

her next position

Prepare Exit
Execution Framework



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Executive Summary

You chose Prepare Exit because staying no longer improves your position, but leaving immediately would increase risk or reduce leverage.

This is not waiting for perfect timing.
This is strategic repositioning.

Core Objective

Strengthen external positioning, secure references, and build financial runway while maintaining professional delivery within 90-120 days.

Hard Rules

- Preparation must materially improve your exit outcome
- Timeline is bounded (90-120 days maximum)
- If nothing external is being built, you're delaying
- Exit when ready, not when perfect

Non-Negotiable Test

If preparation extends beyond 120 days without active job offers in process, you are avoiding the transition, not preparing for it.

This path rewards strategic preparation. It punishes indefinite delay

What This Decision Actually Means

Leaving is rational because:

- Staying will not improve your position
- Leverage sits outside your current organisation
- Risk compounds faster by staying than leaving
- But immediate exit would unnecessarily increase cost

What preparation enables:

- Stronger external positioning before search
- Clean references secured while relationships are warm
- Narrative refined and tested
- Financial buffer built
- Market intelligence gathered

What this is not:

- Waiting for the "perfect" next role
- Hoping the situation improves internally
- Delaying because exit feels uncomfortable
- Preparing indefinitely to avoid the transition

Prepare Exit works only when preparation materially improves outcomes within a bounded timeline.

If you've been "preparing" for 6+ months, you're avoiding.

What Counts as Real Progress

By day 90-120, all of the following must be complete or in active progress.

References secured

3-5 strong references identified.
Contacts approached and confirmed.
They can speak to specific, measurable impact.
Relationship is warm, not transactional.

Narrative refined and tested

Why you're leaving is clear and forward-focused.
Value proposition lands in 2-3 sentences.
Tested with external contacts and tightened.
No defensiveness, no blame.

Market intelligence complete

Salary ranges for target roles known.
5-10 target organisations identified.
You understand demand for your skills.
Job descriptions reveal gaps you've addressed

Financial runway established

3-6 months core expenses covered.
Budget adjusted for transition period.
Clear threshold for what's financially viable

Positioning gaps closed

Skills needed for next move strengthened.
Portfolio or proof points documented.
Visible work that supports external story.
LinkedIn reflects current positioning.

What does not count:

Thinking about leaving.
Following job boards passively.
"Networking" without concrete conversations.
Hoping someone will reach out

Active search initiated

Applications submitted or recruiter conversations started.
Informational interviews scheduled.
Interview skills practiced.
At least one concrete opportunity in early stages.

The First 7 Days

Days 1–2: Secure References Early

Identify 3–5 people who can credibly speak to your work.

Prioritise:

- People with external credibility
- Those who can address specific outcomes
- Contacts who will respond promptly
- People at or above your level

Do NOT wait until you resign.

Secure references now while relationships are warm and stakes are low.

Days 3–4: Market Intelligence Baseline

Answer these questions with research:

- What do comparable roles pay in my market?
- Which 5–10 organisations are hiring for similar roles?
- What skills appear repeatedly in job descriptions?
- Where do people with my background typically move?
- What gaps exist between my profile and market expectations?

Use: LinkedIn, Glassdoor, industry recruiters, job boards, network contacts

Days 5–7: Draft Initial Narrative

Write your story in 3 sentences:

1. What you built in current role (specific, measurable)
2. Why you're leaving (forward-focused, not blame)
3. What you're looking for next (clear, aligned with target roles)

Test it: Does it sound like strategy or escape?

Share with one trusted external contact for feedback.

30-Day Operating Plan

Weeks 1–2: Foundation Work

References:

Approach 3–5 reference contacts using Script 1. Confirm they're comfortable being contacted. Clarify what aspects of your work they can address.

Narrative:

Refine your 3-sentence story based on feedback. Practice delivering it conversationally. Remove any defensive or negative language.

Documentation:

Gather performance reviews, project outcomes, recognition. Document measurable impact while it's fresh. Save anything that supports your story (legally)

Weeks 3–4: Positioning Gaps

Identify 2–3 skills or credentials that strengthen competitiveness.

Options:

- Volunteer for project that builds transferable skill
- Complete relevant certification or training
- Write article or speak on topic that demonstrates expertise
- Build portfolio piece or case study

This is not over-delivering for current employer. This is building proof points for external positioning.

Week 4 Check:

By day 30, you should have:

- 3+ references secured
- Narrative tested and refined
- Market intelligence on 5–10 target roles
- At least one positioning gap in progress
- Documentation gathered

If none exist, you're still operating as if staying is viable.

60 Day Checkpoint

By day 60, external preparation should be substantially complete.

Preparation signals that must exist:

References locked:

All reference contacts confirmed and briefed. They know what aspects of work to emphasise. You trust they'll respond promptly and positively.

Narrative tested:

Story has been shared with 3+ external contacts. Feedback incorporated. You can deliver it without hesitation or defensiveness.

Network activated:

10+ substantive external conversations completed. At least 3 warm introductions to new contacts. Industry visibility increased measurably

Positioning strengthened:

Gaps identified at day 30 are closed or in progress. LinkedIn profile updated to reflect current value. Portfolio or proof points ready to share.

Search preparation active:

Resume/materials updated and tested. Target company list refined. Recruiter relationships initiated. Interview skills practiced.

If these don't exist:

You are delaying, not preparing. Set hard 30-day milestones. If day 90 arrives without completion, shift to Exit Now. Imperfect preparation is better than indefinite delay

90 Day Readiness Test

By day 90, you must be in active job search with applications submitted or conversations in progress.

If you are:

Execute the search:

Apply to target roles systematically.
Engage recruiters actively.
Schedule informational and formal interviews.
Treat search as your primary work.

Timeline: Most senior searches run 60–90 days from first conversation to offer.

Stay professionally engaged internally:

Maintain delivery without over-investment.
Manage internal signals carefully.
Prepare for transition logistics.

If you are not:

Stop preparing.

You have either:

- Prepared thoroughly and now need to act, OR
- Been avoiding the transition under the guise of preparation

Ask honestly:

What one thing, if completed, would make me ready to search actively?

If you can't name it, the constraint is not preparation. It's fear.

Two options:

1. Shift to active search immediately with current positioning
2. Acknowledge you're not ready to leave and either return to Stay and Stabilise or commit to staying indefinitely

Do not extend preparation beyond 120 days without active applications in process.

Scripts & Tactical Guidance

Script 1: Asking for References (Before Announcing Departure)

"I wanted to ask if you'd be comfortable being a reference for me. I'm not actively looking right now, but I want to make sure I have strong references in place as I think about my longer-term trajectory.

Specifically, could you speak to [the work on X project / my leadership on Y / my impact on Z]?"

Why this works: Normal career planning, gives them an out, specifies their credibility.

Script 2: Networking Without Desperation

"Hi [Name], I've been thinking about my trajectory and wanted to reconnect. I'm currently [brief role] at [company], focused on [area]. I'd love to hear what you're working on and get your perspective on [relevant industry topic]. Do you have 20 minutes in the next few weeks?"

Do NOT mention: Job searching, frustration, urgency.

Do: Rebuild relationship authentically

Script 3: Testing Your Narrative

"As I think about my next move, I'm refining how I talk about my work. Mind if I test something?
[Your 3-sentence value story]
Does that land? Anything unclear or that sounds off?"

This is low-stakes practice before interviews.

Script 4: Explaining Departure in Interviews

"I reached a point where the role no longer aligned with where I want to develop my career. I built [specific things], and I'm now looking for an environment where I can [specific goal aligned with their opportunity].

I'm particularly interested in [their organisation] because [specific alignment]."

Avoid: Criticising culture, blaming leadership, sounding desperate.

Script 5: Managing Internal Signals

When declining additional work:

"I need to be thoughtful about capacity right now. I want to make sure I'm delivering excellent work on [current priorities], so I can't take this on at the level it deserves."

Not defensive. Not apologetic. Clear.

Script 6: Resignation (When Ready)

"I'm writing to inform you that I am resigning from my position as [Title], effective [Date].

I appreciate the opportunities I've had here and will work to ensure a smooth transition.

Please let me know how I can be most helpful during this period."

Brief. Professional. Final.

Common Failure Patterns

Letting preparation become indefinite

Preparation should improve outcomes in 90-120 days. Beyond that, you're delaying.

Over-investing in current role

Effort that doesn't strengthen external position is wasted. Protect capacity for what matters.

Not managing internal signals

Your behavior may telegraph departure. Maintain professional delivery without over-investment.

Announcing prematurely

Once you announce, you lose leverage. Prepare thoroughly first.

Burning bridges on exit

Your industry is smaller than it appears. Protect reputation even when leaving is justified

Isolating during search

Job search is emotionally taxing. Maintain connection with trusted external advisors

Preparing without searching

Research and networking must lead to applications. If you've been "preparing" for 6 months without applying, stop.

Accepting first offer out of urgency

Leaving bad situation for another bad situation compounds risk. Evaluate against criteria, not against discomfort.

Escalation Signals

Reassess immediately if any of these occur.

Internal situation becomes actively harmful

- Performance formally questioned
- Reputational risk increases
- Political exposure grows
- Health deteriorates

Action: Shift to Exit Now. Imperfect preparation beats continued exposure.

Financial situation deteriorates

- Unexpected expenses reduce buffer
- Income stability threatened
- Runway timeline shortens

Action: Either accelerate exit to secure new income or extend preparation with aggressive expense reduction.

Key relationships deteriorate

- References become unavailable or hostile
- Sponsor leaves
- Manager relationship breaks down

Action: Secure remaining references immediately. Accelerate exit timeline.

External market shifts negatively

- Hiring freeze in target industry
- Economic contraction affecting your function
- Demand for your skills decreases

Action: Widen search parameters, consider adjacent roles, or return to Stay and Stabilise while market recovers.

You realise you're avoiding, not preparing

- 120+ days have passed
- No active applications submitted
- You keep finding new things to "prepare"
- You feel defensive about timeline

Action: Get external perspective. Shift to active search or acknowledge fear is the constraint.

Energy & Financial Management

Prepare Exit requires balancing internal delivery with external preparation.

Protect energy:

- Reduce internal over-investment
- Maintain professional delivery, not excellence
- Prioritise external work (network, applications, interviews)
- Set boundaries around optional work
- Track external progress, ignore internal politics

Build financial buffer:

Calculate: Core monthly expenses (rent, food, insurance, debt).

Reduce: Discretionary spending aggressively.

Target: 3-6 months runway before exit.

Track: Actual savings monthly.

Question: What amount makes exit financially viable?

Manage search energy:

Job search is a second job. Structure it:

- X applications per week
- Y networking conversations per month
- Z hours on skill development
- Regular interview practice

Without structure, search becomes reactive and demoralising.

Energy & Financial Management

Maintain external visibility:

- Update LinkedIn profile
- Attend 1-2 industry events per month
- Post thoughtfully (not desperately)
- Engage in professional communities
- Stay interview-ready

What NOT to do:

Burn out trying to excel in current role while searching
Isolate from professional network
Search randomly without focus
Let LinkedIn go dark for months
Apply frantically without targeting

What TO do:

Set clear search structure
Protect capacity for applications and interviews
Build network systematically
Target applications strategically
Track external progress weekly

Reassessment Protocol

At 30, 60, and 90 days:

1. Count preparation milestones completed
2. List active applications or conversations
3. Review reference confirmations
4. Test narrative clarity with new contact
5. Calculate financial runway
6. Document next 30-day actions

Decision Logic Table:

Criteria Met	Timeline	Action
0-1 criteria	Day 30	Set hard milestones, add structure
2-3 criteria	Day 60	Good progress, continue
4-5 criteria	Day 90	Shift to active search
0 criteria	Day 90	Search actively or shift to Exit Now
0 criteria	Day 120	Stop preparing, make a different choice

Final Containment Reminder

Preparation is valuable only if it improves outcomes.

It must lead to action within 120 days.

If 4 months pass without active job search, the constraint is not preparation. It is avoidance.

Prepare deliberately.

Search actively.

Exit when ready, not when perfect.

Do not let preparation become permanent.

You tested whether staying could improve your position.

It cannot.

Now test the external market



Questions or need additional support?

Reply to any email from Her Next Position or DM me on LinkedIn

Disclaimer

This execution guide provides structured decision support based on the information you supplied during the diagnostic process. It is intended as a strategic framework to support disciplined action and review.

It does not constitute legal, financial, tax, medical, or employment advice. All decisions, actions, and outcomes remain your responsibility. Organisational dynamics, market conditions, and personal circumstances can change, and no specific result is guaranteed.

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