From Doer to Expert to Brand:

The Three Stages of Career Evolution

Evolving Professional Value Across Three Career Stages

ecap

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01

Who This Is For
(and Who It's Not)

This paper is for professionals who are technically strong, trusted, and ambitious, but who either feel their career momentum has slowed despite sustained effort or are intentionally seeking to move into more senior, higher-visibility roles.

It is most useful if you:

- Consistently perform at a high level but aren't progressing as quickly as you expect
- Are relied upon, yet not always influential
- Sense that your value exceeds your current role or recognition
- Want to move deliberately into more senior, visible, or trusted positions.

This is not about:

- Early-career skill acquisition
- Hustle culture or "doing more"
- Building a loud personal brand without substance

This paper focuses on how the market values you - and how that value evolves over time.

Executive Summary

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Most career advice assumes a simple ladder: work hard, get promoted, repeat. In reality, long-term progression is less about climbing and more about shifting perception on how the market values you.

This paper introduces a straightforward model of career evolution:

STAGE 1:

"What you do"
THE DOER

Your value is defined by execution: delivering outcomes, being reliable, learning quickly, and continuously improving your craft.

STAGE 2:

"What you know"
THE EXPERT

Your value comes from expertise and judgement: becoming a subject-matter expert, building a track record, and solving increasingly complex problems consistently.

STAGE 3:

"Who you are"
THE BRAND

Your value is rooted in trust and reputation: your personal brand, credibility that travels, referrals, testimonials, and being identified for who you are, not just what you do.

To move deliberately through these stages, this paper introduces the ecap checklist - a four-part framework for building and demonstrating career value:

- **e** — **Execution:** consistently delivering results
- **c** — **Capability:** developing repeatable expertise and sound judgement
- **a** — **Authority:** earning trust, endorsement, and professional gravitas
- **p** — **Presence:** being visible to the right people for the right reasons

Key insight: People often get stuck when they continue investing in the previous stage's currency (e.g. "doing more tasks"), while the next level requires a different currency (e.g. "proving judgement" or "earning trust at scale").

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The Model

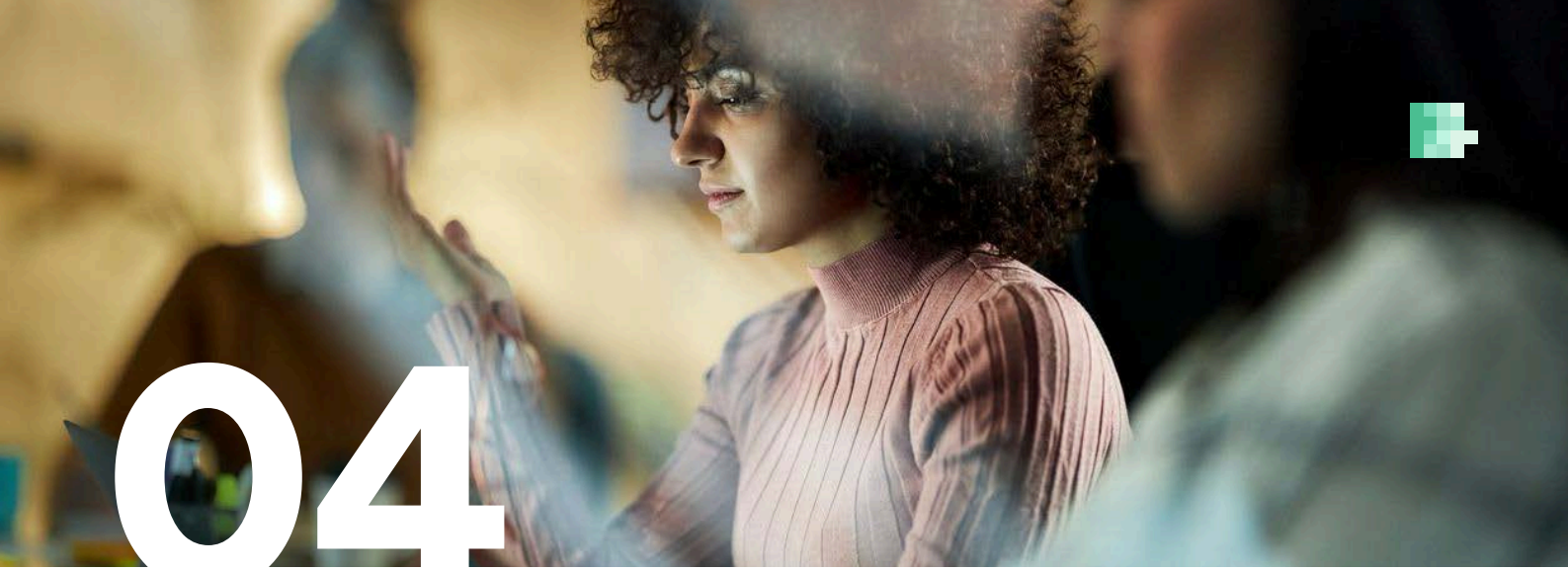
Career value typically shifts across three identities:

Career Identity	Market Question
▪ What you do	▪ Can you deliver?
▪ What you know	▪ Can you solve this reliably?
▪ Who you are	▪ Can we trust you with high-stakes outcomes?

The ecap checklist:

- **e** — **Execution:** delivery, standards, follow-through
- **c** — **Capability:** expertise, judgement, repeatability
- **a** — **Authority:** trust, endorsement, credibility
- **p** — **Presence:** visibility, narrative, market signal

Simple Rule: Stage 1 is dominated by **Execution**, Stage 2 by **Capability**, and Stage 3 by **Authority** and **Presence** - with each element building sequentially and every stage essential to progression.



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Stage 1:
"What You Do" *Doer*

You are primarily valued for execution: delivering tasks, meeting expectations, learning quickly, and becoming dependable.

Career currency:

Output Quality + Reliability + Learning Velocity

What great looks like:

- ✓ Consistent Delivery
- ✓ Steady Improvement
- ✓ Proactive Communication

ecap Checklist - Stage 1:

To move deliberately through these stages, this paper introduces the ecap checklist - a four-part framework for building and demonstrating career value:

e	**Execution:** Deliver on time, manage expectations, close loops
c	**Capability:** Learn core skills quickly, know what good looks like
a	**Authority:** Earn trust, take ownership of mistakes
p	**Presence:** Make contributions visible, document outcomes

Common Pain Point At This Stage:

"I'm busy and reliable, but I'm interchangeable."

Promotion Trigger:

You stop being evaluated on ***"Did you do it?"*** and start being evaluated on ***"Did you choose the right approach?"***

Stage 2:
"What You Know" *Expert*

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You are valued for expertise and judgement:

Diagnosing problems, solving them, and creating repeatable results.

Career currency:

Decision Quality + Pattern Recognition + Track Record

What great looks like:

- ✓ Navigating ambiguity
- ✓ Producing reusable work
- ✓ Earning trust through consistent judgement

Common Pain Point At This Stage:

"People trust my opinion, but decisions still happen without me."

Promotion Trigger:

Opportunities begin to arrive because of who people believe you are ***"We want you involved,"*** not just ***"Can you help?"***

Stage 3:
"Who You Are" *Brand*

You are valued for a trusted identity at scale:
Reputation, leadership signature, and credibility that travels.

Career currency:

Trust

+

Endorsement

+

Narrative Coherence

+

Network Effects

You attract opportunities - you don't just pursue them.

Why Organisations Get This Wrong:

- ✓ Rewarding Stage 1 Behaviour (Output) While Expecting Stage 2 Thinking (Judgement)
- ✓ Promoting Expertise Without Enabling Authority
- ✓ Treating "Presence" As Self-Promotion Rather Than Market Signalling

As a result, individuals are often blamed for stalls that are actually **systemic mismatches between role expectations and evaluation criteria.**

Common Pain Point At This Stage:

"I have influence inside my role, but lack gravitas beyond it."

Common Traps:

developing a brand without substance, falling into ego capture, or becoming disconnected from reality
This stage is about credible, visible presence grounded in results, reputation, and trusted endorsements - not self-promotion.

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Transitions and the 90-Day Moves

TRANSITION 1	TRANSITION 2
Stage 1 ⟶ **Stage 2**	**Stage 2** ⟶ **Stage 3**
▪ Shift from tasks to judgement. Focus on **domain expertise, methods, and documented outcomes.**	▪ Shift from expertise to identity. Focus on **narrative, referees, and proof.**

Each transition should produce **concrete artefacts and evidence** - for example, testimonials, case studies, or a professional portfolio.

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The ecap Checklist in Practice

USING THE ECAP CHECKLIST MONTHLY:

- ✓ **Score yourself** on each element.
- ✓ **Pick one lever** to focus on (E, C, A, or P).
- ✓ **Define one artefact** of proof that demonstrates progress.

Examples of proof artefact:

e	**Execution:** metrics, delivery dashboards
c	**Capability:** frameworks, case studies
a	**Authority:** endorsements, leadership roles
p	**Presence:** public signals, talks, articles

How the ecap Checklist Works in Real Careers

Here is how the ecap checklist maps to career evolution using public figures. These examples illustrate how consistent execution (E), capability (C), authority (A), and presence (P) build over time.

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Alan Greenspan

Alan Greenspan is a globally recognised economist whose insights shaped US monetary policy for decades. From co-founding a consulting firm to leading the Federal Reserve during periods of enormous economic change, he became known for turning deep technical expertise into trusted guidance at the highest levels of government and finance. His career demonstrates how consistent execution and disciplined judgement can build a reputation that commands trust and influence worldwide.

e

Execution: Repeatable economic analysis

Proof: Client-grade forecasts & advisory memos that stakeholders reused.

c

Capability: Built specialized competence in economic and policy analysis

Proof: Demonstrated judgement in complex macro/policy systems.

a

Authority: Appointed Chair of President's Council of Economic Advisers; later Fed Chair

Proof: Official appointments & confirmations = institutional trust.

p

Presence: Speeches, media attention, post-Fed consulting

Proof: Public visibility downstream of Authority.

Takeaway:

Deliver consistently

↓

Become unusually competent

↓

Get formally trusted

↓

Become broadly visible.

Indra Nooyi

Indra Nooyi is an inspiring business leader who transformed PepsiCo into a powerhouse of strategic growth and sustainable innovation. Rising from early strategy roles to CEO and Chair, she built a unique capability in corporate strategy, finance, and global leadership, earning the trust of boards, investors, and employees alike. Her journey demonstrates how combining relentless execution with strategic insight and earned authority can create a lasting legacy and a visible, influential presence.

e

Execution: Delivered in high-performance environments (Boston Consulting Group, early PepsiCo roles)

Proof: Promotions, increased scope, critical workstreams.

c

Capability: Strategic expertise in corporate strategy, M&A, and finance

Proof: Frameworks, restructuring decisions, recognized competency by peers.

a

Authority: Appointed CEO & Chair of PepsiCo

Proof: Formal institutional trust, top-level decision-making authority.

p

Presence: Public thought leadership, memoir, speaking circuit

Proof: Enduring visibility beyond the role.

Takeaway:

Execute in demanding arenas

↓

Build rare capability

↓

Gain institutional authority

↓

Convert authority into lasting presence.

09

Self-Assessment

Rate each statement from 1–5:

e	**Execution:** reliability, delivery
c	**Capability:** expertise, repeatability
a	**Authority:** trust, endorsement
p	**Presence:** visibility, market signal

Interpretation:

- **High E** → Stage 1
- **High C** → Stage 2
- **Strong A/P** → Stage 3

Why Most Career Transitions Still Fail

Most professionals can identify their stage. Far fewer know how to **signal the next one effectively.**

Transitions fail because:

- ✓ Signals Lag Reality
- ✓ Proof Is Informal Or Invisible
- ✓ Feedback Comes From The Wrong Audience

This is where deliberate calibration of evidence, narrative, and market perception makes the difference in career progression.

Next Step: Use the **ecap checklist** to assess your stage, define proof, and make your value visible - ensuring your career progression aligns with the market's expectations, not just your effort.

ecap Career Positioning Diagnostic

e Execution

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I consistently deliver expected outcomes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I meet deadlines and follow through	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I communicate progress and results proactively	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My work is reliable and reusable by others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learn quickly and improve outputs over time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

e — Execution Total: _____

c Capability

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I apply expertise to solve complex problems consistently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I create frameworks, methods, or processes that can be reused	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others recognise my judgement and domain knowledge	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I identify patterns and anticipate challenges before they arise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My work produces measurable, repeatable impact	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c — Capability Total: _____

a Authority

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am sought out for advice on high-stakes decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I hold positions or responsibilities that signal trust	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others endorse or vouch for my competence and judgement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am consulted on critical or high-visibility work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My involvement signals credibility to colleagues and stakeholders	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

a — Authority Total: _____

p Presence

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I am visible to the right people for the right reasons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My insights and work are recognised beyond my immediate team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My reputation and influence extend beyond my current role	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I proactively communicate achievements in appropriate forums	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am recognised externally (industry, network) for my expertise	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

c — Presence Total: _____

Step 2: Identify Your Stage

Highest total score indicates your current stage:

- High E → Stage 1: Doer
- High C → Stage 2: Expert
- Strong A & P → Stage 3: Brand

Define one concrete artefact of proof to demonstrate progress:

Step 3: Define Your Next Move

- Pick one element (E, C, A, or P) to focus on

Define one concrete artefact of proof to demonstrate progress:

Defining Your
Artefacts of Proof

Section 1:
What Must Change in Perception?

- To progress to the next stage, how must you be seen differently?
- What assumptions about you need to shift?
- Where are you currently perceived as strong - but limited?
- What narrative do you want associated with your name?
- In which forums does your authority need to be unquestioned?

Write the perception shift clearly:
"I need to move from being seen as _____ to _____."

Notes:

Section 2:
Concrete Artefacts of Proof

Define three tangible artefacts of proof:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Progression requires visible evidence.
- What specific artefacts will demonstrate your evolution?
- What decisions will you lead?
- What rooms will you enter consistently?
- What strategic conversations will carry your voice?
- What outcomes will be publicly associated with you?
- Who will visibly endorse or sponsor you?

Notes:

Section 3:
90-Day Activation Plan

Authority compounds through deliberate action.

- In the next 90 days, I will:

_____

_____

- Increase visible authority by:

_____

_____

Notes:

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About ecap

At ecap, we help organisations unlock the potential of their people, leaders, and teams to drive meaningful, lasting impact. Clients trust us to provide insight-driven solutions across leadership, talent, and organisational strategy. Today, we are a single source for executive search, leadership development, rewards, and strategic advisory, empowering businesses and leaders to make human-centric decisions and achieve lasting results. Our solutions range from talent assessment and executive appointments, to leadership coaching, organisational design, incentive frameworks, and large-scale transformation programmes.

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