

Moving Past Obstacles

A diagnostic guide to identify what's in your way and how to move forward.

You're capable. You do good work.

Colleagues respect you. You've accomplished things.

But you know there are obstacles between where you are and where you want to be.

This guide walks you through five questions that will clarify what's in your way. Then you'll take one small action this week. After that, you'll understand exactly where you're headed.

Section 1: Name What's Frustrating You

WHERE WE ARE: Everyone has obstacles. Let's identify yours.

WHY: Most people assume the obstacle is external (wrong job, bad market, bad timing). Sometimes it is. But first, we need to name what's actually showing up for you.

Question 1: What are the three things that frustrate you most with your work?

Question 2: What's your biggest challenge right now?

Don't sugarcoat it. Say it like it is. What's on your mind? What would you like to change? What feels like it's in your way?

Section 2: Define What You Actually Want

WHERE WE ARE: You've named what's frustrating you. Now we need to know what moving forward looks like.

WHY: You can't move toward something you haven't clearly named. This question forces you to get specific about what you want, not just what you don't want.

Question 3: What would a great outcome look like?

Given your biggest challenge, what would you like to change? What would a great outcome look like?

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Section 3: What's Actually in Your Control?

WHERE WE ARE: You know what you want. Now we're getting real about what you can actually do about it.

WHY: Many people blame circumstances. But the truth is, you have more agency than you think. This question separates what you can influence from what you can't.

Question 4: Given your desired outcome, what do you control? How can you be part of making it happen?

Section 4: What's Really in the Way?

WHERE WE ARE: You know what you want. You know what you can control. Now let's name what's actually blocking you.

WHY: Once people name what they want and what they control, they often realize the real obstacle is internal: fear, uncertainty, not knowing where to start, or waiting for someone else to validate the move.

Question 5: What obstacles will keep you from making this outcome happen?

Section 5: Here's What Changes

You've just done something most people don't: You named your frustration, your desired outcome, what you control, and what's in the way.

Now comes the hard truth: Clarity doesn't come from thinking harder. It comes from moving.

One conversation teaches you more than a month of planning.

One small action reveals what spreadsheets hide.

Section 6: The Small Test Framework

WHERE WE ARE: You understand what's in your way. Now here's how to move forward.

WHY: You don't need a perfect plan. You need a small, cheap test that teaches you something real about what you're trying to do. Tests give you data. Data kills uncertainty.

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Why Tests Work

A test is different from a plan. Plans live in your head. Tests live in the world.

When you run a test:

- You learn something concrete (not theoretical)
- You discover what you actually want (not what you think you should want)
- You build momentum by moving, not by thinking
- You get feedback that changes your direction

One test beats a month of planning.

Test 1: Conversation Test

What It Is

Talk to someone who's already done what you're thinking about doing, or who's in the position you want to move toward. Ask real questions about how they got started, what was the big leap, their challenges, etc. Listen.

What You Control

- Who you talk to
- When you reach out
- What you ask
- How you listen

(You don't control their answers or their willingness to talk, but you control everything else)

How to Run It

- Name one person who fits: Someone who's done it, or who has the role/situation you want
- Reach out (email, LinkedIn, phone, in-person coffee)
- **Ask ONE good question. Examples:**• 'How did you make the transition from [your role] to [their role]?'• 'What did you wish you'd known before you started building [what they do]?'• 'What's the biggest challenge you face in [their situation]?'
- Listen. Don't pitch. Don't sell. Just listen.
- Take notes. Notice what surprised you.

What You Learn

- Whether this direction is real for you (or just an idea)
- What the actual obstacles are (not what you imagined)
- What skills or experience actually matter

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- Whether you want to do this (you might not)

Time to Run It

3-5 days to set it up. 30 minutes to an hour for the conversation.

Examples

- Want to move into management? Talk to someone who recently made that jump.
- Thinking about starting a side income? Talk to someone doing it in your field.
- Considering a different industry? Talk to someone who made that move.

Test 2: Visibility Test

What It Is

Make one post, write one thing, or show one piece of work that demonstrates what you know or what you want to do. See who responds and what they ask.

What You Control

- What you say/show
- Where you share it
- How honest you are
- Whether you respond to feedback

(You don't control who sees it or how they react, but you control the message)

How to Run It

- **Create something small. Not perfect. Real.**• One LinkedIn post about something you know• One email to your network about a skill you have• One piece of work you share (code, writing, a design, a video)• One article or insight you publish
- Keep it specific and honest. Not 'I'm thinking about X.' But: 'Here's what I learned about X.'
- Share it where your audience is (LinkedIn, email, Twitter, your network)
- **Notice:**• Who responds• What questions they ask• What surprises you about the responses (Be patient – people are watching and at the oddest time will comment about what you posted.)

What You Learn

- Does anyone actually care about this?
- Who cares? (That tells you something about your audience)
- What questions do they have?
- Are you actually good at this? (Their reactions tell you)

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Time to Run It

30 minutes to create. 1-2 days to share and see responses.

Examples

- Write about a problem you solve at work. See who asks follow-up questions.
- Share a tool or framework you use. See if people want to learn more.
- Post about a skill you have. See if anyone asks for help.
- Share your thinking on something in your field. See who engages.

Test 3: Action Test

What It Is

Do the smallest possible version of what you want to do. Not the plan. The actual thing.

What You Control

- What you build/offer
- Who you offer it to
- How simple you make it
- Whether you actually do it

(You don't control whether they say yes, but you control whether you try)

How to Run It

- **Define the smallest version:**• Not 'start a business' but 'offer your skills to one person'• Not 'write a book' but 'write one article'• Not 'build a product' but 'build the simplest version for one customer'• Not 'get promoted' but 'take on one project that shows you in that role'
- Do it. This week.
- Learn:• What was actually hard?• What surprised you?• Do you actually want to do this?• What's the next step?

What You Learn

- Whether you actually want to do this (big difference between thinking and doing)
- What the real obstacles are (not theoretical ones)
- What you're actually good at
- What you need to improve

Time to Run It

1 week to complete. Ongoing to learn from it.

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Examples

- Want to move to a new role? Volunteer for a project that uses those skills internally.
- Want to build a side income? Offer your skills to one potential client. See if they bite.
- Want to switch industries? Take a small project in that industry. See how it feels.
- Want to lead? Step up on one small team initiative. See if you like it.

How to Pick Your Test

Look at your obstacle (from your answers above). Which test addresses it most directly?

If your obstacle is: "I don't know if this is actually possible for someone like me"

→ Run a **CONVERSATION TEST** (talk to someone who did it)

If your obstacle is: "I'm not sure if anyone cares about what I have to offer"

→ Run a **VISIBILITY TEST** (show what you know, see who responds)

If your obstacle is: "I don't know where to start" or "I'm waiting for perfect conditions"

→ Run an **ACTION TEST** (just start with the smallest version)

If you're unsure:

Start with a Conversation Test. Lowest friction. Highest insight.

Important

A test that fails teaches you as much as one that succeeds.

The point is not success. The point is movement and learning.

You will learn something. You will move forward. That's the win.

Section 7: Your First Move This Week

WHERE WE ARE: You've done the diagnostic. You understand the framework. Now you commit to one action.

WHY: Most people read a guide and feel better. Then they go back to work and nothing changes. You're not most people. You're going to move this week.

Based on your answers above, commit to your test:

Which test will you run? (Circle one)

Conversation / Visibility / Action

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Get specific

Not 'have a conversation.' Who? When? What will you actually say or do?

Do it this week. Not next month. This week.

Section 8: What Happens Next

You're going to do your test. You'll learn something. Then most people stop there.

Don't be most people.

Step 1: Do Your Test

Run the test you committed to above. This week.

Step 2: Reply to This Email

Tell me what you learned. What surprised you? What's your next move? I read every reply.

Step 3: Subscribe to [YouTube Page](#)

This is my weekly podcast. Come check it out and subscribe.

Remember

The people who move forward are the ones who actually move.

Who take the test.

Who tell me what they learned.

Who understand that movement beats perfect planning.

Make your move this week. Then tell me about it.

—Dale