

Professional Identity in challenging times



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Current Forces of Change

Marketplace (External Forces):

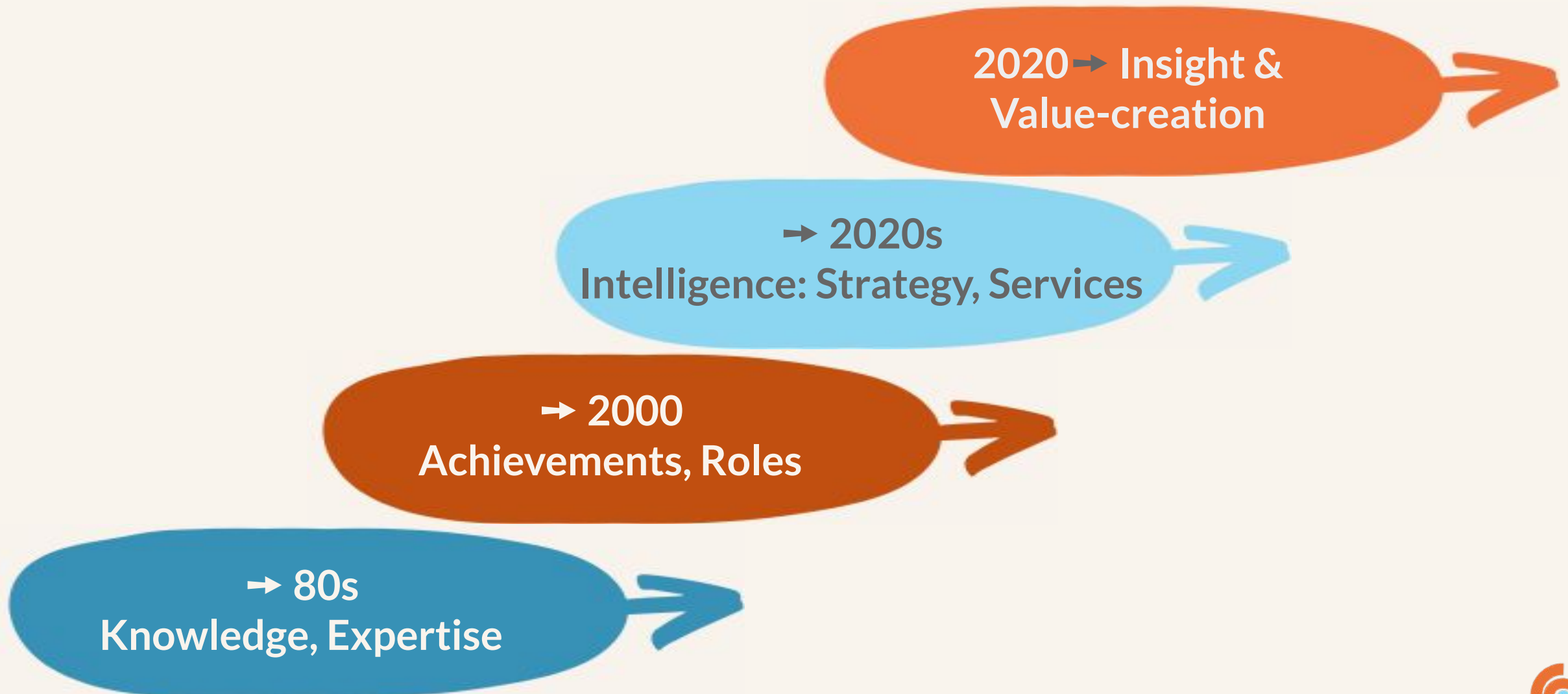
- Waves of change and reorganisation
- Virtual- / hybrid-working
- AI and technology disruptors
- Shifting demand, markets, supply-chains

Personal (Internal & Cultural Forces):

- Search for meaning & purpose
- Longer working lives = more transitions
- Geographical and lifestyle aspirations
- Self-expression



Evolution of Professional Identity



Sample identity #1: Development of Key Talent

Context

“With hybrid working, the challenges of retaining key talent are greater than ever...

Issues

... with spiralling salaries, high replacement cost, disrupted client relationships etc...

Identity

*I’m often seen as an “**Middle-Management Champion**” which means I focus on empowering day-to-day managers with essential people “micro-skills”...*

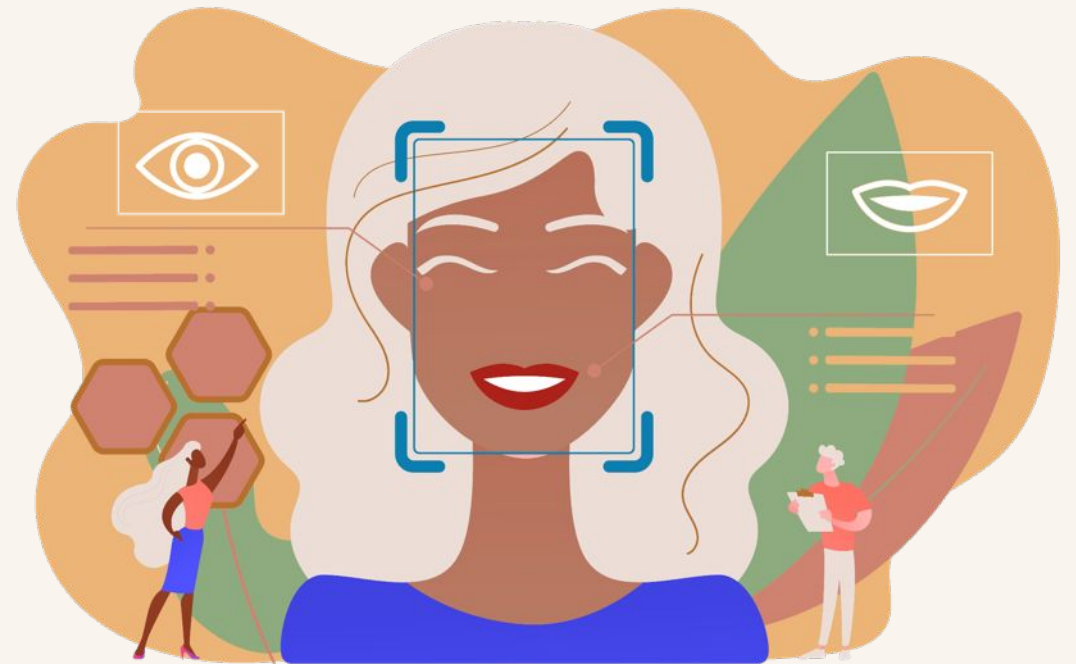
Value

As a result of which they become the role-models of productivity, wellbeing, inclusion, diversity and whatever the business needs next.”



What is a professional identity?

- More than a job title or qualification
- It's **who you are** in the workplace, not what you do
- The “**red line**” that runs through all your various roles, businesses + projects
- The **value** you consistently create
- The **approach** you are known for



Not to be confused with...

≠ Current / last role

≠ Personal Brand



≠ Qualifications or Affiliation

≠ Values or Ethics

≠ Achievements



Why is Professional Identity important?

Without:

- Defining self by roles, expertise
- Expertise replaced by AI
- Scrambling for opportunity
- Personal impact, e.g. feeling lost, depressed, invisible

With:

- Future-proof your career in terms of value
- Others can tell your story and open doors
- Sustainable, don't have to do endless self-promotion
- Resilience: knowing who you are, no matter what



Three dimensions of professional identity

Needs of Others =
*Usefulness in current or
future marketplace*



Sample identity #2: Digitalisation and AI

Context

“You know how AI and digitalisation is changing everything, including people-management...

Issues

... with all the issues of overwhelm, insecurity, loss of valued talent, short-term planning, etc...

Identity

*I see myself as a **Facilitator of the AI-augmented Workforce**, focusing on adopting AI-augmented working asap, rather than waiting for some big future wave*

Value

As a result of which people gain tangible tools to reduce overwhelm, they feel prepared for the future and feel a greater sense of wellbeing.”



Sample identity #3: Professional Identity development

Context

“Given the extent that roles are changing in an increasingly virtual world...

Issues

... bringing issues of uncertainty, insecurity, need for reinvention and changing life aspirations...

Identity

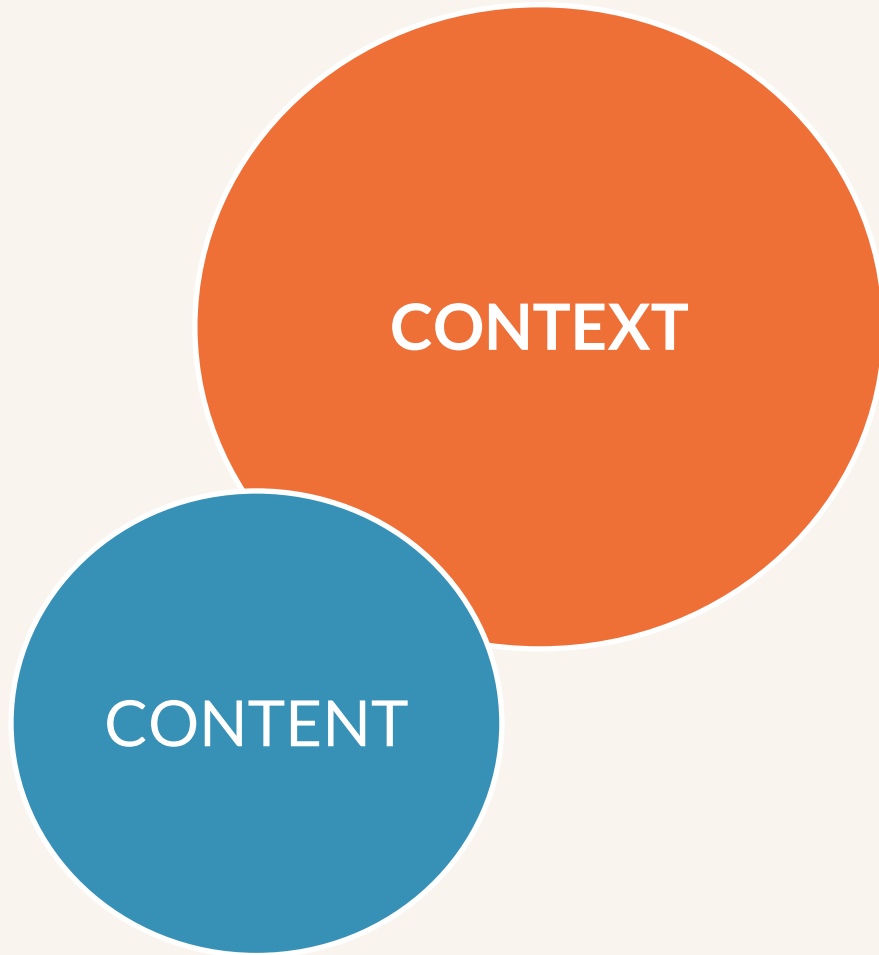
*I am an **Ambassador for Professional Identity** development which means focusing on **who** you are in your work, i.e. the **approach** you bring, not just **what** you do.*

Value

*This not only results in higher **retention** of key talent, it's a recipe of better **engagement** and equipping people to navigate **the AI future**.*



Value: Key Distinction



The value of your work lies in the **Context**, not the Content

This means looking **beyond Strengths** to understand **Context**

Value lies in **ripple effects**

Challenge: becoming fluent in the language of Context



Four key benefits of a clear identity

4. Developing Identity with others

2. Opportunity

Others can be
your Ambassadors



3. Value

Raises the value of work

You are their Partner...
not their Servant

1. Energy & Focus



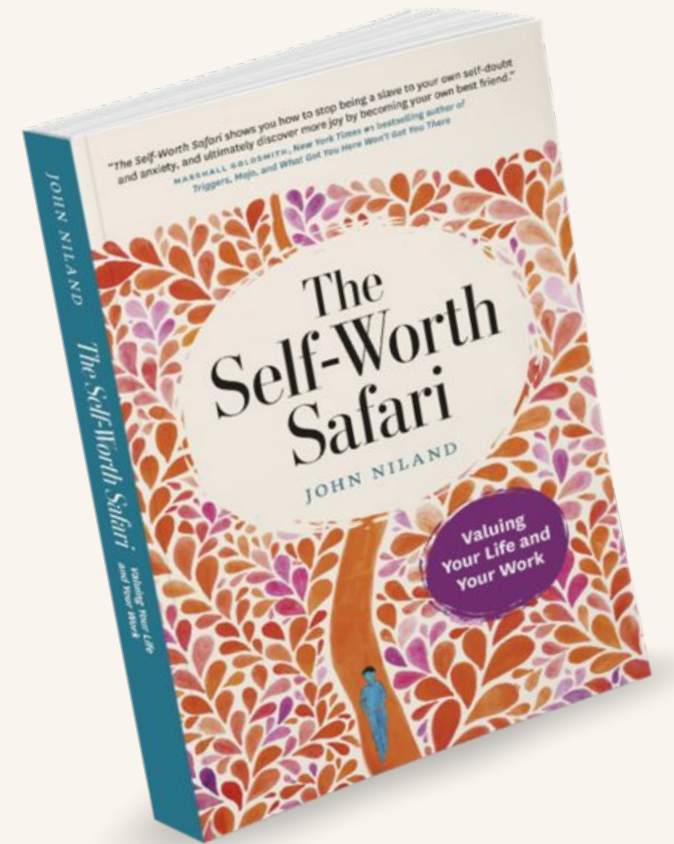
How? The very short version

- Translate your **strengths** into **insights & approach**
- Build your **identity** on the **approach** you bring to the challenges of the marketplace
- Rework your **introduction** and **profile**
- Do **Explorer Conversations** to sharpen insights and get **Ambassadors**
- Avoid seeking validation / self-evaluation: focus on **usefulness** (self-worth)
- Communicate the **value** of your work, not just adjectives and stories about you



Self-Worth as the foundation of identity

- Many of us have been brought up in a self-esteem culture, often getting self-esteem from work
- Self-esteem can be vulnerabilities during transition and uncertainty
- **Resilience:** strong sense of self enables swift recovery from setbacks, creates courage
- Self-worth is a **stronger foundation for identity:** you are bringing value, not seeking validation



“

What we must decide is **HOW** we are valuable
rather than how valuable we are.

— Edgar Friedenberg

”

Developing professional identity with others

- Lots of change, uncertainty and insecurity
- Engagement issues
- Resilience and mental health issues
- Need for initiative, creativity and innovation
- Agile teams... so who are you?
- Huge potential for distraction, procrastination
- **People professionals can be navigators for professional identity development**



Insights you can bring (just a few...)

- **Who** you are, vs **What** you do
- Hybrid-working, Teal organisations, agile teams...
Who are you?
- Focus on value: (Context vs Content)
- Develop your own **insights** and **approach**
- Build on a foundation of **self-worth** vs self-esteem
- **Longer** working lives: think about the implications
- Rethinking the **value** of your work in the age of AI



Further development

- Become a certified Professional Identity Facilitator
- In house: Talent Development programs
- **Enriching Professional Identity**, self-study course: (www.SelfWorthAcademy.com)

50% off for CIPD: **50OFFEPI**

- Individual mentoring
- Contact: John@SelfWorthAcademy.com

