



Creating Your Career Blueprint

Whilst it may sound obvious to some, knowing who you are, where your strengths lie, what you enjoy doing each day, the environments and people that bring out the best in you, and the types of companies that can support you to reach your goals are among the most empowering ways to find happiness and fulfilment in your career.

Knowing where to start is one of the most common challenges and there are several ways to approach this - many of which can be found from a google search. But a particularly successful strategy that we have found works through years of trial and error has been to conduct what we call the Clear Blueprint. This is a simple exercise to complete and should build clarity about what's really important to you, and will form as a reference point to use when deciding whether a career choice you are about to make will bring out the best in you.

As we have mentioned, you spend 1/3 of your life at work, it is critical that you take the time and effort to get this right.

Mapping Out Your History

The blueprint process should only take a few hours to complete and has the power to set you on the right path and change your life forever. The first step is to sit down with a notepad and your CV, ensuring it includes all of the work experience you have ever had, as far back as any internships or work experience you may have held in your school/uni years.

Taking one position at a time, start to write about the things you enjoyed in the role: the tasks, projects, people, environment, anything that you can think of. Then, on the flip side, the things you may not have enjoyed so much, the experiences you remember, whether personal or professional, that stick in your head from the time. Some of it may seem irrelevant, but if it is planted in your memory there is a reason. The secret here is go for your life!

As you go through this for each role, you should find yourself writing pages upon pages of information and memories, which you may find quite enjoyable - and it is often surprising by the things you recall and the experiences (both positive and negative) that have, for some reason, remained etched deep in your memory for all these years.



Here are a few questions to get you started:

- What have you liked and disliked about each job? Which projects did you work on? What did you find energised or de-energised you? What did you learn and achieve?
- How were the people you worked with each day? Who did you look up to? What leadership qualities did they display? Who did you avoid? What advice did you receive that remains with you to this day (both that you agree and disagree with)
- What was the environment like? Do you remember the companies values? Did they live them? Did they resonate with you? Which ones in particular did you find engaging and energising? Was it a social company? Was it diverse? What do you recall about the culture and ways of working? Was the business made up of young, mature or mixed ages, genders and backgrounds?
- Were they structured or unstructured? Fast paced or steady? Innovative or risk averse? Agile or rigid? Did they invest in systems and processes, training and development?
- How far did you need to commute? Do you remember this fondly? What did you do on the journey? Was it an arduous task or did you enjoy this as 'you' time?
- How were you rewarded, both financially and non-financially?
- Time again, what would you do differently? Did it lead you down the path you expected? Try to recall your thought process in deciding to take the role - did it eventuate as expected? What do you wish you had considered beforehand with the value of hindsight?

This is not an extensive list, just write down anything and everything that you can think of until you have finished writing this up for each position. You should have several pages (reams if you have done it right!) to work from.

The Power of Reflection

It's hard to live your values if you don't know what they are. So, for anyone who is planning on furthering their career, reflection on personal values before, during and after new professional experiences is key. This exercise plays a vital role in helping you to gain clarity on your ideal next steps and they are key triggers you look for when searching for your dream job.

The end goal is knowing and owning your values, such as achievement, independence, recognition and support. If you are in the process of exploring other career options, taking some time to reflect on the following questions, and you never know, the answers might just transform your process and change what you decide to do.



- What has been your proudest moment professionally?
- What have you regretted doing during your career?
- What has led you to pursue the industry you are currently working in or would like to work in?
- Who is a mentor to you, and what is one example of when this person transformed or shaped you professionally?

Finding and living your values is an ongoing exercise, and there are times when our values shift, so be prepared to revisit your answers and update them before and after every job. This exercise will help you find fulfilment as well as improve your energy and re-ignite your passion.

What Workplace Culture Suits You Best?

The next step is to assess the ideal culture fit that ties in with your personal values. To do this, ask yourself questions such as:

- How would you describe previous work cultures you've worked in?
- What aspects about your previous workplace cultures have you liked and disliked?
- Do you want to work in a culture where you can express your views and ideas?
- Do you prefer casual atmospheres or stricter ones?
- Do you want to work alongside people younger or older than you?
- What dynamics of each work culture would you change if given the chance?
- What types of people have you enjoyed working with?
- Would you prefer flexible working environment or a 9-5 Monday to Friday desk job?

The benefits of self-assessment will show when you start highlighting recurring patterns in your results. Use this reflection time to imagine your dream job where you're at your happiest - and remember, anything is possible!

Now pour yourself a beverage, you've earned it (!) and take a quick breather before moving on to the final section.



The Clear Blueprint

The next part is the simplest, but the most rewarding and often enlightening part. Grab a highlighter and start working through each of the pages, marking up anything that you feel is particularly important, that conjures up the most emotion, is repeated on several occasions or just simply resonates strongly with you.

What you may find is that many of the things that were important to you early in your career remain important to this day. Whilst your values may evolve over time, there is often a core that guides you, and it's this driving force we are seeking to identify here. The same goes for the things that you enjoyed or were energised by the most, and on the flip side the areas that demotivated, de-energised or frustrated you.

The objective here is to end up with a one or maximum two page summary that will provide you with a great reference point to work from. You should have a shortlist of areas that you enjoy in your roles, the areas you would like to avoid, the values that yourself with, and the practical components, such as salary, location and flexibility all covered, to ensure you are setting yourself up with the greatest chance of success in this critical and life-changing decision.

Your blueprint should be a working document that you review on an annual basis, used to critically assess any opportunities you consider moving forward, both internally and externally, and provide the basis for any questions you should be asking when meeting any individuals or companies throughout any career based discussions.

Often, when actively seeking a new role, we can be guilty of talking ourselves into taking something that, with a more critical eye, may not be aligned with our goals or aspirations. We also find that people can often take the offer with the last company they met or with the person who they liked the most throughout the process, ignoring warning signs or gut feel, or simply allow ourselves to be wooed by someone to take a position that may not be right. Whilst these decisions may not always be the wrong ones, they can often be challenged to a greater extent, and the blueprint provides a solid base to refer back to throughout the process and help hold yourself accountable to what is truly important to give you the best chance of finding fulfilment in your work.



To Conclude

Reflecting on and identifying your values, goals and dreams and subsequently placing them at the centre of your career exploration process will help you to make more meaningful connections between your skills and career interests. The activities described above are designed to help you gain clarity on your distinct professional values. We hope the revelations will help you discover what you stand for as a professional and guide you in making sense of how your many professional pursuits are integrated, to prioritise your work and make decisions about what professional opportunities you want to pursue.

The next step in your journey is to begin formulating a target list of companies that may align with your goals and requirements. Try our A, B, C guide to help get you started in this important process.

Further Support

If you still find it somewhat challenging to identify your energising and de-energising strengths, your core values and a greater understanding of your personality type, do not worry, there are a number of ways in which we can assist you through this with the assistance of coaching, questionnaires and assessments. For more information, [book a consultation](#) to discuss your current ambitions and whether we are able to assist on your exciting career journey.