

Career Crossroads Framework

A structured approach to career reflection, growth, engagement, and future alignment

One of the greatest risks organisations face today is not simply losing people – it is losing the *wrong* people. Too often, high-performing individuals disengage quietly long before they resign. They may still be delivering results, holding critical expertise, and appearing successful externally, yet internally they may feel underutilised, stuck, disconnected, or no longer aligned to the work they are doing.

In many cases, the issue is not capability. It is a career evolution. People naturally evolve. Their motivations shift. Their identity changes. Their aspirations grow. What energised someone three years ago may no longer provide challenge, meaning, learning, or fulfilment today. The reality is that individuals sometimes outgrow roles before organisations recognise it.

As leaders, we have a responsibility not only to drive performance, but to genuinely support the growth, well-being, engagement, and long-term fulfilment of our people. This requires ongoing development conversations – not simply during annual performance reviews or once resignation risk appears. Many talented individuals do not necessarily want to leave the organisation. They may simply no longer see a future version of themselves in their current role configuration.

This framework is designed to help individuals, coaches, people leaders, and HR teams to create more structured, reflective, and constructive career conversations.

Rather than approaching career decisions as a simplistic “stay versus leave” choice, this framework encourages a deeper exploration of:

- Identity – Who am I becoming professionally?
- Energy – What gives me energy versus drains it?
- Impact – Where do I create the greatest value?
- Environment – What conditions help me thrive?
- Aspiration – What future am I moving toward?
- Trade-offs – What am I willing or unwilling to sacrifice?

The purpose is to help individuals make conscious, values-aligned, future-focused decisions – while also helping organisations better understand, retain, develop, and redeploy valuable talent where possible.

Often, clarity emerges not through a single answer, but through a structured exploration of:

- current reality,
- aspirations,
- strengths,
- motivations,
- future possibilities,
- and the gap between where someone is today and who they are becoming.

At its best, this process creates:

- greater self-awareness,
- more meaningful development conversations,
- stronger engagement,
- better internal mobility,
- improved retention,
- and more sustainable career decisions for both the individual and the organisation

Career Crossroads Evaluation Framework

A potential Framework (5 phases)

1. Understand the Current Reality
2. Identify the “Push” and “Pull” Factors
3. Career Identity Exploration
4. Future Design Exploration
5. Internal vs External Evaluation
6. Decision Matrix

This Framework could be shared with employees by their people leaders / HR/Mentor or Coach to create meaningful development conversations.

This framework creates a structured methodology to explore:

- career alignment,
- strengths,
- motivators,
- wellbeing,
- leadership aspirations,
- capability transferability,
- internal mobility,
- and future role fit.

Phase 1 – Understand the Current Reality

(What is really happening?)

A. Current Role Diagnostic

Score each from 1–10 and discuss patterns.

Area	Questions	Score
Meaning & Purpose	Does this work still feel meaningful?	
Energy	What parts energise vs drain me?	
Growth	Am I still learning and developing?	
Challenge	Am I stretched appropriately?	
Recognition	Do I feel seen, valued, respected?	
Autonomy	How much control/influence do I have?	
Relationships	Quality of boss, peers, stakeholders?	
Alignment	Does the role align with my values and identity?	
Lifestyle	Is the role sustainable emotionally/physically?	
Future Fit	Does this role position me for the future I want?	

Then explore:

- What has changed?
- When did dissatisfaction begin?
- Is this role fatigue, leadership fatigue, cultural fatigue, or career evolution?
- Is she running away from something or toward something?

Phase 2 – Identify the “Push” and “Pull” Factors

This is often where clarity emerges.

A. Push Factors (moving away from)

Examples:

- Burnout
- Politics
- Lack of growth
- Lack of meaning
- Identity stagnation
- Values misalignment
- Poor leadership
- Feeling trapped as “the SME”
- Limited future pathway

“If nothing changed in the next 2 years, how would that feel?”

B. Pull Factors (moving toward)

Examples:

- Leadership
- Broader influence
- Creativity
- Strategy
- Purpose
- Flexibility
- Better culture
- New challenge
- Reinvention
- More human impact
- Different lifestyle

Ask:

“What type of work makes you feel most alive?”

This distinction is important:

- Leaving **because of pain** often creates reactive decisions.
- Moving **toward aspiration** creates more sustainable choices.

Phase 3 – Career Identity Exploration

This is deeper than job titles.

A. Best-Self Reflection

Reflect on:

- Peak career moments
- Times you felt proud
- Work you naturally gravitate toward
- What others consistently seek you out for
- What you would still do even if not formally rewarded

Questions:

- What strengths do I most enjoy using?
- What kind of problems do I love solving?
- What identity am I trying to grow into?
- What parts of myself feel underutilised today?

B. “What Would I Miss?”

This is critical and often skipped.

Potential Loss

Reflection

Expertise identity	“I am known here.”
Status/reputation	“People rely on me.”
Relationships	Team/community/network
Safety/security	Predictability/familiarity
Influence	Informal authority
Purpose	Feeling needed
Mastery	Confidence/competence
Flexibility	Existing freedoms
Lifestyle	Commute, balance, routine

“What would be genuinely hard to let go of?”

Sometimes people discover:

- They do not hate the organisation,
- They hate the current configuration of the role.

Phase 4 – Future Design Exploration

Future Role Criteria

Define:

“My next chapter must include...”

Examples:

- More leadership
- Strategic involvement
- People development
- Innovation
- Purpose alignment
- Variety
- Broader business exposure
- Better wellbeing
- International exposure
- Flexibility

And:

“I no longer want...”

Examples:

- Constant firefighting
- Pure operational work
- Lack of autonomy
- Narrow SME identity
- Toxic politics
- Unsustainable hours

Phase 5 – Internal vs External Evaluation

This is where the organisation can engage constructively.

Option A – Stay in Current Role

What would need to change?

- Scope?
- Support?
- Recognition?
- Team?
- Career path?
- Learning?
- Autonomy?
- Purpose connection?

Option B – Move Internally

Questions:

- What adjacent roles align to strengths/interests?
- What transferable capabilities exist?
- What development gaps need support?
- Is there a pathway from SME → broader leadership?

Option C – Leave

Questions:

- What specifically are you seeking externally?
- Is it realistic?
- What assumptions may be idealised?
- What risk exists in leaving?
- What opportunity exists in staying?

Phase 6 – Decision Matrix

A simple weighted evaluation tool helps depersonalise emotion.

- 1) Work with a coach, a people leader, and yourself to explore potential Weightings and choose the weightings that resonate with you. You may want to do the [3Qetc Values Exercise](#) to help with this process.
- 2) You may add more or have fewer weightings; this also depends on what resonates, is intrinsically important, motivates you, and aligns with your values.

Criteria	Weight	Current Role	Internal Move	External Move
Meaning	20%			
Growth	20%			
Wellbeing	15%			
Financial	10%			
Purpose	15%			
Future Career	15%			
Lifestyle	5%			

This often surfaces:

- emotional bias,
- hidden priorities,
- and trade-offs.