



Path of Ascension

Mapping Out Your Growth Plan

You are embarking on a journey that not many people have the good fortune to take.

There is a story, a legend really, that the English architect Christopher Wren asked three stonecutters to describe what they were doing.

The first replied, "I'm cutting stone." without looking up.

The second replied, "I'm shaping this stone to fit with the others to build a wall."

The third replied, "I'm building a cathedral to worship the Almighty."

Vastly different goals are shaped from differing depths of insight. The bigger the picture, the deeper the purpose.

Without understanding the interplay of your work and your life goals, you'll be grasping for existential meaning well before retirement. Remember, you'll spend the majority of your waking hours at work.

Your life is too important to just get by and pay the bills. Maybe you work simply to feed your family. That's a noble goal, but we all need more.

Like the second stonecutter, understanding how your job fits with others is the next step in understanding the bigger picture.

But what if you, like the cathedral builder, could envision the *really* big picture?

- What if you could actually grow in your job and create a plan to follow?
- What if you could play to your strengths and learn how to compensate for your weaknesses?
- What if your growth was part of your definition of success at work, where it was measured and rewarded?

Meet your Path of Ascension.

Path of Ascension is a research-backed program designed to give you more meaning, fulfillment and joy in your work. It will empower you to be more productive, profitable and satisfied.

What Does Growth Mean?

There are two types of career growth, and Path of Ascension is designed to support both, making it relevant and practical for any leader.

1. **Quantitative Growth.** This is what most people think of when they hear career growth. This is about growing in position, rank, or responsibility. For example, moving from a Marketing Manager to a Marketing Director. We call this quantitative growth. You'd need to gain certain "hard skills" and specific knowledge or training to move into that position as well as leadership "soft skills."
2. **Qualitative Growth.** This is about becoming qualitatively better at what you do. For example, you may be a Marketing Director already. Or you're a Marketing Manager and not looking to advance in responsibility, but you want to work "better". Perhaps you want to be more effective at work, or manage your time better, or inspire your team more. Perhaps you want to find more pleasure and meaning in the work you do. If you already own your company, most likely your Path of Ascension will be focused on qualitative growth.

Now let's get into it!

There are three parts to the Path of Ascension Template:

1. Strategic Path of Ascension

This part of your Path of Ascension zooms out and helps you articulate the big picture of who you are at work and what makes you tick. *You articulate your mission, values, strengths, opportunities and KPIs.* This section is designed to be updated on a yearly basis. Many of these components may remain constant year to year. Nonetheless, it's vital to revisit and review them annually.

2. Goals

Now it's time to make it real by setting your goals and mapping out how you will achieve them. This section enables you to set specific yearly and long-term goals for yourself, set a timeline, choose your support system and articulate why your goals matter. This step is invaluable to your growth in the company.

3. Quarterly Upgrades

Many people make a New Year's resolution, but how many of them are still sticking with it by February (let alone June!)? Less than 20%. It's vital to map out your goals, but unless you break them down into bite-sized action steps, you run the risk of losing those opportunities. This section is designed for you to review your yearly goals every quarter, then determine simple, realistic quarterly upgrades to help you reach that goal.

Part 1: Strategic Path of Ascension Guide

Step 1: My Mission At Work

Let's talk about your mission at work. Why do you do what you do, above and beyond making money?

This is your finest version of who you are. It's what launches you out of bed every day. It's your M.O. (Modus Operandi) - how you operate at work and why you do what you do.

This isn't just about what your job title is or what you're responsible for accomplishing: your Mission at Work is aligned with your values.

When crafting your Mission at Work, consider the following questions:

1. If you could accomplish anything at work, what would it be?
2. What's your wildest dream for the company as a whole?
3. What type of person do you want to be at work? How would you want to express yourself? (We are human beings not just human doings.)
4. If you had to deliver your Ted Talk about your role at the company called "I have a dream," what would the talk be about?
5. What is the most meaningful part of your job?
6. What part of your job would you continue doing even if you weren't getting paid to do it?
7. Whom do you impact in your current role?
 - a. In what way do you improve their lives?
 - b. Whom do you want to impact more and how will you improve their lives?
8. What do you need to do to leave work each day feeling emotionally satisfied?

Take a step back. Allow yourself the luxury to dream, to change, to grow. Don't let fear or other people's judgments stop you. What is your mission?

Work with your mentor or VIP (Verbal Introspection Partner) to refine your Mission. Say it out loud. Read it and try it on like a new suit; it will need some tailoring. When you get this right it will give you the energy you need to face obstacles and overcome the inevitable challenges with joy.

Examples:

1. My mission is to help consumers live in integrity, help our clients, and find creative solutions.
2. I build thriving, happy teams who love what we do, because we produce great results together.
3. My mission is to improve the lives we touch and build friends for life with magical moments.

Step 2: Company Values

Because this plan is designed for your growth within the company, it must be aligned with the company's values.

Fill in the company's values here. Is it self-evident how your mission fits with the overall company's values? Could you make a pitch to your supervisor about how they integrate?

Step 3: My Strengths & Opportunities

Because you want to play to your strengths, you'll first have to define what those are. You may use either a formal assessment or just think this through on your own.

When thinking about your strengths, consider the following:

1. What do you excel in?
2. What do others often ask you for help with?
3. What are you naturally talented at?
4. What have you accomplished in the past that you feel really used your best skills and made you feel "whole"?
5. What do you simply love doing?
6. What are you passionate about?

Next, let's articulate your opportunities for growth. These are areas which you will have the most ROI (return on investment) if you improve.

When thinking about your opportunities, consider the following:

1. What's holding you back from succeeding at work?
2. What changes would make you and your team happier and more productive?
3. Where would you like to be in 2-5 years from now?
4. What possibilities are there for you to grow in the company?
5. What changes are you naturally positioned to go through personally or professionally in the next 6 months?
6. What opportunities do you think your supervisors see for you?
7. What opportunities do your friends and family think you have?

Step 4: My KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)

(You'll fill out this section now, then revisit it once you've completed your entire Path of Ascension and reviewed it with your mentor and supervisor.)

First, articulate your current KPIs. Your job may have pre-defined KPIs already, in which case review them first with your mentor and/or supervisor to make sure they're relevant, then put them into your Path of Ascension.

If you don't have pre-defined KPIs, now's the time to draft them. We have an entire guide devoted to *"Everything you wanted to know about KPIs, but were afraid to ask"*. Please reference this guide for help in understanding what KPIs are and how to define them.

When creating your KPIs, consider the following:

1. What are you responsible for accomplishing at work?
2. How do you measure success?
3. What are your division's targets? How do you contribute to those targets?
4. What are the company's goals that you contribute toward?
5. What determines if you get a raise (if applicable)?
6. What results-based KPIs may you have?
7. What action-based KPIs may you have?

Warning: Steer clear of over complicating your KPIs! The more simple, realistic and clear they are, the better chance they have at getting achieved. On the other hand, don't get too complacent. Try to push yourself outside of your comfort zone just a bit.

Be sure to define the time frame for these KPIs- are they yearly targets? Quarterly? Monthly? They can be a mix of all of the above, just be sure to delineate appropriately.

Part 2: Goals

Now it's time to articulate some specific yearly goals for you to grow in the company- either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Step 1: Short-Term Goals (Within One Year):

Complete the chart found in your Path of Ascension template.

- **Goals**

Here you'll articulate specific goals for yourself this year. Remember, these can be "quantitative goals", such as learning a new skill, moving up in the leadership ranks, taking on a new responsibility, or even getting a raise! Or, then can be "qualitative goals," such as

improving your communication skills, becoming more efficient, learning to embrace other personalities.

When crafting your goals, make them as specific as possible. Stay away from "Become a better team member"- what *exactly* does that mean? Instead, try, "improve my communication skills as a manager."

- **Action Steps**

Here you'll define exactly how you will accomplish each goal. What action steps will you take over the course of the year? There will likely be more than one action step you'll need to take.

Some categories of action steps may be roles, projects, and training.

Later on, we'll review these action steps and break them down further into quarterly upgrades.

- **Support Needed**

We're social creatures. We need our tribe to cheer us on, help us when we stumble and motivate us. Who will be your support in these endeavors? These may be people inside of your workplace or outside. Choose people who can help you and mentor you, and let them know that you'll be requesting their support in helping you reach this goal.

- **Potential Roadblocks**

It's great to set goals, but life happens. We're busy, things come up, we get distracted, opportunities change.

Now's your time to think through some potential roadblocks that might prevent you from accomplishing this goal. These may be internal or external roadblocks. Be honest.

What steps can you take to overcome those roadblocks?

- **Milestone Target Date**

When will you accomplish this goal (within the year) or when will you set a time to review your progress if the nature of the goal isn't completion, but progress.

- **How Will This Make My Life Better?**

This may be the *most important* part of this chart. Why does this *REALLY* matter? Accomplishing your goals is hard work. It will take a lot of effort, dedication and perseverance. Unless you really have something motivating you, you'll be fighting an uphill battle.

Ask yourself what accomplishing this goal will do for you? How will it improve your life?

Surprise: Working 90% of your time in your HABUT (Highest And Best Use of Time) is goal #1!

You may have noticed by now that you have a pre-filled goal in your chart. Why? Because regardless of exactly how you want to grow this year, focusing on your HABUT and learning to spend 90% of your time there is a must.

As a leader, you will constantly be pulled in a million different directions. One of the things that will make you an exceptional leader is your ability to consistently focus on what matters most, or as we all it, your HABUT.

Once you fill out your HABUT Worksheet, you'll review it either on your own, with your VIP partner or with your Mentor. You'll then use the HABUT worksheet to guide you in filling out this chart. It will specify your HABUT and possible quarterly upgrades.

Step 2: Long-Term Goals (2-5 years):

Here's your chance to map out your long-term goal for your growth. Dream big! Where could you see yourself in 2 to 5 years?

- Think of both qualitative and quantitative growth formats.
- Get particular, if possible.
- It could be that the position you're envisioning does not exist yet. Write it anyway.

Part 3: Quarterly Upgrades

Now let's make it actionable. Review your yearly goals and choose a quarterly upgrade for each one. There may be more than one upgrade for each goal, that's ok. You may also have the same upgrade for that goal as you did the last quarter. Some goals take longer than 3 months to achieve. That's ok too!

Choose something that's practical and possible to implement in these 3 month cycles. Think through what is coming up in your life and your seasonal business rhythms. For example, don't plan on accomplishing a big quantitative goal in the first quarter of the year, if you're an accountant. Set your bigger goal upgrades for summer.

Finishing Up

Reward yourself for finishing your Path of Ascension Template! You've taken steps to concretize your goals and hold yourself accountable. You could actually do this! Make the time with your VIP (Verbal Introspection Partner) fun and rewarding. This is life, not an exam. It's all for your benefit.