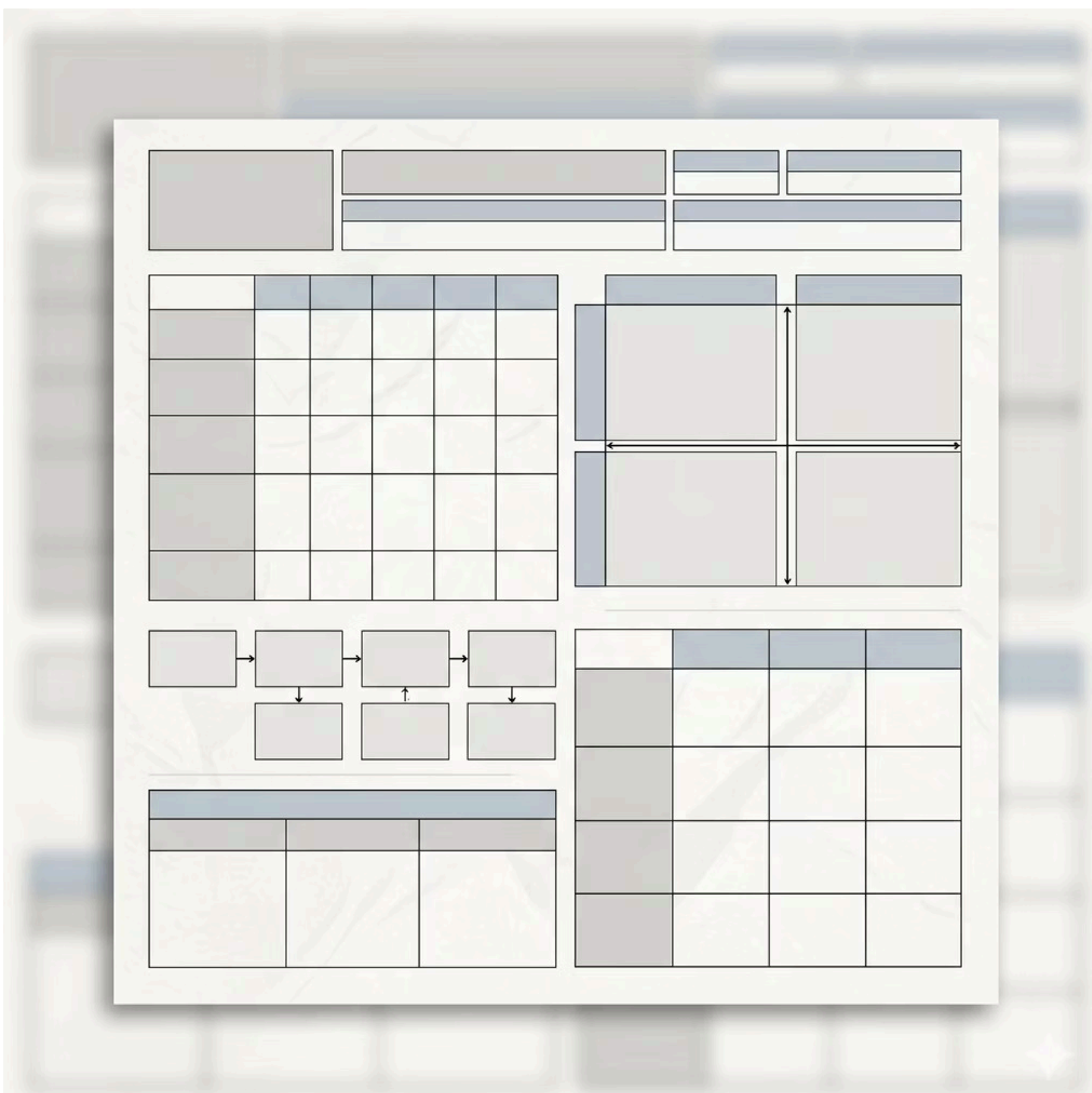
Target Industry Research Worksheet

A structured, actionable guide for working professionals ready to move with clarity — not guesswork. Whether you're switching careers, exploring new sectors, or sharpening your market positioning, this worksheet gives you the research framework that top consultants and career strategists actually use.



Why This Worksheet Exists

Most professionals don't fail to land roles in new industries because they lack skills. They fail because they walk in unprepared — unaware of how the industry is structured, what drives hiring decisions, or how insiders actually speak about their work. Researching a target industry isn't a one-time Google session. It's a disciplined process of building contextual intelligence.

This worksheet solves a specific problem: **the gap between surface-level awareness and genuine industry fluency.** When you can speak the language of an industry — its pressures, its jargon, its career ladders, its influential voices — you signal readiness to hiring managers and professional networks alike. That signal is the difference between a callback and silence.

What Problem This Solves

- Vague, unfocused job searching across too many sectors
- Inability to speak confidently in networking conversations
- Weak cover letters and interview answers due to shallow research
- Wasted time applying to roles in misaligned industries
- Missing the hidden job market within specific sectors

How to Use This Resource

This worksheet is designed for **three modes of use**:

- **Deep Work:** Block 90 minutes, work through every section sequentially
- **Quick Reference:** Return to specific modules as your research evolves
- **Ongoing Log:** Treat it as a living document — update as you learn more

Start with Module 1 even if you think you already know your target industry. Most professionals discover blind spots they didn't know they had.

MODULE 1

Define Your Target Industry

Before you research anything, you need to name your target clearly. "Tech" is not an industry. "Healthcare" is not specific enough. This module forces the precision that makes all downstream research more valuable. Most professionals skip this step — and it costs them enormously in terms of misdirected energy.

Industry selection is not just about interest or passion. It involves an honest intersection of three factors: your transferable skills, the industry's current appetite for those skills, and the realistic time horizon for your transition. Use the framework below to pressure-test your industry choice before investing weeks of research in the wrong direction.

1

Name the Industry Precisely

Write the full name of your target industry. Be specific: not "finance" but "climate-focused impact investing" or "B2B SaaS for mid-market retail."

Your Target: ____

2

List 3 Sub-Sectors

Every industry has sub-sectors with different hiring cultures. Name at least three that interest you most and note why.

Sub-sector 1: __________ **Why:** __________

Sub-sector 2: __________ **Why:** __________

Sub-sector 3: __________ **Why:** __________

3

Validate Your Choice

Answer honestly: Is this industry growing? Are roles available at your experience level? Do your transferable skills have clear application here?

Evidence of growth: ____

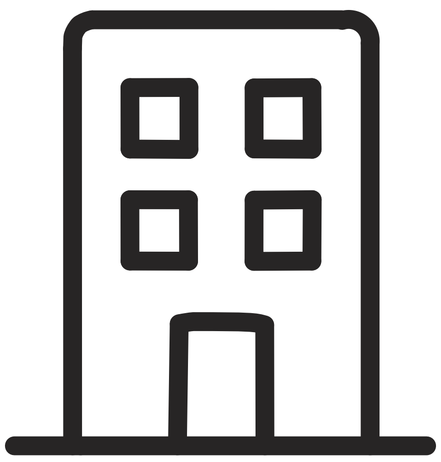
💡 **Pro Tip:** Use LinkedIn's Industry filter to count active job postings in your target industry right now. If you see fewer than 50 relevant openings nationally, you may need to broaden your sub-sector scope.

MODULE 2

Map the Industry Landscape

Understanding an industry means understanding its **ecosystem** — not just the companies within it. You need to know who the major players are, how the value chain works, what external forces shape it, and where the growth pockets are. This is the intelligence that separates candidates who impress interviewers from those who merely show up prepared.

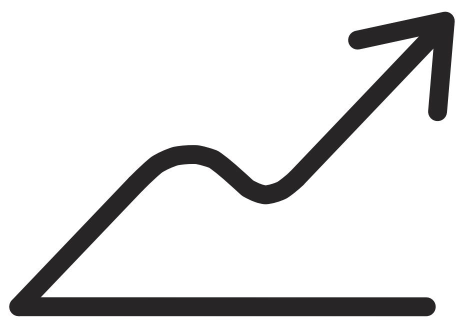
Work through each research layer below. Aim to spend at least 20 minutes per layer. Use primary sources (annual reports, industry publications, regulatory filings) wherever possible — do not rely solely on Wikipedia or general news articles.



Major Players

Identify the top 10–15 companies in your target industry. Categorise them: market leaders, challengers, fast-growing startups, and notable international entrants. Note their market positioning and recent strategic moves.

Sources: IBISWorld, Statista, Crunchbase, industry association reports



Growth Drivers

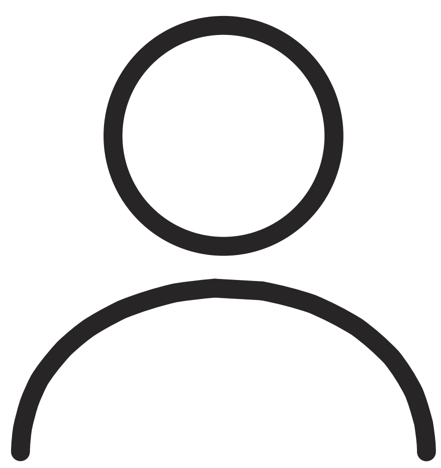
What macro forces are expanding this industry? Identify at least 3 tailwinds: regulatory changes, consumer behaviour shifts, technological disruption, or demographic trends. These become your talking points in interviews.

Sources: McKinsey Global Institute, Deloitte Insights, sector-specific newsletters

Headwinds & Risks

Every industry has challenges. Identifying them shows intellectual honesty and strategic thinking. Note at least 2 risks: supply chain vulnerabilities, talent shortages, regulatory threats, or margin pressure.

Sources: Earnings call transcripts, trade press, analyst reports



Key Associations & Communities

Every industry has professional bodies, conferences, and online communities that shape thinking and hiring. Identify 3–5 relevant associations or events you should know about — and potentially join or attend.

Sources: Industry association websites, Meetup, LinkedIn Groups

MODULE 3

Decode the Role Landscape

Knowing the industry is necessary. Knowing how your target roles exist *within* that industry is what translates research into results. This module maps the specific function you're targeting onto the industry's actual hiring structure — so you understand not just whether roles exist, but how they're titled, levelled, compensated, and evaluated.

Role Inventory Worksheet

Search your target industry on LinkedIn Jobs and Indeed. Collect the following data across at least 15 job postings:

- **Most common job titles** for your function in this industry
- **Experience brackets** (entry, mid, senior) and what differentiates them
- **Most frequently required skills** (hard and soft)
- **Certifications or credentials** consistently mentioned
- **Salary ranges** (use Glassdoor, Levels.fyi, LinkedIn Salary)

My target role title(s):

____

Typical experience required:

____

Top 5 skills I see repeatedly:

1. ___________________________________
2. ___________________________________
3. ___________________________________
4. ___________________________________
5. ___________________________________

Skills Gap Assessment

Once you've identified the top required skills, honestly rate yourself on each one. Use this simple scale:

- ✅ **Strong** — I can demonstrate this with examples
- 🔄 **Developing** — I have some exposure, need to deepen
- ❌ **Gap** — I don't have this yet

Skill 1: __________ Rating: ___

Skill 2: __________ Rating: ___

Skill 3: __________ Rating: ___

Skill 4: __________ Rating: ___

Skill 5: __________ Rating: ___

For every ❌ Gap skill, write one concrete action to address it within 60 days.

My 60-day plan for gaps:

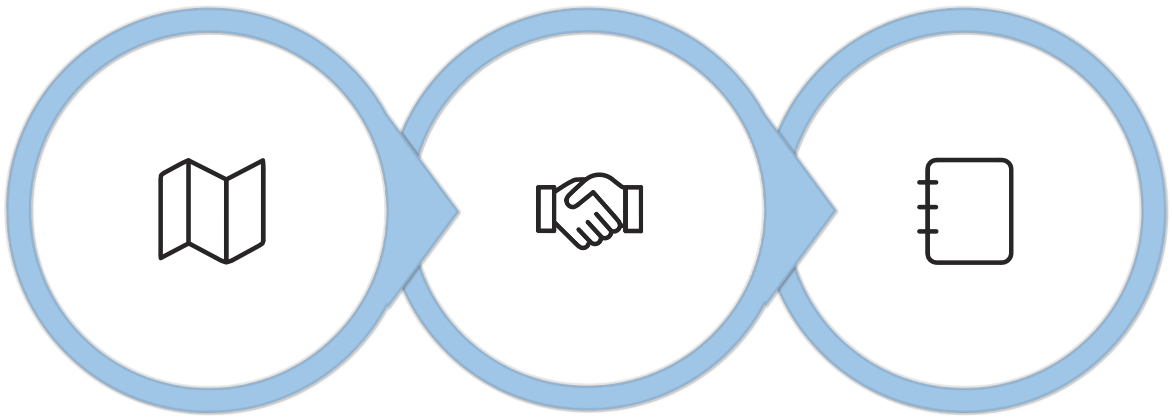
____

MODULE 4

Build Your Industry Intelligence Network

Research from secondary sources will only take you so far. The most valuable industry intelligence comes from conversations with insiders — people currently working in the industry who can tell you what annual reports and LinkedIn posts never will. This module gives you a structured approach to building those connections intentionally and ethically.

Informational interviewing is the most underutilised career tool available to professionals at every level. It is not about asking for a job — it is about gathering intelligence that accelerates your research, sharpens your positioning, and opens doors that job boards never will. Approach it with genuine curiosity and a clear respect for the other person's time.



Identify | Reach Out | Extract & Log

The three-phase approach above ensures you build your network with intentionality rather than randomness. Most professionals skip Phase 1 entirely — they reach out to whoever they can find rather than strategically targeting people whose roles, companies, or career paths most closely mirror their goals. The logging habit in Phase 3 is equally critical: insights fade within 24 hours if not captured.

Informational Interview Question Bank

Use these questions as a starting framework. Customise them for each conversation:

About the Industry

- "What are the 2–3 biggest changes you've seen in this industry over the last 3 years?"
- "Where do you see the most growth or disruption happening right now?"
- "What do outsiders consistently misunderstand about this sector?"

About the Role

- "What does success actually look like in this function at your company?"
- "What skills or experiences do you wish you'd built before entering this role?"
- "How is this function perceived within the broader organisation?"

About the Transition

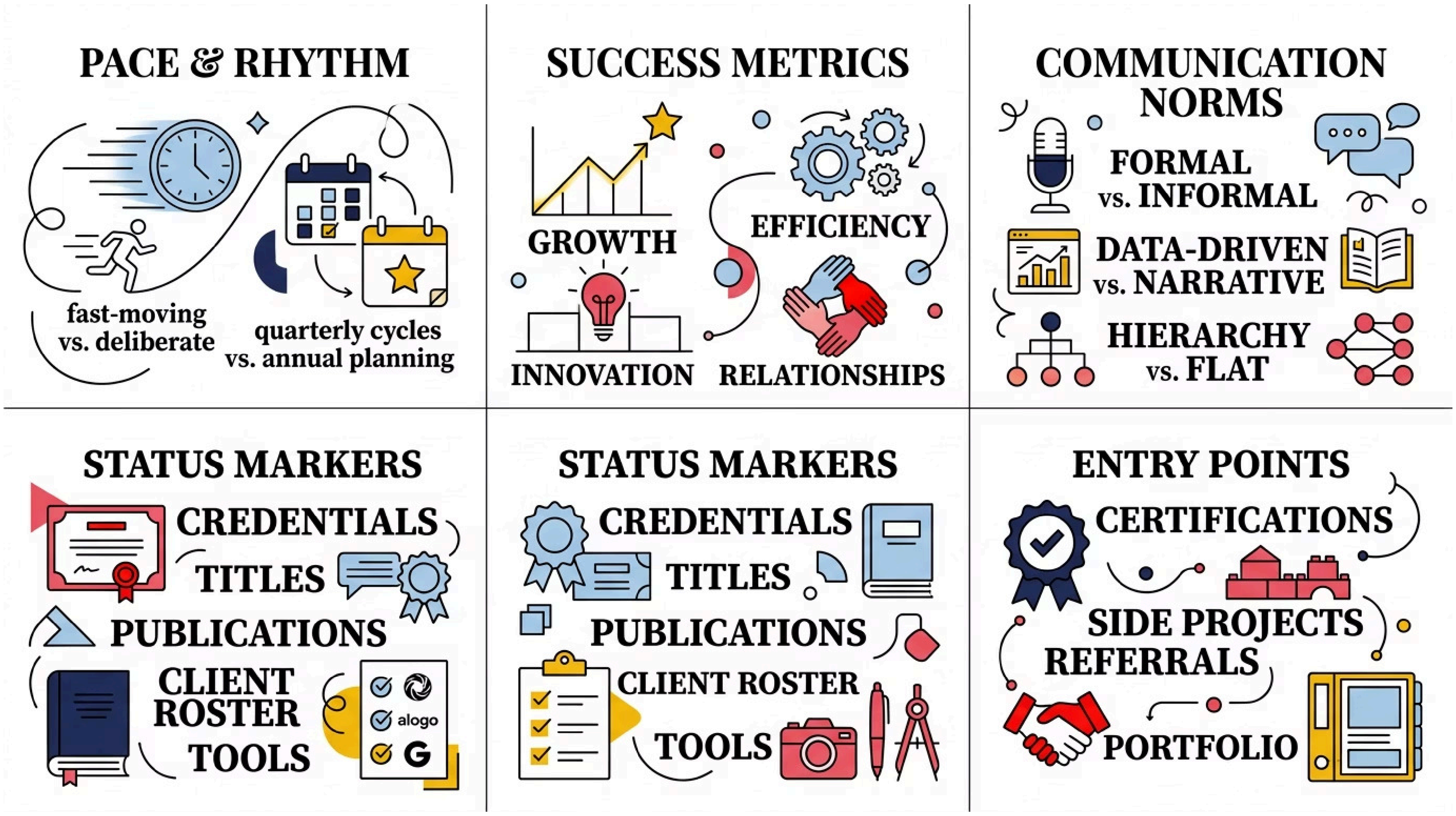
- "If someone from [your background] wanted to move into this space, what would you advise?"
- "Who else should I be speaking with to round out my understanding?"
- "Is there anything I should read or follow to get up to speed quickly?"

MODULE 5

Understand the Industry Culture Code

Every industry has an unwritten culture code — shared values, communication norms, success metrics, and status markers that insiders absorb over time. As an outsider entering a new sector, you need to decode this culture deliberately. Getting it wrong can undermine an otherwise strong application or interview, even when your skills are a perfect fit.

Culture code research is where most worksheet exercises stop short. They tell you to "research the company culture" — but culture operates at the industry level first. The pace and formality of fintech is different from that of public sector consulting. The success metrics celebrated in venture-backed startups differ entirely from those valued at established FMCG corporations. Know the industry's culture before you try to fit into a specific company's version of it.



Culture Research Worksheet

Pace of the industry: ______________________________________

How success is publicly celebrated:

____

Communication style I've observed:

____

Status markers I need to earn or signal:

____

How insiders describe their work to outsiders:

____

3 industry-specific terms I need to understand:

1. _____ means: _______________________
2. _____ means: _______________________
3. _____ means: _______________________

MODULE 6

Target Company Deep-Dive

Once you've developed macro-level industry fluency, it's time to go micro. Selecting and deeply researching 5–10 target companies within your industry is not just a job-search tactic — it's a strategic intelligence exercise. The professionals who land the best roles are those who demonstrate company-level knowledge that signals genuine interest, not desperation.

Your company research should go well beyond the "About Us" page. You need to understand the company's strategic priorities, recent performance, competitive positioning, culture signals, and — critically — how your function fits into their structure. This depth of preparation transforms your applications, networking conversations, and interviews from generic to genuinely compelling.

Company Research Template

Complete one table per target company. Aim to research at least 5 companies.

Company Name	____
Industry Sub-sector	____
Company Size & Stage	____
Recent News (last 90 days)	____
Strategic Priorities	____
Known Challenges	____
How my skills address their needs	____
My insider connection (if any)	____
Application status	____

⚡ **Research Sources Checklist:** Company LinkedIn page → Company website (Investor Relations for public companies) → Glassdoor reviews → Recent press coverage (Google News) → CEO/leadership LinkedIn activity → Podcast appearances by leadership → Industry analyst commentary on the company

REAL-WORLD APPLICATION

Case Example: From Generalist to Fintech Insider

To make this worksheet concrete, here is a realistic example of how a working professional used this exact research process to successfully transition into financial technology — one of the most competitive and sought-after industry transitions in the current market.

The Professional's Profile

Name: Priya (composite example)

Background: 6 years in B2B marketing at a mid-sized logistics company

Goal: Product Marketing Manager role at a Series B–D fintech company

Timeline: 4-month active research and application phase

Result: 3 offers from fintech companies, accepted a role 28% above previous salary

How She Used This Worksheet

- **Module 1:** Narrowed from "fintech" to "B2B payments infrastructure" — found 3x more relevant roles immediately
- **Module 2:** Mapped the competitive landscape: identified Razorpay, Cashfree, and PayU as her target ecosystem
- **Module 3:** Discovered "GTM strategy" and "developer marketing" were universal requirements — enrolled in a 3-week online course
- **Module 4:** Conducted 11 informational interviews over 6 weeks — 2 led directly to referrals
- **Module 5:** Learned that fintech values data-fluency and moves fast — adjusted her LinkedIn and resume language accordingly
- **Module 6:** Researched 8 target companies deeply — walked into every interview with company-specific talking points

Common Mistakes This Process Prevents

❌ Too Broad

Applying across 5 unrelated industries simultaneously. The research thins out, the positioning becomes generic, and nothing resonates.

Fix: Module 1 forces specificity. One industry, 3 sub-sectors maximum.

❌ Surface Research

Knowing the company name and tagline but unable to discuss their recent strategic moves or competitive pressures.

Fix: Module 6 template ensures depth before every application and interview.

❌ No Network

Relying entirely on job boards without ever speaking to an industry insider. Missing the 70–80% of roles that are filled through networks.

Fix: Module 4 builds this habit systematically, not chaotically.

❌ Skills Mismatch

Applying for roles without understanding the actual skill requirements, leading to rejection with no clear diagnosis of why.

Fix: Module 3 gap analysis creates a precise development plan before applications begin.

SELF-EVALUATION

Your Research Readiness Scorecard

Before you move from research to active application, use this scorecard to assess whether your industry intelligence is deep enough to compete. Be ruthlessly honest — submitting applications before you're genuinely prepared is the single biggest time-waster in any job search. Use this as a quality gate, not a formality.

Score yourself on each dimension using a 1–5 scale, where 1 = "I have little to no knowledge here" and 5 = "I can speak confidently about this in any professional conversation." A total score of 25 or above suggests you're ready to begin active outreach and applications. Below 20 means you have specific research gaps to close first.

1

Industry Definition

I can name my target industry and 3 sub-sectors with precision and explain why I've chosen each one.

2

Landscape Fluency

I can name 10+ major players, 3 growth drivers, and 2 key risks without referring to notes.

3

Role Clarity

I know my target role titles, typical requirements, and salary ranges. My skills gap plan is written down.

4

Network Depth

I have spoken to at least 5 industry insiders and logged their insights. I have at least 2 warm connections in my target companies.

5

Culture Fluency

I can discuss industry norms, success metrics, and communication styles. I know the key terms and can use them naturally.

> "The professionals who transition fastest into new industries are not the most talented — they are the most prepared. Research is not a passive activity. It is the most strategic investment you can make before your first application goes out."

Key Takeaways & Your Next Steps

You now have a complete research framework that transforms vague industry curiosity into actionable competitive intelligence. Here is what matters most as you move forward. Revisit this worksheet every 30 days during an active search — industries shift, your research deepens, and your positioning should evolve accordingly.

1 Specificity beats breadth every time

Naming your exact industry and sub-sector is the foundation of everything. Vague targeting produces vague results — precision in your research creates precision in your positioning.

2 Map the ecosystem, not just the companies

Understanding growth drivers, risks, regulatory forces, and industry associations gives you the contextual intelligence that most candidates completely lack in interviews.

3 Skills gap analysis before applications

Know exactly where you stand against role requirements before submitting a single application. Close critical gaps with targeted, time-bounded actions. Applications without this preparation are guesswork.

4 Informational interviews are your highest-ROI activity

Eleven conversations over six weeks can do more for your transition than 60 cold applications. Conversations create referrals. Referrals create opportunities that never appear on job boards.

5 Culture fluency signals genuine insider readiness

Learning to speak the industry's language — its metrics, its status markers, its communication norms — signals that you've done the work. This is the detail that moves candidates from "interesting" to "hired."

6 Deep company research transforms every interaction

Walking into any professional interaction — a networking coffee, a recruiter call, or a final-round interview — with company-specific intelligence is a differentiator that virtually no one else in the room has prepared for.

7 Research is not a one-time event — it's a habit

Set a monthly research review date. Industries shift, companies pivot, and new opportunities emerge. The professionals who stay informed consistently outperform those who research once and consider themselves done.

🚀 **Your Immediate Next Action:** Open this worksheet and complete Module 1 within the next 24 hours. Write your target industry name and three sub-sectors. That single act of specificity will immediately clarify everything that follows — and separate you from the 90% of job seekers who never define their target with this level of precision.