

The Alignment Audit: Designing Your Next Chapter

This exercise is a structured reflection designed for mid-career professionals and executives who are rethinking how their time, energy, and talents are spent. At this stage of life, career decisions are no longer just about advancement, but rather, they're about sustainability, purpose, and legacy. This exercise invites you to intentionally allocate 100% of your life across the priorities that matter most to you today, including career, family, health, community involvement, and continued learning. By comparing where your time is currently spent with how you actually want to spend it, you'll gain perspective and clarity on whether your current path supports the life you're trying to build, and what adjustments may be needed to align your next chapter with what matters most to you.

Before we talk about career moves, graduate school, or community leadership, we need to step back and look at the bigger picture of your life. Too often, mid-career and executive-level professionals make decisions in isolation without first understanding how their choices fit into the life they actually want to live. Whether you are changing jobs, adding commitments, or pursuing credentials, you need a structured and honest perspective to see how your time and energy are currently being spent. Then you have to compare that to how you actually want to spend your time and energy, and identify where alignment (or misalignment) exists. From this point forward, every decision should become more intentional.

Before we start, take a moment to list your top three priorities in life. These will be different for everyone, and sometimes they may change as life goes on. But right here, right now, what are your top 3?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Your Life & Energy Budget

In this step, you'll take an honest look at how you want to allocate your time, energy, and mental bandwidth, and how they are being allocated today. Using the categories provided, assign a percentage to each area based on your ideal allocation, then complete a second allocation reflecting your current reality. There are no right or wrong answers. This exercise is about self-awareness, not self-judgment. Each column must total 100%. The goal is not perfection, but clarity, because you can't realign what you haven't first acknowledged.

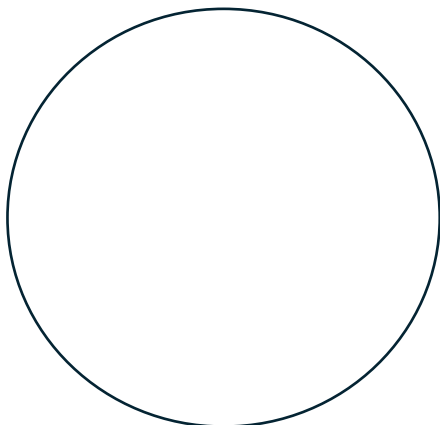
Core Category	Ideal Allocation	Current Allocation
Primary Career/Primary Income-Generating Work		
Secondary Career/Secondary or Passive Income-Generating Work		
Family and Parenting		
Marriage and/or Partnership		
Health, Recovery, and Energy		
Community Leadership and Service		
Education/Skill-Building (School, Certifications, etc.)		
Personal Identity and Joy (Hobbies, Creativity, etc.)		
Other:		
Other:		
Total	100%	100%

Current vs Desired: The Dual-Pie Exercise

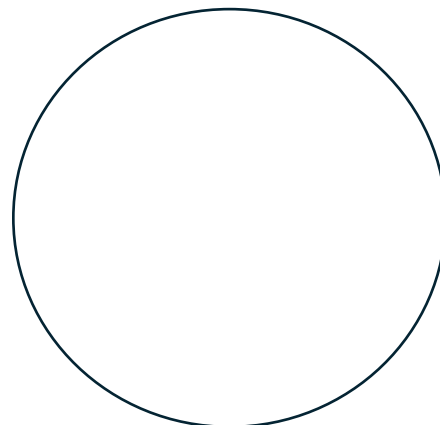
This part may feel a little uncomfortable or even silly, especially if you haven't drawn anything since middle school. That's okay. The goal here isn't artistic skill; it's perspective. Turning your priorities into a visual "pie" forces you to see your life as a finite resource. You only have 100% of your time and energy, and every slice you give to one area necessarily comes from another. By physically drawing the pies (one for your current reality and one for your desired future), you'll quickly spot imbalances, overcrowded priorities, and areas that have been unintentionally neglected. Many adults are surprised by what becomes obvious once it's on paper. Trust the process. The clarity comes from making the invisible visible.

Use the list above to fill in the two pie charts below. Then circle the two largest gaps between the two.

Ideal Allocation Pie



Actual Allocation Pie



Reflection

Look at the pie charts you just drew and answer the following questions as honestly as possible:

1. Which category currently absorbs more than it deserves?
2. Which category reflects who you are becoming, not who you've been?
3. Where are you investing time that no longer delivers return?
4. What would *future you* thank you for reallocating now?
5. What are you protecting by *not* making a change?

The Career Compatibility Test

With your ideal allocation pie in mind, it's time to take an honest look at how your current role fits, or doesn't. This isn't about judging your career choices or labeling your job as "good" or "bad." It's about understanding structural reality. Some roles naturally support certain priorities, while others quietly undermine them, no matter how competent or committed you are.

At this stage of life, misalignment often doesn't show up as dissatisfaction or boredom. It shows up as chronic exhaustion, diminished energy, or a sense of friction you can't quite name. This section helps you identify whether the tension you're feeling is situational or structural, and whether it stems from time demands, energy drain, values conflict, or a deeper identity mismatch.

1. Does my role enable or block this allocation?
2. Which slices are structurally incompatible with my job?
3. Is the conflict about:
 - a. Time?
 - b. Energy?
 - c. Values?
 - d. Identity?

Education & Community as Strategic Tools (Not Add-Ons)

At mid-career, decisions about going back to school or increasing community involvement shouldn't be driven by guilt, habit, or external expectations. They should be strategic. Education and community leadership are powerful tools for growth, credibility, reinvention, and impact, but only when they are aligned with your broader life design.

In this section, you'll evaluate whether additional education or volunteer commitments truly support the life and legacy you're building, or whether they risk becoming well-intentioned but unsustainable add-ons. The goal is to shift from saying yes reflexively to

choosing opportunities that intentionally expand your influence, sharpen your skills, and contribute to your sense of purpose, without crowding out what matters most.

Education / School

1. What problem would going back to school actually solve?
2. Is your desire to go back to school about:
 - a. Skill gap?
 - b. Credibility?
 - c. Reinvention?
 - d. Personal fulfillment?
3. Does the time investment match the life pie?

Volunteering / Community Leadership

1. Do I want to serve, lead, or build?
2. Am I seeking meaning, visibility, or impact?
3. Does this role refill or drain me?

Non-Negotiables: Your Line in the Sand

Clarity without boundaries doesn't lead to change; it leads to better explanations for staying the same. This section is where reflection turns into resolve. Your non-negotiables define the conditions under which your next chapter must operate, not the other way around. They are not wishful thinking or "nice-to-haves." They are the standards that protect what you've already identified as essential to your life, health, family, and purpose.

By naming and committing to five non-negotiables, you create a clear filter for future opportunities (roles, programs, leadership positions, and commitments), so that decisions are guided by alignment rather than momentum or pressure.

List five non-negotiables for your next chapter. Some examples might be maximum hours per week, flexible or remote structure, protected family time, mission-aligned work, space for community leadership, or time to pursue education without overload.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Translate Into Career Criteria

Insight only matters if it changes how you choose. This final step turns everything you've uncovered (your ideal allocation, points of friction, and non-negotiables) into clear, usable decision criteria. Instead of evaluating opportunities based on titles, compensation alone, or external validation, you'll define what alignment actually looks like in practice.

By completing the sentence "*My next role must support a life where...*" and outlining your structural needs, energy boundaries, growth allowances, and legacy goals, you create a personal filter that simplifies future decisions. From here forward, opportunities are no longer weighed by momentum or fear of missing out, but by whether they genuinely support the life you're intentionally building.

*Finish this sentence: **My next role must support a life where...***