



**KNOW YOURSELF -  
IT MATTERS**



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# 1. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND YOURSELF?

Imagine launching an RPG game and charging at the dragon without knowing your characters statistics. Sounds absurd, right?

That's exactly what happens on the job market when you choose an internship or a field of study without knowing what you're good at, what excites you, or where your boundaries are.

Why are these questions important?

Because moments of full engagement — the so-called flow — are the simplest compass pointing to your strengths and values.

## Take a moment and ask yourself:



When was the last time you felt like time stopped while doing a task or hobby?



What exactly was fueling you in that moment — a talent (e.g., analytical thinking), a value (e.g., helping others), or perhaps the topic itself (e.g., ecology)?

## Mini-reflection summary:

Write down one word that best describes that experience (e.g., “analysis,” “creation,” “support”). That’s your first clue in building your “map of self.”

## Why does this clue matter?

In the next step, I’ll show you how to tell whether it’s a natural talent, a learned skill, or simply a subject you find fascinating.

# 1.1 WHAT IS „SELF-UNDERSTANDING“?



**Before we move on to the exercises, let’s agree on a vocabulary:**  
talent ≠ skill ≠ competence.  
This distinction will be useful in every conversation with a recruiter.

Element	Plain Definition	How to Identify It
<b>Talent</b>	“I do this more easily than others, without much training.”	In school/university, you didn’t need much practice and were still among the best.
<b>Skill</b>	“I learned this from tutorials or courses.”	Check how many hours of practice you’ve had doing this task.
<b>Competence</b>	“I can do this in a real situation, under pressure.”	Someone pays you or relies on you to deliver this outcome.

## Why should you care?

Because recruiters ask about competencies, mentors think in terms of talents, and you list skills on your CV. A clear distinction prevents misunderstandings.

## EXERCISE: “MY VALUES IN PRACTICE”

Learn this, so your CV and job applications aren't random but filtered through what really matters to you.

### STEP 1:

Write down your 3 core values.

### STEP 2:

List situations at work where each value would show up (e.g., during recruitment, onboarding, or a project).

### STEP 3:

Mark which values are “nice to have” and which are “non-negotiables.”

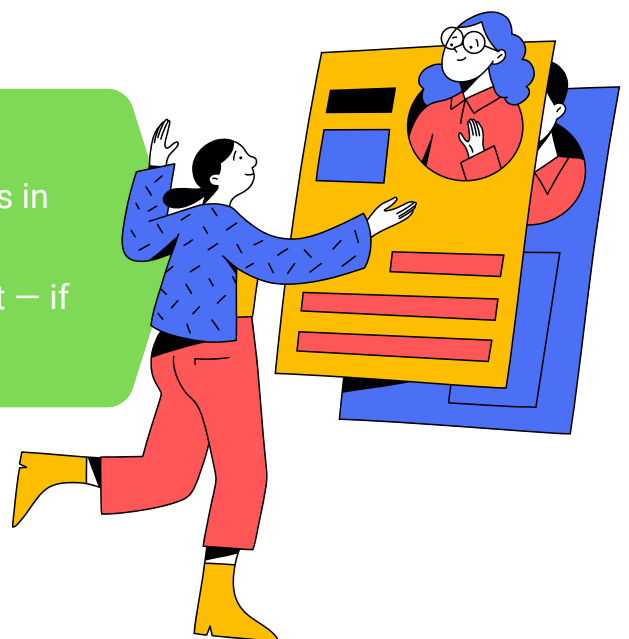
### STEP 4:

Write a question for the recruiter to check if that value is present in the workplace.

### Example (value = autonomy):

“How can employees propose their own solutions in your company?”

Tip: Treat the recruiter's response like a checklist – if your must-haves aren't there, move on guilt-free.



## First Micro-Step

Knowing yourself = flashlight. The brighter the light, the fewer random decisions.

## Your micro-step this week:

Pick one value from the exercise and use it as a filter while browsing internship listings. Take notes on which postings pass the filter and which don't — and why.

Remember this

There's no job that will meet all your expectations. Employment is an art of compromise — between your needs (meaning, flexibility, security) and the actual offer a company can make. Research on person–job fit shows full alignment is rare (Edwards et al., 2006). What matters is that the balance is positive — and the decision is always yours



## Final Tip:

For every new professional opportunity, ask yourself two questions:

1. “Which of my values does this job fulfill?”
2. “What inconvenience am I willing to accept in return?”

If the answer is “it’s worth the trade-off” — go for it.

If not — keep looking for a place where your flashlight shines brighter.

## 2. HOW TO DISTINGUISH TALENTS, SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES?

### 2.1 Explaining talents, capabilities, skills and competencies.

Before you start looking for a job or thinking about your future, it's worth getting to know yourself well — what you're good at, what you enjoy, and what you can develop.

To do this effectively, it helps to distinguish between a few concepts that often sound similar but mean different things:

**Talent** is something you're born with. It's a natural ease with something — for example, one person might have a talent for drawing, another picks up languages quickly, while someone else intuitively understands people and can immediately sense what others are feeling.

- Example: You always instinctively know how to defuse a tense atmosphere — that could be a talent for building relationships.

**Strength** is a talent that you've developed and practiced. It's not just something you have, but something you know how to use.

- Example: If you have a talent for storytelling and you practice it by performing on stage or managing social media — it becomes your strength.

**Skill** is a specific thing you can do — something you can learn in school, at work, on your own, or through experience.

- Example: You know how to make PowerPoint presentations, edit videos, write emails, cook, or manage your time.

**Competence** is a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitude that helps you perform well in different situations.

- Example: The ability to work in a team is a competence — because it requires you to understand collaboration principles, listen actively, speak clearly, and navigate differences effectively.



## 2.2 How to find your capabilities?

Sometimes it's hard to recognize what we're good at. Here are a few simple ways to start:

**Reflection** – Ask yourself: What comes easily to me? What do I enjoy doing? What do people often ask me for help with?

Example: If you're always the one organizing hangouts and everyone waits for your decisions – you might have a talent for organization.

**Feedback from others** – Ask friends, family, teachers: What do you see in me? What do you appreciate about me?

You might be surprised by what others notice that you don't give yourself credit for.

**Past successes** – Think back to times when something went well or you felt proud of yourself. What were you doing? What helped you succeed?

Example: Maybe you did well organizing a fundraiser, running a tournament, or having a tough but helpful conversation – all signs of your strengths.

Mini-reflection summary: Write down one example for each method - these notes will come in handy in the next exercise.

### Mini Glossary:

#### Talent ≠ Strength ≠ Competence






Term	Simple Definition	Quick Test – “Do I have it?”
<b>Talent</b>	Natural ease + fast progress without much training	You do it better than others after 1–2 tries
<b>Strength</b>	Skill + consistent results	You achieve effective results
<b>Competence</b>	Knowledge + skill + attitude	You do it well enough and enjoy doing it

### Why is this important?

A CV that lists “Word, Excel” says nothing. A CV that says “Prepared a sales report in Excel within 24 hours” shows real value immediately.

# EXERCISE: “FIVE TALENT CLUES”

**Goal:** To spot hidden talents that you can develop into strengths and eventually turn into competences.

Clue	Description	
Quick learning	You pick up a new tool or task in hours	
Energy	You feel energized after doing the task	
Repeat success	You've had success with it 2 or more times	
Intuition	You “see” the solution without analysing deeply	
Satisfaction	You're proud of it and love talking about it	

Check  next to the clues that apply to your tasks from the past month. Write down 3–4 tasks with at least 3 checkmarks each.

If you've identified a talent, plan your first development step (project/course) and put it in your calendar – this is how it becomes a strength.

**Now it's time to head toward the job market – maybe it's waiting exactly for the talents you mentioned earlier!**

## Your micro-step:

Recruiters see hundreds of CVs.

What makes yours stand out is a clear result backed by a real example.

Talents show potential, strengths prove you deliver.

Every six months, review these three areas:



Talents with no project? → Find a challenge



Competence going stale? → Refresh it with a course or hands-on practice.



## 3. JAK OSWOIĆ LĘK PRZED ZWOLNIENIEM Z PRACY

A **fixed-term contract** can feel like a prepaid phone plan — as long as there's "credit," it's fun, but in the back of your mind there's that nagging thought: "What if they cut off my signal tomorrow?" According to the OECD, young people on temporary contracts are **twice as likely** to report anxiety about job security compared to peers on permanent contracts.

### Why is this important to talk about?

Because chronic fear of being fired (job insecurity) drains the energy you could be using for growth and development.

### Pause for a moment and ask yourself:

- What exactly worries you the most — losing money, losing your reputation, or losing your sense of purpose?
- Which of these things do you have a Plan B for, and which ones do you have no plan at all?

**Mini takeaway:** Fear that's been named is a fear that can be tamed. In the next sections, I'll show you tools to turn those worries into clear, practical steps.

### 3.1 What is „Job insecurity“?

It's not necessarily the **certainty that you'll get fired**, but rather the **subjective feeling** that you might not be in control. Most common effects?

- You postpone courses or learning opportunities ("Why bother, they'll replace me anyway"),
- You accept every extra task — not out of ambition, but out of fear,
- Your confidence drops when negotiating a raise.

## Exercise: EU Employee Rights Checklist:

**Goal:** demystify the termination process and check what's actually at risk.

1. Grab your work contract + search for Directive 2019/1152 in EUR-Lex.
2. Highlight in your contract: notice period, reasons for dismissal, severance pay (if applicable).
3. Compare it with the directive – what's guaranteed, negotiable, or unclear?
4. Call a free legal aid point (you can find a list at your local employment office) to confirm any uncertainties.

*Just knowing your minimum notice period (e.g., 2 weeks instead of immediate dismissal) often reduces anxiety by a few points on a 1–10 scale.*

## Exercise: Competency Diversification Canvas

**Goal:** so that one employer isn't your only "charging station."

1. Divide a piece of paper or a document into 3 columns: Task | Competency | Alternative industries.
2. List 5 tasks you currently do at work or in volunteering.
3. For each task, name the underlying competency (e.g., data, storytelling, stress management, customer communication).
4. For each competency, write down at least 2 industries where it would also be valuable.
5. Mark the most frequently repeated competency → find a webinar, project, or mini internship in one of those new industries and sign up within 14 days.

*This builds your "employability cushion" — so you have a landing spot before a crisis hits.*



## Exercise: 3 × 4 Resilience Journal

**Goal:** lower physical stress symptoms and keep your head clear for decision-making..

Moduł	Czas	Co robić?
Box breathing	4 min	Breathe in a 4–4–4–4 rhythm (inhale, pause, exhale, pause)
Gratitude notes	4 min	Write down 3 things that went well today
Daily check-in	4 min	Share one small success from the day with a partner or friend

Practice for 7 days, tracking your stress level each day (1–10).

Most people see a 2–3 point decrease — and with less stress, it's easier to think clearly and take action.

Summary – 3 anchors for dealing with job insecurity:

1. **Legal knowledge** – you know your rights.
2. **Competencies** – you have a Plan B in a different field.
3. **Mental reset** – you manage stress daily, so it doesn't shut down your thinking.

## 4. HOW TO PLAN A CAREER FOR THE REAL WORLD?

Think of it like using navigation on your phone: **you enter the destination**, and the app shows you a possible route. If something changes along the way - like traffic or a detour - it recalculates the route, but never loses sight of the final goal. That's exactly how a career plan works.

It doesn't have to be a perfect 10-year roadmap. All you need is to define a **clear goal** (e.g., get your first job, learn a specific skill, try out profession X), come up with a few **steps you can take right now**, and assign **deadlines** to them. That gives you a reference point, so you can track your progress - and adjust the plan when needed.

Interestingly, a study of recent graduates in the UK found that those with even a **basic plan of action** (goal + steps + deadlines) earned **7% more on average** after three years than those who just "winged it." A plan won't guarantee success, but it **increases your confidence** that you're not going in circles — and that your decisions are moving you closer to what you want to do.

### Pause and ask yourself:



Do you know where you want to be in 3 years, or do you just "want a good job"? What does a good job mean to you? How will it feel? How will you work?



When was the last time you recalculated your route due to changes (e.g., new tech, a crisis in your industry)?

Up next: I'll show you tools to turn your "where to" into a map with checkpoints — and how to adjust it without panic.

**Exercise:** The Career Planning Mini-Glossary

Concept	Simple Definition	How to Recognize It in Practice
<b>Goal</b>	A desired state by a specific date	Can be written in one sentence + a deadline
<b>Milestone</b>	A measurable sign of progress	A certificate, completed project, or useful feedback
<b>Metric</b>	LA number that shows "done/not done"	% completed, salary level

Now you know where you're heading - and how to recognize progress along the way.

**Exercise:** The 3-5-7 Scenarios

**Goal:** Avoid tunnel vision when the job market shifts.

Horizon	Sample Headline	2 Key Skills
<b>3 years</b>	"Asia – Junior Data Analyst at an NGO"	SQL, Data Storytelling
<b>5 years</b>	"Asia leads the Analytics team in EdTech"	People skills, ETL
<b>7 years</b>	"Asia advises governments on Open Data"	Lobbying, Public Policy

**Step 1:** Write 3 of your own career headlines - no filters.

**Step 2:** List 2 key skills per headline.

**Step 3:** Highlight any skills that show up 2+ times - that's your development core.

### **Exercise: Prototype Career Experiment (PCE)**

**Goal:** Test a scenario on a small scale before investing years.

**Step 1:** Pick one of the recurring skills from 4.4.

**Step 2:** Find a micro-project ≤ 20 hours (e.g., hackathon, volunteering, job shadowing).

**Step 3:** After completing it, fill out a PCE reflection:

- What engaged me?
- What drained me?
- What evidence did I gather?

**Step 4:**

- If the result is "+", add the skill to your Roadmap (see 4.6).
- If the result is "-", revisit your scenarios and recalculate.

### **Final Thoughts**

After doing these planning exercises, you might realize something important:

**you don't need to know everything from the start — you just need direction and to act.**

A career plan isn't a rigid script you have to follow step-by-step. It's more like a **map you create to avoid getting lost**. And if things change along the way? You're allowed to recalculate, change your mind, and set a new goal.

The key is making **conscious decisions** based on what matters to you. Even a simple plan — what I want to achieve + what I can do this week/month — gives you a sense of control and motivation.

You don't need to know where you'll be in 5 years.

You just need to take **one step today** that moves you closer to where you want to be.

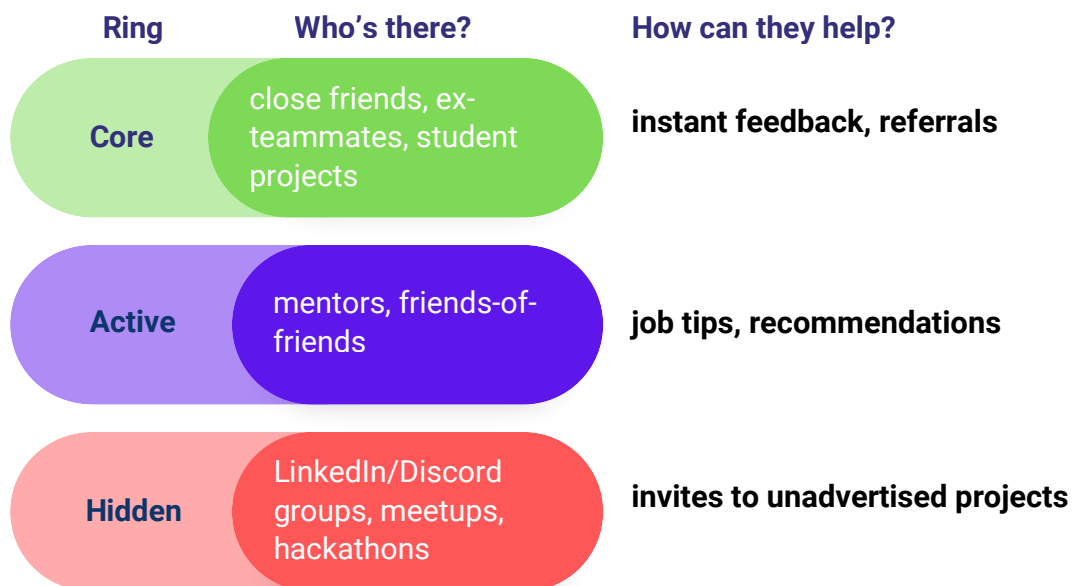
The rest, you'll learn along the way.

## 5. HOW AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR ADVICE?

Imagine a bakery where the best pastries disappear before they even hit the shelves - they're reserved for the regulars. The job market works in a similar way: research shows that **70–80%** of hires happen through networks before a job ad is ever made public. When you see an interesting job posting, do you have three people you could ask for the behind-the-scenes scoop?

When was the last time you helped someone with a job lead (a link, feedback, or contact)?

### Exercise: Mini Support Network Map



**Why make this map?** Because otherwise, you treat every contact the same - like trying to use one key for every lock.

### Exercise: Concentric Network Map

**Goal:** Spot gaps and plan small actions for the next 30 days.

**Step 1:** Draw 3 rings and fill in at least 5 names or groups per ring.

**Step 2:** Write a micro-action next to each one (a comment, sending an article, a virtual coffee).

**Step 3:** Pick two people from the Active ring - those are your targets for first contact this week.

**Tip:** It's not about "selling yourself" - it's about value exchange. Start by giving, not asking.

## Exercise: Informational Interview – 5 Questions

**Goal:** Get insider knowledge and be remembered as someone proactive.

### Use this template for a 15-minute conversation:

1. “What are the biggest technical challenges your company/industry is facing right now?”
2. “What skill do juniors most often lack when starting here?”
3. “What’s the recruitment process like from CV to offer?”
4. “What’s the most common mistake you see candidates make?”
5. “What advice would you give yourself five years ago in this field?”

### How to use it:

- Send a personalized message requesting 15 minutes (LinkedIn or email).
- Take notes; after the chat, thank them and share one insight you applied.

Your professional network won’t build itself - but it doesn’t have to be hard to build either. In this section, you’ve learned how to take the first step: map your connections, start a valuable conversation, and set up an informational interview. Small actions like these can snowball into major career opportunities over time.

Remember: networking isn’t about asking for favours. It’s about value for value. Treat your relationships with care and attention, even if you don’t know yet where they might lead. One helpful habit is to write down every time you help someone - or they help you. This makes it easier later to talk about referrals and reminds you that you have something to offer.

Building a network isn’t a sprint - it’s a process. Start with two messages and one short call.

The rest will follow as long as you keep showing up.

## 6. TESTS AND SURVEYS – HOW TO USE PSYCHOMETRY CONCIIOUSLY?

**Psychometrics** is a field that helps measure psychological traits - such as personality, talents, work style, or motivation. A well-chosen test can help you understand yourself better, identify the environment where you thrive, and start making more informed decisions.

**But a word of caution:** tests are just tools. They don't give answers - they help you ask the right questions and name what already exists within you.

### Why take questionnaires and assessments at all?

To understand what you're naturally good at.



To better choose your career or academic path.

To find the right words to describe yourself in your CV and during interviews.

To build self-confidence and make better decisions

# 6.1 HOW TO SELECT TESTS? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?



## 1. Your Natural Talents and Strengths:

**CliftonStrengths (Gallup)** – reveals your 5 dominant talents and how to use them

- Paid (approx. \$20–50)
- Best taken with a certified coach or trainer for interpretation

**VIA Character Strengths** – shows your core character strengths (e.g., creativity, perseverance, gratitude)

- Free (basic online version)
- A good starting point for self-reflection

## 2. Personality and How You Operate:

**16Personalities (MBTI)** – describes your personality type (e.g., INTJ, ENFP), how you make decisions, learn, and work

- Free (test + online description)
- Popular but simplified – treat it as a starting point, not a final answer

**DISC / Insightful Profiler / FRIS®** – reveal your thinking and action style in teams, under stress, and when making decisions

- Paid (available through career counselors, trainers, or coaches)
- Useful for professional development and better understanding of how you function at work

## 6.1 HOW TO SELECT TESTS? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?



### 3. Learning and Working Style:

**VARK Learning Style** (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, reading/writing)

- Free
- Helps you discover how you best learn and retain information

**RIASEC Test (Holland Codes)** – shows which types of jobs suit you (e.g., realistic, artistic, social)

- Free versions available online (or through a career counselor)
- Great for people unsure where to start in their career exploration

### 4. Motivation and Values:

**Reiss Motivation Profile** – identifies what truly drives you and what you need in life and work (e.g., independence, order, recognition)

- Paid
- A deep tool, often used in professional career counseling
- 

**Career Values Tests** (e.g., Values in Action)

- Free versions available online or through career centers
- Helps match you with a job and work environment aligned with your values

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## 6.2 Test completed – now what?

The result of a psychometric test is only the beginning – its true value emerges when you truly understand it and apply it to decisions. That's why it's worth discussing your results with an experienced career advisor or consultant who can help you see the bigger picture, ask the right questions, and show possible directions. A specialist can also help you distinguish the actual result from an overinterpretation and support you in connecting the insights with your real-life context. It's an opportunity to see your strengths more clearly and make better use of them.

### **It's not about believing everything the test "spits out."**

#### **Ask yourself:**

- What surprised me?
- What fits with my experience?
- What can I do with this in practice?

You can also talk it over with someone you trust – others often see things we overlook ourselves.

#### **What to watch out for:**

- Don't treat the result as a label – it's just a clue, not the "ultimate truth"
- Don't compare yourself to others – everyone has a different set of strengths, and that's OK
- Don't base major decisions solely on a test – always combine it with reflection and conversation with another person

#### **Use it wisely, not magically**

Tests and questionnaires are like flashlights – they help you shed light on what's inside you. But you decide what to do with that insight. Choose mindfully, write down your conclusions, talk about them, and treat the results as a tool for building your path, not a ready-made map.

If you're curious – pick one test, take it, and see what new things you can discover about yourself. It might be the start of an interesting journey.

## 7. MINDSET – A MUSCLE, THAT GROWS FROM SMALL OVERLOADS

**Imagine a hand in a cast** – the longer it’s immobilized, the weaker the muscle becomes. A **fixed mindset** is like that mental cast: “I can’t do it – end of story.” Now swap the cast for a resistance band: small, daily movement builds flexibility. That’s the **growth mindset** – “I can’t do it yet, but I can stretch into it.” Research on 90,000 people shows that even short growth mindset exercises improve learning and work outcomes – small but steady progress.

### FixeFixed vs. Growth – A Quick Thought Scanner

Situation	Fixed Thought (brake)	Growth Thought (stretch band)
Feedback: "Too many mistakes"	"I'm hopeless."	"I don't get it yet – what's the first thing I can improve?"
Job offer in a new industryJ	"That's not for me."	"Which 2 skills can I already transfer?"

#### Why this exercise?

Naming the mental brake makes it easier to release – and that’s exactly what the next steps will help you do.





## EXERCISE: FLIP THE “YET”

01

Write down one self-limiting sentence, e.g., “I can’t present or speak in public.”



02

Add the word “yet”: “I can’t present or speak in public yet.”



03

Add a 10-minute micro-action you can do tomorrow (e.g., “Watch one TED Talk and note what the speaker does with their hands.”)



04

Practice – apply new behaviors in conversations with others, in casual situations, and build confidence through action.



**Remember:** one task a day is enough – it’s about consistency, not a marathon.

# EXERCISE: THE JAR OF MINI-SUCCESSSES

01  
Grab a jar or box and some small notes.



02  
Every evening, write down one small win (e.g., "I asked a question in the course chat.")



03  
After a week, pour out the notes – look at what you actually did, not what you feel like you didn't do.



04  
60-second reframe: when you think "I never get anything right," open the jar and read 3 random notes.



**Growth mindset isn't a talent or an innate trait** – it's a choice you can make every day. Sometimes, one small step is enough to shift your thinking. The more often you act on it, the more flexible and supportive your mindset becomes.

## **It's not magic – it's practice.**

When you start noticing your thoughts daily, reframing them, planning your how and what, and celebrating even the tiniest wins, you slowly quiet that inner voice of doubt.

Just a few minutes a day – but done regularly.

## **Try it for a week.**

Start with one "fixed" sentence and turn it into a "yet" statement.

In the following days, add notes to your success jar.

After a week, see how much has changed – and how much more is in you than you thought.

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# HIRE-FIRE. AVOIDING FAILURES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

This e-book has been developed by the HIRE-FIRE project team of youth workers, educators, career advisors, and young people, who teamed up to assist you in avoiding the common mistakes at the beginning of your professional journey.

To be able to support you, we are working on:

- Learning platform, offering a course on how to avoid the common mistakes in navigation on the labor market .
- Short informative videos offering solutions to the main problems and mistakes presented in this e-book.

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