



NAJAH AL-ATASSI, FOUNDER

www.alatassileadershipconsulting.com • najah@alatassileadershipconsulting.com

FOR AMBITIOUS WOMEN WHO KNOW THEY ARE CAPABLE OF WAY MORE

The Bold Career Conversation Kit

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR YOUR NEXT PROMOTION

*Have the conversations. Create the opportunities.
Build your boldest career.*

CLARITY • CONFIDENCE • WHAT'S YOUR NEXT PEAK?

A Note from Najah

Dream the impossible and take the possible steps to achieve your boldest dreams has been my guiding principle throughout my life and career. My leadership philosophy is dream it, believe it, execute it. The first step for any aspiring leader is having the courage to dream big — to imagine yourself as a leader of a team, a community, a company, a country, a school, a board, a charity, or whatever you dream of leading.

"The person with big dreams is more powerful than one with all the facts." — Albert Einstein

You know you're capable of more. You've built experience. You've delivered results. You've learned a lot. **You are ready to move to the next level, and you know what that could look like.**

We know that navigating corporate power dynamics is more than 50% of the work to get this well-deserved promotion. Let's get strategic together.

This guide will help you prepare for the conversations that will move your career forward: **(1)** about your growth, **(2)** what it takes to get promoted, **(3)** the opportunities you need, **(4)** the feedback you need to hear, and **(5)** who needs to know about your work and your ambitions.

However, the most important conversation of all is **the conversation you have with yourself**. You might be asking yourself: Is my current organization still the right place for me? Am I still growing, or have I settled into my comfort zone? Am I assuming I'll be promoted without a clear path to get there? And if I'm not promoted within the next year — am I going to quit?

By the end of this guide, you'll be ready to have the tough conversations, and hold all the insight you need to move to your next Peak.



"Dream the impossible, and take the possible steps to achieve it."

— NAJAH AL-ATASSI

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS KIT



Conversation
Starters



Reflection
Worksheets



An Honest
Self-Check



Your
Action Plan



Before you turn the page

What's the one career conversation you know you should have next?

The Imposter Syndrome Myth

I'm sure you've heard the words **"imposter syndrome."** You've probably also had people assume you have it — even when you don't.

Research by Ruchika Tulshyan and Jodi-Ann Burey in *Harvard Business Review* challenges how we commonly talk about imposter syndrome, especially for women. Their argument is important: we should be careful about turning self-doubt — something that happens to all of us — into an individual problem a person (mostly a woman) needs to fix.



Competence and occasional self-doubt can coexist. Men and women can be highly accomplished and still question whether they belong at the next level.



Context matters. Sometimes the workplace itself shapes how confident behavior is perceived — it's okay for a man to be loud and take credit for his work, but a woman can be tagged as *not* a team player if she wants to take credit for hers.

Having self-doubt from time to time doesn't mean you have imposter syndrome. So the next time doubt creeps in, do this:

Act as if you have all the confidence in the world. Lead with your behaviors, and confidence will follow.

You don't have to wait until you *feel* confident to act confidently. You know the saying "fake it till you make it" — it works. Chances are, you already know it. And remember: the goal isn't to eliminate every moment of doubt. **The goal is to keep moving forward despite it.**



Reflect

Where does self-doubt show up for you most — and what would "acting with confidence" look like there?

Get Honest With Yourself First

Before you start having conversations with other people, have an honest conversation with yourself. **Is a promotion in your current company actually the best next step for your career?**

Sometimes it absolutely is — you may be in the right organization, with the right people and the right trajectory. But don't assume the promotion is automatically the logical next step. We often chase it because it feels like the natural progression: *next role* → *fancier title* → *more money* → *career success*. But what if that promotion gives you a better title and less of the growth you actually want? Sometimes, the best next promotion is at another company.

Your next step might not be simply to get promoted. Your next step should bring you closer to the career you want in 10 years.

So before asking "How do I get promoted?" — start with: **"Is this promotion actually the right next step for me?"** That's the question we get honest about first.



Ask yourself

- When was the last time my own manager got promoted?
- If my manager gets promoted, am I the person they'll bring with them?
- Have I actually discussed my career progression with my manager — or am I assuming they know what I want?
- What evidence do I have that a promotion is likely?

THE TRAP OF "NATURAL PROGRESSION"



Next Role



Fancier Title



More Money



Real Growth?

Chasing the "natural" next step can quietly lead you away from the growth you actually want. Check the destination, not just the direction.

Growth, Comfort, or Both?

Am I still growing? Still learning, taking on bigger challenges, becoming more valuable — or have I simply become comfortable? Be honest: are you staying because you see a real path forward, or because leaving feels uncertain?

There is nothing wrong with being comfortable. But comfort should not be confused with progress.

Am I still growing here? What's the evidence?

Right place — or comfort zone? Why?



The one-year question

If I am not promoted within the next year, am I going to quit? Don't rush this answer.

IF YES —

What are you going to do now to prepare?

IF NO —

Why? How long are you willing to wait, and what would need to change for you to stay?



One final question

If nothing changes over the next 12 months, will I be happy that I stayed?

What Would Make Me Stay?

Be specific. Write it down — because if you don't know what you want, it becomes very difficult to recognize whether you're getting it.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ A promotion | ☐ A move to a more strategic team (one that produced CXOs) |
| ☐ More visibility | ☐ A stretch assignment |
| ☐ A larger role | ☐ A defined path forward |
| ☐ Better compensation | ☐ A clear development plan |
| ☐ More responsibility | |



Prepare before you need to move

You don't have to quit tomorrow. But if this doesn't happen within the next year, what do you need to build now so you're ready to resign and accept a better offer?

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| — Your skills | — Your résumé |
| — Your experience | — Your financial readiness |
| — Your network | — Your knowledge of the market |
| — Your personal brand | — Your confidence in your value |

NOTES



Get Strategic Before You Ask

Being ready for the next promotion doesn't mean being difficult. People want to work with people they like. You can be ambitious without making every interaction about your promotion — direct while being warm, confident while showing appreciation.



Be someone people enjoy working with — and don't want to lose

You're already a superstar. Now be the one that everyone trusts, respects, and enjoys working with. Be curious. Take credit and be proud and vocal about your achievements — and at the same time, celebrate other people's wins. Say thank you. Recognize good work.



Your influence compounds

It's built in hundreds of small moments — not only in your performance review.

The goal is to become someone who is **excellent at what she does AND someone people want to see succeed.**



Your power checklist — before an important conversation

- ☐ I documented what I've accomplished
- ☐ I've made my accomplishments visible
- ☐ My manager knows my aspirations and skills
- ☐ My manager's manager knows my aspirations and skills
- ☐ I've shown that I listen and can reflect and act on feedback
- ☐ I'm building relationships; people know who I am
- ☐ I'm pleasant to work with
- ☐ My internal clients ask me to support their team
- ☐ I've demonstrated leadership skills
- ☐ I've made my ambition very clear to my boss
- ☐ I'm approaching this with confidence



Walk in knowing

Know your value. Be warm. Be strategic. Ask directly. And then listen.

Make Your Achievements Visible

Don't assume your manager knows everything you've accomplished. They have their own priorities, meetings, and problems. **Help them see your wins** — and don't wait for your annual review to talk about them.

TRY THIS INSTEAD OF "LOOK WHAT I DID"

"I wanted to meet you to share some good news — the client gave us great feedback on the project, and the approach we took really worked."

TELL THE STORY OF YOUR GROWTH



What did
I do?



What was
the result?



Why did
it matter?



What did
I learn?



What's
next?



Appreciation (flattering) is a power move

If your manager taught you something useful, tell them. If someone gave you an opportunity, thank them — and be specific.

INSTEAD OF

"Thanks for your help."

TRY

"I appreciated how you handled X — I used that same approach, and it helped me achieve Y."

Now you've done three things at once: shown appreciation, demonstrated that you listen, and shown the result of applying what you learned — while making your boss feel great about helping you.

The Conversations

These aren't scripts to memorize. They're starting points — use language that sounds like you. The goal isn't to sound polished. **The goal is to have a real conversation.**



CONVERSATION 1

I'm Ready for More

Before you ask for the next opportunity, **establish your value.** And yes — flattery works, as long as you connect their advice to what you did with it. Then build your case:

"Since I started here, I've developed significantly. I've taken on [X], delivered [Y], and developed [Z]. I'm ready for the next level, and I believe I can take on that role."

Once you've established your accomplishments, growth, and readiness, look at your manager, smile, and ask, half-jokingly:

"Sooo... when are you recommending me for the next level?"

THEN STOP TALKING. GIVE AT LEAST A MINUTE. DO NOT FILL THE SILENCE.

CONVERSATION 2

What Does It Take?

Don't ask "What do I need to do to prove I'm ready?" You already proved yourself. Start from what you already know about your value:

"I'm already operating at a much higher level than when I started. I want to understand what the organization considers the next level, and how I can position myself for it."

- What does success at the next level look like here?
- What's the next role that makes sense for me?
- Which parts am I already demonstrating?
- When is the next realistic opportunity?
- Where's the biggest opportunity to expand my impact?
- Who's involved in that decision?

You're not saying "tell me what to do so I can hopefully get promoted." You're saying — **"Let's map the path based on how leadership progression works here."**

CONVERSATION 3

Give Me the Opportunity

You don't need to wait for someone to hand you an opportunity. If you see something you can lead, ask for it:

"I see that we're going to be working on X. I'd like to lead that piece — it would be a good opportunity to demonstrate my readiness and apply my skills."

- What upcoming projects would benefit from my leadership?
- What responsibility can I take off your plate?
- What can I take ownership of?
- What senior-level exposure can I take on?



The double-duty principle

"I want the work I take on to do double duty: deliver value for the business, and build evidence that I'm the obvious choice for the next promotion."

CONVERSATION 4

Tell Me What I'm Not Seeing

This one needs a shift. We're not asking *"What am I doing wrong?"* — we're asking for intelligence:

"Based on the work I've delivered and the way I've grown, what do you think could still be standing between me and the next level?"

- Am I demonstrating my personal brand?
- Is this a skill, experience, or exposure issue?
- What capability should I be demonstrating more visibly?
- Who should see me demonstrating these capabilities?

If you receive criticism: don't immediately defend yourself. Listen. Decide whether it's useful. Then turn it into something actionable.

CONVERSATION 5

Who Needs to Know?

You can be excellent at your job and still be invisible to the people who influence career opportunities. Reframe bragging as informing. **You need to manage your visibility.** How can you build relationships with more strategic people across the organization? Which committees are you on that increase your visibility? Which conferences are you attending that other leaders are attending too? Remember: people are people. What do you have in common?

"I'm very intentional about where I want my career to go next. I want to make sure I'm spending my time strategically."

- Who are the people I need to know?
- Which leaders would benefit from seeing what I can do?
- Who should I be working with more closely?
- Who should I learn from?

And once the relationship is open, nurture it. Then, when it's time: **"When the next opportunity comes up, I'd like you to support me. Can I count on you?"** — not permission. *Sponsorship.*

Questions That Can Change the Conversation

You don't need to ask every question. Choose the ones that fit the room you're in.



About Growth

- Am I still growing here?
- What would help me grow faster?
- What experience would strengthen my case for the next promotion?
- What should I be doing now that will serve me tremendously next year?



About Promotion

- What does readiness actually look like?
- What would make you recommend me for the next promotion?
- What is a realistic roadmap — and a timeline?
- Who makes the final decision?



About Opportunities

- What problem can I solve?
- What project could I own?
- Where does the team need more leadership?
- What would give me exposure to the next level?



About Feedback

- What am I not seeing?
- What should I do more of?
- What's my biggest opportunity?
- How can I make your life easier?



About Your Future

- Who should I talk to?
- What does my résumé need for the next position — even at a different company?
- What should I focus on over the next year?
- What opportunities should I be looking for?



Prepare for their concerns

Before the conversation, ask: what might they be thinking? "She needs more experience." "There isn't a position." Anticipating the concern lets you ask a sharper question — e.g. "If leadership experience is the concern, what opportunity could I take on to demonstrate it?"

HANDLING THE ANSWER

When You Hear No

You will hear no. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow — but at some point. Don't automatically interpret it as *"I'm not good enough."* Instead, ask: **what kind of no is this?**

- ☐ No — for now?
- ☐ No — for this role?
- ☐ No — because of a specific gap?
- ☐ No — no opportunity exists?
- ☐ No — my manager doesn't support me?
- ☐ No — wrong organization for me?

? Questions to ask after a no

- What would need to change for the answer to become yes?
- What experience would change the answer?
- Is there something I can take on to demonstrate that?
- When should we revisit this?
- Is there another opportunity to demonstrate these skills?
- If there isn't a path in our team, what team would you recommend I move to?

The question isn't whether you'll hear no. The question is: what will you do when you hear it?

Vague answers create vague careers. Ask questions until you understand what they actually mean.

YOUR MANAGER'S RESPONSE IS INFORMATION

A SUPPORTIVE SIGNAL

- "Here's what I think you need to work on."
- "Let's get you on this project."
- "I'll introduce you to..."
- "Let's revisit this in six months."

AN INCOMPLETE SIGNAL

- "Just keep doing what you're doing."
- "It's not the right time."
- "Let's see how things go."
- "We'll talk about it later."

Keep Score of Your Own Progress

After every important career conversation, write down what happened. This creates a record of your career — not just your feelings about it. Over time, patterns become visible.

- What did I ask?
- What did they say?
- What did I learn?
- What did they commit to?
- What did I commit to?
- What is my next action?
- When will we revisit?
- Who else do I need to speak with?

Is This Mountain Still Mine to Climb?

There is a point where the question changes. It's no longer *"What do I need to do to get promoted here?"* It becomes:

"Is this still the right place for me to build the career I want?"

Go back to the questions you asked at the beginning. Am I still growing? Is there a real path forward? Have I been given a clear answer, and real opportunities to demonstrate readiness? If I'm not promoted within the next year, am I going to quit — and if so, am I preparing myself now?

Sometimes the next intentional step is to stay and keep climbing. Sometimes it's to move sideways, or move up somewhere else. And sometimes — **you need to find another mountain.**

Ready for more? **BOOK YOUR DISCOVERY SESSION →**

"Your career is yours to shape."

YOUR MOVE

Your Next Conversation

Don't finish this guide by simply feeling inspired. Choose a conversation. Write it down.

My next conversation is with

The date of my conversation

The conversation I need to have

Three questions I will ask

What I need to prepare · What I'll do after



*You don't need permission to be ambitious.
You are responsible for managing your career.*

Ask for the opportunity. Ask what it takes. Ask for honest feedback. Ask who you need to know. Then listen, gather the information, and take the next intentional step. **Your career is yours to shape.**

REFERENCES & SOURCES

The ideas in this guide are informed by research and perspectives on career advancement, organizational power, leadership, negotiation, and workplace equity. The tools and questions are an original synthesis for women navigating career growth.

Tulshyan, Ruchika, and Jodi-Ann Burey. "Stop Telling Women They Have Imposter Syndrome." *Harvard Business Review*, February 11, 2021.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey. *Power: Why Some People Have It and Others Don't*. HarperBusiness, 2010.

Nooyi, Indra. *My Life in Full: Work, Family, and Our Future*. Portfolio/Penguin, 2021.

Voss, Chris, with Tahl Raz. *Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It*. HarperBusiness, 2016.

**Najah Al-Atassi · www.alatassileadershipconsulting.com ·
najah@alatassileadershipconsulting.com**

