



UNITED NATIONS
GENEVA



UNITED NATIONS



UN CAREER TRANSITION TO PRIVATE SECTOR WORKBOOK

Career Transition Programme
Participant Workbook

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About this workbook

This workbook is a practical companion to the UN Career Transition Programme. It is designed to help you reflect on your experience, explore career options and prepare for conversations with your UN Coach.

Career transitions are rarely linear. They involve exploration, reflection and experimentation. The activities in this workbook will help you make sense of your experience, identify new possibilities and gradually build confidence through action.

Each activity builds on the previous one, so working through the workbook in sequence will help you get the most from the programme.



REFLECTION

Every section includes reflection activities to help you connect the concepts to your own experience and capture your ideas throughout the programme. The red pin indicates an exercise to be completed during the session. Time will be allocated for this purpose.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

In many sections, you will find further actions to help you continue exploring, experimenting and applying what you have learned. You can complete these between sessions or after the programme.

ROADMAP & COACHING SUPPORT

To close the workbook, you will find a Career Transition Roadmap with step-by-step guidance that you can return to and iterate as your transition progresses. The workbook is also designed to help you make the most of your UN coaching support. Completing the exercises and identifying specific questions or challenges will allow your coach to provide more focused guidance. A final Coaching Support checklist will help you prepare for each coaching session.

1 Mapping the private sector

Your UN experience has built capabilities that can create value in many private-sector environments. But capability is only one part of the picture. Different sectors offer very different cultures, ways of working, opportunities and trade-offs. The goal is not to find the “best” sector, but to start identifying which environments might be the best fit for you.

1

RECOGNIZE WHAT YOU BRING

Identify the capabilities you have built through your UN experience and where they could create value.

2

EXPLORE DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

Look beyond roles and job titles. Pay attention to how different sectors work: their culture, pace, expectations and ways of accessing opportunities.

3

LOOK FOR FIT

Consider your capabilities, your motivation, company culture and compensation together. Which environments seem worth exploring further?

SECTORS IN THE PRIVATE MARKET

Any company names referenced herein are used solely as examples. We have no affiliation with, nor are we endorsed by, any of the companies mentioned.

TECHNOLOGY



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Fast-paced and performance-driven



Structured with clear reporting lines and goals



Informal, agile and innovation-oriented



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Operating under uncertainty



Complex coordination



Strategic problem-solving



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- Google
- Microsoft
- Amazon / AWS
- Salesforce
- SAP
- LinkedIn
- Startups / Scale-ups (e.g. Stripe)



TYPICAL ROLES

- Program Manager
- Strategy & Operations
- Product Operations
- Partnerships
- Public Policy
- Market Expansion
- Business Development
- Regulatory Affairs

CONSULTING



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Fast-paced and client-driven



High-performance and feedback-heavy



Structured, analytical, and demanding



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Strategic problem-solving



Commercial influence & business development



Executive communication & stakeholder management



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- McKinsey
- BCG
- Bain
- Deloitte
- Accenture
- Dalberg
- ICF
- Impact/Boutique Firms



TYPICAL ROLES

- Consultant
- Engagement Manager
- Expert Advisor
- Industry Specialist
- Transformation Lead

INDUSTRY



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- Maersk
- Siemens
- DHL
- Chevron
- Tesla
- Delta Airlines
- 3M/BASF



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Stable, structured, and process-driven



Engineering-led and operationally complex



Slow-moving but highly resilient



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Large-scale operations



Complex coordination



Regulatory & stakeholder navigation



TYPICAL ROLES

- Regional Operations Manager
- Supply Chain
- Resilience Manager
- Security & Risk Manager
- ESG/Sustainability Lead
- Corporate Strategy

CONSUMER GOODS



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- Procter & Gamble
- Unilever
- Nike
- L'Oréal
- Dentsu Group/ Publicis Groupe
- Spirits/Alcohol Companies
- Tobacco Companies



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Fast-paced and consumer-driven



Commercial, brand-led, and highly competitive



Hierarchical with strong informal influence networks



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Stakeholder management



Market & regulatory awareness



Cross-functional coordination



TYPICAL ROLES

- Brand Manager
- Commercial Strategy
- Director Global Purpose Comms.
- Global Localization Lead
- Cross-Cultural Comms. Strategist
- Public Affairs/Government Relations

PHARMA & HEALTHCARE



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- Roche
- Novartis
- Pfizer
- Johnson & Johnson
- AstraZeneca
- Sanofi
- Merck
- AbbVie
- Health startups



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Highly regulated and risk-sensitive



Structured, stable, and process-driven



Complex, cross-functional, and high-budget



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Regulatory & political navigation



Complex coordination



Stakeholder management



TYPICAL ROLES

- Public Affairs
- Medical Affairs
- Conference Management
- Regulatory Affairs
- R&D/Clinical Operations
- Supply Chain/Logistics
- IT/Digital
- Strategy/Operations

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Highly structured and hierarchical



Competitive, formal, and influence-driven



Trust-based and relationship-intensive



BEST-MATCHED CAPABILITIES



Regulatory & political navigation



Structured communication



Stakeholder influence



EXAMPLE COMPANIES

- IFC
- World Bank
- EBRD
- Asian Development Bank



TYPICAL ROLES

- Investment Analyst
- Risk & Compliance
- ESG/Sustainability
- Development Finance
- Public Affairs
- Institutional Relations

SOCIAL IMPACT



WORK ENVIRONMENT



Mission-Driven



Collaborative



Stakeholder-Heavy



EXAMPLE ORGANIZATIONS

- EU Institutions
- UN Agencies
- other multilaterals
- IFC
- World Bank
- EBRD
- ADB
- IDB
- African Union
- ASEAN
- Regional Development Banks
- NGOs/INGOs
- Foundations
- Think Tanks
- Social Enterprises/ Impact Startups
- Oxfam Foundation
- Gates Foundation
- Brookings
- Ashoka
- Impact Hub



REFLECTION

1. Which sector(s) surprised you the most? Why?

2. Which sector(s) would you like to explore further? What makes them interesting to you?

3. Which sector(s) seem to be the best fit for your experience and interests at this stage?

4. Complete your Sector Fit Framework

Complete circling which sectors fit best with you. 5 being the most fit and 1 being the least. Compensation and Ease of Entry have been pre-filled for most UN profiles. Adapt as you see fit.

SECTOR	 MOTIVATION FIT	 CULTURE FIT	 CAPABILITY FIT	 COMPENSATION FIT	 EASE OF ENTRY
Technology	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Consulting	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Industry	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Consumer Goods	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Pharma & Healthcare	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Development Finance	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Social Impact / Mission-Driven	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Run a fast prototype. Get the ball rolling. You do not need to know exactly where you are going before you start learning from the market.

1. Think of one person

Who do you already know outside the UN — perhaps in a sector, organization or geography you are curious about? It can be a friend, family member, friend of a friend, a former co-worker... You will be gathering information and soft-testing possible translations of your experience.

Name

Why could this person be useful to talk to?

2. Try your story

How would you explain what you do and the value you bring without relying on your UN title or acronyms?

3. Have the conversation

Reach out. Ask about their experience and market. Notice what they understand immediately, what requires explanation and what you learn.

2

Design thinking your career

Design Thinking encourages us to approach our careers with curiosity rather than certainty. Instead of trying to identify one perfect path, it invites us to intentionally explore several possible futures by creating different Odyssey Plans — they are a way to broaden your thinking and consider possibilities you might otherwise overlook. Design Thinking encourages prototyping: taking small, low-risk actions — such as conversations, volunteering, short courses or side projects — to gather real information before making bigger career decisions.

1

ODYSSEY 1

Is your current plan: if everything went as expected, what would your personal and professional life look like?

2

ODYSSEY 2

Is your alternative plan: if your current path was no longer available for any reason, what would you do instead?

3

ODYSSEY 3

Is your unconstrained plan: if money, status and other people's expectations were no object, how would you choose to live and work?

**REFLECTION**

By comparing these three futures and testing elements of each through small experiments, you can make career decisions based on real experiences rather than assumptions, while giving yourself permission to explore possibilities you may never have considered.

ODYSSEY 1

Five-year plan · click any blank area to type

0

1

2

3

4

5

Alternative Plan # _____



6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

ODYSSEY 2

Five-year plan · click any blank area to type

0

1

2

3

4

5

Alternative Plan # _____



RESOURCES



I LIKE IT



CONFIDENCE



COHERENCE

6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

ODYSSEY 3

Five-year plan · click any blank area to type

0

1

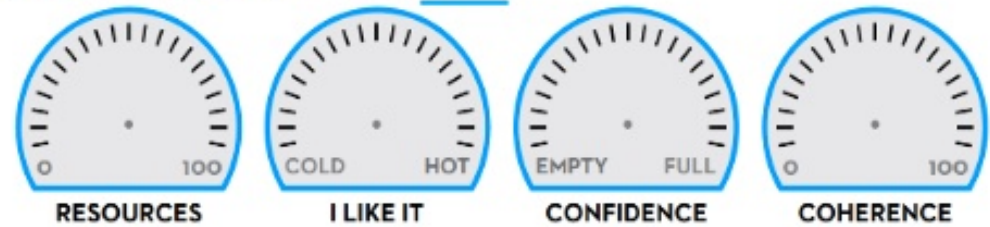
2

3

4

5

Alternative Plan # _____



6 word title:

Questions this plan addresses:

PROTOTYPING

Prototyping is about learning through action. A prototype is a small, low-risk experiment designed to help you gather real information about a possible future before making a bigger commitment. Focus on doing, not thinking. Work on one question at a time, and design experiments that are simple, affordable and achievable within the next month.

PROTOTYPING EXAMPLE

How might I prototype working in Consulting?

- Look up online or with AI what Consulting and Impact Consulting work is.
- Ask friends/family if they know someone working in Consulting.
- Contact that person for an informational interview.
- Wear a suit for 5 days straight.
- Hang out by the offices of a Consulting firm near you: look at people that go in and out and listen in to employee conversations in a coffee place next to the offices.
- Take a quick tutorial on YouTube of a business-case interview.
- Do a free job simulation on The Forage: <https://www.theforage.com/simulations?careers=consulting>



REFLECTION

1. Choose three career ideas or possibilities you would like to explore.

Frame each idea as something you can experience, not simply think about. Remember: focus on one prototype at a time, rather than trying to answer several questions at once.

Prototype 1

Prototype 2

Prototype 3

2. List small, inexpensive actions you could take over the next month to gather real information.

Think of actions that are practical, accessible and easy to try. Examples: speaking with an active professional, volunteering, attending events, taking a short course, shadowing someone, completing a side project or joining a professional community.

PROTOTYPE	ACTIONS I CAN TAKE THIS MONTH
Prototype 1	
Prototype 2	
Prototype 3	

3 Job search strategy

A successful job search is intentional, structured and relationship driven. Rather than relying only on job applications, it starts with learning from the market through conversations. Small, consistent actions create momentum and build advocacy in the organizations you are targeting.

1

EXPLORE

Use low-risk identity experiments or prototypes to test possible professional directions and learn through action.

2

PRIORITIZE

Build and score the UN Transition Tracker to focus time and effort on organizations offering the strongest combination of access, motivation and alignment for you.

3

CONNECT

Use targeted outreach and informational interviews to gain insight, build relationships, and create pathways to advocacy and opportunities.



REFLECTION

1. Familiarize yourself with the UN Transition Tracker.

Review the different sections and understand how the document is organized. This will become your working document throughout your career transition.

[Access and download the UN Transition Tracker](#)

2. Start building your UN Target List or your Contacts list.

Begin listing organizations that jumped out at you and/or people you would like to contact in your circle and beyond.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

- Reach out to at least 10 people over the next two weeks. And continue setting weekly outreach goals.
- Make sure to transform a one-time conversation into the beginning of a professional relationship. Asking for advice, acting on it, and reporting back!

4 Application materials

Your CV and LinkedIn are tools to help the market understand you quickly — they are not your job search strategy. Recruiters are looking for recognizable signals of fit: relevant experience, professional titles, keywords, skills and evidence of impact. For UN professionals, this often means translating your experience into market language so that someone outside the UN can immediately understand what you do and where you create value. Your CV needs to signal relevance quickly and stand up to a deeper read, while LinkedIn also needs to make you searchable, visible and easy to find.

1

TRANSLATE

Make your UN experience immediately understandable outside the UN. Use market-readable language, professional titles and keywords that recruiters will recognize.

2

SIGNAL RELEVANCE

Make it easy for recruiters to quickly see the experience, capabilities and achievements that connect you to the roles you are targeting.

3

BE SEARCHABLE

Use relevant titles, skills and strategic keywords consistently so that your LinkedIn profile can be found by recruiters searching for professionals like you.

For a deeper dive on translating your UN experience, see the Career Transition Series:

Session 14 — Finding Your Path in the Private Sector

<https://vimeo.com/1198448559/5d8a3e5180?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

All sessions and materials

<https://learning.unog.ch/career-transition-series>



REFLECTION

In this exercise, you will use an AI-powered LinkedIn tool to explore how your UN experience could be positioned for the external market. It can help with market-language translation, keywords, professional titles and profile content, but you bring the nuance and strategic direction.

Think of it as an exploration tool, not a final answer. You can run it as many times as you need, adjusting your career targets as your thinking progresses and comparing different positioning options.

1. Access the AI tool for the LinkedIn exercise

You will need to create a free account or sign in to access the tool. It is recommended that you use a personal email address.

[Access the LinkedIn AI Exercise](#)

2. Upload your materials

- Current CV
- LinkedIn profile

3. Define your career targets

Give the tool some direction. Your career targets do not need to be fully defined, but the more useful information you provide, the more relevant its recommendations will be. Consider writing down:

- Possible job titles
- Sectors you would like to explore
- Companies or types of organizations you are interested in
- Capabilities you want to use or build on
- Salient projects or experiences you want to carry forward

If your UN title does not translate easily to the private sector, quickly look up possible equivalents or use the examples from the session.

My career targets

4. Run the exercise and capture recommendations

As you work through the AI exercise, capture the ideas and recommendations you find most useful. You do not need to accept everything the tool suggests — use this space to record what feels relevant to your positioning.

LinkedIn Headline

Banner Slogan Ideas

Strategic Keywords

Experience Title Optimization

Alternative Job Titles

About Section

Profile Enhancement Chat

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Update your CV using the recommendations from the session and the private sector CV template.

learning.unog.ch/sites/default/files/CV_Template_ENGLISH_James_Smith.docx

Pay particular attention to:

- Your professional summary and positioning.
- Market-readable professional titles.
- Relevant keywords.
- Achievements and measurable impact.
- Translating UN-specific language and acronyms.
- Making your most relevant experience easy to find.

Review your CV section by section and make sure someone outside the UN can quickly understand who you are, what you do and where you create value.

Add possible professional titles and strategic keywords to your UN Transition Tracker. Keep refining them as you research roles, talk to people in the market and learn how employers describe the capabilities you bring.

5 Compensation

Compensation is one part of a career decision, and how much it matters will depend on your priorities, professional purpose and the life you want to build. Compensation in the private sector can vary significantly, even for professionals with similar capabilities. It reflects how an organization values particular skills and experience in a particular context and at a particular moment — shaped by factors such as sector, geography, market demand and organizational needs. Understanding how these decisions are made, and when you have room to negotiate, can help you approach compensation conversations with greater confidence and perspective.

1

UNDERSTAND CONTEXT

Compensation reflects how organizations value particular capabilities in a particular context. It is not a measure of your professional worth.

2

KNOW THE PROCESS

Understand how compensation decisions are made. HR/Compensation teams play different roles, while salary bands, market benchmarks and internal equity shape what is possible.

3

WHEN TO NEGOTIATE

Know when and how to discuss compensation. Prepare for the three moments when salary conversations really happen, and negotiate from an informed position.



REFLECTION

In this exercise, you will prototype your compensation scenarios. This is a quick prototype, not a full compensation study. The objective is to gather enough real information to compare possible futures. Move quickly and work with imperfect information: you are looking for useful market signals and realistic ranges, not definitive answers.

1. Choose your career scenarios

Choose two career scenarios you might realistically consider. If you are already clear about the direction you want to pursue, choose one scenario and explore it in greater depth.

CAREER SCENARIO 1

Role / direction

Sector / organization type

Geography

CAREER SCENARIO 2

Role / direction

Sector / organization type

Geography

2. Research your scenarios

Start with information you can access quickly during the session. Compare different signals to establish a realistic range for your role, sector and geography.

PUBLIC MARKET DATA

Glassdoor · LinkedIn Salary · Payscale · Salary ranges in comparable vacancies

STRUCTURED BENCHMARKS

Look for data relevant to your geography and sector:

- **Salary guides:** [Hays Salary Guides](#) · Robert Walters Salary Surveys · [Michael Page Salary Guides](#)
- **Compensation surveys and industry reports**
- **MBA employment reports** — particularly useful as a proxy when direct compensation information for mid- or senior-level roles is difficult to find.

3. Capture what you found

	CAREER SCENARIO 1	CAREER SCENARIO 2
Realistic compensation range		
Overall package		
What looks attractive		
What gives me pause / I still need to understand		

Looking at both scenarios, what stands out?

4. Go beyond published data

Think about who could help you get more current, specific and real-world information about each scenario.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

Consider Talent Acquisition professionals, recruiters, headhunters, executive-search firms or recruitment consultants specializing in your target sector or geography.

Who could I contact? How might I find out?

PEER INTELLIGENCE

Think about friends or family working in that region or sector, former colleagues who have moved outside the UN, alumni, sector contacts or people you have met through informational interviews. You do not need to know someone who has the answer. Think: “Who do I know who might get me one step closer to someone who does?”

Who could I ask? Who might introduce me to someone?

5. What does this mean for you?

Now look at your scenarios as possible futures, not just compensation packages.

Which scenario looks more or less attractive now? Why?

What would matter most to you? What might you be willing to trade?

How does compensation compare with the other things that matter to you in your career and life?

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Turn your compensation prototype into real market intelligence.

Choose one or two people you identified in the exercise and reach out to them. Use the conversation to test your assumptions and fill the gaps that published salary data could not answer. You might ask about:

- What a realistic compensation range looks like for your target role and market.
- How compensation is typically structured beyond base salary.
- Which elements of the package tend to be negotiable.
- What someone entering this market from the UN might not know or misunderstand.

Then update your compensation prototype with what you learn.

Your career transition roadmap

YOUR CAREER TRANSITION ROADMAP

10 steps to turn exploration into action

You don't need to have everything figured out before you start. Begin with the people and information already within reach, take small actions and use what you learn to inform your next steps.

Career transition is iterative. You may move backwards and forwards through this roadmap as your direction becomes clearer.



GET MOVING

Explore, clarify and open doors.

1

KNOW YOUR VALUE

Identify the capabilities, strengths and experience you already bring.

[Finding Your Path in the Private Sector — Career Transition Session 14 \(Video\)](#)

2

START WITH WHO YOU KNOW

Identify people already within reach who work outside the UN, particularly in a sector or geography you are curious about. Start talking to them.

3

TRANSLATE & SOFT-TEST YOUR STORY

Explain what you do in language people outside the UN understand. Notice what lands, what needs explaining and what questions they ask.

4

PROTOTYPE POSSIBILITIES

Explore different possible futures and test them through small, low-risk actions. Use what you learn to refine your direction.



BUILD MOMENTUM

Focus your effort and create opportunities.

5

TARGET STRATEGICALLY

Identify and prioritize the organizations, sectors and geographies where you want to focus your effort.

[UN Transition Tracker](#)

6

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Build momentum through consistent outreach and conversations.

150 reach-outs → 35 conversations → 5 interviews for opportunities / collaborations

Use these as directional milestones to track whether your activity is generating real opportunities.

7

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Use TIARA method to build relationships that can lead to advocacy, referrals and opportunities.



CONVERT OPPORTUNITIES

Position yourself and move forward.

8

POSITION FOR THE MARKET

Translate your experience into language the market understands and communicate your value clearly.

[CV Format](#)

[AI LinkedIn Tool \(AI Tool\)](#)

9

PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS

Understand the interview formats you may encounter and practice communicating your experience with evidence and impact.

[Mastering Interviews in the Private Sector — Career Transition Session 15 \(Video\)](#)

10

UNDERSTAND COMPENSATION & NEGOTIATE

Research your market, understand how offers are made and prepare to evaluate and negotiate from an informed position.

START → LEARN → REFINE → KEEP MOVING

Start where you are. Take action. Learn. Refine. Keep moving.

Coaching support

If you have access to coaching, this page can help you prepare for each session by reflecting on your priorities and considering how your coach can best support your development.

1. What would you like to work on?

2. What would be a useful outcome from the session?

3. Bring something to work with

Your coach can provide the greatest value when you provide work and evidence to build on. Please send ahead of your meeting one or more supporting documents:

Notes from a prototype or career experiment

Your UN Transition Tracker: your target companies or contacts

A networking message you have drafted or sent

Notes from an informational interview

Your updated CV

Your updated LinkedIn profile

A job description that interests you

Interview examples or preparation notes

Compensation research for a target role, sector or geography

Something else you would like to work on:

Final words

At the beginning of this journey, we invited you to explore possibilities, test ideas and learn from what you find. We hope this workbook has helped you do exactly that — and perhaps see your experience, and what might come next, a little differently.

You have built valuable capabilities in one of the world's most complex operating environments. The private sector holds many interesting opportunities for people who can navigate complexity, different cultures, governments, stakeholders and change.

You do not need to have everything figured out. What you are looking for are the conditions for the next level of clarity. Keep exploring, talking to people, trying things and paying attention to what you learn along the way.

Your next step does not have to define the rest of your life. Stay curious and embrace some of the uncertainty — it may take you somewhere you had not considered before.

We wish you the very best for whatever comes next. And please stay in touch.