



JOB SEEKER'S GUIDE TO CREATING A 30-60-90-DAY PLAN

The first 90 days in a new job typically set the tone for your employment. Three months is the standard “grace period” for new employees, and how you handle those first weeks and months on the job is critical.

Creating a 30-60-90-Day plan as part of the job interview process can not only help you win the job offer, but it can help guide your actions during the transition period for your new position. The plan is a written outline of the strategy and goals you have for the first three months in a new position. It demonstrates an understanding of what the job involves and your ability to perform the job.

Developing a 30-60-90-Day plan requires that you mentally prepare yourself for a new position by planning the activities and projects that will help you learn what you need to know about your potential new employer and co-workers while setting yourself up for success in the first 90 days on the job.

You can develop a 30-60-90-Day plan for almost any position, but they are most commonly used in sales, management, technical, and administrative jobs. In certain types of positions — for example, sales or sales management jobs — you may actually be asked to create a 30-60-90-Day plan as part of the interview process. However, taking the initiative to create a plan — even without being asked — can set you apart from other candidates and demonstrate your understanding of the role and qualifications to handle the challenges the position offers.

Creating a plan signals the hiring manager that you are a serious candidate and that you are willing to invest the time and resources necessary to be successful in the position. It can demonstrate your knowledge of the company's needs and outline the skills and abilities you'll put into action to effectively perform in the position. It distinguishes you from other candidates for the position by focusing on the company's needs and requirements and showing how you can make an immediate impact in your first 90 days on the job. The 30-60-90-Day plan can enhance your chances for receiving an additional interview and securing the job offer. Once you are hired, the plan can serve as a road map for success in your first 90 days in a new position.

Your 30-60-90-Day plan will address many aspects of business matters, including products, customers, technologies, company culture/politics, and strategies.

After 90 days in a new position, your supervisor expects you to be making an impact in that position. The 30-60-90-Day plan helps ensure you'll achieve this goal.

Important Note: In developing the 30-60-90-Day plan — especially in the execution phase — focus on *what*, not *how*. That is, identify broad targets to focus on, but don't provide detailed specifics on how you plan to implement each task, thereby creating a document that could be used as a roadmap by another candidate or by the company itself if it doesn't hire you.

Outcomes should focus on solving problems for the company (i.e., retaining customers, increasing revenue, fixing specific problems) or capitalizing on opportunities (increasing sales, expanding the business, attracting new customers, being more competitive).

When to Develop the 30-60-90-Day Plan

Generally there are two specific time periods when you might develop your 30-60-90-Day plan. The first is after your initial job interview, when you've started identifying how you can be a fit for the company's needs. You might actually suggest to the hiring manager at the end of the interview that you create a 30-60-90-Day plan so that he or she can assess whether you'd be a good fit for the organization. In securing permission to create the plan, you may request permission to conduct informational interviews with people you'd be working with in the position. This is an opportunity to get to know your future co-workers and obtain information that isn't available through third-party research alone. Your request to create a plan indicates serious interest in the position.

The second timeframe for creating a 30-60-90-Day plan is after the second or third interview, but before a hiring decision has been made. It's sometimes at this point that the hiring manager actually requests you create the plan, instead of you taking the initiative to create one.

Where to Get the Information for Your 30-60-90-Day Plan

This document can set you apart from other candidates by demonstrating an understanding of the role and a specific plan for meeting the company's needs. Of course, to create the document, you must have information about the company, the job, and the industry. You can gather this information by researching the company and industry, and/or customers, through conversations with your job interviewer(s), future co-workers, supervisors, and vendors serving the company or the industry.

Here are just some of the sources you can consult for research:

- The job description/job posting for the position
- The company's website (including news releases, mission statements, and the company's annual report)
- The company's social media channels (Twitter, Facebook business page, LinkedIn company profile, YouTube channel, etc.)
- Third-party websites like GlassDoor.com (www.glassdoor.com) or WetFeet.com (www.wetfeet.com) allow you to read the opinions of former employees
- Media coverage (trade journals as well as mainstream media coverage)
- Google the company
- Ask the hiring manager to provide you with access to additional data that will help you develop the plan — i.e., financial and operating reports, strategic and functional plans, employee surveys, etc.? (Keep in mind, the company may not want to provide you with this data unless you are hired, so you may not have access to this information until you're an employee.)

- If you know someone who works for the company — or if you can network your way to be able to talk to a current employee — you can ask them questions to assess the current situation
- You can also talk to people who are currently working in the field to gain a better understanding of the job, company, and/or industry

One of the best sources of information is your interview with the hiring manager for the job. Listen carefully for information that relates to the organization's strategy, technical capabilities, corporate culture, and organizational politics. During the interview, pay careful attention to spot clues to the hiring manager's problems and concerns and to identify the company's plans for future growth.

Here are some questions to ask in the interview that will help you prepare the plan:

- What is the biggest challenge facing the organization in the next 6 months or year?
- How is this role expected to address this challenge facing the company? (Or is it?)
- What does he or she absolutely need you to accomplish within the first 90 days?
- What would he or she like you to do beyond that during the first 90 days?
- What is the most promising — yet unexploited — opportunity for growth? Why isn't the company pursuing that opportunity right now?
- What is the biggest problem you need solved by (this job title)?
- Is this position focused on new projects, turnarounds/realignments, or sustaining success?

Take a few moments after the interview and write down everything you can think of that relates to:

- Problems the hiring manager and/or company is facing
- Opportunities that haven't yet been pursued but that are a priority
- Your personal weaknesses/shortcomings that may need to be addressed in follow-up communications to strengthen your position as a candidate

Formatting Your 30-60-90-Day Plan

The typical 30-60-90-Day plan is a Microsoft Word document with 1-5 pages — or a PowerPoint document with 7-12 pages — that is usually sent electronically to the hiring manager, either after an interview or before a follow-up interview.

In each 30-day period, you want to focus on 3-7 initiatives or projects. Trying to do too much will be counter-productive. It's very easy to take on too much during your transition into a new position, but you can't achieve results without focus. Identify the most high-value activities and prioritize those in your plan.

You can use the template below to create your 30-60-90-Day plan, customizing the initiatives to the specific company you're targeting. The plan needs to speak to the hiring manager's needs and the company's specific challenges and opportunities. A generic plan will not be effective.

Template for a 30-60-90-Day Plan

• *Introduction/Cover Letter*

The introduction provides an overview of what you would like to accomplish in the first three months on the job. Outline specific outcomes you'd like to have achieved at the end of the first 90 days.

In the introduction, provide a disclaimer that the plan is provided to stimulate communication about the company's specific needs in this role and how you, the candidate, can hit the ground running to meet those needs. State, however, that the plan is subject to revision in collaboration with the supervisor's specific needs.

Be as specific as possible; however, you will want to leave open the possibility that these tasks can be amended or modified if desired, in consultation with the supervisor.

The body of the plan is divided into three separate content sections: the first 30 days, days 31-60, and days 61-90. Each section contains specific tasks or initiatives.

• *First 30 Days (Meet/Learn/Understand)*

In the first 30 days, your goal is to analyze your situation and ensure the priorities you focus on in the next 60 days are ones that will get you started on the right path. Understanding the history of the organization and learning organizational dynamics and structure will help you recognize potential pitfalls and challenges due to company culture and/or internal politics. You will use this time to meet key internal personnel and external stakeholders, educate yourself about the company and its products and services, get to know your co-workers and customers, and collect the information that you will need in order to plan and execute the projects you'll be working on. A large part of your work in the first 30 days is to learn about the organization's history and culture.

However, there is a balance between learning and doing. Spend too little time learning, and you may make decisions that alienate your new colleagues. Spend too much time learning, and your supervisor may wonder if you will accomplish what he or she wants you to do in your new role.

During this time, your activities may focus heavily on building relationships, getting advice, and gathering information. It may seem strange to focus time and attention on these activities, but the information-gathering and learning phase is important. You must identify people in the organization who have the information you need and begin to build relationships with them so you can learn from them. At the same time, don't neglect taking action on small projects that can build positive momentum.

Sample objectives:

- Meet with supervisor to identify specific short-and long-term project goals and key initiatives.
- Make a list of co-workers and schedule informal lunches and meetings with key team members, colleagues, internal stakeholders, and management to identify important issues, discuss past successes, form relationships, and assess company culture.

- Identify who else in the company you need to meet. Ask your supervisor for a list of the 10 key people outside your department that you should get to know, and then set up meetings with those people.
- Are there external relationships you need to build (i.e., customers or vendors?). Research the needs of current customers and analyze existing company relationships with customers. Meet with all existing account contacts.
- Complete company training and/or self-learning to get up to speed on products, services, policies, procedures, and company culture.
- Are there any other shortcomings in your learning you need to address (i.e., training on a specific software platform)?
- Research existing company literature (website, mission statement, employee handbook, newsletter/daily email list, etc.)
- Review competitive opportunities and create a report to establish closable business in the next 60 days, 90 days, and 6 months.

Remember, you will want to choose no more than 3-7 initiatives per 30-day period.

• *Days 31-60 (Strategize/Plan)*

Once you have taken time to assess the company and get up to speed, the next 30 days will focus on planning and strategizing. What shortcomings can you help address? Your efforts in the first 30 days are focused on building credibility — but the next 60 days emphasize strategizing and planning to improve performance.

You will also start to learn “how things get done” in this organization. You must sort out who does what, the roles of each individual and department, and how the group has worked together in the past. You’ll want to plan how to create internal and external networks — “coalitions” — to get things done. Who do you need support from in order to achieve change? Don’t neglect “influencers” — people outside your direct chain of command who have the power to make things happen. Sooner or later, you’ll need the support of people over whom you have no direct authority. During this 30-day period, figure out who those people are and how to work with them.

Action is also important in the 31-to-60-day timeframe. Show how you can take what you’ve learned and apply it towards accomplishing specific tasks or projects. You will begin to demonstrate how you can contribute to achieving the company’s goals.

One of the items to include in this time period is a review of the plan with your supervisor to clarify mutual expectations and assess progress toward the plan completion. Now is the time to make course corrections, especially as it relates to the execution phase of the plan.

Sample objectives:

- Meet with supervisor to assess progress in first 30 days and determine priorities and plan adjustments for next 60 days.
- Ensure all plans for first 30 days are completed.
- Continue to have bi-weekly meetings with team members to move forward on [XYZ] project.

- Create territory routing and call cycle plan to increase number of contacts with existing accounts.
- Develop account prospect database (compiled from Hoovers, trade journals, LinkedIn, Salesforce.com, and incoming leads).
- From discussions with supervisor and product specialist, formulate plan to close short-term opportunities.
- Meet with key account decision-makers and identify specific steps needed to bring business in this year.
- Schedule four new account meetings per week. Update CRM weekly to grow prospect database.
- Create pilot program for [specific new initiative] and gather team and client feedback.
- Begin to strategize on a major initiative to focus on in the final 30-day period of the 30-60-90-Day plan.

• *Days 61-90 (Execute)*

In the final 30 days, you will focus on execution. In this time period, make sure you are concentrating on initiatives that matter to your boss. Identify what your supervisor cares about the most and try to create results in those areas. It's essential to focus on executing one or more key items that your supervisor has outlined. In other words, your efforts during this time should be consistent with achieving one or more of your supervisor's top business priorities.

In the final 30 days, you also begin to demonstrate how you can move from being reactive to proactive. Be aware of new projects being developed and be ready to contribute to the conversation and planning process. Look for opportunities to become more connected by participating in an internal committee, cross-functional task force, or professional association. These will keep you on the cutting edge of what is happening in your specific role, at the company, and in the industry as a whole.

You'll also identify long-term goals and begin strategizing how to accomplish those plans beyond the first 90 days.

Sample objectives:

- Meet to assess your first 90 days and develop a plan for the next 90 days and the rest of the first year in the new position.
- Exceed monthly sales quotas by increasing level of contacts with key accounts. Assess where we stand as vendor of choice with accounts and whether the customer has the ability to make the purchase in the next six months. Identify any roadblocks to making the sale.
- Continue to network with successful Account Executives throughout the company to identify best practices for lead conversion and making the sale. Set up monthly conference calls to share ideas for making contacts and closing sales.
- Develop a two-year plan to dramatically increase market share and make company the vendor of choice for top 10 prospect accounts.

- *Outcomes*

In the first 90 days, you aren't just learning — you're expected to contribute as well. You want your supervisor, co-workers, and colleagues to see an immediate impact. Part of this is identifying those tasks that can lead to "small wins." Achieving these outcomes in the first 90 days builds momentum and increases your visibility and credibility.

By the end of your first three months in your new role, you want your supervisor, your colleagues, and your subordinates to see the impact you have made on the organization. Small, early wins can create energy and forward progress.

- *Call to Action*

At the end of the plan, suggest the next step. If you've had one interview, you might suggest meeting for a second time to review the plan and assess whether the priorities you've identified would meet the company's business objectives. If you've had several interviews, you might reiterate your serious interest in the position and your desire to be the one to execute the plan. This may seem extremely straightforward and bold, but you've now invested quite a bit of time and energy in identifying the company's needs and problems and developing a plan to address how you can solve them, so asking for the opportunity to execute on the plan is simply following through.

Even after you've presented the plan to the hiring manager, it's not complete. You might learn additional information in further interviews that would change your initiatives.

Of course, once you've gotten the job offer and secured agreement from your supervisor for your 30-60-90-Day plan, you have a game plan to guide your first 90 days in your new job.