
Chapter 4

It Starts With You

FUNDAMENTALS, FEATURES, AND FUNCTIONS

This is not a process to be rushed. You are launching, re-engaging, or continuing a journey of self-discovery that will help you understand what “you” are all about and therefore give you much greater understanding into what others are all about. The objective is not to “find yourself” unless you want to. However, once you have gathered enough intelligence about your own life- and work-related desires, you can better empathize with others and their view of the world and their personal and professional experiences.

As you progress, use the accompanying worksheet to flesh out the details in each area as you find out more about yourself. You may consider how you want to craft your future more intentionally.

FUNDAMENTALS

- **FULFILLMENT:**

What satisfaction are you getting from your work content, role, and community? What ambitions do you have for your career—achieving, learning, contributing, and more? What more would you like to be accomplishing in your role? How well do you feel you have advanced in your job and career over the last three years? What would you like to have achieved in three years’ time? What would give you the most satisfaction if you would able to say “I have done _____” in three and five years’ time? What would you like your legacy to be?

- **FINANCIAL SECURITY:**

Do you feel you are being suitably compensated at this point in your career? Do you have reasonable stability in your job? Do you have one employer, one main employer and contractual/flexible arrangements with other companies, a regular group of clients, many clients which are constantly changing, or long projects with one client at a time? What type of employment arrangement do you prefer? Have you explored different types of work arrangements or talked to friends of yours who have different types of employment arrangement and the pros and cons of each? Have you thought how you could achieve more financial security having a different employment arrangement—such as moving to a different company or having multiple clients? What gap do you have between client work typically and is there a way to shorten any gaps so you do not use up savings in between client projects? What other ways can you increase your financial security through exploring different work arrangements?

- **HEALTH:**

Are you comfortable with your overall and specific well-being support? Do you have a health insurance plan you are comfortable with? What more would you like from your health plan and how can you attain that? What work-related situations cause you the most anxiety and stress? What aspects can you prioritize to change in your circumstances to reduce the anxiety, work differently, or make a life or work choice to reduce the anxiety and stress in your life? For the inevitable stress that need to accept, what can you adjust to manage it effectively—such as stress- reducing activities like yoga and meditation? How well does your workplace, your boss, and your team support a healthy lifestyle/fitness routine? Do you find it easy to create boundaries between work and non-work? Do you always get up from your desk to have lunch? Do you talk a walk around the office or outside at least once every workday? Do you exercise or are you active three times a week?

- **HAPPINESS:**

Do you feel a sense of belonging at your company? Do you feel comfortable speaking openly with your team members at work? Do you have a close friend at work? Could you describe the culture of your company? How well do the cultural values align with your own? Is your individual development and success being nurtured? Do you feel your work environment supports your emotional well-being? Does your overall living environment support your well-being? What makes you sing in the shower or hum in the bath? What could you change in your life to help you sing or hum more?!

- **CONTENT:**

What kind of work do you enjoy doing that satisfies you intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, or physically? Do you think your boss would be receptive if you asked them if you could do more of that type of work? Which tasks do you complete easily and which do you struggle with? Is there someone at work who is good at the tasks you struggle with? Might there be a way to swap some of their tasks for yours? What kinds of projects do you engage in most? Could you do more of those in your current role or is there a way to transition to a slightly different role to do them?

- **DEAL BREAKERS:**

What non-negotiable specifications impact your working life? Is there a minimum amount of money you need to earn each week/month? Is there a maximum amount of hours you can or want to work each work/month? Are there specific days/hours that you must be free to deal with non-work obligations? Do you have to be located at/close to home/a third place at certain times/days to take care of regular obligations? Do you need to live in a certain area? Are there cultural tenets that are essential at any company you work for?

FEATURES

- **OVERSIGHT:**

What kind of management support maximizes your output—high touch with many check-ins, a hands-off approach, or some other combination? Do you like to get a lot of guidance, with many options as to how to do something, or be given the optimal structure and format and you will make a few tweaks at the edges, partially because you really do not want to have to ask questions? Or do you prefer to be left to work things out for yourself—you can ask your boss or others if you need help? It can be helpful to chat with your boss and team members to get specific about this element. They may have good suggestions, or they can help you work it out. We each thrive and produce our best work with different levels and types of support.

- **SKILLS:**

What are your top three skills? What are your top three hard skills and soft skills? Which of your skills are starting to become less valuable? What skills do you want to develop over the next two to three years and in order to accomplish what? How are you developing and sustaining your professional competitive advantage? Have you planned how and scheduled when you are going to attain your next key skills? How much is your employer supporting and nurturing your upskilling?

- **CAREER:**

What role are you considering next to continue your career progression? Have you considered horizontal and diagonal moves as well as vertical to gain new skills and perspectives? What do you need to take the next step? How much longer are you considering pursuing your current career? Have you thought about what career you might want to do next, why, and where? What additional skills would you need to transition to or launch that career? How and when are you going to attain those skills so you are ready to start the new career?

FUNCTION

- **TIMING:**

When do you feel most awake and easily able to focus? When do you feel sluggish or sleepy? When you space out and it's time to take a time out? Do your energy levels crash mid-afternoon, slowing your progress dramatically? Mine do, so I sometimes take a short walk with my dogs to clear my head or perhaps get a cup of tea. Just the act of getting up and walking around helps.

- **LOCATION:**

Are you most focused working from home, or from a café or at the office or a hotel when you are traveling for business or even on a plane? Or what type of space supports or distracts you? One friend who avoids a long commute to the office deliberately works at a local coworking space as she gets distracted at home by all the things she hasn't done yet. You may have two preferred locations—one for independent work, the other for group work.

- **SITUATION:**

Do you prefer to work as part of a team or alone? Does it energize you to be surrounded by the buzz of the office? Or does that distract you—depending on the task at hand? What helps you concentrate? What else disturbs you or supports your concentration? Once you understand the best setting for you as you work, you can try and replicate those conditions whenever possible.

- **OBLIGATIONS:**

What unavoidable overlap of responsibilities from your personal life must be considered in devising your optimal working profile? Do you have to pick up kids from school or have an elderly relative to take care of? Do you go to the gym or for a run every workday in order to stay focused?