

# New year, new spark: 7 keys to ignite your purpose in 2024

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Tired of "same old, same old" mornings? As the new year starts, many of us have a desire for a fresh start, a chance to ditch the mundane and ignite our true spark. But beyond resolutions and gym memberships, lies a deeper quest: finding your purpose, your reason for getting up in the morning.



Image: Supplied

This isn't just a young person's game. Those in their 40s, 50s, and beyond – countless individuals are rewriting their stories, changing careers, and discovering fulfilment later in life. Forget age barriers, it's never too late to unleash your passion and make a difference.

In fact, a survey from the American Institute for Economic Research discovered that 82% of respondents aged 47-55 had made a significant career change. Most of those changes happened after age 45, and are successful and much happier due to the change.

I've had the privilege of witnessing several professionals discover their true calling and embark on a path of fulfilment and purpose. So often, we find ourselves 'stuck in a job', where we are in a rut doing things to check off boxes and have no significance in our daily lives; doing a job that drains our energy.

Working with your values and purpose is a great place to start if you want to enhance your motivation and clear your direction for 2024. Consider your goal to be clear about your abilities and strengths, as well as to share those gifts with the world and contribute significantly to the circle in which you work and live.

Here's 7 practical steps to guide you on your journey:

## 1. Embrace the intersection of talent, appreciation, and impact

Discovering meaningful work in today's dynamic work landscape demands finding the sweet spot where your talents, admiration from others, and belief in making a positive effect connect. It's that electrifying feeling of being completely in sync.

To get to this point, you must tune out the outside noise and listen to your inner voice, which holds the truth about your mission.

Begin by observing the trends of what people appreciate about you, especially in the moments you 'feel lost'.

## 2. Embrace transformative experiences

I have witnessed a remarkable pattern among those who have found their calling — often, it emerges from the vessel of challenging experiences. These defining moments, which can be painful, enlightening, or even life-altering, act as catalysts for redirecting one's path.

They shake us to our core, reminding us that we are only human and reshaping our priorities; ultimately leading us to meaningful work.

For example, I had this one client who lost his job during an organisation restructure. In our first conversation, it seemed as if he linked his identity to his job and found himself in a place of confusion. His journey to explore what is really meaningful opened doors in another industry altogether. Today, he is thriving in a new role, knowing that his contribution is impactful and aligned with what is important to him as a father and community member.

## 3. Courageously challenge the status quo

The true purpose is often born from the courageous act of challenging the status quo. Throughout history, inspiring individuals have dedicated their lives to effecting positive change, such as Nelson Mandela.

Whether it's breaking through societal barriers, combating injustice, or reigniting a community's spirit, answering your purpose requires boldness, purpose, and persistence.

It is also here where you need to step outside your comfort zone and embrace the uncomfortable feeling of "I'm not sure how to do this. What I do know for certain is I need to move away from this comfortable feeling of stress, change my behaviour and this must be done". One of the managers I coach asks every colleague to identify a few personal goals each year, working with their coaching groups to make this a reality.





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## 4. Role models and mentors

While discovering your purpose is a personal journey, it is essential to acknowledge the role of those who subtly nudge us in the right direction.

In my experience, clients frequently attribute their transformative moments to the impact of others — mentors, friends, or even colleagues supporting them in times of change. These people play an instrumental role in guiding you toward your purpose, often without even realising it.

Mentors, in my life, played a *huge* role. I still recall a conversation with a director in our business influencing my choice to take a promotion, steering me in a direction to pursue an opportunity I would not have had the confidence to do on my own.

## 5. Growth isn't linear – embrace the journey

I should emphasise that discovering your purpose should not be seen as a fixed destination but rather as an ongoing process of growth and evolution. Growth is also not a linear process. Think of a mosaic of putting all the small pieces together and the end product being different to what you would have imagined.

Once you identify your sense of purpose, the real work begins. It may involve acquiring new skills, pursuing further education, or even starting a business. Often, it leads to work devoted to serving others — a testament to the nobility of professions often underappreciated.

## 6. Don't let age stop you!

While some may discover their purpose at a young age, I have encountered countless individuals who stumble upon their true purpose later in life.

It's never too late to uncover your passion and pursue meaningful work. Embrace the belief that you have the power to find your purpose, regardless of age.

For me, after being in the corporate world for more than 20 years, I realised I was operating in a comfort zone. I was desperate for a change and wanted to impact more businesses than just the one I was working at. When I founded my business, I was not clear on exactly the services I wanted to render but I was clear on enhancing a human-centric environment where people and businesses can thrive.

## 7. Rewriting the narrative on wealth

The pursuit of a purpose does not always equate to chasing financial riches. Many stories I've encountered involve individuals who sacrificed higher-paying jobs for personally rewarding work.

The prevailing societal notion of pursuing wealth at the expense of purpose overlooks the profound satisfaction that comes from taking risks, working with integrity, and leading a life aligned with your true purpose.

## Final words

Finding your spark isn't a passive endeavour. It's a fight, a journey, a continuous search for meaning. And the rewards? Transformative careers, thriving communities, and a life that ripples with positive change.

HR managers and leaders, a reminder that it is our responsibility to foster environments where individuals can thrive and bring their best selves to work, and create safe workplaces so that they can speak up without being judged.

So, as you raise a toast to the new year, make a silent vow to fight for your spark. Reflect, strategise, and most importantly, embrace the journey with courage and an open heart. The world needs leaders committed to empowering others and creating workplaces that inspire greatness.

## ABOUT ANJA VAN BEEK

Anja van Beek is an independent leadership consultant, talent strategist and coach.

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