

How to reinvent and find your purpose

Finding one's *ikigai* - a Japanese concept that means "a reason for being" - and creating a life with meaning seems to be more of an imperative than ever before. And while industries are being disrupted, new professions invented and careers reimagined, the pursuit of purpose can seem wholly overwhelming.

 By [Amelia Brown](#) 18 Mar 2020



Johannie van As, senior copywriter and director, She Says Cape Town, media consultant and author Vanessa Raphaely, creative director of Nick & Barry Karin Barry, founder and CEO of RushTush Rushda Moosajee, head of marketing and communications at Zeitz Mcoaa Annicia Manyapelolo, partner and head of strategy at M&C Saatchi Abel Makosha (MK) Maja-Rasethaba and Anelde Greeff, co-director of She Says Cape Town. Image credit: Estee de Villiers.

Reinvention can take on many forms – some more understated and organic, others more dramatic and intentioned – as the panellists shared at the first SheSays Cape Town event of 2020. On 10 March, media consultant and author Vanessa Raphaely, partner and head of strategy at M&C Saatchi Abel Makosha (MK) Maja-Rasethaba, head of marketing and communications at Zeitz Mcoaa Annicia Manyapelolo, creative director of Nick & Barry Karin Barry and founder and CEO of RushTush Rushda Moosajee shared their stories of getting unstuck.

The panel was moderated by Anelde Greeff, co-director of SheSays Cape Town, who guided the conversation with questions around what reinvention means to the panellists; how to know when it's time to reinvent and how to set a change in motion; how to remain motivated, creative and innovative; and how to handle failure.

There were 6 key take-outs from the event:

1. Do the same, but different

Managing a career and motherhood is often a catalyst for change. For Barry, reinvention has meant doing the same work in a different way.

“ I'd become part of a big machine, and it became apparent that it wasn't going to work anymore. My reinvention was out of necessity – I'm a 40-year-old woman, I don't need to ask someone when I can go and have my hair cut. So I decided to go on my own. Do my thing, own my own time: The hours I work I get paid for. I don't have to sit in a building when there's

nothing to do. I don't have to work on weekends. I just run my own life, because I can. ”

Cue loud applause.



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Becoming a mother demanded conscious changes in Maja-Rasethaba's domestic and work life, too. "When I was on maternity leave, I had this massive fear that I was going to get back to work and I was going to hate it and miss my child," she shared. "I did have the mom guilt, but I also found that I loved getting back into the rhythm. I love working in advertising – all the excitement, the deadlines. This is where I thrive. But I also love being a mom, and I love rushing home to my child. So it was less about reinventing who I am and more about reinventing my life to be able to suit my new reality of being a working mom."

“ Because time has become so precious with all the other pressures I have in my life, I have to be far more intentional with what conversations I engage with at work and how I'm going to make an impact in the short eight hours I have at the office. ”

2. Check in with yourself

Raphaely described her reinvention as a survival strategy. "Fifty years old is a lot of years old to be, and you look at the second half of your life – the second act – and if you're anything like me, you think 'I'm too young, I've got too much to do.' I didn't want to do the same thing. Freedom, autonomy, bravery – finding some kind of bravery in myself is what propelled me."

She referenced Steven Spielberg's quote about "listening to the whisper".

“ It's important to move your way through shouts and screams to find those little whispers. Especially for women because we often are told to suppress our needs and desires; we're told if we're ambitious, we're pushy; that if we're strong we're somehow a danger to other women. There's a lot of bad messaging around. Sometimes the first prize is hearing a whisper inside yourself saying you can do it and this is right for you. Sometimes it's very, very quiet. ”

Manyaapelo emphasised the importance of being true to yourself. "Check your temperature. Check you're still happy in whatever you're doing. I think it's important that we become very intentional with our lives and the things that we choose to do. Because time is precious, and you want to be in a place that is affirming and makes you happy."

Maja-Rasethaba cautioned about falling into the shiny, socially motivated reinvention trap and losing yourself. "We live in precarious times: There's a lot of pressure, especially for young people, to put out a certain image that maybe isn't true to who they are. When people think about reinventing themselves, it can often be for the wrong reasons. At your core, you never need to be reinvented."

3. Be curious and find your tribe

Manyaapelo's career has spanned advertising agency life, broadcasting, magazines, retail and the arts, and she attributes her constant reinvention to her curiosity.

“ I don't think there's one single purpose that we all have to strive towards. We evolve as human beings, life changes, you get an opportunity to do something you never thought you could do. I know it's hard for people to leave their comfort zones, but I will say follow your curiosity. Follow the thing that pulls your heartstrings and if you can, carve out a career that leads you to those things... But do it carefully and have some savings! ”



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Moosajee advises placing yourself in an environment where people are going to inspire you. “If you're feeling uninspired, you need to look at the five people around you. Select them carefully. Are they on the same wavelength as you? Are they adding value? Are they asking you difficult questions about yourself? If they don't serve you, I know it sounds ruthless, but chuck them.”

4. Stay humble and trust the timing

According to Manyapelo, “it's not just about waking up and suddenly doing it. Take your time, understand what it takes, create connections, study what you want. There's nothing wrong with being in a job: There's joy and dignity in working, in being able to get up every day and go and work on something and be part of a community and business.”

Having kindness for yourself is something that Raphaely encourages. “Two very important things: perspective and patience. Taking a deep breath. Taking some time. Evaluating. Listening to wise people.”

5. Learn from your failures

Maja-Rasethaba shared the story of her failed DJing side-hustle, a weekend gig that, although successful, sucked the joy out of music for her. “I had to make a choice: Is it worth investing all of this time and energy into something that maybe didn't fulfil me as much as it did on paper, or focus on my actual job? The lesson was that failure is good; it's necessary. Without it, we can't learn.

Manyapelo thinks it's important that parents teach children that it's okay not to win all the time. “As humans we're not perfect. We live in a society where we're expected to win all the time and it's unnatural. It's important for us to experience different parts of ourselves; some not so good, some great.”

6. Play to your strengths and put the work in

For Moosajee, being flexible, adaptable and trusting her gut have served her in her pursuit for “something more”. After leaving a career in the agency as a designer, she fell into fitness organically, but the common thread through it all has been her ability to communicate.

“ My purpose is about helping other people. I did that only because of communication. I was authentic to myself, and women would come to me because they saw themselves in me. The intention has to be there to deliver your best service, your best self, and something that you believe in. You need to back yourself, but you also need to have the work ethic of a horse. Put in the hours, the behind-the-scenes that no one sees. ”



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The panel all agreed that reinvention can only happen when you've put in the hard work.

Like Raphaely, too, Manyapelo spoke of having a solid foundation. "Do the best with what you have in the moment; be good at it, be solid in it, so that people will call you to come and do the next big thing."

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Want to get involved? Email capetown@weareshesays.com.

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