

A pause in employment because of a lay off can be approached as an opportunity for growth. Part of that growth includes self-reflection to establish a clearer vision of your professional goals and better aligning them with your career direction and aspirations, now. It can feel easier to “do what you’ve always done,” or take the first job that comes your way but you will experience a more fulfilling career journey if you consider your next steps critically, taking into account what you actually want in a role and work environment.

WHAT ARE PROFESSIONAL GOALS?

Professional goals are the outcomes or objectives that guide you to advance in your career. These goals give your work a direction and purpose. They also help you decide where you want to go and the steps you need to take to get there. Professional goals should be a mixture of short-term and long-term goals.

START WITH REFLECTION

Look back at your previous roles, projects, and achievements. Make note of the work that you enjoyed and types of projects that did not energize you. Then make a list of the type of work you might want to explore further in your career. This could be shifting into management, transitioning from one department to another, and/or working with a new student or campus demographic.

Step 1 - Assess Your Skill Development

Consider the skills you have developed, the knowledge you have gained, and how these have contributed to your overall career trajectory. Review the [CAS standards](#) for your functional area and areas that you may be interested in working. Make note of areas where you are excelling, areas that you can grow more or differently in, and areas you want to explore.

Step 2 - Identify Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Pause to objectively evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. Identify your areas of expertise and where you may need improvement. Gather feedback from professional colleagues that you trust. Self-awareness about your strengths and weaknesses can influence your decision-making process when setting new objectives.

Step 3 - Explore New Interests...and Industries

It is permissible to explore new interests. Change is not betrayal and you do not have to be tethered to a position because you have worked in it for a long time or because you think it’s the only work relevant to your degree (*we’ll talk more about transferable skills later*). Identifying your interests can help lead you to a career opportunity where your ideas and pursuits keep you engaged in your work, and engagement is an important factor in job satisfaction.

Step 4 - Engage in Networking & Skill Development Opportunities

Attend industry-related events, conferences, or workshops, or consider volunteering or engaging in freelance projects. These activities can not only enhance your skill set but also expose you to new professional opportunities and contacts.

If costs are an issue, inquire about scholarships and sponsorship opportunities to cover registration and other expenses.

BRING IT TOGETHER

Bring together your assessment of your skills and competencies, your strengths and weaknesses, and your interests along with your answers to the questions below. When you bring all of these elements together, it should enable you to identify themes to guide you as you start to envision the roles and industries you may want to work in.

- Who am I?
- What type of work fulfills me the most?
- What is my personal definition of success?
- What professional and personal experiences shaped me?
- What do I need most to thrive professionally?
- What am I skilled at?
- Which new skill sets are essential for me to learn?

Asana also recommends taking the time to think specifically about your ideal role by asking yourself these questions:

- What do you want to do more of?
- What do you want to do less of?
- What does an ideal work day look like to you?

SET THOSE GOALS

When you are clear about what you need to develop professionally, you will be more likely to research future roles and employers with more intentionality, ask questions of the interviewer, and be better prepared and confident in negotiating job offers. Keep your goals SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) and take into account the current job market, industry trends, and your own personal circumstances to set objectives that are attainable and relevant.

Once you have established your goals, be open to sharing them during the interview process. Ensure that your future work environment and supervisor are equipped to help support you in reaching your goals. Most importantly, make your goals a part of your professional development plan once you get that new position!

Sample Goals

- Advance into a new position (non-lateral move)
- Move into management and supervision
- Become a mentor
- Earn a certification
- Take on leadership responsibilities
- Expand and improve communication skills
- Improve competence in a CAS standard
- Conduct research, become published, present
- Improve work-life harmony
- Expand my professional network

TPE is here to help you. Search for job opportunities via our [job board](#). Contact us to [sign up](#) for a free coaching and materials review session.

More From TPE

- [TPE Academy Video: Building Your Brand](#)

Resources

- <https://asana.com/resources/professional-goals>
- <https://grad.illinois.edu/careers/assess#:~:text=Interests%20are%20reflected%20in%20your,important%20element%20in%20satisfying%20work.>