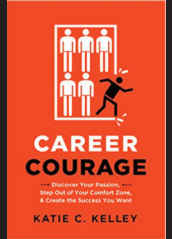


Career Courage

Discover Your Passion, Step Out of Your Comfort Zone, and Create the Success You Want



Book by Katie C. Kelley

Published by AMACOM | © 2016

Synopsis

Ever wondered if you're in the right line of work? Even if you are successful in your field, with the right motivations, you might decide it isn't what you want from life. What next? Take some time to reflect, ask yourself some hard questions, and learn what you would really like to do with your career and life.

Career Courage (AMACOM, © 2016) implores you to evaluate where you are in your career, and what you've always dreamed of. Ask yourself "tough questions" about how you think, how you behave, and what to change so your career starts working for *you*. By building on others' experiences and observing how to make these changes a part of your life, *Career Courage* aims to create lasting passion for your work.



The key concepts of *Career Courage* can be distilled into the following steps:

Believe Life is a Journey

There's no fixed direction when on the journey of life. Explore and connect to the things you find exciting and inspiring, and turn these into a strong career.

Unearth Your Motivation

Think of what you really enjoy doing. Maybe it's a part of your job already. Maybe you need a career shift or new responsibilities to stoke your passion.

Conquer Your Fears

Maybe you're scared of the risks that change may bring, but take the time to plan ahead and turn risks into success.

Get Your Brain in the Game

You need to think like an entrepreneur—how would you use opportunities and approach budgeting without the safety net of a salary or corporate support network?

Make Relationships Work

Whether it's your work-life balance, or networking, or building enduring partnerships, addressing your relationship needs can bring passion and fulfillment to your life.

“At some point, perhaps at many points, during our careers, we wonder, “Is this all there is? Am I really happy? How did I get so far away from the future I had dreamed about when I got out of school?”

Based on *Career Courage: Discover Your Passion, Step Out of Your Comfort Zone, and Create the Success You Want* by Katie C. Kelley, we discuss taking opportunities to change your career and highlight the ways in which you can engage with your life, take charge of your actions, and find harmony between competing responsibilities. We share our interpretations of these approaches in the following pages.

Finding Courage

Having courage means acting on your convictions, working through your fears, and engaging in all the opportunities available to you. It means taking action and living up to your dreams in terms of the choices you make. It's about being accountable, and honoring the life you want to live. This type of valiant behavior is only possible through determination and knowing what you really want from your life—you need to have an intimate understanding of yourself, be brave, stay true to your beliefs, and steer yourself toward something you love.

Loving What You Do

Motivation is what gets you closer to realizing your hopes and dreams for the future—but sometimes this incentive to succeed can get mixed with outside influences. Author Katie Kelley talks about her disillusioning experience of being dissatisfied once she finally accomplished one of her goals; she had landed her dream job as a psychologist. She loved helping people, but the job lacked personal engagement for her. So she started coaching and unlocked a new chapter in her life.

Kelley encourages you to reach into the heart of what you love. To get to know yourself, you need to understand there are different facets to your loves and interests. What makes one person ecstatically happy won't necessarily do the same for you. Consider your current career: why are you in it? What would you change? How do you want to be remembered? Build an action plan using these reflections, as well as the following six elements:

- **Vision.** Be audacious, daring, and original in envisioning your future.
- **Drive.** Build the powerhouse of your goal with motivation, determination, and a willingness to succeed.
- **Inspiration.** Use your vision, values, and ideals to find what inspires and excites you.
- **Feedback.** Ask your family, friends, and colleagues what you should keep doing, start doing, and stop doing.
- **Opportunities.** Ascertain opportunities in your network by discussing various ideas with your contacts.
- **Values.** Follow your gut instinct about what's right and wrong for you—let your ideals guide you.

When you know yourself, and what makes you tick, you've taken the first big leap towards your unique career. However, you might need to address a few more areas before diving in.

Fighting Your Fear

Making a career change can be a particularly fearful experience. How can you plan for the unknown? Counteract feelings of doubt and fear by recognizing when you feel afraid, staying true to your passions, being vigilant about the limitations your fear brings, and remaining confident about the future. Self-confidence gives you the boost you need to stay on your career-change journey, and comes down to believing in yourself. Kelley suggests that in order to boost your confidence, you should reflect on your health and wellbeing, your emotions, your attitude to obstacles and success, your ability to be forthright, your consideration towards possibilities and responsibilities, and feel a sense of pride. Identify the areas you think are lacking in and work to strengthen these.

Being Bold

To be successful, ask for what you need with a positive, can-do, attitude. Be aware of keeping your confidence alive, especially in the face of the uncomfortable unknown. Discomfort and vulnerability can be draining. Confidence can be worn down. Experiment on how to keep your enthusiasm bubbling over. The author recommends taking several approaches:

- Invite friends, family, or colleagues over. Mitigate loneliness and create valuable support to ease your fears.
- Keep clear focus. Don't let day-to-day admin or occasional setbacks undermine your goal.
- Make time to relax. Get away from your routine and observe what's draining your confidence. Return with insight into managing your "confidence killers."
- Recognize your emotions and their consequences. Notice the positive and negative aspects of your behavior and change what creates a negative outcome.
- Develop de-stressing habits. Find a way to deal with a stressful situation and use this approach time after time to develop familiar means of coping.
- Create a culture of flexibility and optimism. These attributes can make you feel comfortable in a new situation.

Taking Risks

When embracing change, the likelihood of failure or success can make you feel cautious, fearful, and confined. But risks are our everyday reality, especially when we make a career change. Decide what risks are acceptable to you. Beware of "foolhardy" risks that are likely to end in disaster, and be calculating in the choices you make. For example, consider using half your savings to start a business instead of taking out a second mortgage on your house. Highlight areas of your life or personality that are worth taking a risk in, for example, loving others or being compassionate towards other people.

In taking a risk, you're looking for opportunities and growth, but you should be prepared for setbacks and loss. Think like an entrepreneur: be self-aware and aim to create innovations on a limited budget. Kelley suggests judging which areas of your comfort zone are most important and considering where you might compromise; for example, not buying a new car in the next year to keep food on the table, and listing the positive and negative outcomes of doing so. Thinking of the worst-case scenario allows you to understand what drives your fear and weigh up how much you really risk if it came to pass.

Creating a Work-Life Balance

Your lifestyle is built around your career; your work influences you on a daily basis, and affects who you are. So, in a sense, changing your career may define your life. To be successful, you should know how to create balance between your work and home lives, how to build a future, and how to include your family and community in

these changes. Remember that sustainable change must be something you can live with, and to make solid decisions about your future, you need to consider their impact on your life.

Your Impact

Who you are makes a difference to your career journey. Your character defines your leadership ability; whether people want to work with and follow you. Who do you want to include as an essential part of your journey? Think of how you relate to people. Do you have rich relationships full of trust, transparency, and loyalty?

Be aware of how you appear to others but not yourself, or how you appear to yourself but not others—and know there are aspects of yourself you have yet to discover. Be consistent—one small act of defiance can destroy your reputation. Reflect on traits that make you trustworthy and loyal, aim to improve your character, demonstrate competence, build working relationships, share values, and exchange favors. Ask yourself questions such as “Do I do what I say I will do,” “If my name came up in a conversation among the leaders of my organization, what would they say?” or “If I could change one aspect of the way I relate to other people at work, what would it be?”

A Balancing Act

You probably already know the stress of a work-life clash. Trying to do-it-all and be-it-all is debilitating. Don't let someone else decide what your life should resemble—accept that there are different ways to achieve something. Be accountable and pay attention to what your actions say about you. There will be stress, and it's important to take a break when it becomes overwhelming. Use your emotional intelligence to recognize when you need help or a break, and develop relationship boundaries to establish where necessary demands begin and end. Remember, you don't need to control everything. Ask yourself who, if not you, could help you meet your work or home demands—and build a strong team. The author describes how she created a “home” team but found she was still juggling work and home responsibilities, and ended up forgetting to arrange for her daughter to be picked up from school one day while she was on a business trip. She tried to do everything—and failed. But when she fully delegated to her “home” team, and trusted her team members, everything changed.

The Seed of Continuity

What steps will you take to achieve the future you envision? What daily decisions do you need to make? Who is your competition? Plan well and adapt to meet the unexpected. You can't get distracted by “shiny objects,” as Kelley refers to them—a promotion that takes you a step away from achieving your dream, or spending money on a new product or vacation when you could invest instead. Kelley recommends you take four approaches:

- **Think long term.** Observe the bigger picture and the finer details, to build your strategy and investments.
- **Serve others.** Work with people: help them, and in helping them, ask for their advice about your future to exceed your personal limitations.
- **Communicate your vision.** When you communicate where you want to go, other people can help make your dreams a reality.
- **Choose the right tools.** Kelley uses a parable about chopping a tree down—you could chop it down in a month taking five strokes a day with an axe, or you could use a chainsaw.

Essentially, be prepared for life's little surprises, and never stop asking questions—explore unexpected avenues.

Progressing your Changes

Making a change is more than adjusting something and hoping it will work. Some of the larger issues you need to address include how to progress your change, how to continue to be strong and successful after you've started, and when to find inspiration to grow. You shouldn't be complacent with reaching a plateau, but seek to expand your horizons—opportunities won't fall into your lap. We discuss some of the factors that play into the lasting success of your change, and provide substance and security time after time, so that you can continue to grow.

The People Who Make a Difference

Independence is important, but belonging to a community is essential too; it provides a wealth of possibilities. A community is a sounding board with opportunities; it can mean the difference between struggling with a career change and making it click.

You must be constantly attentive to your community. Reciprocity cannot be ignored, and empathy and compassion carry more weight than selfishness: pay attention to others' needs, aim to connect needs with skills, be adaptive, and grow your influence. Turning your hobby into the opportunity to network, such as offering guitar lessons, can lead to unexpected introductions. While people connect with those who are like-minded, you can get some valuable advice and connections from those with a different background to you.

Think of your role models. What relationships have they built? Reflect on how increasing your influence could transform your aims. What kind of working relationship are you trying to develop? You will encounter different opinions and it's as important to give others a voice, as it is to have others listen to you. Sometimes no amount of influence will make any difference to a situation. Know your deal-breakers, the limits of what you would do to follow internal politics. Kelley raises the example of a female manager told to lower her voice, not speak her mind, and to not display any signs of wealth—in contrast to the other, male, managers. A deal-breaker. How could she handle it? She chose to work with the company in the short term, with the understanding that she had no place there in the long run.

The Money Tree

Finances are personal, and money isn't always synonymous with success. No matter how you handle your finances, they do correspond to a level of security. Think of finance in a similar way to your health; maintaining it is essential to your wellbeing.

Your financial value system, or what your finances mean to you, can help define what is worth doing—and for how much money—to you. Kelley introduces the example of someone turning down a sought-after job offer due to a relatively low salary, only to be offered double the pay. You can also use finance as a measure of success or development. For example, your Return on Investment, or ROI. Your ROI is a measure of the wealth returned to you for your initial investment. Your financial value system should be comparable to your ROI in making both day-to-day and future-oriented decisions.

Remember that sometimes you may not be completely to blame for your financial situation—if you don't get a bonus or promotion, for example—but you're still responsible for your long-term finances. Kelley encourages you to ask several questions about finances to discover your financial value system:

- When has money made you happy?
- When has money made you stressed?
- What value does money have for you?
- Do you want to be remembered for making money?
- Would your goals remain the same if you had all the money in the world?

The Future of Success

What will you do when you've accomplished your dreams and consider yourself successful? Will the work still be satisfying, or will it be same-old, same-old? In your future career, you may meet with success and feel the need to change again—to chase after yet another dream, to try another path in life. Sometimes you come across an event or feedback that makes you want to change direction—a bad appraisal review, growing older, a birth or death, and financial issues can all force us to follow new paths. Use your instincts, discover a new passion, and fill yourself with energy and motivation for a new venture. Your core values and your previous experiences stay with you from one path to the next and provide guidance when questioning your motivations or fears, weighing up your current situation against the future you imagined, or if you've fallen into a rut and stopped relating to people.

Don't jump into change—take time to assess your current situation; discuss when the best time is to progress, move out, or change your work approach to get the most out of your organization. Don't forget that there's a reason you do what you do, and if you still feel enthusiastic, chances are it isn't time to change yet.

Insights—Change Careers with Passion and Dedication

Be Honest with Yourself

When you're joyful about what you do, you do it well, and you want to do more of it. Develop your vision of your future from your passions; be bold and adventurous—your vision is personal, and it only needs to work for you.

Work Through Your Fears

You need to fight your fear every step of the way—you won't have doubts only once. Be wary of when fear may strike and what makes you feel most vulnerable; imagine what you will do in the situation, and then try it anyway to see what happens. If the worst comes to pass, you've already developed a coping system. If it doesn't, you've overcome your fear.

Be a People Person

Whether it's asking for feedback, working with people, asking for help, or networking, you need to work with people. Explore your areas of stress and what reactions lead to a negative result; then change them so you're at your best when you work with others.

Look After Your Finances

Even if wealth isn't your end goal, you must consider your finances as you would consider your health; keep an eye on them, have regular "checks," and don't take them for granted. Have an entrepreneurial spirit and aim to make every penny spent or invested count.

Plan Your Future

Your journey may take you on an exciting adventure, but you still need to plan for the future. Whether this is the future continuity of your goal, or thinking of what your next challenge might be, set aside some time to make sure you do it properly, with support, instead of just diving in blindly.

Conclusion

Career Courage is about change. It's about shaping your future career by making the most of yourself, being accountable, and continuously progressing in the long term. Whether this means starting out in a new direction, or taking a new approach to the path you're already on, you'll learn how to combat complacency and be bold, while honoring your responsibilities and the things and people who are important for you.

“No matter how radical the change you wish to make, you must keep in mind that it begins, as all new journeys do, by placing one foot in front of the other, with the belief that over time you will arrive safely at the new destination.”

If you've enjoyed our insights on Katie Kelley's *Career Courage: Discover Your Passion, Step Out of Your Comfort Zone, and Create the Success You Want*, we encourage you to access the other *Career Courage* assets in the Skillsoft library, or purchase the hardcopy.

About the Author



KATIE KELLEY is an author, speaker, connector, and mentor for professionals who are seeking greater clarity, influence, and fortune throughout their lives. In 2009, she launched Katie Kelley Networks, a global community of peers, champions, and thought leaders, and currently serves as the Director of People Development for Fuerst Group. She also has a bachelor degree in psychology from Boston College and a masters in Clinical Social Work from Smith College.

This is her first book.