



SUSTAINABLE AMBITION

A Woman's Guide to a Mid-Career Itch
Tool Workbook

2020



Career Hygiene Audit



Career Hygiene Audit

BETA v1.0

The Career Hygiene Audit is a check-up that allows you to gauge how you currently feel about your career and how you might need to navigate from where you stand today. You can use these two simple 2x2 models to determine if you are in alignment with your **Motivations (Your What & Why)** and then consider your **Ambition (The How Far)**.

Your Motivations are a combination of **The What and The Why**. Motivations consider how you like to apply yourself, what type of activities engage you, and why you'd be willing to commit time and effort to your work:

- The What is the type of work activities and skillsets that will be enjoyable and engage you, ones where you will be eager to put in the effort to master them.
- The Why is what drives you. It's about finding purpose and meaning in your work.

Your Ambition is **The How Far**. “What is my ambition?” is a fundamental question many people fail to ask. Honestly considering how far we want to reach, when and how we want to get there, and if we can accept the sacrifices that may be required to reach that ambition can bring further clarity to your motivations and can ignite your energy to put effort into your chosen profession.

If you want to go deeper on The What, The Why, and The How Far, read more [here](#).

Through the first exercise, you'll get a sense of if you are feeling drained or energized by your current career and if your work has or lacks meaning. Depending on those dimensions, you'll consider different paths as possible next steps.

Through the second exercise, you'll build on the first exercise, but change one of the dimensions to get a sense of the current state of your ambition at this stage in your career—if you are looking for an on-ramp and wanting to deepen your commitment to your career and getting to the next level or if you might be looking for an off-ramp or a downshift in your career.



Test Your Motivations

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Using the 2x2 grid* on the next page, plot where you think you land when considering the state of your What and Why.

First, rate yourself along the X axis, considering your Energy-level as a way to test if you are in alignment with your intrinsic work motivators, The What (again the the type of work activities and skillsets that you find enjoyable and engage you, ones where you are eager to put in the effort to master them). Do you tend to be more energized by your current work, or are you more drained? If you lean towards Energized, you tend to be restless in a positive way, look for new challenges, are eager to get up in the morning, and are able to get work tasks completed easily. If you lean more towards being Drained, you tend to be restless in a negative way and find it hard to get up in the morning and difficult to complete work tasks.

Second, rate yourself along the Y axis, considering if your work has Meaning, The Why. If you feel like your work has Meaning, you believe in what you do, and your work is associated with your Purpose. If you feel like your work lacks Meaning, you don't have a strong belief in what you do, and your work is not aligned with your Purpose.

Refer to the sheet for probing next questions.

Read the full article [here](#).

*Framework inspired by: "Assessment: Is It Time to Rethink Your Career?" by Herminia Ibarra in June 2015. Find her assessment [here](#).



Test Your Motivations

BETA v1.0

X Axis Tests Your “What” = Energized vs. Drained

Y Axis Tests Your “Why” = Work has Meaning

High = Work has meaning

Drained: You have Meaning in your work, but are feeling Drained and low energy.

It's time to get re-charged.

- Are you exhausted and is it time for a break to find renewed energy?
- Are you bored and looking for your next challenge?
- Have your ambitions changed, and do you need to rethink your priorities at this stage in your life?

**Quadrant 3:
Drained**
Get Re-Charged

**Quadrant 1:
Engaged**
Deepen Your
Commitment

Engaged: You are Energized and have found Meaning in your work.

Deepen your commitment—you may have found your calling.

- What's your next challenge?
- What's your next ambition?
- What's the next thing you need to learn or gap you need to fill to get you to the next level?

Low = Drained

Disoriented: You are feeling Drained and lack Meaning in your work.

It's time to find New Possibilities.

- What are you motivated by now and why?
- What have been the drivers to you feeling in this state? Why has your energy waned? Why does your work lack meaning?
- What are you curious about now?
- Do more work around your What & Why.

**Quadrant 4:
Disoriented**
Find New
Possibilities

**Quadrant 2:
Primed**
Align Your
Purpose

High = Energized

Primed: You're Energized by what you do, but your work lacks Meaning.

Seek to align your purpose.

- What's the purpose behind what you do?
- What's the value you create for your customers or your internal stakeholders?
- Could you apply the skills you love to an area that has meaning for you? This could be through work or an outside work activity.

Low = Work doesn't have meaning



Test Your Ambition

BETA v1.0

Using this 2x2 grid on the next page, you'll remain in either Quadrants 1 and 2 or Quadrants 3 and 4 depending how you rated yourself in the last Motivation exercise along the x-axis—were you Energized or Drained?

Now, for the Y-axis, plot where you think you land when considering the state of your How Far or your Ambition. If you have high or increasing Ambition, you have a vision for what you want to achieve and strong desire to reach a particular goal or level in your career. You also are committed to putting in the effort to go after that goal at this time in your life. You want to lean in and go for it. If you have low or decreasing Ambition, you may not have a vision for what you want to achieve or may be feeling like you can't commit the time and effort right now in your life to get to the next rung. You might be feeling like you need or want to pull back for a time and focus some of your energy on other endeavors.

Refer to the sheet for probing next questions.

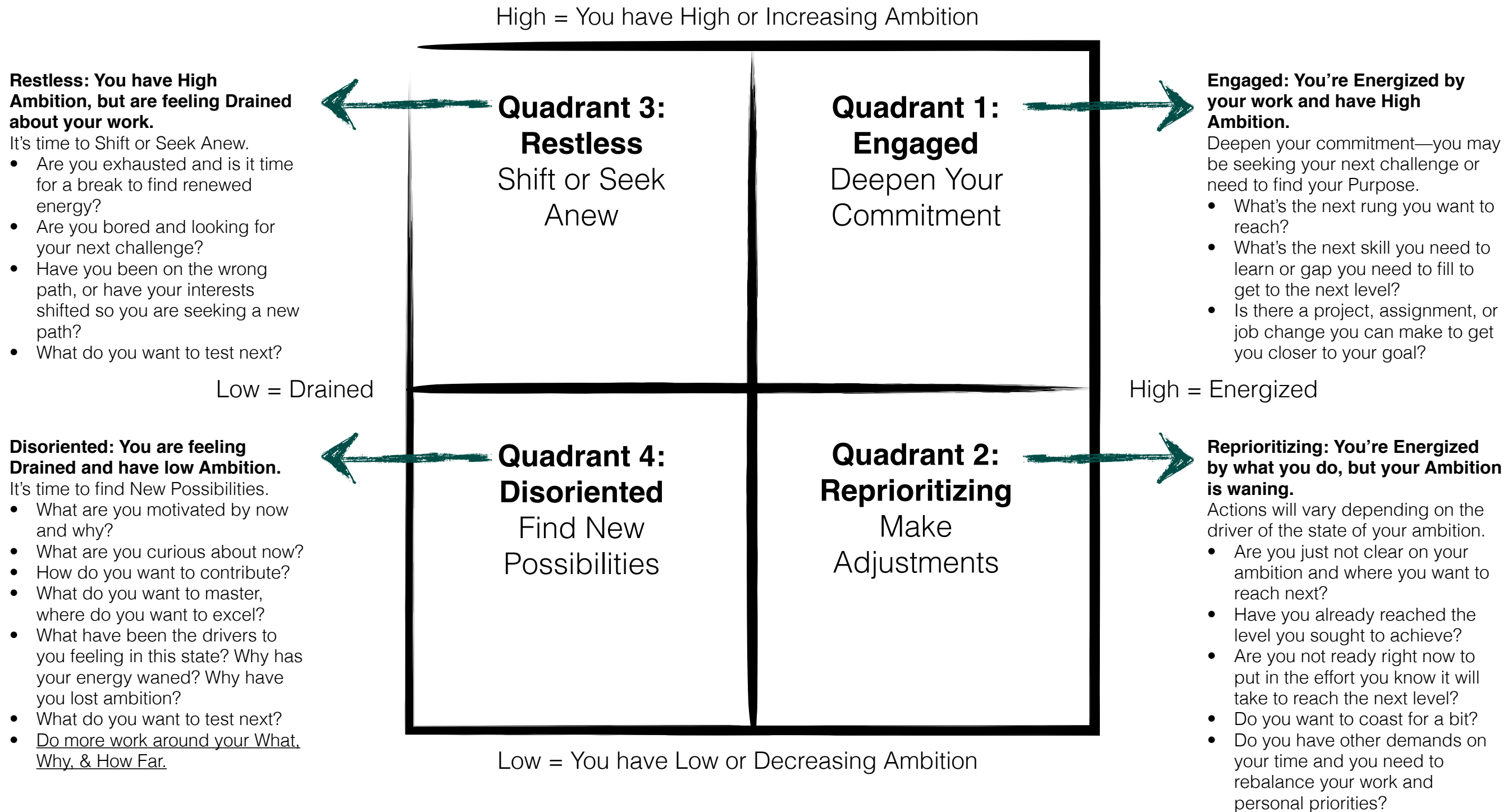
Read the full article [here](#).



Test Your Ambition

BETA v1.0

X Axis Tests Your “What” = Energized vs. Drained
Y Axis Tests Your “How Far” = High or Low Ambition



Career Hygiene Audit

BETA v1.0

Note:

These tools are in Beta format. We'd appreciate any feedback you have on if the tools work for you, what doesn't work for you, what could improve it, or any other feedback that you think would be valuable to make this a more useful tool for people. [Contact us here](#).



Decade by Decade Horizon Map



Decade by Decade Horizon Map

BETA v1.0

A Decade by Decade Horizon Map allows you to look back and review what you've accomplished and gained from all of your experiences to date, while more importantly starting to frame a decade by decade view that allows you to outline what you want to manifest in the future. With a clear view of your life purpose and the future state you want to create, you can more clearly define the next steps to take on your career and life journey.

This exercise is partly inspired by David Allen's Horizons of Focus model, in which he frames different horizons and timeframes for getting things accomplished in life. The highest levels are focused on foundational topics, Purpose & Principles, Vision, and Goals. The lower levels are focused on near-in workstreams and current action items.

Using this concept of levels and timeframes, we've outlined a Decade by Decade Horizon Map for late-stage career planning. You'll first start by framing a rough idea of what you want for your long-term future, considering your life's purpose, personal values, and personal goals that will help guide your actions over the next 5 or more years. This will essentially serve as an ideal vision for what you want your life to look like in the future. Then you'll consider what you want your experiences to be in your 40's, 50's, 60's with the ultimate goal to align your career and work to the future life you seek and your life's purpose. Depending on your age, you can adjust this to the appropriate decades or even 5-year timeframes.

A Decade by Decade Horizon Map is something you can come back to and adjust over time as needed. It shouldn't be a static document, but rather one that grows with you. It also doesn't have to mean that you need to start from scratch each year, because we don't really change that much. The world around us changes, our priorities can shift, new curiosities can arise, but our core is fairly rooted. Finally, remember that for the further out time horizons, the map serves as a rough guide. It's unlikely you'll predict now that you'll meet some milestone in a particular year, say, so don't get too attached to actual timeframes and specifics. Things may shift some, and that is okay as long as you feel that overall you are moving in accordance with the long-term vision you still seek.

Find instructions on the next page, and read the full article [here](#).

*Framework partly inspired by: David Allen's Horizons of Focus model. Learn more [here](#).



Decade by Decade Horizon Map

BETA v1.0

Here's how to create a Decade by Decade Horizon Map:

1. **1. Visioning: Life Purpose and Desired Future State (refer to Template 1).** Getting clear on your “Why” or Purpose can have a powerful impact on performance and often as we get older we want to make a positive impact through our work or side initiatives. Here are a few tool options to help you identify your purpose:
 - [A good summary](#) of the two best exercises to finding one's purpose.
 - [An article](#) on “5 Steps to Finding Your Life Purpose.”
 - [Simon Sinek's TED talk](#) on the importance of Why.
 - A few probing questions from [our article](#) on The What, The Why, and The How Far.

As part of this Visioning step, it can also be helpful to get clear on your Values, as these can provide direction, as well. Here's [an article](#) to consider to help you do this.

If those two activities feel like too big of a task, do a visioning exercise. Envision your desired future state 10 to 20 years from now of what you want your life to be like:

- Consider various elements of your life: Career or Vocation, Family, Community & Relationships, Health (physical, mental, emotional), Financial, Growth & Learning, and Fun & Recreation.
- Ask yourself: What would you want your life to look like? What do you want to manifest? What do you really want to happen? What can't you not do by the end of this time period? What do you want to be doing? How do you want to be? Who do you want to be with? Where do you want to be? What do you want to have achieved? What would make you feel fulfilled in that end time period? What don't you want?
- Consider drawing your vision and not just capturing it in words.

To complete this task, now look at what you've envisioned and star the top three goals that are most important to you to achieve or experience by this timeframe. Focus on the most significant factors that are really important to you and that have the strongest presence when you close your eyes and dream of that future state.



2. **Horizons (refer to Template 2).** With a defined end point, frame what you want and need to experience or achieve across horizons (5-year blocks) to realize your end state vision again considering different facets of life: Career or Vocation, Family, Community & Relationships, Health (physical, mental, emotional), Financial, Growth & Learning, and Fun & Recreation.
- Start from the end and work backwards, setting high-level milestones for each 5-year timeframe.
 - Know that while you are laying this out now, what you are documenting is just a rough idea of what you want to do and achieve at different times in life. Don't feel compelled to fill in something for every topic in every timeframe. Do what feels right for you.
 - Do focus on getting more clear on where you'd like to be five years from now considering your end state vision. This will help you in developing your Action Plan, which we'll speak to more below.
3. **Current State (refer to Templates 3a-3b).** Get clear on where you stand today as it relates to your vision and goals for your most immediate 5-year block horizon. Do you feel you are on-track? Do you see gaps? Just make note of them now before we get to the final stage for building an Action Plan (refer to Template 3a.)

Before you move on, also go back to the same dimensions noted in Step 2 and consider what you shaped in your 20's and 30's. Think about all your experiences in your career and life so far and take note of what you might have achieved and skills and experiences you've acquired. (Refer to Template 3b.) Then step back and consider (refer back to Template 3a to summarize):

When you consider what you've learned to date and your skills and knowledge, at this stage what might you want to carry forward and what you might want to retire? Then also look back at your experiences and key events in your life and explore and make note of what trends or threads you notice are present over the decades.



Decade by Decade Horizon Map

BETA v1.0

- 4. Balance (refer to Template 2).** When thinking about work, there's always a lot of talk of work-life balance. Our belief is that we need to make choices about where we invest our time, consider if we want to lean towards career or towards personal needs, and then create a work environment that integrates well (or as well as it can) with your life. So, consider in your current state, where you want to lean—towards career or personal goals or needs. Then, go back to your horizon map and put simple percentages of how you'd like to balance your time towards career or personal life (is it 70/30 or 50/50 or 25/75?). It's helpful to keep this in mind as you consider solutions for supporting the life you seek.
- 5. Action Plan (refer to Template 4).** Now let's focus again on the most immediate 5-year block and break it down into what you need to achieve in the 3-5 year timeframe and then the next 1-2 year timeframe. Note that actions might actually include taking a break or sabbatical. It may not all be doing, doing, doing.

What's helpful in doing this exercise is that you can more thoughtfully stage and plan for key activities, mapping how they'll fit in relation to other goals you might have for your life. Another example—you might need to get additional training to get to your ultimate vision, or you might want to live abroad a year. How can you fit these in?

Finally, consider the next year and each quarter. What actions do you want to take and what do you want to achieve to forward your vision? You can use this same model to breakdown a year, month, week into finer timeframes to help you focus and stay aligned with your ultimate purpose and goals. This is where David Allen's model can be a big help. You can learn more in [this video](#) and [this post](#).



Visioning: Prompts

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- What would you want your life to look like out in the future?
- What do you really want to happen?
- What do you want to manifest?
- What are you being called to? What is your call to adventure?
- If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do?
- What do you want to be doing?
- How do you want to be?
- Who do you want to be with? Where do you want to be?
- What do you want to have achieved?
- What would make you feel fulfilled in that end time period?
- What can't you not do?
- What don't you want?



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: Visioning

Template 1
BETA v1.0

Life Purpose	Personal Values	Future State	
		Career / Vocation	
		Family, Community, & Relationships	
		Health	
		Financial	
		Growth & Learning	
		Fun & Recreation	
		Career / Personal Life %	



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: Horizons

Template 2
BETA v1.0

	Year: _____ Age: _____	Year: _____ Age: _____	Year: _____ Age: _____	Year: _____ Age: _____	Future State Year: _____ Age: _____
Career / Vocation					
Family, Community, & Relationships					
Health					
Financial					
Growth & Learning					
Fun & Recreation					
Career / Personal Life %					



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: Current State

Template 3a
BETA v1.0

<u>Today</u> Where Stand?	<u>Today</u> Gaps?	Themes from 20's & 30's		Carry Forward
		Career / Vocation		
		Relationships & Community		Retire
		Health		
		Financial		
		Growth & Learning		Trends / Threads
		Fun & Recreational		



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: A Look Back

Template 3b
BETA v1.0

	20 years old	25	30	35	40
Career / Vocation What roles did you have?					
What skills & knowledge did you acquire?					
What strengths did you unearth and develop?					
What were highlight projects you really loved?					
What are your proudest accomplishments?					
What interests and curiosities did you explore?					
What of your traits and characteristics became known?					
Where were you working? In what industries and environments?					
Who or what type of people were you working with?					
Career / Personal Life %					



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: A Look Back

Template 3b
BETA v1.0

	20 years old	25	30	35	40
Family, Community, & Relationships					
Health					
Financial					
Growth & Learning					
Fun & Recreation					



Decade by Decade Horizon Map: Action Plan

Template 4
BETA v1.0

	3 mos	6 mos	1 year	2 years	3-5 year
Career / Vocation					
Family, Community, & Relationships					
Health					
Financial					
Growth & Learning					
Fun & Recreation					
Career / Personal Life %					



Decade by Decade Horizon Map

BETA v1.0

Note:

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Values



Values

Understanding your values is important in shaping your personal definition of success. Knowing them unearths what is important to you, which is helpful in making decisions as you navigate your career and determine what to prioritize when making choices.

One approach to uncovering values is through investigating Peak and Negative Experiences*. You can inquire and explore both by asking: What values were honored? What values weren't honored? Use the templates on the next few pages to explore and summarize your values.

It may be helpful to reference a list of Values, which you can find [here](#).

You can also explore values by considering what traits in others you don't like or that push you away from a person. By reversing the traits you don't like, you can uncover what is important to you. For example, if you are put off by overly ego-driven individuals, you might value being humble or prioritizing serving others. If you are put off by people not being caring and giving, you might value generosity.

*Exercise inspired by: ["Mountains and Valleys"](#) by CultureSync.



Values: Peak Experiences

BETA v1.0

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
What was the experience?					
What Values were honored?					
What are your top 3-5 Values?					
What Values must you honor?					

*Exercise inspired by: ["Mountains and Valleys"](#) by CultureSync.



Values: Peak Experiences

BETA v1.0

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
What was the experience?					
What Values were honored?					



Values: Negative Experiences

BETA v1.0

	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
What was the experience?					
What Values weren't honored?					



Values: Summary

BETA v1.0

What are your top
3-5 Values?

What Values must
you honor?



Alternate Career Futures

Complete Tool



Alternate Career Future: Summary

#: _____

BETA v1.0

Name It: _____

Rate It (# 1-10): _____

When? _____

Describe this Career Future with 3 Adjectives:

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____

**Why does this Career Future motivate me? Why am I excited about it?
What attracts me to it? What detracts me from it?**

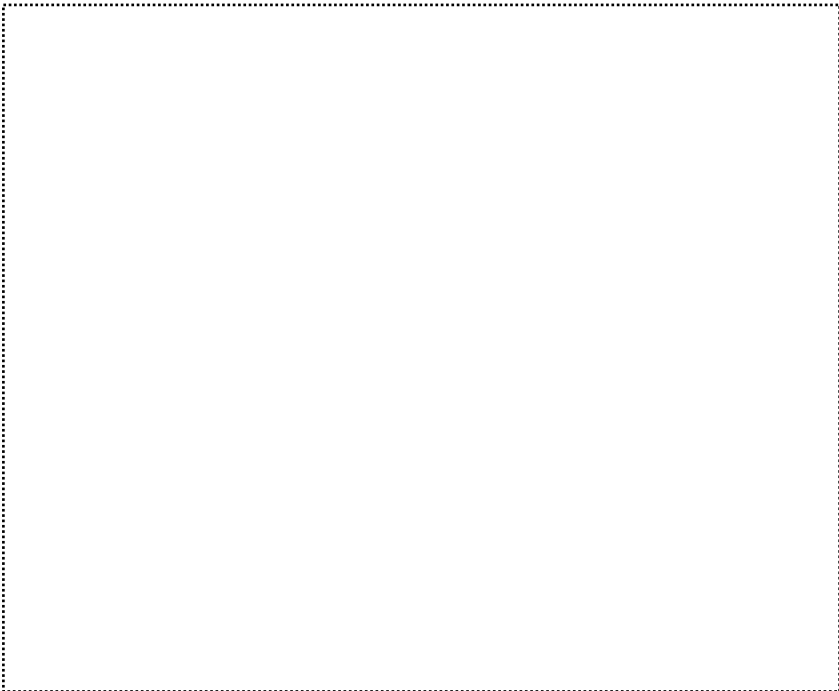
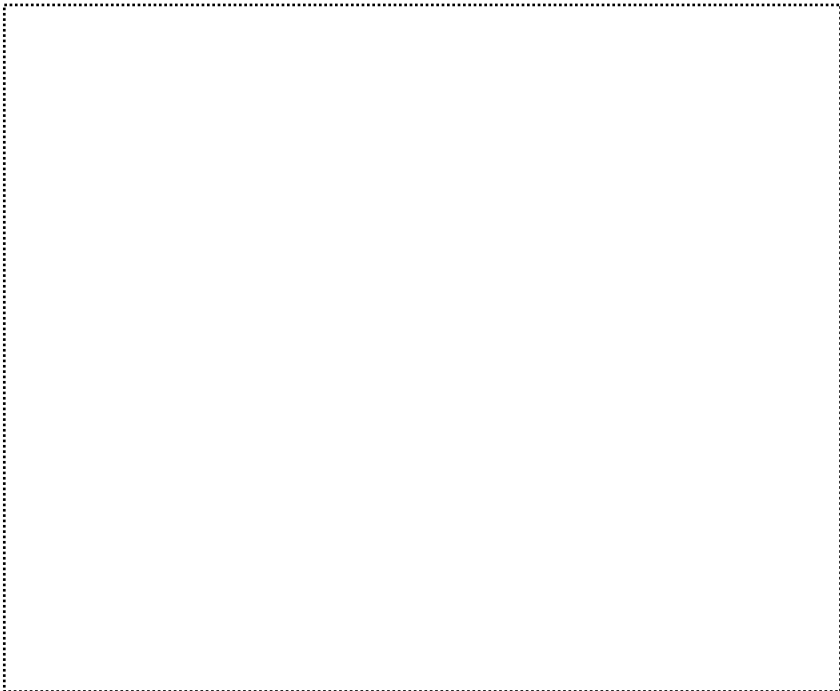
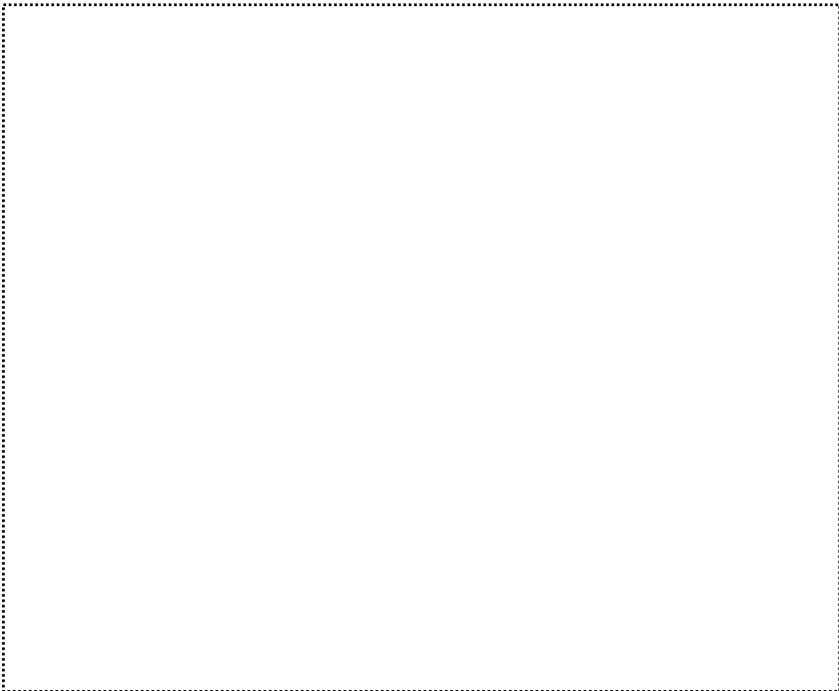
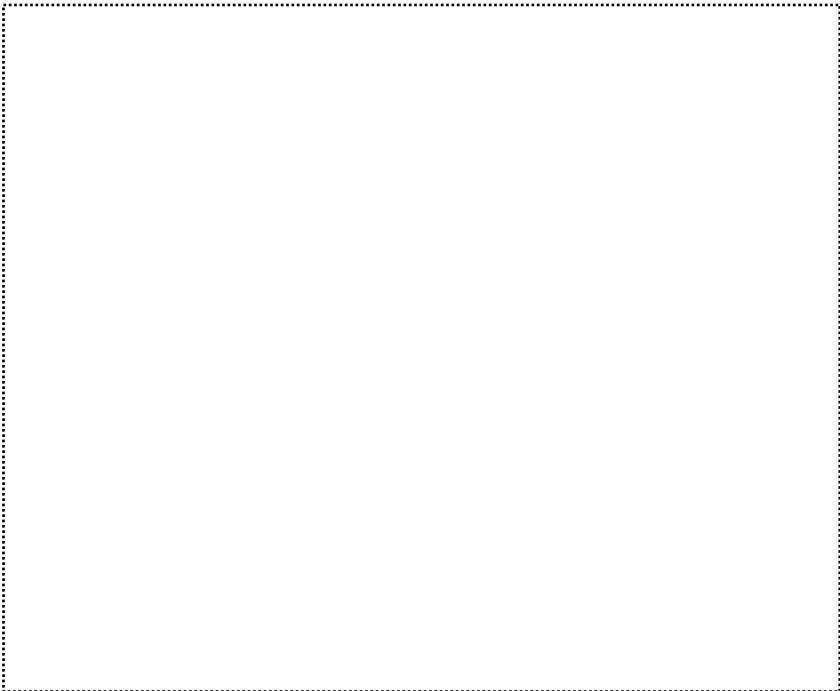
How can I prototype and experiment with this Career Future?
(Refer to the Prototype & Experiment Plan template).



Alternate Career Future: Visualize It

#: _____

BETA v1.0



Alternate Career Future: Story

#: _____

BETA v1.0

Once upon a time...

Every day...

One day...

Because of that...

Because of that...

Until finally...



Alternate Career Future: Story

#: _____

BETA v1.0

Example:

- Once upon a time, there was a woman named Grace who was fretted over what she was doing with her life.
- Every day, she would tell herself stories that made her feel like a victim and like she was stuck, having no choices, and that kept her fearful of following her heart.
- One day, Grace decided to confront the problem in her story to start to frame a resolution that would give her more power.
- Because of that, she started to feel more confident about following what truly motivated her.
- Because of that, she started to talk with people about her vision and did so confidently, such that more and more people were drawn to her ideas and gave her encouragement and help.
- Until finally Grace successfully launched her idea to great fanfare, having embraced her confidence, power, and leadership to drive her true path, learning that telling herself more empowering stories was a way to help her reach her goals.

Story Example for the movie Finding Nemo*:

- Once upon a time there was a widowed fish named Marlin who was protective of his only son, Nemo.
- Every day, Marlin warned Nemo of the ocean's dangers and implored him not to swim far away.
- One day, in an act of defiance, Nemo ignored his father's warnings and swims into the open water.
- Because of that, he is captured by a diver and ends up in a fish tank of a dentist in Sydney.
- Because of that, Marlin embarks on a journey to save Nemo.
- Until finally Marlin and Nemo find each other, reunite, and learn that love depends on trust.

**Source: To Sell is Human, Daniel Pink (borrowing from Pixar)*



Alternate Career Future: Story

#: _____

BETA v1.0



SOURCE: *To Sell is Human*, Daniel Pink

EXAMPLE:

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a widowed fish named Marlin who was protective of his only son, Nemo.

EVERY DAY, Marlin warned Nemo of the ocean's dangers and implored him not to swim far away.

ONE DAY, in an act of defiance, Nemo ignored his father's warnings and swims into the open water.

BECAUSE OF THAT, he is captured by a diver and ends up in a fish tank of a dentist in Sydney.

BECAUSE OF THAT, Marlin embarks on a journey to save Nemo.

UNTIL FINALLY Marlin and Nemo find each other, reunite, and learn that love depends on trust.

*Source: *To Sell is Human*, Daniel Pink (borrowing from Pixar)



Alternate Career Future: Future Persona #: _____

BETA v1.0

Your Bio:

The What		The Why		The How & Who	
What are you doing that you love?		Why are you excited to achieve goals?		How are you using your strengths, skills, and knowledge?	
What curiosities and interests are you exploring?		Why are you excited about the impact you can have?		How and who are you working with?	
What are you mastering?		Why are your values being honored?		How is the environment supporting you?	



Alternate Career Future

BETA v1.0

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Alternate Career Futures

Simplified Tool



Alternate Career Futures: Thought Starters

BETA v1.0

What are you curious about right now?

What would you do if you had no limits on time or money?

I love to do...

I get energy from...

What do you want to master?

What would you do if you could not fail?

I love to be...

I'm drawn towards...



Alternate Career Futures: Quick Ideation

BETA v1.0

	#1	#2	#3
Name the Career Future			
Describe the Career Future			
Why are you excited about this Career Future?			
What curiosities does it reward?			
How are you using your strengths, skills, and knowledge are you using?			
How are your values honored?			
Who are you working with?			
How is the environment supporting you?			
Where are you working (e.g., industry, type of company)?			
How would you prototype it?			



Alternate Career Future

BETA v1.0

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Prototype & Experiment Plan



Prototype & Experiment Plan

Career Future #: _____ **BETA v1.0**

How can I prototype and experiment with this Career Future?

Approach #1	Approach #2	Approach #3
How will you test this path?	How will you test this path?	How will you test this path?
What do you want to learn?	What do you want to learn?	What do you want to learn?
What assumptions do you want to test and understand?	What assumptions do you want to test and understand?	What assumptions do you want to test and understand?
What did you learn?	What did you learn?	What did you learn?



Prototype & Experiment Plan

BETA v1.0

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What's Taking Shape



What's Taking Shape

The “What's Taking Shape” exercise is a way to explore what's next for you. This was inspired by a tool I was introduced to at [The Institute for the Future](#) called “Ride Two Curves.” Ride Two Curves helps organizations plan for disruptive, future innovation (what will take shape in the future) while managing and operating against a strategy in the present.

I've adapted the idea of the tool, applying it to one's professional life, because we, too, need to look ahead and plan for what's next while operating in current roles and capacities. (Note: one could take a broader view with the tool, as well, and consider her personal life thinking about factors such as Relationships & Community, Health, Financial, Growth & Learning, Fun & Recreation.)

It's a helpful exercise to become aware and clear about what you want to give up, what you want to carry forward, what has been developing, and what you are curious about now that you want to further develop.

It can be applied at different stages of your career:

- When you are engaged and want to take your career to the next level
- When you enter a new life stage and are seeking a more positively integrated professional-personal life
- When you are mid-career and exploring new options
- When you are considering Alternate Career Futures (can be used as pre-work to that exercise)
- After taking a sabbatical and exploring how you will re-enter the work world

*Framework inspired by: “Ride Two Curves” by the [Institute for the Future](#).



What's Taking Shape

Here's how to do it. Use either the worksheet we are providing, a blank piece of paper, or even a large sheet of butcher or Post-It paper. It's likely that you'll end up with more content than can fit on one sheet of 8 1/2 x11 paper.

The Current:

On the left-hand side of the sheet, you are considering the Current period, where you stand right now.

1. Capture the following on small Post-Its to make them easy to rearrange in Step 2. Consider your career to date and note top themes around:

- Your strengths
- Your flow activities
- Your skills, knowledge, and expertise
- Core personal traits and characteristics
- How and where you've worked (in what roles, industries, and/or types of companies)

2. Next, sort the above items into two buckets:

1. The first should include those you are still attracted to and still hold your attention. Also include those you'd like to continue to build upon. Place these in the middle as "Assets: what's still interesting." These should be the elements you want to carry forward, strengthen, and perhaps deepen.
2. The second should be those that are starting to lose your attraction, that you are less drawn to today. Place these at the top as "Assets: what's losing interest." These will start to inform the bottom right—what do you want to start moving away from?

3. On the bottom, note what you are drawn to now. These serve as signals to what might be next. Consider:

- The drivers of change you may be experiencing
- Current curiosities, interests, and inspiration
- What you are drawn to learn or master
- How you want to grow
- Industries, functional areas, roles you are attracted to

*Framework inspired by: "Ride Two Curves" by the [Institute for the Future](#).



What's Taking Shape

Now look to the right-hand side. Here you are considering the Future.

The Future:

1. Starting at the top, “Develop: what you’d like to nurture and explore:” revisit the Signals in the bottom left and the assets you want to carry forward, and ideate and capture what you see starting to take shape for yourself:

- What might be the role you want next? Two to three steps from now?
- What might be the capabilities you want to develop? How might you want to apply yourself? What contribution and impact might you want to make?
- What might be the industry you want to work in?
- What is the vision for an ideal day, week, or year?
- As Jenny Blake advocates in her book, “Pivot: The Only Move that Matters is Your Next one,” what might your one-year vision look like?

2. In the middle, “Leverage: what and how you’ll redeploy or deepen:” capture how you might repurpose your transferrable skills to advance the vision you are starting to shape for the Future in Step 1.

3. On the bottom, “Retire: what you’d like to put to the side:” capture what you want to move away from in your past that you explored in The Current, Step 1. Also consider capturing any assumptions or limiting beliefs you need to give up to go after and move towards what you want to create for yourself now.

At the end when you have a clearer picture of what you are moving towards in The Future: capture it in a short statement at the top—what are you moving From and To.

Finally, look to the right-hand side to capture actions you might take now given these insights. Brainstorm Alternate Career Futures, prototyping plans or pilots, and other strategies you might deploy to further investigate and build what you are starting to shape and form as articulated in your “To” statement.

*Framework inspired by: “Ride Two Curves” by the [Institute for the Future](#).



What's Taking Shape

From: _____

To: _____

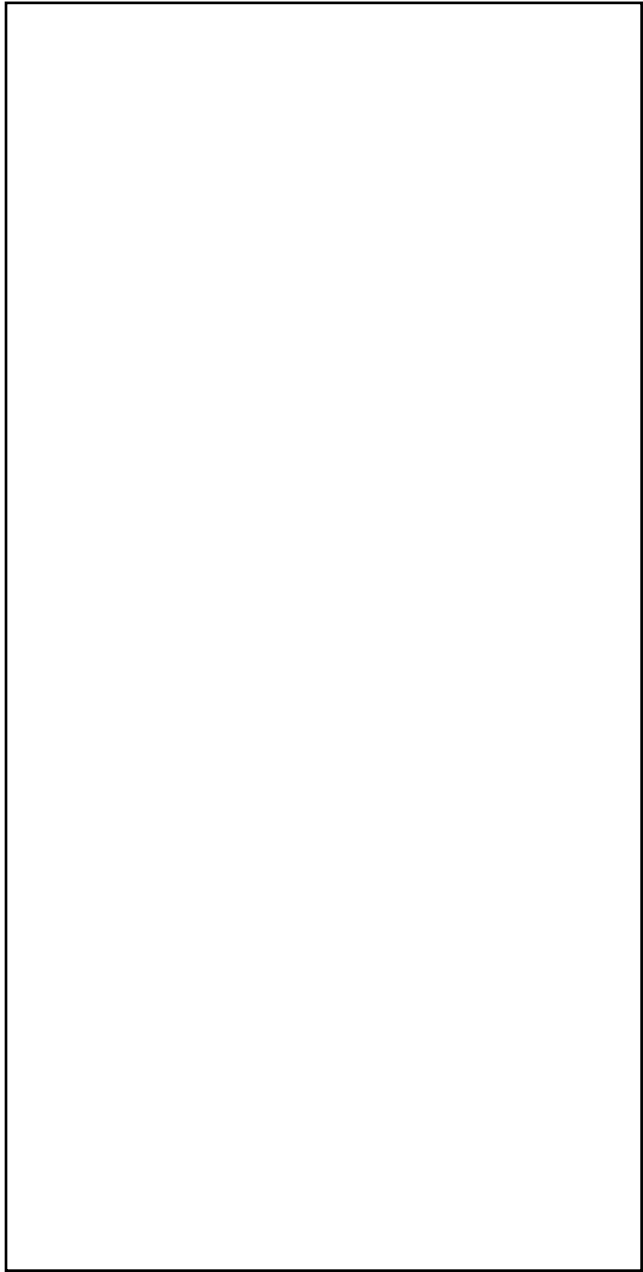
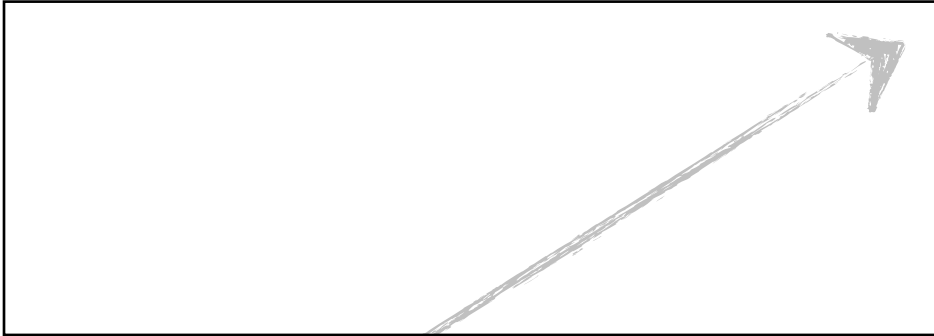
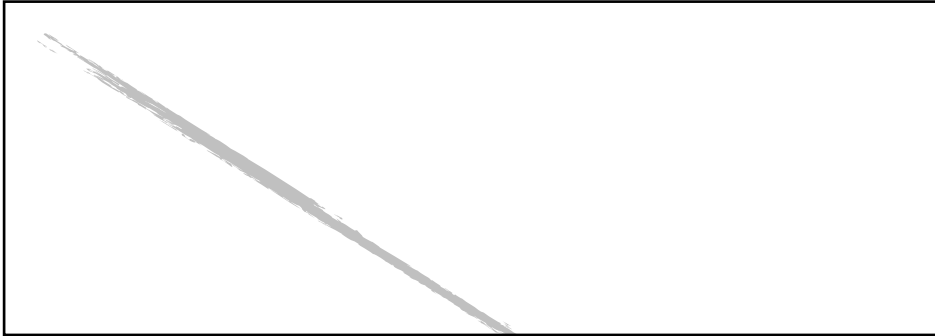
THE CURRENT

THE FUTURE

Assets: what's strong, but losing interest

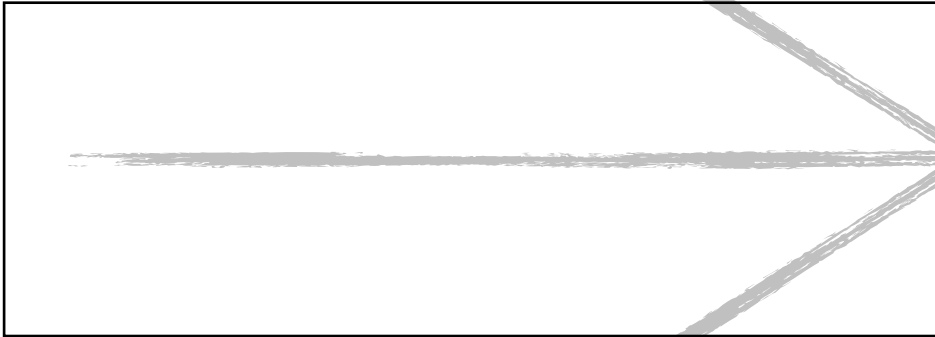
Develop: what you'd like to nurture and explore

Actions



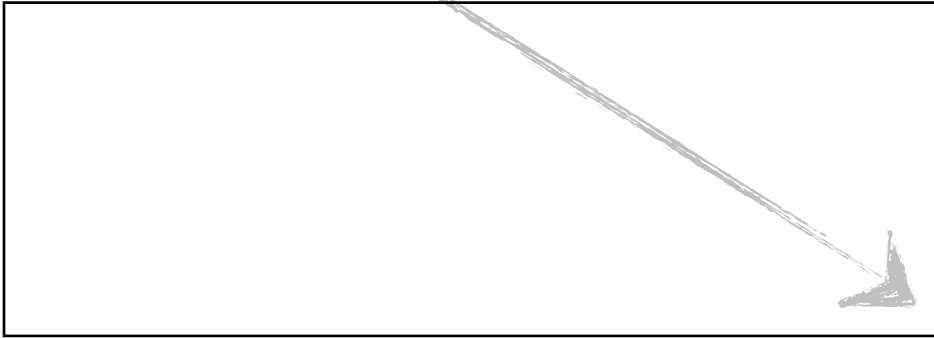
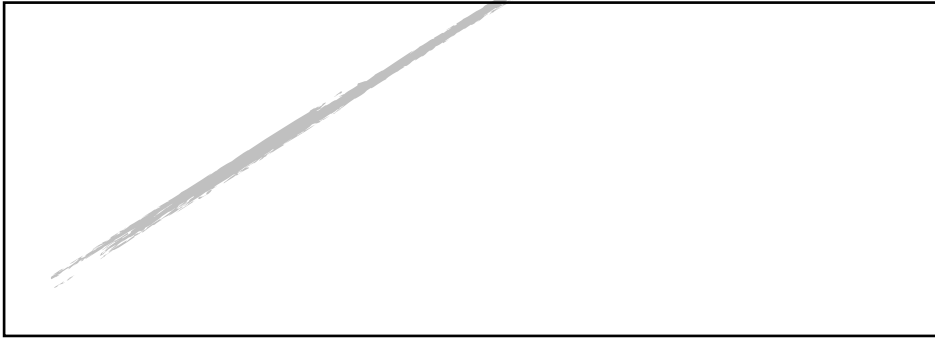
Assets: what's strong and still interesting

Leverage: what and how you'll redeploy or deepen

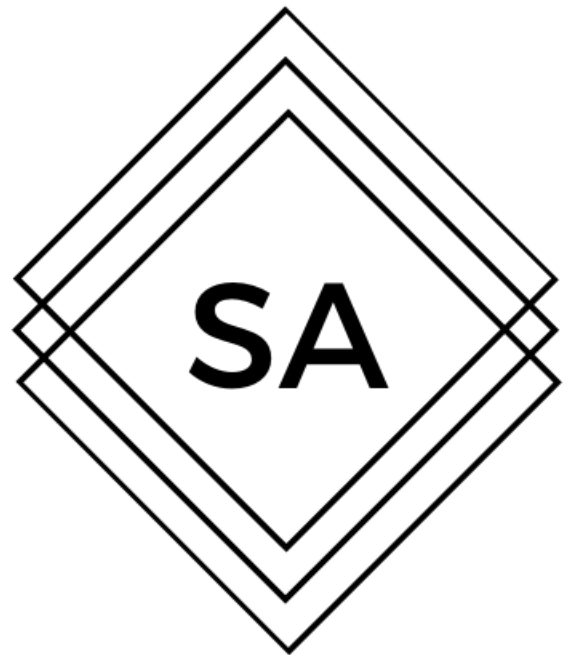


Signals: what's new drawing interest now

Retire: what you'd like to put to the side



*Framework inspired by: "Ride Two Curves" by the [Institute for the Future](#).



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