



Alter

your trajectory

Career Trajectory Series

1. How to Plan Your Career



At Alternatives we connect with precision the best with the best, and all the time with unrelenting integrity, passion and expertise.

To help you on your career journey, we have developed the **Alternatives Trajectory Toolkit**. Whether you are simply planning or reviewing your career; taking an initial look at potential opportunities; applying for a specific role or actively interviewing, we have tips and insights to share with you, accumulated by our team, over many years.

In our **Career Trajectory** series we share:

1. **How to plan your career**

2. Evolving marketing competencies and how to build them

3. How to write a winning cv

4. How to succeed at interview

5. How to prepare for a competency based interview

And of course, you can contact our **specialist talent team** at any time to advise you along the way. They are industry and talent specialists of standing, who recognise the complex and rapidly evolving world of marketing, digital, and customer focused careers. They can advise, and at times challenge you. They will go the extra mile to ALTER your trajectory.

We hope you find these insights useful and we look forward to hearing from you.

From all of the team at Alternatives



How to Plan Your Career

The evolving role of marketing

Career planning is important at every stage of your career. However, the best career is the one that **aligns with you personally**—that aligns with your values, your strengths and interests, your passion, your purpose. The more aligned, the more successful you will be.

Importantly, it is not about what success looks like for others— your family, your partner or your peers. It is not what you feel you should want. It is about what is right for you, so take time to really reflect.

Ask yourself: *What do I really want to do? What energises and excites me? What plays to my strengths? Does the work I do matter? Does it have meaning for me? Do I have a sense of purpose? Does it benefit society and the environment?*

Be ambitious for yourself and aim high.

Marketing is multifaceted and ever evolving

Think about which area interests you most

Marketing encompasses a wide range of ever evolving and new specialist areas such as Strategy, Planning, Innovation, Research, Insights and Data, Brand management, Product management, Creative, Advertising, Proposition development, Pricing and Revenue Growth, Internal and Corporate Communications, E-commerce, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Content, PR, Experiential marketing, Trade marketing, Base management, CRM, Omni-channel management, Customer lifecycle management, CX, UX, Sales enablement, Lead generation, Media planning and buying, Campaign development, Marketing programmatic, Sales and distribution...and there's probably more.

Be guided by your own interests, passions and strengths as a start point.

Plan your career strategically with the end destination in mind

Your career is a journey. And as we have seen in recent times, it is rarely a linear one. Today it is more about portfolio careers, with multiple pathways to where we want to get to. But you can embrace the twists and turns in the road better if you have clarity about the ultimate direction and end goal.

We suggest that you apply you the same thinking to your career as you would to any strategic challenge, by asking:

Where am I now?

Where do I want to get to?

How will I get there?

What's my action plan?

For example, if you want to ultimately be a **Marketing Director**, you will need to build strategic and tactical skills across the core marketing competencies, plus gain significant strategy, business, financial, team and stakeholder management skills.

If you want to go into **general management**, then ensure you get lots of cross-functional project exposure, own a P&L and know your finances in detail, get team management experience and do a stint in another role such as sales.



If you prefer to go down a **path of deep specialism**, there are plenty of options. Marketing is a multi-disciplinary, ever evolving profession, with many paths to choose from, so consider which area is right for you and what the long-term career development opportunities are in that discipline. Is the specialist area recognised as a vital function in organisations and will it likely lead to a Director level role one day? If not, it is still very much a legitimate career choice if it's what you want to do, but your career plan may need to include diversifying your experience along the way, if you aspire to a broader leadership position.

Finding it difficult? Think about what you have **enjoyed** about your previous roles and what types of organisations and industries you feel you get the most from and can give the most to. Listen to your gut too for what you do not like in your current role or sector. Separate the role from the people and company you work with and see does that change your perspective.

Remind yourself of what your **core strengths and abilities** are. Ask your colleagues and friends to tell you what they see as your strengths and, if you think you can take it, your weaknesses - it helps to get an outsider's view on this and focus strategically going forward.

The Marketing Remit varies across sector and companies, so check where it is valued most

When it comes to career planning you need to carefully consider which environment will best nurture your talent and support your career goals. Think about where marketing is valued most and is considered strategic. Think carefully about the sectors and companies that place it to the fore and invest in it.

From our surveys we see that **Marketing plays the most strategic role** and is represented at board level in sectors that are typically very brand and consumer focused such as drinks, FMCG and retail. It also plays a strategic role in the telco, tech, transport, travel, financial services and e-commerce sectors, which are increasingly customer insight and data led.

If a marketer wishes to own both a strategic and commercial agenda and ultimately aspires to general management, then it is vital to choose a sector and company in which marketing plays a growth driving role. If however, a marketer aspires to become a leading specialist eg in strategic planning, communications, innovation, e-commerce, digital, or CX, then they need to look to the sectors in which those functions are essential.

The Sector: Are you passionate about the sector? Can you be? Do you know who the players are and what they really do? Can you talk to people who are already working there? And if you know you will want to change industries, remember it's easier to do so earlier in your career.

The company: Keep updated on the market sector, follow companies online, keep an eye out on who's who and keep up to date with brand and company developments. Talk to anyone who is familiar with the company you are interested in and get an insider's view. A great boss can also be an influencing factor.

The Money question

The most effective marketer knows how to position their product and advertise all the benefits that are relevant to the needs of their target market. Similarly, to impress any future employer, you need to effectively market the benefits of the product, which in this case are your strengths, work experience, industry knowledge, contacts, skills, abilities and successes. It is important for you to be relevant to the market you are talking to and highlight the key transferable skills you possess which will add significant value to a potential future employer.



Be mindful of consistently building your **personal brand**, even when you're not actively looking in the market. Seek out all opportunities around you. Be visible online with value-add content and contributions. Be active in your business networks. Participate at conferences and business community events.

Proactively avail of **networking opportunities**, as they can be a great insight into industries and roles that you may have limited awareness of. Network well, establishing meaningful relationships over time

Ensure you build your Competencies proactively throughout your career

Seek consistent growth and development and **stay relevant**. Invest in your own personal development- do not wait for others to do so. Ensure you build each of the Core Marketing Competencies, at every stage of your career. Keep building your expertise as you move from support level, to practitioner, to manager and to director level in your career.

Develop your competencies via formal learning, work experience and of course, life experiences. Develop your soft skills- you will stagnate in your career unless you do.

See our [Career Trajectory Series 2: Evolving Marketing Competencies and how to build them](#) for more information.

The Money question

Money is of course important, but seek out great roles and learning opportunities too. Do not change roles for a salary increase alone - change only if it is right for your career.

However, if you are looking for that pay rise, unfortunately for your employer it is usually easier (if riskier) to gain big salary increases by changing companies. Do not change too often - show some staying power. 2-3 years per role is probably about right for solid learnings at early to mid-career level and a chance for you to show you have really made a difference.

That said, do not undersell yourself. Know and value your worth. Benchmark your salary and package. The Alternatives & MII annual salary and sentiment survey provides unique and benchmarked information that you can access easily. Our specialist team can also provide guidance.



Contact us

We hope you find these career insights useful. For further guidance on how to plan your marketing career, contact our specialist team at Alternatives.

Call us on **+3531 6618889** or email us at **hello@alternatives.ie**
We look forward to hearing from you.

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