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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?

The first barrier for many young freelancers isn't skill, it's identity: “entrepreneur” feels like a word for other people, more confident, more business-minded, not someone like them. This sub-chapter dismantles that. Entrepreneurship isn't a fixed personality; it's a set of resources, initiative, problem-solving, resourcefulness, you can recognise in yourself and grow. The Ikigai framework gives a gentle way in, mapping where your passion, skill, the world's needs and income can overlap.



WHAT IT IS

Two ideas sit together here. First, that being an **entrepreneur is about resources, not identity**, the mindsets and behaviours (taking initiative, spotting opportunities, solving problems, finding clients) you can develop, not a personality you either have or don't. Second, **Ikigai**, a Japanese idea mapping four overlapping circles: what you **love**, what you're **good at**, what the **world needs**, and what you can be **paid for**. Where all four meet is a personal direction that's both meaningful and financially viable.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because the identity barrier stops people before they start. If “entrepreneur” feels like someone else, you never claim the initiative that goes with it, even when you already act entrepreneurially every day. Reframing it as recognisable, buildable resources shrinks that gap. And Ikigai matters because passion alone doesn't pay and money alone doesn't fulfil, the overlap of all four circles is where a freelancer builds work that lasts because it's both wanted and worth doing. Together they turn “could I?” into “I already am, and here's my direction.”

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Waiting to “feel like an entrepreneur” before acting like one, the feeling follows the doing, not the other way round. Also treating Ikigai as only passion (“do what you love”) and ignoring the world-needs and income circles, which leads to meaningful work that doesn't sustain you, or forgetting love and skill and chasing only money, which pays but drains you. The overlap of all four is the point.

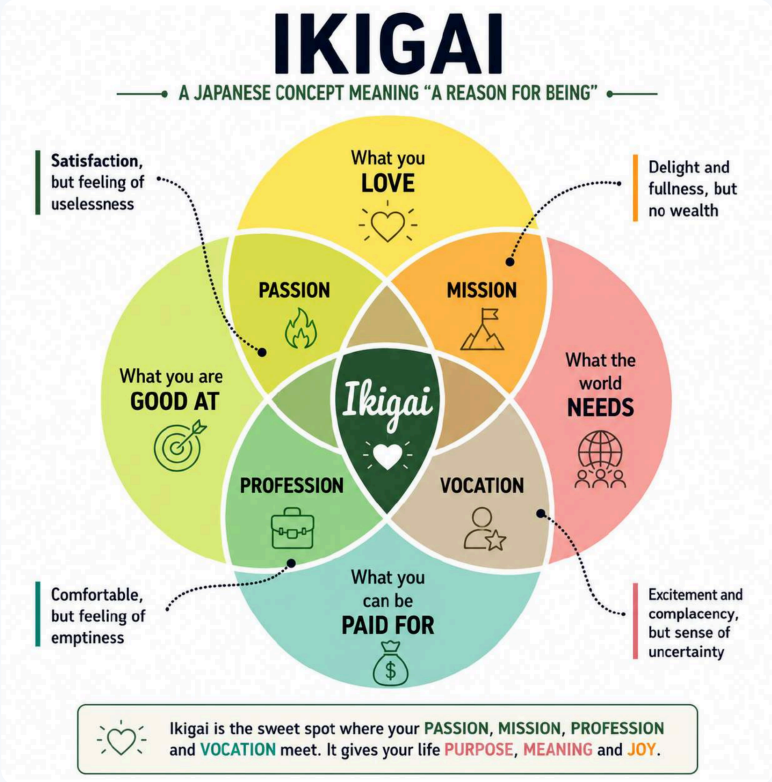
You may already hold entrepreneurial resources without using the word. Recognising them shrinks the distance to “entrepreneur.”

RECOGNISE WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE

Am I an entrepreneur?

HOW IT WORKS

Map your own Ikigai honestly. List what you love, what you're genuinely good at, what people around you actually need, and what someone will pay for. Look for overlaps, especially the centre where all four meet, that's a strong direction. Then notice the entrepreneurial resources you already use (times you took initiative, solved a problem, found a client) and name them as evidence. The goal isn't to become someone new; it's to recognise and build on who you already are.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Léa loved crafts and was good at them, but didn't feel like "an entrepreneur." Mapping her Ikigai, she saw people needed affordable, personal handmade gifts (a need) they'd happily pay for (income), meeting her love and skill. And looking back, she'd already found customers, priced work and solved problems, entrepreneurial resources she simply hadn't named. The word stopped feeling foreign; she was one already, with a direction.

Entrepreneurship is a set of resources you can recognise and build, not a personality you lack. Map your Ikigai to find where love, skill, need and income overlap, and name what you already do.

LEARN ALONGSIDE OTHERS

Peer learning & accountability

Freelancing is lonely, and the usual advice, “network!”, often makes it worse, sending people to collect contacts they never really use. This sub-chapter reframes support around what actually helps: a small learning circle of genuine peers who learn alongside you and hold you accountable. It's not about knowing important people; it's about a few real relationships where you share problems, swap what works, and answer to each other, which is what keeps a solo worker growing and moving.



WHAT IT IS

Peer learning and accountability means building a **small circle of genuine peers**, other freelancers or makers at a similar stage, who **learn together and hold each other accountable**. Instead of a large, shallow network, you cultivate a few real relationships where you can be honest about struggles, share what you're learning, and commit to each other about what you'll do next. The accountability part is key: telling a peer your plan, and reporting back, turns intention into action.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Solo workers stall in two ways: they get stuck on problems others have already solved, and they let their own goals slide with no one watching. A learning circle fixes both. Peers share hard-won lessons, so you learn faster than alone, and mutual accountability means your commitments actually happen, because someone will ask. Crucially, this comes from a few real relationships, not a big network; depth beats breadth. Reframing “support” this way makes it accessible to anyone, you don't need connections, just a handful of honest peers.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Chasing a big network of impressive contacts you never really engage, instead of building a few real relationships, or seeking a single powerful mentor to save you, when peers at your own stage are more available and often more useful. Also joining a circle to take without giving, mutual accountability only works if you show up for others too. Depth and reciprocity, not status and scale.

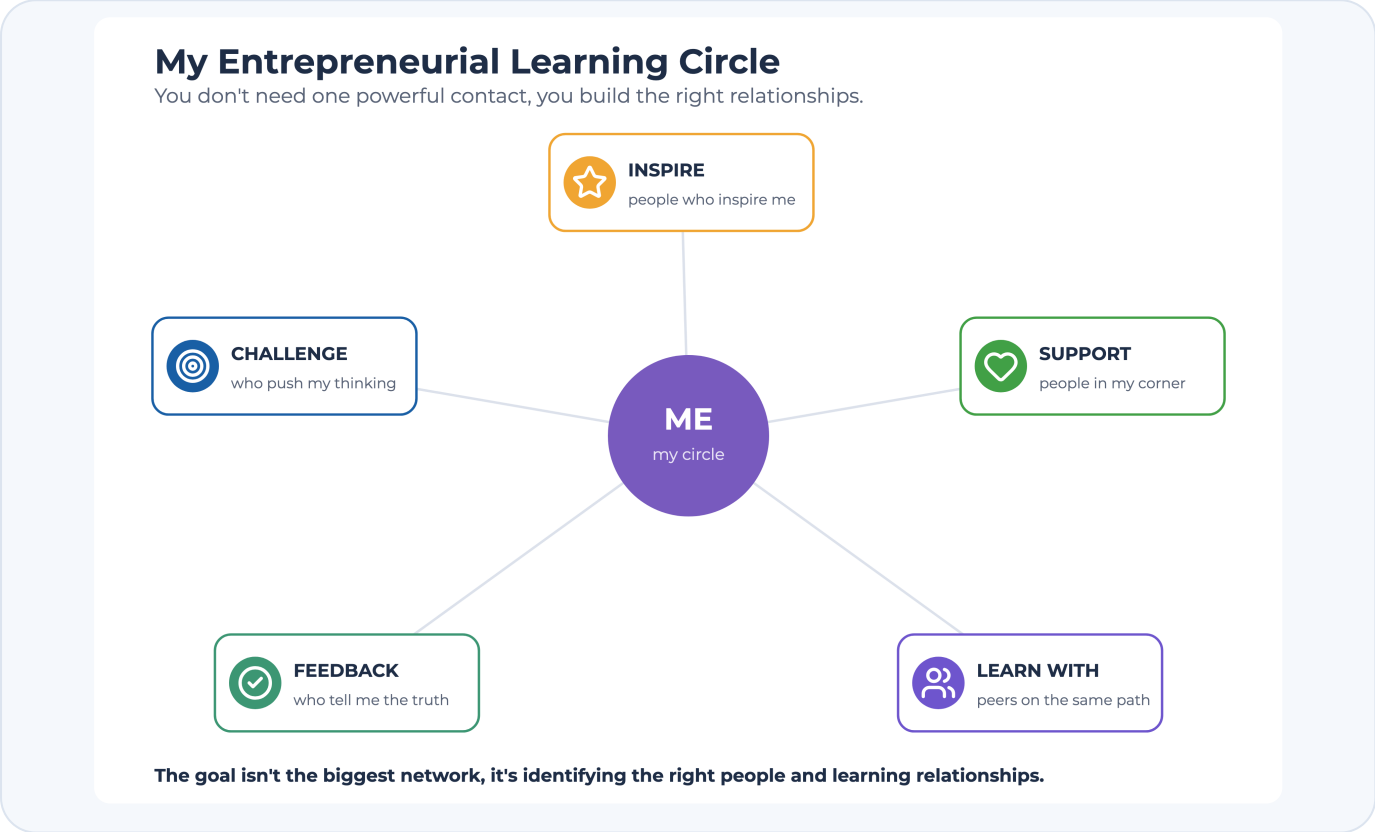
Reframe support from “who do I know that's powerful?” to “which few relationships will actually help me learn?”

LEARN ALONGSIDE OTHERS

Peer learning & accountability

HOW IT WORKS

Find two to four peers at a similar stage, people you can be real with, and set a simple rhythm: a regular check-in (even a monthly call) where you each share a struggle, a lesson, and a commitment for next time. Then follow up, ask how the last commitment went. Keep it small and genuine; this isn't networking, it's a support circle. Give as much as you get: the value comes from mutual honesty and follow-through, not from anyone's status.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Tomás felt isolated and kept abandoning his own plans. He started a monthly call with three other freelancers he'd met online. Each shares one problem, one lesson, one commitment, and they check in next time. Within months he's solved problems faster (someone always has), and actually finished things, because he had to report back. No famous mentor, just four honest peers, changed everything.

You don't have to grow alone, and you don't need a big network. Build a small circle of genuine peers who learn together, hold each other accountable, and show up for one another.

EVERYONE STARTS SOMEWHERE

Psychological safety & belonging

Entrepreneurship asks people to risk, to try, to look foolish, to put themselves forward, and no one does that where they don't feel safe. This sub-chapter is about the precondition for everything else in the module: psychological safety and belonging. Using the image of a participation ladder (from watching, to joining in, to leading), it shows that people enter at different rungs, and that the real work of a facilitator or community is to make the next step up feel safe enough to actually take.



WHAT IT IS

Psychological safety is the sense that you can speak, ask, try and fail without being judged or shamed; **belonging** is feeling you're genuinely part of the group. The **participation ladder** pictures engagement as rungs: at the bottom, quietly observing; then contributing a little; then actively participating; up to leading. The key ideas: people **enter at different rungs** (no rung is wrong), and movement up happens only when the next step feels **safe**. Belonging is the ground the whole ladder stands on.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because courage is downstream of safety. In an unsafe space, people stay silent, don't ask the "stupid" question, don't volunteer, don't risk the idea, so no learning or entrepreneurial behaviour happens. Recognising that people start on different rungs stops us pushing everyone to "lead" at once, which just scares the watchers back down. And making the next step feel safe, rather than demanding a leap, is what actually moves people up. For facilitators especially, building belonging isn't soft; it's the enabling condition for every other skill in this toolkit.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Assuming everyone is, or should be, on the same rung, and pushing quiet people straight to "lead", which feels unsafe and sends them back to silence. Also treating belonging as a fluffy nice-to-have rather than the precondition for risk-taking. And forgetting that safety is built by the facilitator's behaviour, mock one person's question and the whole room climbs down. Meet people where they are, and make the next step safe.

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

EVERYONE STARTS SOMEWHERE

Psychological safety & belonging

HOW IT WORKS

First, build safety: welcome every contribution, normalise not-knowing and mistakes, and never let anyone be mocked. Then meet people where they are, notice each person's rung and invite, don't force, the next small step (a watcher shares one word; a contributor leads one small thing). Make stepping up low-stakes and celebrated. As a facilitator, model vulnerability yourself. The aim is never to drag someone to the top rung, but to make the very next rung feel safe enough that they choose to climb it.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

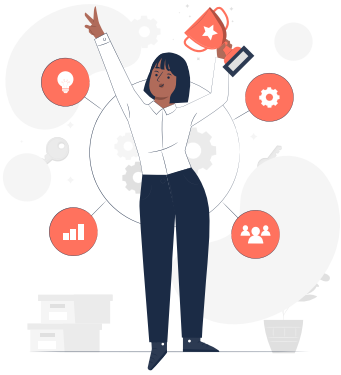
In a workshop, Sofia noticed one participant never spoke, firmly on the “watching” rung. Instead of putting her on the spot, Sofia built safety (praising every contribution, sharing her own mistakes) and offered a tiny next step: “add one word to the board.” She did. Next session she said a sentence; later she led a small task. Not pushed, but made safe, she climbed the ladder at her own pace.

People risk only when they feel safe, belonging is the ground courage grows from. Everyone enters the ladder at a different rung; your job is to make the next step feel safe enough to take.

REAL STORIES, UPS AND DOWNS

Role-model story library

"If they can do it, maybe I can too" is one of the most powerful thoughts a beginner can have, but only if the role model is believable. This sub-chapter is about building a library of real journeys, especially from people "like me", that show the whole path, not a glossy highlight reel. The most useful role-model story includes the setbacks, the doubt, the messy middle, because that's what makes success look survivable and human, rather than magical and out of reach.



WHAT IT IS

A role-model story library is a collection of **real entrepreneurial journeys** used to inspire and normalise, chosen and told with two principles. First, **relatability**: role models who resemble the learner (similar background, start, or circumstances) do far more than distant, famous success stories. Second, **the full arc**: the story must include the **downs as well as the ups**, the setbacks, doubts, and recoveries, not just a triumphant highlight reel. A journey with a real dip in it is the most useful kind.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because highlight reels intimidate as often as they inspire, a flawless success story can make a beginner feel further behind, not closer. A story with a genuine setback does the opposite: it says "struggle is normal, and survivable", exactly the belief a hesitant starter needs. And relatable role models collapse the psychological distance: a distant celebrity is admirable but unreachable; someone a few steps ahead, from a similar place, makes the path feel walkable. The right stories turn "that's not for people like me" into "someone like me did this."

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Reaching only for famous, glossy success stories (distant and intimidating), and telling them as highlight reels that skip the struggle, which quietly signals "real entrepreneurs don't fail", the opposite of the truth. Also assuming any successful person is a good role model, when relatability matters more than fame. Choose the near, the relatable, and the honest, dips included.

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

REAL STORIES, UPS AND DOWNS

Role-model story library

HOW IT WORKS

Curate stories deliberately. Choose role models your learners can identify with, similar background, age, or starting point, over famous-but-distant ones. Tell the whole journey, and don't skip the hard parts: name the setbacks, the moments of doubt, how they got through. Where possible, bring in real, local people a few steps ahead to share honestly. And invite learners to see their own path as a journey with expected dips, not a demand for instant, straight-line success.

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.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

Instead of showing a billionaire founder, a facilitator invited a local maker who'd started three years earlier, and asked her to be honest. She spoke about a failed first product, months of doubt, and nearly quitting, before it worked. The room leaned in. That real dip, from someone recognisably "like them", did more for their belief than any polished success story could.

Real stories from people "like me" shrink the distance to entrepreneurship, but only if they show the dips as well as the peaks. Choose relatable role models, and tell the whole journey, setbacks included.

MAKE MORE PEOPLE BELONG

Cultural sensitivity & inclusion

Freelance work is increasingly borderless, your client, collaborator, or community may communicate in ways shaped by a different culture: more or less direct, more or less formal, different senses of time and humour. This sub-chapter treats cultural sensitivity not as a set of rules to memorise but as a compass, a way of staying curious, reading each situation, and adapting your communication with respect. It's both an inclusion skill (making more people feel they belong) and a genuine professional advantage.



WHAT IT IS

Cultural sensitivity is the ability to **notice, respect and adapt to cultural differences** in how people communicate and work, without stereotyping. The "compass" framing matters: rather than a fixed rulebook ("in country X, always do Y"), it's an orientation, stay curious, observe, and adjust. It spans things like directness vs. indirectness, formality, attitudes to time, hierarchy, and humour. Applied well, it's a form of **inclusion** (helping people from all backgrounds feel understood and welcome) and a **professional competence** (working effectively across differences).

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because miscommunication across cultures quietly costs freelancers work and relationships, what reads as confident directness to one person feels rude to another; what feels friendly informality to you may seem unprofessional to them. Sensitivity prevents those avoidable frictions. It also widens your world: adapting respectfully means more people, from more places, can comfortably work with you, and feel they belong when they do. In a borderless freelance economy, this is both an ethical stance and a competitive edge, inclusion and professionalism in one skill.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Two opposite errors: assuming your own cultural norms are universal (so difference reads as rudeness), and over-correcting into stereotypes (treating a whole culture as a rigid rulebook). Also taking offence at difference rather than staying curious. The compass approach avoids both, observe and adapt to the actual person in front of you, respectfully, rather than assuming or stereotyping.

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

MAKE MORE PEOPLE BELONG

Cultural sensitivity & inclusion

HOW IT WORKS

Lead with curiosity, not assumption. Notice how the other person communicates, their directness, formality, pace, and mirror it respectfully. When unsure, ask rather than guess, and treat any “rule” as a starting hypothesis, not a stereotype. Pay attention to feedback and adjust. Above all, extend the benefit of the doubt: assume difference, not rudeness. The compass isn't about getting every custom perfectly right; it's about staying respectful, observant and adaptable so people feel understood.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Ana, used to warm, informal emails, kept getting short replies from a new international client. Instead of assuming coldness, she noticed his formality and mirrored it, more structured, less chatty. The relationship warmed immediately. She hadn't memorised a rulebook; she'd read the situation and adapted respectfully. The client later said she was “easy to work with”, and referred her onward.

Cultural sensitivity is a compass, not a rulebook: stay curious, read the situation, and adapt your communication with respect. It's both an inclusion skill and a professional edge.

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

Safe group discussion & perspective-taking

Groups often avoid real discussion because it feels like conflict, someone wins, someone loses, someone gets hurt. This sub-chapter offers a safer, richer way: Socratic questioning and perspective-taking, where the aim is understanding, not victory. Instead of debating to win, the group uses gentle open questions to explore each other's views, and treats the conversation as a loop, receive, reflect, refine, re-state, that deepens everyone's thinking without anyone feeling attacked.



WHAT IT IS

This combines two practices. **Socratic questioning**: exploring ideas through open, curious questions ("what leads you to think that?", "what might we be missing?") rather than statements and verdicts. **Perspective-taking**: genuinely trying to see the issue from the other person's view before responding. Together they turn discussion from a contest into a **loop**: you **receive** a view, **reflect** it back to check you understood, **refine** your own thinking, **re-state** it, and go round again, aiming for shared understanding rather than a winner.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because debate-to-win makes groups unsafe, people defend positions, stop listening, and quieter voices withdraw, so the discussion produces heat but little insight. Questions and perspective-taking keep it safe and generative: no one is being attacked, so people stay open, share honestly, and actually change their minds. The loop structure means the conversation builds understanding rather than entrenching sides. For a group learning to take risks and belong, this is how disagreement becomes productive instead of threatening, curiosity replacing point-scoring.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Treating discussion as a debate to win, so people defend rather than explore, and quieter voices go silent. Also asking leading questions that are really disguised verdicts, or "perspective-taking" in name only (pretending to listen while waiting to pounce). And skipping the reflect step, replying to what you assumed they meant rather than what they said. Curiosity must be genuine, and the goal must really be understanding, not victory.

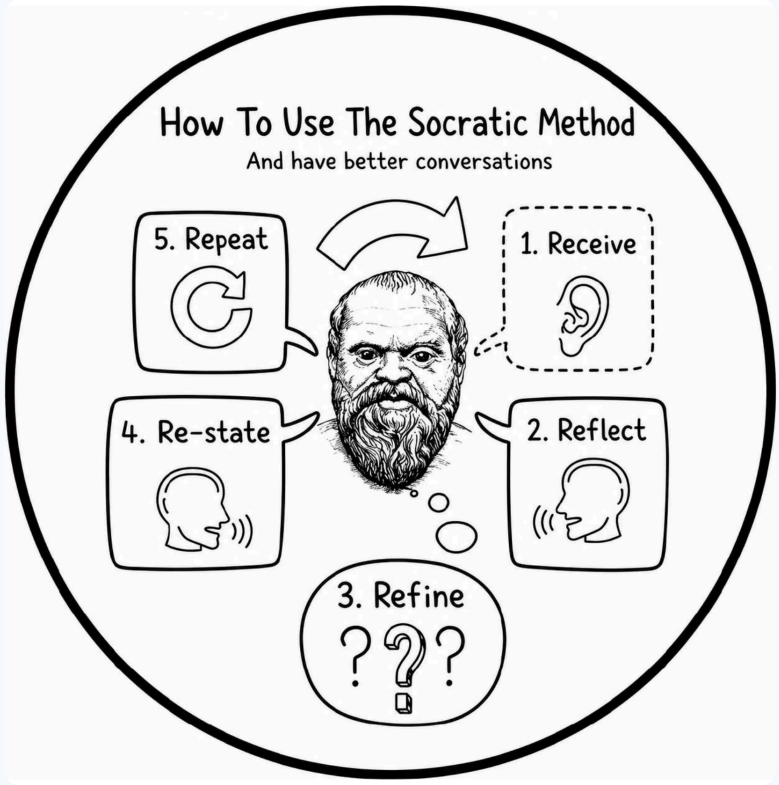
A good conversation is a loop, not a contest: receive, reflect, refine, re-state, and go again.

LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND

Safe group discussion & perspective-taking

HOW IT WORKS

Set the norm that discussion is for understanding, not winning. Favour open questions over statements, especially “what makes you see it that way?” and “what might I be missing?”. Before replying, genuinely take the other's perspective and reflect it back (“so you're saying...?”) to check you've understood. Then refine and re-state your own view, and invite the loop to continue. As facilitator, protect every voice, model curiosity, and never let a discussion become a contest with a loser.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

A group disagreed sharply about pricing. Instead of letting it become an argument, the facilitator asked each side, “what makes that feel right to you?” and had them reflect the other's view back before answering. Tempers cooled, people listened, and both sides refined their thinking. No one “won”, but everyone left with a richer understanding, and the quiet members had spoken, because it felt safe.

Good discussion is a loop, not a contest: receive, reflect, refine, re-state, and go again. Aiming for understanding rather than victory keeps everyone safe and makes disagreement productive.

CONFIDENCE IS BUILT

Confidence in real situations

Many young freelancers hold back, from pitching, pricing, speaking up, because they're "waiting to feel confident." This sub-chapter reframes confidence entirely: it's not an inborn trait or a feeling to wait for, but something you actively build through a simple equation, **preparation + practice + action + reflection**. You prepare, rehearse, act (nerves included), then reflect and adjust, and confidence grows with each loop. The key, liberating truth: you act your way into confidence, you don't wait your way there.



WHAT IT IS

Confidence, here, is treated as a **built capacity, not a fixed trait or a mood**. The equation: **Preparation** (know your stuff, ready yourself) + **Practice** (rehearse in low-stakes settings) + **Action** (actually do it, despite nerves) + **Reflection** (review honestly, learn, adjust). Run that loop and confidence in real situations, pitching, negotiating, presenting, grows each time. Two accompanying truths: confidence comes **after** action, not before it; and **nerves are normal**, confidence is performing well alongside them, not their absence.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because "waiting to feel confident" is a trap that keeps people permanently on the sidelines, the feeling never arrives before the action; it's produced by the action. Understanding confidence as buildable, and nerves as normal, frees people to act now, prepared and practised, rather than waiting forever. Each loop of prepare-practise-act-reflect makes the next real situation easier, so confidence compounds. This is especially vital for freelancers, whose livelihood depends on doing nervous things (selling, pricing, showing up) regularly. Confidence isn't a prerequisite; it's a result.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Waiting to "feel confident" before acting, which guarantees you never start, because the feeling follows the doing. Also mistaking nerves for unreadiness and backing out, when nerves are normal even for the confident. And skipping preparation or practice and then blaming a lack of "natural confidence" for a rough result. Confidence is a loop you run, not a trait you're born with or a mood you await.

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

CONFIDENCE IS BUILT

Confidence in real situations

HOW IT WORKS

Pick a real situation you're avoiding (a pitch, a price conversation, a talk). **Prepare** thoroughly so you know your material. **Practise** it somewhere safe, out loud, with a friend, in the mirror. **Act**, do it for real, accepting that nerves will come and that's fine. Afterwards, **reflect**: what went well, what to adjust? Then repeat with the next situation. Don't wait to feel ready; the readiness is built by moving through the loop, and nerves are a sign you're stretching, not failing.

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.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

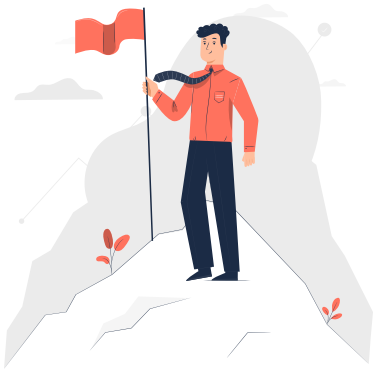
Diogo dreaded pricing calls and kept avoiding them, waiting to feel confident. Instead he ran the loop: prepared his numbers, practised the conversation with a friend, then did a real call, hands shaking. It went okay. He reflected, tweaked, and did another. By the fifth, still a little nervous, he was calm and clear. Confidence hadn't arrived first; the action built it.

Confidence isn't a trait or a feeling to wait for, it's built: preparation + practice + action + reflection, looped. Act before you feel ready, let nerves come, and each loop makes the next situation easier.

DECIDE WITH EYES OPEN

Risk-taking & decision-making

Every entrepreneurial move, taking a big client, buying equipment, going full-time, involves deciding without full information. Beginners often respond in one of two unhelpful ways: freezing (never deciding) or gambling (deciding blindly). This sub-chapter offers the middle path: structured risk-taking. A simple tool, SWOT, gives you a few honest minutes to weigh Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, which won't remove the uncertainty, but turns a scary leap into a calculated, ownable decision.



WHAT IT IS

This is about **making decisions under uncertainty, deliberately rather than blindly**. The tool is **SWOT**: a quick, honest grid of **Strengths** (what's in your favour), **Weaknesses** (what's against you internally), **Opportunities** (external upsides), and **Threats** (external risks) for a specific decision. Laying these out doesn't eliminate risk, entrepreneurship always involves the unknown, but it converts a vague, fearful gamble into a clear-eyed, calculated choice you understand and can stand behind, whatever the outcome.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because the two instinctive responses to risk both fail. Freezing means opportunities pass you by; blind gambling means avoidable mistakes and no learning. A structured look, even a rough SWOT, gives you the benefits of boldness without the recklessness: you see the real upside and downside, spot risks you can reduce, and decide with eyes open. Just as importantly, a decision you've weighed is one you can **own** and **learn from**, win or lose, whereas a blind gamble leaves you no wiser. Structure turns fear into agency.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

The two extremes: freezing (avoiding all risk and missing every opportunity) and gambling (deciding on gut or hope with no honest look at the downside). Also doing a SWOT dishonestly, listing only the flattering points, so it rubber-stamps what you already wanted. And expecting the tool to remove uncertainty; it can't. Its job is to make the risk calculated and ownable, not to guarantee the outcome.

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

DECIDE WITH EYES OPEN

Risk-taking & decision-making

HOW IT WORKS

For a real decision, take a few honest minutes and fill a SWOT grid: your genuine Strengths and Weaknesses for this move, and the Opportunities and Threats around it. Be honest, not optimistic. Then read it: does the upside justify the downside? Can you reduce any threat before deciding? Make the call knowing what you're taking on, and commit to owning and learning from the result, a considered decision, not a blind one.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

Facing a big, slightly scary contract, Rita did a five-minute SWOT. Strengths: the skills, some savings. Weakness: she'd be stretched. Opportunity: a flagship client and referrals. Threat: it could crowd out smaller clients. Seeing it laid out, the upside clearly justified the manageable risk, and she spotted a threat she could reduce (staggering the timeline). She said yes, not as a gamble, but as a decision she owned.

Deciding under uncertainty isn't gambling. A few honest minutes of SWOT turn a scary leap into a calculated, ownable decision, faced with eyes open.

FALL, LEARN, CONTINUE

Resilience & learning from failure

Setbacks are guaranteed in freelance life, lost clients, failed projects, dry spells, and how you respond to them matters more than the setbacks themselves. This sub-chapter reframes resilience: not toxic positivity or pretending it doesn't hurt, but a practical process for bouncing back. You pause and acknowledge the hit, understand what actually happened, adjust, and take the next useful step. Handled this way, failure becomes information you learn from, a bend in the road, rather than a verdict on who you are.



WHAT IT IS

Resilience is the **capacity to recover from setbacks and learn from them**, understood here as a **process, not a personality trait**. The loop: **pause** (acknowledge the setback and that it stings, don't deny it), **understand** (honestly work out what happened and why), **adjust** (change your approach based on that), and **take the next step** (act again, wiser). The core reframe: **failure is information, not identity**, something that happened and can teach you, not something you are. Resilience is the bounce, not the absence of the fall.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because setbacks end many freelance careers not through the setback itself but through the response, quitting, spiralling, or pretending nothing happened and repeating the mistake. A resilience process prevents both collapse and denial: pausing honours the real hurt (so it doesn't fester), understanding extracts the lesson (so the setback isn't wasted), and adjusting plus stepping forward keeps you moving. Framing failure as information, not identity, protects your self-belief through the inevitable dips. In a career built on repeated risk, the ability to bounce is what lets you stay in the game long enough to succeed.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Two opposite failures: collapsing (treating a setback as proof you're not good enough, letting it end things) and denying (pretending it didn't hurt or didn't happen, so you learn nothing and repeat it). Also skipping the understand step, bouncing back fast but blind, straight into the same mistake. Resilience needs both honesty about the hurt and honesty about the lesson, then a real adjustment and a next step.

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

FALL, LEARN, CONTINUE

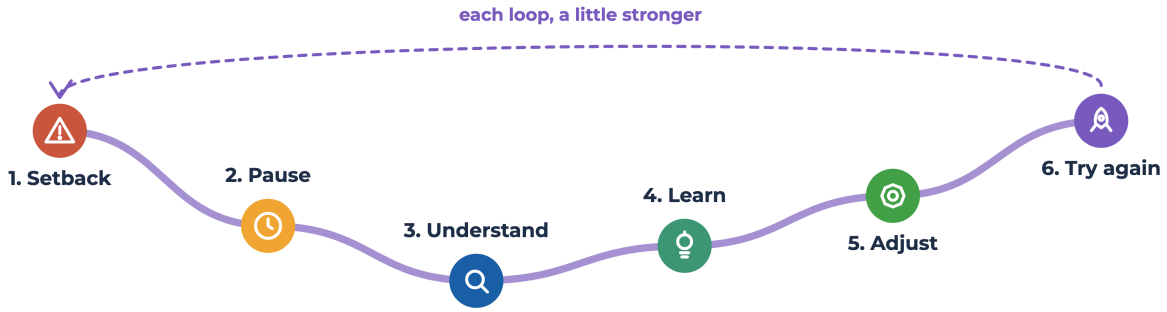
Resilience & learning from failure

HOW IT WORKS

When a setback hits, resist both denial and despair. **Pause**: acknowledge it happened and that it hurts, that's honest, not weak. **Understand**: honestly ask what happened and what you can learn, separating the event from your worth. **Adjust**: decide what you'll do differently. **Take the next step**: act again, applying the lesson. Talk to your peer circle, setbacks feel smaller shared. And keep asking "what does this teach me?" rather than "what does this say about me?"

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.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

Miguel lost his biggest client overnight, and his first thought was "I'm not cut out for this." Instead of spiralling, he ran the process: paused (yes, it hurt), understood (he'd relied too much on one client), adjusted (he'd diversify), and took the next step (reached out to three prospects). Months later he had a broader, safer client base. The failure hadn't defined him; it had taught him.

Setbacks are certain; your response is what counts. Resilience is a loop: pause, understand, adjust, take the next step. Treat failure as information, not identity, and the dips become bends in the road.

SEE YOURSELF AS THE OWNER

Freelancer → director (CEO) mindset

This last sub-chapter names the destination of the whole module: a shift in identity from **freelancer as worker** to **freelancer as director, the CEO of your own professional life**. It's the difference between "I do tasks people give me" and "I decide where my work goes." You don't need employees or a company for this; even as a solo freelancer you already make a director's decisions, prices, clients, direction. Owning that role, seeing yourself as the one steering, is what lets you make bigger, braver, more deliberate choices about your future.



WHAT IT IS

The CEO (or director) mindset is **seeing yourself as the person who directs your professional life, not just the person who does the work**. Picture a shift along a line: from **worker** (executes tasks for others) toward **owner/director** (sets the strategy, chooses the direction, decides the what and why). Practically, it means owning the decisions you already face as a freelancer, what to charge, which clients to take, what to build toward, as a leader's choices rather than things that just happen to you. It's an identity, not a job title.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Because how you see yourself shapes what you'll do. If you see yourself as a worker waiting for tasks, you stay reactive, taking what comes, competing on price, letting others set your direction. Seeing yourself as the director of your own career flips that: you start making deliberate choices about direction, standards and growth, the very decisions that build a lasting, self-determined livelihood. This is the true aim of the whole module, not just feeling more confident, but genuinely believing "I can decide my own professional future", and acting on it.

THE COMMON MISTAKE

Staying in the worker identity, waiting for tasks, taking whatever's offered, letting clients or circumstances set your direction and prices, and calling it "just how freelancing is." Also assuming the CEO mindset requires a company, staff, or scale, when it's really about owning the decisions you already make. The mistake is not the lack of a title; it's not stepping into the director's seat that's already yours.

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

SEE YOURSELF AS THE OWNER

Freelancer → director (CEO) mindset

HOW IT WORKS

Start owning the director's decisions you already have. Instead of accepting whatever work arrives, choose your direction: who you want to serve, what you want to be known for, where you want this to go in a year. Set your prices and standards as deliberate policies, not nervous reactions. Regularly step back from doing the work to direct it, review, decide, adjust. And practise the identity: speak and think of yourself as the one steering your career, because you are, whether or not you ever hire anyone.



A WORKED EXAMPLE

For years Marta took whatever design work came and charged whatever was asked, a worker waiting for tasks. The shift came when she started acting as her own director: she chose a niche, set deliberate prices, and decided where she wanted to be in a year. Nothing about being solo changed, but everything about her decisions did. She stopped taking what came and started choosing where it went.

The final shift is identity: from worker who does tasks to director who sets direction. You don't need a company to be the CEO of your career, own the director's decisions you already make.

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

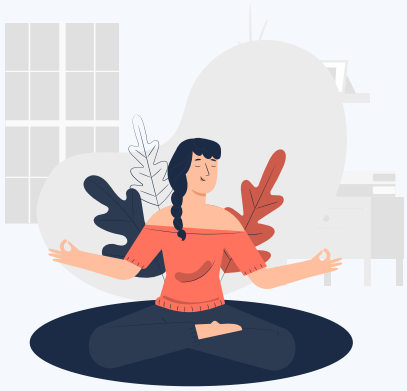
Which inner voice, relationship or condition most changes how you show up?

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

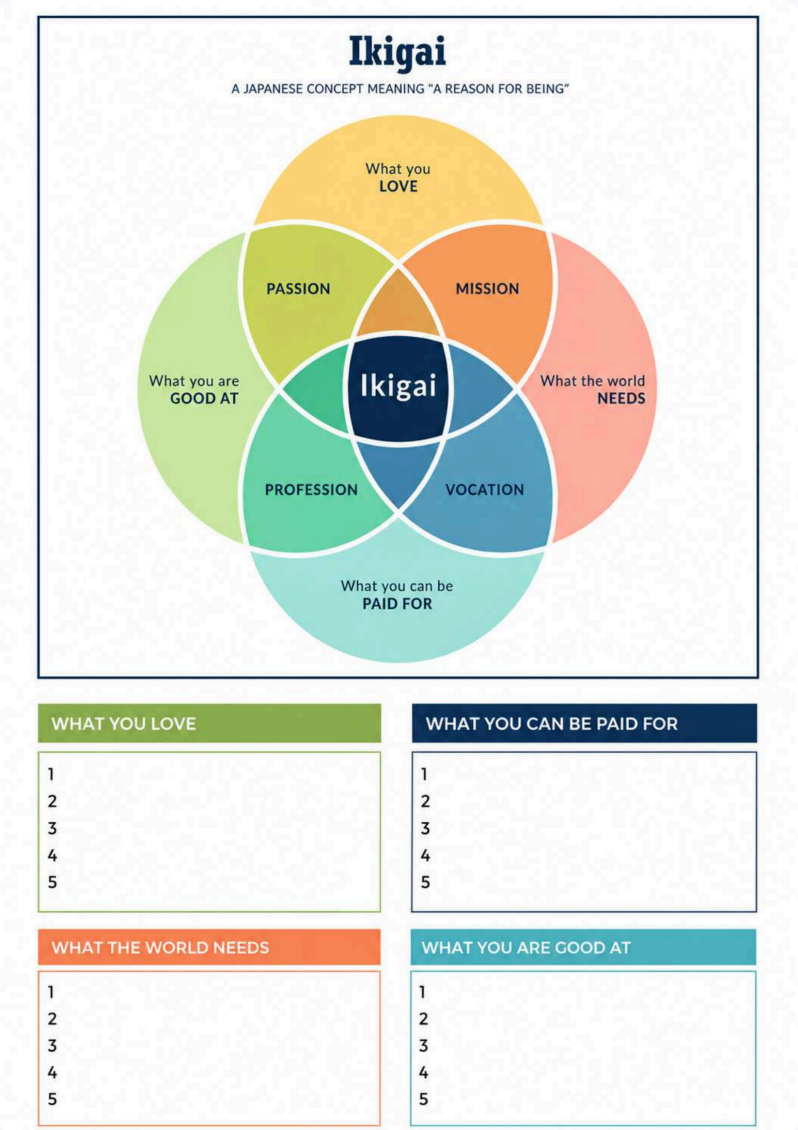
Case study

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.