

Job Search Toolkit

Hi, dear professional!

This document is a collection of exercises I use with clients in career coaching.

It is not here to give you one perfect answer in 20 minutes. It is here to help us collect the right material, ask better questions, and turn vague thoughts into something more practical.

Inside, we will look at:

- What kind of life and work you actually want to build.*
- What your ideal working day could look like.*
- What skills, strengths, stories, and patterns already exist in your experience.*
- What new career directions may be worth exploring.*
- How to analyse job ads, adapt your CV, and track applications with more clarity.*

You don't need to fill everything in perfectly.

Some answers may be clear immediately.

Some will be messy.

Some will appear only during the coaching conversation.

That's normal.

The goal of this document is to make your experience, choices, and next steps more visible – so we can work with them properly.

Thank you for your interest.

All the luck,

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Exercise 1.0

10 - 5 - 1

Before You Start.

The goal of this exercise is to create a clear enough picture of the life you are trying to move towards, so your next decisions are not based only on pressure, fear, habit, or the “next logical step”.

Very often, we start career planning from the wrong end:

- “What job can I get?”
- “What title makes sense?”
- “What should I do next?”
- “What is realistic?”

These questions are useful, but they can also make your world very small.

In this exercise, we start wider.

First, you describe what you actually want your life to look like. Then you gradually bring it closer to reality: from 10 years, to 5 years, to the next year, and finally (if you want) to goals for coaching.

You do not need to know all the answers. You do not need to sound smart, strategic, or realistic from the first sentence.

Write what comes up. Then we can look at it together, notice patterns, clarify what matters, and turn the vague picture into more concrete next steps.

The most important thing is **honesty**.

- Not “what should I want?”
- Not “what would look impressive?”
- Not “what is the safest answer?”

But: **What would actually feel like a good life for me?**

Life 10 Years From Now

Imagine: 10 years have passed, and things have worked out as well as they possibly could.

Not “the right way”, but the way you actually want it. **Describe this life.**

Where do you live?

- Where do you spend most of your time?
- What is around you? What does your environment look like?

What do you do?

- What kind of work, business, or activity is it?
- What do you influence?
- What changes because of your work:
 - In your own life?
 - In other people’s lives?
 - In the industry / society?
- What do you personally like about this activity? What feels “yours” in it?

What does your work look like in reality?

- What does your usual working day look like?
- What takes up most of your time?
- Which tasks come more easily to you?
- Which tasks are difficult, but still interesting for you to figure out?

Work format.

- How do you work: alone / with a team?
- Is it one main focus, or several directions?
- How do you distribute your time?

Money.

- Where does the money come from?
- How is your income structured?

Relationships and people around you.

- Who surrounds you?
- How do you spend time together?
- What does this give you?

Life outside work.

- What do you do simply because you enjoy it?
- Where is there space for this in your week?

Travel and change of scenery.

- Do you have a change of environment? What does it look like?

Body and health.

- How do you take care of yourself?
- How do you take care of your body?
- How do you support yourself psychologically?

Skills and growth.

- What have you learned during this time?
- What has it opened up / unlocked for you?
- What are you learning now, or planning to learn?

Important.

Don't move on until you've filled in all the blocks that are important to you.

If something stays empty, that is also an answer – but it is worth noticing.

Pause for a moment and look at the whole picture.

If you had to highlight 2–3 most important elements of this life, what would they be?

What part of this do you already have now, at least partially?

And what has not started at all yet?

Step back. Where Are You in 5 Years?

Now look at your 10-year picture.

And answer:

What already needs to be in place in 5 years for you to get there?

Go through the same blocks:

- Where do you live?
- What do you do?
- What does your work look like?
- Where does the money come from?
- Who surrounds you?
- How do you spend time outside work?
- How do you take care of yourself?
- What have you already learned?

💡 If 10 years is “this is what I truly want”, then 5 years is “this is already starting to take shape”.

Important.

If you don't see a connection with the 10-year picture, stop and adjust it.

This stage is a bridge, not a new story.

Step back again. The next year.

What needs to start happening in the next year for you to be on the path toward those 5 years?

Again, use the same blocks, but through the lens of reality:

- Where do you live in one year?
- What does your work look like?
- What changes have already happened or are beginning to happen?
- What decisions are you making this year?
- What is different in your day now?
- What habits are appearing?
- What are you starting to learn?

💡 You can use your current life as a starting point:

- If you look at the past week or month, what is already moving in this direction?
- And what is still staying the same?

Important.

If it sounds too vague, go back and make it more specific.

This is where the connection with real actions starts to appear.

[optional] Goals for Coaching

What needs to change in you, your actions, or your decisions for this year to actually happen?

Formulate 3–5 goals.

Check each goal:

Specific.

What exactly needs to start happening differently?

Measurable.

What signs will help you notice it?

Realistic.

Does it fit into your current life?

Connected.

Does it clearly lead toward your 1–5–10-year picture?

Time-bound.

When do you want to see it?

Examples.

✗ “I want confidence.”

✓ “Prepare 5 strong stories and go through at least 10 interviews by [date].”

✗ “I want a new job.”

✓ “Receive an offer for position X with a salary from Y by [date], while sending at least 5 applications per week.”

Final reflections

When you complete the exercise, don't rush to turn everything into a to-do list immediately.

First, take a step back and look at the full picture.

You are not looking for a perfect plan. You are looking for signals.

- What keeps repeating?
- What feels surprisingly important?
- What feels exciting, but also scary?
- What sounds like your own desire, and what sounds more like other people's expectations?
- What is already present in your life?
- What is completely missing?
- What would need support, structure, or courage to start moving?

This exercise is meant to give us a starting point for changes.

It helps us understand not only where you want to go, but also what may be blocking you right now: lack of clarity, fear of change, practical constraints, confidence, money, energy, habits, or something else entirely.

Your answers do not need to be final.

They are working material.

We can question them, update them, make them more realistic, make them braver, or break them down into small steps.

The point is not to force your life into a rigid plan.

The point is to stop drifting by default and start making decisions with more awareness, direction, and honesty.

All the luck!

Exercise 1.1

Ideal working day

Dream a bit

Imagine one abstract working day in a life that feels good for you. Not a vacation day, not a fantasy where nothing goes wrong – a real working day that you would be happy to repeat often.

Describe it from morning to evening.

This exercise is not about designing a perfect productivity routine.

It is about understanding what kind of work environment, rhythm, tasks, people, and energy actually suit you.

Morning.

- What time do you wake up?
- How do you feel when you wake up?
- What happens before work starts?
- Do you have time for yourself, or do you prefer to start quickly?
- What helps you enter the day in a good state?

Getting to work.

- Do you work from home, from an office, from a coworking space, or somewhere else?
- If you commute, how do you commute?
- How long does it take?
- What does the commute give you: transition time, movement, stress, podcasts, quiet, people-watching?
- If you don't commute, how do you create a boundary between "home" and "work"?

Your workplace.

- What does your workplace look like?
- Is it quiet or lively?
- Is it beautiful, practical, minimal, chaotic, cosy?
- What do you see around you?
- What do you need in your environment to feel focused and comfortable?

People around you.

- Who meets you there, if anyone?
- Do you start the day alone or with others?
- How much interaction do you want in the first part of the day?
- Are people around you close colleagues, clients, users, students, managers, a team, or a community?

Before lunch.

- What happens before lunch?
- What kind of work are you doing?
- Are you thinking, writing, coding, designing, planning, talking, creating, solving, teaching, managing, researching?
- Are you mostly static and focused, or moving between people and topics?
- What keeps you busy in a good way?
- What makes you feel useful?

Lunch.

- How do you have lunch?
- Alone, with colleagues, with a friend, outside, at home, quickly, slowly?
- Do you want lunch to be social, quiet, practical, or restorative?
- What kind of break actually helps you continue the day?

After lunch.

- What happens after lunch?
- Is the second part of the day similar to the first, or different?
- Do you need meetings, lighter tasks, collaboration, deep work, movement, calls, admin, or creative work?
- What helps you stay focused?
- What makes you feel satisfied by the end of the working day?

The end of work.

- How do you know the workday is finished?
- What makes the day feel complete?
- Do you close something, summarize something, talk to someone, leave the building, shut the laptop, take a walk?
- What helps you stop working mentally?

After work.

- What do you do after work?
- Do you want people, quiet, sport, hobbies, family, food, learning, events, nothing?
- How much energy do you still have?
- What kind of evening makes the whole day feel balanced?

Look at the whole day.

Now read through your description and notice:

- Where do you get energy?
- Where do you spend energy?
- How much structure do you need?
- How much freedom do you need?
- How much contact with people do you need?
- What kind of tasks make you feel focused?
- What kind of tasks make you feel satisfied?
- What parts of this day already exist in your current life?
- What is missing completely?

Important.

Don't write what sounds impressive.

Write what would actually work for you.

A good working day does not have to look ambitious, busy, social, calm, creative, or "successful" from the outside.

It only needs to give us useful information about the kind of work and life you are trying to build.

All the luck!

Exercise 2.0

Skill Base

The main document of your job search

This exercise is here to collect your professional experience in one place.

First, we build the raw material. Then, we use it for CV, interviews, LinkedIn, cover letters, etc.


Most people underestimate how much experience they actually have because it is scattered across old jobs, projects, responsibilities, tasks, “obvious” things, and small wins they stopped noticing.

The Skill Base helps you see:

- What you actually did.
- What skills and qualities you used.
- What kind of work gives you energy.
- What kind of work drains you.
- Which stories can be used for CVs, LinkedIn, interviews, and career decisions.
- Which patterns keep repeating across different roles.

The goal is not to make every line perfect. The goal is to create a searchable base of your experience.

⚠ Important: **Here is an empty table you can copy and fill in.** Feel free to adjust the structure, add columns, or skip anything that doesn't fit your journey:

 skill_base_template

How to fill it in

Go role by role, project by project, or period by period.

Don't try to write "beautifully" at first. Write clearly and honestly.

You can use rough notes, bullet points, fragments, numbers, examples, and memories. We can polish the wording later.

A good Skill Base should answer two questions:

What happened?

And:

What does this show about you?

That second question is very important.

STAR + M

For that we use a classic STAR structure with a twist.

STAR is:

S – Situation.

What was happening?

T – Task.

What needed to be done?

A – Action.

What did you do?

R – Result.

What changed because of it?

And then we add:

M – Message.

What qualities, skills, or strengths does this story show?

For example:

Situation: Feature requirements were unclear and the team had conflicting ideas.

Task: Align the approach and move development forward.

Action: Facilitated discussion, proposed a simplified version, broke it into smaller steps, aligned on trade-offs, and brought product and design onboard.

Result: Unblocked development and reduced rework.

Message: Handling ambiguity, aligning people, making pragmatic decisions, leadership.

This “Message” part helps you later search your own experience faster.

Instead of thinking, “*Which example should I use?*”, you can think:

“They are testing ownership – I have this story.”

“They are testing resilience – I have this story.”

“They are testing stakeholder management – I have this story.”

Small tweak. Huge difference.

Skill Base columns

Dates.

What to write:

The time period when this experience happened.

Why it is useful:

Dates help you rebuild your professional timeline and see how your responsibilities changed over time. They also help later when we structure your CV and explain career transitions.

Examples:

- March 2021 – September 2023.
- 2022 – 2024.
- Q1 2023.
- During the migration project.

Questions to ask yourself:

- When did this happen?
- Was it a short project, a long-term role, or an ongoing responsibility?

⚠ Important: Gaps are okay. Don't try to "fake" the dates or justify any period when you were not employed. You can also include personal projects, education, volunteering, hobbies, caregiving, recovery time, or anything else that shaped your skills and direction.

Company.

What to write:

The company, organization, client, startup, internal department, or context where this experience happened.

Why it is useful:

Company context matters. The same task can mean very different things in a startup, enterprise, agency, public sector, freelance project, or internal product team.

Examples:

- Fintech startup.
- E-commerce company.
- Internal platform team.
- Freelance client.
- University project.
- Personal side project.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What kind of company or environment was it – industry, sector, company size, stage, culture, pace?
 - How big was it?
 - What should someone understand about this context?
-

Project / Team / Area / Client.

What to write:

The project, product, feature, team, department, branch, business area, or client context you worked in.

Use this column to *separate different contexts* within the same company or role, if needed. This is especially useful if you worked as a freelancer, consultant, or in an outsourcing company where your official role stayed the same, but the client projects were very different.

Why it is useful:

The same job title can look very different depending on the project, team, client, or business area.

A title says “Backend Developer”.

A project or client context says “Payment migration for a fintech client”, “Internal platform team”, “Customer onboarding flow”, or “Mobile app regression testing for an e-commerce project”.

This helps you show your real expertise more clearly and avoid mixing very different experiences into one vague role.

Examples:

- Payment migration.
- Internal admin dashboard.
- Platform team.
- B2B client project.
- German market branch.
- Consulting project for a logistics client.
- Freelance website redesign for a small business.
- Outsourced QA project for a banking app.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What was the project, team, area, or client context?
 - Was this a separate context within the same company or role?
 - If you worked with clients, what kind of client was it?
 - What problem was this project trying to solve?
 - Who was it for?
 - Why did it matter?
-

Role / Title.

What to write:

Your official role and, if needed, your real role.

Why it is useful:

Official titles often don't show the full picture. This column helps separate "what was written in the contract" from "what I actually did".

Examples:

- Official role: QA Engineer. Real role: QA + release coordinator + product clarification.
- Backend Developer.
- Team Lead.
- Project contributor.
- Career changer building a portfolio project.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What was your official title?
- What role did you actually play in the work?
- Were you an individual contributor, coordinator, owner, expert, support person, initiator, or decision-maker?
- Did your role grow over time?

⚠ Important: If your responsibilities grew over time within the same role and company, don't hesitate to create a separate line with an unofficial "more responsibilities" title.

We are not aiming for bureaucratic precision here. We are structuring your experience into a useful database.

The point is to make your real growth visible, not to force everything into one official title.

For example:

- Backend Developer.
 - Backend Developer + mentor.
 - Backend Developer + release coordination.
-

Key Responsibilities.

Prompt:

In a job ad for this role, the responsibilities would include...

What to write:

Describe the role from the outside, as if someone were writing a job description for it.

Why it is useful:

This helps translate your experience into language that recruiters and hiring managers already understand. It is especially useful for CVs and LinkedIn because it turns “I just did many things” into a recognizable role profile.

Examples:

- Develop and maintain backend services.
- Design and execute test plans.
- Coordinate releases across several teams.
- Lead sprint planning and team communication.
- Analyze user needs and translate them into product requirements.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What would this role be hired to do?
 - What were the expected responsibilities?
 - What would appear in a job ad for this position?
 - Which responsibilities were formal, and which became yours over time?
-

Main Tasks.

Prompt:

What I actually did day-to-day.

What to write:

Describe your real everyday work, not the polished job description version.

Why it is useful:

This column shows the reality of the role. It helps us understand what you actually have experience with, what your working rhythm looked like, and which tasks you may want more or less of in the future.

Examples:

- Debugged production issues.
- Clarified requirements with product managers.
- Wrote API endpoints.
- Reviewed pull requests.
- Tested edge cases before releases.
- Prepared meeting notes and follow-ups.
- Helped junior colleagues understand the codebase.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What did you actually spend time on?
 - What tasks happened weekly or daily?
 - What did people come to you for?
 - What was invisible work that still mattered?
-

Key Qualities.

Prompt:

The best fit for this position would be someone who...

What to write:

Describe the qualities, strengths, and working style needed to do this role well.

Why it is useful:

This column helps you move from generic “soft skills” to grounded qualities. Instead of writing “team player” or “result-oriented”, we connect qualities to actual work situations.

Examples:

- Can handle ambiguity without freezing.
- Communicates clearly with technical and non-technical people.
- Notices risks early.
- Can stay calm during incidents.
- Enjoys digging into complex systems.
- Is comfortable challenging unclear requirements.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What kind of person would succeed in this role?
- What qualities did I need here?
- What did this role require emotionally, socially, or intellectually?
- Which of these qualities do I actually want to use again?

– **What kind of person does this work well?**

– **And what kind of person would struggle badly in this role?**

⚠ Important: Don't simply repeat responsibilities here.

This column is not for:

- “A person who can deploy using Kubernetes.”
- “A person who can review PRs.”
- “A person who can write documentation.”

Here, go one level deeper. *For example:*

Instead of: *Can review PRs.*

Go deeper:

- Notices risks without turning every review into a personal battle.
- Can give direct feedback without humiliating people.
- Understands when to insist on quality and when to accept a pragmatic solution.

Instead of: *Can deploy using Kubernetes.*

Go deeper:

- Stays calm when production is fragile.
- Can follow a precise process without rushing.
- Notices small inconsistencies before they become expensive problems.
- Is comfortable asking for a second pair of eyes when the risk is high.

Instead of: *Can work with unclear requirements.*

Go deeper:

- Can tolerate ambiguity without freezing.
- Knows how to ask clarifying questions without sounding helpless.
- Can turn vague input into possible options and trade-offs.
- Does not wait passively until someone gives perfect instructions.

A useful trick:

Imagine two people in this role.

One person does it really well.

The other person fails horribly.

What is the difference between them?

This is often the real quality you are looking for.

Tools & Tech Stack.

Prompt:

Software, frameworks, methods.

What to write:

List the tools, technologies, methods, frameworks, platforms, and processes you used.

Why it is useful:

This gives you keywords for CVs and job applications, but it also helps us see your actual working environment. Tools are not the whole story, but they help hiring people quickly understand your background.

Examples:

- Python, Django, FastAPI.
- PostgreSQL, Redis.
- Docker, AWS.
- Jira, Confluence, Miro.
- Playwright, Pytest, Postman.
- Scrum, Kanban, CI/CD, code review, user interviews.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What tools did I use regularly?
- Which tools did I use deeply, and which only lightly?
- Which methods or processes shaped the work?
- Which tools would be useful keywords for my target roles?

⚠ Important: Even if your tech stack is not “German” or “European”, mention it.

Don't erase tools, platforms, or systems just because you're not sure whether they are known in the local market. If needed, add a European or more widely known analogue in brackets.

For example:

- 1C (similar to SAP / ERP systems).
- Yandex Metrica (similar to Google Analytics).
- Bitrix24 (similar to HubSpot / CRM systems).
- VK Ads (similar to Meta Ads / paid social platforms).

The point is to help people understand what kind of systems, logic, and complexity you have worked with.

Impactful projects & Contributions.

Prompt:

What I worked on + my impact.

What to write:

Describe specific pieces of work you contributed to. This is where **STAR+M** stories often begin.

Why it is useful:

This column helps you collect concrete examples. Later, these can become CV bullets, LinkedIn stories, cover letter examples, or interview answers.

Examples:

- Built a new booking flow for users.
- Improved test coverage for critical payment scenarios.
- Led communication between backend, frontend, and product during a migration.
- Created onboarding documentation for new team members.
- Found and investigated a bug that prevented users from completing registration.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What did I personally contribute?
- What would not have happened, or would have been worse, without my work?
- Where did I take initiative?
- Which stories from this project are worth remembering?
- Was every other colleague approaching this task the same way?
- What would a more careless version of this work have looked like?
- What would a more passive version have looked like?
- What did I notice, prevent, improve, clarify, protect, simplify, or move forward?
- What was my personal way of doing this?
- Which values showed up in how I worked: quality, clarity, ownership, fairness, user focus, reliability, speed, structure, care?

STAR+M helper:

- Situation: What was the context or problem?
- Task: What needed to be done?
- Action: What did I do?
- Result: What changed?
- Message: What does this story show about me?

⚠ Important: Don't discard or lessen your impact.

This column is exactly the place where “it was just my job” needs to be challenged a bit.

Yes, maybe the task belonged to your role. But that does not mean *everyone* would have done it in the same way, with the same quality, the same care, the same communication, or the same result.

For example, instead of:

– *Participated in migration.*

Go deeper:

– *Took ownership of testing and edge cases during migration, helping the team avoid production issues and keep the release safer.*

Instead of:

– *Communicated with stakeholders.*

Go deeper:

– *Clarified conflicting stakeholder expectations, translated them into practical next steps, and helped the team avoid building the wrong thing.*

The point is to stop editing yourself out of your own experience.

Results / Outcomes.

Prompt:

Metrics, improvements, wins.

What to write:

Describe what changed because of your work. Use numbers where possible, but don't force fake metrics.

Why it is useful:

Results help turn responsibilities into evidence. They make your experience more convincing and help you see the real value of your work.

Examples:

- Reduced manual testing time by 30%.
- Improved release stability.
- Decreased customer support tickets.
- Helped launch the feature on time.
- Reduced rework by clarifying requirements earlier.
- Improved team onboarding speed.
- Created a process that other teams started using.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What became faster, clearer, safer, cheaper, easier, more stable, or more scalable?
- Who benefited from this work?
- What changed for users, the team, the business, or the process?
- Is there a number, comparison, or concrete before/after?

⚠ Important:

If you don't have metrics, use observable outcomes. "Reduced confusion between teams" is still better than pretending nothing happened.

Lessons Learned.

What to write:

What this experience taught you about work, people, systems, leadership, communication, yourself, or your preferences.

Why it is useful:

Lessons learned show maturity. They also help you prepare for interview questions about mistakes, challenges, conflicts, and growth.

Examples:

- I learned that unclear ownership creates more risk than technical complexity.
- I learned that I need written alignment before starting implementation.
- I learned that I enjoy mentoring more than I expected.
- I learned that I don't want to work in environments where everything is always urgent.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What do I understand now that I didn't understand before?
 - What would I do differently next time?
 - What did this teach me about my strengths?
 - What did this teach me about my limits?
-

What I Enjoyed.

Prompt:

Energy-giving tasks, green flags.

What to write:

Describe which parts of the role gave you energy, interest, satisfaction, or a sense of meaning.

Why it is useful:

This column is crucial for career direction. It helps us avoid building a career only around what you can do, and start noticing what you actually want to do more often.

Examples:

- Solving unclear problems.
- Working closely with product and design.
- Mentoring junior colleagues.
- Improving messy processes.
- Deep technical investigation.
- Turning chaos into structure.
- Seeing users benefit from the work.

Questions to ask yourself:

- Which tasks made the day feel good?
 - What did I enjoy even when it was difficult?
 - What made me feel useful, focused, or alive?
 - What would I like to have more of in my next role?
-

What I Didn't Enjoy.

Prompt:

Energy-draining tasks, red flags.

What to write:

Describe what drained you, frustrated you, bored you, or made the work feel wrong.

Why it is useful:

This column helps identify red flags and career boundaries. It is not about complaining. It is about understanding what kind of work setup is not sustainable for you.

Examples:

- Constant context switching.
- Unclear priorities with no decision-maker.
- Too many meetings without outcomes.
- Working alone for too long.
- No access to users or business context.
- Firefighting caused by avoidable planning issues.
- Environments where asking questions was treated as weakness.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What consistently drained me?
 - What did I tolerate, but don't want to repeat?
 - What made good work harder than necessary?
 - What are my red flags for future roles?
-

Notes / Reflections.

What to write:

Anything that does not fit neatly into the other columns, but feels important.

Why it is useful:

This is where patterns often appear. A small note like “I was basically the translator between business and tech” can later become a major positioning insight.

Examples:

- This was the first time I noticed I enjoy leadership.
- I was not officially responsible for this, but people kept coming to me.
- This role looked good on paper, but the environment was wrong for me.
- I want to use this experience, but not in the same type of company.
- This could be a strong interview story about ownership.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What feels important here, even if I don't know where to put it?
 - What pattern do I notice?
 - What surprised me about this experience?
 - What could this say about my future direction?
-

Extra STAR+M Story Bank.

For every role or project, try to collect at least 2–3 stories in this format.

Story title.

Give the story a simple searchable name.

Examples:

- Unclear requirements story.
- Production incident story.
- Conflict with stakeholder story.
- Mentoring junior colleague story.
- Migration under time pressure story.

Situation: What was happening?

Task: What needed to be done?

Action: What did you personally do?

Result: What changed because of your actions?

Message: What qualities or skills does this story highlight?

Examples of possible messages:

- Ownership.
- Leadership.
- Handling ambiguity.
- Stakeholder management.
- Problem-solving.
- Resilience.
- Communication.
- Technical depth.
- Pragmatism.
- User focus.
- Strategic thinking.
- Mentoring.
- Conflict resolution.

Questions for after you finish

Look across the whole Skill Base and ask:

- Which skills appear again and again?
- Which qualities keep repeating across different roles?
- Which tasks gave me energy more than once?
- Which red flags kept showing up?
- Which stories are strongest for interviews?
- Which experiences should be more visible in my CV or LinkedIn?
- Which parts of my experience am I underusing?
- What direction starts to make more sense after looking at all of this?

The Skill Base is the foundation for your positioning, CV, LinkedIn, interview preparation, and career strategy.

Using your Skill Base with an LLM

You can also upload your Skill Base to an LLM and ask it to analyse your experience from different angles.

This can be especially useful when the table becomes too big and you start seeing “just a lot of information” instead of patterns.

⚠ Important: Don't treat the answer as final truth. Treat it as a thinking partner. You still need to check whether the suggestions feel accurate, realistic, and relevant to your actual life.

Also, remove or anonymise sensitive data if needed: company names, client names, internal project details, confidential metrics, personal information, etc.

Prompt 1. Career positioning.

Use this when you want to understand which directions to choose.

Based on this Skill Base, suggest 3–5 possible career positioning options for me.

For each option, include:

- Positioning statement.
- Why this positioning makes sense based on my experience.
- Which skills and stories support it.
- Which roles or job titles could fit.
- What might be missing or unclear.
- How strong this positioning is on a scale from 1 to 10.

Be honest and practical. Don't suggest options only because they sound nice.

Prompt 2. Career strategy for a specific country and goal.

Use this when you already have some context and constraints.

Based on this Skill Base, create a career strategy for a person who wants to work in [country], earn at least [salary], and move towards [5-year goal] and [10-year goal].

Context:

- Current location: [city/country].
- Target country: [country].
- Work permit / visa situation: [briefly explain].
- English level: [level].
- German / local language level: [level].
- Preferred work format: [remote / hybrid / office / flexible].
- Constraints: [family, health, location, time, energy, money, etc.].

Analyse:

- Most realistic target roles.
- More ambitious but still possible target roles.
- Roles that look logical but may not be the best fit.
- Strengths to emphasise.
- Gaps to close.
- Companies, industries, or environments that could fit.
- Search strategy for the next 3 months.
- Risks and blind spots.

Prompt 3. Job title ideas.

Use this when you don't know what to search for.

Based on this Skill Base, suggest job titles I could search for.

Group them into:

- Direct fit.
- Adjacent fit.
- Stretch roles.
- Roles I might overlook but should consider.

For each title, explain:

- Why it fits.
- Which parts of my experience support it.
- What keywords I should search for.
- What I would need to prove in my CV or interviews.
- What might be a mismatch.

Prompt 4. Strengths and blind spots.

Use this when you want honest reflection, not just nice words.

Based on this Skill Base, analyse my likely strengths and blind spots.

Please include:

- Strengths that are clearly supported by repeated evidence.
- Strengths that might be present but need better examples.
- Possible blind spots or risks in how I work.
- Work environments where I would probably thrive.
- Work environments where I might struggle.
- Questions I should reflect on before choosing my next role.

Be direct, but don't overgeneralise.

Prompt 5. Strategic summary.

Use this when you want one clear overview.

Based on this Skill Base, write a strategic career summary for me.

Include:

- Who I am professionally.
- What I am especially good at.
- What kind of problems I solve.
- What kind of environments fit me best.
- What roles I should consider next.
- What I should stop underestimating about my experience.
- What my main positioning could be.

Make it practical and grounded in the evidence from the Skill Base.

Best way to use these prompts.

Don't upload the Skill Base once and expect one perfect answer.

Use it in rounds, f.e.:

1. Ask for possible positioning options.
2. Then, challenge the answer: "What are the weak points in this positioning?"
3. Then, refine with real job ads.

⚠ Important: The strongest results usually come when you combine the Skill Base with a concrete target: a country, salary expectation, work format, language level, life plans, and a few real job ads.

All the luck!

Exercise 2.1

Strengths / Interests matrix

Brainstorming new career ideas

This exercise helps you generate new career directions by combining two things:

- What you are good at.
- What you are genuinely interested in.

The goal is to create more options than “the next logical step”.

Step 1. List your skills and strengths.

Write down things you do well.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What helped you do well in previous roles?
- What do people usually ask you for help with?
- What did you personally do in successful projects?
- What feels easier for you than for many other people?
- What gives you energy?

Try to use action verbs.

Instead of:

- Communication.

Write:

- Explain complex topics in simple language.
- Calm people down in stressful situations.
- Turn messy ideas into structure.
- Ask useful questions.
- Tell engaging stories.

Step 2. List your interests.

Write down what naturally catches your attention. It does not need to be professional yet.

Questions to ask yourself:

- What are your hobbies?
- What topics can you read, watch, or listen to for hours?
- What kinds of videos do you watch endlessly?
- If you were at a party with every specialist in the world, who would you want to talk to?
- Which topics make you forget the time?
- What problems make you think: "I wish this worked better"?

Step 3. Choose your top 3 + 3.

Choose:

- 3 skills or strengths.
- 3 interests.

Then create a table:

	Interest 1	Interest 2	Interest 3
Skill 1			
Skill 2			
Skill 3			

Step 4. Brainstorm ideas.

For each cell, ask:

What kind of job, project, business, role, or direction could combine this skill and this interest?

Write down everything.

Even if it sounds:

- Too obvious.
- Too niche.
- Too unrealistic.
- Too silly.
- Not like a “real job” yet.

Do not judge too early. First collect material.

Step 5. Ask other people.

This exercise works well with friends, family, colleagues, or mentors.

You can brainstorm together:

- What jobs can you imagine for someone good at X and interested in Y?
- What am I not seeing because I’m too used to my own experience?
- What weird or unexpected ideas come to mind?
- If I were a character in a movie, what career would fit me?

The rule: no killing ideas too early.

Step 6. Use an LLM if you are stuck.

You can also ask an LLM to help you brainstorm.

Prompt 1. Basic brainstorming.

I'm brainstorming possible career directions.

My top skills are:

- [skill 1]
- [skill 2]
- [skill 3]

My top interests are:

- [interest 1]
- [interest 2]
- [interest 3]

Create a 3x3 table combining each skill with each interest.

For every combination, suggest 5 possible jobs, projects, freelance ideas, business ideas, or career directions.

Include obvious, niche, creative, and slightly unexpected ideas.

Prompt 2. Ideas with constraints.

Based on these skills and interests, suggest career ideas that fit a person who:

- Wants to work in [country/city].
- Speaks [languages + levels].
- Wants to earn around [salary].
- Prefers [remote/hybrid/office/flexible].
- Needs [stability/autonomy/low stress/creative work/social contact/etc.].
- Does not want [red flags or dealbreakers].

Group ideas into:

- Easier transitions.
- Medium-stretch options.
- Long-term experiments.

Prompt 3. Evaluate ideas.

Here is my list of possible career ideas: [paste list].

Help me evaluate them based on:

- Fit with my skills.
- Fit with my interests.
- Realistic transition effort.
- Income potential.
- Stability.
- Autonomy.
- Energy fit.
- Long-term growth.

Create a table, score each idea from 1 to 5, and suggest the top 3 ideas worth exploring further.

Prompt 4. Test the top ideas.

I chose these 3 career ideas:

- [idea 1]
- [idea 2]
- [idea 3]

For each one, suggest small experiments I can do in the next 2–4 weeks to test whether it actually fits me.

Include people to talk to, things to research, small projects to try, and signs that this direction may or may not fit.

Step 7. Choose what to explore.

Look at all ideas and ask:

- Which ideas repeat?
- Which ones make me curious?
- Which ones give me energy, even if they scare me a bit?
- Which ones fit my current life constraints?
- Which ones could be tested in a small way?

Choose 2–3 ideas to explore further.

⚠ Important: You are not choosing your whole future from one table.

You are creating options. Some ideas will be silly. Some will be unrealistic. Some will point to something useful.

The goal is to stop staring only at the most obvious next step and give yourself more directions to investigate.

All the luck!

Exercise 3.0

Job application tracker

Another useful table


This exercise helps you turn the job search from “I sent applications into the void” into something more visible and manageable.

The goal is to track progress, reduce anxiety around ghosting, and learn what actually works practically.

A good tracker helps you see:

- How many applications you sent.
- Which roles get replies.
- Which CV version performs better.
- Which companies you already contacted.
- Which salaries and conditions appear in the market.
- When it is time to follow up or close the loop.

⚠ Important: Here is an empty table you can copy and fill in. Feel free to adjust the structure, add columns, or skip anything that doesn't fit your journey.

 application_tracker_template

Suggested table structure

Column	What to track
Company	Company name, so you don't apply twice by accident.
Role title	Exact role title from the job ad.
Job ad link	Link to the role.
Full role description	Copy the full job ad text, because ads disappear.
Location	City, country, remote, hybrid, office.
Salary / range	Mentioned salary, your target, or notes from the process.
Contact person	Recruiter, hiring manager, referrer, or anyone you contacted.
Contact link / email	LinkedIn profile, email, or other contact info.
Date applied	When you sent the application.

Application channel	LinkedIn, company website, referral, recruiter, email, event contact.
CV version used	Example: CV_backend_v3, CV_teamlead_product_v1.
Cover letter / message used	Link or note which version you used.
Status	Applied, replied, screening, interview, task, offer, rejected, ghosted, closed.
Status date	Date of the latest status change.
Next action	Follow up, prepare, adapt CV, research company, close loop.
Replies / notes	What they answered, useful details, next steps.
Follow-up date	When you plan to follow up.
Closing-loop date	Date when you decide to stop waiting.

Follow-up logic

Decide your rules in advance, so every silence doesn't make you feel like you've lost control of the process.

Example:

- After 1 week: optional light follow-up.
- After 2 weeks: stronger follow-up if the role is important.
- After 3–4 weeks: close the loop and move on.

You can choose your own timeline, but write it down.

Closing-loop message

Use this when you don't want to keep mentally carrying the role forever.

Hi [Name],

I'm closing my loop on this role this week.

If the process is still ongoing, I'd appreciate a quick update.

Thank you,
[Your name]

Optional feedback request:

If the role has already been filled, I'd appreciate any brief feedback – even 1–2 points – that you can share. It would help me improve.

What to review weekly

Once a week, look at your tracker and ask:

- How many applications did I send?
- Which roles got replies?
- Which CV version performed better?
- Which job titles seem to get more traction?
- Which industries or company types respond more often?
- Where do I get rejected quickly?
- Where do I reach interviews?
- Are my salary expectations aligned with the roles I choose?
- Am I applying too broadly or too narrowly?
- Which applications need a follow-up?
- Which ones should I close and stop carrying mentally?

⚠ Important: The tracker is to give you control and data.

Ghosting feels worse when everything is stuck in your head. A tracker helps you decide: this is active, this needs follow-up, this is closed.

The goal is to see the process clearly enough to adjust your strategy instead of blaming yourself.

All the luck!

Exercise 3.1

Job ad analysis

Read and match approach

This exercise helps you read job ads not as “a list of demands”, but as a source of information.

A good job ad should tell you:

- What problem the company is trying to solve.
- What kind of person they hope to hire.
- What you should highlight in your CV.
- What should be worth asking about in the interview.

The goal is to understand what matters most and respond strategically.

Step 1. Read the ad once normally.

First, read the whole job ad without marking anything.

Ask yourself:

Do I understand what the person will actually do?

Step 2. Identify the core problem.

Now read again and ask:

Why does this role exist?

Try to find the business or team problem behind the job ad.

Examples:

- They are scaling and need more structure.
- They are replacing manual work with automation.
- They need someone to stabilize messy systems.
- They need a communicator between tech and business.
- They are entering a new market.
- They need someone to own a process nobody fully owns yet.

This helps you avoid writing a generic application.

Step 3. Mark green flags.

Green flags are points you can use in your CV, cover letter, LinkedIn, or intro message.

Mark anything where you can say:

- I have done this.
- I have solved a similar problem.
- I have worked in this kind of environment.
- I understand this tool, user, industry, or challenge.
- I have a story that proves this quality.

Examples:

Job ad says: *"You will work closely with product and design."*

Green flag to highlight: *Cross-functional collaboration with product, design, and engineering.*

Job ad says: *"We are looking for someone comfortable with ambiguity."*

Green flag to highlight: Experience clarifying unclear requirements and turning them into practical next steps.

Job ad says: *"You will improve internal processes."*

Green flag to highlight: Examples where you improved workflows, documentation, release process, onboarding, testing, or communication.

Step 4. Mark red flags.

Red flags are not always reasons to reject the role immediately.

Often, they are points to check in the interview.

Mark anything that feels:

- Vague.
- Too broad.
- Contradictory.
- Unrealistic.
- Too many jobs in one.
- A possible sign of chaos.
- A possible mismatch with your needs.

Examples:

- “Fast-paced environment” – ask what that means in practice.
- “Must handle many priorities” – ask how priorities are decided.
- “Build processes from scratch” – ask what support and authority you would have.
- “Hands-on leader” – ask about the balance between management and individual contribution.
- “Flexible working hours” – ask whether it means autonomy or constant availability.
- Very long list of tools – ask which ones are truly essential.

Step 5. Turn green flags into CV points.

For each strong green flag, ask:

- Where does this appear in my experience?
- Which Skill Base story proves it?
- Can I add this to my CV intro?
- Can I rearrange CV bullet points to make it more relevant?
- Is there a keyword from the job ad I should use honestly?

Example:

Job ad: *“Experience improving testing processes.”*

CV adaptation: Improved regression testing process for release-critical features, reducing last-minute issues and making release preparation more predictable.

⚠ Important: a job ad is not an exam sheet. You are not trying to prove that you satisfy every bullet point.

You are trying to understand:

- **What they need.**
- **What you can offer.**
- **What you want to check.**

Step 6. Turn red flags into interview questions.

For each red flag, prepare a question.

Don't ask in an aggressive way. Ask to understand the role better.

Examples:

If the ad says "fast-paced environment":

- "How does the team usually handle changing priorities?"
- "Can you give me an example of what 'fast-paced' looks like in this role?"

If the ad lists many responsibilities:

- "Which 2–3 responsibilities would be the main focus in the first six months?"
- "What would success in this role look like after three months?"

If the ad says "build processes from scratch":

- "What processes already exist, and what would need to be created?"
- "How much decision-making authority would this role have?"

If the ad is vague about salary or seniority:

- "What level of experience are you expecting for this role?"
- "What salary range is budgeted for this position?"

Cheat sheet

1. What is this role really about?

- Why does this role exist?
- What problem is the company trying to solve by hiring this person?

2. What are they actually checking?

For each important line in the job ad, ask:

- Are they checking technical skills?
- Ownership?
- Communication?
- Ability to handle ambiguity?
- Leadership?
- Speed?
- Accuracy?
- Stakeholder management?
- Independence?
- Learning ability?
- Stress tolerance?

3. Where do I already match?

- Have I done this exact thing before?
- Have I solved a similar problem in a different context?
- Which projects, tasks, or STAR+M stories prove it?
- Which keywords from the ad can I honestly use in my CV?
- What should move higher in my CV because this role cares about it?

4. What is unclear or potentially risky?

- What would I need to ask in the interview before saying yes?
- What could become a red flag for me personally?

5. How should I adapt my CV?

- Which experience should move higher or get more space?
- Which bullet points should be rewritten to match the role's core problem?
- Which parts are less relevant and can be shortened?
- What proof can I show instead of just listing responsibilities?

6. What is my shortest fit message?

- Why this role?
- Why me?
- What is the clearest overlap between their need and my experience?

A useful final formula:

“You need someone who can [main need]. I have done [similar work], where I [proof / result]. That’s why this role looks relevant to me.”

Example job ad analysis for BE

Backend Engineer in ExampleCompany

About the Company.

We are a fast-growing international technology company building enterprise software for business customers worldwide. Our mission is to help organizations improve efficiency, collaboration, automation, and regulatory compliance through scalable digital solutions.

Our main product is an AI-supported, multi-tenant SaaS platform that hosts a portfolio of enterprise-grade applications. These solutions help companies connect processes across teams, partners, and systems.

With teams across several countries, we are working on secure, scalable, and future-ready business technology.

Your Team.

Our backend engineering team builds the technical foundation of our cloud platform and SaaS products.

The team works on core platform capabilities such as monitoring, real-time data processing, centralized integrations, automated workflows, and tools for dynamic application development.

In simple terms: this team builds the backend technologies that help global companies turn complex business requirements into efficient digital processes.

Your Key Responsibilities.

- **Design and Develop.**
Build and maintain Java-based enterprise software with a focus on backend architecture, reliability, and scalable system design.
- **Own Features.**
Take responsibility for features from initial idea and technical clarification to delivery, release, and ongoing support.
- **Shape Architecture.**
Contribute to technical discussions, architecture decisions, and solution design in an agile engineering environment.
- **Mentor and Review.**
Support less experienced developers and participate in peer code reviews to maintain high engineering standards.

- **Collaborate and Grow.**

Work closely with an agile development team, exchange knowledge with other engineers, and continue developing your technical and professional skills.

Your Experience.

- **Interest in Platform Engineering.**

You enjoy building scalable, distributed backend systems that create real business value for enterprise customers.

- **Java Experience.**

You have solid experience with Java or JavaEE, ideally together with Spring or Spring Boot.

- **Database Knowledge.**

You have experience with relational and/or NoSQL databases, such as PostgreSQL, MongoDB, Cassandra, or similar technologies.

- **API Development.**

You have strong experience designing, building, and integrating RESTful and/or SOAP web services.

- **Test Automation.**

You have worked with automated tests, including unit, integration, or end-to-end testing.

- **Distributed Systems Understanding.**

You understand common backend challenges such as scalability, consistency, reliability, and availability.

- **Modern Engineering Practices.**

You are familiar with Git, code reviews, agile collaboration, and modern software development workflows.

- **Additional Experience.**

Experience with search or analytics engines such as OpenSearch, Elasticsearch, or similar tools would be a plus.

What We Offer.

- Work on a meaningful product that supports complex business and compliance challenges.
 - Collaboration with experienced teams and international customers.
 - A fast-growing company environment with room to contribute ideas.
 - Hybrid work options and opportunities for team connection.
 - Support for personal and professional growth.
 - Mobility and commuting support.
 - Team events and international collaboration.
 - Modern office spaces in several locations.
-

Job ad analysis table

Job ad point	What they are probably checking	What to highlight in CV / message
Java-based backend software, scalable system design.	Technical backend skills, architecture, scalability.	Java, Spring, APIs, databases, scalable backend systems, enterprise software.
Own features from concept to delivery and support.	Ownership, independence, product thinking, delivery, responsibility after release.	A STAR+M story where you owned a feature end-to-end, clarified requirements, delivered, and supported it.
Contribute to architecture and technical discussions.	Architectural thinking, communication, decision-making, ability to explain trade-offs.	Examples where you proposed solutions, discussed trade-offs, improved architecture, or helped choose a practical path.
Mentor junior developers and review code.	Mentoring, quality mindset, feedback style, team support.	Code reviews, mentoring, onboarding, documentation, improving quality standards.
Agile teamwork and continuous growth.	Collaboration, learning mindset, openness to feedback, team fit.	Agile team experience, cross-functional work, learning new tools, growing into more responsibility.

Relational / NoSQL databases.	Data modeling, backend persistence, performance, reliability.	PostgreSQL, MongoDB, Cassandra, SQL, migrations, query optimization, database design.
REST / SOAP APIs.	Integration experience and ability to connect systems.	API development, external integrations, documentation, error handling, auth if relevant.
Automated tests.	Quality mindset and system stability.	Unit, integration, E2E tests, CI/CD, regression testing, quality improvements.
Fast-growing company / open culture / room for creativity.	Adaptability, comfort with change, initiative.	Examples of working in changing environments, improving processes, communicating clearly.

Possible red flags / unclear points

“Fast-growing” company.

This can mean opportunity, but also chaos.

Question to ask:

- What changed in the engineering team during the last year?
- What processes are still being built or improved?
- Where is the team currently feeling growing pains?

“Ownership from concept to support.”

This can be a good sign, but it may also mean high responsibility without enough support.

Question to ask:

- What support does an engineer have when owning a feature end-to-end?
- Who helps with product clarification, QA, architecture review, and release decisions?

“Room for creativity” and “open communication culture.”

Nice words, but vague.

Question to ask:

- Can you give an example of a recent technical or product decision that came from the engineering team?
- How are disagreements usually handled?

All the luck!

Final Note.

This guide is long. And yes, it may feel overwhelming.

That is also why I don't treat it as a "read this and figure out your whole career alone" book.

This is a working document for coaching.

We go through these exercises together, step by step. You don't need to arrive with perfect answers, polished wording, or a clear career strategy already prepared.

My role is to help you:

- Clarify the details while we work.
- Notice patterns you may not see on your own.
- Challenge assumptions and biases that may limit your options.
- Ask follow-up questions when something is too vague.
- Make sure important experience does not get lost or dismissed.
- Add brainstorming input when you feel stuck.
- Turn scattered thoughts into something more structured and useful.

You bring your experience, memories, doubts, ideas, and honest answers.

I bring structure, questions, outside perspective, and a bit of professional stubbornness when you start saying things like "but that was just my job".

So I can help you build a clearer picture of your experience, direction, strengths, options, and next steps – together.

www.tanya.coach

Links to the resources

Skill base template: [skill_base_template](#)

Application tracker template: [application_tracker_template](#)