

Pivot Distance Diagnostic

Measure how far a proposed move travels across domain, function, work model, status, and credentials, then design evidence for the dimensions that actually change.

Purpose

Two moves can look equally dramatic from the outside while demanding very different resets. This diagnostic helps you identify where prior career capital transfers, where it needs translation, and where a new pathway requires direct evidence.

The diagnostic sequence

1. Define	2. Score	3. Translate	4. Test	5. Sequence
Name the actual move.	Rate five dimensions.	Map carry, build, and reset.	Design evidence for the uncertain dimensions.	Commit in stages.

Important boundary

The score is a planning heuristic, not a validated assessment or prediction of success. Its value comes from improving the questions, evidence, and sequencing around a real decision.

1. Define the move precisely

Do not score a broad aspiration such as ‘change careers.’ Compare a specific current state with a specific target state.

Current state	Target state
Domain: _____	Domain: _____
Function: _____	Function: _____
Work model: _____	Work model: _____
Status / responsibility: _____	Status / responsibility: _____
Credential pathway: _____	Credential pathway: _____

Decision and timing

I am deciding whether to move from _____ to _____

The next commitment is due by _____. The full transition would take approximately _____.

The move matters because _____

Compare actual work

Score the role, setting, economics, and required pathway, not the prestige or emotional meaning of the title.

2. Score the five dimensions

Use 0 for substantially the same, 0.5 for adjacent or partly changed, and 1 for materially new. Add the five ratings for a total from 0 to 5.

Dimension	0 Same	0.5 Adjacent	1 Materially new	Your rating
Domain	Same customers, problems, or sector	Related sector or transferable domain	New problems, stakeholders, or knowledge base	
Function	Same core work and outputs	Related work with some new judgment	Different daily work, tools, and success measures	
Work model	Similar employment and cadence	Moderate shift in autonomy or setting	Major shift such as employee to founder, portfolio work, or intensive training	
Status	Similar scope and standing	Some change in responsibility or seniority	Large reset or increase in authority, accountability, or identity	
Credentials	Already qualified	Short, bounded preparation	Degree, license, apprenticeship, or long formal gate	

Total pivot distance: _____ / 5

Planning band	Heuristic range	Planning implication
Low distance	0 to 1	Translate existing evidence and test fit with targeted exposure
Medium distance	Above 1 to 2	Build evidence in the changed dimensions and manage transition economics
High distance	Above 2	Sequence the move, expect several resets, and avoid treating one leap as one decision

Do not compare totals alone

A credential score of 1 may require years. A work-model score of 1 may create immediate income volatility. The dimensions explain the work; the total only helps orient it.

3. Map carry, build, and reset

For each changed dimension, name what transfers, what requires development, and what must genuinely restart.

Dimension	Carry	Build	Reset
Domain	Knowledge, relationships, lived context	New stakeholders, economics, language	Assumptions that do not travel
Function	Transferable judgment and problem-solving	Role-specific craft and operating rhythm	Beginner status in unfamiliar tasks
Work model	Self-management and communication	Pipeline, pricing, boundaries, or training cadence	Employer-provided structure and benefits
Status	Maturity, credibility, and perspective	Trust in the new system	Title, authority, and familiar markers of progress
Credentials	Academic habits and prior expertise	Prerequisites, applications, and supervised practice	Formal standing before qualification

Your translation map

Changed dimension	What carries	What must be built	What resets

A reset is not erasure

A move can reduce formal status while preserving judgment, relationships, domain knowledge, communication, or financial resources. Name both the loss and the retained capital.

4. Match evidence to the distance

A persuasive transition story cannot substitute for missing evidence. Build proof in the dimensions where the move is actually new.

Changed dimension	Useful evidence
Domain	Field conversations, targeted study, customer or community exposure, domain-specific project, current sources
Function	Work sample, project, simulation, supervised practice, role-specific feedback, repeated delivery
Work model	Small contract, side project, trial period, realistic weekly plan, runway test, boundary experiment
Status	Examples of learning, contribution, judgment, and trust without relying on title
Credentials	Prerequisite performance, formal eligibility, application readiness, supervised milestones
Narrative	A coherent explanation connecting past assets, present choice, evidence, tradeoffs, and the value you can create

Highest-value unknown

The move currently depends most on the assumption that _____

I could test that assumption through _____

Evidence that would weaken the move is _____

Test the uncertain dimension

Do not keep collecting evidence for what is already proven. Direct the next experiment toward the part of the move most likely to fail, surprise, or change the decision.

5. Design a transition experiment portfolio

Use several bounded experiments when one activity cannot reveal the whole move.

Experiment	Can reveal	Cannot prove
Structured conversation	Hidden work, career stages, tradeoffs, entry paths	Your ability or fit with the daily work
Observation	Workflow, culture, pace, recurring interactions	Independent competence
Work sample	Current skill and quality of reasoning	Performance over time in a real organization
Project or service	Motivation, collaboration, learning speed, stakeholder fit	The economics or full role
Course or credential step	Ability to meet a formal learning standard	Commitment to the profession or complete readiness
Part-time or contract work	Demand, delivery rhythm, boundaries, commercial fit	Stable long-term income
Application or interview	Market response and narrative gaps	That the path is wrong if one process fails

Experiment plan

Hypothesis	Experiment	Signal	Stop or update rule	Review date

Use market response carefully

Silence or rejection can reflect fit, evidence, timing, access, competition, or process design. Treat it as information to investigate, not a complete verdict.

6. Sequence a high-distance move

When several dimensions change at once, reduce avoidable uncertainty without pretending the move can be risk-free.

Stage	Decision	Useful action
Explore	Is the target worth direct investigation?	Talk with practitioners, study the field, and observe actual work
Test	Does the work and environment fit better than the idea of it?	Complete a bounded project, course, service role, or supervised exposure
Prepare	What must be true before a larger commitment?	Build runway, prerequisites, proof, relationships, and a transition narrative
Commit	Which option is best supported now?	Choose a pathway, accept tradeoffs, and close competing loops
Integrate	How will prior assets compound in the new setting?	Translate expertise without overclaiming authority
Review	What evidence would justify persistence or revision?	Set dates, thresholds, wellbeing signals, and alternative routes

Transition sequence

First reversible step: _____

Commitment threshold: _____

Runway or constraint that must be addressed: _____

Option worth preserving temporarily: _____

Option I will close if the evidence supports the move: _____

Commitment creates information too

Some capabilities, relationships, and identities develop only after sustained participation. Experiments should inform commitment, not replace it indefinitely.

Pivot Decision Record

Decision element	Response
Current and target states	
Distance by dimension	Domain ___ Function ___ Work model ___ Status ___ Credentials ___
Total and planning band	
Strongest carry assets	
Most consequential reset	
Evidence already available	
Highest-value missing evidence	
Next experiment	
Financial and life constraints	
Commitment threshold	
Review date and advisers	

Decision statement

I am choosing to _____

because the strongest evidence is _____

I am knowingly accepting _____

I will revisit the decision if _____

Further reading

- Herminia Ibarra, Working Identity
- Ethan Bernstein, Michael B. Horn, and Bob Moesta, Job Moves
- Annie Duke, How to Decide

This diagnostic supports reflection and planning. It is not a validated psychometric instrument and does not predict hiring, admission, compensation, or career satisfaction.

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