



Putting together a career plan can be intimidating – let alone executing one. But like most professional tasks, some planning, incremental change, and a commitment to action can go a long way.

## Define What You Want (and What You Don't Want)

A few of us know exactly what we want from our careers, from title, company, and industry down to workplace culture and cross-streets. But for many of us, a career plan is an exercise in figuring out what we do and don't want, often through trial and error.

Ask yourself: **What do you enjoy about how you spend your time at the moment?** Is there a particular **project or task that motivates you more than others?** What about the moments in your career that stand out as particularly bad or stressful?

**Ask why** – it could be the content, the process, the people involved, or something else entirely. Answering this will help you find the right role and setting for you.

Next, look at other career variables. Each of us places different weight on the importance of these – some people care only about salary and title, others care more about work-life balance and culture. Figure out what your mix is. Some things to consider:

- Defined and predictable work hours versus something fluid. I.e., traditional 9-5, always on with quick responses the norm, or flexible work day.
- Travel opportunities.
- The natural "next step" up the career ladder vs. a transition to a new discipline
- Industry: where you are vs something different.
- Culture: The cultural gulf between a more-traditional finance company versus a newer tech startup is typically vast.
- Greater purpose/values: is a values-driven organization one of your nonnegotiables? Or will you sell tobacco to teenagers if the company has benefits and paid leave?
- Management style: a hands-on boss versus someone who keeps staff at arm's length – and every management style in between. A good boss can make or break your relationship with a company.
- Location: remote working vs regular office routine. Willingness to re-locate vs close to your home/children's school/s.
- Salary
- Title
- Promotion prospects/clear career trajectory (within vs beyond company)
- Benefits: vacation, paid maternity/paternity/family leave, sick days, gym reimbursement/membership, other perks, etc.