Career Growth Mini Toolkit

Curated by Vanguard Impact

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit gives you practical tools to refresh your resume, prepare for interviews, and negotiate with confidence. Each section includes tips, examples, and ready-to-use scripts or worksheets so you can apply it immediately.

Resume Refresh Guide

Your resume is often your first impression. It needs to be clear, confident, and results-focused.

Step 1: Choose a Clean Layout

- Use a professional font (Calibri, Arial, Helvetica, Cambria).
- Keep margins wide and sections spaced out.
- Stick to 1–2 pages.

Step 2: Focus on Impact

- List achievements, not just tasks.
- Use numbers, percentages, and/or timelines to show results.
- Place your most relevant experience at the top.

Step 3: Write Powerful Bullets

- Formula: Action verb + What you did + How you did it + Result achieved
- Examples:
  - Led a team of 5 to design a new onboarding process, reducing employee turnover by 15%.
  - Created and launched a social media campaign, increasing engagement by 40% in 6 months.

Step 4: Include These Core Sections

- Summary (2–3 sentences highlighting who you are + your value)
- Key Skills (use keywords from the job posting)
- Experience (achievements-focused)
- Education/Certifications (only list relevant ones)

Interview Prep Toolkit

An interview is your chance to connect your experience to the role and show your personality.

Step 1: Prepare in Advance

- Research the Company: mission, recent projects, culture.
- Know the Role: highlight the top 3 skills they want.
- Practice STAR Stories
    - Situation: Set the context
    - Task: What was your responsibility?
    - Action: What did you do?
    - Result: What happened?
- Example:
    - Question: “Tell me about a time you managed a conflict at work.”
    - Answer: “In my last role (Situation), a project deadline caused tension between marketing and IT (Task). I scheduled a joint check-in (Action) and facilitated a quick compromise, which allowed us to launch on time and kept relationships strong (Result).”

Step 2: During the Interview

- Body Language: Smile, sit tall, and make eye contact.
- Listen Actively: Pause before responding — it shows thoughtfulness.
- Ask Questions: “What does success look like in this role at 6 months?”

Step 3: After the Interview

Send a Thank-You Note (within 24 hours):
“Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I’m especially excited about [specific aspect of the role/project] and confident that my experience with [key skill] can add value to your team. I look forward to next steps.”

Negotiation Scripts & Tips

Negotiation is not about asking for more. It's about showing the value you bring and finding an arrangement that works for both you and the employer.

Step 1: Research & Anchor High

- Use Glassdoor, PayScale, LinkedIn Salary, and industry reports to find the market rate for your role, region, and experience level.
- Identify a target number (the high end of fair market value) and your walk-away number (absolute minimum).
- Anchor your ask at the high end. This leaves room to adjust down slightly while still landing within your goal.

Step 2: Timing is Key

- Wait until after the offer (or at least until you've proven your fit in the interview process).
- Avoid being the first to give a number unless pressed — let them put an offer on the table first.
- Script if asked early: "I'd love to focus first on how I can best contribute to this role and team. Once we determine fit, I'm confident we can find a fair compensation that reflects my experience and the market."

Step 3: Lead with Value, Not Need

- Frame the conversation around your contributions, not personal reasons.
- Script: "Given my [X years of experience] in [industry/skill], and my proven results in [specific examples], I was expecting something closer to [$X]."

Step 4: Avoid the Full Range Trap

- Instead of giving your full desired range, share a single number or narrow band that's anchored high.
- If you want $85K, don't say "$75K–$85K." Instead say: "Based on my research and the value I'll bring, I'd like to be in the $85K range."
- This signals flexibility but doesn't open the door to the bottom number.

Negotiation Scripts & Tips

Step 5: Expand the Pie (Non-Salary Benefits)

- If salary isn't fully negotiable, shift the conversation to total compensation:
- Additional vacation or flex days
- Remote or hybrid options
- Professional development budget
- Signing bonus or performance bonus
- Health/wellness perks
- Script: "I understand the salary budget may be firm. Would you be open to exploring options like additional vacation time or a professional development allowance to create a package that works for both of us?"

Step 6: Practice Your Close

- End with confidence and collaboration.
- Script: "I'm excited about this opportunity and confident we can arrive at a compensation package that reflects both the value I'll bring and the market standards."

Pro Tips

- Silence is powerful. After stating your number, pause and let them respond.
- Confidence is contagious. If you act as though your ask is reasonable (because it is), they are more likely to accept.
- Document everything. Always get the final offer in writing before accepting.

Career Growth Roadmap (Self-Reflection Worksheet)

Use these prompts to create your growth plan.

Step 1: Skills Audit
What are 3 skills I use daily that I want to strengthen?

What new skill could help me reach the next level?

Step 2: Network Growth
Who are 3 people I admire that I'd like to connect with?

What communities (online or local) can I join to meet new people?

Step 3: Milestone Goals
Where do I want to be in 3 years?

What's one step I can take this month to move closer?

Extra Tools & Resources

Recommended Books:
- Dare to Lead by Brené Brown
- Getting Along by Amy Gallo
- The Confidence Code by Katty Kay & Claire Shipman

Podcasts:
- HBR Women at Work: conversations about where we're at and how we move forward
- The Broad Experience: a conversation about women, the workplace, and success
- The Marketing Mavericks Podcast: conversations with business owners from different industries