Navigating My Career Journey

Thursday, June 12, 2025
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm
Via Zoom

Mentoring Pow Wow: Session #3
Navigating My Career Journey

(Gaining clarity, confidence, and direction, in my professional life)

Whether you are just starting out, considering a pivot, or seeking to grow where you are planted, this session is designed to help you reflect, plan, and progress with purpose.

Careers are not always linear. They include twists, turns, pauses, and sometimes setbacks. But with self-awareness, mentorship, and strategy, you can chart a path that aligns with your values, talents, and long-term goals.

In this Pow Wow, we will examine where you are, where you want to be, and what it takes to get there—without losing who you are along the way.

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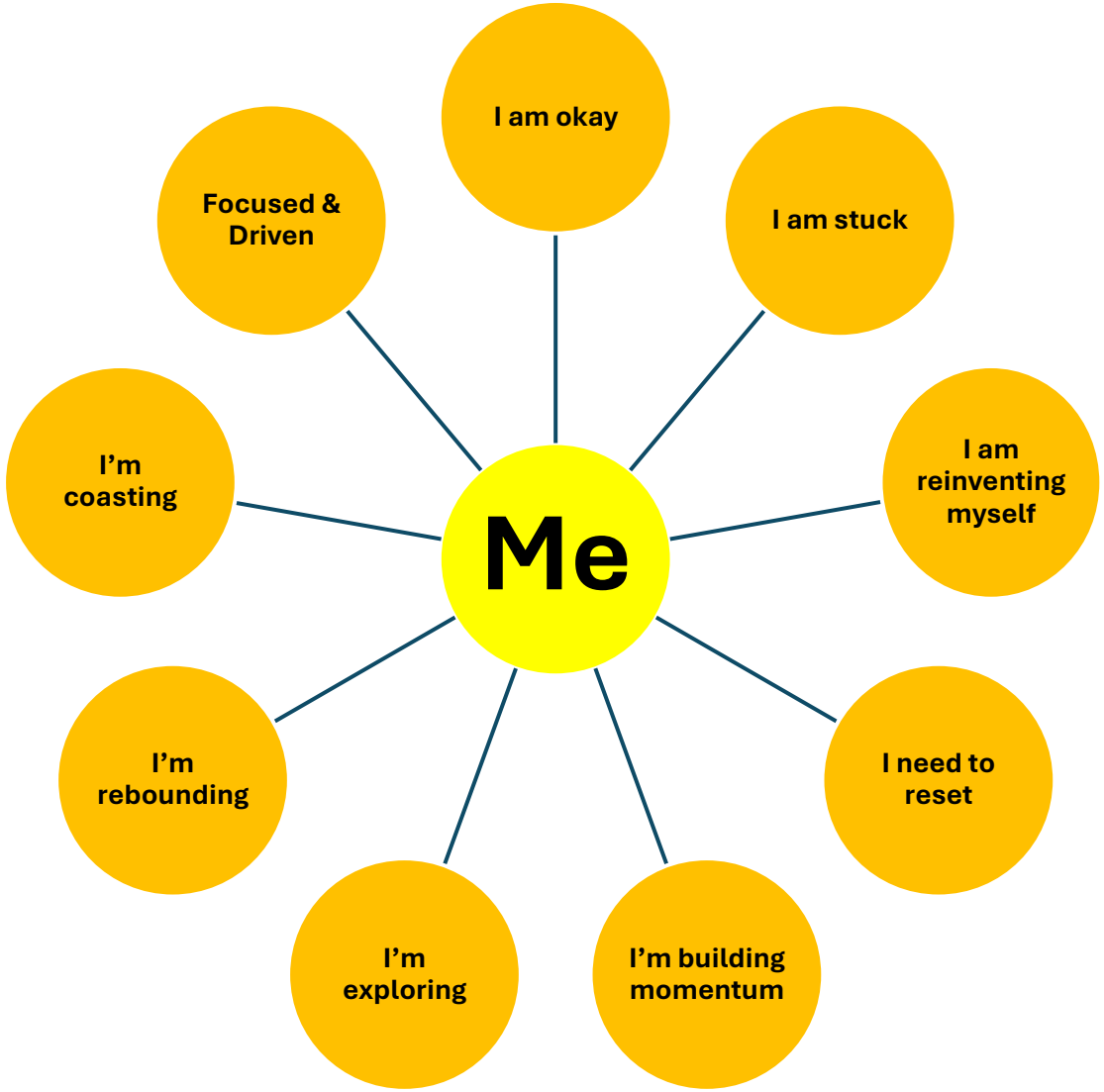
What is My Current Mindset (Career-Wise)?



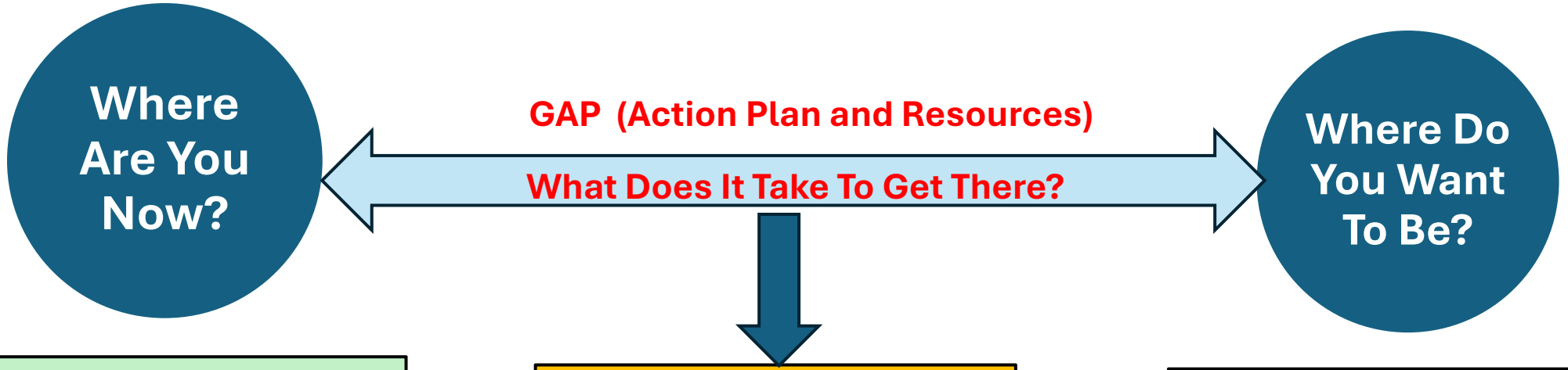
What is My Current Mindset (Career-Wise)?

- Focused and Driven: Clear on goals; intentionally moving in the right direction.
- I'm coasting: Comfortable; not challenged; postponing growth.
- I'm Rebounding: Recovering from a setback; planning a comeback.
- I'm Exploring: Curious about new options; open to possibilities.

- I am Okay: Generally content
- I am Stuck: Stagnant; unclear about next steps; not sure what to do.
- I am Reinventing Myself: Making a bold change—switching fields, industries, roles; rebranding personally.
- I Need to Reset: Recognize burnout imbalance or misalignment; ready to pause or redirect.
- I'm Building Momentum: Feeling progress; learning new skills; gaining confidence.

Current Assessment

(Making Intentional Decisions About Your Future)



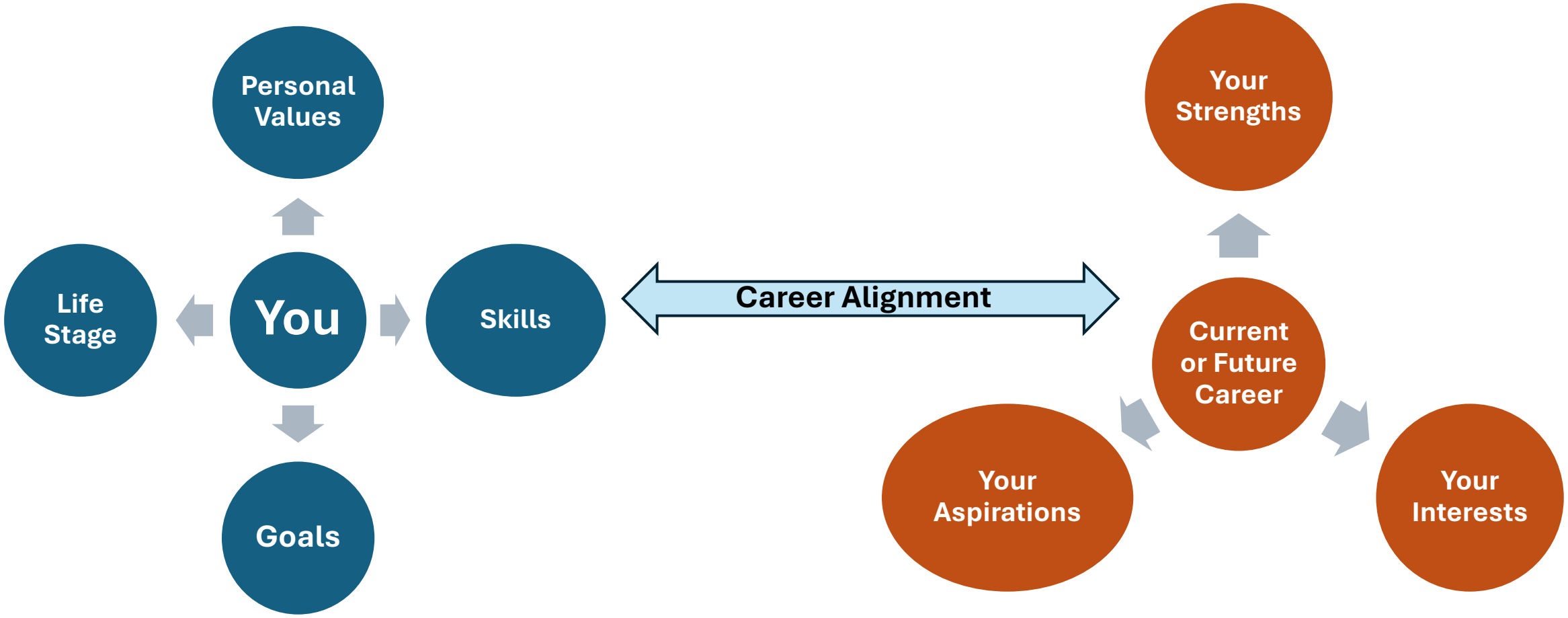
- Current job duties, strengths, and accomplishments?
- Current skills aligned with your career trajectory?
- Mindset (confident, uncertain, motivated, burnt out)?
- Experiences and/or credentials that are marketable?
- Personal obligations or life factors impacting your career?
- Personal relationships (mentors, managers, peers)?

- Skills or credentials you need to gain or improve?
- People (mentors, sponsors, connections) who can help you?
- Experiences (projects, roles, volunteer work) will position you well?
- Sacrifices required (time, relocation, comfort zone)?
- Habits needed to adopt or let go of?
- How do you respond to obstacles, rejections, or detours?
- What professional development (courses, networking, certifications) is needed?

- Ideal role, industry, or work environment?
- Success (title, salary, work-life balance, impact, purpose)?
- Lifestyle you want your career to support?
- Passion aligned with your career goal?
- Long-term professional legacy or contribution?
- Want to lead, manage, specialize, or pivot into something new?

Career Alignment

(A Big Picture Perspective)



Leads to greater fulfillment and job satisfaction

Navigating My Career Journey

Consider this:

- You will never discover who you were meant to be if you use another person to find yourself.
- You will never know what you can do by using what someone has done to measure your ability.
- You will never know why you exist if you use someone else's existence to measure it.
- You cannot become what you are born to be by remaining what you are. You are full of potential.
- Your potential is much greater than what you are right now.
- Your life will lack purpose and focus until you discover your wings.

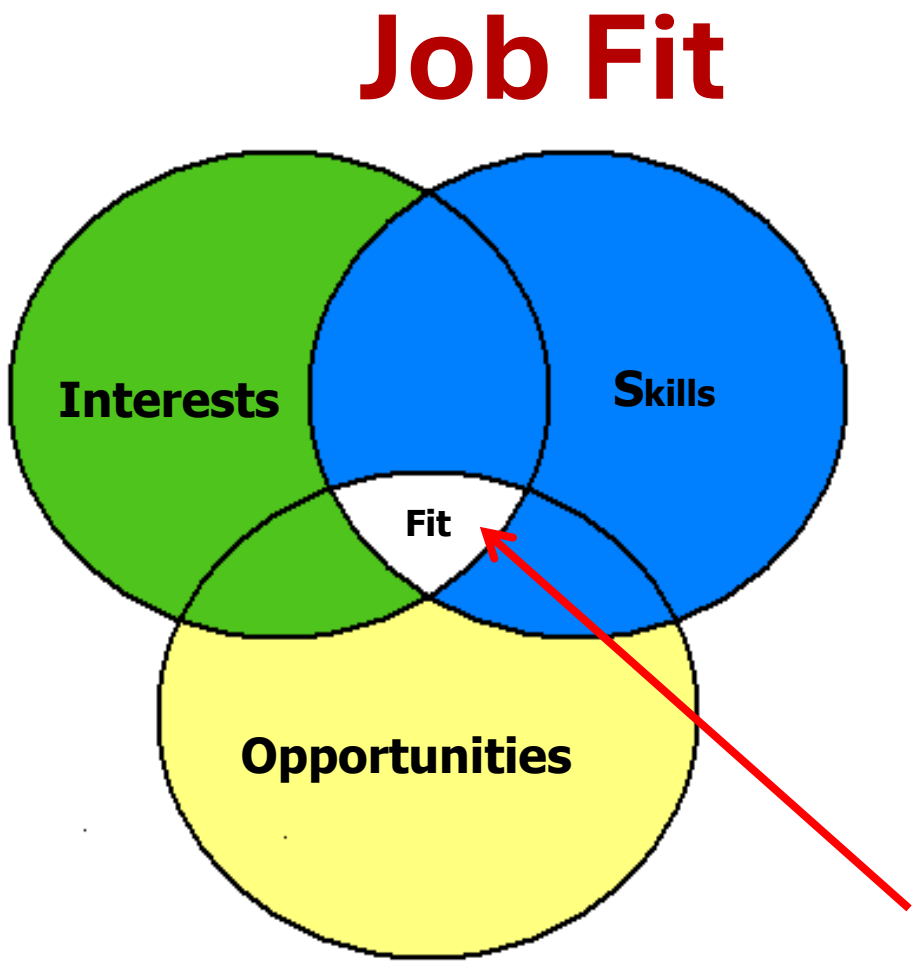
- **Purpose**: What gives you wings? What's your "why"?
- **Values**: What do you believe in? What guides you?
- **My Story:** What motivates you? What gives you perspective?
- **Career Aspirations**: What/who do you want to be or do?
- **BOD:** Who's on your Board of Directors? Are you chair of your own board?
- **Resources**: What's available to you? What books do you read?
- **Barriers**: What/who holds you back? What do you need to let go of?

What I Value Most About Work (Example)

Value	Ideal Rating	My Rating	This Company	Some Questions to Ask or Ponder
Nature of Work	**10**			What will I be doing? Do I like what I will be doing?
Work Environment	**10**			Have I visited the office? Have I interned there? What impressions do I get? Will I be challenged? What do employees say about the work environment?
Company Culture	**10**			What is it like working there? What's being said about the company culture? How reputable is the company? What about its leadership? What is the work ethic?
Training and Development	**10**			How are employees being trained? Is there an emphasis on training and development?
Compensation	**10**			What is the starting pay? Is there overtime? What benefits are there? Are employees generally happy with the company benefits?
Growth Opportunities	**10**			Are there opportunities for advancement? Are there career paths? Are people moving along? Is the company successful? Have there been layoffs, etc.?
Travel	**10**			Is there travel? How often? Where? What flexibility is there?
Gut Feeling	**10**			What does my gut/instincts tell me?
Total	**80**			

Interviewer's Perspective

Finding the Right Job



Hiring Manager's Perspective

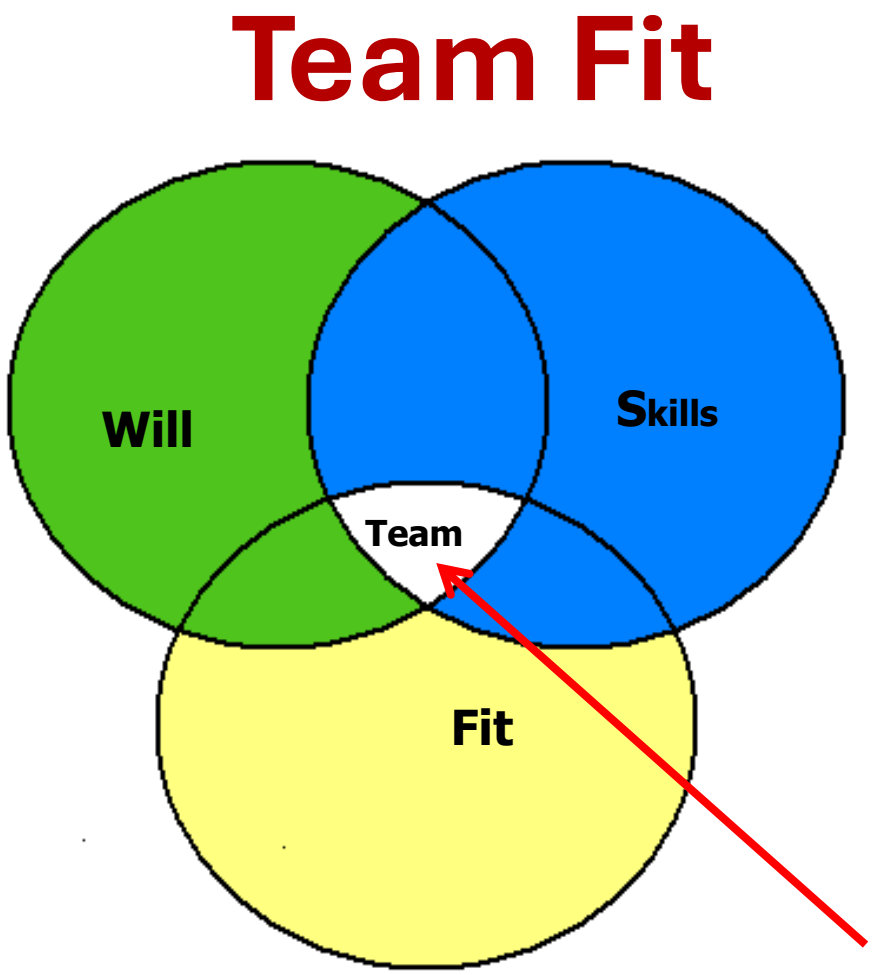
(Finding the Right Person)

Financial Analyst Role:
Financial Analysts typically play a key role in ensuring the accuracy, reliability, and compliance of financial reporting and internal controls within a company.
They do:

- Financial reporting & analysis
- Internal controls & risk compliance
- Audit support
- Compliance & policy monitoring
- Data validation & reconciliation
- Cross-functional collaboration

Reporting Data:

- Accuracy, timely, reviewed, consistent, available or accessible, presentable



Hiring Managers Want to Know:

- Will: Will you do the work?
- Skills: Can you do the work?
- Fit: Will you fit in (team, department, company, etc.)?

Skills:

- Strong Excel and data analysis skills
- Knowledge of ERP systems
- Familiarity with audit software and data analysis tools
- Certifications

Employee's Will or Motivation a Hiring Manager is Looking For

- Motivated by challenges and problem-solving
- Passionate about what stories the numbers tell
- Love the ability to explain financials to a non-financial person
- Employee shows up for work every day, ready to work/contribute
- Employee pays attention to detail
- Employee loves finding efficiencies in work processes, etc.

Career Gaps and Short Job Stays: Red Flag or Not?

- **Why they are less of a red flag now**
  - COVID-19 disrupted many careers
  - Job-hopping is more common (younger generation)
  - Gig economy and contract roles
  - Mental health and career resets
- **When they "can" be red flags**
  - Frequent short stays without clear story or growth pattern
  - Gaps that lack productivity (no upskilling, volunteering, caregiving, or personal development)
  - Negative or vague explanations during interview
- **How to address them**
  - Be transparent, not defensive—own your story with confidence
  - Show how you use the gap (learning, caregiving, travel with purpose, etc.)
  - Connect the dots—explain how past roles led you to this opportunity

Bottom Line: Gaps and short stays aren't automatic deal breakers anymore—context, communication, and current readiness matter more.

Employers want to know: Can you add value now, and are you likely to stay and thrive?

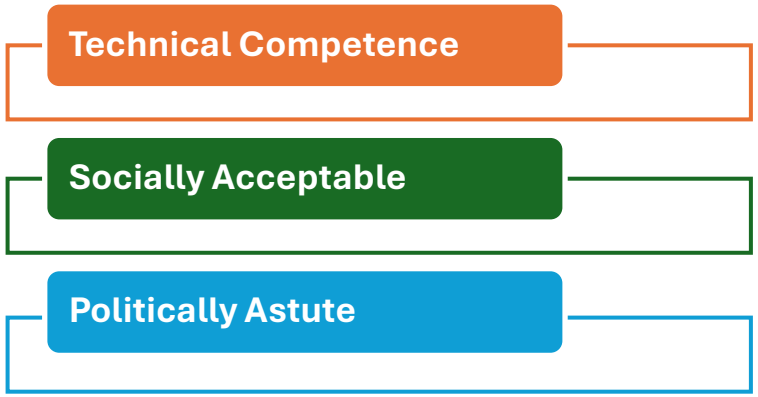
Is It Easier to Find a Job If You Already Have One? Yes

- Perception of Value
- Leverage in Negotiation
- Networking Opportunities
- Confidence and Mindset
- Continued Skill Development

Three Pillars of Professional Success

Over the years, I've emphasized the importance of maintaining three (3) foundational attributes for long-term success: **Technically Competence, Socially Acceptable, and Politically Astute.**

The combination of **technical competence**, **social acceptability**, and **political astuteness** creates a well-rounded, impactful professional. Each of these pillars is essential, especially in today's multifaceted environments where success depends not only on what you know, but also on how you relate to others and navigate systems.



Technical Competence

Mastery, Growth, Precision, Reliability

(Being technically sound gives you a seat at the table):

- Continuous learning (stay current in your field: courses, certification, industry reading)
- Problem-solving (finding innovative, efficient, and accurate solutions)
- Results-oriented (deliver high-quality outcomes that provide value)
- Data-informed (use facts and analytics to drive decisions)

Socially Acceptable

Respect, Empathy, Communication, Presence

(How you treat people determines how long they'll walk with you—even if they initially admire your skills):

- Emotional Intelligence (EQ: Understand and manage your emotions and those of others)
- Cultural Awareness & Inclusion (be sensitive to diverse backgrounds and perspectives)
- Authenticity (Be approachable and genuine)
- Conflict Resolution (Address issues directly, calmly, and respectfully)
- Relationship Building (Build trust and mutual respect with others)

Politically Astute

Influence, Awareness, Strategy, Integrity

(It's not just what you know—it's what you do with that knowledge in a system of people, processes, and power):

- Reading the Room (Understand timing, tone, and temperament)
- Strategic Positioning (Know when to speak, listen, or align)
- Power Dynamics (Recognize who really influences decisions
- Advocating for Others (Use your influence to elevate and support others)