

Your professional roadmap

The big picture:

Picture this: You've had a long, rewarding career, and are on the cusp of a happy retirement. What does your life look like?

- ☐ **Where are you living?**

- ☐ **What role are you retiring from?**

- ☐ **What will you spend your free time doing?**

Long-term goals:

Where do you see yourself in 8-10 years?

Think about your job, network and skills, and how you'd like to grow in each of these areas.

- ☐ **What are your goals? Be as specific as you can.**
 - ☐ *E.g. Receive a promotion to the C-suite level*

- ☐ **What do you need to accomplish in order to achieve these goals?**
 - ☐ *E.g. Gain X years of high-level strategic experience*

- ☐ **Skills to improve and training needed to achieve these goals:**
 - ☐ *E.g. Organizational forecasting, executive collaboration and business strategy*

Medium-term goals:

Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?

Write down what you need to achieve within 3-5 years to support your long-term goal.

☐ **Goals**

- *E.g. Receive a promotion to the director level*

☐ **Things to accomplish in order to achieve your goals:**

- *E.g. Gain X years of mid-level strategic experience*

☐ **Skills to improve and training needed to achieve those goals:**

- *E.g. Departmental forecasting and managing managers*

Short-term goals:

Where do you see yourself in 1-3 years?

Think of the bigger picture, and break down your medium and long-term goals into smaller targets achievable in the next few years.

☐ **Goals**

- *E.g. Formalize an industry-relevant mentor relationship*

☐ **Things to accomplish in order to achieve your goals:**

- *E.g. Join an industry-specific peer group*

☐ **Skills to improve and training needed to achieve those goals:**

- *E.g. Professional networking, oral communication and self-advocacy*

Next steps:

What can you do in the next few months that will get you closer to your goals?

These could be books to read, classes to take or projects to get involved with.

☐ **What are your goals? Be as specific as you can.**

- *E.g. Add 10 new connections on LinkedIn and read "Earn It" by Jill Young*

A few tips for drafting a successful career plan

It isn't just a "one-and-done" activity:

Professional roadmaps are based on an understanding of your goals, skills and areas of interest—all things subject to change as you continue to grow. For this reason, this should be a living document that you revisit at least once a year as your goals and motivations change. You should also plan to meet with your supervisor annually to discuss your revised roadmap.

Take some time to reflect before drastically changing your roadmap.

You're always allowed to alter your career path to fit your unique passions. But before you scrap documented goals, ask yourself a few questions to ensure your next steps take you closer to where you want to be.

- ☐ Why do I want a change?
- ☐ What, exactly, am I unsatisfied or unhappy with? What amount of control do I have over this?
- ☐ Would a different role, department or area of expertise satisfy my need for change?
- ☐ Why do I think this new direction will make my life better?
- ☐ What are some possible downsides or risks?

Before you start, identify your "must-haves."

Your values directly influence where you are and where you want to be. Take some time to identify what is most important to you in your career—be it freedom, camaraderie, creativity, autonomy, etc.—and put them into the following categories:

- ☐ Must have
- ☐ Nice to have
- ☐ OK to not have

Likewise, be ready to think critically about the skills you'll need to learn to get where you want to be. There are tons of free resources to support your professional development, and learning is the name of the game!

Do some research and draw inspiration from what other people are doing.

When it comes to professional roadmapping, tools like LinkedIn come in handy to see how others have gotten to where you want to be. Take advantage of the information you have at hand and draw inspiration to identify potential next steps. What jobs have led your mentors to where they are today? What skills have they developed? Once you've taken a deep dive into others' career paths, you'll have a better handle on the realm of possibilities.

Tips for a productive roadmap conversation.

Consider asking these questions to gain insight.

- ☐ What parts of your job are most interesting and energizing to you?
- ☐ What areas are you finding most challenging right now?
- ☐ What are you already doing to reach short and long-term career goals?
- ☐ What's your "dream job"? Why?
- ☐ How can the company support your goals? What resources would you like to take advantage of?
- ☐ Are there any other projects, committees or additional responsibilities that fit in line with your goals?
- ☐ Are there any areas within (or outside of) your field that you'd like to explore?

Top tools for professional development

- ☐ **Coursera**—an online learning platform with an infinite number of courses from world-class universities.
- ☐ **Section 4**—an amazing online education platform shedding real-world insights from entrepreneurs, creatives and award-winning professors.
- ☐ **Skillshare**—an online learning community for creatives, where you can learn cutting-edge techniques for graphic design, photography, illustration and much more.
- ☐ **Harvard Extension School**—degrees and certificates in more than 25 fields delivered by industry leaders and faculty members from Harvard University.

General tips & guidance

- ☐ **Meet with your direct reports to discuss professional development at least once a year.**
A career roadmap is a living document designed to allow space for change. By revisiting this document annually, you'll maintain an important dialogue on up-to-date preferences and career goals.
- ☐ **Ask questions that are specific to your direct report.**
Some team members love answering questions like, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" But, while high-level questions like this are a great starting point, they do little to focus the conversation on day-to-day opportunities. Ask specific questions about your team member's goals, and work together to find opportunities to enact those goals on a daily or weekly basis.
- ☐ **Talk as little as possible. This is about your direct report—not you!**
Managers should provide structure and manage expectations, but more than that, your role is to coach team members into defining success for themselves. Serve as a partner and coach in guiding your employee, but don't take ownership of defining all goals for them.

Career roadmap checklist

**Need to keep you and your direct report on track with career roadmaps?
We got you. Check items off as you go, and watch their careers take off!**

Preparation

- ☐ Send the career roadmap template to your direct report, and ask them to fill it out.
- ☐ Schedule a time to discuss your direct reports' career roadmap with them.

Discussion

- ☐ Attend the meeting with vulnerability and an open mind.
- ☐ Document the tasks to be completed in the next year in order to achieve their short-term goals.

Action

- ☐ Share a list of tools for professional development that align with their goals.
- ☐ Encourage your direct report to perform research on career paths and draw inspiration from what industry leaders are doing.
- ☐ Actively look for opportunities for your direct report to gain their desired experience within your company.
- ☐ Schedule informal one-on-one check-ins with your direct report to discuss their progress.
- ☐ Revisit their career roadmap in an annual meeting to assess progress and priorities.
- ☐ If they want to change their roadmap, approach this conversation with a coach-like mindset.

P.S.

Remember, this exercise is supposed to get your direct report closer to their goals and desires. Be flexible, curious and get ready to help them achieve their dreams!