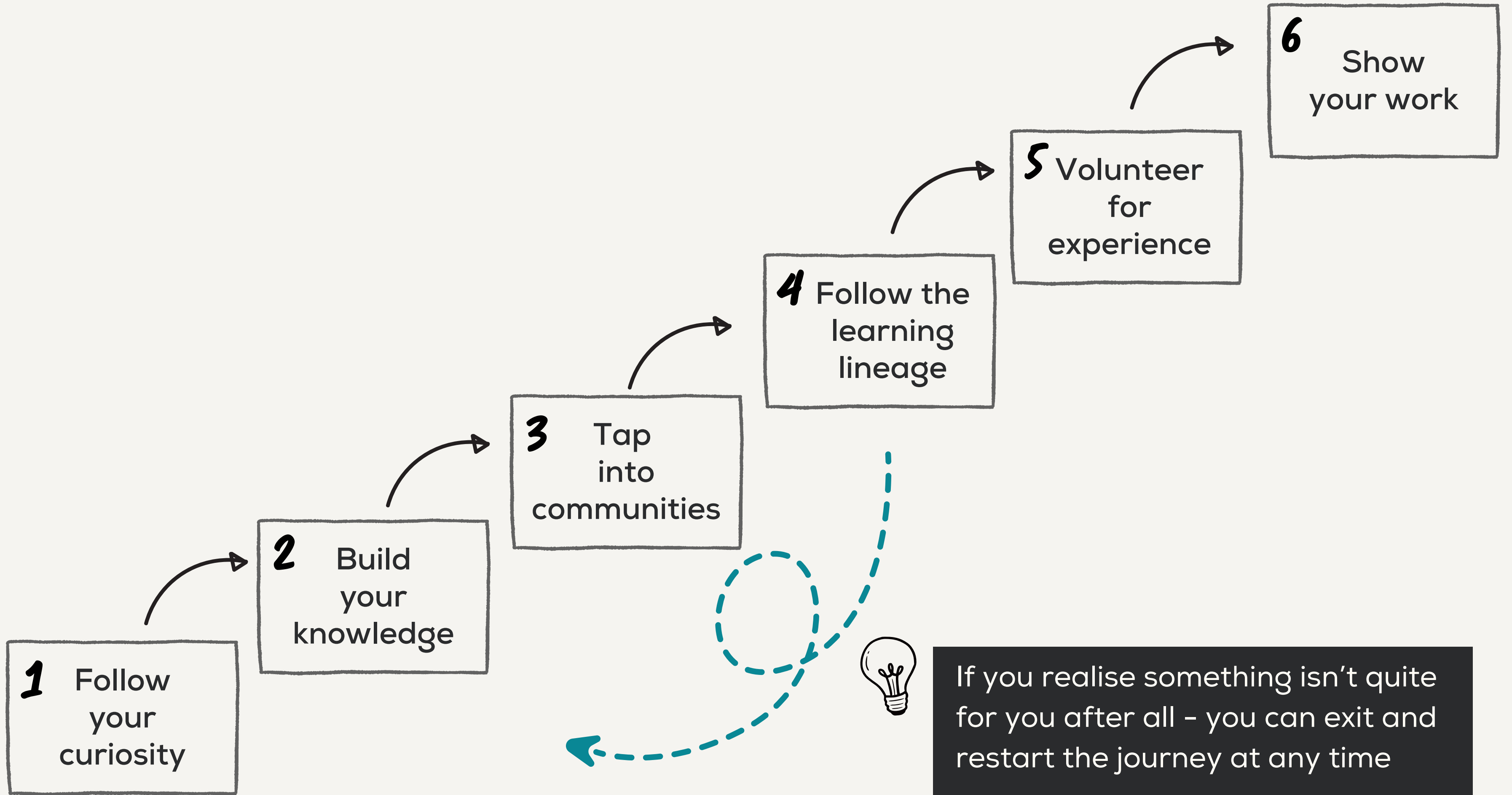


# Hack the System

## *BUT HOLD THE DOOR*

A capability building guide for  
the modern professional





## STEP 1

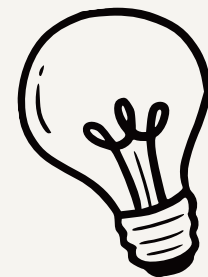
# Follow your curiosity

Curiosity is the starting point for meaningful growth.

- What are you curious about right now?
- Why do you find it interesting?
- What problems exist in the world that could be solved by leaning into your curiosity?

## Try this:

- Write down 2–3 areas or job roles that spark your interest (e.g. “UX design,” “ethical AI,” “DevOps,” “open source projects”)
- Jot down why they interest you or what sparked your interest.
- Google these job or roles and identify 2–3 areas you want to explore first (e.g. biases, ethics, operating principles)
- Take note of what feels exciting or unfamiliar (that’s your learning edge).



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# Follow your curiosity

Before you sign up for a course, start with the people already talking about it. The internet is full of rabbit holes; use that to your advantage.

- If someone you admire quotes a book or references a tool – don't stop there.
- Read the book. Try the tool. Google the original quote.
- Let one good source lead to the next. This is what we mean by "follow the breadcrumbs."

At first, everything sounds insightful – every podcast seems brilliant, every tool claims to change the game. But the more you read, the more you refine your judgment.

You'll start to distinguish:

- Good content from garbage
- Real trends from passing hype
- People solving real problems vs. those just posting for clout

***YOU'RE NOT JUST BUILDING KNOWLEDGE, YOU'RE BUILDING CONTEXT AND DEVELOPING DISCERNMENT.***

## STEP 2

# Build your knowledge

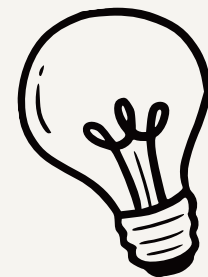
Learn from people you agree with – and those you don't.

- Whose voices are you learning from?
- Who do you agree with? (Why?)
- Whose voices don't you agree with? (Why?)

Be sure to learn from diverse voices, and sources. Exploring different views allows you to evaluate your own.

## Try this:

- Identify 3–5 credible voices in the space.
- Look for practitioners, not just influencers.
- Search podcasts, LinkedIn, Medium, YouTube, or blogs.
- Bookmark a mix of free resources: articles, podcasts, YouTube channels, GitHub repos, newsletters.
- Compare different perspectives – even opposing ones.
- Use a tool like Notion (or even a simple Google Doc!) to create a learning resource list.



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# Build your knowledge

The best voices aren't always the loudest – they're often the ones just quietly doing the work.

Start by identifying people who:

- Work in roles you're curious about
- Share thinking that challenges or stretches you
- Talk less about “how amazing they are” and more about how things actually work

Then, follow the chain:

- Who do they quote?
- What newsletters do they recommend?
- Have they spoken at meetups, on podcasts, or written long-form pieces?

As your list grows, so does your learning tree; a map of thinkers, builders, and writers who can shape your own thinking. This isn't just learning, it's research that helps you find your voice.

***YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM THEORY, BUT YOU WILL LEARN THE MOST FROM THOSE DOING THE WORK***

## STEP 3

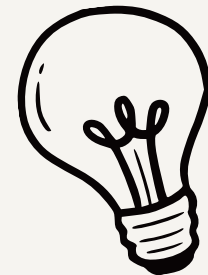
# Tap into communities

You learn faster with others – even as a quiet observer.

- Which communities would serve me best: Remote, on person, or both?
- Which spaces could I join this week?
- What am I most excited about learning from a community?

## Try this:

- Join Slack groups, Discord servers, Reddit threads, Meetup.com or even LinkedIn groups in your area of interest.
- Lurk a little! Get a feel for how people interact, and if the community is a good fit.
- When you're ready, introduce yourself.



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# Tap into communities

To grow, put yourself near the action. Even if you don't feel ready to contribute yet, proximity still matters. You learn as much (or as little) in a field from those you surround yourself with.

Find where the work you want to do is actually happening. Look for:

- Slack or Discord groups
- Webinars or practice sessions
- Meetup talks or online conferences

Then:

- Lurk a little. Learn how people speak, what tools they use, what problems they're solving.
- Start to notice patterns – and gaps. Those gaps are your entry points.
- Introduce yourself (at least once). Ask one question. Research the tools and terminology.
- Reach out to friendly voices to learn more. Those who are passionate about the work love talking about it.

**LEARN THE LANGUAGE. UNDERSTAND THE FIELD. GAPS WILL EMERGE, THIS IS WHERE YOU BEGIN.**

## STEP 4

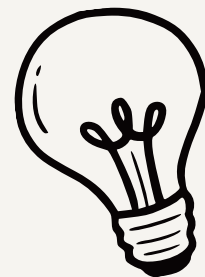
# Follow the learning

Everyone you admire learned from someone they admire, too.

- Whose path inspires you?
- How did they start?
- Who are your heroes? Who are their heroes?
- What makes them more interesting, compared to others?

## Try this:

- Look them up on LinkedIn or podcast guest lists.
- What roles, skills, and communities shaped them?
- Who did they learn from? Who do they follow?
- Which books are they reading?
- Whose names do they casually mention in conversation on podcast interviews?



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# Follow the learning

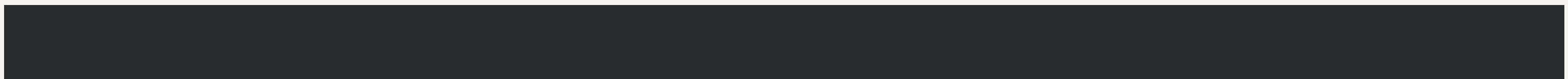
Once you've found someone doing the kind of work you love – become a curious detective.

- Look at their LinkedIn – not to compare, but to learn.
- What roles have they had? What industries have they worked in?
- Google them – have they written or spoken anywhere?
- Pay attention to who they quote, cite, or recommend.
- Go back another layer: who influenced them?

You'll start to see that every expert is standing on the shoulders of other thinkers.

Create your own “learning lineage” – a tree of influences that helped shape your field.

This helps you:

- Learn faster
  - Think more critically
  - And eventually, shape your own voice in the space
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## STEP 5

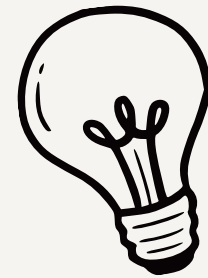
# Volunteer for experience

You don't need a job title to gain real-world skills.

- What are simple ways to get involved?
- Where could you offer your skills while you learn?
- How can you start building proximity to practitioners in your communities? (We learn by spending time with knowledgeable people, too)

## Try this:

- Offer help to an NGO, a student project, or a small startup
- Join an open-source project – fix a bug, improve docs, or suggest UX tweaks
- Frame your contribution as “here’s what I can offer while I learn.”
- Add the experience to your CV or portfolio
- Talk about it on your social platforms



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# Volunteer for experience

The fastest way to build confidence (and capacity) is to contribute to something real.

Look for places where:

- Your skill (or interest) overlaps with a real need
- People are open to beginner participation
- You'll get a glimpse of how real work happens in your chosen field

This might look like:

- Improving documentation on an open-source tool
- Joining a civic tech hackathon
- Helping a nonprofit redesign or test their sign-up flow
- Supporting a community-led project

You'll be rewarded with feedback, practical skill building and something tangible to add to your CV

***YOU'LL HAVE A STORY TO TELL IN INTERVIEWS OR PORTFOLIOS THAT SHOWS INITIATIVE, LEARNING, AND COLLABORATION.***

## STEP 6

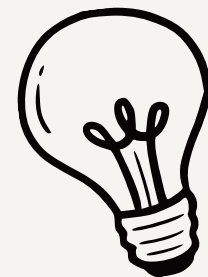
# Show your work

Visibility builds credibility.

- What is one interesting thing you learned this week?
- What are you most curious about?
- What are you working on?
- Which events have you attended, or are planning to?

## Try this:

- Document what you're learning or building. Share what you find most interesting
- Reflect on what you've learned in a short post on LinkedIn
- Start a blog, a Medium page, or a BlueSky thread. Or, just share inside your community group



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# Show your work

Learning is powerful. But sharing your learning is what helps it stick (and helps you get noticed).

Creating visibility for your work helps you:

- Reflect more deeply
- Get feedback
- Build credibility (especially when you don't have formal titles or credentials yet)

You don't need a fancy portfolio to begin. Start small:

- A screenshot of something you're working on
- A short LinkedIn post or blog article:
  - "Here's what I'm trying / learning / struggling with"
  - An experiment that went wrong – and what you'd do differently next time

*YOU'RE NOT SHOWING OFF. YOU'RE SHOWING UP.*

# Plan of action canvas

## 1. MY CURIOSITY

What am I drawn to right now in tech or design? (*Fields, tools, problems, roles, or people that spark something for me*)

→ I'm curious about:

## 2. MY KNOWLEDGE PLAN

Who's already doing great work in this space?  
(Podcasts, YouTube, LinkedIn, Medium, etc.)

→ I want to learn from:

How will I track the best free resources I find?  
(e.g. Notion, Google Sheets, bookmarks)

→ I'll use:

## 3. MY COMMUNITIES

Where can I go to find like-minded people?  
(Slack groups, Discords, meetups, webinars, LinkedIn groups)

→ I'll explore, or join:

## 4. MY ROLE MODELS

Who do I admire – and what can I learn from their journey? (Look up their path, influences, content)

→ I'm inspired by:

→ They learned from:

## 4. MY FIRST CONTRIBUTION

Where could I volunteer or contribute while I learn? (NGOs, open-source, student projects, side gigs)

→ Possible opportunities:

## 5. MY FIRST CONTRIBUTION

How will I show what I'm learning or building?  
(Posts, blogs, LinkedIn, GitHub, design portfolio)

→ I'll share my work by:

# Made with **LOVE** (and coffee) by goya



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Innovation Consultant

Behavioural strategist, CX  
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 [skye-forrester](#)

*\*Feel free to share this document with anyone who may find it useful.  
This document is a work in progress - Follow Tess on LinkedIn for new updates!*

## ***UX & UI DESIGN***

- [Springboard](#): Free UX Design Course
- [UX Writing Hub](#): Learn UX Writing for free
- [University of Michigan](#): Introduction to User Experience Principles and Processes
- [Skillshare](#): Figma UI UX Design Essentials
- [Code Academy](#): Introduction to UI and UX Design
- [Udemy](#): Free User Experience (UX) Design Courses and Tutorials

## ***CX DESIGN & JOURNEY MAPPING***

- [Alison](#): Customer Experience Design
- [HP LIFE](#): CX for Business Success
- [Class Central](#): CX - Customer Experience Management
- [Coursera](#): Customer Experience Courses
- [Atlassian](#): How to create a customer journey map
- [HubSpot Academy](#): Creating a Customer Journey Map

## ***SERVICE DESIGN***

- [Swiss Innovation Academy](#): What is Service Design
- [Uxcel](#) – Service Design Basics

## ***HUMAN-CENTRED DESIGN & DESIGN THINKING***

- [Acumen Academy](#): Introduction to Human-Centered Design
- [Canva Design School](#): Field Guide to Human-Centered Design
- [Open University](#): Design Thinking
- [Udemy](#): World of Design Thinking

## ***PRODUCT DESIGN***

- [Udacity](#): Product Design Intro
- [Supercharge Design](#): Introduction to Product Design
- [User Experience Database](#): Product Design Course

## **GENERAL**

- MIT OpenCourseWare
- Harvard Online (via edX)
- Stanford Online
- Open University
- University of Oxford: Podcasts
- Coursera
- Udemy