

Finding Your Perfect Work

Sample Content

Finding and holding down a job that allows you to put your life together in a way you want to live has become a puzzling challenge. Often just keeping it all together gets harder by the day. According to pollsters, too many of us are overworked or out of work, juggling shifts or patching together multiple jobs. Parents worry what their kids are up to because they rarely see them in the daylight. We fluctuate between job shortages and new rounds of layoffs.

This isn't the way we'd like life to be, and fortunately, it doesn't have to be like this. You don't have to put up with such an existence. There is a better way. Right when it seems as though life is getting completely out of control and everything is falling apart, the very changes that are wreaking such havoc in our lives are also providing an unprecedented opportunity for you to take charge of your life and start living it on your own terms. But you won't find it within the job-oriented careers we've all depended on for so long. Jobs as we have known them are no longer sufficiently flexible, dependable, or malleable to work even nearly perfectly for many people. Today's new economic realities call for new solutions and new models. That's what this book is about.

Features of This Book

This book is actually a personal journey and not a reference book or generic how-to manual. You undoubtedly have particular ways in which you prefer to go about learning that help you see options, make choices, and reach decisions. Some people prefer working from a conceptual framework, looking at the big picture. Others prefer many specific examples and visual illustrations. Still others want a step-by-step procedure they can follow. Most people want some combination of all these things. Therefore, we've designed this book to provide a wide variety of resources for you to draw upon. Each section has the following elements we invite you to use as fully as you find valuable.

Stories. Each section has many stories of real-life people who are making a living creating their own lives. We believe the more stories you read, the more possibilities you'll begin to see for yourself. Many of these stories are about more-unconventional and less-obvious ways people have created a living making a life. They're here to stretch your imagination and spark ideas, not so much for doing just what these people have done, but for doing what you want to do.

Profiles. Each part of this book also includes in-depth profiles of people that enable you to get to know in greater detail how others are creating new lives for themselves as a result of what's happening in the economy today. You'll learn more about what motivates them, how they think, what they've done to create the kind of life they want, and how they feel about the new lives they've created. Again, you'll find their lifestyles often quite original. No one person is quite like another. But as you get to know their stories, you'll better understand how you might create the particular and equally personal life you're seeking.

Work Sheets. Each section also has many work sheets that will enable you to capture your ideas, explore your possibilities, define your goals, and evaluate the alternatives you're

generating as you read. Feel free to write on these work sheets or, if you prefer, you might want to use a separate journal or notebook so you can write and plan more extensively. Alternatively you may prefer to record your answers on tape or in your computer. Once you've completed these work sheets you will have done the planning and exploration you need to do to know what direction you want to go with your life and how to create the perfect work to get you there.

[Click here obtain the eBook, print book, or audio](#)

SNIPPETS FROM THE CHAPTERS

Chapter I: Believing in the Possibilities

Sometimes our dreams are born from the frustrations and disappointments of our fast-changing lives. We grow restless, discontented, dissatisfied, even desperate, and change presents us with new choices and causes us to seek new options that charge up our dreams. Change shakes us from our complacency and forces us to find new solutions in order not to give up our dreams. And that's exactly what's happening now.

More than twenty-four million Americans have decided to become their own bosses and to create their own jobs, so they can live the lives they want to live and do the kind of work they want to do. For many, this has become the New American Dream. For some, it took a crisis, a traumatic life-changing event, to force them into finding some new way to hold on to their dreams. For others, it was a conscious choice; they decided there had to be a better way, and they set out to create one. Still others simply stumbled quite by chance onto some new opportunity and eagerly seized the moment to give their dreams a chance. The Chinese symbol for "crisis" is also the symbol for opportunity.

Dreams Born of Crisis

Our research indicates that perhaps as many as 40 percent of people who become self-employed do so in response to some kind of crisis that forced them to take back their dreams and find new ways to live them. They've told us:

Chapter II: The Path: Choosing How to Get There

THREE TRAPS TO AVOID

Most of us have never really taken such an option seriously. When we say we'd like to live life on our own terms, be our own boss, it's almost like saying we want to win the lottery. Of course we want it, but if we don't think it will actually happen, why should we take the time and energy to decide what we really want? We probably won't achieve it anyway.

Most of us have led lives that revolved around our jobs or school or family demands, squeezing everything else we want to do into "after working hours and weekends." And even in our free time, we may not get around to doing the things we'd really like to do because either we have to catch up on pressing odds and ends or we're just so worn out that we need a chance to sleep in, goof off, or live it up. Most people these days feel there

just isn't enough time for many of the things they'd like to do, sometimes even the most important ones. As a result, when you set out to create a more independent life, you risk making one of three common mistakes many people make in their search for what kind of work to do: instead of finding and enjoying your perfect work, you could end up stuck in a rut, getting burned by buying into some hot opportunity, or simply drawing a blank when it comes to how to proceed. As a result you could conclude that independence is not for you.

Ending up Stuck in a Rut

If you don't know for sure just what you want to do or what else you could do, you might set out to simply duplicate the life you have now. You might automatically decide to basically do on your own what you've been doing, living in the same place, keeping the same hours, working with the same kind of clients, only to end up wondering why your new life isn't any better. "If it's not going to be any better than this," one woman told us, "why should I go to all this trouble? Why shouldn't I just get another job?" And that's a very good question. If the life you create for yourself is just as stressful, pressure filled, financially tight, dull, or boring as the one you had when you were working for someone else, why go to all the extra trouble of starting a new one?

"I never thought about what I'd do at twenty-five because I never thought I'd live to twenty-five."

An ex-gang member

"I never thought much about how my life would be, because I never thought what I did had much to do with it."

Thirty-three-year-old woman

"If you keep on doing what you've been doing, you'll keep on getting what you've been getting."

Chapter III: Finding Your Way

Over the past fifteen years we have conducted and analyzed over a thousand interviews with self-employed individuals to determine how they found what they could do to support themselves. We've found that invariably those who were successful could be identified as having taken one or a combination of four specific paths to self-employment.

- ***Harvesting a Gift.*** For some, the path of choice is to harvest a gift, ignite an innate talent or an acquired skill at which they shine.
- ***Pursuing a Passion.*** For others it's to follow their heart, earning a living doing something they love passionately.
- ***Following a Mission.*** For still others the path of choice is to answer a calling, follow a mission or a sense of destiny they believe it's their role and purpose to undertake.
- ***Capitalizing on Your Assets.*** And finally, for some, in fact many if not most, their path is to capitalize upon their assets and current circumstances, doing what comes most naturally to achieve the other important goals in their lives.

As you read about each of these paths in the next four chapters you'll come to know their pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages, traps and pitfalls, as well as their needed safeguards. You'll see, however, that all these paths have characteristics that can enhance your chances for success and enable you to go from dream to action. Each taps into some internal source of energy that will help carry you toward your destination. You will meet people in the chapters that follow who have successfully pursued each of these paths. Also, work sheets in each chapter will provide an opportunity for you to weigh the value of each path to your situation. As you respond to these work sheets, be sure to elaborate fully on your answers and provide as much detail about the ideas as the space permits; or, if you prefer, use a separate notebook or audiotape to explore your answers. Force yourself to go beyond a one-or two-word response; such limited answers rarely provide you with the insights you need to discover the richness of choices that you actually have.

Chapter IV: Harvesting a Gift

ABOUT ONE OUT OF SIX PEOPLE becomes successfully self-employed by taking advantage of a special talent or skill he or she has that others value and willingly pay for. These people have tapped into a gift, something at which they shine, that others can readily recognize and want. Such a built-in demand makes this path a particularly desirable one because in a normal economy, marketing a business based on a gift is usually not a problem.

Many people, however, miss out on the opportunity to harvest their gift, because they don't recognize it or they discount its value. In fact, a gift often comes so easily or naturally that those who have it that they either assume everyone can do it or that it has no particular value. It's so much a part of who they are and what they do that they think there's nothing to it. That's undoubtedly why, unlike the other paths, people most often discover this route to independence only by accident, happenstance, or serendipity.

Many of us have outstanding creative skills, producing heart-stopping artwork, crafts, paintings, sculptures, ad copy, screenplays, choreography, food, decorations, designs, creative writing, poetry, or inventions. But we may doubt that we could actually earn a living using these talents, so we discount their potential for supporting us in creating a better life for ourselves. We shouldn't. We can harvest them however small they may seem to us. That's what Jim Pelle of Sacramento, California, did with his home-based company Laughter Works. Pelle has turned his gift for humor into a unique business teaching organizations how to enhance their creativity through laughter. His clients include some of the nation's biggest companies. Sharon Leeds uses her creativity to design English gardens on her clients' patios and porches. She calls her one-woman company Secret Gardens. It all started from a hobby for which she had such a gift that when her friends admired her own tiny garden, they began asking her if she would help create one for them.

Chapter V: Pursuing a Passion

PROS AND CONS OF PURSUING A PASSION

If you have one or more passions you would strongly enjoy pursuing as your livelihood, you will find doing so has a definite advantage: you won't have trouble motivating yourself to get to work and keep at it! Your passion is intrinsically motivating. In other words, your work is rewarding in and of itself. And because you like doing it so much, pursuing a passion provides you with a level of endurance and perseverance that other paths may not. Even if the going gets tough, you'll be more likely to keep going because you have such a passion for what you're doing.

TWO FOR ONE IS MORE FUN

Some people combine two or more passions into a livelihood:

Joshua Grenrock loves pets, people, and photography. So that's the name of his company: Pets, People, and Photography. He says, "I create fine-art portraits of the entire family."

Kent Kachigian combines his love for doing fine-art watercolors with his love for gourmet cuisine. He does paintings of the top chefs in the country as they are at work in their kitchens.

Lauren Hefferon began a love affair with Italy when she won a Rotary scholarship to study there. Now she has combined her passion for Italy with her love of cycling and outdoor education. She takes people on cycling and walking tours of Italy.

Jeff Caneis is a self-proclaimed scribe. Inspired by the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, he transforms letters, poetry, and documents into works of art. For \$300 he will combine his love of history, poetry, and art into unique handmade communiqués for his clients complete with ribbons, wax seals, and parchment paper.

Sig Unander combines his love of aviation with his love for art. He sells prints, posters, paintings, and sculptures of classic airplanes. His company is Air Art Northwest.

Three Reasons Why You Don't Have to Be Exceptionally Gifted When You're Exceptionally Motivated

As many golfers will testify, just because you have a passion for something doesn't mean you're gifted at it. You may love it but not necessarily be the very best at it. So if you're not particularly outstanding at what you're most interested in, don't think that means you can't earn a living doing it. You can. To pursue your passion as a livelihood, you don't have to be excellent at it already in order to succeed. If you are the best, that's great. That means you have both a gift and a passion! That's a powerful combination. But it isn't necessary for three reasons:

1. To succeed on your own, you only need to be sufficiently competent to inspire sufficient confidence to attract clients and customers and to deliver a satisfactory result for them. And fortunately competence is usually something you can acquire through experience.

In this sense, creating a job for yourself is like finding employment with someone else. Employers must hire the best they can get, but that doesn't mean they can always hire the

very best. Often they can't. Most independent careers aren't like professional sports. You don't need to be among the elite to do perfectly well.

If you don't believe this, just think about your own experience as a consumer. Haven't you seen people who are extremely successful at something who aren't the very best there is at it? Surely you have. These people are successful because they're so motivated by their work that they will go the extra mile to win the trust and support of loyal clients and customers. You probably use many such services yourself. Do you only use the very, very best printer in the city? Do you go to only the very, very best lawyer or accountant? Is your dentist the very best in the field? Are your appliances always the top of the line? There is ample evidence that there's plenty of room for mere competence in the marketplace.

Chapter VI: Following a Mission

*You have a calling with exists only for you and which only you can fulfill.
Naomi Stephen, Ph.D.*

FOLLOWING A MISSION is by far the least-traveled path people take to begin making a living creating a life. Fewer than one in six people go out on their own along this path to their perfect work. But for those who do, it can be a highly rewarding and deeply meaningful way to live. And we predict that as our economy comes to rely more heavily on self-employed individuals who are providing information and personal and creative services of all kinds, this path will become an increasingly popular one. We believe this to be true because we sense a growing hunger in people to do work that makes a difference, that fulfills some higher purpose, that makes a significant contribution to the world around us. And that's what following a mission is all about.

In many ways, following a mission is a hybrid of pursuing a passion. All the people we've met who are following a mission of some kind have a great passion for what they're doing. The difference between these two paths, however, lies in the source of the primary reward. Those pursuing a passion usually find the act of doing what they do to be personally enjoyable. Following a mission, however, is not always personally enjoyable. The enjoyment often comes not so much from what you're doing as from the ultimate benefits or results others derive from your work.

*"Yeah, it's a gamble, but it's the path I'm on. I mean, this is bigger than I am It's like, I have to go this way. This is the direction."
David Caruso, actor*

We define a mission as a cause or task or duty someone feels destined, moved, or called upon to undertake. This definition seems to capture the way people talk with us as they describe earning their living by following a mission.

“... five ways people have set out to earn their living from a mission:

1. SURVIVING PERSONAL TRAGEDY OR OVERCOMING DIFFICULTY

Perhaps the most common way someone decides to follow a mission is as a result of experiencing a personal tragedy of some type, an overwhelming loss, an illness, a lifelong problem they've overcome, even a life-threatening situation. Such a mission may be fueled by a conviction that something must be done about what they've experienced, that the situation they've faced cannot be allowed to happen again, that others must know about it and be protected from it. Sometimes, however, it's simply a desire to help ease the way for others who are suffering what they have gone through. Here are some examples of people who now earn their livelihood following such a mission.

Research suggests that those who have made it through tough experiences are more likely to become highly successful in life.

Chapter VII: Capitalizing on Your Assets

"It doesn't matter so much what you do in particular, so long as you have your life."

Henry James

ALTHOUGH CAPITALIZING on whatever assets you have—be they your previous job experiences, your contacts, or other resources you have available to you—can be useful no matter what path you take, this is by far the most popular path people take to making a living creating a life of their choosing. Almost one of every two people who becomes self-employed choose this path at least initially. They don't begin in response to demands for some special gift they have. They don't set out to pursue a personal passion, nor do they feel compelled to follow a particular mission. For them, and perhaps for you, becoming self-sufficient is a means to some other end. It might be economic survival, having greater flexibility and more control over your life, working from home, having more time for your children, pursuing some other aspect of your life, or living and working in some location or way that better suits you.

Chapter VIII: Choosing a Path

From where does the strength come to finish the race? It comes from within.

Eric Liddell, *Chariots of Fire*

AT THIS POINT, you probably have a pretty good idea of what paths hold the most appeal to you. You probably have some ideas about how you might weave the potential of those paths together to create the perfect work to support what you want in life and enjoy the journey along the way. As we said at the beginning of this section, you are not so much choosing a path as creating one, drawing from the many possibilities that best fit your needs, desires, and circumstances. Your path will probably not look just like any of those you've read about throughout this section. Yours will be as unique to you as theirs is to each of those we've profiled. In a sense, you are creating a path only you can travel because it leads to where only you want to go, doing what only you can do in the ways only you can do it.

CHAPTER IX: Getting Connected

One of the greatest things in life is to take any talent you have and any opportunity you have and do something really good for people.

Joseph Califano, former Secretary of Health Education and Welfare

AT LAST, we come to the question that usually causes the greatest distress: How will you make enough money to support yourself along the path you've chosen for yourself? How will you finance your journey? How will you find the means to live your dreams? We have purposely delayed addressing this question because as soon as money comes into the picture, it's too easy for the picture to get distorted. It's too easy to stop thinking about what you want and start thinking about what you can get. For most people, how they will get what they need from doing what they want is the greatest stumbling block to proceeding with confidence toward their perfect work.

From the customary salary mentality, we're used to thinking that money is about getting. How much salary can I get? How many fringe benefits can I get? How many stock options can I get? So we start thinking, If I go out on my own, what can I get? How much can I make? Will it be enough? Thinking about money in this way, however, won't get you where you want to go. To get where you want to go, you have to stop thinking about what you can get and start thinking about what you can give—without disconnecting from what you want, without leaving the personal path you've chosen in life. That's the challenge and the opportunity of these times.

Needs Created by New Technology

Every time new technology is introduced not only can it be used to provide the purpose for which it was intended, it also creates the following ancillary needs for products and services:

- Writing documentation for using it
- Promoting it
- Selling it
- Consulting on selecting and installing it
- Teaching people to use it
- Publishing books, tapes, and videos on using it
- Maintaining and repairing it

Chapter X

Needs Created by New Technology

Every time new technology is introduced not only can it be used to provide the purpose for which it was intended, it also creates the following ancillary needs for products and services:

- Writing documentation for using it

- Promoting it
- Selling it
- Consulting on selecting and installing it
- Teaching people to use it
- Publishing books, tapes, and videos on using it
- Maintaining and repairing it
- Developing accessories for it
- Discovering new applications for it
- Developing accessories for it
- Discovering new applications for it Be among the first to recognize the potential of new technologies.

Be among the first to recognize the potential of new technologies

THE FOUR PHASES TO GENERATING YOUR OWN LIVELIHOOD

Phase 1: Casting Forth. Once you decide what you think your perfect work might be, you must start casting forth what you want to offer, letting people you think need it know about it and testing out if there really is a connection between your desires and meeting the needs of those you intend to serve. This phase can feel a lot like looking for a job, but often it's actually easier to get small pieces of work than it is to land a full-time job doing what you want to do at the full salary you're seeking. You should be able to start making a connection with people or companies that need you in less time than it would take you to find a well-paying job doing the kind of work you want to do. But only if you invest the time and effort to continue casting forth will you actually make a connection that does meet other people's needs.

Fill yourself with the inspiration that comes from embracing your dream. Use the energy that inspiration provides you to make a connection with an outcome you can begin to help others achieve. Keep drawing upon the dream until the results you get for them brings back the energy you've invested multiplied.

Phase 2: Connecting. As you continue casting forth what you have to offer and responding to what you discover, you'll learn how you can best connect your interests to what people need and will pay for. As long as you have yet to make such a connection, though, earning an income will be difficult. If you find yourself struggling once you get under way, realize that it's this connection you're seeking and continue to use the overlapping matrixing circles to further define how you can connect what you desire and what you have to offer with what people actually need.

For some people, like Oscar Vargas in starting Piñata Party, the connection is in place right from the beginning: his sister had back orders waiting for him, so he never felt as if he was looking for a job. He had work to do right from the get go. For others, like Gregg Warren in starting Worry Free, the connection comes immediately upon announcing what you will offer. He had 5,000 responses in five months to the ad he placed in the newspaper. For still others, like Jonathan Storm in starting Earthtunes, making the needed connection takes longer. Storm is still seeking avenues for linking what he does to something a sufficient number of people will eagerly pay for, but his connection has been growing stronger every year.

My desires are like seeds left in the ground; they wait for the right season and then spontaneously manifest into beautiful flowers and mighty trees, into enchanted gardens and majestic forests."

The Vedas

Phase 3: Feeding the Connection. Usually simply making a connection will not be enough to generate the steady income you seek. Up until this phase, what you're doing is a lot like fishing. You cast your net, you connect. But once you connect, it's no longer like fishing because only rarely can you simply reel in nets full of fish. Instead, you actually have to start feeding the connection you've made by investing time, energy, and money in becoming known and trusted by those who need what you're offering, doing a good job for them, getting results for them, and building a reputation for your work.

How long you will need to feed the connection before your career supports you through a life of its own is directly related to the level of effort that will be involved for you to launch the path you've chosen: i.e., how many people are eager and waiting for what you're offering, how closely the work you've chosen matches doing things that come naturally to you instead of your having to acquire new abilities, and how well positioned you are to tap into the needs people have instead of having to build a relationship and reputation from scratch among key contacts and clients. If the career you've chosen falls in the Serendipity quadrant of the Viability Grid, for example, the feeding phase will be shorter than if your choice falls in the Long Haul quadrant.

But even if you start out with a backlog like Oscar Vargas's Piñata Party, you will need to satisfy your clients and build your connection to them so they will want to return to you and you can attract still others. In other words, once you connect, you haven't necessarily got the job. You're on probation, so to speak.

Phase 4: The Quickening. This is the stage we're all seeking. It's the point at which you've invested sufficient energy, time, and money into your connection so that the word is out and begins to spread about what you do. At this point your work will take on a life of its own. It may even grow beyond what you can

handle, and you will have to decide whether you simply want to create a good income for yourself or if you want to start employing or contracting out with others to help you respond to the momentum you've created. Many people choose to limit their work to what they personally can do; they're not interested in building a business, having employees and turning over the work to other people whom they must supervise or oversee. Others are happy to let their enterprise grow beyond themselves in response to the demand they've created.

APPENDIX I: THE DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY PERSONAL STYLE SURVEY

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE a classic "entrepreneurial type" to succeed in a career as a self-employed individual. One out of five of those who are successfully self-employed will go on to employ others, some becoming large corporations like Microsoft and Apple Computer, but most self-employed people continue to do what they love to do and do it themselves without hiring a staff. Either way, we've found that the most successful self-employed individuals do things that come naturally to them that they enjoy doing.

APPENDIX II: An Alphabetical Listing of Self-Employment Careers

APPENDIX III: Directory of Self-Employment Careers by Personal Style

[Click here obtain the eBook, print book, or audio](#)

Copyright 1996, 2003, 2008 Paul and Sarah Edwards