

Upgrade Program Career Plan

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Introduction

This document is part of a series of upgrade plans for every [area](#) of your life. It's broadly designed for a single, middle-class, 30-something living in a major city in a developed country.

Your career is perhaps the most important decision you ever make in your life, so take your time figuring out what you do. And, just as importantly, what you don't do. If you spend 2,000 hours/year for 40 years, you'll have invested 80,000 hours into your career. If you spend 2,500 hours/year for 60 years, you'll have invested 150,000 hours into your career. If you value your time at \$100/hour, that's between \$8-15M.

It behooves you to spend some deep work ahead of time trying to optimize that. As a rule of thumb, consider using 1% of the total time you'll spend working in career planning and reflection over your lifetime. Revisit and update this plan as needed, perhaps once a year.

Please go to "File" > "Make a copy" and make a copy of it for yourself. Then fill it out section by section according to your particular needs and circumstances. Perhaps add sections or items, delete them, change the order, and so on.

Your aim should be to make the plan as applicable and useful to you as possible. You should not follow the plan blindly—think it through for yourself.

Note that this process might be challenging. You might need to teach yourself things you aren't very knowledgeable about yet. You might feel like you need to do preliminary work in a different life area first. That's okay. Figure out broadly what makes sense for you, operationalize that understanding as specific actions in the [Actions](#) section, and then do them.

If it feels overwhelming, just start with the parts you find most valuable and do what you can. Tackle the rest over time. It may also help to set aside a dedicated [day](#) to work exclusively on this by yourself or with friends. Or you may choose to enlist an [UP Coach](#) to co-design and execute this plan alongside you.

Epistemic Status

This is an overview of how confident the principal [author](#) is in this plan.

- Generally high confidence of plan
- Based on 250+ hours of direct research, reviewing 5,000+ job or position applications over 25+ years, advising the world's leading social impact careers advising startup for 1.5 years, coaching and mentoring 150+ people on careers, and personally working for 24 jobs or internships over 25+ years

Objectives

Decide what objectives you have with this plan and rank them in order of importance. Below are some sample objectives.

1. Develop clear map of career possibilities in the next 1, 5, 10, 25, 50, and 100 years
 - a. Define and weigh all relevant values
 - b. Integrate future macro trends around industries and required skills
2. Define optimal career path or paths
3. Secure current optimal career option for career path or paths
4. Secure appropriate compensation levels for given skill level

Metrics

Decide what metrics you will use to evaluate the effectiveness of this plan. Also include the frequency in which you'll evaluate those metrics (e.g., ad hoc, once, hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually or per decade). Below are some sample metrics.

- Career Rating: How would you rate your career, on a 1-10 scale?
- Lifetime Number of Jobs
- Average Job Satisfaction
- Average Job Compensation
- Workplace PERMA-Profiler Rating
- Work-Life Questionnaire Rating

Values

List all of your relevant values and rank them in order of importance. Below are some sample values.

1. Affiliation
2. Altruism
3. Autonomy
4. Career Positioning
5. Financial Gain
6. Intellectual Challenge
7. Lifestyle
8. Managing People
9. Power/Influence
10. Prestige
11. Recognition
12. Security

13. Variety

Value Analysis

List and then analyze all of the costs and benefits of this plan. Potentially also estimate expected value, cost-benefit, return on investment, and/or net present value. Below is a sample value analysis.

Overview

- Time costs: 1 - 2,500 hours/year
- Financial costs: \$0 - \$5,000 dollars (e.g., career coaches, website creation, resume editors, courses, books, assessments, etc.)
- Benefits: \$X in potentially extremely large objective and subjective benefits (e.g., impact, financial compensation, skill development, status, connections, etc.)

Sample Cost-Benefit Analyses

- **Financial Advising Shift**
 - Estimated time to complete all plan actions: 35 hours
 - Estimated benefit: \$5-15k annual salary increase; assuming \$10k over 5 years = \$50k in additional salary
 - Estimated cost-benefit: 1,428:1 or \$1,428/hour
 - Current hourly rate: \$25/hour (\$50k at 2,000 hours/year)
 - Plan value: 57x more important than current work
- **High Net Worth Individual Advising Shift**
 - Estimated time to complete all plan actions: 45 hours
 - Estimated benefit: \$30-50k annual salary increase; assuming \$40k over 5 years = \$200k in additional salary
 - Estimated cost-benefit: 4,444:1 or \$4,444/hour
 - Current hourly rate: \$25/hour (\$50k at 2,000 hours/year)
 - Plan value: 178x more important than current work

Strategies

Decide on your high-level strategies for achieving your objectives. Below are some sample strategies.

Key People

- Do the work on your own

- Outsource some of the work to experts (e.g., career coach, resume writers, etc.)
- Outsource some of the work to assistants

Key Timings

- Do some of the work every day until you reach your objectives
- Do as much of the work as you can over a set period (e.g., one week, one month or three months)
- Work as intensively as you can until you've reached your objectives

Search Approaches

- Do comprehensive search to find the role(s) with the best personal fit, compensation per hour, and long-term strategic value
- Do fast search for a role by extensive networking to see what arises

Actions

List the specific actions you will take to achieve your objectives. You should add these tasks to your project management system unless you are choosing to do them now. Below is an example sequence of actions you might take.

1. Describe your [mental model](#) of your career
 - a. Create a visual representation from memory without referencing this plan or outside sources of information
 - b. Create a new visual representation after thoroughly studying this plan and any relevant sources of information
 - c. Pay special attention to the improvements in the second version as incorporating those new insights may be crucial to the success of your plan
2. Finish every section of this plan, including the [assessments](#), [tools](#), and [resources](#) below
3. Develop your [values](#)
4. Develop your [purpose](#)
5. Complete [UP Life Path Design](#)
6. Complete [UP Life Strategies Design](#)
7. Complete [UP Career Design](#)
 - a. Brainstorm ~100 potential careers
 - b. Narrow down to <20 potential careers
 - c. Develop evaluation criteria (e.g., net impact, salary, security, flexible hours, etc.)
 - d. Narrow down to <10 potential careers
 - e. Rank each prospective career option on your evaluation criteria
 - f. Tentatively plan out your career trajectory
8. Consider using [80,000 Hours Decision Tool](#)

9. Consider using [80,000 Hours chatbot](#)
10. Consider using [Career Explorer](#)
11. Consider developing your [ikigai](#)
12. Create a How to Work With Me Guide
 - a. Include communication norm preferences, communication channel preferences, conflict resolution preferences, pet peeves, personality profiles, and other useful information
 - b. Selectively share as needed or post to personal website
13. Create outstanding application materials
 - a. Create or update extremely well-designed [curriculum vitae/resume](#) that effectively tells your unique story and has zero spelling, grammar, and formatting errors (see [samples](#))
 - i. Create a full version
 1. Use to copy and paste text for applications and other purposes as needed
 - ii. Create a 1-2 page version
 - iii. Have 3+ hiring managers review your curriculum vitae/resume and update it according to their feedback
 - b. Create or update extremely well-designed cover letter that effectively tells your unique story and has zero spelling, grammar, and formatting errors
 - i. Create a 1 page page version with zero spelling, grammar, and formatting errors
 - ii. Have 3+ hiring managers review your cover letter and update it according to their feedback
 - c. Create or update your LinkedIn profile
 - i. Tell your story authentically and persuasively
 1. Ensure zero spelling, grammar, and formatting errors
 2. Eliminate excessive buzzwords
 3. Spell out or explain all acronyms and jargon, as needed
 4. Use metrics appropriately
 - ii. Include an incredible headshot of you
 1. Hire a professional photographer and use the best they can create
 - iii. Include an incredible title picture that's relevant to you
 - iv. Secure >5 well-written recommendations
 - v. Secure as many skill endorsements as possible
 - vi. Have 3+ hiring managers review your LinkedIn and update it according to their feedback
 - d. Create or update other social media profiles
 - i. Ensure they represent you professionally and don't reveal any information that might hurt your chances of being accepted
14. Reach out to contacts and organizations
 - a. Investigate top 3-5 prospects thoroughly (e.g., phone calls, coffee meetings, extensive Google research, etc.)

- b. Meticulously tailor curriculum vitae/resume and cover letter to each prospective employer
 - i. Have 3+ hiring managers review your materials and update according to their feedback
- c. Apply to best 3-10 prospective employers simultaneously
- d. Persuade the hiring manager to hire you by forecasting maximal cost-benefit from choosing you over other candidates
 - i. Consider sending a proposal for improving some key pain point of your prospective employer that you will lead or help implement upon joining
 - ii. Consider building a dedicated website augmenting your application
 - iii. Consider creating a <1 minute video augmenting your application
 - iv. Consider offering to work for free for a trial period to prove your value
- 15. Choose the best option
 - a. Generally speaking, assertively pursue each prospect with a warm follow up about every week or two weeks depending on their desired timeline
 - b. Secure multiple offers, ideally around the same time
 - c. Negotiate optimal compensation packages based on each offer
 - d. Select the best offer
 - e. Begin work
- 16. Improve your [brand](#)
- 17. Improve your [productivity](#)
- 18. Improve your [communication skills](#)
- 19. Improve your [appearance](#)
- 20. Consistently deliver enormous value while testing fit
 - a. Attempt to maximize the amount of value you create, especially in the first 3-6 months
 - b. Be extremely mindful of first impressions, especially in the first 1-3 months
 - c. Re-evaluate decision to join after about 1-3 months and re-commit fully or consider restarting the process
- 21. Assertively rise up to higher positions when an if desired

Schedule

Decide on which days you will take which actions. You should add these dates to your calendar now.

- [Date]: Finalize plan
- [Dates]: Execute plan
- [Dates]: Review plan's outcomes

Predictions

Predict how well you will do in achieving your objectives.

- [Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that I will [Y] by [Z].
- [Team Member's Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].
- [Team Member's Name]: I predict with [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].

- Combined: We predict with an average [X]% confidence that [Name] will [Y] by [Z].

Outcomes

Objectively record how well you achieved your objectives.

- [Year 1]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 2]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 3]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 4]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 5]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 6]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 7]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 8]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 9]: [Outcomes]
- [Year 10]: [Outcomes]

Assessments

List all of the assessments you might take to understand how you're doing compared to your objectives. Below are some sample assessments.

- [Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale](#): a test to assess the prevalence of an individual's psychological experiences of intellectual and professional fraudulence
- [Contextualised Competency Mapping \(CCM\)](#): a method that is used to evaluate work complexity and work-related competency requirements in terms of Elliott Jacques' Stratified Systems Theory (fee, inquiry required)
- [Critical Factors Assessment \(CFA\) Snapshot](#): a simplified version of the full Critical Factor Assessment (CFA) that allows a person to self-assess their venture against the 8 most critical factors for venture success
- [Entrepreneur Personality Profile](#): an assessment that will provide information both about which aspects of a person's personality are well-suited for owning a business, and which aspects could be problematic
- [SelfStir Individual 360 Feedback](#): a 360-degree feedback development solution

- [Startup Test](#): a test that examines if a person has what it takes to be the founder or CEO of a successful startup
- [Startup Valuation Calculator](#): a tool used to calculate startup valuation
- [Subject-Object Interview](#): an interview tool designed specifically to generate data about how a person is creating meaning according to Robert Kegan's constructive-developmental theory (fee, inquiry required)
- [The Workplace PERMA-Profiler Questionnaire](#): a questionnaire to measure flourishing at work through the five elements (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Achievement) developed by Martin Seligman that account for what makes up the "good life"—authentic and sustained happiness and well-being
- [Webexec Questionnaire](#): a short self-report of executive function suitable for administration via the internet
- [Work-Life Balance Score](#): an indicator of how to thrive in both professional and personal life, as well as how well a person can shape lifestyle, habits, and behaviors to maximize overall life satisfaction
- [Work-Life Questionnaire](#): a questionnaire that measures work-life satisfaction
- [Work Passion Scale \(WPS\)](#): an assessment of four distinct dimensions: work enjoyment, self-motivation, self-identity, and sense of learning
- [Workplace Inventory — Second Edition \(WPI-II\)](#): an online assessment that determines 6 work style domain scores and 16 work style behavior scores based on the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (US \$6.30-\$76)
- [Workplace Personality Inventory for Professionals \(WPI-Pro\)](#): an online assessment that measures 20 personality and behavioral traits categorized into 4 managerial clusters based on the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network: self, people, task, and change (register for a free trial account)

Tools

List all of the tools you might use to achieve your objectives. Below are some sample tools.

- [360-degree feedback](#)
- [50 Ways to Get a Job](#)
- [80,000 Hours Decision Tool](#)
- [Angellist](#)
- [Career Explorer](#)
- [Coursera](#)
- [Craft](#)
- [Enhancv](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)
- [Jobscan](#)
- [Kormo Jobs](#)
- [Krisp](#)
- [Lean Canvas Model](#)
- [Levels](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

- [My Next Move](#)
- [Payscale](#)
- [ReciproCoach](#)
- [Resume](#)
- [Resume Genius](#)
- [Resume Worded](#)
- [SelfStir](#)
- [Strive](#)
- [The Grand](#)
- [UP Actions](#)
- [UP Assessments](#)
- [UP Career Design](#)
- [UP Curriculum](#)
- [UP Life Path Design](#)
- [UP Life Strategies Design](#)
- [UP Purpose Plan](#)
- [UP Values Plan](#)
- [UP Tools](#)

Resources

List all of the resources you might use to achieve your objectives. Below are some sample resources.

- [50 Ways to Get a Job: An Unconventional Guide to Finding Work on Your Terms](#)
- [80,000 Hours](#)
- [80,000 Hours Career Guide](#)
- [80,000 Hours Meaningful Careers Literature Review](#)
- [Conscious Business: How to Build Value through Values](#)
- [Expected Lifetime Earnings for Different Majors](#)
- [ResumeGenius Resume Samples](#)
- [Running Lean: Iterate from Plan A to a Plan that Works](#)
- [Scaling Up: How a Few Companies Make It...and Why the Rest Don't](#)
- [So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love](#)
- [Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals](#)
- [The 80,000 Hours Podcast](#)
- [The Personal MBA: Master the Art of Business](#)
- [U.S. News Best Jobs Rankings](#)
- [Who: The A Method for Hiring](#)
- [WikiHow: How to Make a Resume](#)

Notes

Add any random thoughts, questions, and uncertainties you may have.

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