

NOBEEL

TRAILBLAZER

MAGAZINE



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“Resilience doesn’t just get you through hardship, it transforms hardship into growth, pain into purpose, and faith into fuel.”

-FOPE

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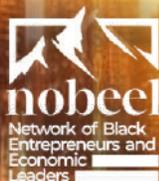
My mindset was simple, if my accomplishments were enough to earn the award, that was fine, and if not, I was still content.”

-DR SOMTO

“

These are your Codes of the Future: Competence, Collaboration & Coaching. Embrace them with agency and urgency, and you will not merely participate in the unfolding future; you define it.

-DDK



CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE
A reflection on purpose,
progress, and the collective power of the NOBEEL network. **01**

2024 NOBEEL TRAILBLAZER INTERVIEW
— Dr. Somto Igboanugo **03**

MESSAGE FROM OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER
“Codes of the Future: Positioning Gen Next in Global Trade,
Tech & Talent” — DDK **05**

**25 UNDER 25:
THE NEXT GEN OF CHANGEMAKER**
Celebrating Exceptional Young Leaders Shaping the Future **06**

FEATURE STORIES

**THE RESILIENCE CURRENCY:
A PAGE FROM THE BLACK EXCELLENCE PLAYBOOK**
— *F'opefoluwa Jolugbo* **09**

“SELL YOURSELF, EVEN BEFORE THE JOB”
— *Tumilara Dauda, MBA | Nestlé UK* **12**

**THE TECH NURSE:
“CURIOSITY OPENED THE DOOR FOR ME.”**
— *Erioluwa Ajibade* **13**

**THE AI ADVANTAGE:
LEADING MARKETS, JOBS AND INNOVATION
IN THE NEXT DECADE** — *Dr. Kachy Jumbo* **15**

**SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE FUTURE OF
LEADERSHIP FOR GEN NEXT** — *Elham Fardad* **16**

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

*“Focus on planting seeds of thought. Have meaningful
conversations that spark productive ideas.”* **18**
— **ZAHRA 'TUL-JANNAH AHMED AJETUNMOBI**





CONTENTS

*“Don’t just think about what you want to do;
begin to do something toward it.”*

— **Bejay Mulenga**

19

ARTICLES FROM NOBEEL

RESILIENCE AS CURRENCY

A Practical Playbook For Founders and Professionals

20

Skill and Growth: The Currency of the Future

*Empowering the next generation through competence,
creativity, and continuous learning.*

23

Career Paths Beyond 9–5

*Exploring flexible, innovative alternatives to traditional
jobs, from freelancing to entrepreneurship.*

24

Data Outside Analytics

*Exploring how data shapes our world beyond numbers,
in culture, creativity, and community*

25

Voices on NOBEEL: Empowerment in Action

*Celebrating what members, awardees, and entrepreneurs
have to say about NOBEEL’s impact*

26

Photo Speaks

27

Our Sponsors

30

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Lady Ifeoluwa Oyatokun
(Executive Director)

This magazine is an extension of that mandate.

NOBEEL Magazine is more than a publication; it is a **Playbook, Mirror, and Megaphone.**

A **playbook**

– sharing strategies, tools, and pathways so that success is no longer accidental, but structured and repeatable.

A **mirror**

– reflecting the excellence, courage, and innovation already present in our communities, so we no longer doubt what is possible.

A **megaphone**

– amplifying the voices, stories, and solutions of Black entrepreneurs, professionals, and allies who are shifting economic narratives across the world.

Dear Changemaker,

When I first began to sit across the table from Black founders, professionals, and young visionaries, I noticed something that both inspired and troubled me.

On one hand, I saw brilliance and ideas that could redefine industries, leadership instincts sharpened by lived experience, and an unrelenting desire to build something better than what we inherited. On the other hand, I saw underestimation, of self, of value, of possibility. Too many of us were negotiating against ourselves before we ever reached the table.

NOBEEL was born as a response to that tension.

The Network of Black Entrepreneurs and Economic Leaders (NOBEEL) exists to change the terms of engagement for Black people in business, leadership, and wealth creation. We are not simply advocating for “a seat at the table”; we are building the rooms, designing the tables, and equipping our people to own the buildings.

In these pages, you will encounter stories of people who chose to *build anyway* – despite systemic barriers, limited access, and the pressure to shrink. You will find conversations that do not romanticise hustle, but honour resilience, smart strategy, collaboration, and rest. You will read insights that move you from inspiration to execution – whether you are a start-up founder, mid to senior professional, investor, policymaker, or student mapping out your next move.

My hope is that as you read, three things happen:

1. **Your vision expands.**

That you begin to see your career, business, and wealth journey as part of a much larger economic story for the Black diaspora – one in which you are not a passive character, but an architect.

2. **Your confidence deepens.**

That you are reminded that you are not “lucky to be in the room”; you are *needed* in the room. Your skills, your story, your cultural intelligence, and your perspective are economic assets.

3. **Your action sharpens.**

That you leave each edition with at least one decision to make, one conversation to start, one door to knock, one system to build, or one young person to mentor

At NOBEEL, we believe economic empowerment must be **multi-layered**:

- It lives in policy and boardrooms.
- It lives in contracts and equity stakes.
- It lives in how we price our services, negotiate our salaries, invest our income, and collaborate with each other.

We are building an ecosystem – summits, clinics, accelerators, mentoring, and platforms – that support you across these layers. This magazine captures that ecosystem in print, so you can carry it with you, revisit it, and share it.

As you turn each page, I invite you to read with a pen in hand and a question in your heart:

“

What will I do with the access, insight, and opportunity I now have?

Because ultimately, NOBEEL is not about me, nor even about the organisation itself. It is about **you**, the entrepreneur refusing to settle for survival, the professional preparing for the next level, the student daring to dream in full colour, the leader designing systems that outlive you.

Thank you

for lending us your time, your attention, and your trust.
Thank you for choosing to build wealth, influence, and legacy with intention.
Thank you for being part of a generation that will not merely talk about equity, but **engineer** it.

Welcome to NOBEEL Magazine.

Welcome to the network where your potential is seen, your ideas are taken seriously, and your growth is not negotiable.

With conviction and expectation,

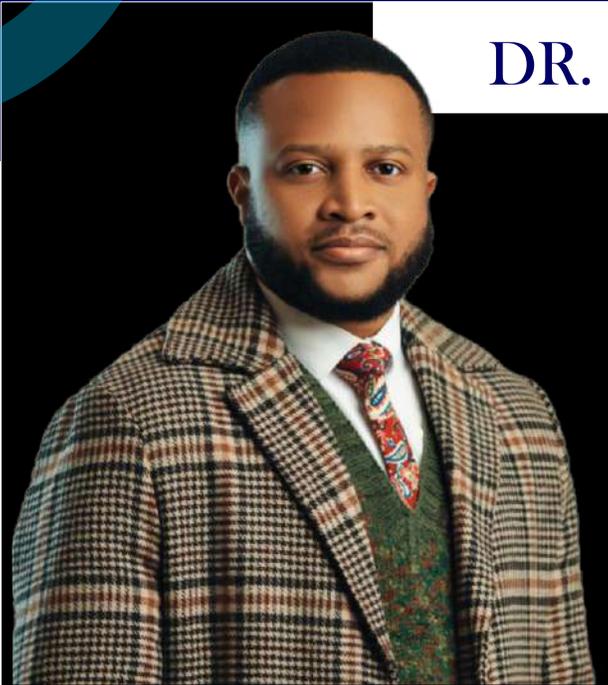
Lady Ifeoluwa Oyatokun
(Executive Director)

– NOBEEL –
**Network of Black Entrepreneurs
& Economic Leaders**



2024 NOBEEL TRAILBLAZER INTERVIEW WITH

DR. SOMTO IGBOANUGO



Who are you at your core, beyond the titles and accolades?

At my core, I believe that leadership or life success is not measured by position or titles. A title should never change who I am; instead, I strive to remain humble and grounded. For me, true impact is found in the ability to positively influence people, inspire them, and help them pursue a greater vision. I am, at the heart of it, a simple man committed to making a positive difference wherever I go, and I deeply value relationships because I see people as the greatest asset.

Was there a moment, a spark, or a struggle that lit the fire in you to become who you are today?

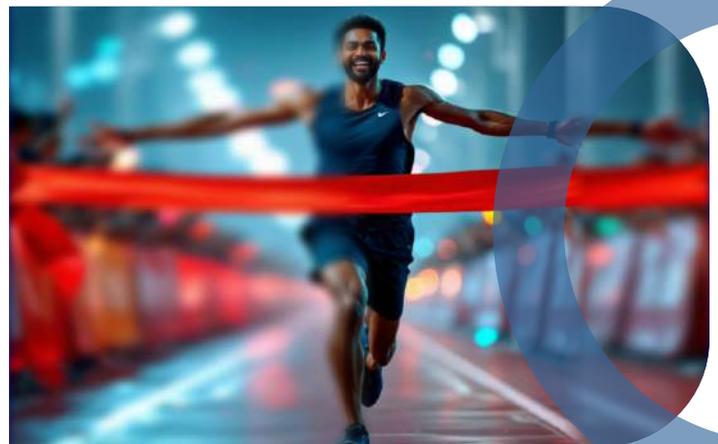
I can't point to one single spark that changed everything, but rather a series of positive sparks along my journey. I was raised with a mindset of always leaving a place better than I found it. That upbringing shaped a heart for service and a constant question I carry with me: "How can I add value here?" Instead of focusing on what I can get, I focus on what I can give, not what I can 'have', but what I can 'add'. That value-addition mentality has been the driving force that continues to push me into new levels of growth and achievement.

For young people reading this who are still figuring things out — what truth do you want to plant in them?

The truth I'd want to plant is this: *Your worth is not defined by what you have or what people say about you — it's defined by who you are created to be, and what value you*

What's one challenge that almost stopped you when you were nominated as a trailblazer last year and what pulled you through?

To be honest, I didn't face any real challenge. I've never been a person driven by titles or accolades, so I felt no pressure. My mindset was simple — if my accomplishments were enough to earn the award, that was fine, and if not, I was still content. Either way, I remained at peace and focused on the bigger picture, not the prize.



add to society. You carry a unique light within you, and the world is waiting for that light. Don't try to copy others, instead, discover your own voice and let it shine. Start where you are, with what you have. keep showing up and making that small positive impact.

How do you stay innovative and relevant in what you do?

I have an ever-growing appetite for knowledge and learning, and that keeps me up to date with innovation. I believe knowledge is the key to staying relevant the more you learn, the more you can adapt, create, and lead with fresh ideas.

What dream are you chasing next, and how can the NOBEEL youth rise with you?

I am commencing my writing journey this year by releasing two books I believe will be life-changing for young readers: *I Shine: How to Impact Your World God's Way* and *No Filter: Discovering the Real You Beyond the Noise*. I believe every young person needs to read these books because they speak directly to identity, purpose, and the power of influence.

My dream is to see a generation of young people equipped with clarity and courage to live authentically and make impact wherever they are.

The NOBEEL youth can rise with me by embracing these truths, applying them in their daily lives, and becoming living examples of the change we want to see. By standing together as a community of light-bearers, we can inspire others, transform culture, and show that young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow

— We are leaders today



Trailblazer

Message from Our Keynote Speaker

Codes of the Future:

Positioning Gen Next in Global Trade, Tech and Talent

We stand at a defining cusp of this decade, where a new generation stands ready to rise to the frontlines in trade, technology, and transformative innovation. Believe me, this is your Era of Execution, and I want to share the Prophetic Pointers, the "Codes", that will empower you make the Majestic Moves required to seize this unprecedented opportunity.

First, commit to Multiplying Competencies. Talent is beautiful, but it must be discovered, developed, and diligently deployed. Cultivate an appetite for rigorous, research-driven, life-long learning that positions you as star-grade in your field.

Secondly, learn to Leverage Strategic Coalitions. Collaboration is the new currency of speed and excellence. As I often say, find your "Mars Group", those thoroughbred minds who ignite your fire for visionary execution as you ignite theirs.

Finally, honour the power of High-Value Coaching, Counselling and Mentorships. Approach every mentorship relationship with a mindset of mutual value exchange, superior relational intelligence and personal/social awareness.

I am deeply proud of you, and I know you will rise to lead the world we've long envisioned.

These are your
Codes of the Future:
**Competence,
Collaboration,
and Coaching.**

Embrace them with agency and urgency, and you will not merely participate in the unfolding future; you will define it.

— **Debola Deji-Kurunmi**



25 UNDER 25

THE NEXT GEN OF CHANGEMAKER

Celebrating Exceptional Young Leaders Shaping the Future

Across continents and communities, a new generation is stepping forward with brilliance that cannot be ignored. They are founders, builders, scholars, inventors, policy voices, creators and quiet reformers. They are challenging old systems, designing new ones and reimagining what is possible for people of African descent across the world.

Introducing **25 Under 25**, a spotlight on exceptional young leaders whose talent, vision, and impact are shaping the future. This edition is more than a celebration of achievement, it is a declaration of identity, capacity and future readiness. These are young leaders who do not wait to be invited into the room. They create rooms, build tables and open doors for others. Their work reflects competence, conviction and an uncommon sense of responsibility. From breakthrough innovations to courageous advocacy, from community leadership to global excellence, each honouree demonstrates what it means to lead with purpose before the world is watching,

They represent the next class of changemakers, bold thinkers with the resilience to stay, the wisdom to build and the vision to shape the future with intention.

This is The Next Gen of Changemakers. And their journey is only just beginning.

MEET THE NEXT GEN OF CHANGEMAKERS

CYBER SECURITY ANALYST

Who recently completed a four-year degree apprenticeship with NHS professionals about safeguarding the digital world through clear, effective security solutions

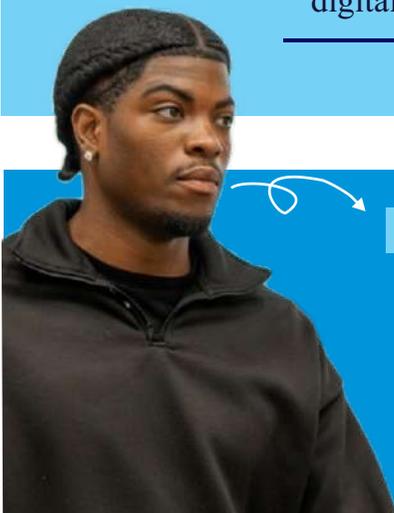
JAYDEN AYEH



FINAL-YEAR BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE STUDENT

And aspiring Medical Doctor whose passion for medicine was shaped by early hospital experience; a faith-driven young leader with experience in student leadership, youth projects, internships and academic support roles.

F'OPEFOLUWA JOLUGBO





MISS AFRICA 2024 FINALIST

And computer science student at University college Birmingham, embodying purpose, intellect, and service. A mental health advocate supporting young people through awareness and lived experience. Through her pageant platform, she raises awareness and funds for BulliesOut and Birmingham city children's Hospital. Passionate about sustainability and agricultural development in Ghana.

EMMANUELA TWUMASIWAA

VICE PRESIDENT

of the Student Representative Council, recognised for her commitment to student leadership and active representation on campus.

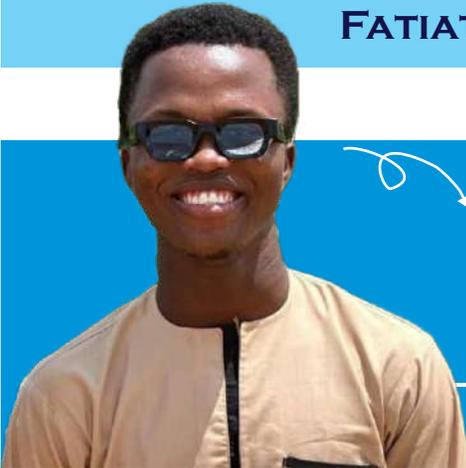
FATIAT ADEDAMILOLA ADEDIGBA



YOUTH LEADER

who helped execute the Prime Time Conference, served as Faculty Vice President, and contributed to launching the first TEDx event in his community

MORAKINYO AKINOLA DAVID



FIRST-CLASS GRADUATE

and record breaker who has led multiple initiatives, mentored juniors, and served in ten leadership roles across three organisations.

TESTIMONY IFEOLUWA OGUNWALE





FOUNDER OF A THRIVING EVENT PLANNING BRAND

built from scratch; lead coordinator for major youth initiatives, including Ignite Conference, impacting over 1,300 young people.

TUMI HAROUN



A MULTIFACETED CREATIVE

specialising in graphic and brand design, creating visuals that drive visibility and impact. He also works as a data analyst and content creator.

BAYONLE MAKINDE



A COMMITTED YOUNG LEADER

who consistently leads by example and inspires others through her service and student evangelism initiatives.

OLOWOPARIJA BLESSING

The Resilience Currency:

By F'opefoluwa Jolugbo

A Page from the Black Excellence Playbook



My story didn't begin in a lecture hall or a laboratory.

It began in the corridors of Great Ormond Street Hospital, not as a doctor, not even as a student, but as an eleven-year-old patient. It was painful, yes, but it was also transformative.

Watching the surgeons, nurses, and doctors work together, not just to rebuild my ear, but to restore my confidence, planted something in me: a quiet fascination with the human body, and an even louder desire to one day serve others in that same way.

But here's what I didn't know back then: dreams, no matter how beautiful, don't fulfil themselves. You can have passion, purpose, and prayer, and still face pain.

The road to medicine is rarely straight, and mine certainly wasn't.

When I applied for Medicine during my A levels, I was full of hope and expectation. I'd done everything right, grades, volunteering, personal statement polished. And then came the word that changed everything: "Unfortunately."

That word became so familiar it almost echoed in my inbox. Each rejection chipped away at my confidence.

I spent months revising for the UCAT, night after night, trying to prove myself, and yet each time, I fell short of the score I wanted.

I remember one moment vividly. Year 13. I had just received my first rejection. My mum didn't know yet, but she found me sitting on the edge of my bed, trying to hold it in. Before she could even ask what was wrong, I broke down crying.

That moment taught me something I'll never forget: resilience isn't unwavering. It's not an unshakeable shield that never cracks.

Resilience hurts. It's painful. It's the moments when you feel like you have nothing left to give and still find a reason to keep breathing, keep trying, keep believing.

That day, my mum didn't say much. She just held me. And that silence, that small act of love, became one of the loudest lessons in resilience.

The Resilience Currency:

I'm grateful that God gave me a support network, my mum, my friends, my faith, to calm the tides of self-doubt when I couldn't do it myself.

Because resilience isn't about never breaking. It's about learning how to bend without losing your shape.

So, I pivoted. I chose to study Biomedical Science at Aston University, not as a Plan B, but as a plan to rebuild

I told myself, "If the door doesn't open yet, build a new one."

But rebuilding isn't glamorous. In my second year, I almost got held back because of one module I had to resit. That was humbling, not just academically, but emotionally.

The weight of disappointment returned, that familiar whisper of "not enough." But I kept going, studying harder, leaning on faith, reminding myself that delay isn't denial. When placement season came, I faced another wave of rejection. Email after email began with, "We regret to inform you."

After a while, I began to think maybe it wasn't meant to be. Maybe medicine wasn't for me.

Then, one day, I finally got an offer. And strangely enough, I turned it down.



Not out of pride, but because I had finally learned: resilience isn't about taking every opportunity. It's about waiting for the right one.

Through it all, God was my anchor. When my plans fell apart, my faith held me together.

Every setback felt like a redirection, a divine pause to reflect and trust. Because faith reminds you: your story doesn't end at "unfortunately."

By the time I reached the end of university, I had learned something profound. Resilience isn't one big act of strength, it's the quiet, daily decision to try again... and again... and again.

So, I applied again for Medicine. And this time, I wasn't chasing validation, I was walking in purpose.

Each interview, each assessment, each long wait for an email, I carried that same lesson: every "unfortunately" is just an invitation to rise again.

Along the way, I found new ways to build resilience.

As a care support worker, I learned what it truly means to serve selflessly, to comfort patients, monitor their vitals, and preserve their dignity when illness tries to take it away.

As Sports Officer for the African-Caribbean Society, I learned leadership under pressure, how to motivate, how to listen, how to lift others even while you're still climbing.

And during the Ernst & Young Smart Futures Programme, I learned adaptability, that excellence wears many faces, and success often begins outside your comfort zone.

Each of those experiences became an investment. Every time I spent a little resilience, I gained something back: confidence, clarity, and calm.



That's when I realised, resilience spends like currency. Every time life forces you to spend some of it, through rejection, through delay, through doubt, you grow richer in wisdom, purpose, and grace.

Resilience isn't glamorous. It's not a straight line from hardship to success. It's a cycle of breaking, rebuilding, and becoming.

The Resilience Currency:

It's forged in tears, in prayer, in community. And when you spend it wisely, it becomes the wealth that opens doors, sustains dreams, and builds leaders.

Because resilience is the currency of excellence.

It's what turns adversity into achievement. It's what has carried so many of us, the sons and daughters of immigrants, into rooms our grandparents could only dream of. That's the heart of Black excellence. It's not perfection. It's persistence.

It's the ability to say:

“I may not have started with much, but I will finish with purpose.”

Now, I know what I'm saying might sound familiar. We've all heard phrases like “pain builds character” or “everything happens for a reason.”

And honestly, I used to roll my eyes at those too.

But after living through rejection, delay, and doubt, I've realised those words aren't empty.

Because resilience doesn't just get you through hardship, it transforms hardship into growth, pain into purpose, and faith into fuel.

It sounds cliché until it's your story. Until you've lived it. Until you've watched God take what was meant to break you and use it to build you instead.

So, to every young dreamer here today, your setbacks are not the end of your story. They are the refining fire that prepares you for the greatness ahead.

I know that might sound like the kind of line you've heard a hundred times before, I've heard it my whole life too. But here's the truth: clichés only exist because they hold weight. And this one does. I've lived it.

Through every “unfortunately,” every tear, every quiet prayer whispered in the dark, I've learned that resilience is more than endurance, it's trust. It's peace in the middle of chaos.

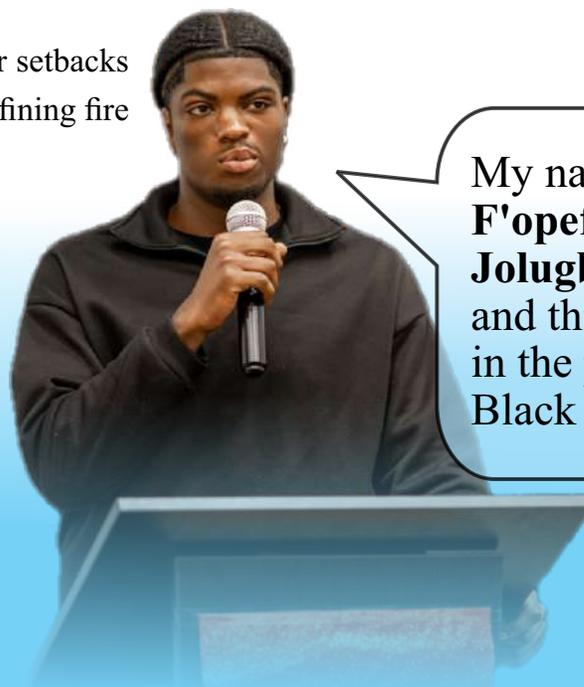
Resilience doesn't just get you through hardship, it transforms hardship into growth, pain into purpose, and faith into fuel.

And one verse that has carried me through, time and time again, is **Philippians 4:7**: “The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds.”

That verse reminds me that even when life doesn't make sense, peace can still exist. It's that peace that steadied me when strength ran out.

So spend your resilience wisely. Invest it in your growth, your faith, your purpose, and let it buy you the future that was written for you all along.

Because when you spend your resilience, you don't lose, you invest. In strength. In purpose. In faith.



My name is **F'opefoluwa Jolugbo**, and this is my page in the playbook of Black excellence.

Trailblazer Feature



“Sell Yourself Even Before the Job”

Tumilara Dauda, MBA | Nestlé UK

When Tumilara Dauda walks into a room, you can tell she knows her value. But that confidence wasn't always there. It was built, one conversation at a time.

Today, she manages some of Nestlé UK's biggest accounts. Back then, she was a young woman in Nigeria trying to land her first corporate role. No fancy degree in business, no sales certifications, just grit, curiosity, and good instincts.

“I remember staying up all night before that interview,” she recalls. “I didn't know all the technical sales terms, but I knew how to sell. That was my edge.”

At the time, Tumi ran a small business on the side, selling hair and makeup. When her interviewer asked, **“So what do you do right now?”** she didn't try to sound more corporate. She told the truth, but told it smart.

— *“I said, ‘I sell hair, and I'm good at it.’”*

The interviewer smiled and asked playfully, *“Alright then, why should I buy your hair for that price?”*

That was her moment. She pitched with confidence, explained the value, and sold not just a product but an experience. By the time she finished, her interviewer wasn't only impressed, she wanted to buy the hair.

— *“I didn't lie. I just showed that selling hair taught me how to sell, period.”*

She got the job. No MBA yet, no glowing referrals, just the ability to connect, communicate, and close. That role became the springboard that took her from Nigeria to the United Kingdom and eventually to Nestlé, one of the world's most respected brands.

The Real Secret

“People think success starts with your degree,” she says. “Mine started with my language. I learned to translate what I had into what I wanted. That's how I've always moved.”

It's a principle she still swears by:

“Use what you have to get what you want. I can bring you this value because this is what I already have.”

Those words have guided every step of her journey, from small-business hustler to global account manager. Her story proves that soft skills are not optional. They are the foundation of lasting success.

Still Selling

Even now, Tumi says she has never stopped selling.

“Every day I sell something. An idea, a strategy, a partnership. Selling never ends. It just evolves.”

Her colleagues describe her as magnetic and precise, someone who can bring life into any boardroom. And while her career looks seamless now, she remains grounded. “The goal isn't to look qualified,” she says.

— *“The goal is to be valuable.”*

Key Takeaway

- Your story is your sales pitch.
- Your soft skills are your capital.
- Confidence is your closing strategy.

The Tech Nurse:

“Curiosity opened the door for me.”

Erioluwa Ajibade 

on Bridging Care and Technology



The title itself sounded almost unreal, **Nursing and Technology** in the same sentence? But curiosity has a way of charting new paths. For Erioluwa, her journey from bedside care to digital transformation wasn't planned, it was discovered, one question and one act of curiosity at a time.

Today, as a **Clinical Specialist Practitioner (Digital)** with the UK's National Health Service (NHS), Erioluwa stands at the intersection of care and innovation. Her story isn't just about adapting to change, it's about leading it, one patient, one system, and one digital solution at a time.



From Bedside to Backend

For Erioluwa, the shift began not with a career plan, but with curiosity. “I used to check people's LinkedIn profiles just to see what they did,” she laughs. “If someone updated their job title, I'd ask, *'Okay, what exactly do you do?'* That was how I stumbled on digital healthcare.”

That habit of asking questions opened a door she didn't know existed, a space where healthcare and technology meet.



“After taking a course in **Business Analysis**, I began to see connections between nursing and IT. I discovered that within the field, there are specialties where nurses can work as testers, analysts, or clinical safety officers.” It wasn't a theory. It was a possibility. And she followed it.

Bridging Care and Code

Today, Erioluwa plays a critical role in ensuring healthcare technology works seamlessly for real people. “Anything related to digital transformation in healthcare, I'm involved in it,” she says. From maintaining clinical applications to testing upgrades and mapping user journeys, her work sits at the heart of how hospitals function in the digital age.

She explains it simply:

““

My job is to make sure technology supports patient care, safely and effectively.”

But the transition didn't happen overnight. Her **Business Analysis certification** gave her a framework for understanding systems and processes, while her nursing background gave her insight into the human side of healthcare. “That mix is what makes digital healthcare roles powerful,” she adds. “You're improving systems you've actually worked in.”

Leading Beyond the Job Description

Leadership, for Erioluwa, isn't about **position**, it's about **perspective**. “Having a leadership mindset means taking ownership,” she says. “Don't wait for permission to make things better.”

One of her favorite examples came from her early nursing days. “We had elderly patients who were always bored. I suggested we create an activity corner with puzzles and drawing materials. Everyone loved it, and it became a regular ward initiative.”

She smiles as she adds, “That's what leadership looks like. See a gap, fill it. That attitude stands out everywhere, even in interviews.”

Overcoming Fear, Finding Confidence

When she moved to the UK, Erioluwa faced what many immigrant professionals experience, fear. “A lot of us come in with fear,” she admits. “We've heard stories of discrimination or failure. But fear limits growth. Once you overcome it, you begin to see opportunities differently.”

She learned to replace fear with **curiosity and courage**, two traits she believes every aspiring Tech Nurse must cultivate. “We're competent and trained. We just need to show up and keep learning.”

Skill Mapping and the Growth Habit

For Erioluwa, growth is intentional. She practices something she calls **skill mapping**. “I list my current skills, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, then compare them to the requirements of higher roles. That's how I know what to improve.”

It doesn't stop there. She also keeps a **reflection and brag folder**, a personal record of wins, feedback, and lessons learned. “It keeps me interview-ready and helps me see how far I've come,” she says.

The Power of Volunteering

Before the job titles and certifications came something more grassroots, volunteering.

“When my church decided to switch to a new administration system, I volunteered to help with training and support,” Erioluwa recalls. “That experience turned out to be gold. It showed initiative, and it stood out when I applied for my digital role later.

” Her advice? “Don't wait for opportunities to be formal. Create them. Volunteering builds confidence, gives you experience, and helps you learn the language of a new field.”

Her daily routine ends with a simple reflection: *What went well? What didn't? What can I do better tomorrow?* That discipline, she believes, builds quiet confidence.

Mentorship and Momentum

Behind every strong career, Erioluwa insists, is a circle of guidance. “Mentorship changes everything” she says firmly. “I have mentors I meet with monthly. If one person doesn't respond, move on to the next. There's always someone willing to help, but you have to be bold enough to ask.”

Her approach is direct, practical, and deeply human, the kind that makes complex things sound simple. “Growth doesn't happen by accident,” she says. “It's planned, built, and refined.”

Redefining the Future of Nursing

Erioluwa represents a growing generation of nurses blending **clinical expertise with digital intelligence**. They're not leaving healthcare behind, they're redesigning it.

Her story proves that the next frontier of care isn't just in hospitals; it's in systems, data, and innovation, powered by professionals who understand both empathy and technology.

““

“Be curious. Volunteer. Reflect. Lead,” she says with conviction.

““

“That's how you grow, from a nurse to a Tech Nurse, and beyond.”

The AI Advantage:



Leading Markets, Jobs and Innovation **in the** Next Decade

By Dr. Kachy Jumbo

Economic empowerment begins with positioning. Not the kind defined by limitations imposed by others, but the kind shaped by intention, ownership and foresight.

We are living through an intelligence revolution. Just as previous generations navigated the industrial and digital revolutions, this generation is facing a defining moment of transition. Artificial intelligence is not simply a technological shift. It is an economic reset. And how we respond to it will determine who leads, who follows and who is left behind over the next decade.

AI is often misunderstood as a set of tools or platforms. It is not. It is a way of thinking. We are the first generation tasked with teaching intelligence how to learn, and the last generation that cannot afford to function without it. This reality demands a serious conversation about readiness, ownership and leadership.

Every economy produces leaders and laggards. In an intelligence-driven economy, cognitive capacity is the new capital. The advantage will belong to those who understand how to apply intelligence strategically, not just consume it passively. Using AI tools is no longer enough. The future belongs to creators, owners and innovators who understand context, nuance and human-centred design.

This is not a capability problem. It is a positioning problem.

I have seen exceptionally talented individuals with advanced degrees settle into roles far beneath their capacity, simply because survival replaced vision. But every decision we make today paints a picture for the next generation. What we normalise becomes their ceiling.

AI presents an opportunity to disrupt this cycle.

Regardless of your discipline, sector or background, there is no field that cannot be reimaged through intelligence-driven innovation. The question is not whether you are technical enough. The question is whether you are intentional enough to recognise problems worth solving and courageous enough to step into ownership.

Value has a voice. But value must also be visible.

In leadership spaces, silence is costly. If you want influence, you must show up. Visibility, contribution and clarity are essential currencies in this era. The algorithms shaping opportunity today do not reward passivity. They reward presence, relevance and precision.

This is especially critical as new roles emerge and old ones disappear. AI will not eliminate all jobs, but it will certainly displace those unwilling to adapt. New careers are already forming at the intersection of technology, ethics, creativity and strategy. Our responsibility is to ensure that we and the next generation are positioned to lead within them, not scramble behind them.

The shift required is simple but profound: move from consumer to creator.

Look around your environment. Every community, workplace, institution and organisation carries inefficiencies, pain points and unmet needs. These are opportunities for innovation. AI does not require complexity to be powerful. It requires context. It requires relevance. It requires purpose.

Technology can be used for harm or for good. The difference lies in who builds it and why. When applied with intention, AI becomes a force for inclusion, access and transformation. Identity, too, is an advantage. Our lived experiences, cultural context and global perspective equip us uniquely for leadership in an interconnected world. This generation does not need to choose between identities. It can hold multiple truths at once and lead from that richness.

The future will not be shaped by those waiting for permission. It will be shaped by those who understand their value and refuse to live beneath it. We were not positioned in this moment by accident.

The intelligence revolution requires leaders who think boldly, act intentionally and build systems that create opportunity at scale.

The AI advantage belongs to those ready to claim it.

Social Mobility

& THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP FOR GEN NEXT

BY ELHAM FARDAD



ELHAM FARDAD

I often say that my relationship with education began in a basement.

As a teenager growing up in Iran during the Iran–Iraq war, nights were punctuated by bombardments. Electricity was unreliable. Safety was uncertain. Yet every evening, I completed my homework by candlelight, surrounded by conditions no child should have to endure. I did it because I believed, even then, that education would be the only constant in my life. If I was going to live or die, I wanted to do so knowledgeable, not ignorant. When my family migrated to the UK and I arrived in Birmingham at the age of 13, I was introduced to what my father called an information society. Free libraries. Endless books. Knowledge that did not require permission or privilege. I was astonished. I remember quietly collecting free leaflets from bank branches, reading about mortgages, investments and interest rates, trying to understand the systems that shaped this country. To me, access to information felt like freedom. That early experience shaped everything that followed.



Education as the First Ladder of Social Mobility

Like many young people from African and Asian migrant backgrounds, I grew up with a deep respect for education. It was never optional. It was survival. Despite moving schools repeatedly, caring for my younger brother and navigating family instability, I pushed forward academically. I completed my maths early, achieved strong GCSEs and A-levels, and set my sights on university.

But social mobility is never a straight line.

At 18, despite having lived in the UK for several years, I was classified as an international student because of my Iranian passport. The fees were impossibly high. I had saved £4,000 through tutoring and door-to-door sales, but I chose to give that money to my mother instead. I believed there had to be another way.

So I did something unconventional. I camped outside Birmingham City Council offices until someone listened. When they finally did, I told them exactly what I wanted: to study, to work, to pay taxes, and to contribute as a useful member of British society.

Weeks later, I received confirmation that I would be treated as a home student. That decision changed my life. It also reinforced a belief I still hold today: social mobility often requires both resilience and the courage to ask.

Leadership Is Earned Through Delivery

My career in corporate finance taught me something important about leadership. At GE, News Corp and EY, what ultimately mattered was not my background, my gender or my age. It was whether I delivered.

I immersed myself fully. I learned operations, finance, strategy and systems. I worked days and learned nights. I asked questions. I stayed curious. I sought responsibility before title. And when the opportunity came to pursue an Executive MBA, I negotiated for it at the point where my value was undeniable.

Leadership, especially for Gen Next, is not about waiting to be invited into rooms. It is about building capability so strong that presence becomes inevitable.

When Representation Is Missing, Competence Must Be Loud

Early in my career, leadership rooms were often homogeneous. Older. Male. Privileged. I noticed it, but I could not afford to be paralysed by it. Confidence, I learned, is not always a feeling. Sometimes it is a decision.

When you believe you have no option but to succeed, you focus on solutions. You learn to play the best game possible with the cards you have. For young leaders navigating systems not built with them in mind, this mindset is essential.

From Individual Success to Systemic Responsibility

After two decades in senior corporate leadership, I reached a realisation. Personal success is not the end goal. It is a platform.

Many of us have capabilities forged in adversity. That is not accidental. We are meant to use them to widen the path for others. That belief led me to found *Migrant Leaders*, a charity dedicated to supporting first and second-generation young migrants across the UK.

Today, we work with thousands of young people, hundreds of educational institutions, and senior mentors from leading organisations. Everything we offer is free to participants because access should never be the barrier. Our ambition is to support 10,000 young migrants by 2027.

*That is how systemic change happens.
Not through isolated success stories,
but through scale.*

The Future of Leadership for Gen Next

The future of leadership belongs to those who combine competence with conscience. To those who understand systems but are willing to reshape them. To those who remember that opportunity is not evenly distributed, but talent is.

For **Gen Next**, leadership will not be about fitting into old moulds. It will be about redefining what excellence looks like and who gets to participate in it. Social mobility is not charity. It is an investment in collective progress. My own journey has been shaped by people and institutions that took a chance on me. The responsibility now is to ensure that chance is no longer exceptional, but expected.

That is the future I am committed to building.





**Zahra 'tul-Jannah
Ahmed Ajetunmobi**

At just 13 years old, Zahra 'tul-Jannah Ahmed Ajetunmobi is already making waves as a passionate advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals, children's education, and environmental awareness. Raised in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Zahra is a Yoruba Nigerian, a proud Muslim, and a Year 8 (JSS 2) student.

How it all began

Zahra's interest in sustainability sparked during a school social studies lesson about the SDGs. Learning about innovative projects like "pink farms" in the UAE, farms adapted to desert climates, caught her imagination. Around age 9, she asked her dad to help her start a YouTube channel. While he was initially hesitant, her mother supported the idea with one condition: she would only make educational and inspirational content.

• *Achievements and what she is doing*

Zahra creates fun, engaging videos on sustainability that young people can relate to. She blends humour, creativity, and real facts so the message is both inspiring and accessible. She founded the Zahralicious Book Club, a space for young learners that mixes reading, values, education, and sustainability.

She has spoken on global stages, including climate events, and interacted with influential leaders. She has met Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, discussed sustainable development with the Director-General of the Energy Commission of Nigeria, and had conversations with HRH Sanusi II, former CBN Governor and Emir of Kano. Her content is now being used as a teaching reference in classrooms in the UAE, Nigeria, and beyond.

• *What drives her and what she believes*

Zahra believes meaningful change starts with mindset, planting seeds of thought so children can dream, ask questions, and imagine solutions. She talks about balance: school, faith, family, and advocacy. With the support of her parents, she makes sure she still has time to enjoy being a child, which helps her stay grounded.

• *Message to young readers*

Zahra often says:

"Focus on planting seeds of thought. Have meaningful conversations that spark productive ideas. By talking about positive, developmental topics, you can inspire others, and yourself, to make a difference."



Bejay Mulenga

Bejay Mulenga was born in East London in 1995 and is of Congolese heritage. He is a British entrepreneur, creative consultant, speaker, and social innovator.

How it all began

Bejay's journey into entrepreneurship began early. When he was just 13, he organised a talent show at his local youth centre. Around the same time he convinced his school to let him run a tuck shop, which gave him practical business experience.

He called this venture "Supa Tuck". That tuck shop made over £15,000 in its first academic year. Seeing how well it worked, he scaled the project into more schools. Within a few years, Supa Tuck had reached more than 5,000 students across about 100 schools.

• *What he built*

Bejay has launched and grown multiple interlinked ventures under the Supabrand:

- *Supa Academy*: a training and workshop platform giving young people skills for business and work.
- *Supa Network*: this brings together his training, recruitment, and creative services. It works with big companies like Facebook, Apple, Google, Uber and more.
- He also co-founded The Great Feast of London, which is a digital food festival / delivery platform tied to charity work aiming to address food poverty

• *Recognition and Impact*

- At age 20 he became the youngest recipient of the Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion in the UK.
- He has spoken at major events: Conservative Party Conference, Global Entrepreneurship Week, etc.
- In 2023 he was awarded an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) for services to entrepreneurship and tackling food poverty.

Recent projects include *The Student View*, a charity for media literacy among youth, which secured funding to launch a New Creator Club in Tower Hamlets. The program helps young people learn to understand, create, and critique media content.

• *What motivates him*

Bejay often stresses that ideas are good, but execution is essential. He believes in teaching skills young people will actually use, communication, business basics, confidence.

He also talks about the importance of access: access to opportunity, mentors, networks; this has driven many of his ventures.

He likes combining creativity + business + social impact.

• *Message for readers*

"Don't just think about what you want to do; begin to do something toward it." Bejay encourages young people to try small, real actions, even if imperfect. Starting early, learning constantly, and being willing to adapt and work hard have been his key lessons

Articles From NOBEEL

RESILIENCE CURRENCY

A Practical Playbook For Founders And Professionals

— By Lady Ifeoluwa Oyatokun

There is a kind of capital that does not show on your balance sheet, yet it quietly shapes how investors, employers and partners respond to you.

That capital is resilience.

If you are building a business or accelerating a career, resilience is not just inner strength. It behaves like a real economic asset. It is a currency of exchange and part of the compulsory down payment for anything you want to last.

This is how to treat your resilience like currency, and use it deliberately.

1. Recognise Resilience As Part Of Your Capital Stack

Stop seeing resilience as a vague personality trait. Start counting it as part of your capital. Ask yourself:

- When was the last time I wanted to quit, but did not?
- What difficult seasons have I already survived in business, work or life?
- What did I continue to do, even when it stopped feeling exciting?

Write those moments down. That is your **resilience balance sheet**.

Instruction:

Create a one page list titled "Times I Stayed". Refer to it when you feel like giving up or when you prepare for investor or promotion conversations.

2. Treat Tough Seasons As Your Down Payment

Anything meaningful has a price.

Property requires a deposit.

Investments require regular contributions.

A credible track record requires years.

Your difficult seasons are often the **price you are paying upfront**.

Instead of asking, "Why is this so hard", ask:

- If this is part of my down payment, what is it buying me? Skills? Depth? Credibility? Story?
- What am I learning now that will save me money, time or embarrassment later?
- How can I make sure this pain does not go to waste?

Instruction:

For every challenge you are facing now, write one line that begins with, "This season is buying me..."

This reframes pressure as investment, not punishment.

3. Apply The Five-Year Rule

Markets are watching how you behave over time, not just in one month. There is an unwritten rule: if you and your work are still standing after five years, you send a powerful signal.

You are saying:

- I am not here to play.
- I am not running a short-term experiment.
- I am a long-term operator in this space.

Instruction:

- Mark your official "start year" for your business or serious career phase.
- Draw a simple five-year line.
- Decide what you want to be able to say about yourself at the end of those five years, in terms of skills, relationships, revenue, impact or positioning.

Then measure your choices against that, not against your feelings this month.

4. Learn To Buy Your Own Dip

In investing, wise investors do not sell a good asset just because the price dips. They check the fundamentals. If those are strong, they buy more. Resilience is how you **buy the dip on yourself**.

When things go wrong, ask:

- Are my fundamentals still sound? Is my vision still valid, my values still clear, my capacity still growing?
- What small upgrades can I make now, instead of abandoning everything?
- Who can help me interpret this dip with clarity, not fear?

Instruction:

When you hit a dip, do three things before you make a big decision:

1. Write down the facts of what happened.
2. Write down what stayed the same, for example your skills, your network, your values.
3. Choose one improvement you will make as a direct response.

This is how you turn dips into better versions of you, not permanent exits.

5. Convert Resilience Into Tangible Value

Resilience is currency when it buys something. Here is what it should be buying you, and how to make that clear.

a. Time In The Market

The longer you stay, the more cycles you see and the more prepared you are.

Instruction:

Stop resetting your journey every year. Choose a clear lane and commit to building in it for a meaningful period, not just a season.

b. Real Insight

Hard experiences are expensive, so squeeze the learning out of them.

Instruction:

After each major setback, do a short debrief:

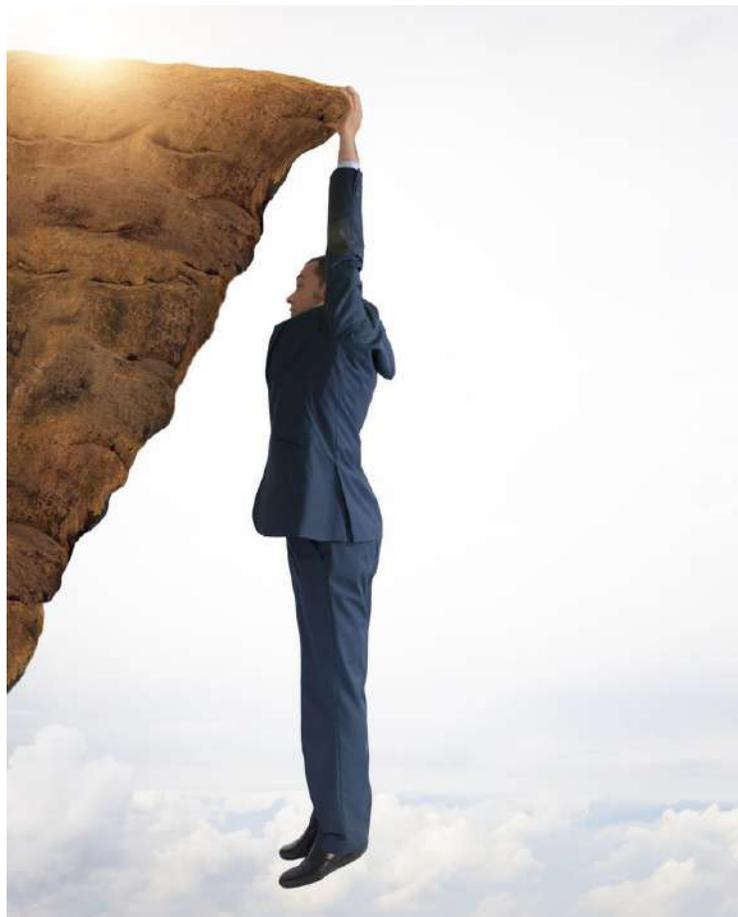
- What actually happened?
- What did this reveal about my model, my market or myself?
- What will I do differently next time?

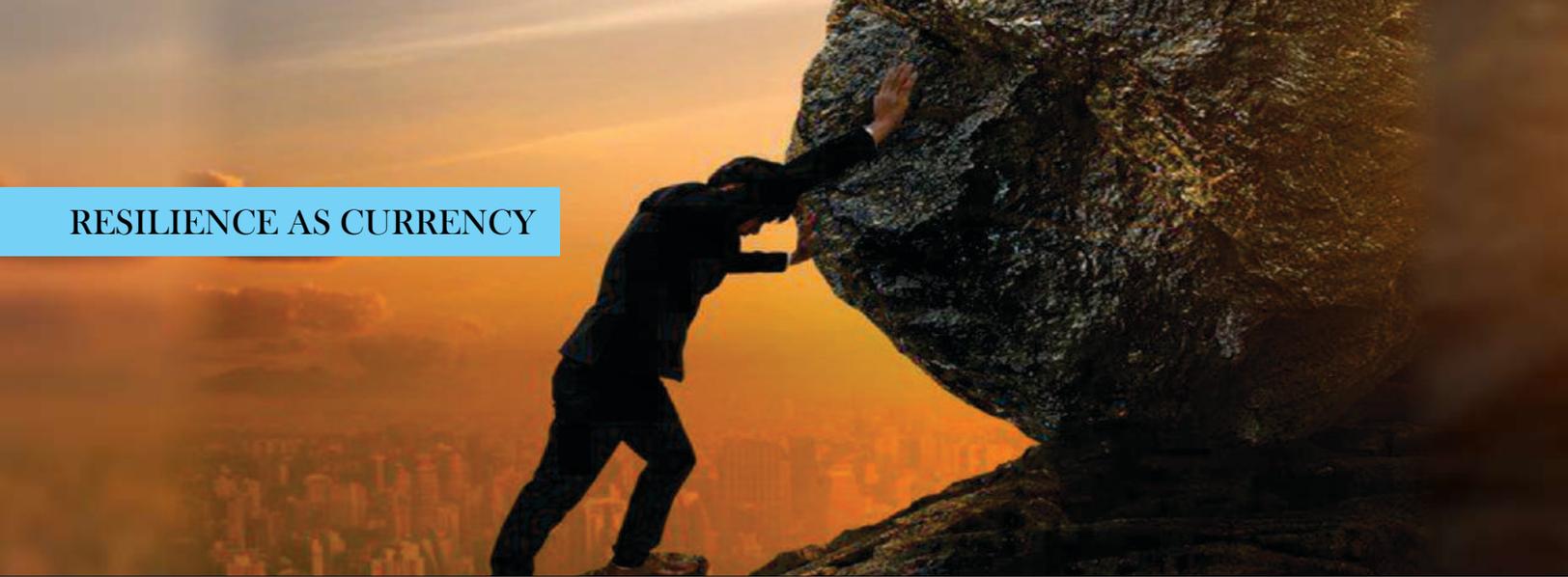
c. Trust And Credibility

People trust what they have seen to survive pressure.

Instruction:

In interviews, pitches and reviews, include one short story that shows you faced a challenge and still delivered. This signals resilience without you having to claim it.





RESILIENCE AS CURRENCY

d. Better Terms

Resilience gives you the confidence to say no to the wrong opportunities.

Instruction:

Write down your non negotiables: minimum pricing, values you will not compromise, types of clients or roles you will not accept. Let your resilience support these boundaries.

6. Tell Your Brain A New Story About You

Every resilient choice is also sending a signal inside you. Each time you stay committed, you are telling your own mind:

- I am a long-term builder.
- I am someone who finishes.
- I am not disposable, I am strategic.

Instruction:

Create a simple personal statement such as:
"I am the kind of person who builds for the long haul." or
"I do not quit on myself. I refine, I adjust and I return stronger."

Read it daily in seasons that feel heavy. You are training your internal narrative to match the future you are building.

7. Use Your Resilience Story In The Rooms That Matter.

Investors, employers and partners are not just looking at numbers. They are quietly asking:

"If this person hits a wall, will they disappear or will they adapt and continue?" Help them see your answer.

Instruction:

Prepare a short, structured story using this pattern:

- Context: "Here is the situation I faced."
- Challenge: "Here is what went wrong."
- Response: "Here is what I chose to do instead of quitting"

- Result: "Here is what changed, and what I learnt"
This turns your resilience into a clear, investable narrative.

Final Thought

Resilience is not about suffering endlessly. It is about staying in the game with wisdom, boundaries and strategy.

When you choose not to give up on your business, your career or your assignment, you are not just holding on emotionally. You are making a calculated investment.

You are paying your down payment.
You are buying your own dip.
You are signalling to yourself and to the market that you are here to build for the long haul.

**Treat your resilience
like currency.
Spend it wisely.
Let it compound.**

Skill and Growth: The Currency of the Future

Across the globe, young people are stepping into a world that is rapidly shifting. Technology is advancing at a speed never seen before. Economies are transforming, and artificial intelligence is rewriting the rules of work and industry. In the midst of this evolution, one truth remains constant: the power of skill and the necessity of growth.

Skill is not merely a tool; it is the foundation upon which opportunities are built. Growth is not simply a desire; it is the force that ensures those skills remain relevant. Together, they shape the leaders who will define the next decade.

Consider this: in just ten years, a 15-year-old today will be 25. A 25-year-old will be 35. The choices made in this window of time will determine whether the next generation is prepared to lead, or left behind by forces they cannot control. Degrees and titles may open doors, but it is skills honed with discipline and sustained by growth that will keep those doors open.

At NOBEEL Summit, we believe that skill and growth are inseparable. Skill without growth becomes obsolete. Growth without skill is empty ambition. But when the two are cultivated together, they unlock transformation, not only for individuals, but for communities and nations.

This is why skill and growth must be treated as the true currency of the future. They buy relevance, resilience, and responsibility. They create innovators, builders, and reformers who can meet the demands of a global economy and shape societies for the better.

The future will not wait. It will not slow down for those unwilling to adapt. But it will reward those who choose to learn, unlearn, and relearn. Growth does not happen by chance; it happens by choice.

So the question is clear: **will you be ready?**



Career Paths Beyond 9-5: Making the Most of Alternatives to Traditional Jobs



For many years, the traditional career model followed a certain path; school, university or training, full-time employment, and progressive advancement that led to long-term security. However, the model has increasingly been elusive in recent times. This is because there is economic instability which comes along with recessions and cost of living crises, the stagnancy of wages, rigid hierarchies and office politics.

It is no news that a new model is emerging; one that values flexibility, autonomy, and multiple income streams over loyalty to a single employer. A model that provides many pathways rather than a single, linear path. It offers independence, skill diversification, and adaptability to changing markets. For the older generations who had to make use of the old model, success meant promotions, home ownership, and long service with a single employer but now it is flexibility and fulfillment. Job security was a thing under the old model but under the new, adaptability is what is acceptable. You no longer have to rely on one employer.

Noteworthy is that the rise of digital opportunities has been a major factor in the emergence of this new model. Popular routes under this model include freelancing, e-commerce and reselling, portfolio careers, and tech and digital services. For young people considering non-traditional paths, here are some key strategies:

Build a financial cushion

Freelancing and side hustles often bring unpredictable income. Saving at least three months' expenses provides stability during slow periods.

Diversify income streams

Relying on a single client or gig is risky. Multiple income sources spread financial risk.

Upskill continuously

Make sure you are constantly picking up new skills or

enhancing the ones you have. There are several online learning platforms that allow you to enhance and build skills in demand.

Network digitally and offline

Communities on social media platforms or local meetups provide opportunities, advice, and collaboration. Make sure you are active part of some.

Take mental health seriously

Without workplace structures, users of the new model must set their own boundaries. Schedule downtime and protect work-life balance.

Plan for the long term

Open a pension, track taxes, and seek advice from relevant organisations.

The challenges of the new model are not insurmountable. They however need you to be ahead of the pack for you not to crumble under the weight of the model.

Data outside Analytics

You hear someone say, “**I work in data.**” The automatic response tends to be, “**Oh! You're a data analyst?**” But here's the thing: when we say “**data**” these days, it doesn't just mean digging through spreadsheets, building dashboards, or running trend reports. The world of data is exploding into new roles, ones that challenge perspectives, require purpose, and call for leadership in unexpected places.

For years, data has been tied to analysis, and analysis alone. The typical image is a person surrounded by graphs, decoding patterns, and trends. But that view is fast becoming outdated. In today's world, data isn't just something we study; it's something we shape. It influences laws, fuels innovation, drives storytelling, and determines how technology interacts with people. Those who understand this shift are discovering a whole new side of the data industry, one that's more diverse, creative, and globally relevant than ever before.

Take, for instance, a young professional who has just secured a role in **Data Policy**, helping organizations make informed decisions about how information is collected, stored, and shared. Another recently transitioned from working in **Fashion Data** to **Data Governance**, where their task is to maintain accuracy and ethics in the use of data across departments. These career paths might sound unfamiliar to most, but they're becoming the new normal. Data is no longer just about what we can learn from numbers, but how we choose to manage and protect them.

Across industries, new opportunities are springing up. Data governance experts keep information clean and trustworthy. Data policy specialists design frameworks that balance innovation with privacy. Data storytellers transform raw numbers into powerful narratives that inspire action. And with artificial intelligence reshaping work, professionals who understand both the technical and human sides of data are becoming some of the most valuable voices in the room.

This shift also brings new roles that didn't exist a few years ago. **Synthetic Data Engineers**, for example, are creating artificial datasets to train AI models without compromising privacy. **Data Ethicists** are working to ensure that technology remains fair and transparent. **Analytics Engineers** are bridging the gap between data science and business, making insights easier for decision-makers to act on. It's no longer a world of coders and statisticians alone, it's a space for thinkers, planners, communicators, and problem-solvers.

Another interesting trend: “**Skill-Based Hiring.**” Employers are focusing less on fancy degrees and more on whether you can actually do the work, especially in AI and privacy roles. It means boot camps, online certificates, and hands-on projects count for a lot.

What makes this transformation so exciting is the opportunity it offers to young professionals. You don't have to be a programmer to work in data anymore. You can come from law, communications, design, or even fashion, as long as you understand how data connects to people. The skill that truly matters now is curiosity: the ability to ask how information shapes the world around us and how it can be used for good.

As technology evolves, so does the need for people who can guide it responsibly. Governments, businesses, and communities are paying closer attention to how data is managed and who gets access to it. This opens the door to meaningful careers built on trust, impact, and leadership. It's not just about understanding the numbers, but about knowing the story behind them, and having the vision to decide what comes next.

So the next time you hear someone say, “**I work in data,**” don't assume they're buried in spreadsheets. They might just be one of the architects designing the rules, ethics, and innovations that will define the future. Because in the new world of work, data isn't just a skill, it's a language, and those who learn to speak it fluently will shape the next generation of progress.



Voices on NOBEEL: Empowerment in Action



**MAHARI
HAY**

Receiving the 2023 TrailBlazer of the Year award from NOBEEL UK was such an honour. This is more than an award, it is a recognition of a community that empowers Black entrepreneurs, intrapreneurs, and leaders to excel and thrive. NOBEEL reminds us that our passion, when coupled with purpose, can create real impact.



**ANN-MARIE
BROOKS**

Attending NOBEEL's Annual Summit was nothing short of inspiring. From the powerful keynotes to the wisdom shared by incredible panellists, I left with fresh ideas and renewed energy. Winning Black-Owned Business of the Year was a moment I will never forget.



**ISATOU
(ESHER) N'JIE**

NOBEEL is noble. It exists for Black professionals, not just in the UK but across the Pan-African diaspora. This is a network that demands attention, it is purpose, vision, and action in motion.



**SHARDIA
O'CONNOR**

For any entrepreneur navigating business in the UK, NOBEEL is a guiding light. Purposeful, integral, and full of value, this is where you find the tools, support, and community to truly thrive.





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