VMBARS CAREERS

WORKING GUIDE

Career Portfolio Audit

Take stock of the assets, obligations, evidence, relationships, and options that shape your next career decision.

Purpose	A career decision changes more than a job title. This audit helps you see what already compounds, where you are overdependent, what a move could put at risk, and which assets deserve deliberate investment.

The audit in five moves

1. Inventory	2. Evaluate	3. Stress-test	4. Reallocate	5. Review
Name what you carry.	Test strength and portability.	Expose concentration and fragility.	Choose what to protect, build, or release.	Update from evidence.

Use this guide before a job search, promotion decision, career pivot, return to school, portfolio-career move, or quarterly review.

- Complete the inventory with evidence, not aspiration.
- Distinguish assets you own from access an employer temporarily provides.
- Name tradeoffs explicitly. Preserving every option is not a strategy.

Core question	What should you carry forward, strengthen, test, protect, or stop carrying into the next chapter?

1. Define the decision and the horizon

Do not audit your entire life without a decision in view. Start with the choice, deadline, and level of commitment that matter now.

Decision horizon	Useful question	Output
Next 90 days	What can I learn or build without an irreversible move?	One bounded experiment and a review date
Next role	Which environment would use and extend my strongest assets?	Role criteria, evidence gaps, and target list
Next chapter	What identity, contribution, and life design am I moving toward?	A provisional thesis and staged transition
Risk event	What remains portable if my role, employer, or plan disappears?	Dependency reduction and recovery plan

Decision under review

I am deciding whether to ____

by _______________ because ____

The decision is reversible / partly reversible / difficult to reverse because ________________________________

____

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Keep the unit of analysis clear

A title is not a career. Examine the work, environment, people, economics, learning, identity, and constraints that come with the choice.

2. Inventory the portfolio

Record what exists today. An asset belongs in the portfolio only when you can describe the mechanism through which it creates opportunity, effectiveness, resilience, meaning, or bargaining power.

Asset class	What to inventory	Evidence to capture
Capabilities	Skills, judgment, pattern recognition, and work you can perform	Outputs, results, demonstrations, feedback
Relationships	People who teach, collaborate, refer, challenge, sponsor, or open context	Shared work, follow-through, reciprocity, relationship state
Reputation	What credible people expect from you	Recommendations, repeated invitations, trusted responsibilities
Credentials	Degrees, licenses, certifications, affiliations, and formal access	Status, recency, transferability, maintenance requirements
Evidence	Work samples, results, stories, decisions, and proof of contribution	Permission, attribution, confidentiality, relevance
Economic base	Income, savings, benefits, debt, runway, and recurring obligations	Amount, reliability, concentration, timing
Ownership	Equity, intellectual property, audience, systems, data, or durable assets	Control, portability, monetization, maintenance
Options	Real paths you could pursue, not merely imaginable possibilities	Access, readiness, cost, expiration, next test
Constraints	Health, family, geography, time, immigration, ethics, and other non-negotiables	Source, duration, flexibility, affected decisions

Ownership test If your employer, title, platform, or current network vanished tomorrow, which parts would still travel with you?

3. Evaluate quality and portability

A long inventory can still be weak. Evaluate each important asset against the same practical tests.

Test	Question
Strength	Can I use this well enough to produce a meaningful result?
Evidence	Can another person verify the capability, contribution, or outcome?
Portability	Does it retain value across employers, sectors, locations, or work models?
Relevance	Does it matter for the work and stakeholders I want to serve next?
Scarcity	Is it differentiated, difficult to replicate, or unusually well combined with other assets?
Durability	Will it remain useful, or does it depend on dated knowledge, one gatekeeper, or temporary access?
Compounding	Does using it strengthen related skills, relationships, evidence, income, or ownership?
Cost	What time, money, attention, identity, or obligation is required to maintain it?

Asset under review: ____

How it creates value: ____

Best evidence: ____

What makes it fragile or nonportable: ____

Decision: protect / deepen / combine / demonstrate / maintain / release

____

____

Combine before discarding

A capability that looks ordinary alone may become distinctive when combined with domain knowledge, relationships, lived experience, or a complementary skill.

4. Stress-test concentration and dependency

Career risk often hides in dependence on one employer, one sponsor, one income stream, one identity, or one narrow interpretation of past experience.

Dependency	Warning sign	Possible response
Employer	Most evidence, relationships, and access disappear with the job	Create portable work records, relationships, and demonstrations
Role	Your story works only when the title is understood	Translate recurring problems solved and judgments exercised
Sponsor	One person controls visibility or advancement	Build several credible working relationships without transactional networking
Income	One interruption creates immediate decision pressure	Build runway, reduce fixed obligations, or test an additional stream
Credential	A desired path requires formal access you do not yet have	Sequence prerequisites and test fit before the full commitment
Identity	Changing direction feels like invalidating your past	Separate retained assets from the role sequence that produced them
Narrative	Your story omits setbacks, tradeoffs, or the actual reason for change	Build a truthful, bounded explanation supported by evidence

Most consequential dependency

I currently depend on ____________________________ for ____

If it disappeared, the immediate effect would be ____

The smallest useful hedge is ____

____

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Do not confuse optionality with avoidance

Options create value when they improve learning, resilience, or choice. Keeping every path open can also prevent investment, credibility, and commitment.

5. Reallocate deliberately

A strong portfolio reflects a point of view about the future. Decide where limited time, money, and relationship energy should go next.

Action	Use it when	Decision prompt
Protect	The asset is valuable and exposed	What failure mode could destroy or strand it?
Deepen	The asset is relevant but below the required level	What real work would produce the next level of capability?
Combine	Two ordinary assets become differentiated together	Which combination changes what problems I can solve?
Demonstrate	The capability exists but is not credible to others	What artifact, result, story, or reference would make it visible?
Transfer	An asset may apply in a new setting	What bounded experiment tests whether the transfer is real?
Maintain	The asset is useful but not a current priority	What is the minimum cadence that preserves it?
Release	The cost exceeds the expected future value	What am I carrying mainly because of status, identity, or sunk cost?

Ninety-day allocation

Priority	Asset	Action	Evidence expected	Review date
1				
2				
3				

Evidence before scale

When the direction is uncertain, buy information with a small experiment before buying certainty with a large commitment.

Quarterly Career Export

Complete this privately every quarter and before leaving a role. Preserve enough detail to reconstruct what changed without exposing confidential information.

Area	Questions
Work delivered	What did I complete, improve, decide, teach, or help move forward?
Evidence	What result, artifact, feedback, or repeated responsibility supports the claim?
Capabilities	What can I now do, understand, or judge better than three months ago?
Relationships	Whose work did I support? Who supported mine? Which loops should I close?
Reputation	What did others begin to trust me with, and why?
Economics	How did income, runway, benefits, obligations, or ownership change?
Energy and fit	Which work created or depleted energy? Which pattern repeated?
Options	Which paths became more credible, less credible, newly available, or no longer worth preserving?
Next allocation	What should I protect, deepen, combine, demonstrate, test, or release next?

Three-sentence quarterly summary

This quarter I created value by ____

The strongest new evidence is ____

Next quarter I will reallocate toward ____

____

____

____

Keep the record private by default	A complete career record can contain confidential work, compensation, failures, and relationship context. Publish only what is accurate, permitted, useful, and appropriately attributed.

Use the audit to make one decision

The audit is complete when it changes an allocation, experiment, boundary, or commitment. It is not complete because every box contains text.

Decision record	Response
Choice	What am I deciding now?
Assets carried	What remains useful from prior chapters?
Assets required	What must be built, borrowed, demonstrated, or credentialed?
Assets at risk	What could the move weaken or strand?
Constraints	What limits the feasible set?
Experiment	What is the smallest test that could change my view?
Commitment	What will I do if the evidence supports the move?
Review	When will I revisit the decision, and with whom?

Further reading

• Herminia Ibarra, Working Identity

• Ethan Bernstein, Michael B. Horn, and Bob Moesta, Job Moves

• Annie Duke, How to Decide

• Robert Reffkin, No One Succeeds Alone

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