

The Career Clarity Guide

A 10-page framework for turning “I have no idea what I'm doing” into a direction you can act on.

Most people don't lack ambition. They lack a direction they can defend. This guide gives you the three things that close that gap: a way to know yourself, a way to shortlist real options, and a way to talk to the people already doing the work.

How to use it: don't read it in one sitting. Do section 02 today, section 03 this week, and send your first message from section 04 before the week is out.

What's inside

- 01 Why most people stay stuck — The three traps that keep smart graduates busy and directionless.
- 02 The Self-Knowledge Framework — Strengths, values and conditions — plus your Career Direction Statement.
- 03 The Career Shortlist Method — From a hundred maybes to three directions, in four passes.
- 04 Your first 3 networking moves — Who to talk to, what to send, and how to run the conversation.
- 05 The five questions everyone asks — Straight answers to the ones that stall people.
- 06 The 14-day plan — What to do, in order, starting tomorrow.

01 — Why most people stay stuck

Three traps. You are probably in at least one of them.

The Optionality Trap

You keep every door open so you never have to be wrong. The cost is that no door ever opens wider. Optionality feels like safety and behaves like drift.

The Credential Trap

When you don't know what you want, another course, another certificate, another degree feels like progress. It's motion. It buys time and postpones the decision.

The Application Trap

You send 80 applications into a portal and call it a job search. You get silence, and you read the silence as evidence about you rather than evidence about the method.

The common thread: all three avoid contact with reality. Direction comes from contact — with your own track record, and with people doing the work.

02 — The Self-Knowledge Framework

Any direction worth having sits on three inputs. Write real answers, not aspirational ones.

Input 1 — Strengths (evidence, not adjectives)

List four moments in the last two years when something went unusually well. For each: what was the task, what did you specifically do, and what happened?

Input 2 — Values (what you refuse to trade)

- Autonomy — how much do you need to decide how the work gets done?
- Impact — do you need to see who benefits, and how soon?
- Money — what number makes the trade-off honest?
- Status — whose respect are you actually working for?
- Craft — do you want to get very good at one specific thing?

Rank your top three. The fourth and fifth are the ones you'll compromise on — know that now, not in month six.

Input 3 — Conditions (where you do your best work)

Team size, pace, structure, in-person vs remote, feedback style, how much ambiguity you can hold. Conditions kill more good-fit jobs than job titles ever do.

Your Career Direction Statement

Fill this in. One sentence. If you can't say it out loud without flinching, it isn't finished yet.

I want to use my [strengths] to work on [problem or field], in a place that is [conditions], because I care most about [top value].

Write yours here

Test it against three people who know you. Ask: "Does this sound like me, or does it sound like a LinkedIn headline?"

03 — The Career Shortlist Method

Goal: go from a hundred vague maybes to three directions you'd genuinely pursue. Four passes, ninety minutes total.

Pass 1 — Dump (15 min)

Write 20 roles, industries or organisations that have ever made you curious. No filtering. Include the embarrassing ones.

Pass 2 — Cut on values (15 min)

Delete anything that fails your top two values. Not “might fail” — clearly fails. You should lose about half.

Pass 3 — Cut on evidence (30 min)

For each survivor, find one real job posting and one real person on LinkedIn doing it. If you can't find either in ten minutes, it's a fantasy, not a direction.

Pass 4 — Rank on the 3 tests (30 min)

Score each remaining option 1–5 on: Curiosity (would you read about this on a Sunday?), Traction (do you have any evidence of aptitude?), Access (do you know anyone within two degrees?). Keep the top three.

Three is the number. One is a bet. Five is indecision wearing a spreadsheet.

Shortlist worksheet

Direction	Curiosity	Traction	Access	Total

Your three directions:

04 — Your first 3 networking moves

You do not need to know exactly what you want before you talk to people. Talking to people is how you find out. Three moves, in order.

Move 1 — Map who you already know

Alumni, former managers, lecturers, friends' parents, people from a society or a part-time job. Write 15 names. You are looking for second-degree access, not favours.

Move 2 — Send five curiosity messages

Not “can I pick your brain”. Specific, short, and easy to say yes to:

Hi [Name] — I'm [one line about you]. I'm working out whether [direction] is the right path for me and you're one of the few people I've found doing it properly. Could I ask you two questions about how you got there? Happy to keep it to 15 minutes, or email if that's easier.

Move 3 — Run the conversation properly

- Ask about their path, not for a job. Jobs come later and they come unprompted.
- Two questions that always work: “What surprised you most in your first year?” and “What would you do differently if you were starting now?”
- End with: “Who else should I be talking to?” — this is the line that compounds.
- Follow up within 24 hours with one specific thing you took from the conversation.

The Ask comes later. Three to five conversations in, you've earned the right to be specific: “I'm applying for [role] at [company]. Would you be comfortable introducing me to [person], or letting me use your name?” Specific asks get answered. Vague ones get ghosted.

05 — The five questions everyone asks

“What if I pick the wrong direction?”

You will pick a partly-wrong direction. Everyone does. A direction held for nine months and revised with evidence beats no direction held for three years. The cost of being wrong is far lower than the cost of being undecided.

“Isn't networking just using people?”

Using people is asking for something you haven't earned from someone you'll never speak to again. Networking is asking someone a question they're qualified to answer, listening, and telling them what you did with it. The difference is the follow-up.

“I have no experience — what do I even say?”

You have evidence, which is different from experience. A project, a part-time job, a society you ran, a thing you taught yourself. Lead with what you did and what happened, not with the title you didn't have.

“Should I take the job I don't want, for now?”

Usually yes, if it buys you time, money or a skill — and you set an exit date in writing. Drifting into year three of a job you took 'for now' is the actual risk, not the job itself.

“How long should this take?”

Two weeks to a direction. Three months to a shortlist you've tested with real people. Six to nine months to a role, if you're working the system rather than the job boards.

06 — The 14-day plan

Day	Do this	Done
1	Write your four strength stories	
2	Rank your values, name your conditions	
3	Draft your Career Direction Statement	
4	Shortlist passes 1 and 2	
5	Shortlist passes 3 and 4 — pick your three	
6	Map 15 people you already know	
7	Send curiosity messages 1 and 2	
9	Send messages 3, 4 and 5	
10	First conversation — run the questions	
12	Second conversation + follow-ups	
14	Review: which direction got stronger?	

Before you close this

You've got a direction when all five of these are true. Tick honestly.

- ☐ I can say my Career Direction Statement out loud without flinching.
- ☐ I have three directions on a shortlist, not one bet and not a list of ten.
- ☐ For each direction, I've found one real job posting and one real person doing it.
- ☐ I've had at least two conversations with people already in the work.
- ☐ I know the single next thing I'm doing, and the date I'm doing it by.

My next action, and the date

What's next. This guide is the framework. The Find Your Direction Masterclass is the full system — seven modules, seven things you actually build, including the complete Networking & The Ask module. theobviousgap.com/courses