

PUTTING THE ABCD JOB FRAMEWORK TO WORK

From A Job to Dream Job: The ABCD Framework for Building Your Future

Starting or rebuilding a career can feel overwhelming, especially if you're navigating reentry into the workforce. The path forward may not always seem clear, but it's important to remember that every step you take brings you closer to achieving your goals. At Talent Nova, we use the ABCD Framework to help justice-impacted job seekers like you chart a meaningful journey from where you are now to where you dream of going.

The ABCD Framework—A Job, Better Job, Career, Dream Job—breaks down the path to career growth into manageable steps. By understanding each stage, you can focus on progress, build confidence, and create a future that reflects your potential.

A "A Job": Stability & Building Experience

This is where many journeys begin. The focus at this stage is finding stability and building a foundation for growth.

What It Means:

- A job provides immediate income and helps you establish a routine.
- It may not align with your long-term goals yet, but it's a critical first step toward independence and self-sufficiency.

Your Goals in This Stage:

- Gain experience in the workforce.
- Build relationships with coworkers and supervisors.
- Demonstrate reliability, professionalism, and a strong work ethic.

How to Make the Most of It:

- Treat every job as a learning opportunity. Skills like teamwork, time management, and communication are valuable no matter where you work.
- Use this time to identify what you enjoy (or don't enjoy) about the role to guide your next steps.

B "Better Job": Growth & New Opportunities

Once you've gained some experience and stability, the next step is to aim for a better job—one that aligns more closely with your skills, interests, and financial needs.

What It Means:

- A better job offers improved pay, working conditions, or opportunities for growth.
- It moves you closer to a role that matches your long-term goals.

Your Goals in This Stage:

- Identify roles that leverage the skills you've developed so far.
- Begin upskilling through training, certifications, or education to qualify for higher-level positions.
- Explore industries or fields that align with your interests.

How to Make the Most of It:

- Network with professionals in your desired field to learn about opportunities.
- Look for roles that challenge you to grow while still feeling achievable.
- Continue building your resume by tracking accomplishments and learning new skills.

C “Career”: Specialization & Advancement

At this stage, you’re not just working a job—you’re building a career. This means finding a role that aligns with your long-term goals and offers opportunities for advancement and specialization.

What It Means:

- A career is more than a paycheck—it’s about aligning your work with your passions, values, and skills.
- You’re developing expertise in a particular field or industry.

Your Goals in This Stage:

- Focus on growth within your chosen field, whether that’s through promotions, additional education, or taking on leadership roles.
- Seek out mentorship and networking opportunities to deepen your connections.
- Define your vision for the future and map out steps to achieve it.

How to Make the Most of It:

- Take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by your employer or external programs.
- Build a personal brand—this could include creating a strong LinkedIn profile, sharing your achievements, and positioning yourself as a reliable expert in your field.
- Balance short-term goals with long-term aspirations to stay motivated.

D “Dream”: Passion, Purpose & Leadership

This is the ultimate goal: a role that fulfills you both personally and professionally. While it may take time to get here, each step along the way prepares you for this destination.

What It Means:

- Your dream job aligns with your passions, strengths, and values.
- It offers financial security, personal satisfaction, and a sense of purpose.

Your Goals in This Stage:

- Continue growing and learning to stay at the top of your field.
- Focus on giving back—whether that’s mentoring others, sharing your story, or contributing to meaningful causes.
- Embrace the journey that brought you here and celebrate how far you’ve come.

How to Make the Most of It:

- Stay adaptable—your dream job may evolve as you grow and discover new passions.
- Use your success as a platform to inspire and support others, including fellow justice-impacted individuals.
- Never stop learning—personal and professional growth are lifelong processes.

How to Move Through the ABCD Framework

1 **Set Goals for Each Stage**

Clearly define what success looks like at each step of the framework. For example:

- In “A Job,” your goal might be to build a professional network.
- In “Better Job,” your goal might be to secure a role with a living wage.

2 **Upskill Continuously**

Invest in your growth at every stage. Take free courses, earn certifications, or attend workshops to keep building your qualifications.

3 **Leverage Support**

Lean on resources like Talent Nova, mentors, and professional networks to guide you through each transition.

4 **Track Your Progress**

Celebrate small wins and reflect on how each step prepares you for the next. Keeping a journal or list of accomplishments can remind you of your growth.

5 **Stay Resilient**

The journey from “A Job” to “Dream Job” isn’t always linear. Setbacks happen, but they’re opportunities to learn and grow stronger.

Success Stories to Inspire You



Kenyatta Leal

Kenyatta Leal transitioned from incarceration to an entry-level job in technology and education. Over time, he developed a deep passion for mentorship and workforce training, which led him to lead [The Next Chapter](#), an initiative by Slack. Today, he advocates for justice-impacted individuals, and works to create career pathways for people facing similar challenges.



Teresa Hodge

Teresa Hodge took a corporate position after incarceration to gain financial stability and professional experience. She used her time in that role to build her skills, network, and research ways to make an impact. Eventually, she leveraged her expertise to co-found [Mission: Launch](#), an organization focused on reentry services and entrepreneurship for justice-impacted individuals.

How These Stories Inspire Movement Through the ABCD Framework:

- Coss Marte started with any job that provided stability (A Job) before transitioning into a better role that helped him develop his entrepreneurial skills (Better Job).
- Teresa Hodge took a corporate position to gain experience (Better Job) before turning her insights into a full-fledged career in social impact and business (Career).
- Frederick Hutson built a career around solving a problem he understood well (Career) and grew his business into a national success (Dream Job).
- Kenyatta Leal took an initial opportunity in tech (A Job), developed leadership skills through mentorship and education (Career), and is now living his purpose (Dream Job).

These stories prove that no matter where you start, you can build a future filled with success, purpose, and opportunity by progressing through the ABCD Framework.

“

Life is beautiful if you know how to live it. You can do anything you want—stay positive and stay strong. Talent Nova helped me see that I have real options, not just obstacles.

- Aaron, Utah

“

Expect a lot of closed doors, but keep looking—one will open. Talent Nova reminded me that my skills and experience still matter, and that I'm not just my past.

- Valerie, Mississippi

Your Path to Success

Whether you're just starting out or striving for your dream job, the ABCD Framework reminds us that every stage of the journey is important. Each job, skill, and experience prepares you for the next step, and no effort is wasted.

At Talent Nova, we're here to equip you with the tools, resources, and encouragement you need to keep moving forward. Your journey is uniquely yours, but you don't have to navigate it alone.



Call to Action

Ready to take the next step toward your dream job? Join Talent Nova today for resources, tools, and a community dedicated to helping justice-impacted job seekers thrive. No matter where you are on your journey, we're here to help you reach your goals!