

DRIVEN BY THE JOURNEY™

Professional Success Guide

Actionable strategies for developing workplace confidence, leadership skills, and career readiness.

TRACK 3: EARLY-CAREER WOMEN → PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

This guide is designed to help you move from simply having a job to intentionally building a professional identity, career strategy, leadership presence, and reputation that can travel with you throughout your career.

Your career is not something you wait for. It is something you learn to navigate.

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Driven By The Journey™

1. Start With Professional Self-Awareness

Professional confidence begins with knowing what you bring to the room and where you still need to grow.

- Write down your five strongest professional skills and one example that demonstrates each skill.
- Identify three skills you need to strengthen for the role or level you want next.
- Know the difference between your technical skills and your transferable or soft skills.
- Define the professional values you do not want to compromise.
- Identify the work environments in which you perform best.
- Ask a trusted manager, mentor, professor, or colleague for specific feedback about how you are perceived.
- Create a short professional introduction that explains who you are, what you do well, and where you are headed.

Professional Identity Statement

I am a _____ professional who is known for _____.

I create value by _____.

Over the next 12 months, I want to become _____.

2. Build Workplace Confidence

Confidence at work is not knowing everything. It is trusting your preparation, judgment, voice, and ability to learn.

- Prepare before meetings so you can contribute instead of waiting to feel confident.
- Speak at least once in meetings where your role or expertise is relevant.
- Ask clear questions when expectations are ambiguous.
- Stop apologizing for appropriate questions, professional boundaries, or informed opinions.
- Document accomplishments, positive feedback, completed projects, and measurable results.
- Practice receiving feedback without immediately becoming defensive or dismissing your strengths.
- Separate a mistake from your identity: correct it, learn from it, and move forward.
- Replace 'I am not ready' with a specific readiness question: What skill, experience, evidence, or support am I missing?

Coach Jackson's Gem

You do not need permission to prepare for the next level before someone offers it to you.

3. Strengthen Your Professional Presence

- Make sure your email, voicemail, LinkedIn profile, resume, and professional biography are current.
- Use a professional headshot and a consistent name across career platforms.
- Know how to communicate an idea concisely to a manager or senior leader.
- Meet deadlines or communicate early when a deadline is at risk.
- Follow through on commitments without requiring repeated reminders.
- Learn the communication norms of your organization without losing your authentic voice.
- Pay attention to how you enter meetings, listen, disagree, present information, and close conversations.
- Develop a reputation for preparation, reliability, discretion, and solutions.

4. Learn to Navigate the Workplace

Career success requires more than doing your assigned tasks. You must understand how decisions, relationships, information, and influence move through an organization.

- Learn your organization's formal reporting structure and its informal influence network.
- Identify who makes decisions that affect your work and what information they value.
- Distinguish healthy professional relationships from gossip, cliques, and workplace drama.
- Do not confuse visibility with self-promotion; make your contribution understandable and measurable.
- When conflict occurs, address the issue, impact, expectation, and next step - not the person's character.
- Keep appropriate documentation of important assignments, decisions, performance feedback, and agreements.
- Know when an issue should be handled directly, escalated to a manager, or referred to HR.
- Build relationships before you need something.

5. Build a Strategic Network

- Identify five people inside your organization whose work or leadership you respect.
- Identify five people outside your organization who work in fields, roles, or industries you want to understand.
- Schedule one meaningful professional conversation each month.
- Follow up after introductions and networking events within 48 hours.
- Offer value - information, support, introductions, encouragement, or expertise - rather than contacting people only when you need help.
- Develop relationships with peers as well as senior leaders.
- Identify at least one mentor and understand the difference between a mentor, sponsor, coach, and advocate.
- Keep a simple relationship tracker with names, dates, context, and next follow-up.

6. Prepare for Advancement

- Know the responsibilities and qualifications of the next role you want.
- Compare your current experience with actual job descriptions for that role.
- Choose 2-3 development gaps to close during the next six months.
- Ask for stretch assignments that create evidence of next-level capability.
- Quantify accomplishments whenever possible: money saved, revenue supported, time reduced, people served, errors reduced, projects delivered, or outcomes improved.
- Update your resume and LinkedIn before you urgently need them.
- Practice interviewing by preparing accomplishment stories using Situation, Task, Action, and Result.
- Discuss career goals with your manager when the environment is appropriate and safe to do so.
- Apply for opportunities based on evidence of capability, not a belief that you must meet every listed qualification.

7. Protect Your Professional Boundaries

- Know your job responsibilities and ask for clarity when duties continually expand without discussion.
- Use your calendar to protect focused work, preparation, and recovery time.
- Avoid making immediate commitments when you need time to assess capacity.
- Practice professional boundary language such as: 'I can complete A by Friday, or B by Friday. Which is the priority?'
- Do not routinely rescue systems that remain dysfunctional because you continually overfunction.
- Recognize the difference between being collaborative and being chronically overextended.
- Use organizational resources appropriately when workload, conduct, safety, discrimination, or other serious concerns arise.
- Remember that protecting your capacity helps you sustain high-quality work.

8. Create Your 90-Day Professional Success Plan

Area	My 90-Day Goal	First Action	Deadline
Confidence			
Skill Development			
Visibility / Presence			
Networking			
Career Advancement			
Boundaries / Well-being			

Professional Success Self-Check

Rate yourself from 1 (needs immediate attention) to 5 (strong and consistent).

Area	1	2	3	4	5	My Next Step
Professional confidence	■	■	■	■	■	
Communication	■	■	■	■	■	
Executive presence	■	■	■	■	■	
Networking	■	■	■	■	■	
Workplace navigation	■	■	■	■	■	
Career readiness	■	■	■	■	■	
Boundaries	■	■	■	■	■	
Leadership	■	■	■	■	■	

My Next Three Career Moves

1. _____

Deadline: _____

2. _____

Deadline: _____

3. _____

Deadline: _____

YOUR NEXT STEP WITH DRIVEN BY THE JOURNEY™

Professional excellence is built through intentional preparation, confidence, relationships, boundaries, and execution. Use this guide to identify one area you can strengthen now, then take measurable action within the next seven days.

For Track 3 resources, professional-development workshops, and coaching support, visit www.coachrhondajackson.com.

Remember: Do not wait for your career to happen to you. Learn how to navigate it, build it, and lead within it.