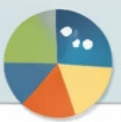




Career Planning Insights Worksheet

A practical, action-ready guide for working professionals ready to take ownership of their career trajectory — from clarity to confident next steps.

Goals ☐ ☐ ☐ 		Progress 
Personal Development Plan 1 → 2 → 3 	Skills & Learning ☐ ☐ ☐    	
Action Steps   	Timeline 	
 	Vision & Success   	

INTRODUCTION

Why Career Planning Matters More Than Ever

Most professionals spend more time planning a holiday than they do planning their career. That's not a criticism — it's a reality. When you're deep in deadlines, meetings, and daily deliverables, stepping back to ask **"Where is this all going?"** feels like a luxury. It isn't. It's a necessity.

The working landscape has fundamentally shifted. Roles are being redefined, industries are converging, and the concept of a single linear career path is increasingly outdated. Career changers are switching industries mid-stream. Early-career professionals are discovering that their first job title rarely reflects their long-term ambitions. Managers are realising that the skills that got them here may not take them where they want to go.



This worksheet exists to solve one core problem: **the gap between where you are and where you want to be**. It gives you a structured, honest, and actionable framework to assess your current position, identify what's working and what isn't, and map a realistic path forward — without the overwhelm.

Use this resource in three ways: read through it end-to-end for a full career audit, dip into specific sections when a particular challenge arises, or use the fill-in worksheets as a recurring quarterly check-in. There's no single right way to engage with this — the right way is the one you'll actually do.

How to Use This Worksheet

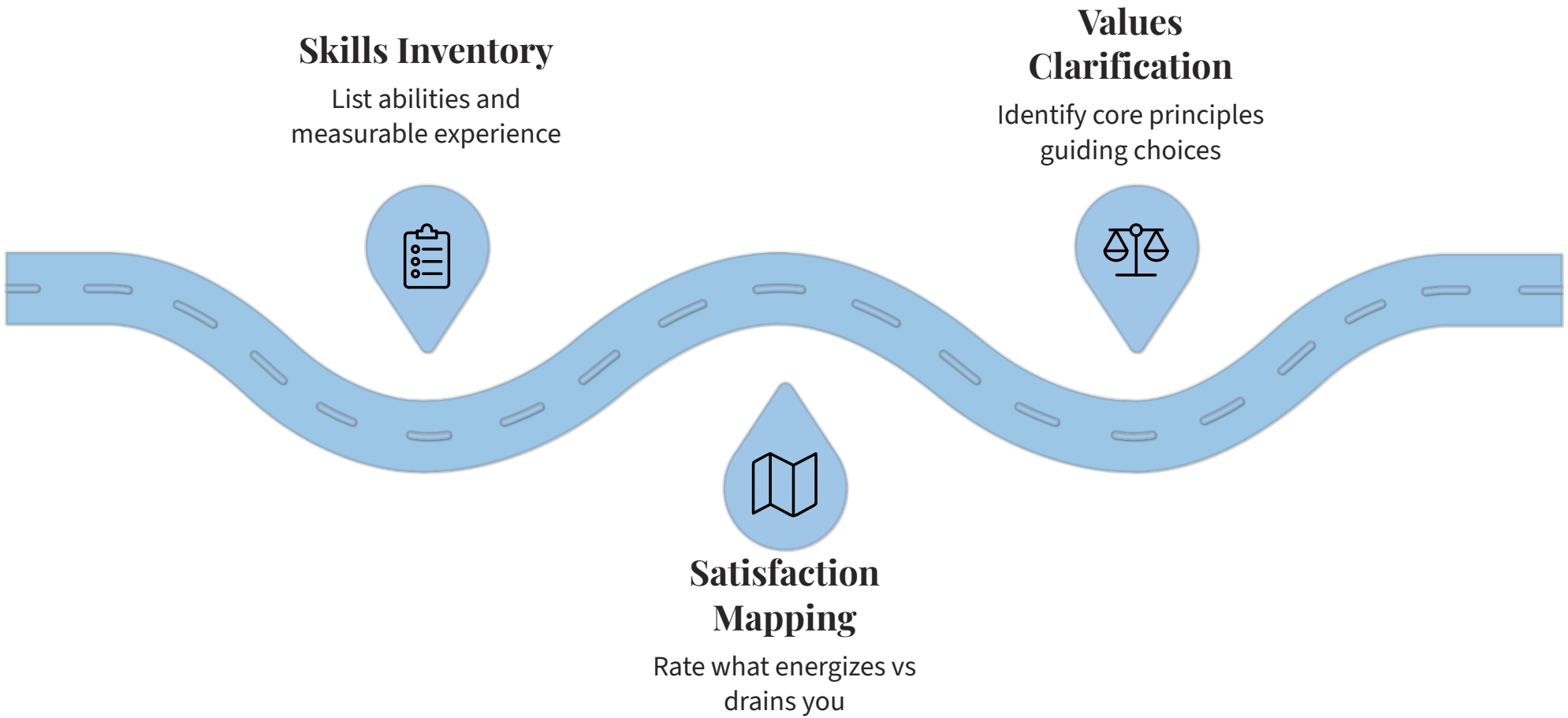
-  **Read Through** — Full career audit, start to finish
-  **Reference Mode** — Jump to the section most relevant right now
-  **Worksheet Mode** — Fill in the prompts, revisit quarterly
-  **Coaching Mode** — Use with a mentor or career coach

 This is not a one-time exercise. The most effective professionals revisit their career plan at least twice a year.

STEP 1

Where Are You Right Now? — The Honest Audit

Before you can plan where you're going, you need an unflinching look at where you currently stand. This isn't about self-criticism — it's about gathering the data that makes everything else possible. Think of this as your professional baseline: skills, satisfaction, values, and the story your CV is currently telling.



Most professionals skip this step and jump straight to job searching or skill-building — then wonder why nothing sticks. The audit grounds your next move in evidence rather than anxiety.

Worksheet: Skills Inventory

List your top 5 skills under each category below. Be specific — "communication" is too broad. "Facilitating cross-functional workshops" is precise and powerful.

Technical Skills	Soft Skills	Domain Knowledge
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

Worksheet: Role Satisfaction Score

Rate your current role on each dimension from 1 (low) to 10 (high). This surfaces where energy is being drained versus where it's being fuelled.

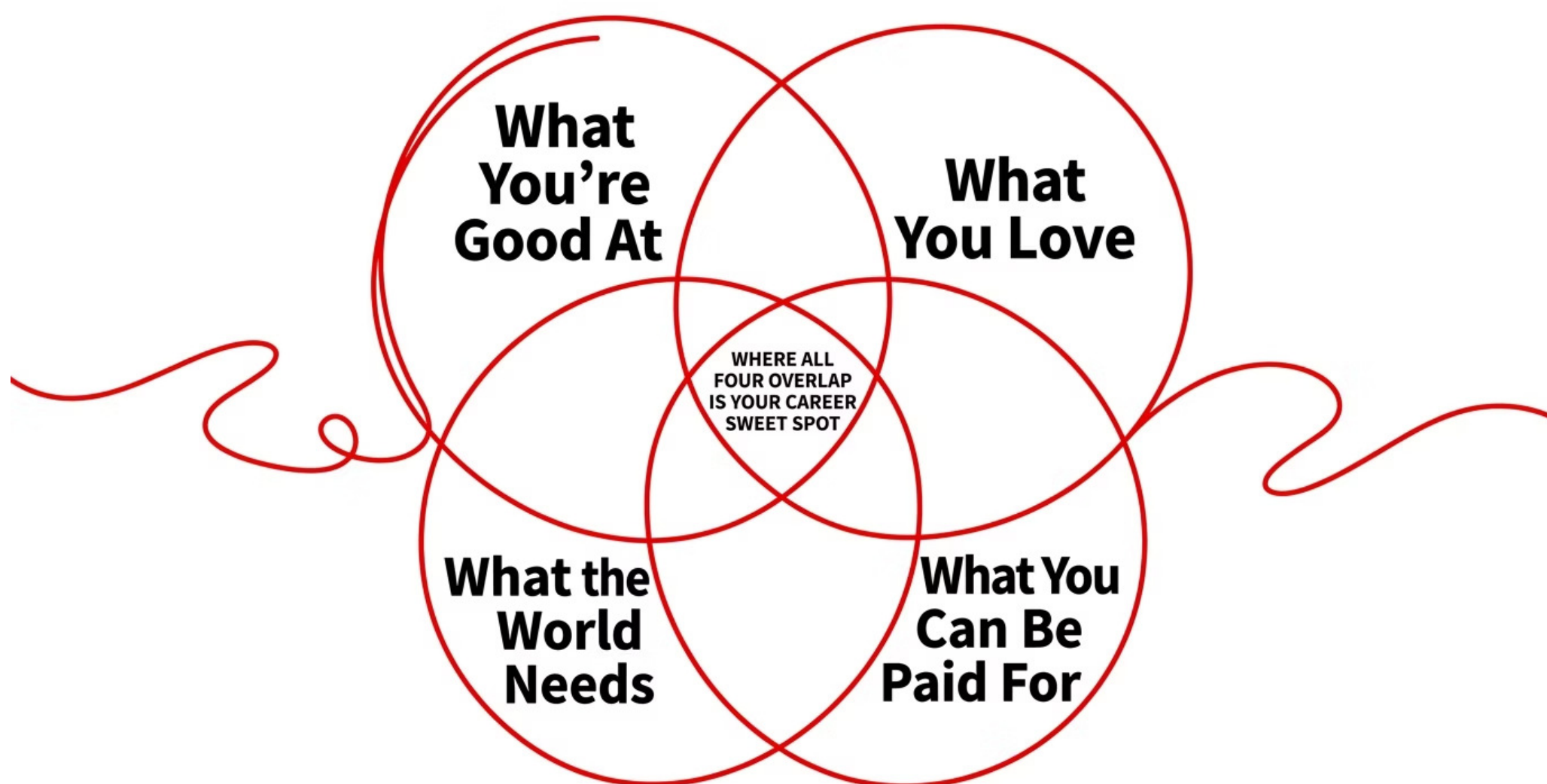
Dimension	Your Score (1-10)
Day-to-day work quality	
Growth opportunities	
Compensation & benefits	
Team & manager relationship	
Alignment with personal values	
Work-life integration	
Career trajectory visibility	

 Any score of 5 or below signals an area worth investigating further. Patterns across multiple low scores often reveal the root cause of career dissatisfaction.

STEP 2

Define Your Career North Star

A career without direction is just employment. The difference between professionals who feel stuck and those who feel energised often comes down to one thing: **clarity of intent**. Your Career North Star is not a job title — it's a convergence of what you're good at, what you love doing, what the world needs, and what you can be rewarded for. This is inspired by the Japanese concept of *Ikigai*, adapted for professional contexts.



Reflection Questions — Find Your Intersection

Work through each of these questions thoughtfully. Don't rush. Give yourself 20 minutes minimum with no distractions. Your honest answers are the raw material for your North Star statement.

1. What tasks at work make you lose track of time?
2. What do colleagues, managers, or clients most often praise you for?
3. What problems in your industry genuinely frustrate you — and that you'd love to solve?
4. In 5 years, what does a great Tuesday look like for you professionally?
5. What would you do professionally even if the pay were reduced by 20%?

Write Your North Star Statement

- ✔ Complete this template: **"I want to use my [Top 2–3 Skills] to help [Audience/Sector] achieve [Meaningful Outcome] so that [Personal Motivation]."**

Example: "I want to use my analytical thinking and storytelling skills to help mid-sized tech companies make sense of their data so that I can build a meaningful consulting practice on my own terms."

Write yours here:

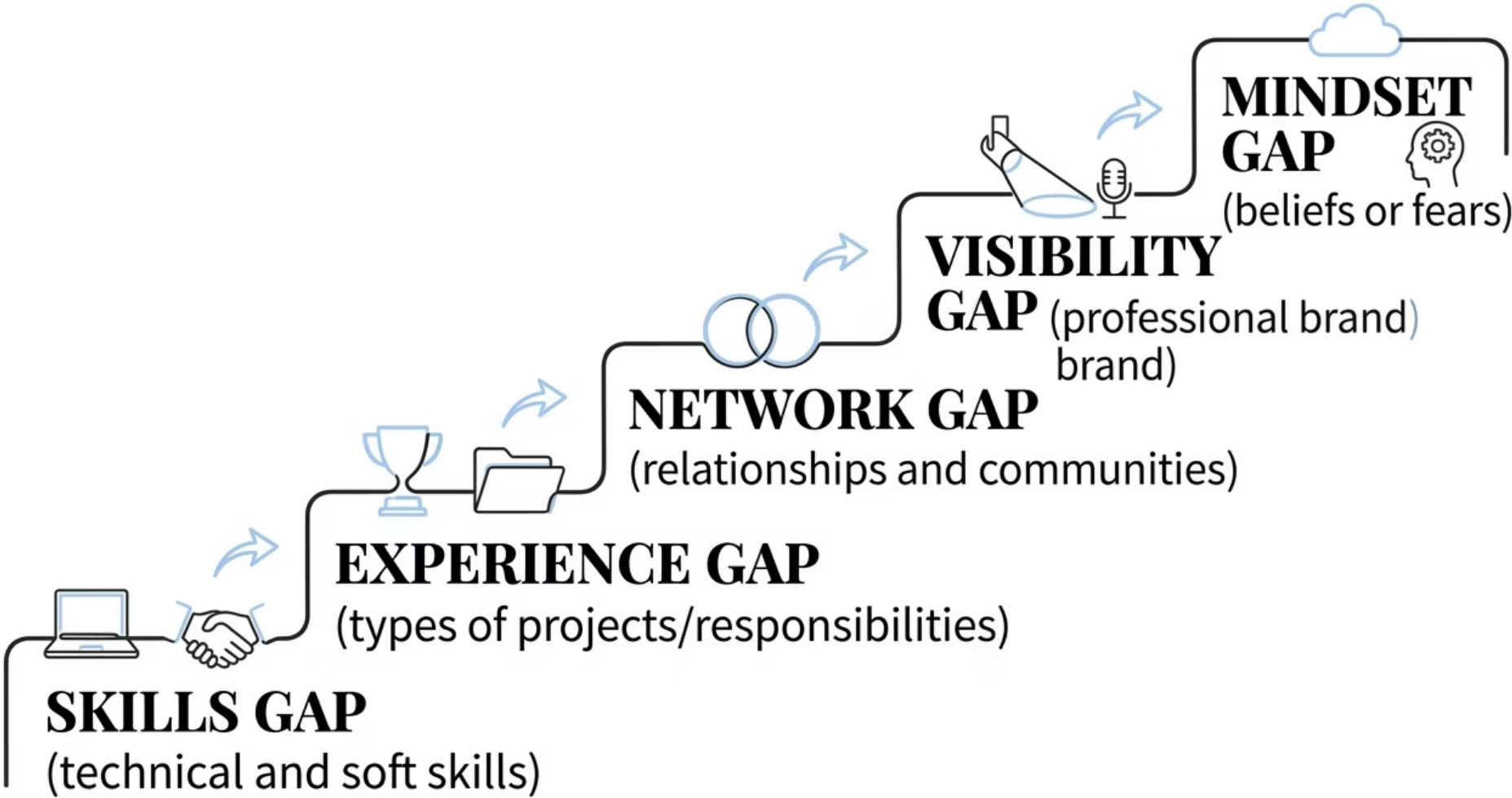
"I want to use my _____ to help _____ achieve _____ so that _____."

STEP 3

Map the Gap — Where You Are vs. Where You Want to Be

Now that you have a clearer picture of your current baseline and your North Star, it's time to identify the distance between them — and turn that distance into a structured development plan. The Gap Map is one of the most powerful exercises in career planning because it replaces vague anxiety ("I'm not where I want to be") with specific, actionable insight ("I need to develop X, build Y, and gain exposure to Z").

The gap is rarely just about skills. It almost always involves a combination of skills, experience, network, visibility, and mindset. Each of these requires a different kind of intervention — which is why a holistic audit of the gap is so important before jumping to solutions.



 Your Gap Map — Fill In Each Category

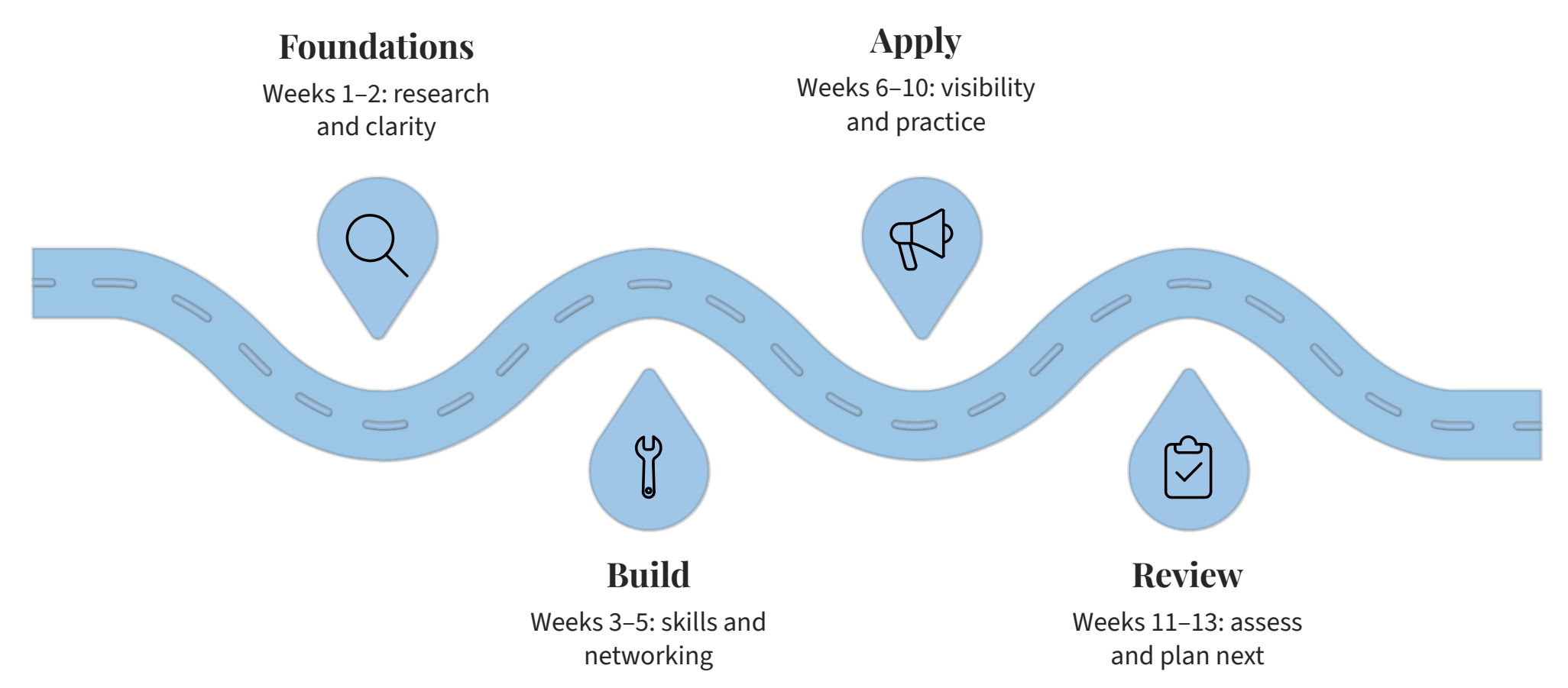
Gap Category	Current State	Target State / What's Needed
Skills Gap	What skills do I currently have?	What new skills does my target role require?
Experience Gap	What have I done so far?	What experiences am I missing?
Network Gap	Who do I know in my target field?	Who do I need to know?
Visibility Gap	How visible am I professionally?	What's my target visibility level?
Mindset Gap	What beliefs hold me back?	What shift in thinking is needed?

STEP 4

Build Your 90-Day Career Action Plan

Big career goals feel intimidating until you break them into 90-day sprints. Ninety days is long enough to make meaningful progress and short enough to stay accountable and adjust course. Think of each sprint as a focused experiment — you're testing, learning, and iterating, not committing irrevocably to a single path.

The structure below helps you move from insight to action in a way that's specific, time-bound, and realistic for a busy professional. Each action item should be small enough to fit into your existing schedule without requiring a life overhaul. That's the secret — sustainable momentum beats dramatic but unsustainable effort every time.



90-Day Action Planner — Fill In Your Commitments

Focus Area	Specific Action	Deadline	Success Indicator
Skill Building	e.g., Complete LinkedIn Learning course on data storytelling	Week 4	Certificate earned + 1 application at work
Networking	e.g., Reach out to 3 professionals in target industry	Week 3	2 conversations booked
Visibility	e.g., Publish 1 LinkedIn article on professional topic	Week 6	Post published, 50+ engagements
Exploration	e.g., Attend 1 industry event or webinar	Week 5	Notes taken, 2 new contacts
Internal Advocacy	e.g., Request a career conversation with manager	Week 2	Meeting booked + prep document ready
Your Action 1			
Your Action 2			

 Pro tip: Schedule your actions in your calendar immediately after filling in this planner. An action without a time slot is just a wish.

Strengthen Your Professional Brand

Your professional brand is the reputation you have — and the one you're actively building. It's what people say about you when you leave the room, what your LinkedIn profile communicates to a recruiter in 8 seconds, and what comes up when your name is Googled. Most professionals either neglect their brand entirely ("I'll just let my work speak for itself") or feel uncomfortable with self-promotion. Both are career limiters.

The truth is, brand-building isn't about boasting. It's about making it **easy for the right opportunities to find you**. A strong professional brand means that when someone in your network hears about a role or project that matches your skills, your name comes to mind immediately. That's the compounding power of brand investment made over months and years.

The 5 Brand Pillars for Working Professionals

● LinkedIn Presence

Complete headline, summary, and featured section. Post 1–2x per week on topics in your domain.

● Thought Leadership

Share insights, not just achievements. Comment meaningfully on others' content.

● Internal Visibility

Volunteer for cross-functional projects, present in team meetings, mentor others.

● Referral Network

Maintain warm relationships with 10–15 professional contacts who know your work well.

● Portfolio of Evidence

Curate case studies, project outcomes, and measurable wins. Numbers tell the story fastest.

Brand Audit Checklist

Run through this quick audit today. Be honest — it takes about 15 minutes.

- ☐ My LinkedIn headline goes beyond job title to show my value proposition
- ☐ My LinkedIn summary is written in first person and tells a compelling professional story
- ☐ My LinkedIn has at least 3 recommendations from colleagues or managers
- ☐ I have posted or commented on LinkedIn in the last 30 days
- ☐ I can clearly articulate my top 3 professional strengths in under 60 seconds
- ☐ I have at least 2–3 documented case studies or project wins ready to share
- ☐ My email signature, resume, and online profiles are consistent in tone and messaging
- ☐ I have a clear "elevator pitch" for career conversations and networking events

Case Example: From Stuck to Strategically Moving

Meet **Priya** — a 32-year-old marketing manager with 8 years of experience at a mid-sized FMCG company. She felt professionally stagnant: her salary had plateaued, her role felt repetitive, and she had a vague sense that she wanted to move into growth consulting but had no idea where to begin. Her story is not unique — it mirrors the situation of thousands of mid-career professionals across India and globally. Here's how she used this worksheet to move forward.

Phase 1: The Audit

Priya completed her Skills Inventory and was surprised to find she had strong analytical and stakeholder management skills she had been underselling. Her Satisfaction Score revealed low marks on Growth Opportunities (3/10) and Career Trajectory Visibility (2/10). This was the data she needed.

Phase 2: The North Star

Her North Star statement: *"I want to use my consumer insights expertise and cross-functional leadership to help early-stage brands build scalable go-to-market strategies, so that I can work with more diverse challenges and build something of my own."*

Phase 3: The Action Plan

Priya committed to three 90-day sprint actions: completing a growth strategy short course, connecting with 5 consultants on LinkedIn per month, and writing 1 case study per month documenting her existing campaign wins. Within 6 months, she had 2 consulting conversations underway.

Priya's key insight: "The worksheet helped me stop treating my career as something that happens to me and start treating it as something I'm actively designing. The gap map was the single most useful thing — it turned a vague fear into a specific list."

Common Mistakes — And How Priya (And You) Can Avoid Them

✗ Mistake 1: Waiting for the "Right Time"

Fix: There is no right time. Start with 20 minutes today. Clarity comes from action, not from waiting for it.

✗ Mistake 2: Confusing Busyness with Progress

Fix: Being busy at work is not the same as building your career. Schedule protected career planning time — even 1 hour per week compounds dramatically.

✗ Mistake 3: Planning in Isolation

Fix: Share your North Star statement and action plan with at least one trusted colleague, mentor, or coach. Accountability multiplies follow-through.

✗ Mistake 4: Treating This as a One-Time Exercise

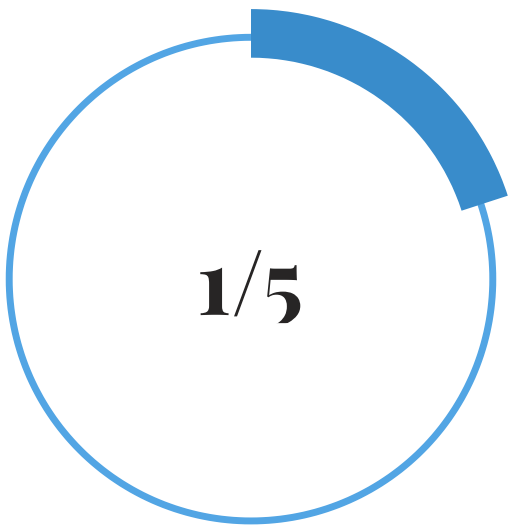
Fix: Revisit this worksheet every 90 days. Your goals, market, and skills all evolve — your plan should too.

SELF-EVALUATION

Career Readiness Self-Evaluation

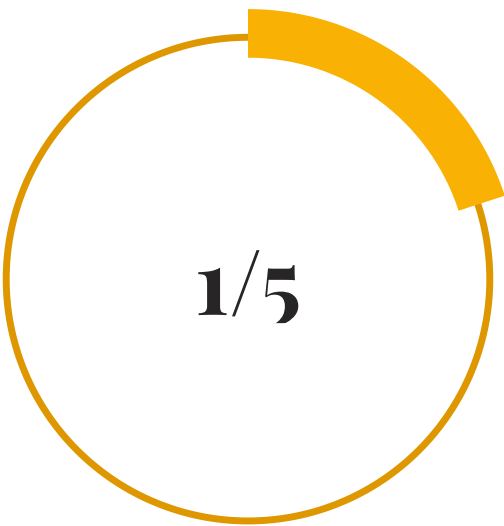
Before you move into your next sprint, take 5 minutes to honestly evaluate where you stand across the five career readiness dimensions. This is not a performance review — it's a compass check. The goal is to identify where your energy and attention will create the most leverage over the next 90 days.

Rate yourself from 1 to 5 on each statement. Be honest — this data is only valuable if it's accurate. Low scores are not failures; they're indicators of where your highest-return investments lie.



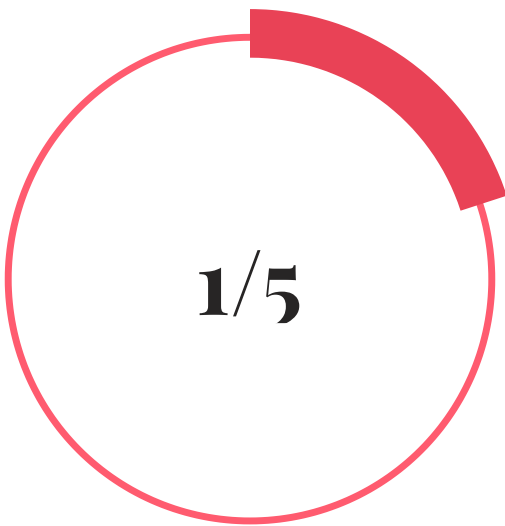
Clarity

I have a clear and written Career North Star statement that I revisit regularly.



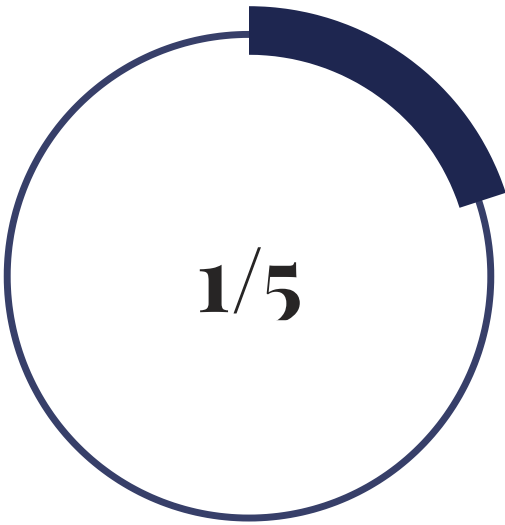
Skills

I have identified the specific skills I need for my target role and am actively building them.



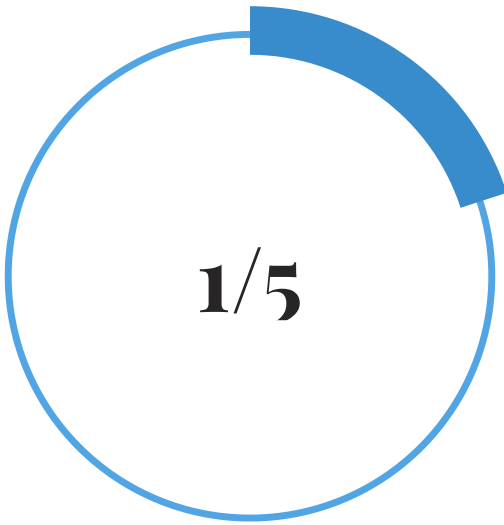
Network

I have warm relationships with professionals in my target field and actively nurture them.



Brand

My professional brand is consistent, clear, and visible in the right communities and channels.



Action

I have a written 90-day action plan with specific deadlines and success indicators I review weekly.

✔ Score yourself on each dimension and shade the circle to match your honest rating. Any circle below 3/5 is your priority zone for the next 90 days. Focus your energy there first — targeted effort beats scattered effort every time.

 My Priority Zone This Quarter

Based on my self-evaluation, the dimension(s) I will focus on most intensely in the next 90 days are:

1. Priority Dimension 1: _____
2. Priority Dimension 2: _____
3. The single most important action I will take this week:

 My Accountability Commitment

I will share this worksheet and my action plan with:

Name: _____

Relationship: _____

Check-in Date: _____

☐ Accountability is the single highest-leverage tool for follow-through. Choose someone who will challenge you, not just validate you.

Skill Gap Analysis

After defining your 'North Star' and honestly evaluating your current career readiness, the next crucial step is to conduct a thorough Skill Gap Analysis. This process systematically identifies the discrepancies between your existing capabilities and the competencies required to achieve your desired career goals.

Understanding these gaps is paramount, as it transforms vague aspirations into a concrete development roadmap. It helps you focus your learning efforts, prioritise upskilling, and strategically position yourself for future opportunities, ensuring your actions are directly aligned with your long-term vision.

Define Your Target Role

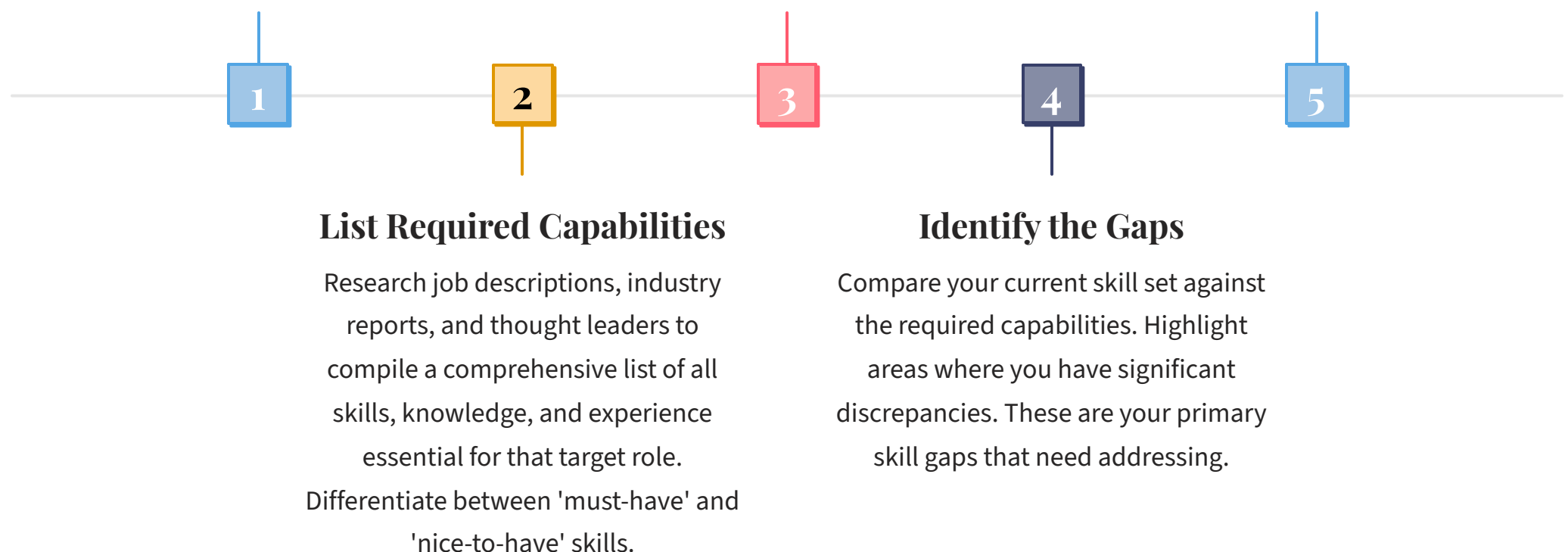
Clearly articulate the specific role, industry, or professional trajectory outlined in your Career North Star. What does success look like in this desired position?

Assess Your Current Skills

Leverage your self-evaluation from the previous section, past performance reviews, and feedback from trusted mentors or peers. Objectively evaluate where you stand for each required capability.

Prioritise Development

Focus on the high-impact gaps first. Which skills, if acquired, would create the most leverage for your career progression or open up new opportunities? Create a phased learning plan.



i A Skill Gap Analysis is not a one-time exercise. Your target roles, market demands, and personal growth will continuously evolve. Revisit this analysis regularly to keep your development plan current and effective.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Your Career Is a Design Project — Here's Your Summary

You now have everything you need to move from career drift to career design. The insights from this worksheet are only as powerful as the actions you take immediately after completing it. Don't let this become another saved document that gets revisited "someday." Someday is not a day of the week. The professionals who grow fastest are not the most talented — they are the most intentional. Below are your seven core takeaways to carry forward.

01	02	03
Audit Before You Act An honest skills inventory and satisfaction score are the foundation of every smart career move. Data beats guesswork — always start here.	Clarity Is a Competitive Advantage Professionals with a written North Star statement make faster, more confident decisions. Write yours and revisit it quarterly.	The Gap Is Not the Enemy Identifying the gap between where you are and where you want to be is not discouraging — it's the most useful map you'll ever draw.
04	05	06
Sprint, Don't Marathon 90-day action plans beat 5-year plans every time. Short cycles keep you accountable, adaptable, and making real progress.	Your Brand Works While You Sleep A strong, consistent professional brand creates opportunities passively. Invest 1–2 hours per week in visibility and it will compound over years.	Accountability Multiplies Results Share your plan with one trusted person. Commitment made public is commitment kept. Find your accountability partner today.
07		
Revisit. Revise. Repeat. Careers evolve, markets shift, and your goals will too. Return to this worksheet every 90 days. Iteration is not failure — it's good career design.		

Your Immediate Next Steps

- ☐ Complete the Skills Inventory (Step 1) — 20 minutes
- ☐ Write your Career North Star Statement (Step 2) — 30 minutes
- ☐ Fill in your Gap Map (Step 3) — 20 minutes
- ☐ Draft your 90-Day Action Plan (Step 4) — 30 minutes
- ☐ Run your Brand Audit Checklist (Step 5) — 15 minutes
- ☐ Name your accountability partner and set a check-in date
- ☐ Calendar-block your first 90-day review date right now

A Final Word

You don't need to have it all figured out. You just need to take the next right step with intention. This worksheet is your toolkit — return to it as often as you need. **Your career is worth designing.**

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