

Thinking strategically in your research career

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What I hope you will get out of today

Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)



strategy

/ˈstrætɪdʒi/

noun

1. a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.

"time to develop a coherent economic strategy"

Similar:

master plan

grand design

game plan

plan of action

plan

policy



2. the art of planning and directing overall military operations and movements in a war or battle.

"he was a genius when it came to military strategy"

Similar:

the art of war

military science

military tactics

generalship

- Understand what strategic thinking is!
- Some ways strategic thinking can help you as you pursue your research career.
- Have 5 key elements of a strategic individual development plan
- Time to do some strategic thinking!

What is strategic thinking?

Strategic thinking is a process that involves considering the big picture and anticipating opportunities and challenges to guide an individual (or organisation) in achieving a goal.

Strategic thinking is an intentional and rational thought process that focuses on the analysis of critical factors and variables that will influence the long-term success.

For researchers - taking the time to:

- Find your ikigai!
- Think about your goals
- Understand your options
 - Plan and mitigate
- Review, celebrate and reassess

Why is strategic thinking important?

Many opportunities

Competitive landscape

Change is the only constant!

Better chance of getting resources

Make things better

Make a greater contribution in your role

Become more essential to your organization

Achieve personally

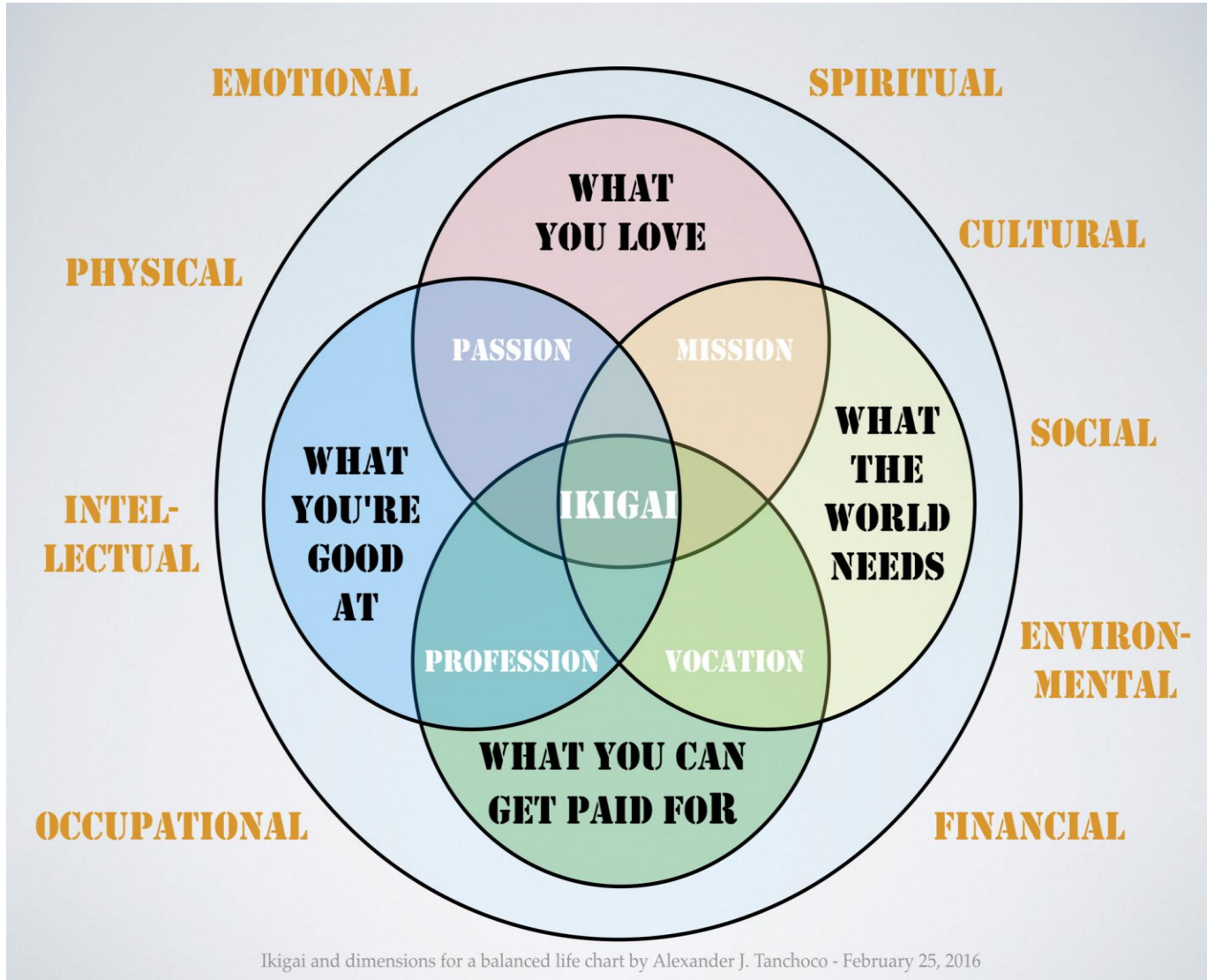
Anticipating, forecasting, and capitalizing on opportunities.

Many barriers

Helping people and patients

New trends

Finding your Ikigai?



Why do you want to do research?

What is your motivation?

It is ok if you can't pin-point your Ikigai to one thing or be able to articulate it now

Maybe you have a clear motivation

Maybe it is a few key things or more!

Maybe your Ikigai is to go with the flow and seize opportunities as they come

A key part of knowing what opportunities and goals are the right ones to take/have is understanding what you want first

Write it down!

Think about your goals?



Knowing what your overall purpose is or the career route you want at the moment

What goals might you set yourself?

What do you want to achieve

- This year?
- Next year?
- In 5 years?

These can be small things like

These can be bigger things like

A key part of getting to where you want to be is to set goals and review them regularly
Write them down!

Understand where you are, your options and gaps

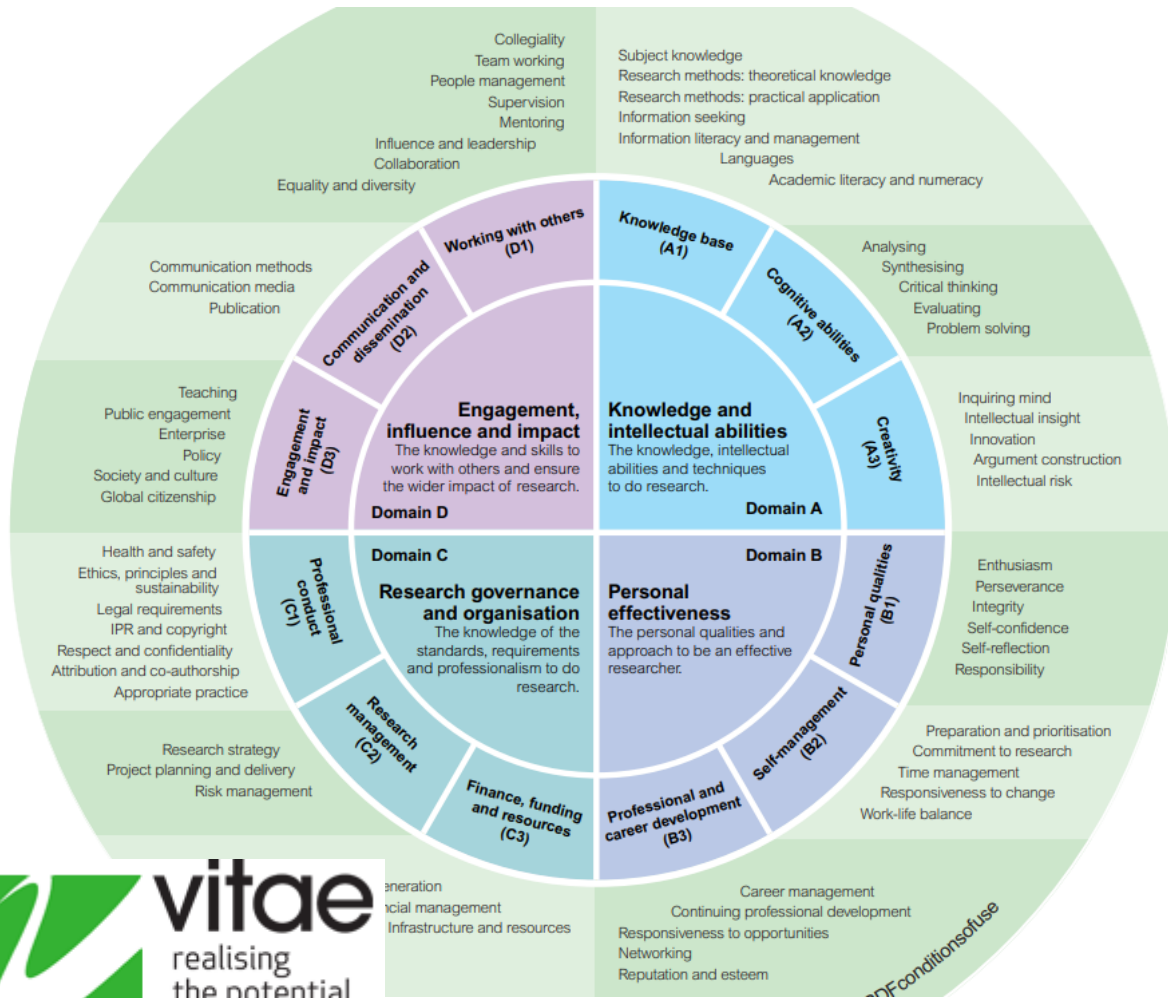
Now you have your goals, you can think about what you already have achieved, options and gaps
Write it down!

Collect together evidence of achievements (CV):

- Qualifications in research
- Publications
- Grants/Awards
- Other research activity:
 - patient recruitment
 - experience as a researcher through projects
- Your networks and support

Have you identified the skills that you have?

Any that you need to build on?





Plan and mitigate

What do I need to do and when to achieve my goals:

- Do you need funding first? Do I know the options and best ones to go for?
- Can I build in some of my goals into my current work?
- How will I fit in my personal development and learning?
 - Can I do this 'on the job'
 - Do I need to attend a training course?

You could break down each goal into a plan



Getting around road-blocks - how can I mitigate these?

- publications/grants/impact
- personal life
- Too many ideas and things to do
- Practice trade-offs – mixed roles, time pressures

Create multiple options and maybe some of the difficulties you may face

Write it down!

Review, celebrate and reassess



Regularly update your CV or your list of 'where you are at now' – 6 monthly-ish is good:

Tick off your plans/goals – get that dopamine 'feel-good' release.

Add new goals and plans

Celebrate your achievements with others and yourself

Adapt and thrive - Don't be afraid to try and fail! You are allowed to change plans



**Regularly celebrate, adapt, thrive and gain experience
Having a mentor can help you do this.**

Time to think strategically!

In pairs/groups of 3 (Break out rooms):

1. Introduce yourselves

2. Take one of the 5 points discussed in the session:

- **Ikigai** – What is your Niche? How would you describe your research?
- **Goals** – Map out some goals for ... this year, next year, 5 years time?
- **Options** - What options are open to you? What funding might you consider? How might you achieve your goals?
- **Make plans and mitigate** – Can you set some goals? short, medium or longer term. What skills do you need to build?
- **Acknowledge and reassess** – What have you achieved in the last 1-3 years? What are you most proud of? What might you change or do to move forward?

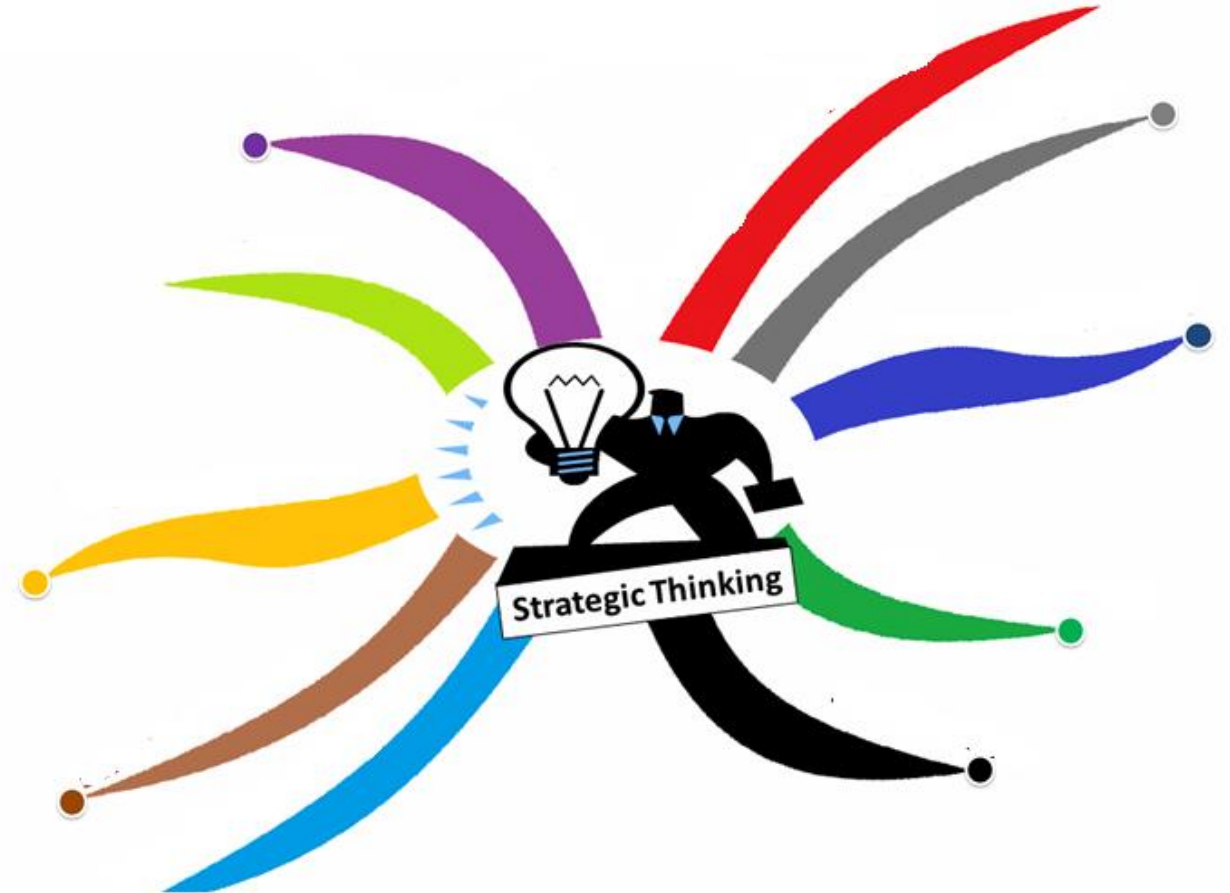
3. Each in turn discuss with your partner/group this area of your research career

4. Discuss another if there is time

Welcome back

**How did you find your
discussions?**

Time for a few
comments/reflections/
questions



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Useful resources?



[Researcher development framework](#)

[Short online course in planning](#)

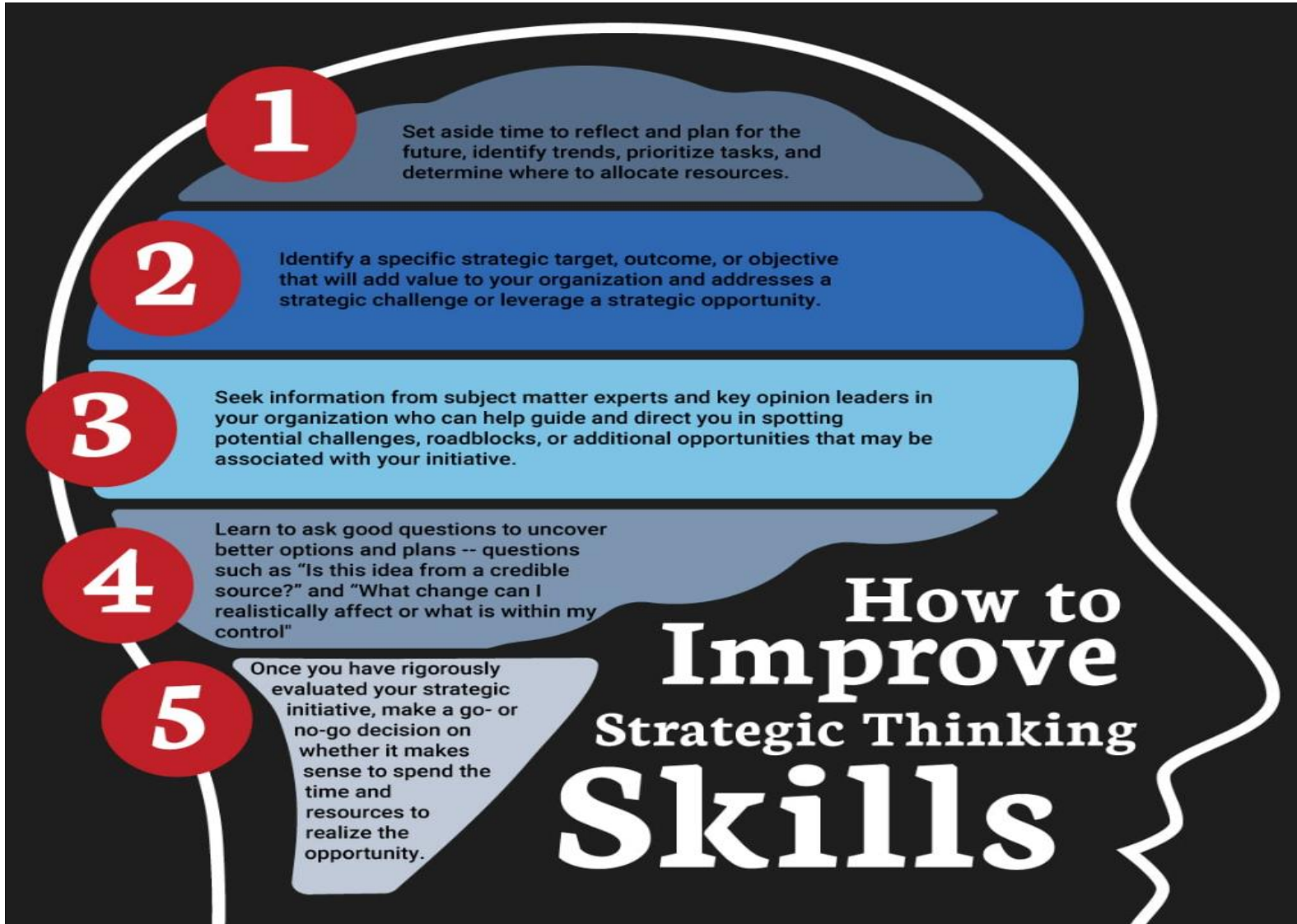
NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration
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Individual research plan template:

<https://arckss.glasscubes.com/share/s/89vk7gvkngs3pvatcacthabuud>

Mentorship

<https://arc-kss.nihr.ac.uk/learning-and-development/mentorship>



Thank you



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