

It's My Life 2006 has offered colleagues a month of challenging and thought-provoking activities and events to help build great careers and achieve better work-life balance.

Amid the profusion of lectures, masterclasses and debates there were several pervading themes. Courses held in the early part of the month helped colleagues answer the question: Where do I want to be?, where the middle of the month focused on: Where am I now? and the latter part on: How do I get there?

Rock on

The final event of the month was That's Really Me! hosted by Peter Cook, Managing Director of Human Dynamics, who offered his own life story as an example of how it is possible to make career changes and remain interested, focussed and successful.

The event also featured Peter's friend, 70s punk rocker John Otway - contrasting careers but bound by a passion for music.

At one point in his career, Peter realised he wanted to change from science to HR, a move that required him to exercise both creativity and persistence. After all, such a move addresses the paradox that to do a very different role you need different and relevant experience, yet you can only gain that experience by doing the job. A classic catch -22. Peter's advice typically involved a song title - "knock three times", he said.

Become who you are

To follow the advice of Nietzsche and become who you are, Peter had a list of tips:

- Be good at relationships
- Psyche yourself up to motivation and leadership
- Become a high performer and always deliver the goods.

These themes are explored in Peter's new book *Sex, Leadership & Rock 'n' Roll*.

"A career is no longer a ladder but a climbing frame," said Peter. "You can't always go up to achieve progression, sometimes you have to move sideways, or even down to get to a different point from which you can move forward."

His six principles to manage our careers were:

1. Take intuitive risks
2. Check out risks analytically – but don't kill them off
3. Be flexible rather than doggedly persistent and look at things from different points of view. Don't waste time banging your head against a brick wall
4. Be willing to sacrifice short-term gains for long-term satisfaction – change when you want to, not when you have to
5. Develop the ability to network
6. You will need focus, determination, courage and emotional resilience – and be able to bounce back from adversity.

"When making decisions ask yourself what you feel passionately about, what do you enjoy, what are you good at? Try to develop transferable talents. Stop waiting to fill dead men's shoes. Take control of your career yourself," he said.

Rock and Roll's greatest failure

Making the most of failure and coping with success was the title of John Otway's presentation - singer, songwriter, two-hit wonder and self-styled "Rock 'n' Roll's greatest failure".

John's first hit the big time in 1977 with *Really Free* after performing it on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* where he jumped onto an amplifier and fell to the ground. The fans thought he had done it as part of the act – and they were hooked.

Sadly (for John) that was his fifteen minutes of fame and the last hit for 25 years, despite searching for ways to get his success back - some highly creative, others more bizarre (especially with the benefit of hindsight).

The turning point for John came when he discovered that his unique selling point was the fact that he was a failure and he decided to capitalise on it. He subtitled his autobiography 'Rock and Roll's greatest failure' and the book earned him a hugely loyal fan base.

When his fans asked him what he wanted for his 50th birthday he had an answer ready - another hit. Using his 1,000 loyal fans as backing singers on the B-side (and naming them all on the cover) each bought a copy of the record and another one for their mums. *Bunsen Burner* reached Number nine in the charts in 2002.

"Career success for a musician is more than appearing on *Top of the Pops* ," said John. "Every rock musician wants to be able to look back on their World Tour - playing famous venues, staying in top hotels."

The absence of a global fan base is not stopping John realise his career aspirations. In a highly innovative move he has chartered his own plane and this October will spend two weeks flying round the world with his fans playing the classic venues.

To find out more, and follow his progress as he realises this next milestone in his career, visit his [website](#) .

In conclusion, John's career tips were:

- Start with the end in mind
- You will need inspiration and perspiration
- Don't bang your head against a brick wall
- Bounce back
- Be enthusiastic

Thanking both speakers, the Director of Learning and Development said: "Both Peter and John have illustrated the enjoyment and fulfilment they obtain from their very different careers. It is apparent that a lot of creativity and innovation comes from this

'fun', and it is a virtuous circle. Our challenge is to take these lessons of luck, persistence and long-term goal-setting, to ensure we have similar levels of motivation for our own chosen careers. It's YOUR Life."