

Identity Red

Navigating Transition Assessment Results

Understanding Your Identity Red Score

Your Navigating Transition assessment has identified Identity as a red zone. What this means is that right now, your capacity to maintain a coherent sense of professional self during this transition is significantly stretched. This is often the deepest and most unsettling of the three constraints.

What Identity Red Actually Feels Like

You might recognise some of these experiences:

- Not knowing how to answer 'What do you do?' anymore
- Feeling like you've lost your professional credibility or authority
- Struggling to explain who you are without referencing your previous role
- Imposter feelings – doubting your competence even in areas where you have extensive experience
- Difficulty seeing yourself in new roles or contexts
- A sense of professional grief or loss that others don't seem to understand

These experiences reflect a genuine identity transition. Your professional self was built around specific roles and contexts – when those change or end, the identity work of rebuilding becomes necessary.

How Identity Fits the $M \times L \times I$ Framework

Your Navigating Transition assessment measures three dimensions that multiply together: **Motivation \times Learning \times Identity = Transitioning Capacity**. Identity plays a particularly foundational role. A disrupted sense of professional identity actively undermines both your motivation (why bother when you don't know who you're becoming?) and your learning (hard to acquire new skills when you can't envision yourself using them).

Common Patterns When Identity Is Red

Role-Identity Fusion

Your professional identity was so closely tied to a specific role or organisation that losing that context has created an identity void. Without those anchors, you struggle to articulate who you are professionally.

Credibility Collapse

Your professional credibility was built through years of experience in a specific context. Outside that context, you feel like a beginner again – despite having valuable expertise.

Identity Grief

You're grieving the loss of a professional identity that took years to build. This grief is real and needs processing, but others often dismiss it.

Future Self Disconnect

You can't envision yourself in new roles or contexts. When you try, it feels inauthentic. This isn't lack of imagination – it's insufficient identity capacity to hold multiple possible selves simultaneously.

What Usually Doesn't Help

- **Personal branding exercises:** Creating a LinkedIn headline feels artificial when you don't know who you are.
- **Extensive self-reflection:** Spending weeks on personality assessments without taking action creates analysis paralysis.
- **Trying on identities:** Adopting new professional identities wholesale without building the underlying capacity feels fraudulent.
- **Minimising the struggle:** 'Just move on' dismisses the genuine identity work that transitions require.

What Actually Helps

Separate Identity from Role

Your professional identity isn't your job title – it's the capabilities, values, and approaches you bring regardless of context. What remains true about your professional self even when the role changes? That's your portable identity.

Allow Parallel Identities During Transition

During transitions, you don't need one clear identity – you need capacity to hold multiple possible selves simultaneously. 'I was X and I might become Y or Z' is a perfectly valid identity position during transition.

Build Identity Through Action, Not Just Reflection

New identity emerges through doing things, not just thinking about things. Small experiments where you act 'as if' you have the identity you're building creates the experience that gradually makes it real.

Three Small Actions You Can Take

Action 1: Write Down Three Things That Are Still True (10 minutes)

List three things about your professional self that remain true regardless of your job title. Not 'I was Head of...' but things like 'I help people solve complex problems' or 'I create clarity from confusion'. These are your portable identity elements.

Action 2: Give Yourself One Permission (5 minutes)

Complete this sentence: 'During this transition, I give myself permission to...' Could be permission to not have all the answers, permission to be uncertain, or permission to take longer than expected. Write it down.

Action 3: Have One Conversation This Week (30 minutes)

Talk to one person about something professional – not a job application or formal networking, just a conversation. The goal is practising professional identity in a low-stakes setting.