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MODULE 6 · FREELANCER-TO-STARTUP TOOLKIT

You Belong Here

Identity, belonging, confidence and resilience, the person behind the business. Recognise the value you already carry, and find your place in entrepreneurial spaces.





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MODULE SIX

You Belong Here

06

Before the business tools comes the person behind the business, and the

Many young people have skills, ideas and informal experience but still feel "business is something other people do." This module works through one honest question at a time: **Do I belong here? → What do I bring? → Can I show it? → Can I take action? → Can I recover when things go wrong? → Can I take ownership?** It uses reflection, peer learning, role models and structured dialogue rather than long theory, and never assumes a participant already identifies as an entrepreneur.



By the end, a participant can

- Recognise their strengths, experiences and values as entrepreneurial resources.
- Build a support circle, communicate with confidence and make decisions under uncertainty.
- Recover from setbacks and take ownership of their professional direction.

~10 hrs facilitated | 6 facilitator-led + 4 self-directed | Localised · PT · LT · SI

Inclusive of NEET & first-time founders

SUB-CHAPTERS IN THIS MODULE

1 · Am I an entrepreneur?, identity
2 · Peer learning & accountability
3 · Psychological safety & belonging
4 · Role-model story library
5 · Cultural sensitivity & inclusion
6 · Safe group discussion
7 · Confidence in real situations
8 · Risk-taking & decision-making
9 · Resilience & learning from failure
10 · Freelancer → director mindset

ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

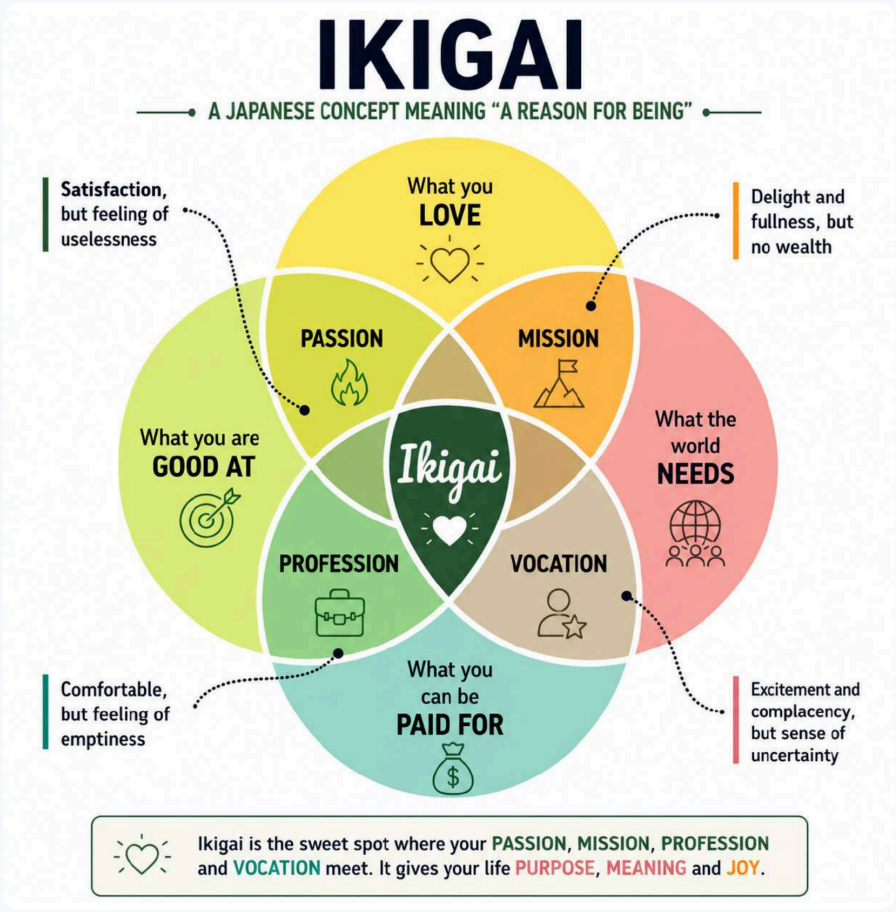
F1 · My Ikigai, 90 min
F2 · Decision SWOT, 90 min
F3 · Business Model Canvas, 90 min
F4 · Questions Before Answers, 90 min
F5 · Meet the Makers, 180 min
F6 · Culture Compass, 90 min
S1 · Lead Yourself Through Failure
S2 · Meet Your Inner Team
S3 · Build Your Learning Circle
S4 · Your Safe Facilitation Plan
+ Case study · resources · templates

RECOGNISE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Am I an entrepreneur?

Many young people freelance for years without ever feeling like “an entrepreneur”, the word sounds like someone else, someone bolder. But entrepreneurship isn't a personality you're born with; it's a set of resources you can recognise and build. The Ikigai lens helps: where what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs and what pays overlap, that's your entrepreneurial ground.





You may already be one

Taking initiative, solving problems, finding clients, you may already do the things entrepreneurs do, without the label. Recognising that shrinks the gap between “someone like me” and “an entrepreneur.”

Ikigai finds the overlap

Ikigai maps four circles: what you love, what you're good at, what the world needs, what you can be paid for. Where they meet is a direction that's both meaningful and viable.

You may already hold entrepreneurial resources without using the word. Recognising them shrinks the distance to “entrepreneur.”

LEARN ALONGSIDE OTHERS

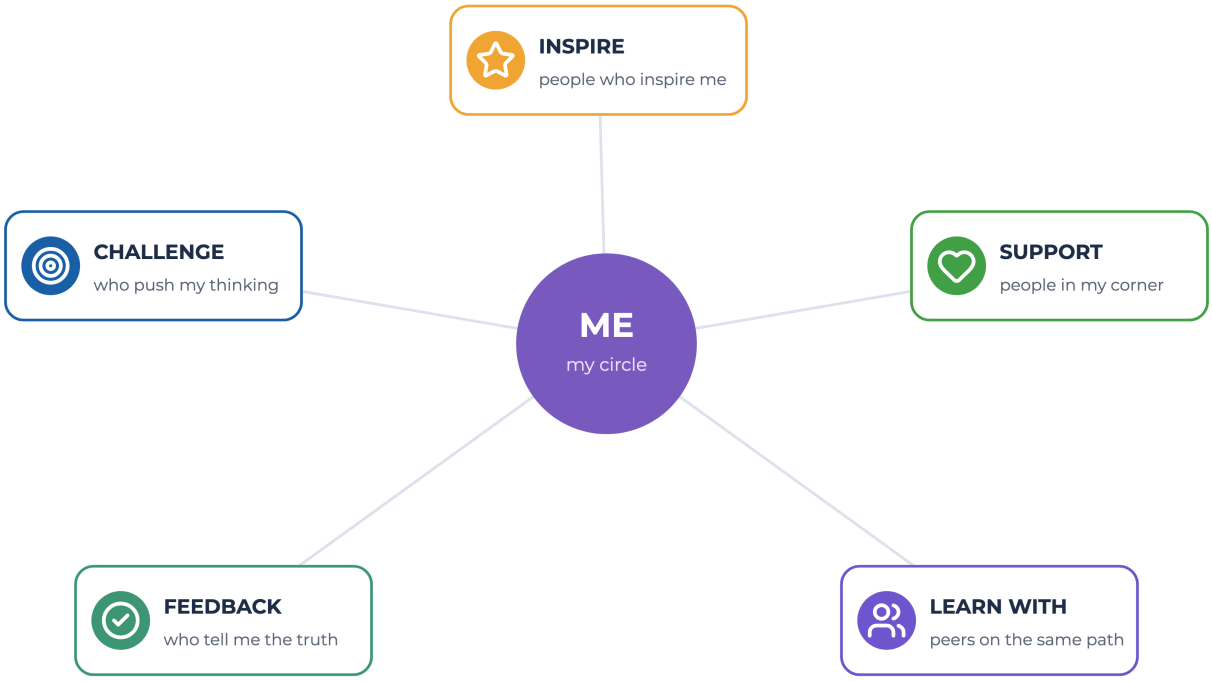
Peer learning & accountability

You don't have to build alone. The most useful support isn't a famous mentor or a big network, it's a few honest relationships where you learn together and hold each other accountable. Reframe the question from “who do I know that's powerful?” to “which few people will actually help me grow?” A small learning circle beats a big contact list.



My Entrepreneurial Learning Circle

You don't need one powerful contact, you build the right relationships.



The goal isn't the biggest network, it's identifying the right people and learning relationships.

A few real relationships

Accountability and learning come from a handful of genuine peers, not hundreds of contacts. Two or three people who check in on you are worth more than a huge network.

Learn together, answer to each other

When you tell a peer what you'll do by when, you're far more likely to do it. Mutual accountability turns good intentions into finished work.

Reframe support from “who do I know that's powerful?” to “which few relationships will actually help me learn?”

EVERYONE STARTS SOMEWHERE

Psychological safety & belonging

People take entrepreneurial risks only when they feel safe enough to. Belonging isn't a nice extra; it's the ground that makes courage possible. Picture a participation ladder: everyone enters at a different rung, from just watching to leading, and the job, for a facilitator or a community, is to make the next step up feel safe enough to take.



The Participation Ladder

Confidence grows one step at a time, you can enter at any rung.

grow

6	LEAD	· help guide others
5	CHALLENGE	· question, respectfully
4	SHARE	· offer your ideas
3	SPEAK	· say one small thing
2	THINK	· form your own view
1	OBSERVE	· watch and get comfortable

Psychological safety = you can ask, try, disagree and recover without being judged.

Safety comes before courage

No one risks looking foolish in a space that feels unsafe. Belonging and psychological safety are what let people try, ask, and step up at all.

Everyone starts on a different rung

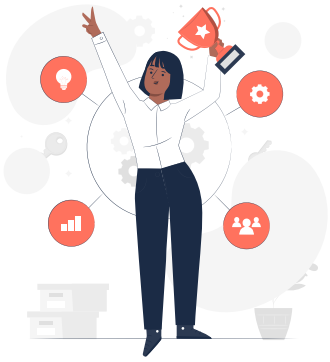
Some are ready to lead; others are just watching from the edge. There's no wrong rung, the goal is simply to make the next step feel possible.

Everyone can enter the ladder at a different rung. The job is to make the next step feel safe enough to take.

REAL STORIES, UPS AND DOWNS

Role-model story library

Nothing shrinks the distance to entrepreneurship like a real story from someone “like me.” But the useful stories aren't highlight reels, they include the setbacks, the doubts, the messy middle. A role-model's real journey, ups and downs, shows that success isn't a straight line and that the dips are survivable, which is exactly what a beginner needs to believe.



The Role Model Journey

Relatable stories show the ups AND downs, not just the highlight reel.



▶ **A role model only a few steps ahead, with a real setback in the story, is more useful than an unreachable success.**

Show the dips, not just the peaks

A polished success story can intimidate more than inspire. A story with real setbacks in it says “this is normal, and you can get through it”, far more useful for a beginner.

“Someone like me” matters most

Relatable role models, similar background, similar start, do more than distant celebrities. Seeing someone a few steps ahead makes the path feel walkable.

Show the ups AND the downs. A story with a real setback in it is far more useful than a highlight reel.

MAKE MORE PEOPLE BELONG

Cultural sensitivity & inclusion

Freelancers increasingly work across cultures, with clients and collaborators who communicate differently. Cultural sensitivity isn't about memorising rules; it's a compass: staying curious, reading the situation, and adapting how you communicate with respect. Done well, it's both an inclusion skill and a professional edge, it makes more people feel they belong, and it wins you work across borders.





Adapt, don't assume

Directness, formality, timing, humour, these vary widely across cultures. Notice and adapt respectfully rather than assuming your normal is everyone's normal.

Inclusion is a professional skill

Making people from different backgrounds feel understood isn't just kind, it's good business. It widens who'll work with you and who feels they belong.

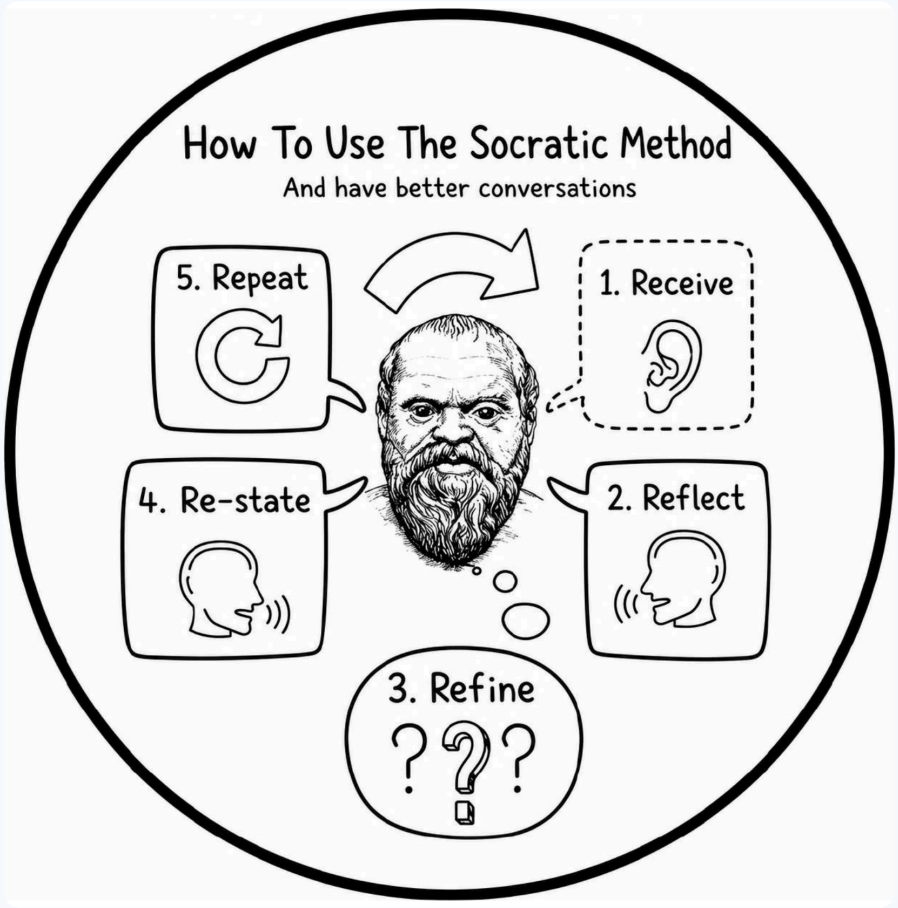
Adapting communication respectfully is both an inclusion skill and a professional one, it's how you make more people feel they belong.

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

Safe group discussion & perspective-taking

The best discussions aren't debates to win; they're loops of understanding. Using gentle, open questions (the Socratic way) and genuine perspective-taking, a group can explore ideas without anyone feeling attacked. The rhythm is simple: receive a view, reflect it back, refine your own, re-state, and go again, curiosity over point-scoring.





Questions over verdicts

Asking “what makes you see it that way?” opens a conversation; declaring someone wrong closes it. Good discussion runs on curious questions, not verdicts.

A loop, not a contest

Discussion isn't won; it's shared. Receive, reflect, refine, re-state, and repeat. The goal is deeper understanding on all sides, not a winner.

A good conversation is a loop, not a contest: receive, reflect, refine, re-state, and go again.

CONFIDENCE IS BUILT

Confidence in real situations

Confidence isn't a personality trait you either have or don't, and it isn't something you wait to feel. It's built: preparation + practice + action + reflection. You prepare, you rehearse, you act (nerves and all), then you reflect and improve, and confidence grows each loop. Waiting to "feel ready" is the trap; acting before you feel ready is the way.



What Confidence Really Is

Confidence is built, not felt into existence, and nerves are allowed.



NOT: Confidence = never feeling nervous

Nervousness doesn't mean you're incapable, the skill is acting while you feel it.

Confidence is built, not waited for

You won't wake up feeling confident. You build it by preparing, practising, acting despite nerves, and reflecting. Each cycle makes the next situation easier.

Nerves are allowed

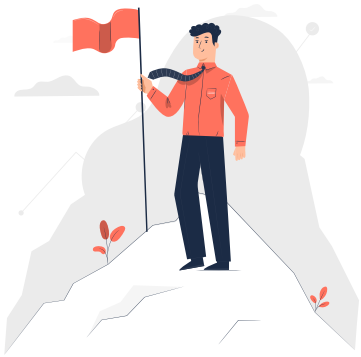
Feeling nervous isn't a sign you're not ready, even confident people feel it. Confidence isn't the absence of nerves; it's acting well alongside them.

Confidence = preparation + practice + action + reflection. It's built, not waited for, and nerves are allowed.

DECIDE WITH EYES OPEN

Risk-taking & decision-making

Entrepreneurship means deciding with incomplete information, but that doesn't mean gambling. A few honest minutes of structure turn a leap-in-the-dark into a calculated, ownable decision. A simple SWOT, your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, laid out plainly, won't remove uncertainty, but it turns a vague fear into a clear-eyed choice you can stand behind.



STRENGTHS

- What do you do well?
- What unique resources can you draw on?
- What do others see as your strengths?

- I have skills and knowledge in my area of expertise.
- I am motivated, disciplined and ready to learn.
- I can work independently and manage my time.
- I am creative and good at solving problems.
- I have access to a laptop, Internet and digital tools.
- I can communicate my ideas clearly.
- I am adaptable and open to change.
- I have a strong personal network or can build one.
- I am passionate about my work and want to create value.

WEAKNESSES

- What could you improve?
- Where do you have fewer resources than others?
- What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

- I lack experience in running a business.
- I have limited financial resources.
- I find it hard to market myself or find clients.
- I sometimes struggle with procrastination and focus.
- I have limited knowledge about taxes, contracts and legal matters.
- I lack confidence in selling my services.
- I don't have enough time to learn everything at once.
- I may feel overwhelmed when facing many tasks.

OPPORTUNITIES

- What opportunities are open to you?
- What trends can you take advantage of?
- How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

- Growing demand for freelancing and digital services.
- More people and companies work online.
- Online platforms (Upwork, Fiverr, LinkedIn) make it easier to find clients.
- I can build a personal brand on social media.
- Opportunities to learn new skills online (for free or low cost).
- I can offer packages, courses or products in the future.
- Partnerships and collaborations can help me grow faster.
- Access to start-up grants, incubators and mentoring.
- I can work from anywhere and create location freedom.
- More clients care about quality, creativity and personal connection.

THREATS

- What threats could harm you?
- What is your competition doing?
- What threats do your weaknesses expose you to?

- High competition in the freelance market.
- Clients may not pay on time or at all.
- Changes in algorithm and online platforms.
- Economic downturns can reduce client budgets.
- Rapid changes in technology and tools.
- Risk of burnout and lack of work–life balance.
- Scams and unreliable clients.
- Lack of contracts and legal protection.
- Dependence on one or two clients.
- Self-doubt and loss of motivation.
- Unclear pricing can lead to undervaluing my work.

Calculated, not reckless

Good risk-taking isn't bravado; it's deciding with eyes open. A quick, honest look at the upside and downside turns a gamble into a considered bet.

Own the decision

When you've weighed it honestly, you can own the outcome either way. A structured decision is one you can learn from, a blind gamble teaches you little.

You can't remove uncertainty, but a few honest minutes of SWOT turn a gamble into a calculated, ownable decision.

FALL, LEARN, CONTINUE

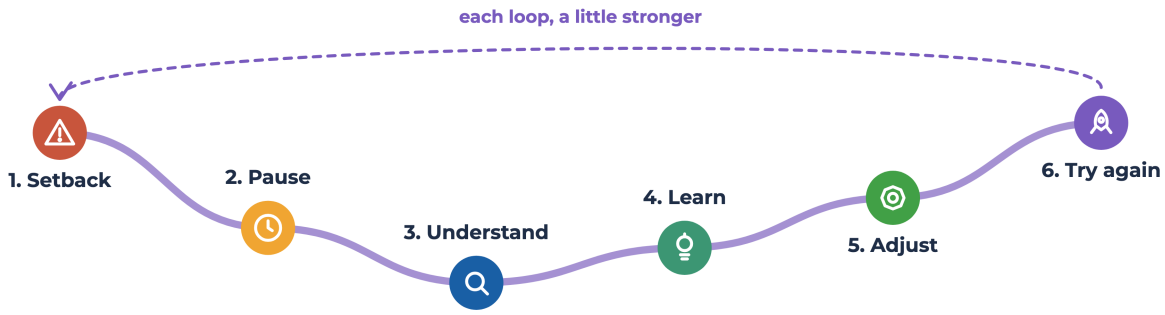
Resilience & learning from failure

Every freelancer hits setbacks, a lost client, a failed project, a quiet month. Resilience isn't pretending it doesn't hurt or "staying positive"; it's a process: pause, feel it, understand what happened, adjust, and take the next useful step. Failure treated this way becomes information, not identity, a bend in the road, not the end of it.



Bouncing Back From a Setback

A setback is information, pause, understand, and take the next useful step.



▶ The goal isn't to pretend failure doesn't hurt, it's to recover, reflect and continue.

Bounce, don't break

Resilience is the bounce after a fall, not the absence of falling. The dip is normal; what matters is that you pause, learn, and take the next step.

Failure is information, not identity

A failure is something that happened, not something you are. Ask "what does this teach me?" instead of "what does this say about me?"

The goal isn't to pretend failure doesn't hurt, it's to pause, understand, adjust and take the next useful step.

SEE YOURSELF AS THE OWNER

Freelancer → director (CEO) mindset

The final shift is how you see yourself: not a worker doing tasks for hire, but the director of your own professional life, someone who decides direction, not just delivers work. This is the real goal of the whole module, moving from "I take what comes" to "I choose where this goes." You don't need a company to be the CEO of your career.



From Task-Doer to Director

Ownership grows as you step back and decide the direction of your work.



▶ **The CEO mindset isn't a corporate title, it's ownership and agency over your own professional future.**

From doing to directing

A worker executes tasks; a director sets direction. The CEO mindset is stepping back to decide the what and why of your work, not just grinding through the how.

You're already the CEO

Even as a solo freelancer, you set your prices, pick your clients, choose your path, that's a director's job. Own it, and you make bigger, braver decisions.

The real goal isn't "I feel more confident." It's "I see myself as someone who can decide my own professional future."

FACILITATOR-LED

F1 • My Ikigai

90 min

Reflection / identity

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 1 · Entrepreneurial identity.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Recognise their strengths, interests and experiences as entrepreneurial resources, and connect them to a possible opportunity.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 10 min
   Everyone already carries value, today we find where yours overlaps into opportunity, gently.
2. **Four questions** · 25 min
   Each person fills the four Ikigai zones: what they love, are good at, the world needs, could be paid for.
3. **Find the overlaps** · 20 min
   In pairs, help each other spot where zones meet, passion, mission, profession, vocation.
4. **Name a possibility** · 20 min
   Each person writes one realistic opportunity their overlap points toward.
5. **Share & reflect** · 10 min
   Volunteers share one discovery; the group notices how much was already there.
6. **One small step** · 5 min
   Everyone writes one action to explore that possibility further.

THE FRAMEWORK

The Ikigai overlap: what you LOVE · are GOOD AT · the world NEEDS · you can be PAID FOR.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

The printed My Ikigai worksheet; pens; optional printed Ikigai diagram.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 1. Complete your own Ikigai first as a live, honest example (including an imperfect one). Set a warm, non-judging tone.

Facilitator tips

Some learners undervalue informal experience (caring, helping, community work), name it explicitly as a real resource. Keep it exploratory; nobody has to "become" an entrepreneur today.

→ What can I do next?

Turn your Ikigai overlap into one sentence: "I could create value by _____ for _____."

Reflection & Youthpass

What did I discover I already carry that could create value for others? **Youthpass:** Entrepreneurship + personal competence, "I can name what I already bring, and imagine where it could lead."

FACILITATOR-LED

F2 • Decision SWOT

90 min

Decision-making / reflection

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 8 · Risk-taking & decision-making.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Analyse a real entrepreneurial decision using SWOT, and finish with one concrete, ownable action.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 10 min
   Good decisions aren't fearless, they're informed. Today we structure one real choice.
2. **Pick a real decision** · 10 min
   Each person names an actual decision they're weighing right now.
3. **Internal factors** · 20 min
   Map strengths and weaknesses, what's within your control and capability.
4. **External factors** · 20 min
   Map opportunities and threats, what's happening around the decision.
5. **Peer challenge** · 20 min
   In pairs, question each other's SWOT: what's missing, what's assumed?
6. **Decide the next action** · 10 min
   Each person commits to one concrete step, go, wait-and-test, or adjust.

THE FRAMEWORK

Decision → Strengths → Weaknesses → Opportunities → Threats → Action.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

The printed Decision SWOT sheet; a real decision each participant is facing; pens.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 8. Prepare one worked SWOT of a realistic freelancer decision (e.g. "Should I lower my price to win this client?").

Facilitator tips

Watch for the two traps: impulsive "just do it" and frozen "only when it's certain." Steer toward a small, reversible next step rather than an all-or-nothing leap.

→ What can I do next?

Run a 5-minute SWOT before your next real freelance decision this week.

Reflection & Youthpass

How do I usually respond to uncertainty, and what would a calmer, calculated response look like? **Youthpass:** Entrepreneurship, "I can weigh a decision under uncertainty instead of freezing or acting blindly."

FACILITATOR-LED

F3 • Business Model Canvas

90 min

Business planning / systems

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 10 · Freelancer → director mindset (the Business Model Canvas tool itself is introduced in Module 1).

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Move from self-reflection into ownership of a real idea, seeing the whole business as one connected system.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 10 min
   Step into the owner's chair: not "what task do I do?" but "what am I building?"
2. **Start with the customer** · 15 min
   Define the customer segment and the value proposition for them first.
3. **Map how value reaches them** · 20 min
   Channels, relationships and revenue, how you connect and get paid.
4. **Map what it takes** · 20 min
   Key resources, activities and partners that make the value possible.
5. **Cost & viability** · 15 min
   Add the main costs; check the model roughly holds together.
6. **Owner's decision** · 10 min
   Name one thing to say YES to and one to say NO to as the director of this idea.

THE FRAMEWORK

The nine blocks: customers, value, channels, relationships, revenue, resources, activities, partners, costs.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

The printed / drawn Business Model Canvas (nine blocks); sticky notes; a real or imagined service idea per person or group.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 10. Have the Business Model Canvas (from Module 1) ready as a large printout or wall drawing, and prepare one filled example.

Facilitator tips

Keep it a thinking tool, not a form to complete perfectly. For first-timers, one honest sticky note per block is enough, the systems view matters more than detail.

→ What can I do next?

Fill a rough BMC for your own idea and circle the one block you understand least.

Reflection & Youthpass

What am I actually building, and what decisions are mine to make about it? **Youthpass:** Entrepreneurship, "I can see my idea as a system, not just a task I perform."

★ Expert extension

Use an AI tool to pressure-test one block: "Here's my value proposition and customer, what am I missing?" Judge the answer; keep what's useful.

FACILITATOR-LED

F4 • Questions Before Answers

90 min

Structured dialogue / Socratic

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 6 · Safe group discussion & perspective-taking.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Practise structured Socratic dialogue, listening, open questioning and perspective-taking in a safe format.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 10 min
   Today we practise questions before answers, understanding beats winning.
2. **Set safety** · 10 min
   Agree the rules: listen fully, ask before assuming, no ridicule, everyone can pass.
3. **Receive & reflect** · 20 min
   One person states a view; others ask genuine questions to understand, not to attack.
4. **Refine & re-state** · 25 min
   Speakers refine their view aloud; listeners re-state it fairly before responding.
5. **Repeat with a new voice** · 15 min
   Rotate so quieter participants lead a round.
6. **Debrief** · 10 min
   What changed in your thinking? What did a good question do?

THE FRAMEWORK

The Socratic cycle: Receive → Reflect → Refine → Re-state → Repeat.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

A discussion prompt with no single right answer; the Socratic-cycle card; simple ground rules on cards.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 6. Choose a relevant, low-stakes but real dilemma (e.g. “Is it ever OK to work for free?”). Agree ground rules for safety.

Facilitator tips

Protect quieter voices actively, invite, don't spotlight. Model curiosity yourself. If it heats up, return to “re-state the other view fairly” before continuing.

→ What can I do next?

In your next disagreement, ask one real question before you give your opinion.

Reflection & Youthpass

When did a question, not an argument, actually change my mind? **Youthpass:** Citizenship + communication, “I can disagree respectfully and let a conversation change my thinking.”

FACILITATOR-LED

F5 • Meet the Makers

180 min

Role-play / role models

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 4 · Role-model story library.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Research a real freelancer or entrepreneur and explore their journey through a simulated talk-show role-play.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 15 min
   We learn most from people a few steps ahead, today we step into their shoes.
2. **Discover & research** · 45 min
   Groups research a chosen freelancer/entrepreneur: path, skills, challenges, achievements.
3. **Create & become** · 40 min
   Each group builds a short profile and picks one member to represent the role model.
4. **Interview & guess** · 50 min
   In a mock talk show, others ask questions, listen for clues and identify the story.
5. **Reflect & apply** · 25 min
   Discuss the different journeys, what ideas or actions can each person borrow?
6. **Take one lesson** · 5 min
   Everyone writes one lesson from a maker they'll apply to their own path.

THE FRAMEWORK

Discover & research → create & become → interview & guess → reflect & apply.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

Internet for research; simple "talk show" set-up; role cards; the role-model journey template.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 4. Prepare a shortlist of relatable, reachable role models (local, migrant, young, creative) so no group is stuck. Allow the full 180 minutes.

Facilitator tips

Steer groups away from billionaires toward reachable stories. Celebrate setbacks in the stories, they're the most useful part. Migrant and community role models are a strength here, not a limitation.

→ What can I do next?

Reach out to one relatable maker (a message, a comment, a follow) and note one thing you'd ask them.

Reflection & Youthpass

Whose journey felt reachable to me, and why? **Youthpass:** Entrepreneurship + cultural awareness, "I can learn from relatable journeys and see myself in them."

FACILITATOR-LED

F6 • Culture Compass

90 min

Inclusive communication

BASED ON

Sub-chapter 5 · Cultural sensitivity & inclusion.

BY THE END, PARTICIPANTS CAN

Create practical guidelines for inclusive digital communication across language, visuals, representation and accessibility.

Step by step

1. **Frame it** · 10 min
   The way we communicate can quietly include or exclude, today we make it intentional.
2. **Read the examples** · 20 min
   In groups, examine real posts against the five compass points.
3. **Spot the exclusion** · 20 min
   Identify where language, visuals or assumptions might exclude someone.
4. **Build the compass** · 25 min
   Each group drafts practical guidelines for inclusive digital communication.
5. **Share & combine** · 10 min
   Merge group guidelines into one shared class "culture compass."
6. **Commit** · 5 min
   Each person picks one change for their own online communication.

THE FRAMEWORK

The compass: Language · Representation · Accessibility · Assumptions · Stereotypes.

→ See the full diagram

MATERIALS

Real social posts / websites to critique; the compass template; sticky notes.

FACILITATOR PREP

Read sub-chapter 5. Gather a few real (anonymised) examples, some inclusive, some not, to analyse together.

Facilitator tips

Keep it constructive, not a purity test, the aim is awareness and habit, not fear of getting it wrong. Use the group's own diverse backgrounds as the richest source of insight.

→ What can I do next?

Apply the five compass questions to your next post before you publish it.

Reflection & Youthpass

Whose perspective am I missing when I communicate, and how would I include it? **Youthpass:** Cultural awareness + citizenship, "I can communicate so more people feel included, not excluded."

SELF-DIRECTED · ~30 min · Reflective mission

S1 • Lead Yourself Through Failure

Turn a hard setback into a plan: name it, separate the thoughts, and choose one next step.

1. **Name the setback**
   what happened, plainly.
2. **Split the thoughts**
   automatic vs supportive thinking.
3. **Recovery plan**
   one next useful step.



Builds on

Sub-chapters 7 and 9 · confidence and resilience.

✎ Your workings

Reflection & Youthpass

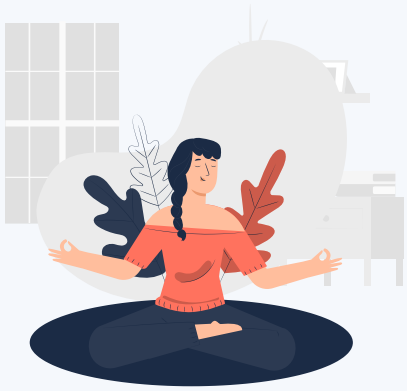
Which inner voice, relationship or condition most changes how you show up?

SELF-DIRECTED · ~30 min · Reflective mission

S2 • Meet Your Inner Team

Meet the inner voices that drive you, and choose which one leads in a hard moment.

1. **Map your voices**
   the critic, the fearful, the brave.
2. **Notice the trigger**
   what sets each one off.
3. **Choose who leads**
   before a hard moment.



Builds on

Sub-chapter 7 · confidence in real situations.

✎ **Your workings**

Reflection & Youthpass

Which inner voice, relationship or condition most changes how you show up?

SELF-DIRECTED · ~35 min · Reflective mission

S3 • Build Your Learning Circle

Map your support network, spot the gaps, and build a few real learning relationships.

1. **Map who's there**
   inspire, challenge, support, feedback.
2. **Find the gaps**
   which role is missing?
3. **Reach out to 3–5**
   plus a simple accountability plan.



Builds on

Sub-chapter 2 · peer learning and accountability.

✎ Your workings

Reflection & Youthpass

Which inner voice, relationship or condition most changes how you show up?

SELF-DIRECTED · ~35 min · Reflective mission

S4 • Your Safe Facilitation Plan

Design the conditions that make a group feel safe enough to take part.

1. **Recall an unsafe moment**
   what made it feel that way.
2. **Design conditions**
   trust, gradual steps, no shame.
3. **Write your plan**
   for a group you'll lead or join.



Builds on

Sub-chapter 3 · psychological safety and belonging.

✎ Your workings

Reflection & Youthpass

Which inner voice, relationship or condition most changes how you show up? **Youthpass:** "I strengthened my personal, social and learning-to-learn competence, self-awareness, emotional awareness, peer learning and recovering from setbacks."

CASE STUDY

Sophia Amoruso: from “not the type” to founder, and back

Sophia Amoruso did not look like anyone's picture of an entrepreneur. No degree, a string of odd jobs, and, by her own account, no plan. Around 2006 she started selling curated vintage clothing on eBay from home. That small, skill-based hustle grew into **Nasty Gal**, a fashion business that reached tens of millions in sales, and a best-selling book, *#Girlboss* (2014).

Then it went wrong. The company over-expanded, and in **2016 Nasty Gal filed for bankruptcy**. For many people that would be the end of the story. Instead, Amoruso treated the failure as information: she reflected publicly on what she'd misjudged, and started again, building **Girlboss**, a media and community platform for other first-time founders.

Her arc is the whole of Module 6 in one life: an **unconventional identity** that still created value, real **risk-taking**, a very public **setback**, and the **resilience and ownership** to reflect and rebuild.

Sophia Amoruso, Nasty Gal / Girlboss. Facilitator note: pair this with a local, “a-few-steps-ahead” maker from F5, the module's own guidance is that reachable role models inspire action more than famous ones.



THE MODULE 6 IDEAS IN THIS STORY

- **An unconventional entrepreneurial identity →**
- **Calculated (and un-calculated) risk →**
- **A very public setback →**
- **Ownership, deciding the next direction →**

What you can borrow, whatever your starting point

1. **Start with a skill, not a title.** A small, real hustle can become an identity long before you feel “official.”
2. **Treat failure as data.** The useful question after a setback is “what can I learn and control next?”
3. **Own the direction.** Rebuilding meant choosing what to build next, that's the director's mindset.

You don't have to look the part to belong. You need a skill worth sharing, the nerve to try, and the resilience to begin again.

GO DEEPER

Resource library

Everything to go further with Module 6. The **printable templates are built into this booklet** (next pages).

SHIFT printable templates

- My Ikigai, F1 ↗
- Decision SWOT, F2 ↗

Reading & further learning

- #Girlboss, Sophia Amoruso
- Mindset, Carol Dweck (growth mindset)
- The Culture Map, Erin Meyer
- EntreComp: the EU entrepreneurship competence framework

Frameworks used here

- Ikigai, purpose & overlap
- SWOT, structured decision-making
- Business Model Canvas, Strategyzer
- The Socratic method, structured dialogue

Where to build belonging

- Local youth / freelancer communities
- Peer accountability pairs & groups
- Mentoring & role-model networks
- Online communities of practice

Watch & listen (free)

- Ikigai, explained simply
- Carol Dweck, the power of "yet"
- The Business Model Canvas in 2 minutes

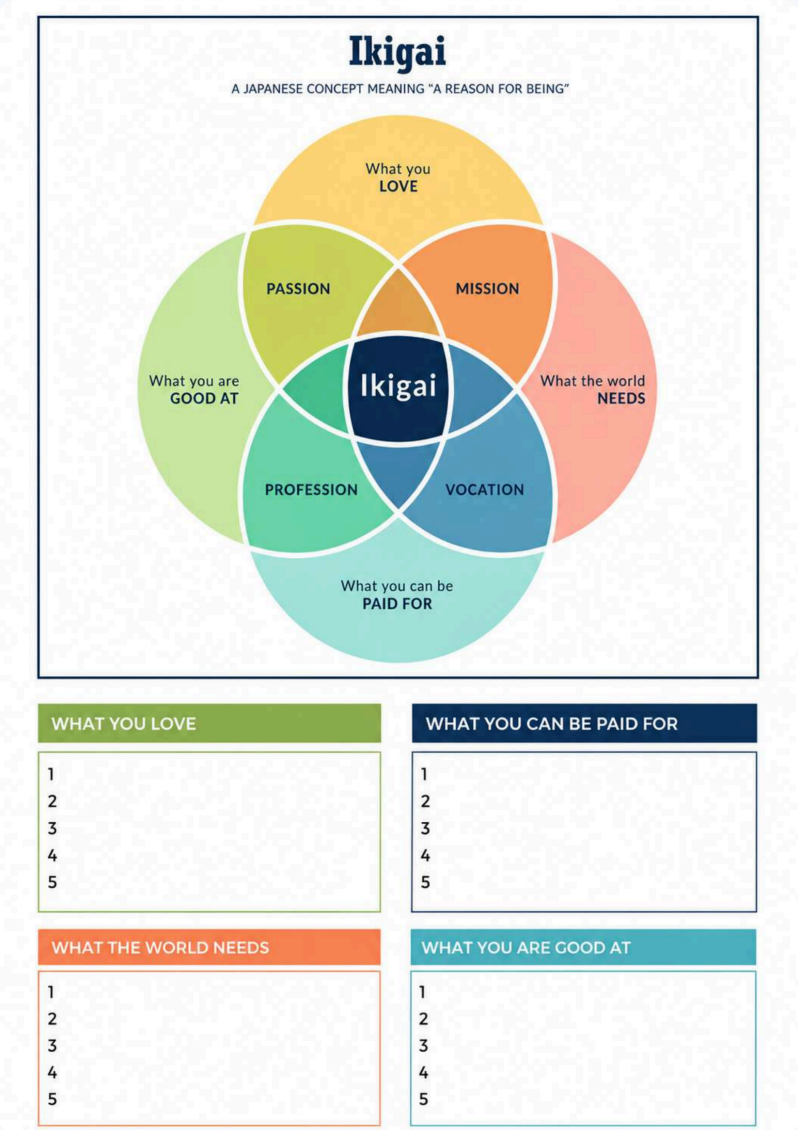
Case study

The identity → failure → resilience story on the previous page, Sophia Amoruso, should always be paired with a reachable, local maker from F5.

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE · 1 OF 2

My Ikigai worksheet

The worksheet for facilitator activity **F1 · My Ikigai**. Fill each circle honestly, then look for where they overlap.



1. **Be honest, not impressive**, informal and community experience counts as real value.
2. **Look for overlaps**, passion, mission, profession and vocation live where circles meet.
3. **Name one possibility**, turn the overlap into a single realistic opportunity.

Your Ikigai isn't a fixed answer, it's a lens for noticing the value you already carry into work.

PRINTABLE TEMPLATE · 2 OF 2

Decision SWOT worksheet

The worksheet for facilitator activity **F2 · Decision SWOT**. Write the decision at the top, then fill all four boxes before you choose.



1. **Strengths & weaknesses** are internal, about you and what you can control.
2. **Opportunities & threats** are external, about the market and situation.
3. **End with one action**, go, test small, or adjust. A SWOT with no decision is just a list.

A few honest minutes across four boxes turns a nervous gamble into a calculated, ownable decision.