



Moving on, moving forwards: outplacement and transition coaching

Moving on and forwards when we are facing a career change that we may not have chosen and when we may not be in control of the timing, can present many of us with our biggest ever challenge.

As an organisation asking people to move on, we know that whatever the sound commercial reasons, “people never forget how you made them feel”.

I have direct experience of both of these roles and have invested heavily in learning, development, and expertise of change over the past 25 years.

Outplacement and transition approach

In my view, outplacement and transition work has three parts:

- working through the emotional rollercoaster;
- creating a plan and structure to replace the working day that is being left;
- finding the next role(s).

All three are critical and to get the best outcomes, we work on all three elements in parallel.

Emotional rollercoaster: We all react in different ways to these situations – the rollercoaster can be positive as well as challenging. I have learnt to meet people where they are and work with them on where they want to be, recognizing that this changes over time and can be different from day to day.

I have a track record of being able to support people to make the emotional transition of their change, to help them make sense of it and to work through their feelings to their organisation. I use a mixture of models, tactics, books, question and values cards and typical coaching techniques. I have worked with people at all levels in transition, internationally and across sectors and I draw on this breadth of experience and input to support and encourage people through the emotional challenges, which are exacerbated and more complex in the current climate.

Creating a plan for the short, medium and long term. I work with the client to create a plan, focused on daily, weekly and monthly activities, all within their control. We create spreadsheets of contacts, dial up the use of LinkedIn, create targets and undertake research to support ideas and thinking. If of interest, we identify short-



term work opportunities, such as projects, pro bono work for charities, consulting opportunities, etc.

We also take this opportunity, to look at longer-term plans and think about values, mission, legacy. While the urgency of the short-term plan tends to take precedence, making space to have bigger picture discussions results in the creation of more purpose and meaning and helps with the rollercoaster. It can also lead to the creation of ideas and opportunities that would not arise if short-term focus prevails.

Finding the next role: We work together on creating a number of written pieces. In terms of CV, I have been part of numerous recruitment teams and boards, as well as recruiting directly into senior positions in exec and non-exec capacity. We know we have a matter of seconds to make an initial impact.

We also create a bio together, a vital document to support a search when we don't necessarily want to look like we are searching for a job, as well as looking at digital footprint and updating profiles and using professional networks.

We make a phased plan of attack as regards recruiters and headhunters. We know that as we become more comfortable with our position, we become more confident about what we are in fact looking for, and how to get this across. It is vital that we pace our connections and activities to take account of this and learn as we go.

We work together on technique and approaches and invest in the preparation and support, especially if it has been sometime since last interviewing. Again, we create a structure to identify and track opportunities, creating a sense of momentum and purpose, within our control, not reliant on others.

What I bring to Outplacement and Transition Coaching

I have a strong cocktail of executive experience, recruitment and headhunting experience and a huge amount of personal learning regarding transition and change.

Executive experience: I have been part of a number of teams who have implemented wholesale reorganisations, including at Linklaters which was the first Magic Circle firm to ask Partners to leave in the early 2000s. I was given insight into the minds of those partners who were exiting as well as those making the decisions. Likewise, when I was part of the exit sales team at Whitehead Mann, I completed a second phase of restructuring, closing offices and exiting people, and then exited myself. I have asked a number of people to leave organisations and experienced first-hand the impact this can have and how to do it as well as possible.



This insight means that as well as being empathetic and supportive of the outplaced person, I have direct experience of the processes, politics and challenges of the exiting organisation and can bring this perspective into conversations.

Headhunting and recruitment experience: After I left the law, I became a legal recruiter and worked with partners to move firms, giving me insights from both sides. As the Head of Leadership Consulting at Whitehead Mann, I led the Transition Mentoring team, working with clients who were exiting senior individuals in the FTSE250 and in private businesses. As a result of both these roles, I have a very wide network of connections with headhunters and recruiters across sectors. I also consult to this sector and have built up further connections through this work. In addition, I have sat on Boards and led recruitment for trustee and non exec appointments and so also have direct insights into interview panels and hiring teams. While I have this wealth of connections, I know how vital it is to work hard to create opportunities, and not rely on recruiters.

Personal experience: I have moved sectors in executive roles, and have a very broad range of consulting clients, and can share insights into engaging and adapting to understand sectoral differences. I was suddenly widowed and as a result of the work I have done to support myself, as well as my work as CEO of an autism school, I have gained strong insights into behavioural psychology. I have psychometrics I use to support change and have seen their success, again across sectors and roles.

My philosophy

I am whole-hearted when it comes to working with those in transition – I continue to bring a high-challenge approach but the people I work with are under no illusion that I am utterly committed to supporting them to find their next opportunity. My focus on daily and weekly planning, with tactics on what to do, having been through it, brings a balance of the practical with the emotional support that is necessary in typical times, let alone during a pandemic/recession.

Much of this can be done at pace – in my experience, we can get to a point after a couple of 90 minute sessions, where there is clarity of plan and direction and insight on how to manage the emotions, assuming the client puts in the work and effort in between the sessions.

Transition of career is a challenging time but in my experience, working hard at it leads to outcomes that would not have been achieved if the person had stayed in situ. It has impacts on all relationships and can change the way a person perceives



themselves. It is some of my favourite work and I always recognise the trust and impact this role can have.

Recent testimonials

Managing director/COO, professional services

“When the door closed on a long held role my head filled with competing emotions - half were ones of excitement and thrill attracted by the opportunity to do something new and half were unsettling ones born of the uncertainty over how to manage and cope with the transition.

Thank god for Sarah the perceptive and wise chaperone for the early stages of my journey.

Turns out that there is a proven process to pursue if you want to maximise your chances of ending up doing what you've always wanted to do and Sarah is its champion.

As my guide Sarah delivered her messages through a delightful cocktail of empathy, application, wisdom, and punch.

The success of my transition owes much to her for which I am immensely grateful. “

Business services director, Magic Circle law firm

“What was helpful about your input to me? A few thoughts:

- *Content: You do actually know what people should do in this situation – both practically but in terms of transitioning their identity, market positioning, overall patterns of thought – you get it on a lot of levels.*
- *Input/value: In every interaction be it short or long you gave me something to chew on – read, think about, respond to, people to connect with. One of the challenges of a “furlough” period is lack of stimulation or anything really to respond to – you need material.*
- *Acknowledgement of state of mind: Looking for work can make the most positive people feel like used car salesman. I could become bored of or inured to my actual skills and capabilities and tend to ignore them so I started to value myself less. I wasn't in any kind of feedback loop – and being in work is generally a positive loop otherwise it would be miserable. It's lonely and can be demoralising. Lots of people get depressed. I felt you got that.*
- *Tone of voice – you are excellent at balancing the “it'll all be ok” personal support element with the message “It will be if you do certain things with discipline and commitment”.*



- *Challenge: Because you are empathetic (see above) you can challenge without breaking your client. You aren't afraid to say things that will or won't help/play well. But you keep it impersonal – it's not stuff I was getting wrong or right – it's stuff that is or isn't actually helpful right now. We are all delicate flowers in this situation. Somehow you were able to tell me to change [something to do with digital profile] without causing an identity crisis.*
- *Follow up: You consistently checked back in"*

Pricing

Packages for this type of coaching depend on the level and complexity of the individuals involved, the number of sessions envisaged and the timeframes. I have a track record of being able to make significant progress with individuals in a couple of sessions due the combination of expertise I can bring.

While it is typical to do this work exclusively 1:1 at partner and director/CXO level, there are a number of the practical elements of this work that can be delivered in groups or cohorts. There could be benefits to this approach, beyond the obvious commercial ones for the organisation, which include peer learning and support and the creation of momentum. A mix of the two may be ideal in our current environment. I would always recommend an initial 1:1 coaching meeting with an outplaced candidate – it is too easy with social contagion to take others off track when one person is in a particularly difficult place.