

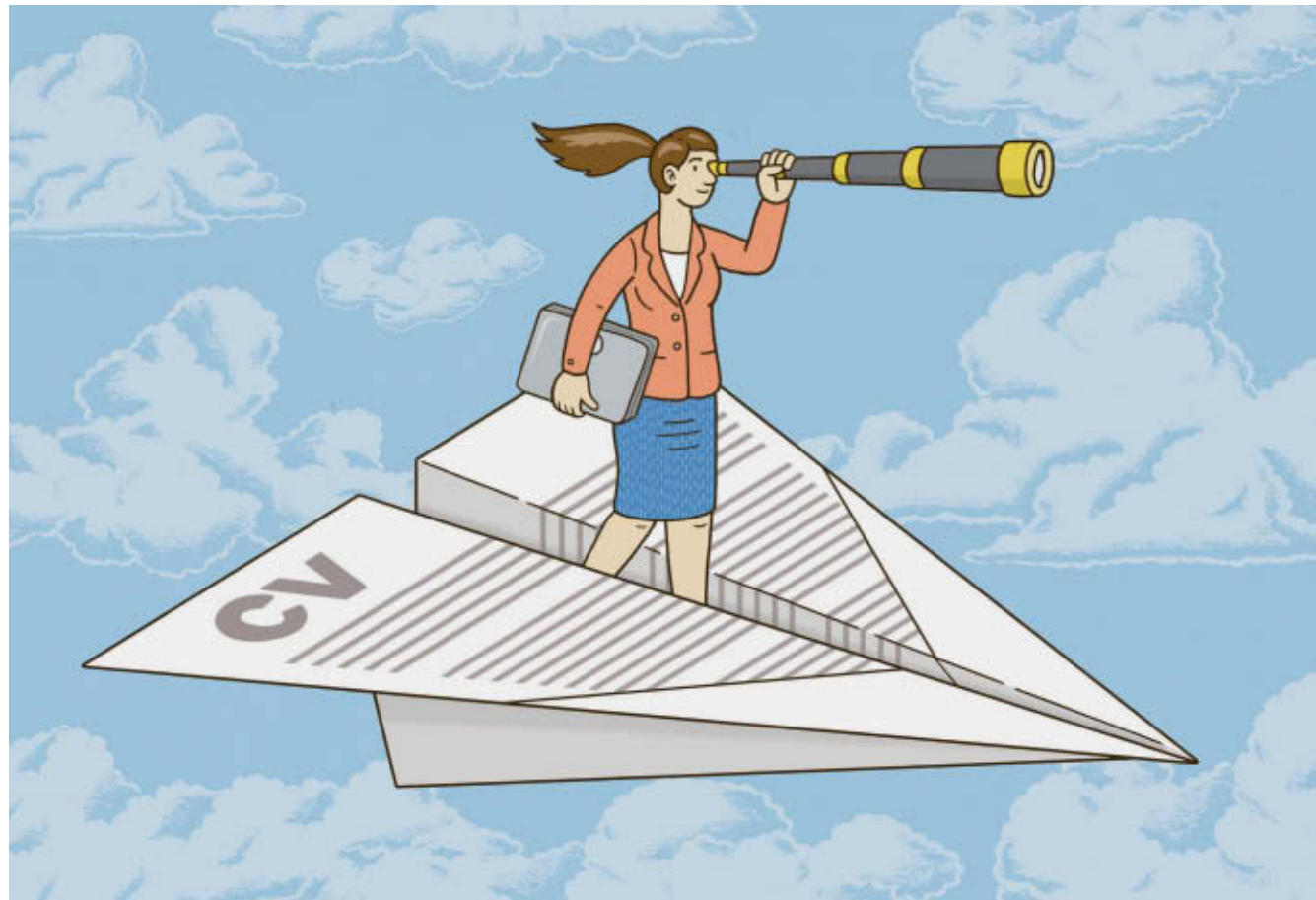
# 31 SUPERCHARGE YOUR CAREER

Are you in the right job? Now's the time to ask yourself the big questions, says **Phoebe Luckhurst**

In November — after being out of work for four months — Gareth Southgate bit the bullet and joined LinkedIn. Yes, that Gareth Southgate. “After eight years serving in one of the highest-profile roles in world football... I’m thinking deeply about what comes next,” the former England manager wrote in a post on the professional networking site. “I’m not limiting my future options to remaining as a football coach.”

From the dugout to the... boardroom? He’s used to pressure, big egos and towering stakes. Whatever comes next, though, in contemplating a career shift at all the 54-year-old is squarely of his generation. According to the think tank Phoenix Insights, a third of the current 45 to 54-year-old working cohort expect to change careers before they retire. And whatever your age, it’s quitting season: research by the V7 Recruitment firm found that 75 per cent of employees actively explore new opportunities during the month of January.

“There are two times when people reflect on a career,” explains Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health at the Alliance Manchester Business School at the University of Manchester.



The first is in summer, he says, and the second is “over Christmas, because you have a lot of reflection time — do I really want to do what I’ve been doing?”

If that’s you, first pinpoint why you’re restless. “Ask yourself, am I being challenged?” says Dina Grishin, a careers coach based in London with clients around the world. “Am I still engaged? Do I hate my industry? Am I still interested in the job but not my team? Really interrogate why you’ve fallen out of love.”

You might realise you have hit the ceiling in your current role and want a promotion. These conversations are daunting: come

prepared, with a presentation. “Make a case for why you should be promoted,” Grishin says. “What value have I added? How have I gone beyond my job?” If redundancies mean you’ve absorbed other responsibilities, “you need to self-advocate”, Grishin states.

You will have to make a compelling case: the UK job market is stagnating. Figures released by the ONS in October found that the number of vacancies decreased between July and September, marking the 27th consecutive quarter this has happened.

If you want a change, up is not the only way. You may not covet your line manager’s ergonomic office chair but are perhaps

curious about another department altogether, says Helen Tupper, the co-author of *The Squiggly Career*. You may be a candidate for a sideways move, or dropping down a level to find more job satisfaction.

“Let go of this idea that careers should look like a ladder,” Tupper says. “Move to a different department — it shows you’re progressive, you’re a learner.” It can help you get out of a rut too. “Just because you’re good at something does not mean it’s what you want to be known for.”

A “squiggly” move may involve a pay cut, which might not be an option for you. Still,

don’t rule anything out on principle. You may be making assumptions, Grishin says, “like it’s too tough, I have to start at the bottom, I have to take a pay cut”. Ask questions and do your research.

Whenever you’re agitating for a new role — internal or external — you need to create what Tupper calls “pull”. With a sideways move “your job title does not translate to the role you’re trying to get. You can’t rely on that. Your talents need to do the talking.” Show your prospective new boss what you can do, whether that’s meeting deadlines or pitching to clients. “You create ‘pull’ when you solve people’s problems,” she says.

creating one doesn’t have to involve greasing palms. Just keep in touch with interesting people you meet through work. “People’s networks are always their most underused resource,” Grishin says.

It is easier to fling yourself into the unknown in your twenties or thirties, when you may be renting and do not have any financially draining dependants. In your forties, and with a family, it’s harder to follow your dreams — although do look at the risk v reward pay-off. At 40 you may yet have almost 30 more years at work. Meanwhile, people in their fifties and sixties may have plenty to give but face ageism: statistics from the intergovernmental

## A SIDWAYS MOVE, OR DROPPING DOWN A LEVEL, MAY LEAD TO MORE SATISFACTION AND GET YOU OUT OF A RUT

It is also worth asking yourself if some of your frustration at work has anything to do with your boss. There’s that saying that people never leave a job, they leave a boss. Cooper, co-author of the new book *How to Be the Line Manager You Never Had*, argues that retaining and motivating staff is “to do with who your boss is”. “The problem we have in most developed countries is that people get promoted and recruited to management roles based on their technical skills, not their people skills,” he adds.

Tupper reckons that you need four types of people in your career. A mentor (“someone who has done what you would like to do”); a peer (“someone who’s going through what you’re going through”); a sponsor (“someone who has influence over an area you’re interested in — the head of a project, say”); and “someone who has the approach of a coach”.

Finding these four people underlines the importance of fostering your professional network. The word “network” makes most sensible people break out in hives, but

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that only a third of firms would hire someone aged 50-55.

Finally, if you’re feeling disengaged, the key to supercharging your career may — counterintuitively — be to find that mythical work-life balance. Think like Gen Z, who job-hop and refuse to settle for bosses who ask too much. “They are looking for the right culture fit,” Cooper says admiringly. “It’s not that they don’t want to work hard, but they don’t want to burn out.” Grishin also suggests looking at your free time. “How often do you see your friends? How and when do you end your days? How do you switch off? Just a little tweak can help you get some breathing space in your week.” Ta-dah — work no longer feels like the problem.

Time to stop scaling the ladder and make your job work for you. Cooper says the era of being a company man or woman is over. “Nobody stays in a job. People are churning a lot and I think they will continue to do so.” See you on LinkedIn, Mr Southgate.

lives with them,” says Oliver Zolman, a British doctor specialising in longevity.

### 32 Power-walk to stay lean.

As we up the intensity of walking, there’s a point at which we switch from burning fat to burning carbs. “It’s why bodybuilders power-walk to keep lean without burning muscle,” the running coach Sadkin says.



### 33 “Box-breathe” before sleep.

Harry Jameson, a personal trainer and co-founder of the Pillar Wellbeing health club, tells his clients to “box breathe” before bed. Picturing four sides of a square, you breathe in for four seconds, hold your breath for four, exhale for four, then hold for four. “Six rounds of that is a simple way to damp down stress hormones,” he says.

### 34 Embrace rest days.

“If you’ve done your 10k run on the Sunday and you are my client, we’re not touching the weights on a Monday,” Jameson stresses. “You will get a lot more benefit from a sauna or some breathing work.”

### 35 Track your hormones.

“There’s so much talk about perimenopause

and menopause, which is fantastic, but how do you know if this applies to you?” asks Sohère Roked, a GP and hormone specialist. She suggests that women track their cycles, even if it’s just on paper, looking for patterns in energy, mood, skin changes or bloating.

**36 Meditate.** “A moment to disconnect from the world



helps us to reconnect with ourselves and everyone else,” says Dora Kamau, a meditation and mindfulness teacher and podcaster at the Headspace app. First-timers only need to set aside as little as three minutes. “Choose a point of focus, such as your breath, that anchors you to the present,” Kamau says. “When the mind wanders, which it will,

gently return the focus to your anchor.”

### 37 Brush for your heart.

Studies have linked poor oral health to heart disease, diabetes and dementia. “Good brushing and regular visits to the hygienist set you up for the future, just like going to the gym,” says Anshu Sood, an orthodontist at the Helix House clinic in Nottingham. ▶