Three Questions for Any Project

Idea In Short

Every project has its strengths and weaknesses, and no single assignment will ever score perfectly across every dimension that matters. A simple three-question framework, covering what you are doing, how well you are doing it, and what you are learning, offers a genuinely useful scorecard for evaluating any project, job or assignment honestly, rather than relying on vague overall impressions of whether something feels good or bad.

Why Asking for Perspective Matters

One of the more common early-career mistakes is plowing ahead without genuinely seeking outside perspective on how a project or career decision is actually going. Feedback, whether encouraging or difficult to hear, consistently makes a professional sharper, and learning to actively seek it out rather than avoiding it is itself a valuable skill worth developing early.

A Simple Three-Question Framework

A genuinely useful mental framework for evaluating any project, job or assignment comes down to three consistent questions: what are you actually doing, referring to the underlying strategy and content of the work; how well are you doing it, referring to actual performance and quality; and what have you learned, referring to genuine, continuous skill growth.1 Returning to these same three questions repeatedly, especially during a project that feels stuck or uninspiring, offers a genuinely grounding way to assess where things actually stand.

Rating a Project Honestly Across Three Dimensions

Applying a simple numeric scale, say one through ten, across each of the three questions makes the framework concrete rather than abstract. Consider a handful of illustrative

project types: a stable, well-run support engagement might score moderately on content, but strongly on performance and reasonably well on learning, since even routine work often teaches more than expected. A short, innovation-focused project might score very high on content and learning while scoring lower on execution, since ambitious, fast-moving work often comes with genuine growing pains. A messy, technically demanding project involving multiple collaborating teams might score well across performance and content but only moderately on learning, since much of the difficulty comes from coordination rather than new skill-building. A clearly scoped project with a well-defined client might score only moderately on content interest despite excellent conditions and execution, simply because the underlying work itself feels routine.

No Project Scores Perfectly

Reading across even a small handful of past projects makes one thing clear: every project, every job, and every course of study carries its own mix of strengths and weaknesses. A useful, balanced scorecard asks three consistent things: is the actual content genuinely interesting, is performance on that content genuinely strong, and is the experience making the person doing the work more valuable and more capable going forward.

Guarding Against the Fear of Missing Out

It is easy to fall into a pattern of assuming some other project, team or opportunity would surely be better, a kind of professional fear of missing out that rarely holds up under closer examination.2 Finding genuine value in the current situation, rather than constantly imagining a better alternative elsewhere, tends to produce both stronger performance and greater personal satisfaction in the work actually in front of someone.

Doing the Work in Front of You

The healthiest long-term approach is straightforward: do strong work, learn as much as genuinely possible from whatever project happens to be in front of you, and let that accumulated experience and reputation position you well for stronger opportunities down the road. Expecting any single project, job or class to deliver complete satisfaction on its own sets an unrealistic bar that few real assignments will ever meet.

Building the Habit Into a Regular Rhythm

Revisiting these three questions on a regular cadence, rather than only during a formal annual review, keeps the assessment honest and current rather than retrospective and vague. Professionals who build this habit early tend to develop a clearer, more accurate sense of their own trajectory than those who only reflect on their work once a year.

A Framework That Travels Well

Because the three questions are simple and content-neutral, the same scorecard applies just as easily to a short-term assignment, a multi-year role, or even a single course of study. Carrying the same consistent lens across very different situations makes it far easier to compare experiences honestly over time, rather than relying on shifting, situational standards that make genuine self-assessment nearly impossible.3

- 1Reflective Practice
- 2Fear Of Missing Out
- 3Self-Assessment

Summary

No project, job or assignment scores perfectly across content, performance and learning, and that is genuinely fine. Applying a simple three-question scorecard consistently, honestly assessing what you are doing, how well you are doing it, and what you are learning, helps separate a genuinely bad situation from one that simply has an uneven mix of strengths and weaknesses.