

Mid-Career Development for Compliance Professionals
Applying Domain Expertise to One's Own Career
By Gates Garrity-Rokous

The Idea in Brief

This paper explains methods for mid-career compliance professionals to apply their compliance skills and tools to the challenge of evaluating and managing their own careers.

Major elements:

- **Deploy compliance skills** to the challenge of excelling in mid-career.
- **Define the core elements needed for success**, to support both developing goals and measuring progress.
- **Define the key metrics** needed to measure one's ability to obtain those elements in one's present role – or in the next role. A “key” metric measures the factor most integral to success in an element.
- **Develop and incorporate self-assessment and goal-setting tools**, based on the core elements and key metrics, to guide *sensemaking*: the professional's ability to make sense of their career development, make job and role decisions, and orient their daily efforts.
- **Incorporate project management methodologies** to provide better *structure* to support career development: the practices and habits that provide organization and priority-setting to career and daily efforts.
- **Ensure regular review**, to create positive synergies *between* sensemaking and supporting structure by iterating new ideas, reinforcing positive steps and appropriate risk-taking, and providing ways to measure progress.

Introduction: Three Common Mid-Career Challenges

Let's start with three career situations in which we often find ourselves challenged.

First, continuing success. With each new project, Rachel feels her confidence grow. She consistently delivers reliable results, and she has earned the respect of her team, with whom she has a sense of connection and support. She feels capable of embracing the challenges and opportunities as they come her way, and she brings a sense of fulfillment and passion to her work. Rachel wants to find ways to maintain and continue this progress in her current role.

Second, improving one's current role. While Dana knows her work is deeply valued and she feels a strong sense of connection with her team, Dana sometimes finds herself just staring blankly at her computer. She cannot shake the feeling that she might be getting stuck in her current role. She wants to make sure her career continues to align with her abilities and interests, which continue to evolve. Yet the misalignment may cause friction with her current supervisor. Dana wants to find a way to “evolve in place” by re-orienting her tasks and reinforcing her engagement in her current role.

Third, making a job/career change. John finds the monotony of his daily routine unbearable, and he senses his previous connection with others on his team is degrading. His finds that job drains

his energy while stifling his creativity and sense of delivering value. John is ready to start actively searching for a new opportunity but does not know how to find a role that better aligns with his abilities and aspirations.

The inability to identify one's situation (regardless of which of the above paradigms applies), and to respond effectively, frequently causes career stalling or failure. Let's tackle this potential failure systematically, by defining career "success" and breaking down its core elements.

Defining Career "Success"

There exist many definitions of "success" in a career.¹ Ultimately the decision about what matters in your career is yours. I've outlined three well-accepted core elements below; you can adjust them based on what matters to you.

1. **Delivering value.** Our work is *valuable*, by the measures the organization, the broader economy, and our society define. To truly "deliver value," however, one does more than simply what our role requires; we also overcome challenges and makes sacrifices when needed to advance a purpose beyond our roles and earn a sense of accomplishment by making the effort.
 - **How it feels when this element is present:** "I feel a sense of satisfaction in the work I do each day, because I know I have worked hard to achieve something meaningful. I pursue and achieve goals through effort and dedication."
 - **How it feels when this element is lacking:** "I lack control or agency, and often feel my work is worthless or futile. I find myself constantly reacting to disorder, without the ability, either in the moment or over time, to plan or prepare."
 - **How managers often think about this element:** What the person in the role produces or delivers through their effort, expertise, and experience.
 - **How to use this element as a goal:**
 - **Naming the goal: Deliver.** Continuing to deliver value as we meet our work and personal obligations.
 - **Identifying the key metric: Agency.** Delivering value requires us to initiate and control our own actions, take charge of our situation, and positively influence outcomes through our effort, expertise, and experience.
 - **How to evaluate the key metric in action:**
 - **Command** of self/situation (agency in action)
 - **Deliberateness** (planfulness in advance and in moment)
 - **Initiative** (ability to flex to situation and proactively make change, find insight, or inspire/reassure others)
2. **Building connections.** We deliver value because we *connect* with each other, forming teams to effectively align individual efforts, and we enjoy doing so.
 - **How it feels when this element is present:** "I enjoy making progress and solving problems with others, whether I act as a critical component of an ongoing, steady and

¹ The three career elements align with Arthur C. Brooks' essentials of happiness in life (satisfaction, enjoyment, and meaning). See Brooks and Winfrey, "Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier," 2023.

reliable business process, or I actively collaborate with others on projects on teams that frequently change in membership and composition.”

- **How it feels when this element is lacking:** “I feel separate and alone. When something does not go well, I feel rejected or ashamed.”
- **How managers often think of this element:** How the person in the role works with others on a team and/or with internal or external clients.
- **How to use this element as a goal:**
 - **Naming the goal: Connect.** To build and deepen our emotional connections with others.
 - **Identifying the key metric: Engagement.** The ability to connect with others on an individual and emotional basis, and to engage others in the collective achievement of mutual goals.
 - **How to evaluate the key metric in action:**
 - **Emotional awareness** (of self and others)
 - **Proactivity** (initiative in building connections with self and others)
 - **Deliberation** (ability to decide in the moment how best to connect with one's own emotions or to engage with others)

3. Maximizing meaning. We deliver value, and connect best with others, when we pursue goals that *inspire* us. In practical terms, this means we work on the kinds of problems we enjoy solving, we receive information that makes us curious, and the personal significance of what we do becomes its own source of motivation.

- **How it feels when this element is present:** “I love to solve complex, systemic problems that advance the organization’s mission.”
- **How it feels when this element is lacking:** “I have to struggle to get anything done; I hate my day-to-day work and feel my skills and efforts are wasted.”
- **How managers often think of this element:** What inspires or motivates the person in the role to both deliver value and to connect with others on team(s).
- **How to use this element as a goal:**
 - **Naming the goal: “Inspire.”** To derive or develop motivation by maximizing the alignment between our work and our personal values, interests, and talents.
 - **Identifying the key metric: Match quality.²** The quality of the match between an individual's values, interests, and talents, and the activities and goals to which they are committed.
 - **How to evaluate the key metric in action:**
 - **Commitment** (intense concentration on present moment)
 - **Flow** (ideas come easily, time passes quickly)
 - **Fulfillment** (sense of joy and reward)

²Author David Epstein popularized this definition of match quality in the career context in his book *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* (2019).

Why knowing the core elements for oneself is helpful

Let's go back to the situations in which our three prototypical employees found themselves. Someone in Rachel's situation might fail to continue her success, and in becoming stagnant watch her previous trajectory flatten. At her next 1-1 meeting with her manager or her annual review, Rachel will need to know *why* her role is currently working so well for her, to ensure that her manager continues to reinforce and support those positive aspects.

Someone in Dana's situation could become frustrated, risking increased ineffectiveness and interpersonal conflict. At her next 1-1 meeting with her manager or her annual review, Dana will need to identify what needs to stay the same, and what needs (and is capable of) changing in her current role, to ensure her manager's support.

Finally, someone in John's situation is already frustrated and might either stay in a current role until a point of crisis, or make a job change in desperation which later proves a career setback. John will have to find a way to make this change in a positive career direction, while retaining security and support in his current job.

What would we find useful if we found ourselves in one of the above situations?

The ability to deliver a succinct summary of what makes us exceptional in each of these three core elements: delivering value; building connections; and maximizing meaning.

Imagine ending a meeting with a supervisor or interviewer with something along these lines: "I'd hate to end this meeting without summarizing the three reasons why I excel in my job/need to evolve my role/am the best candidate. First, I deliver accurate, credible solutions to compliance problems, so that those problems remain fixed [what I deliver]. Second, I build teams by serving and empowering others – I make it easier for others to collaborate, whether I lead from the front or support from behind [how I connect]. Third, I love to solve complex, systemic problems that advance the organization's mission [what inspires me]."

Defining these three core elements then becomes a vehicle for communicating – to others, and to ourselves – our own mission statement. As we evolve these three elements, we give our careers meaning.

Exercise One: Use Our CVs to Better Articulate Strengths in Each Element

How could we define our own three core elements? Use what we already know, our past experiences. Try this exercise.

Create a separate "self-discovery" copy of your last CV,³ and add to it as follows:

³ When creating the self-discovery CV version, take the time to review and edit the public version. Check to ensure that each entry provides both a "what" (what one did) and a "so what?" (the net change or effect produced, preferably measurable, of what one did), either as a two-part phrase within each bullet or as two separate bullets under the entry. (E.g., "researched significant export controls issues for Sourcing client; delivered efficient, timely answers for 14 RFPs and generating vendor renewals leading to over \$2M in cost savings.")

1. **Under each entry, add short vignettes.** Recall one or two images or stories that come to mind for each entry. These should be small “moments in time” that were particularly memorable or enjoyable.
2. **Add non-resume examples, in chronological order.** Add in trips, volunteer activities, anything else, even pre-college. This is especially important for those in an early stage of their career, but is valuable at any age, because these activities reveal a great deal about what we deliver, how we connect, and what inspires us. Build as many specific examples as possible.
3. **Highlight key words.** Then go back through and highlight the descriptive words. Try, using those words, to draft three summary sentences, one for each category.
4. **Categorize.** Put labels (perhaps in the margin) for each example: is it expertise and experience, collaborating with others, or a source of inspiration? Note that one experience could provide multiple examples, and one example could serve multiple categories. If so, create a separate bullet/way of explaining it for each category. Try to develop 5-10 examples of experiences under each of the three career elements.⁴
5. **Re-write and perfect those three sentences.** These sentences become the themes that support every performance evaluation, job application, and cover letter or email outreach. They become the elevator pitch for who we are and what makes us unique, and they evolve as we move through a career.

With these three sentences in draft, we can better focus on making work meaningful. Now we need to reinforce that meaning with structure: daily and weekly habits to more deliberately deploy those differentiating strengths. As we do, we learn more – and those three sentences iterate.

Exercise Two: Evaluate How Time Gets Spent

This exercise causes us to pay more attention to how we spend our time and the quality of our focus each day. Doing so encourages more thought in how we choose to place that focus – in a particular meeting or activity, over the course of a day, and through a week and month. Having given meaning to our career strengths by articulating our three strengths, this structure reinforces our ability to use those strengths deliberately and effectively.

The Rating Methodology

This methodology focuses on the three career elements and enables measurement of the key metrics of each.⁵

⁴ This process is invaluable when preparing for an interview. Every question will point toward one of the three career elements. Once prepared, any question (e.g., “tell us about a work experience in which you had a challenging co-worker, and how you overcame it...”) can be immediately categorized (aha! That’s career element two!). Then can dip into the specific examples prepared in that category for the answer.

⁵ See page 8 below, and separate Excel template.

Step 1: Evaluate the Rating System. Recall past situations – how would they be scored? Note that the ratings contain specific ways to evaluate each key metric in action. If the words do not resonate, change them for yourself. Make the rating system your own – make it useful!

Step 2: Proactively Fill the Daily Tracker. Each day, plan ahead by proactively filling out the daily tracker (in red) with scheduled or planned activities. This forces us to think through the day in advance, get clarity on what to achieve, and observe the balance across the three elements.

- **Tip:** When making this step, be sure to ask: “What do I want to do with this time?” Take into consideration work commitments, relationships, and personal growth or interests.

Step 3: Rate Events as They Occur. Through the day, track how events actually unfold. At the end of each event or activity, give it a score based on the scoring system.

Step 4: Generate Daily Scores. At the end of the day, calculate averages for each element, and the total amount of time spent in activities under that element. Enter these on the Weekly Tracker.

Step 5: Evaluate the Weekly Tracker. As the process continues, generate observational data on how time gets spent across the three career elements, and the quality of efforts under the key metrics. Over time, this data reveals patterns in where we focus most of our energy, and where it could best be redeployed.

Step 6: Evolve the Rating and Tracking Methodology. There’s no perfect formula—this system is a tool for continuous improvement. Don’t hesitate to adjust the rating categories or scoring system as needed. The idea is to refine it based on one’s observations and find what works best.

Reflection: We all already use to-do lists and schedules. This process stacks new habits on these pre-existing habits, and an important reward mechanism: As the process evolves over time, positive choices on how we use our attention and energy each day influence our one’s productivity and career satisfaction. Enjoy experimenting with this approach, and remember—there’s no magic, just consistent reflection and deliberate effort.

Conclusion: Create Positive Synergies

These exercises offer the opportunity to create a virtuous cycle – a positive synergy develops between confidence in one’s own core career strengths, and one’s supporting structures. This synergy builds career momentum and allows us to continually learn and develop because it reinforces positive steps and appropriate risk-taking, while providing ways to measure progress.

Evaluation Tool: Ratings and Tracker

The Core Career Elements: Goal Summaries and Key Metrics

Goal Summaries and Key Metrics			
<i>Goal & Key Metric</i>	<p>Goal Summary: Deliver (deliver value in meeting one's work and personal obligations)</p> <p>Key Metric: Agency <i>"The ability to initiate and control one's own actions and positively influence outcomes through effort, expertise, and experience"</i></p>	<p>Goal Summary: Connect (build and deepen connections with others)</p> <p>Key Metric: Engagement <i>"The ability to connect with others on an individual and emotional basis, to engage with others in the collective achievement of mutual goals"</i></p>	<p>Goal Summary: Inspire (deriving or developing motivation by maximizing alignment between work and personal values, interests, and talents)</p> <p>Key Metric: Match Quality <i>"The quality of the match between an individual's values, interests, and talents and the activities and goals to which they are committed"</i></p>
<i>Evaluating the Key Metric in Action</i>	<p>Command of self/situation (agency in action)</p> <p>Deliberateness (planfulness in advance and in moment)</p> <p>Initiative (ability to flex to situation and proactively make change, find insight, or inspire/reassure others)</p>	<p>Emotional awareness (of self and others)</p> <p>Proactivity (initiative in building connections with self and others)</p> <p>Deliberation (ability to decide in the moment how best to connect with one's own emotions or to engage with others)</p>	<p>Commitment (intense concentration on present moment)</p> <p>Flow (ideas come easily, time passes quickly)</p> <p>Fulfillment (sense of joy and reward)</p>

The Core Career Elements: Ratings

Ratings			
Rating	Deliver: Agency	Connect: Engagement	Inspire: Match Quality
5	<p>Felt in control during/energized after activity</p> <p>Exceeded plan outcomes and/or leveraged plan to move project(s) forward</p> <p>Flexed as needed to make the most of the opportunity</p>	<p>Landmark event: substantially deepened connection with self/another</p> <p>Established new baseline: initiated change that gained fundamental insight or set new standard</p> <p>Insight: proactively used moment to maximize engagement and positively change relationship</p>	<p>Completely committed to person/task</p> <p>100% flow: ideas came easily; absorbed/time flew</p> <p>Enjoyed activity and felt uniquely needed; fulfilled and rewarded by efforts</p>
4	<p>Managed task or deadline well and advanced solutions</p> <p>Planning for meeting advanced objectives toward goal</p> <p>Found opportunities as needed through new ideas</p>	<p>Connected to others: engaged in a way that left self feeling accepted, loved, valued, safe, rewarded</p> <p>Connected to self: engaged with high energy, not conflicted/stuck</p> <p>Thought first before each statement or action, maximizing engagement</p>	<p>Involved in person/task</p> <p>50-75% flow: ideas came easily, absorbed, time passes</p> <p>Enjoyed activity and felt fulfilled and rewarded by efforts</p>
3	<p>Met needs for meeting or activity</p> <p>Met goal and plan as needed to ensure activity met needs and advanced plans</p> <p>Managed situation but did not advance solution or new ideas</p>	<p>Maintained relationship but did not change it for the better</p> <p>Maintained involvement to keep things going but didn't lead to improvement</p> <p>Stayed aware of emotional needs of self and others but did not leverage awareness</p>	<p>Ambivalent about person/task</p> <p>Effortful: advancing ideas required effort</p> <p>Got through objective but only because activity advanced broader goals: efforts could have been replaced by someone else</p>
2	<p>Role felt diminished or undermined</p> <p>Meeting/issue unplanned and required constant attention and effort</p> <p>Made situation worse but not the worst it could be</p>	<p>Undercut relationship: actions resulted in disconnection or lack of appreciation</p> <p>Lacked awareness of emotions leading to surprise and negative outcomes</p> <p>Disconnected from awareness resulting in lack of planning and poor moment-to-moment decisions</p>	<p>Disliked person/task</p> <p>Extremely effortful: took hard work to get through</p> <p>Efforts sub-par and could have been done much better/more easily by someone else</p>
1	<p>Powerless; "shut up and take it"</p> <p>Highly reactive or defensive</p> <p>Made situation worse, virtually catastrophic outcome; will require significant work to fix</p>	<p>Rejected/lonely: feeling abandoned or alone</p> <p>Passive/reactive: at mercy of events, conflicted, ashamed</p> <p>Stuck: no idea what to do next; panicked; insecure</p>	<p>Completely frustrated by situation</p> <p>Extremely effortful: had to grind to get through it</p> <p>Hated activity and felt own skills and efforts were wasted</p>

The Core Career Elements: Daily Tracker

	Activity	Deliver: Agency	Connect: Engagement	Inspire: Match Quality	Comments
6:00					
6:30					
7:00					
7:30					
8:00					
8:30					
9:00					
9:30					
10:00					
10:30					
11:00					

The Core Career Elements: Weekly Tracker

Date	Day	Deliver Avg.	Deliver Total hrs	Connect Avg.	Connect Total hrs	Inspire Avg.	Inspire Total hrs	Overall Day Score (1-10)	Comments
8-Mar	Saturday								
9-Mar	Sunday								
10-Mar	Monday								
11-Mar	Tuesday								
12-Mar	Wednesday								
13-Mar	Thursday								