

L² LaunchToLead

 PIVOT PATH • Free Strategy Guide

Trojan Horse Pivot Guide

Change Roles Without Quitting Your Job

Test a new role, build proof of capability, and get hired internally—all while keeping your current paycheck.



Mansour Manci
Career Coach & Founder, LaunchToLead

LaunchToLead.io

THE PROBLEM

The Traditional Pivot is Broken

What Most People Try:

- ✗ **Quit first, figure it out later** → 6+ months unemployed, burning savings
- ✗ **Apply to new roles externally** → Rejected for "lack of experience" even though you have transferable skills
- ✗ **Go back to school** → \$50K+ in debt, 2 years lost, still no proven track record
- ✗ **Hope for a random opportunity** → Wait years for "the right time" that never comes

The real problem?

You're trying to **prove** you can do a new role *without any evidence*. Hiring managers see risk. You see potential. That gap is why pivots fail.

There's a Better Way

Build proof *before* you pivot. Get hired *while* you're employed.

The Trojan Horse Strategy

Use your current role to build a portfolio for your next one

The Core Formula

Old Problem + New Tool = Portfolio

Find a problem in your **current role**, solve it with skills from your **target role**, and document the results. Now you have **proof**.

1 Old Problem

Identify a pain point in your current team/company

Examples:

- Manual reporting takes 10 hours/week
- Customer onboarding has 40% drop-off
- Team collaboration is siloed across tools

2 New Tool

Apply a skill from your target role to solve it

Examples:

- Want to be a PM? Write a product brief
- Want to be a Data Analyst? Build a dashboard
- Want to be in DevRel? Create technical documentation

3 Portfolio

Document the results and showcase them

You now have:

- ✓ A case study with measurable outcomes
- ✓ Real work samples in your target domain
- ✓ Credibility with stakeholders who saw you deliver

Trojan Horse Projects by Target Role

Real pivot opportunities across engineering disciplines



Engineer → Product Manager

Old Problem

Features shipped but rarely used

New Tool

User research + product briefs

Portfolio Piece

Feature validation framework + case study



Engineer → Engineering Manager

Old Problem

New hires take months to contribute

New Tool

Onboarding curriculum + mentorship

Portfolio Piece

Mentorship results + retention metrics



Engineer → Solutions/Technical Sales

Old Problem

Sales team can't explain technical features

New Tool

Demo scripts + technical collateral

Portfolio Piece

Deals influenced + content created



Engineer → Data Science/Analytics

Old Problem

No visibility into system performance

New Tool

Analytics dashboard + predictive alerts

Portfolio Piece

Dashboard + downtime prevented

From Engineer to Product Manager

How Sarah built proof while keeping her salary

Sarah's Situation

Current role: Senior Software Engineer (5 years)

Target role: Product Manager

Obstacle: "You don't have PM experience" from every external application

1 Old Problem She Identified

Engineering team kept building features nobody used—35% of shipped features had <1K MAU

2 New Tool She Applied

Sarah created a lightweight **Product Validation Framework**:

- User research interviews (5–10 customers)
- One-page product brief template
- Success metrics dashboard

3 Portfolio She Built

Results after 6 months:

- Feature adoption rate increased from 35% to 78%
- Framework adopted by 3 other engineering teams
- Documented 8 product briefs with measurable outcomes
- PM team noticed and asked her to co-lead next quarter's roadmap

The Outcome

Sarah was offered an internal PM role 9 months later—**without applying externally**. She had proof, advocates, and a portfolio of real PM work.

She never quit. She never took a pay cut. She just built proof while employed.

Design Your Trojan Horse

Map out your own pivot strategy

Your Current Role:

Example: Backend Engineer, Marketing Analyst, IT Support, etc.

Your Target Role:

Example: Product Manager, Data Scientist, DevOps Engineer, etc.

1. Old Problem (in your current team/company):

What's broken, inefficient, or frustrating? Be specific.

2. New Tool (from your target role):

What skill/approach from your target role could solve it?

3. Success Metrics (how will you measure impact?):

Time saved? Cost reduced? Adoption rate? User satisfaction?

4. Timeline (when can you start?):

Example: "2 hours/week for next 3 months"

 **Pro Tip:** Start small. Don't ask permission. Just solve the problem and share the results. People remember impact, not job titles.

How to Pitch Your Manager

Scripts for getting support (or permission) for your Trojan Horse project

Option 1: The "Forgiveness Over Permission" Approach

Best for low-risk experiments you can do in spare time

"Hey [Manager], I noticed we've been struggling with [Old Problem]. I did some experimenting on my own time and built [New Tool]. Initial results show [Metric]. Want me to walk you through it?"

✓ Low risk – you've already proven value before asking

Option 2: The "20% Time" Request

Best when you need dedicated time or resources

"I've identified a problem that's costing us [estimated cost/time]. I'd like to spend 2–3 hours per week for the next month testing a solution. If it doesn't show results, I'll stop. If it works, it could save us [projected savings]."

✓ Time-boxed and low-commitment ask

Option 3: The "Career Development" Frame

Best during performance reviews or 1:1s

"I'm interested in growing toward [Target Role]. I've identified a project that would let me build those skills while solving [Old Problem] for the team. Can we discuss how to make this happen?"

✓ Frames your pivot as professional development

⌚ Key Principles

- **Lead with the business problem**, not your career goals
- **Make it low-risk** — time-box, offer to stop if no results
- **Show, don't tell** — a demo beats a pitch deck

Realistic Timeline for Your Pivot

What to expect in your first 6-12 months

**Month 1–
2**

Identify & Experiment

Find your Old Problem. Research solutions from your target role. Start small experiments (2–3 hrs/week).

**Month
3–4**

Build & Document

Create your solution. Track metrics obsessively. Start documenting your case study.

**Month
5–6**

Share & Expand

Present results to stakeholders. Offer to train others. Look for your next Trojan Horse project.

**Month
7–12**

Position & Transition

Have 2–3 portfolio pieces. Start conversations about formal role change. Update resume with proof.

Signs You're On Track

- People ask you questions about your target domain
- Your work gets mentioned in team meetings
- Stakeholders request your involvement on projects
- You have measurable results to show

Course-Correct If...

- You're building but not documenting
- No one knows about your work
- You haven't talked to anyone in your target role
- 3+ months with no measurable progress

You've Just Unlocked the Strategy

The Trojan Horse is how you pivot without risk. But there's more to landing your dream role than just building proof.

What's Next?

- **The Pivot Positioning:** Frame your transition story for maximum credibility
- **The Internal Interview:** Navigate interviews for roles you created
- **The Sponsor Strategy:** Turn advocates into champions who open doors

[Book a Free Strategy Call](#)

Questions? We're here to help.

www.launchtolead.io/contact