

WEBINAR RESOURCE  
GUIDE AND WORKBOOK

# UNLOCKING YOUR CAREER POTENTIAL

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**A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO  
CAREER PATHING**



# START WITH WHY



## **WHY DO YOU DO WHAT YOU DO?**

Your contributions, performance, and attitude reflect your purpose and value.

## **HOW DO YOU BEHAVE?**

Your values, skills, experiences, and character can affect or influence your performance.

## **WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR YOUR LIFE?**

Your work is and will be an intersection of your **WHY** and your **HOW**. You can create that visual through words or images.

develop

# YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH PLAN

**IDENTIFY THE CORE WORK SKILLS THAT YOU POSSESS AND CONSIDER WHICH ONES MAY NEED FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OR WHICH YOU STILL NEED TO ACQUIRE IN ORDER TO PROGRESS IN YOUR CAREER.**

Identify them as technical skills/functional skills. Think about if Are there durable or translatable skills, or even soft skills that you might need in the role or environment.

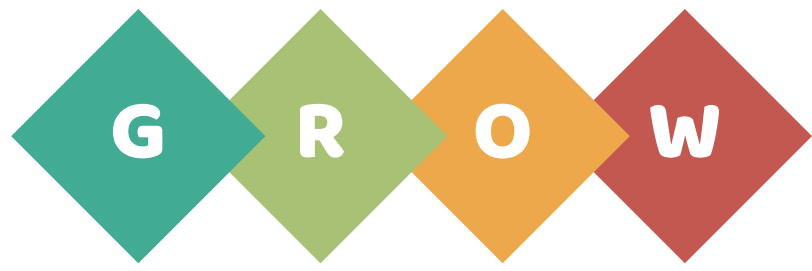
**TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. IDENTIFY WHAT YOU WILL DO.**

Educational benefits, certifications, conferences, stretch roles and service roles, such as volunteerism or mentoring.

**WE NEED PEOPLE. IDENTIFY AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD NETWORKS.**

Think about who in your social and professional connections can assist you - people you might have met through conferences, interest groups, and online. Start now and maintain those connections.

# GROW MODEL



John Whitmore, 2009

## **GOAL - ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS**

What do you want to move forward on?

## **REALITY - EXAMINE YOUR REALITY**

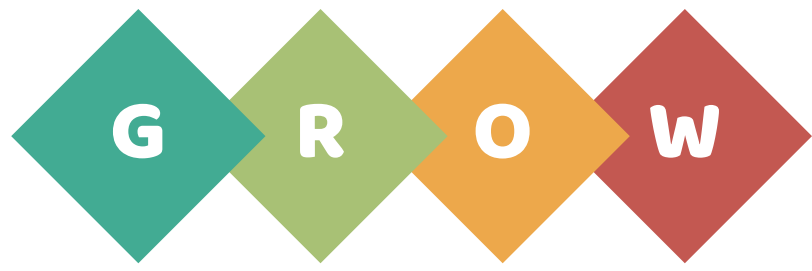
What made you realize that you need to do something different?

## **OPTIONS - EXPLORE THE OPTIONS FOR MEETING YOUR GOALS**

What could you do to move yourself one step forward?

## **WILL - AFFIRM YOUR COMMITMENT TO DO WHAT IS NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD**

What will you do next? how, when, and with whom? What do you need from others?



## GOAL - ESTABLISH YOUR GOALS

What do you want to move forward on?

**Objective:** Transition from a Senior Analyst role to a Team Manager position within the next 12 months.

*Specifics of the goal:*

- Lead a team of at least 5 people.
- Develop skills in team leadership, conflict management, and project oversight.
- Successfully manage at least two team-wide projects within the first 6 months of the new role.

**SMART** criteria for the goal:

- *Specific:* Become a Team Manager within the department.
- *Measurable:* Take on managerial responsibility for a team of 5 and oversee 2 projects.
- *Achievable:* Currently, the organization is looking to promote from within and support leadership development.
- *Relevant:* The organization values internal growth and leadership development, which aligns with personal career aspirations.
- *Time-bound:* Achieve the promotion within 12 months.

## REALITY - EXAMINE YOUR REALITY

What made you realize that you need to do something different?

**Current** situation:

- Senior analyst for 3 years
- Good technical expertise and recognized as a subject matter expert (SME) in the field, but no formal managerial experience
- Some experience in mentoring junior colleagues, although not in a formal capacity
- There is one open managerial position in the department

**Challenges:**

- Lack of formal managerial experience
- Some knowledge gaps in areas such as conflict resolution and team dynamics
- Limited exposure to cross-functional project management

**Strengths:**

- Strong technical expertise and high performance in current role
- Good relationships with senior management and colleagues
- Demonstrated leadership potential through informal mentoring

## OPTIONS - EXPLORE THE OPTIONS FOR MEETING YOUR GOALS

What could you do to move yourself one step forward?

### Possible actions and alternatives:

- Enroll in a management or leadership training program (online/live, internal/external, cohort-based/solo).
- Volunteer to lead smaller team projects before securing the formal managerial role.
- Seek mentorship or shadow a current manager (in a similar role or 1-up) to gain insight into day-to-day management responsibilities.
- Work on developing soft skills (communication, conflict management, delegation) through reading, workshops, or coaching.
- Network with HR and senior management to express interest in the role and seek advice on preparation.
- Set up regular check-ins with the current supervisor to track progress and receive feedback.
- Take on additional responsibilities to demonstrate readiness for a leadership position.

## WILL - AFFIRM YOUR COMMITMENT TO DO WHAT IS NEEDED TO MOVE FORWARD

What will you do next? how, when, and with whom? What do you need from others?

### Next 1 month:

- Enroll in a leadership training course or program to develop key management skills.
- Approach current supervisor to discuss career goals and get feedback on areas of development.

### Next 3 months:

- Take on a small project to lead within the team, such as organizing workflows, optimizing team processes, or enhancing employee engagement.
- Schedule regular meetings with a mentor from senior management for guidance and insight into leadership.
- Start reading and applying key concepts from leadership books (e.g., *"The Five Dysfunctions of a Team"*).

### Next 6 months:

- Seek feedback from team members and colleagues on leadership style and effectiveness.
- Volunteer to co-manage a cross-functional project to gain wider exposure and experience.
- Continue with development activities such as workshops and networking events.

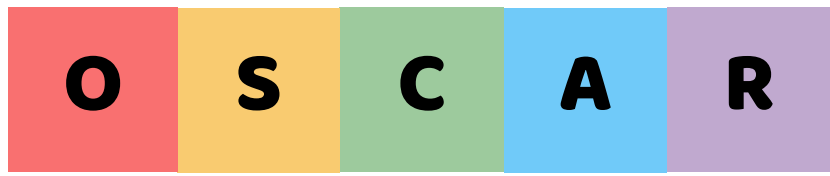
### Next 12 months:

- Apply for the Team Manager position.
- Demonstrate the ability to manage projects, work with teams, and handle challenges effectively.
- Schedule a formal performance review with current supervisor to assess readiness for the role.

### Review and Adjust: Regular check-ins every 2-3 months

- Assess progress and make necessary adjustments to the development plan.
- Adjust the timeline if unforeseen challenges arise or if additional learning is required.

# OSCAR MODEL



Gilbert & Whittleworth, 2009

**OUTCOME** - UNDERSTAND YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME AND LONG-TERM GOALS

**SITUATION** - BECOME AWARE OF YOUR SKILLS, ABILITIES, LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE, AND HOW YOU FEEL

**CHOICES** - CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS FOR REACHING YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME

**ACTIONS** - IDENTIFY THE IMPROVEMENTS AND HOW BEST TO MAKE THEM

**REVIEW** - HOLD REGULAR CHECK-INS WITH AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER TO STAY ON TRACK

## **OUTCOME - UNDERSTAND YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME AND LONG-TERM GOALS**

### **Objective:**

- Move from a mid-level marketing manager role to a senior marketing director position within the next 18-24 months.
- Develop advanced leadership skills and enhance strategic thinking and communication skills to effectively manage a large team and high-budget campaigns.

### *Specific outcomes:*

- Lead a marketing team of 20+ members.
- Be responsible for multi-million-dollar budgets for at least 3 major marketing campaigns.
- Achieve measurable improvements in team performance and marketing ROI (return on investment).

## **SITUATION - BECOME AWARE OF YOUR SKILLS, ABILITIES, LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE, AND HOW YOU FEEL**

### **Current position:**

- Been a marketing manager for 5 years, overseeing a small team of 5 people.
- Manage marketing budgets of around \$500,000 annually, with experience leading medium-scale campaigns.
- Performance is strong, but lacking experience in managing large teams and complex problems.
- Senior management has recognized the potential but needs further development to handle a senior director role.

### **Challenges:**

- Limited experience in managing larger teams or dealing with very high-budget projects.
- Needs to enhance strategic thinking to align marketing goals with broader organizational objectives.
- Requires more exposure to working cross-functionally with other departments, such as finance, research, etc.

### **Strengths:**

- Strong performance in current role, consistently delivering on campaign goals and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Good interpersonal skills and effective team management on a smaller scale.
- A strong rapport with key stakeholders within the organization, with a good reputation for creativity and innovation in marketing strategies.

## **CHOICES - CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS FOR REACHING YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME**

- Enroll in an executive leadership development program that focuses on strategic leadership and decision-making.
- Seek opportunities to co-lead larger, cross-functional projects to gain experience managing larger teams and budgets.
- Work with a mentor from senior leadership within the organization to gain insights into the skills needed for higher-level roles.
- Attend industry-specific conferences and networking events to stay updated on the latest marketing trends and strategies.
- Collaborate more with the finance department to gain a deeper understanding of high-level budgeting and financial planning.
- Lead a task force for a high-priority project within the department to demonstrate the ability to handle greater responsibilities.

## **ACTIONS - IDENTIFY THE IMPROVEMENTS AND HOW BEST TO MAKE THEM**

### **Immediate steps (next 3 months):**

- Enroll in a strategic leadership course or a specialized marketing director certification program.
- Meet with direct supervisor to communicate career goals and seek opportunities to lead larger projects or co-manage high-budget campaigns.
- Initiate a relationship with a senior marketing director or VP as a mentor to discuss career progression and skill-building.

### **Medium-term steps (next 6-12 months):**

- Take on co-leadership or advisory roles in large marketing campaigns (e.g., over \$1 million in budget) to gain hands-on experience.
- Actively participate in cross-departmental strategy meetings to understand broader organizational goals and align marketing strategies with them.
- Present results and insights from ongoing campaigns to senior leadership to demonstrate thought leadership and readiness for bigger responsibilities.

### **Long-term steps (next 12-24 months):**

- Build a portfolio of successful campaigns, showcasing strategic thinking, leadership, and budgeting skills.
- Continue networking and relationship-building within the organization and industry.
- Apply for senior marketing director positions once all necessary skills and experience are developed and demonstrated.

## **REVIEW - HOLD REGULAR CHECK-INS WITH AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER TO STAY ON TRACK**

### **Monitor progress and feedback:**

- Set up quarterly review meetings with direct supervisor to assess progress toward leadership and project management goals.
- Regularly check in with the mentor to discuss achievements, areas for improvement, and new opportunities.
- Track personal development in leadership, strategic thinking, and budgeting by documenting achievements, feedback received, and challenges overcome.
- Make adjustments to the plan if goals are not being met within the expected timeframes or if new opportunities arise.

### **Key indicators of success:**

- Progression from leading a small team to managing larger teams or projects.
- Success in managing high-budget campaigns with measurable ROI improvements.
- Positive feedback from senior leadership on strategic contributions and leadership style.

# SOAR MODEL



Stavros, Cooperrider & Kelley, 2003

## STRENGTHS - AWARENESS

What do you excel at?

What are your greatest accomplishments?

What are you most proud of?

What makes you unique?

## OPPORTUNITIES - DESIRE

What partnerships would lead to greater success?

What changes and trends in the market align with your strengths?

What threats do you see?

Are there gaps in the market that you could fill?

## ASPIRATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

What partnerships would lead to greater success?

What changes and trends in the market align with your strengths?

What threats do you see?

Are there gaps in the market that you could fill?

## RESULTS - ABILITY

What measures will tell you that you are on track to achieve success?

How do you translate your vision of success into tangible outcomes?

How do you know when you've achieved your goals?

# SOAR MODEL

example



## STRENGTHS - AWARENESS

### Current role:

- The individual works as a Senior Software Engineer with 5 years of experience in designing and developing web applications.

### Key strengths:

- *Technical expertise:* Strong understanding of software development processes, tools, and technologies.
- *Problem-solving skills:* Proven ability to identify issues and come up with creative solutions.
- *Collaboration:* Works well with cross-functional teams, including designers, quality assurance, accessibility, and marketing.
- *Leadership potential:* Experience in mentoring junior developers and occasionally leading project teams.
- *Customer-focused mindset:* Good at understanding user needs and translating them into technical solutions.

### Areas to leverage:

- Technical background gives a deep understanding of the product lifecycle and the ability to communicate effectively with developers.
- The ability to mentor others shows potential for leadership in a product management role.
- Experience working closely with various teams provides a foundation for coordinating diverse stakeholders in product development.

## OPPORTUNITIES - DESIRE

### Career goal:

- Transition into a Project Manager role within the next 12-18 months.

### Current opportunities within the organization:

- The company is launching a new product line, and the project team is expanding.
- There is an internal mentorship program for aspiring project managers.
- The company supports professional development through sponsorship for courses and certifications in product management.

### Career opportunities in industry:

- Project management roles are in high demand, particularly for individuals with a technical background.
- Opportunities to attend industry conferences, webinars, or workshops to build networks and knowledge in project management.
- Certifications such as *Certified ScrumMaster (CSM)*, *Lean Six Sigma*, *Prosci*, and *Project Management Professional (PMP)* could be valuable.

## ASPIRATIONS - KNOWLEDGE

### Vision for the future:

- *Short-term goal:* Transition into a Junior Project Manager role within the next 12 months, gaining hands-on experience in managing project cycles, data analytics, research, sponsor and stakeholder collaboration, change management, and transition to operations.
- *Long-term goal:* Within the next 3-5 years, aim to become a Senior Project Manager responsible for vendor relations, primary strategy, deadlines, agile workgroups, budget, change management, and risk assessment, and leading a team of project managers.

### Personal development goals:

- Develop skills in project management and agile strategy, change management, data analytics and research, and agile project management.
- Improve leadership and communication skills to effectively lead cross-functional teams.
- Build stronger relationships with stakeholders from various departments to understand their needs and align project and program or product development.

### Inspiration:

- To lead projects that not only meet demands but also enhance experiences through change management.
- Aspire to be a key decision-maker in shaping organizational strategies and driving innovation.

## RESULTS - ABILITY

### Within the next 6 months:

- Enroll in a project or change management certification course (such as PMP or PROSCI).
- Shadow a current Project Manager for hands-on learning of the project management process.
- Lead a project to showcase leadership and decision-making skills in a project management and change management context with a diverse group of stakeholders from all over the organization.

### Within 12 months:

- Apply for a Junior Project Manager position.
- Successfully lead the project for and launch of at least one feature or product enhancement that results in a measurable increase in user engagement or satisfaction.
- Gain experience with conducting stakeholder interviews, sponsor meetings, risk assessments, and data analytical research, using insights to inform decisions.

### Within 18-24 months:

- Transition into a full Project Manager role, managing the project from ideation to launch and leading change management efforts.
- Lead the successful launch of a project, with a measurable impact on user experience (e.g., an increase in positive reactions by 20%).
- Be recognized by senior management for contributions to project strategy and team leadership.

### Ongoing review and adjustments:

- Set up bi-monthly check-ins with a mentor from the project team to receive feedback and adjust goals as needed.
- Regularly measure progress by documenting completed tasks, outcomes, and feedback from stakeholders.
- Reassess the plan every 6 months to adjust based on career growth, skill development, and changes in the industry.

# RESOURCES FOR A CAREER VISION



## Questions to

### **EXPLORE - VALUES**

- What causes or issues are you most passionate about, and why?
- What impact or legacy would you like to leave behind?
- What are your top priorities in life, and how do they align with your career goals?
- What kind of work environment or company culture brings out the best of you?

### **IDENTIFY - PERSONAL RESOURCES**

- What skills or abilities do you possess that others often recognize and appreciate?
- Think of a time when you faced a significant challenge. How did you overcome it, and what personal strengths did you rely on?
- What activities or tasks do you enjoy that make you lose track of time? What does that inform you about your natural talents?

### **GENERATE - JOB IDEAS**

- What job would you choose if there were no limits, and why?
- What are your hobbies or interests outside of work?
- What entrepreneurial venture or business would you start if you had unlimited resources and support?
- Reflect on times when you have felt the most excited and energized. Are there any job roles or industries that evoke similar feelings?

**Accomplishment**

**Accountability**

**Achievement**

**Advancement**

**Adventure**

**Authenticity**

**Authority**

**Autonomy**

**Balance**

**Challenge**

**Competence**

**Competition**

**Control**

**Creativity**

**Diversity**

**Education**

**Enjoyment**

**Entrepreneurship**

**Environment**

**Equity**

**Excellence**

**Expertise**

**Fairness**

**Fame**

**Family**

**Fitness**

**Friendship**

**Growth**

**Happiness**

**Harmony**

**Health**

**Helping Others**

**Honesty**

**Independence**

**Innovation**

**Integrity**

**Knowledge**

**Leadership**

**Learning**

**Leisure**

**Loyalty**

**Nature**

**Personal Development**

**Power**

**Prestige**

**Promotion**

**Recognition**

**Religion**

**Respect**

**Responsibility**

**Risk**

**Safety**

**Security**

**Self-Expression**

**Service**

**Spirituality**

**Stability**

**Travel**

**Trust**

**Wealth**

**Wellness**

**Wisdom**

**THIS LIST IS NOT ALL INCLUSIVE - WHAT ARE OTHER VALUES OR LENSES YOU LOOK THROUGH?  
AND, WHAT ARE YOUR TOP 5-10 VALUES?**

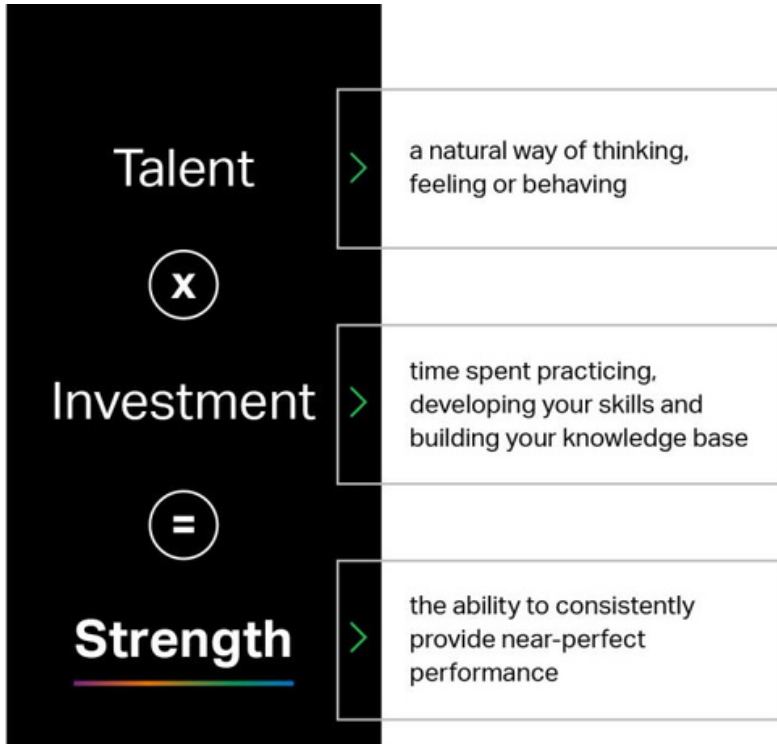
# USER MANUAL



The User Manual is a short description of how you like to work. Relationships are built by working to understand the other person and what makes them tick. The User Manual is a simple way to accelerate that relationship. On one sheet of paper, describe what drives you crazy at work and what energizes you. What are your work rules? What should your coworkers know about you to avoid misunderstandings?

Rich Smalling

- The most important thing to me, or the motto I live by is:
- I value:
- My work and learning styles and habits are:
- I like people to approach me when:
- I like people to communicate by (including what I don't like):
- Ways I prefer feedback and ways I give feedback:
- My meeting preferences include:
- My work pet peeves include:
- I make decisions by:
- People can help me when or by (needs/accommodations):
- I am at my best when:



## What are your Top 5 Strengths and how do you apply them?

If you've never taken CliftonStrengths, navigate to this link:

<https://VT.my.gallup.com/direct/ac/YBHN6FR8QD37NF4Y>.

- Log in to Single Sign On with your VT PID and password.
- The assessment should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.
- Be sure to start when you will have an uninterrupted period of time.
- If you have any technical issues, please reach out to [strengths@vt.edu](mailto:strengths@vt.edu) with a screenshot of any error messages you receive.

Once you've completed the assessment, you can find and read about your results anytime in the VT Strengths portal: [vt.my.gallup.com](https://vt.my.gallup.com).

### CUSTOMER TESTIMONY

Discovering my strengths has changed my life. I am more aware of how I feel and act in different situations, and I better understand why others act as they do.

Excellence is not achieved in isolation. Excellence is created through the merging of people's differing strengths. Once each team member's strengths are aimed at the same purpose and teams are aligned on goals, this is where true excellence and success happens.

[#cliftonstrengths](#)

“Some of the most successful people I've ever known achieved what they did because they built their careers around their strengths, not their weaknesses.”

– JIM CLIFTON



# USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES



## LINKEDIN

[Video on how to use LinkedIn Learning - My Career Journey](#)  
[LinkedIn Career Goal Setting Feature FAQs](#)

## OTHER TALENT DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

[Participant Guide](#)  
[Supervisor Coaching Guide](#)  
[Development Action Plan](#)  
[training.vt.edu](#)

## ONLINE COURSE

[Understanding Higher Education](#) by CUPA-HR

## BOOK

[Reach: A New Strategy to Help You](#) by Andy Polinsky, PhD