits of Insights

When we start communicating in terms of insights, rather than in terms of our history / expertise / job title / qualifications / talents etc, all sort of remarkable things start happening:

- You build **credibility** with potential clients and employers
- You feel **energised** and more **confident**, moving beyond the anxiety of “Imposter Syndrome”
- In practice, insights often act as a filter: separating whom you can work well with, from those that **do not share your values** or your approach.
- Other people can share your insights, which empowers them to **open doors for you**.
- When work comes your way, you are on a strong basis for **negotiation**.

If you can turn your strengths and talents into insights, you are demonstrating **self-worth in action**. In this way, you have a strong basis on which to **be seen and valued**.

Further Resources

Download the first chapter of the book “The Self-Worth Safari”: how to clarify and deepen self-worth, particularly when going through transition.

Webinars on self-worth and professional identity

Book a call with me to discuss individual professional identity challenges, to explore in-house programs for your team, or to develop as a Professional Identity Facilitator.

