



---

# What I Wish I Had Known Earlier In My Career

---

Wise words from those who have been there.

Anita Brick and  
many others



# Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<a href="#"><u>Identity is Everything</u></a>	
<b>Larry Ackerman .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Founder and President of The Identity Circle	
<a href="#"><u>Shake Things Up, and Find Your Own Path</u></a>	
<b>Marci Alboher .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Vice President Civic Ventures, author of One Person/Multiple Careers: A New Model for Work/Life Success	
<a href="#"><u>Education Comes in Many Forms</u></a>	
<b>George Andrews.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Associate Dean at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business	
<a href="#"><u>Networking by the Numbers</u></a>	
<b>Dennis Aust .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Managing Director, Senior Partner at CharterMast Partners LLC and President at Chicago Booth Alumni Club	
<a href="#"><u>Telling the Best Stories</u></a>	
<b>Cam Axelrood .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Independent Public Relations and Communications Professional	
<a href="#"><u>Wake Up Inspired</u></a>	
<b>Marian Baker .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Chief Inspiration Officer. Master Certified Coach, award-winning Author & Speaker at Wake Up Inspired	
<a href="#"><u>Multi-Faceted Career and Personality</u></a>	
<b>Sachin Bapat .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Senior Director, Solutions Got-to-Market at SAP America Inc.	

## [Tech Geek and Astute Leader](#)

**Caryl Barclay** ..... 26

Organizational Change Management Principal at SAP

## [Networking at the Top](#)

**Anna Behrman** ..... 28

Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer, Top Tier Professional Services Firm

## [Lessons at the Perfect Time](#)

**Brenda Bence** ..... 30

President at Brand Development Associates International, Ltd.

## [Global Executive Onboarding Accelerator](#)

**George Bradt** ..... 32

Managing Director at PrimeGenesis and Principal at CEO Connection

## [Comebacks Can Be Spectacular](#)

**Anita Brick** ..... 34

Director of Career Advancement Programs at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business & creator of What I Wish I Had Known, Encouragizers™, and No Matter What

## [Don't Be Anonymous](#)

**Paul Burns** ..... 37

Consultant at Independent Financial and Insurance Intermediary

## [Confront Versus Confrontational](#)

**Pamela Butler-Fox** ..... 39

Principal Consultant at SellingSolutions

## [Analysis and Presence](#)

**Mike Carpenter** ..... 41

Finance Director at PAREXEL

## [Inspiring Value](#)

**Andrew T. Carr** ..... 43

Business Development Consultant, Public Speaker, Radio Host, and Professional Development Coach at Andrew T. Carr

## [Plan with Self-Awareness and Be Deliberate](#)

**Carolyn Chan** ..... 45

Partner at Heidrick & Struggles

## Expert Leader and Guide

### **Serhat Cicekoglu** ..... 49

Adjunct Professor at Loyola University, Graduate School of Business and Principal,  
Corporate Development at Advanced Micro Devices (AMD)

## Relationships are for Contributing

### **Sheri Colas-Gervais** ..... 51

Senior Director at SCG Group and Vice President and a founding member of the  
Board of Directors for the Le Flambeau Foundation

## Entrepreneurial Performing Artist

### **Steve Cole** ..... 53

Chair, Music Business Division at McNally Smith College of Music, Recording Artist at Mack  
Avenue/Artistry Records, and Writer at Universal Music Publishing

## Visual Leadership™

### **Maureen Costello** ..... 55

President at Image Launch LLC

## Perspective is Everything

### **Sara Dell** ..... 57

Serial entrepreneurial manager in HR, Administration and Operations and  
Career Management Professional

## Expert Collaborator

### **Rupert D'Souza** ..... 59

Senior Director, Treasury and Finance at BioMarin Pharmaceutical

## Talent Leadership

### **Marc Effron** ..... 61

President, the Talent Strategy Group; Author, One Page Talent Management

## The Magnificent Relationship Builder

### **Linda Eunson** ..... 63

Director, Career Services and Executive Education, Asia, the University of Chicago  
Booth School of Business

## Where Art and Hope Intersect

### **Martha Foster** ..... 65

Documentary Expert at American Documentary Showcase and Founder and President/CEO at  
Living Earth Television NFP (Five Emmys in 2001-02, awarded Influential Woman in Business in  
2003 by the National Association of Women Business Owners, and nominated for the 2007  
Award of Appreciation from Images and Voices of Hope)

## Hard Driving Balance

### **Paula Giovacchini** ..... 67

President at Gio Group Inc.

## Leadership Starts with You

**Judith E. Glaser** ..... 69

Chairman of Creating WE Institute, CEO of Benchmark Communications, Inc., Keynote Speaker and Author of 6 books including 3 best sellers: Creating WE, The DNA of Leadership, & 42 Rules for Creating WE.

## Intellectual Property is Your Currency

**Kathy Graham** ..... 71

Principal at HQ Search, Inc., Principal at HQ Search, Seminars, Scripts, & Services, Inc., and author of Graham's Manual of Style for Resumes and Cover Letters and The Land of Lemons and Nuts: a Fable

## Entrepreneurial Courage

**Michael Guerrieri** ..... 73

Vice President, Business Development & Sales Operations at Apparel Media Group

## You are Your Message

**Jeff Hornstein** ..... 75

Facilitator - MBA Effective Leadership Program at University of Chicago Booth School of Business and President at The Speaker's Choice

## Marrying Well-Being and Success

**Karim H. Ismail** ..... 78

CEO at Avidium Inc. and author of Keep Any Promise

## Your Dream Can Be Your Career

**Joni Jackson** ..... 80

Faculty at Robert Morris University

## Ever Victorious with Surprises

**Lirella Jaen** ..... 83

Staff Clinical Massage Therapist at AthletiCo West Loop Clinic and becoming an anatomist

## Elegant Career Leadership

**Kim Jarvis** ..... 85

Talent Management Curriculum Consultant at DeVry Inc.

## Go for the Gold

**Robert Jordan** ..... 87

Author of How They Did It: Billion Dollar Insights from the Heart of America and Founder, CEO at InterimCEO/InterimCFO Network, Principal at Red Flash, and on the Alumni Board of Community-Health, the largest non-profit clinic providing health care to uninsured Chicagoans.

## Surround Yourself with Motivated People

**Karim Khalil** ..... 89

EEMEA Equities at Jabre Capital

## No Need to Go it Alone

**Bill Kooser** ..... 91

Associate Dean at Johns Hopkins Carey Business School

## There's Always an Adventure

**Alice Lane** ..... 93

Independent Marketing and Business Development Strategist

## Influential Mom who Designs Toys

**Dianne Lauble** ..... 95

Principal and Toy Designer at Blue Fly Toy, LLC

## Living Your Dream on Your Terms

**Jeri Love** ..... 97

Ghostwriter, Manuscript Editor, Professional Writing Services, Writing Coach

## Honor Organizational Politics

**Karthik Mahadevan** ..... 99

Software Program Manager at Hewlett-Packard

## Contributing to the Success of Many

**Tony Martorano** ..... 101

Managing Director - Chicago at Steven Douglas Associates

## Open Your Mind – Today, Tomorrow, and Forever

**Dennis Misurell** ..... 103

Instructor - Business Technology at Northwest Kansas Technical College

## Confidence is King

**Bill Moller** ..... 105

Host at WGN Radio and President at Bill Moller Communications, LLC

## Real Life Networking Begins at Birth

**Andrea Nierenberg** ..... 107

President at the Nierenberg Group

## Nothing is Wasted

**Meredith Nierenberg** ..... 109

BA in Family and Community Studies. Certified Psychiatric Nurse since 1990

## Your Career Path Will “Find” You

**Fern O’Neill** ..... 111

Associate Director Career Services at University of Chicago Booth School of Business

## The Business and Technical Multiplier

**Eric Olson** ..... 113

Management Consultant at A.T Kearney

## Explore Before You Need To

**Chris Ortigara** ..... 115

CFP®, Financial Advisor at Water Tower Financial Partners, LLC/Massachusetts  
Mutual Life Insurance Company (Mass Mutual)

## Listen More, Talk Less

**Monica Piercy** ..... 117

Director - Career Management Centre at the Lisbon MBA - Católica | Nova

## Crossroads Require Focus

**Jessica Pryce-Jones** ..... 119

CEO at iOpener Ltd and author of Happiness at Work

## The Power of Risk and Exposure

**Zoe Quan** ..... 121

Owner, Qingchu Thinking, LLC

## You Don't Need All of the Answers

**Ruth Reiner** ..... 124

Director, Effective Leadership at University of Chicago Booth School of Business

## Career Management: Start Early and Often

**Gary Roll** ..... 126

Contract Project Manager at UCAN Chicago

## Versatile Visionary

**Ellen Romberg** ..... 128

Chief Human Resources Officer at MacArthur Foundation

## Succeed — Absolutely Anywhere

**Virginia Schneider** ..... 130

Film, television, and stage actress

## Change Agent Extraordinaire

**Gowri Selka** ..... 132

Director, Pharmacy Quality Assurance at Walgreens

## Dream and Act — Over and Over

**Lori Silverman** ..... 134

Strategist, Change Agent, Organization Effectiveness Consultant and Owner at Partners for  
Progress and Ad hoc instructor at UW Madison Fluno Center for Executive Education



## Brave, Bodacious, and Good

- Penny Steele** ..... 136  
Small Business Owner/Partner, Alzheimer's Caregiver, and Graduate Student in Transpersonal Studies (Career Numbers 12, 13 & 14)

## Success Requires Relationships

- Cindy Swanson** ..... 138  
Director at the University of Chicago (Booth) Women's Business Group

## Give Yourself Courageous Choices

- Dr. Edith Taber** ..... 140  
Clinical Psychologist

## Take Risks Early — When You Can Afford To

- Christina Trampota** ..... 142  
Founder at CGM Squared

## Pilot as Leader

- Marcy Trojak** ..... 144  
Airline Pilot (Captain) at United Airlines

## You Can't Do it Alone

- Doug Webb** ..... 146  
Manager, Talent Management at Siemens

## Adding Value Everywhere

- Melissa Giovagnoli Wilson**..... 148  
Founder and Business Growth Strategist at Networkding, and bestselling author of many books, including Networkding

## Stand Up for Your Career

- Cali Yost** ..... 150  
CEO & Founder at Flex+Strategy Group/Work+Life Fit, Inc. and author of Work+Life

## All Success Leads to and from Mentors

- Lois Zachary** ..... 152  
President, Leadership Development Services, LLC and author of The Mentor's Guide

## **Lighten Up**

## It's All in Your ABC's

- Julie Danis** ..... 154  
essayist, [www.juliedanis.com](http://www.juliedanis.com), Contributing Editor at [www.womensvoicesforchange.org](http://www.womensvoicesforchange.org) and Adjunct Lecturer at Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism. Media Integrated Marketing Communications

# Introduction

There are people from all walks of life around the globe who have experiences, knowledge, and insights, that could be valuable to others. In my work as Director of Career Advancement Programs at the [University of Chicago Booth School of Business](#), nearly every day someone asks me the question: “Who do you know who has already achieved my career goal? I want to talk to that person – the sooner the better.”

What I Wish I Had Known was created to assist you to connect with individuals whose lessons learned could help you as you pursue your own goals. In Volume 1 — What I Wish I Had Known — earlier in my career — you will have an opportunity to read the words of wisdom from people in a variety of fields, ranging in age from mid-30’s to late 80’s. These individuals share their wise words as an act of appreciation for all the things they have gained — material and otherwise.

We hope you will find them as a source of encouragement to spur you on to achieve your goals and dreams. Not every idea will be relevant to your situation. You decide which ones are right for you and your circumstances. Once you have, please come back and share your own insights.

This is the first in a series — we welcome your ideas about other topics — from starting a business or getting into consulting to buying a home or bouncing back after a challenging time. All suggestions appreciated.

Finally, thank you for all of you who provided inspiration, words of wisdom, and leadership on so many different levels. Also, thank you to those of you now reading this for making the time.



## Larry Ackerman

Be open-minded as to who becomes your mentor and what you want out of that relationship.

*Founder and President of The Identity Circle*

- \* Relationships are as important as facts. Treat them with the respect they deserve.
- \* Work is about giving not just taking. "What am I getting out of this job?" is a classic early career question. Realize now that the more you give, the more you get – at least, the more you deserve.
- \* You are not your job, no matter how much you like what you do. Knowing and living out of your identity is crucial for success, happiness, and meaning. Remember that what you do is NOT who you are. But, who you are can make what you do far more impactful and fulfilling.
- \* Finding a mentor is a powerful success influencer. Mentors come in all ages, shapes, sizes, and levels in an organization. Be open-minded as to who becomes your mentor and what you want out of that relationship. You might have only one mentor during your entire career or a series of people who help you for shorter periods of time.
- \* Be heard, in writing. Becoming an author elevates your reputation—something I benefitted from after writing *Identity Is Destiny* and [The Identity Code](#). Not everyone has to write a book – a couple of provocative articles will do but you do need to build a positive reputation and be visible professionally.
- \* Always having to be – and be seen as – the smartest guy in the room is a dumb idea – it's a great way to turn people off who happen to be your co-workers; maybe even your boss.
- \* Listening trumps talking every time. Talking can be intoxicating when you have an audience who cares about what you have to say. Yet for them to keep paying attention, you need to care enough to listen to them. Put in other terms, you don't learn anything when you're talking.
- \* Being fired isn't the end of the world. Sometimes, it's the beginning.



## Marci Alboher

Find ways to stay connected to  
your network that come easily.

*Vice President Civic Ventures, author of [One Person/Multiple Careers:  
A New Model for Work/Life Success](#)*

- \* Have a plan, but be prepared to revisit your plan as the world changes, as you evolve, and as opportunities arise.
- \* Don't "network" for networking's sake. Find ways to stay connected to your network that come easily. If you're passionate about a cause, connect with like minded do-gooders. If you're a jock, do it through sports. If you're an introvert, write or use online tools. If you're outgoing, show up.
- \* Always mentor others, and always find new mentors for yourself. And don't be caught up on traditional notions around mentors. Your next mentor might be half your age, and you might find yourself mentoring someone who was your guru at an earlier stage.
- \* Cultivate a slash or two. Custom blend a career that marries your unique set of skills and talents. Being a teacher/CPA/fundraiser will open lots of doors, provide security in down markets and stave off boredom.



# George Andrews

Every job has taught me  
valuable explicit tasks...

*Associate Dean at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business*

- \* You must realize that you can't change the past, so don't dwell on it. I have always liked the quote by Jack Kerouac, 'Nothing behind me, everything before me, as it always is on the road'. That all said, I have come to understand that the past can be very beneficial when you use it to learn lessons and help you move forward.
- \* First, do not wish away the present by always thinking about the future. While I told you that I am not someone who lives in the past, my problem has always been living in the future, always wishing for the next promotion, the next raise, the next challenge.
- \* What I now realize is that every position has taught me valuable lessons. Every job has taught me valuable explicit tasks, whether it was learning how to work with and read data, or learning to cold call prospects. I always felt that I was ready to move on much sooner than I actually was. What I learned by staying in those jobs was the implicit tasks that only come with time. Let me explain.
- \* One of my jobs was to open new accounts for Procter & Gamble. I would walk in and try to convince small drug stores that they needed to carry a line of cosmetics or fragrances. There were certain explicit tasks I needed to learn to be successful such as the pricing and promotional levels that we offered, or reading the opportunity at the account by walking the store and looking at the other products and price points.
- \* These tasks were easy for me, and I felt in a short time that I was quite capable. What I did not realize at the time was that I was also developing many implicit skills, skills not specifically taught by the company nor written in my job description but tasks that would end up serving me very well, not only in that role and organization, but in subsequent roles and at subsequent companies.
- \* In fact, these implicit skills are often the ones that are most sought after and the ones that are most transferable no matter what you do. For example, carrying a sales bag gave me incredibly thick skin. You cannot cold call



for long if you are afraid of a few no's. My speaking skills were acutely honed and my ability to read individuals became incredibly sharp. These implicit skills did not come easily and were only developed long after I had mastered the explicit skills.

\* Now, in my current role as Associate Dean, what skills do I rely upon daily? Not the explicit skills, but all the implicit skills. The ability to read applicants, to understand their objections and identify their needs. To work with students who are upset, or angry, and make them feel understood. To be able to walk into a room full of individuals and, without hesitation or anxiety, to launch into conversation, these are the skills that now serve me well.

\* So in closing, the quote I now like is that of Soren Kierkegaard 'life is to be lived forward but understood in reverse'. He has it right. Live in the moment and maximize all the learnings that come from it. You may not fully understand how the tools will be used, but they very well might be setting you up for greater success in the future.



## Dennis Aust

Always keep an open mind.  
Something that seems perfectly  
right today may be obviously  
wrong when you look at it  
years later (or vice versa).

*Managing Director, Senior Partner at CharterMast Partners LLC  
and President at Chicago Booth Alumni Club*

- \* It's never too soon to build and maintain strong and reciprocal relationships. The people you know today can be the senior leaders of tomorrow. Do this even if you might feel doing so is a stretch for you. Approach people from the perspective that you have value to add to their careers and lives. When you do, you will find things to contribute—and people who are open to helping you.
- \* Classes in finance, marketing, operations, accounting, and more are clearly key in developing the foundation to be a successful leader in business. A bit less obvious are the softer skills—from managing people to selling to internal and external visibility—which become increasingly important over time—especially if you want to reach senior ranks.
- \* Always keep an open mind. Something that seems perfectly right today may be obviously wrong when you look at it years later (or vice versa). Learn to trust your gut feelings, but remember that they may ultimately prove wrong. The trick is always finding the right balance, which can be a lot harder than it sounds.
- \* Be strategic. What is right in front of you can be exciting. Be sure to take a step back and think about the short and long term implications of any career decision. As long as you know why you make a decision, it's easier for others to see the logical and strategic thinking in your decision.
- \* You don't have to do everything by yourself. While I haven't yet written an entire book, I contributed chapters to three books: [The Valuation Handbook](#), [Managing Innovation in the New Millennium](#), and *Stock Options: An Introduction*. Completing those chapters and adding “published author” to my bio increased my visibility tremendously.
- \* Plan ahead and be open to random opportunities that come your way, even if it's not in your overall plan.



## Cam Axelrood

Sometimes you have to stop what you are doing and create a vacuum so that something new can materialize.

- \* Passionately pursue what you love and then find or create a job within that field/ profession. If you don't know what you love, do research—read, take classes, talk to people who have jobs you might want to pursue. You don't need to have everything figured out—in fact, you likely never will. Not to scare you, but your career is a journey. Go for the ride.
- \* It is so important to do what you love in your lifetime. Think about how much time people spend in their careers—it's a lot. So do the up front work to find the work that you want—and by the way, this could (and likely will) change over time, so be open to it. Some people like surveys, assessment, self-reflective exercises. Others like dream boards. Do what works for you.
- \* Then have the conviction to pursue your goals and dreams. Sometimes this means having the guts to explore and take a variety of classes—even those courses that are a stretch for you (and could lower your GPA.)
- \* Sometimes you have to stop what you are doing and create a vacuum so that something new can materialize. I was not all that receptive to pausing even for a short time, yet doing so helped me change my career and life.
- \* A favorite quote from John Irving from his book "A Prayer for Owen Meany" says, "If you're lucky enough to find a way of life you love, you have to find the courage to live it."



## Marian Baker

They say if we're not somewhat uncomfortable, we're probably not evolving.

*Chief Inspiration Officer. Master Certified Coach, award-winning Author & Speaker at [Wake Up Inspired](#)*

- \* I don't really have a strong "wish I had known" sense about things. As mentioned, it all feels like a learning journey that helped me pause, reflect, make smarter choices and grow. I look forward to more "mistakes or disappointments" as I hope to continue to evolve. They say if we're not somewhat uncomfortable, we're probably not evolving. Having said that, here are a few lessons gained along the way that come to mind:
- \* Have a focus that allows you to build deep expertise around things you enjoy contributing. Take time to treasure hunt for your authentic passions, gifts, who you best serve and work with, and how those fit with what others are willing to pay for. Be open to moving with these changes. Go for alignment with your true self more than accumulate achievements. You may need to be bold and know it's worth it.
- \* Don't buy the hype from lots of people on how to grow your business multiple streams of income stuff out there, especially web marketing promises like blog your way to millions (in your pajamas) for an hour a day LOL.
- \* Be careful what you showcase. If your resume or case stories say that you are brilliant at handling difficult clients, guess what you'll get more of? :-) Do highlight what you'd really love to attract, not just what others have praised and paid for. Highlight who you intend to be more so than where you have been.



## Sachin Bapat

...make your work be consistent  
with your interests, talents, and  
desires.

*Senior Director, Solutions Got-to-Market at SAP America Inc.*



- \* Realize the importance of having a mentor. Start early in your life. It could even be before you enter the workforce – certainly once you begin working. This is significant because with each mentoring relationship you build, you practice and understand how to benefit from having a mentor. You also learn how to be a mentor.
- \* Make the time to understand your natural abilities and drivers (i.e. what moves you to do something.) Then, use that information to find a fit with one or more professions. Success and fulfillment becomes a by-product of your work rather than something you have to chase.
- \* Know that big pay checks mean less and less as time goes by. Don't get me wrong, compensation is important to pay for the kind of life you desire and to help support the family you have or want in the future – but you also need the time to enjoy what you earn with your family and friends.
- \* Do your MBA, or whatever graduate degree, early. Plan for it at the beginning of your career.
- \* Do your homework. Understand how different industries develop at different paces and choose the industry along with your career path. For example, if your goal is to sell and make money, pick a growing industry like software rather than one that is not, like metal castings.
- \* Do really what you like to do. Go for more fun that also aligns with your passion. I understand that people have obligations, but still make your work be consistent with your interests, talents, and desires.
- \* Be sure that you understand trends, areas of growth, and organizational vitality and match these with where your interests and passions are. This way you can thrive personally and financially.
- \* Become a conduit of help. Look for mentors inside and outside of your organization and allow them to help you. Also, help others grow and advance in their own careers.
- \* Some points may seem contradictory, but that is a result of my multi-faceted personality.



## Caryl Barclay

Make sure you like the company,  
not just your hiring manager.  
I once had 3 managers in the  
first 6 months on the job...

- \* Recognize the importance of true trust in working relationships. There is nothing as powerful or fun to work with as a high performance team and that type of team requires a high level of trust with the team supporting each other, recognizing each other's strengths and weaknesses, and helping each other improve.
- \* What a difference a good manager makes. Someone who really cares and has an inner desire to support his/her direct reports even if it means losing a good employee or a promotion or another group.
- \* Don't count on people and managers seeing the contributions you make, especially in consulting where contact is minimal. You need to make people aware of your contributions without appearing overconfident, being seen as bragging, egocentric, etc. It is a difficult balancing act and very dependent on who you are dealing with and the culture of the organization.
- \* Never think you are too old to move to the next level.
- \* Never take a job at the top of the pay grade. No matter what the hiring group says, there is a high probability that it will be difficult to get adequate raises as they try to move you back down to the middle, particularly if you change managers.
- \* Make sure you like the company, not just your hiring manager. I once had 3 managers in the first 6 months on the job due to promotions and reorganizations.
- \* Never forget that organizations are made up of people and people do not always act logically or in the best interests of the group. Assume that is a given and work on your abilities to influence the team members to achieve outcomes that benefit the individuals and the group.



## Anna Behrman

Know that you are a brand. It's what you deliver in your actions, behavior, and presence.

*Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer,  
Top Tier Professional Services Firm*

- \* Research your interests, talents and where you can use them. Get lots of detail on career paths and salary levels in various business arenas.
- \* Learn early on what kind of networking is really required these days to position oneself. Then build those relationships from the beginning of your career and keep them active throughout your life.
- \* Follow the advice of Spencer Stuart and other top retained search firms, telling young people starting out—to join a top tier company brand—because things flow much more easily from there. Going from a top tier big brand, you can do almost anything after that, because companies like to hire this top tier experience.
- \* Look for people in your network who sit on boards. Once you have a solid relationship there, ask a lot of questions on how that person landed those board positions. Then create a plan on how to position yourself to get on public boards.
- \* Don't be afraid to ask for more responsibility, bigger opportunities, and greater compensation.
- \* Identify what you really love, your passions, and all that good stuff. I know that it takes time, but do it. Learn how to align yourself with what you love and how to get paid top dollar for the work you want to do. If you have the guts to figure this out earlier in the career, you will ascend to the top quicker than those who don't have that clarity early on. (This includes the “novelty/fantasy” type careers that you don't learn much about in the traditional world (i.e. how to take your natural talent and build a career in the music industry for example, or the art world, etc.)
- \* Know that you are a brand. It's what you deliver in your actions, behavior, and presence. It's what others see. Make sure that what you deliver is how you want to be known.
- \* Learn how to manage up (as well as down and sideways) in your organization. Practice often from the very beginning of your career. If you don't know how to do this, watch others and ask questions of trusted colleagues on how to best position yourself with bosses.



## Brenda Bence

...the lessons learned along the way were all so important—some painful, some not—but learning them was key, and the way I learned them was also critical.

*President at Brand Development Associates International, Ltd.*

- \* Refuse to look back with regret, even if you didn't receive what you expected when you expected it. Learn from the past – don't hold on to it begrudgingly.
- \* Looking at my own past, I feel that everything I needed to know came to me when I most needed it—if I had known certain things earlier, it might have been a bit more “convenient,” but it wouldn't have been as impactful. Part of the importance of the lesson is how it's learned.
- \* Indeed, the lessons learned along the way were all so important—some painful, some not—but learning them was key, and the way I learned them was also critical. This includes writing, publishing, and promoting several books – starting with my personal branding book series, [How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo](#), and ending most recently by publishing [Smarter Branding Without Breaking the Bank](#).



## George Bradt

Decide what's right for you, so  
you don't end up with someone  
else's career.

*Managing Director at PrimeGenesis and Principal at CEO Connection*



- \* Choose early on which table to play at—this means which profession, industry, and company. Now I understand you won't know everything from the start, but keep this in front of your mind. Research, observe, and experiment and then do it again and again.
- \* Different careers are right for different people. While this may seem obvious, it's easy to get caught up in what everyone else is doing. Your career is your decision based on what you like, what you're good at, and a whole host of things. Decide what's right for you, so you don't end up with someone else's career.
- \* In order to choose the right career you really need to understand who you are, what you want, and what you're willing to give up to get it. This is not a onetime endeavor—what you need and want at twenty is different than what you need and want at thirty-five. Once you do the upfront work, then choose a career that is most likely to get you what you want, knowing you'll have to adjust along the way as the world evolves.
- \* Have the guts to do what most interests you. When my book, [The New Leader's 100-Day Action Plan](#), came out, I had even more opportunities to do what I love.



## Anita Brick

Express appreciation wherever you are – with everyone who helps you (with big and small stuff.)

*Director of Career Advancement Programs at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business & creator of What I Wish I Had Known, Encouragizers™, and No Matter What*

- \* Know that you can be good at something you absolutely, positively love. It may take a while (like it did with me,) but keep at it. Read, talk to people in different fields, and try out new things—as your job or volunteering. For me, it was a combo of the two.
- \* Relationships are incredibly important. You can develop and nurture them at any place, any time, and in a whole variety of ways. I have stayed in touch with some incredibly interesting people whom I met on elevators, trains, and planes.
- \* Connect others. One of the most fun things for me to do professionally is link up people who can help one another and this is of enormous value to others.
- \* Old school can work better than the latest and greatest technology. Handwritten notes of encouragement can make a person's day and provide the courage to pursue big dreams. I write a lot of cards and the level of impact is so much greater than I ever expected.
- \* Allowing others to positively acknowledge you is a wonderful thing—but needing such acknowledgement is not.
- \* Realize how much you have to offer and how capable you are. It makes life easier, more fun, and yields greater success. Sometimes, strengths are hidden – even though my unending questions drove my parents crazy when I was a kid, my curiosity actually is a wonderful professional asset.
- \* When a working relationship is not functioning, don't expect the other person to change. Refuse to focus on "fixing" that person. I learned that I need to look inside and make the change within myself first.
- \* Trust yourself. Do lots of research on what you want your career to be. Read and talk to people in fields where you have an interest. Even if many people tell you what you "should" do, ultimately you will need to believe in yourself, have the courage to pursue your own goals and dreams, and act.

\* Cultivate relationships with people who truly want to see you succeed – not just those who pretend to. When you do, you will have a support team, an advisory board, and people with whom to celebrate.

\* Express appreciation wherever you are – with everyone who helps you (with big and small stuff.) Be sincere and specific on how you benefited from them. Do this even if you didn't get all that you wanted. Appreciation makes everything work better.



## Paul Burns

No-one ever got head hunted  
by being anonymous.

- \* Publicize your achievements in an appropriate way.
- \* Let people know what you have done, how you have made your team or company better (more efficient / more cost-effective / improved QC / improved sales, etc., etc.)
- \* Very few people have a boss or company magnanimous enough to say, "Yep, that was all down to him (or her.)"
- \* No-one ever got head hunted by being anonymous.



## Pamela Butler-Fox

Temporary setbacks are  
not a failure.

- \* There is an important and subtle distinction between confronting and being confrontational. Learn how to face challenges bravely with compassion and with wisdom. Confronting then comes to mean clarifying or addressing, two necessary steps towards healing and harmony.
- \* Taking the courageous step to confront and clarify led me to an improved attitude, greater faith, belief in myself, and increased joy in creating.
- \* Pay attention to the times when your thoughts, words, and actions veer toward being confrontational. Often, it isn't the words that you use, but the intent and tone in which you use them. Knowing the difference can make change, harmony and progress the direction of the conversation, the project, or relationship.
- \* Don't worry if sometimes you are successful in doing this and other times you are not. Temporary setbacks are not a failure.





## Mike Carpenter

...skills such as listening and strategic thinking become more critical to career development than being able to solve an analytical problem.

*Finance Director at PAREXEL*

\* The combination of analytical and softer skills is essential for career success and advancement. Coming out of Chicago Booth, I thought that if I did great quantitative analysis, then that would propel me to the CFO office. The reality is that solid analysis can only take you so far. To really take your career to the next level, you need to also have an executive presence, demonstrated leadership skills, and be an effective communicator.

\* By the time you are a manager/director, you will be doing far less of the analysis firsthand as you will have a team for that work. As a result, softer skills such as listening and strategic thinking become more critical to career development than being able to solve an analytical problem. It seems obvious now, but it wasn't to me when I was 27 years old just graduating with my MBA.



## Andrew T. Carr

Take your expertise, abilities,  
and experiences and weave  
them into a story, so compelling,  
that people want to work with  
you and reward you well.

*Business Development Consultant, Public Speaker, Radio Host, and  
Professional Development Coach at Andrew T. Carr*

- \* Be doggedly determined to understand your true worth. This is one of the most essential things that you will do throughout your entire career. It starts now and continues as long as your career does. Your “analysis” includes a whole host of items—from your skills, talents, and accomplishments to who cares about these things and who will pay well for them.
- \* Build on the analysis of your true worth and turn it into a persuasive value proposition. It's great to have the facts and yet the facts alone are rarely enough to convince anyone of anything.
- \* Take your expertise, abilities, and experiences and weave them into a story, so compelling, that people want to work with you and reward you well. This doesn't happen the first time – you will need to test drive your story until it works well and keep testing it to keep it fresh.
- \* Continue to expand your reach by helping others create enormous value in their careers.
- \* From there, you can be focused and strategically involved in activities and networks. All of this will enhance and leverage the wealth of knowledge and skills that you have from the beginning and give you the opportunity to continually enhance them over time.



## Carolyn Chan

Constantly learn new skills  
and “upgrade” in order to  
get ahead.

*Partner at Heidrick & Struggles*

## Begin with the End in Mind...

- \* Take time early in your career to create a plan for your advancement and continued development. The plan you create after undergrad will likely need to evolve and change as you grow and continue your journey in life. Know that your plan is a living document that needs and requires regular care and attention. "Check in" with it regularly and update your plan at least once a year, especially if there are changes to your life. Be honest with yourself at each stage of your life. Be sure to factor in changes such as: marriage, partners /spouse career goals, a move to a new location/ country, children, divorce, aging parents and/or desire to be based in a specific location due to personal circumstances—significant milestones which might trigger a change in lifestyle.
- \* Ask yourself:
  - What do you really want to do? Why do you want to do it? What will success look like?
  - What will it take? Is the cost/ sacrifice worth it? (What are the choices and trade-offs?)
- Do I have the resources? If not, how do I get them?
- Who do I know, or who can I ask for help and further connections?
- How will these choices have an impact on my life in three, five years' time?
- Imagine being at the end of your career journey, what would you have wished you had accomplished?
- \* Have courage. Take risks. Your career will continuously evolve. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by new challenges and changes to your plan. Instead use them as opportunities to explore – these are the pivotal points in your career. Be open to possibilities. Seize them and you never know where it could lead you.
- \* Constantly learn new skills and "upgrade" in order to get ahead. This isn't a just good thing to do – it's critical to your development. Otherwise, you could wake up one day and find you've become obsolete. Your company could change; new leadership then looks for new skills, and innovative ways to grow the company and compete. If you've not kept up with the

industry, as well as your own development, you could find yourself at a crossroad and needing to “re-invent” yourself.

- \* Learn about leadership. The change of moving from an individual contributor to a team leader and organizational leader is something that cannot be easily taught. We mostly know how to prepare for our own career and “do” things – later in our career; we need to “be” a manager of people and “lead” others. How does one prepare for that? I have seen examples where people have failed at this, resulting in a term we call “Derailment.” Sometimes, being with one company for too long can also hurt. One becomes too comfortable with the role, culture and inertia sets in. The skills that once made someone successful can later cause that person to fail. “Strengths” overplayed, can lead to derailment.\* Always, learn to learn new things, like how to be a better leader. How do I articulate a vision, create alignment, and gain commitment? Leaders have followers, how do you get others to listen and follow you when they don’t

necessarily report to you on an organizational chart?

- \* Know the power of the people. Assess the “culture” early on, and see if there is a fit with your value system. Know what’s important for you and be sure to “interview” them as much as they interview you. In some organizations, it’s people of a certain background. In others, it’s a preference of where you went to school or which companies you’ve worked at before. Mostly, it’s about who you are, your “EQ” or emotional quotient and ability to relate to others in order to make something happen. Regardless, build strong relationships across departments, regions – and beyond your own organization.
- \* Learn to “Extend” yourself. Give back and contribute to the profession you are in by joining an association or membership group that advances the agenda. For most professions, there are interest groups or conferences where like-minded people come together to learn, share information, and advocate change for the better. Take

*\* research studies by Center for Creative Leadership on Derailment*

a leadership role in driving something that would be beneficial for all and develop the industry or function to the next level.

\* Network outside your own organization. All too often, we are so busy with work and our private lives, that “networking” becomes a nice to do. Working mothers are especially vulnerable. # A deliberate “building of connections in a focused manner,” and “developing longer term relationships” with those outside your company and immediate circle, can help to provide different perspectives and ideas that could prove beneficial when you least expect or need it. Leave a Legacy – whatever it is, wherever you are, leave things in a better place than when you came. Develop a reputation for how you would like to be remembered.

\* Remember — “life is a journey, not a destination” — it’s about life-long learning.

# Side note: FOR WOMEN – What I wish I had known? :

“How to play with the boys”  
– Some recent research by H&S, HBS, and WCD suggests there is a shortage of women at the top. In the US, while more women graduate from college than men, only 15.7% hold Board seats on the Fortune 500 companies. What do I wish to know now? How do we even the playing field, so that future generations of daughters can help to change the world?





# Serhat Cicekoglu

Pause before you quickly  
say “yes” or “no” – the choice  
is yours.

- \* Find a good mentor for career planning. Learning from people who have been there is an excellent thing to do at any time in your career. It is especially true at the beginning or any critical turning point—like completing a degree or getting promoted. Realize that different people can serve as mentors for you at different times in your career. Don't worry if one person no longer can make the time or doesn't live up to your expectations.
- \* Know that organizations have silos, power structures, and even cliques. Make the time to develop a deep appreciation of the "office politics" and how it affects management decisions about your career.
- \* Getting promoted is certainly a function of how well you do your job and your potential to advance. Yet it's more – it's also who knows you and how they know you. Your reputation will usually precede you – saying this not to scare you, but to make you aware.
- \* Pause before you quickly say "yes" or "no" – the choice is yours. Give yourself three seconds of silence and think about implications of your boss's proposal – BEFORE you say "yes." Even if you really don't have a choice, those three seconds will give you a sense that you are making a decision.
- \* Achievement comes in stages. Realize that you have not really accomplished something, until it is recognized by people that you care about. Self-recognition of accomplishments makes you feel good about yourself, but doesn't help much about career advancement. You need both.



## Sheri Colas-Gervais

If you have strong relationships  
you can get things done faster  
and better – tap into knowledge,  
contact, opportunities, and even  
support.

*Senior Director at SCG Group and Vice President and a founding member  
of the Board of Directors for the Le Flambeau Foundation*

- \* Have a solid sense of who you are, know what you want to accomplish, and believe that you can do it. I am optimistic and knew that I wanted rewards and that I could achieve them. I also knew and know that you need to work hard. This perspective is key to advancing in good times and through challenging twists and turns.
- \* Having solid relationships trumps everything in your work life. They are far more important than I ever realized. Make it your priority to understand your relationships. Maintain and nurture them – when you want something and especially when you do not. Look for ways to add value to others – when they least expect it.
- \* Remember that relationships tie into everything that we do. Everything is connected. If you have strong relationships you can get things done faster and better – tap into knowledge, contact, opportunities, and even support. This is more true today than ever – social media made that so, but it's been a reality long before LinkedIn and Facebook.
- \* Learn the art of networking. Know that there is an action aspect of relationships. Relationships need to be sincere – you are in a professional relationship (or any for that matter) because your heart is in. [Professor Wayne Baker](#) helped me look at networking at a deeper level.
- \* Understand that effective networking is strategic and intentional. This is not to say that you can't meet people anywhere and at any time. That said, you only have twenty-four hours in a day. Your time and your priorities need to be taken into account and tied together. Factoring in your limited amount of time and conscious prioritization is critically important – personal/ family and work.
- \* Prospects are invariably perishable. That there will be a window – opportunities come and are here and then gone. While you don't want to say yes to everything, if you want to say yes – do it.



## Steve Cole

Every once in a while, pause long enough to identify what's not working, but more importantly what is.

*Chair, Music Business Division at McNally Smith College of Music, Recording Artist at Mack Avenue/Artistry Records, and Writer at Universal Music Publishing*

- \* Recognize the distinction between a job vs. a career. It's crucial to understand the difference between a series of jobs that only leads to a series of jobs and a series of jobs that leads to a career. Some jobs are interesting and exciting, but don't go anywhere in the long term. Others may seem a bit mundane, yet will give you a foundation and options for your future.
- \* Make the time to understand your true strengths, weaknesses, and passions. Some of this will come from undertaking assessments and coursework and other insights will come from talking to friends, colleagues, and other people you meet. This will inform you of where to concentrate your efforts.
- \* Your excellence and achievement has two parts. Even though it is essential, being great at something is only one requirement for success in business. You can have lots of talent, but you also need to lead to advance beyond a basic level – and leading only counts if you have people following. That all said, being able to inspire others to be great will get you even further than raw talent alone.
- \* It's not just about the job or field. Happiness and fulfillment in work life is holistic. There must exist the right culture, environment, people, opportunity, and more. The “more” will vary from person to person and will change over the course of your life.
- \* Every once in a while, pause long enough to identify what's not working, but more importantly what is. I have seen many people (including me at times) chasing something they think they want and miss what they already have. Give yourself the opportunity to recognize when you really have what you want in a career—and that greener grass (and all that might mean) is often times a mirage.
- \* Be sure to integrate your career with your entire life. Happiness (and often achievement, too) will elude you if you allow your job or career to exist in a vacuum or silo. Career is not mutually exclusive to the rest of one's life – if you want one that is successful and meaningful.



## Maureen Costello

Making the time to know your talents, strengths, and interests will enable you to be focused, and magnify your talents throughout your career.

*President at Image Launch LLC*

- \* Identify your unique abilities early on. While this may seem obvious, many people put it off. Making the time to know your talents, strengths, and interests will enable you to be focused, and magnify your talents throughout your career.
- \* Presence is one of the key success factors in your career and life. Technical skills need to be paired with social skills. Emotional intelligent skills can be nurtured and developed incrementally. As you grow and apply these new skills, pay special attention to how you come across and learn from the feedback. If you need help to refine how you self-present, seek out a mentor or coach.
- \* Have the courage to do the work that you love and understanding the “why” helps with clarity and goal setting as you map out the future. It took me a while, but I chose a direction that was a bit non-traditional. I create visual credibility in people from different walks of life who have significant aspirations – and I have the opportunity to help them succeed.





Sara Dell

Trust your gut/instincts...

*Serial entrepreneurial manager in HR, Administration and Operations  
and Career Management Professional*

- \* Really know yourself. This means all of you — your skills, talents, priorities, interests, values, strengths, and weaknesses. Also, make an effort to understand what's most important to you, what drives you, and what will sustain you. This takes time, but is well worth it. Without recognizing and appreciating who you are, you could make decisions based on something less than reliable.
- \* Have the courage to listen to what you learn about yourself. This is not easy — especially if you identify parts of yourself that aren't the way you want them to be. Remember that you don't have to accept and/or change everything all at once. Be as brave as you can — as you can.
- \* Knowing yourself and being bold enough to do something about it has a big payoff. That combination is very powerful — to have professional roles that are challenging and meaningful.
- \* Trust your gut/instincts — what a potent resource at your disposal just for the taking.
- \* Remember the 80/20 rule — especially good for those of us who strive for perfection :)



## Rupert D'Souza

Get to know a variety of people before jumping into a mentoring relationship.

*Senior Director, Treasury and Finance at BioMarin Pharmaceutical*

- \* Select a GOOD mentor at the work place. It actually doesn't have to be just one person. You may have a series of mentors throughout your career (even more than one within an organization.)
- \* Get to know a variety of people before jumping into a mentoring relationship. Notice how the different people act over time and how they treat people. Then choose and realize that not everyone who you choose will choose you back—and that's okay.
- \* Know that doing a good job and collaborating well/interacting with co-workers and high ups is the “price” for being in the game, but there is more to achieving a high level of success. It takes more. Having GOOD mentors allows you to make leaps and bounds in your career and get to where you want to go faster and better.



## Marc Effron

Don't divorce yourself from  
organizational politics.

*President, the Talent Strategy Group; Author,  
[One Page Talent Management](#)*

- \* Become a student of organizational politics and then master these corporate politics. It is essential if you want to succeed in organizations big and small.
- \* Don't divorce yourself from organizational politics. If you want to succeed, you at least need to know how they work. My view had always been that political behavior in companies was distasteful and exhibited only by those without the capabilities to get their job done by other means.
- \* While that's still largely my perspective, I have learned that politics are an organizational reality and that one is never "above" them.
- \* You're either working them or being worked by them.



## Linda Eunson

Let people (managers and others in the organizations you work for) know what you accomplish.

*Director, Career Services and Executive Education, Asia, the University of Chicago Booth School of Business*

- \* First and foremost, building and expanding relationships with all kinds of people, those different from yourself, is the most important thing you can do for a successful and meaningful career.
- \* Be open-minded on who can help you in your career. I meet people wherever I am and this has served me so well over the years. You really don't know who can be the bridge to the next opportunity, so treat people well. I have more examples than could fill a book of hundreds of individuals who came through for people when they least expected it—including me. All of my jobs (8,) save one, came through a network contact that I knew.
- \* Let people (managers and others in the organizations you work for) know what you accomplish. Now, I am not suggesting that you brag — just let them know. Send an e-mail when you achieve something. Think about how things are communicated in your organization. Be part of that communication. If you have a team that accomplished something, brag about your team. The impact will fall back on you without looking like you are bragging.
- \* While it would be nice, don't assume others will know about your accomplishments. This is rarely the case.





# Martha Foster

Surround yourself with people  
who believe in you...

*Documentary Expert at American Documentary Showcase and Founder and President/CEO at Living Earth Television NFP (Five Emmys in 2001-02, awarded Influential Woman in Business in 2003 by the National Association of Women Business Owners, and nominated for the 2007 Award of Appreciation from Images and Voices of Hope)*

\* Establish a sense that you are good enough. This doesn't mean barely good enough, but that your skills, talents, and abilities are on a level with those of people you admire. I was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship upon graduation from Northwestern, many, many, many years ago (!) and thought, oh, how could they not see how little I deserve this? It has been a long, hard road getting to see that I am more than good enough, but with the help of friends like you, I've made a lot of progress.

\* Surround yourself with people who believe in you —individuals who see great things in you that you can't see for yourself. These people could be friends, mentors, colleagues, professors—be open-minded about where this support comes from. Even if you don't initially believe them, accept what they see a little bit at a time—if that's what it takes for you to see and feel your greatness.

\* Realize that you will hit obstacles—personally and professionally. Having had some big ones, I learned many things. They may slow you down temporarily, but

they can, in fact, make you stronger. The person you become is better equipped to take the smaller bumps in the road in stride—and more determined, confident, and able than ever to reach your goals.



# Paula Giovacchini

You can't achieve anything significant over time without others.

*President at Gio Group Inc.*

- \* If you remember one thing, know this: It's all about relationships. You can't achieve anything significant over time without others. Period. It's just true.
- \* Being laser focused on results is essential, but incomplete. If you zero in on the outcomes and achievement alone (even in the early part of your career) at the expense of workplace relationships, you could derail your career.
- \* Find ways to balance your "hard driving" ambition by cultivating strong and sustainable relationships in the workplace.
- \* Know that you will ultimately need to figure this out in your own way—through trial, error, and regrouping. Even if someone had told me earlier in my career to put the relationship before the result, I think I would have had to learn that lesson on my own to have been able to put it in practice.



# Judith E. Glaser

Recognize that there is a career  
for everyone.

*Chairman of Creating WE Institute, CEO of Benchmark Communications, Inc., Keynote Speaker and Author of 6 books including 3 best sellers: [Creating WE](#), [The DNA of Leadership](#), & [42 Rules for Creating WE](#).*

\* Recognize that there is a career for everyone. Each person has a unique configuration of skills, talents, values, and more. There is no need to rush to choose the "perfect" career or be anxious about it—I know this is easier said than done. It took me a while to find my career. I didn't know that there was an occupation called consulting or coaching.

\* Keep learning and learning more and more and more. Read, study, and talk to others. Then think about what you learn and how it applies to you. What do you like about different careers and not even what the job entails, but does it afford the quality of life that you want.

\* Ultimately, it's less about knowing and more about wisdom. It's what you do with the knowledge you gain and how it benefits you and others.



# Kathy Graham

Become a student of  
intellectual property protection.

*Principal at HQ Search, Inc., Principal at HQ Search, Seminars, Scripts,  
& Services, Inc., and author of [Graham's Manual of Style for Resumes  
and Cover Letters](#) and [The Land of Lemons and Nuts: a Fable](#)*

\* Realize that your sustainable competitive advantage results in outstanding achievements of some sort (e.g. top sales, quant models extraordinary, program development that attracts huge crowds, marketing campaigns that sell out products, charismatic speaking programs, and more.)

\* Take care of your intellectual property. You will need to protect your creative work and related revenue streams from potential poaching, plagiarism, or (unfortunately) outright theft by others that can include (unfortunately) your bosses, colleagues, friends, etc. The old saying that captures the benign form of this concept is "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." However, competitive pressures may lead some people past flattery to improper and unjust infringements of another person's success.

\* Become a student of intellectual property protection. Being forewarned about this topic early will allow you to be better forearmed. There are many excellent techniques that one can use to protect oneself while not

alienating the person acting improperly, if one is aware that these situations occur regularly for super talented professionals. In fact, these situations are so common that the vast majority of individuals of this creative profile that I've encountered in my human capital development/recruitment role have experienced a big loss at least once in their career due to this type of behavior by others.





# Michael Guerrieri

Work is work and play is play.

*Vice President, Business Development & Sales Operations at Apparel  
Media Group*

- \* Become an expert in something. While it is important to have knowledge and expertise in a lot of things, it helps a lot today to be a “specialist” earlier in your career. While it's not limited to this, it's much like developing a skilled trade like a doctor or lawyer.
- \* Work is work and play is play. While it's fine to do things with co-workers outside of the office, prioritize how you spend your time. There is little benefit partying with co-workers. You can waste so much time socializing to build rapport with coworkers that really should not be done over drinks. They are generally not friends (although there are exceptions) and should not be confused as such.



## Jeff Hornstein

Having connections with people in the right places can be paramount to you helping others...

\* Seek out mentors. Having mentors in your life is the single most important thing you can do to help you succeed in life. While you may want to have a mentor that supports you across all areas, consider different mentors that have expertise in specific areas. Common areas in which mentors have helped me are: school, career choices and changes, relationships at work and home, retirement planning, work/life balance, and how to be a better contributor to everything I'm involved in.

At times in your life you may feel that one of your mentors is no longer able to advise you in achieving a new level. Don't be afraid of creating new mentor relationships and letting go of others if they no longer serve you and the mentor, and yes, that can be uncomfortable. I've learned to rely on mentors for advice within their area of expertise and not to solicit advice that falls outside their capability. Keep your eyes and ears open for those who might be your next mentor.

\* Volunteer. Giving back or "paying it forward" can be an incredible experience for everyone involved. Find volunteer opportunities to be

a mentor to students at any age, from high school all the way down to elementary school. Your knowledge, experience, and perspective can be invaluable. Perhaps a great place to start is to find areas where you have expertise that is needed, you love sharing it, and it provides value to people. My two favorite volunteering experiences were—at a community career center, helping job seekers practice interviewing skills, and at an elementary school teaching public speaking skills to 4th graders.

\* Build a big, broad, network. We've all heard the phrase "it's not what you know, but who you know." We'd say it is both "what and who you know." Having connections with people in the right places can be paramount to you helping others, saving time, reducing stress, growing in your career, achieving financial success, and reaching your dreams. I have personally benefited in all those areas and more from my network.

\* Learn to deal effectively with fear of the unknown. For some of us, "not knowing" can be very unsettling. By

shifting the context of “not knowing,” from unsettling to something like curiosity, or excitement, you’ll experience a greater sense of peace, confidence, and likely find answers sooner than you expect. You can use your mentors, and your network to help you with this. Don’t let yourself fall into “paralysis due to analysis.” Be curious, ask questions, and always keep finding ways to move forward.

- \* Enjoy the process of your career unfolding. As much as many of you may want to have your career plans laid out, we’d suggest you accept the possibility that it may take twists and turns that you might not be able to predict. What’s more, you may be pleasantly surprised by what your career ends up looking like. While you may encounter experiences along the way that don’t fit into the picture you envisioned, try to glean something of value from them. At a minimum you will likely gather lessons, stories, and perspective from everything you do throughout your career. You never know where prior experience may come in handy. Enjoy the process!



## Karim H. Ismail

There are enormous rewards  
if you have the courage to  
think big.

*CEO at Avidium Inc. and author of [Keep Any Promise](#)*

\* Continually strive for balance in your life. You can make this happen while still accomplishing all or perhaps, most of what you want to accomplish. The lack of balance caused me to have significant relationship deterioration/breakdown, poor health, and next to no spiritual connection. Huge price to pay and it has taken years of work to ameliorate all of this. Today, I am HUGELY happy with the balance I have—and still accomplish lots of things that are important to me and that benefit others, too.

\* Appreciate your innate talents and gifts. I learned I have an ability to inspire and touch people whom I often didn't recognize. Become more and more cognizant of your unique abilities and you will be able to use these innate strengths even better.

\* Make ambitious choices. There are enormous rewards if you have the courage to think big.

\* Be entrepreneurial if that's where your passion lies, but be smart financially. Poorly capitalized start-ups are likely to fail. Avoid them.



# Joni Jackson

Listen up—you are not perfect  
and never will be.



- \* Work really is meant to be fun. When you hit on the thing that you are “meant” to do, there is a joyful feeling, a total abandon. This is a strong indication of your life’s work and that this work can be/should be fun.
- \* Trust your instincts. This shows up in different ways for different people. It could be in your head, your heart, your gut, or someplace else. For me, it was a fire in my belly really pointing me in the direction of the things I loved to do.
- \* There are signs all around you of what you want to do, where you want to go, and the skills and talents you want to use. Sometimes, these messages come in successes and other times, they come in failures. Allow your successes to advance you in the right direction and allow setbacks to help you question, regroup, and reorient yourself. The importance of not ignoring those messages cannot be overstated.
- \* Passion will not tell you what to do, but it will tell you what’s most important to you. The other part of this is that passion does not die.
- \* Some positions you take will be “just a job,” something that you do in furtherance of a goal, but these things do not define you.
- \* There are invaluable learnings, even in painful experiences and with people that you may not like or even get along with. In one way or another, be glad you meet the people you do on the job. Make the time to listen to them and learn what to do and how to act—or what NOT to do and how NOT to act.
- \* From the start, learn to ask for what you want. I can absolutely guarantee that if you do not ask, you will not receive—and if you do receive something, it likely won’t be all of what you want.
- \* If you are smart and brave, learning will never stop; it will last a lifetime. You will forever be learning that once you master one lesson a new one is not far behind. I am glad that I am still learning (I’ll be working for a while!)
- \* Listen up—you are not perfect and never will be. This is not a criticism (I don’t even know you; it’s a fact. Learn

early on that if you have the need to be perfect, at least forgive yourself when you realize that you are not.

- \* No regrets. I wish I had learned earlier, never to have regrets.



## Lirella Jaen

...a fulfilling career must have  
three basic components:  
Beauty, Gain and Good.

*Staff Clinical Massage Therapist at AthletiCo West Loop Clinic and  
becoming an anatomist*

- \* Do some self-reflection and deep retrospection. Be honest and ask yourself: what would you need to do to help yourself find a career closer to your heart. What path would make you truly happy at work? Ask yourself over and over again until you get an answer. I am a Buddhist so chanting Nam-Myoho-Renge-Kyo is my method of finding answers (or I may say my unlimited potential.) You may try meditation, prayer, writing in your diary, going outdoors or just sitting down comfortably in a quiet room. Do whatever works best for you.
- \* Read and do research on what you want your career to be. My favorite writer, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, points out that a fulfilling career must have three basic components: Beauty, Gain and Good.
  1. Beauty: Your career is something you love and are passionate about;
  2. Gain: Your career provides you with income to live a comfortable life; and
  3. Good: Your career allows you to create value for yourself and society.
- \* Do your best. Live your career without auto-judgment. Be patient, sincere, and have a sense of gratitude for everything. Through your actions create value for yourself and others, don't worry about the past. Keep moving forward and NEVER, EVER, EVER betray your goals—as this equals betraying yourself.
- \* Realize that the best things in life are the surprises, even if they don't come wrapped in pretty packages. I think a little "mystery" in everything we do is a must for us to be able to grow and develop as human beings.
- \* Be really open to choose your career and how things turn out. Many human beings tend to choose the path of least resistance. Don't. Be brave. If I'd have known how freaking hard I have had to work in order to be taken seriously as a clinical massage therapist, then I'd have never pursued it.
- \* Go and swim even if you don't know how. I could comfortably say that this applies to everything I've done in life. It's kind of an attitude—being ever victorious.



## Kim Jarvis

Take them all in [experiences]  
and use all of these observations,  
from positive to painful.

- \* Relationships are the first priority. Building strong working relationships on my team is critical to success. Believe it or not, it's even more important than doing a stellar job. If I focus on the relationships first, then it will be even easier to accomplish both my own and my team's personal and professional objectives.
- \* I need to trust myself completely. I've learned to pay very close attention to red flags when networking and interviewing for positions. My intuition has been correct time and again.
- \* It is critical to take stock of what's most important to me while realizing that my values and interests will change with life experiences. If I have a clear sense of my values, then I can assess any work situation and other career opportunities against those values to ensure I'm making the best career decisions. If at any time my work situation does not align with my values, it's time to either change the work environment to fit those values or to consider other options that will honor my values.
- \* I need to be very clear about my priorities. For me, challenging, stimulating, and autonomous work within a supportive and positive organizational culture are much more important than anything else, including the brand recognition of the organization.
- \* I need to clearly understand and articulate the leadership style that allows me to excel and thrive. It is absolutely critical for me to gain a very clear sense of the leadership style in the team when assessing opportunities to ensure I'm making the right decisions. I've witnessed a wide range of leadership strategies throughout my career, from incredibly motivating and inspiring to extremely negative and oppressive. You will have these experiences, too. Take them all in and use all of these observations, from positive to painful. If you want to be a leader of leaders, you can utilize all of your experiences to assist others with developing their own unique and effective leadership styles.



## Robert Jordan

Harness the power of the collective genius—and nurturing—that is around you.

*Author of [How They Did It: Billion Dollar Insights from the Heart of America](#) and Founder, CEO at Interim CEO/Interim CFO Network, Principal at Red Flash, and on the Alumni Board of Community Health, the largest non-profit clinic providing health care to uninsured Chicagoans.*

\* Join a Mastermind Group. Harness the power of the collective genius—and nurturing—that is around you. I have lots of good friends and colleagues who did wonderful things for me, and I for them. But that's not the same thing as a dedicated mastermind group. If you form or join a mastermind group, you significantly increase your chances for success, no matter your industry or profession. Napoleon Hill is the modern day discoverer of the power of mastermind groups, which he labeled when he saw the power that came from titans like Henry Ford and Thomas Edison coming together to help each other succeed. While a mastermind can apply to any area of your life, in a business context, a mastermind consists of no more than six to eight professionals who come together in a spirit of harmony and meet regularly to present their goals, challenges and progress. Each member is held accountable, which is key!

\* Create a List. Had the Power of Focus been written back at the start of my career, I would have formed a list early on of everything I wanted to accomplish in

life. Create a master list at age 22 (or immediately if you are now over the age of 22,) no matter how outrageous. Language creates reality and by committing to life goals in writing at an early age, you get further on your path faster.

\* Tune into People's Feelings. Develop your intuition of how people are feeling, not just what they are saying. It took me 20 years to develop good antennae. Maybe this challenge is more common for guys—I trusted interpretation of everyone else's feelings to my girlfriend, my sister, and other folks who I knew to be intuitive. It was as if a foreign language were being spoken while I was in the room, and I'd turn to my girlfriend and ask, "What'd he mean?" I heard the words but not the feelings. Now? I listen very closely, and not just for words, but also for meaning and context; the spirit behind the talk.





# Karim Khalil

Build relationships with a wide  
and diverse group of people.

- \* Surround yourself with smart and highly motivated individuals. This may seem obvious, but it isn't. It takes courage and a strong sense of who you are to associate with people who may be smarter and more accomplished than you. Yet, you will learn, grow, and advance each time you do.
- \* Build relationships with a wide and diverse group of people. You may not understand the value of each person initially, but keep a really open mind on the value the individual brings. It could be in ways that you expect or in ways that surprise you.
- \* Stay current. Be part of a group that's in the know—you can define what "in the know" means to you. It could be directly related to your function, industry, or organization or something very different. Some people believe that associating with people very unlike you broadens your perspective to the point where you become quite valuable because of your unique point of view.



## Bill Kooser

Be open and you could end up with a “team” to guide you through your career...

*Associate Dean at Johns Hopkins Carey Business School*

- \* Relationships are so crucial. When others tell you this, believe them. The importance of networking and mentoring is deep and vast.
- \* There is no reason to go it alone. Take responsibility for your life and career, but it's also possible to become too self-reliant in your career. There is no reason to rely on your own abilities (to the exclusion of help from others) and assume that you have to "do it all."
- \* Find a mentor and realize that you can define what that means for you. No mentor has to "take you on" and that's fine. Keep looking and you may have multiple mentors—simultaneously and/or consecutively. Be open and you could end up with a "team" to guide you through your career and help you navigate the management decisions and issues that you will inevitably face.
- \* Stretch yourself. Networking was not something I was comfortable with. Maybe you aren't either. Don't let that stop you. Find simple ways to stay in touch—from having a spreadsheet with dates to reaching back out

to responding to updates from your contacts on LinkedIn.

- \* The bottom line is—no matter how good you are (or think you are) having others on your team is a tremendous advantage.



## Alice Lane

Recognize that there is a balance between making things happen and letting things happen.

\* Develop an ability to allow. You may be ambitious and want to see results yesterday. This approach doesn't guarantee success. Recognize that there is a balance between making things happen and letting things happen. Sometimes roadblocks are not meant to be blasted through. The detour may be the route you should really check out.

\* Don't chase the perfect career situation. There is not a single "right" thing for you that will be right forever. You can spend a lot of time and energy pushing and searching for perfection. There's nothing wrong with searching, as long as you're also listening to your instincts/gut/inner voice as well.

\* You can be too busy—searching for your calling, landing the best position, and succeeding on the job. Of course, do your best. Just realize that super busyness makes it hard to feel/hear/recognize what is really going on. That's why people are perpetually surprised by both success and failure.



## Dianne Lauble

Don't use being a working mother as a justification to take a less determined route toward advancement.

*Principal and Toy Designer at Blue Fly Toy, llc*

\* Find a mentor who has your background and the experiences to which you aspire. You will want a guide from the start of your career through the different stages. Why go it alone? It's easy to make the wrong choice, just because you don't have insights from someone who has been there.

\* Don't use being a working mother as a justification to take a less determined route toward advancement. There is no merit in pulling back from doing 100 percent because you have kids. To the contrary, you need to work harder and not make excuses. Not going on the out of town trip, working less hours, and taking less pay turns out to be a slippery slope where you and others start to see you as "less than" leadership material. It will show up in your 401k years later. You know; basically cause and effect!!

\* That said, give yourself choices. If you want to advance at the same rate (or even faster) after having children, do it. I know women who do. Yet, if you want to be a full-time parent, choose that. Both paths are workable and admirable. Just actively make the decision.





## Jeri Love

Celebrate each step along  
the way.

\* Living your dream doesn't always mean that it's the way you earn your livelihood. When I went to college, my initial goal was to become a photojournalist, but there were no role models in my environment at that time and I pursued journalism as a writer. I worked as a journalist for 17 years (primarily in broadcast news management) and then worked in corporate PR for five years. Today, I make a living ghostwriting non-fiction books or helping people write their books.

\* Have an open mind about how you can achieve your dreams:

I am currently living my dream as an amateur photographer, pursuing my passion by photographing and dialoguing with nature.

This passion emerged during a solo vacation to reclaim my spirit, and it was when I learned that living your dream doesn't always mean that it's the way you bring in the bucks.

What I learned is that when you're connected to your dream and your heart is so filled with passion for that dream, the rest of your life

is much more vibrant and fulfilling.

Today, I write a blog: [www.lifelessonsfromnature.wordpress.com](http://www.lifelessonsfromnature.wordpress.com), which I began in honor of a significant date in my life. I share my nature photographs (from the viewpoint of an amateur photographer) and interpret Mother Nature's lessons.

In the months since I started the blog, the process of photographing nature and committing myself to daily blogging has changed my life, and opened the door to a new mission to publish a book of the lessons Mother Nature is always attempting to teach us.

\* Celebrate each step along the way. It's never too soon. I don't know where this will lead. But I know I see the world through different eyes every single day because of my heart-to-heart connection/dialogue with nature and the opportunity to live and speak my truth as an artist and writer.



# Karthik Mahadevan

Be aware of the importance of people in positions above you and their ability to influence your career.

\* Ignore organizational politics at your own peril. You can be solid, consistent, and produce results, but unfortunately, it might not be enough. I prided myself on being 'black and white' in my behavior and actions and assumed my work would speak for itself. Don't assume this—ever!

\* Understand that you need to develop strong skills to manage up in your organization. Be aware of the importance of people in positions above you and their ability to influence your career. They need to know you, appreciate your skills, talents, and abilities—and like you enough to want to help you advance.

\* Find mentors. This can make all the difference in how far you go and how quickly you get there. At some point in my career I came across a couple of mentors who influenced my career dramatically. I then went up the ladder rapidly, leapfrogging over smarter and harder working people. My caliber, intelligence, and other traits had not changed. What did change, were the people who had my best interest at heart lending their

weight and influence to my advancement.

\* Make an effort to understand the difference between knowing how to do something, and knowing why something has to be done. The former category comprises of people like engineers (e.g. me.) As an engineer, you will always have a stable job, but these folks are typically not exposed to decision making at a corporate level. (Exceptions are always possible.) As your career progresses, knowing why is more important. If you are a person who knows why, you will be the person who hires the engineers—and will have more power and influence.



## Tony Martorano

Be able to really evaluate potential new career moves. Be sure that they match your goals, values, and priorities before your move.

- \* Know that there is tremendous power if you have a strong network. Build one from the very start of your career. It is never too early. Realize that the purpose of any relationship is that it adds value to both people. If you take without giving, the relationship will not last. If you give without receiving anything in return (over time,) consider allocating your time, interest, and resources elsewhere.
- \* Work for a well-known company. While this is not a be-all, end-all in your career, it can be important throughout your career. When some companies recruit talent for mid and senior level positions, they look for leading companies and top schools on candidates resumes.
- \* Study negotiation. You will want to develop strong negotiation skills. These will be valuable when you receive offers for new positions, work on deals with vendors and supplies, and strategize on how to gain access to resources for projects inside your company.
- \* Have clear goals and priorities as you progress in each stage of your career. If you are good at what you do, job prospects will come your way from within your company and from external sources. Be able to really evaluate potential new career moves. Be sure that they match your goals, values, and priorities before your move. Be painstakingly honest with yourself. Ask yourself with any offer: are you escaping a situation you don't like, or are you going to a good opportunity?



# Dennis Misurell

Give and receive with equal  
preference and skill.

- \* DP3. Eight words that matter most. Discipline to, patience with, persistence in, perseverance through. The nouns refer to personal qualities that you want to develop in order to be successful. The prepositions suggest relationships to everything else that matters. This is true whether it be goals (discipline to,) yourself (patience with,) whatever tasks you have to do (persistence in,) or whatever hardships you may face (perseverance through.)
  - \* Know what you want to do. Develop the self-awareness and emotional intelligence to determine what matters most to you. It entails self-management. There's no substitute for using tools that contribute to setting dated, achievable, personal, positive, and specific goals for you. Then develop your plan that links means to ends and short-term to long-term so that it breaks down to meaningful work you can do every day. (I learned this from [Skip Downing](#)'s wonderful book, [On Course](#).)
  - \* Share your crayons. Give and receive with equal preference and skill. Be interdependent. It often won't matter if you have 8 or 64 crayons in your box.
- Don't focus on the colors you have. If you have a good picture to draw, then you can attract most any color you want to get your vision executed. Ask for help when you don't have the color, share your colors gladly when you do, and you'll love the end results.
- \* When commenting, practice PPC, (Find a Plus, Find a Potential, Find a Concern.) (I learned this from the [Creative Problem Solving Institute](#).) Every manager will be asked for comments. If you make your comments practicing PPC, they will be balanced, helpful, and focused on solutions. This is true even when you see something that strikes you as insane. Hit your pause button. Try to find a Plus, even if the idea only illustrates insanity. Try to find a Potential because ideas suggest new options. Premature closure is an enemy of progress. Try to find where your Concerns lie, and then express them as items on which everyone can work. Nothing sucks out energy faster than negativity relentlessly expressed.
  - \* It's great to learn things from others. Share what you learn, and give credit where credit is due—always!





## Bill Moller

It is the person who projects confidence, especially when it is backed up by excellent work, who gets ahead.

\* Be open in how your career unfolds and don't over strategize. Only in retrospect did I see the true value in what I had thought were divergent stops on my mostly non-linear career track. Don't worry if your career is not straight line upward. Keep looking for the value in everything you do and you will increase your confidence in your abilities and be able to leverage that to get ahead.

\* From every success, note those things that are meaningful to you and your career. This will steer you toward smart career choices, and help you accelerate your advancement. It took years as a broadcast journalist before I realized I was a very good writer/storyteller with a strong on-camera presence.

\* Appreciate your strengths, talents, and skills. It is the person who projects confidence, especially when it is backed up by excellent work, who gets ahead.



# Andrea Nierenberg

Networking is NOT only  
for extroverts.

*President at the Nierenberg Group*

\* Begin networking at birth. I wish I had realized the importance of real life networking at age 6 rather than age 20. It is so important on so many levels. Here's a sample list of the potential areas of value:

- Who to play with at recess
- Where to go to college
- What careers are available to me after school
- How to get salary information I need quickly after I receive an offer
- Where are the opportunities in a tight job market
- Where do I find support for my start-up
- How do I develop business
- How do I create relationships and friendships at work

\* Create relationships early in your career. Life is all about cultivating and building relationships. This may seem obvious, yet many people lose track of time and let their personal and professional relationships suffer. Don't do it. Find ways to stay in touch —e-mail, twitter, sending articles, and handwritten notes—whatever works for you that you can do consistently.

\* Networking is NOT only for extroverts. I even wrote an entire chapter in my book, [Million Dollar Networking](#), how to network as an introvert (from my personal first-hand experience as an introvert) and the benefits.

\* Learn something from EVERYONE you meet! You can advance faster than you can possibly imagine if you stop and learn something from everyone. The greatest learning often comes where you least expect it—and from people who would surprise you. Be open.



# Meredith Nierenberg

Use all of your knowledge,  
experiences, and lessons to  
help you advance...

\* I wish you what I have gained: The wisdom that I know now, the strength to get me where I am now and the knowledge of keeping me where I am now, to go through the life changes that I needed to do.

\* There is value to everything. Nothing is wasted if you learn from it. Use all of your knowledge, experiences, and lessons to help you advance through the life changes that you needed to do.



## Fern O'Neill

While some people know exactly what they want to do at twelve, they are rare exceptions.

- \* Trust yourself. Know that you have the knowledge within yourself to understand what you are good at and where you can use your skills, knowledge, and talents.
- \* Be patient with yourself and then you will find what you really love to do. While some people know exactly what they want to do at twelve, they are rare exceptions. Most people are like me. I took a long time to find the career I love (which my work allows me to do every day.)
- \* Believe that you will find work that you enjoy. Hang in there until you do. Now I am not suggesting that you wait until everything is perfect. You will need to work to pay the bills and learn what works and what doesn't, where your strengths lie, and where you can add the most value. When I worked in marketing in consumer goods, I had the opportunity to create a training program for new MBAs entering my company. I loved it and that became my bridge to what I do today.





## Eric Olson

I've learned that there are many viable paths to any destination.

*Management Consultant at A.T Kearney*

- \* Create a multi-faceted approach to your education. Know that you can take a technical path in undergrad and then get the business credentials via an MBA (or work experience) years after starting a career.
- \* Realize that you can change careers or even morph the one you have. Focusing the majority of my time on business related topics in undergrad worked out for me. However, I know that a more technical background could have sent me into a different career path—not better, just different. I've learned that there are many viable paths to any destination.

Explore Before You Need To



## Chris Ortigara

Learn how important  
credentials...are.

*CFP®, Financial Advisor at Water Tower Financial Partners, LLC  
/Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (Mass Mutual)*

\* Explore possible career paths early in your career.

\* Focus your efforts on:

Understanding the different industries you are targeting and what skills, background, and credentials they require.

Learn what specific experience is most attractive to employers.

Study trends (industry, macroeconomic, and functional) to see where the jobs are projected to be and where the demand level is growing.

\* Talk to professionals in fields that you are potentially pursuing. Learn how important credentials (like CFP, CFA) are. Develop an understanding about which are most important and are really not that important. Some designations are not that valued because the bar to get them is really low.



## Monica Piercy

When you listen, even more  
than you talk, you will gain  
tremendously...

- \* Make intent listening to others a priority. Early in a person's career, it is easy to spend more time talking than listening to prove that you are capable. That type of communication style does not foster engagement with others and you might be perceived as assertive and stubborn. When you listen, even more than you talk, you will gain tremendously—from other people's ideas, opinions, and perhaps also their warmth and friendship.
- \* Establish relationships beyond your immediate team. When you foster relationships across departments and teams, you will create a resource pool of knowledge, contacts, and support (for projects, ideas, and your own career development)—which can certainly lead to more opportunities for growth and advancement.
- \* Broaden your skills, knowledge, and experience. Take a wider view of your career and seek lateral moves early in your career. Of course, gain depth and leadership opportunities—just don't sacrifice your longer term advancement for an immediate win based on ambition without a strategy.
- \* Do your due diligence before joining an organization. Make sure, to the degree that you can, that the work environment is compatible with your values, personal goals, and personality. Seek happiness at work and consider ways to clearly separate work and home life—this may be tricky in the short term, but very important nonetheless.



# Jessica Pryce-Jones

...the little worries are not  
the best use of your time  
and energy.

*CEO at iOpener Ltd and author of [Happiness at Work](#)*

\* Know what's important.  
It's often little things that you worry about and see as monumental but in actual fact they are simply incidental. You just can't see it. If you're not sure if your worry is justified, talk with a mentor, trusted friend, or advisor. Ultimately, you will need to trust yourself. From my experience, the little worries are not the best use of your time and energy.

\* Keep an eye on your goals and aspirations. When you know why you are doing something, the annoying distractions along the way can be perceived for what they are—not to be completely ignored, but not to be your primary guide. Pay attention to the crossroads. You can only successfully do this if the small stuff is relegated to its proper (not so significant) place.





## Zoe Quan

The power of a supportive network cannot be underestimated.

- \* Use the power of hindsight to shape your career. Make self-reflection a regular part of your career development. I have been blessed with an interesting journey and afforded the opportunity to try a number of different things. Yet hindsight is an important “career advisor.”
- \* Do not shy away from risks —just try not to take risks that are completely unaligned with your personality, goals, and priorities. Most people can benefit from taking a bit more risk in carving out their career path. Identify what type of problem solving (or whatever skills you want to use) you are best at, and recognize that in the corporate world being right may not be as useful as being nice.
- \* Choose opportunities that expose you to many aspects of the business. This enables you to make better decisions and can make you better qualified to take on a wider range of opportunities.
- \* Seek out mentors and people who want to see you succeed; choose advisors from both within and outside of your field. Having a wide range of mentors and supporters for different perspectives and specific pieces of knowledge can make it easier to recognize that you are ultimately not alone.
- \* Appreciate your skills and passions early. Talk to people in your chosen field, and learn from people outside your ordinary realm. Such a multifaceted approach can expose you to ideas you wouldn't have thought of from a single-dimensional perspective. Take in everything you learn, and then build on it to advance in the same direction as before —or modify your path and even your approach.
- \* Build and take care of relationships from the beginning of your career. Nurturing relationships is a continuous, lifelong process. The power of a supportive network cannot be underestimated.
- \* Understand your personal brand, and learn how to market yourself. No matter how good you may be, if no one knows about it, it won't make a difference. It goes back to your relationships —and how solid they are. Cultivate your mentors and supporters, and this will help

you to promote your value throughout your career. That said, ultimately you will still have to demonstrate the value you add and the benefits, to others, of working with you.

\* No regrets. I am fortunate to have had the experiences I've had, and I have learned that hindsight can refine my approach again and again. Review. Regroup. Refine.



## Ruth Reiner

It's okay to say you don't have  
an answer.

- \* You don't have to have all of the answers—in fact, sometimes it's best if you don't. It took me 20 years (perhaps because I was a consultant and assumed I was hired for my answers) to realize this and life is better as a result.
- \* It's okay to say you don't have an answer. Now, you don't want to leave it there. You will want to ask another question to get clarification or to move the conversation forward. It's okay if you need to do some research or talk to someone else to get an answer. Just be sure to follow up with whatever you discover.



## Gary Roll

While you are responsible for your career development, organizations and managers won't necessarily have career paths and development plans mapped out for you...

*Contract Project Manager at UCAN Chicago*

- \* Take responsibility for your career development. It really is up to you. When you actively manage your career, you will be better prepared in general and especially given the twists and turns that will likely be part of any career today.
- \* Partner with your manager, HR, and your company. While you are responsible for your career development, organizations and managers won't necessarily have career paths and development plans mapped out for you, utilize these avenues to support your efforts. Use your performance review as a time to discuss possible next steps, areas for your development, and ways to bridge any gaps you might have.



## Ellen Romborg

Think creatively about how your past skills and experience can be useful in other realms.

*Chief Human Resources Officer at MacArthur Foundation*



- \* Review job postings on a regular basis. Keep scanning the opportunities available right now, identify the ones that are most interesting to you, and modify your approach, resume, and other communication to demonstrate that you can meet the needs of the potential employer.
- \* Be open to new openings and challenges that you might not have considered before. You may have chosen a very specific career path and target and are single-handedly pursuing opportunities that get you there directly. This could prove to be short-sighted. There are many ways to reach your goals — some that you haven't even thought about that could get to your target positions faster.
- \* Think creatively about how your past skills and experience can be useful in other realms. I came to realize from my early education and work experience in music applied to business roles — that mastering a concerto is really project management.
- \* Know yourself—skills, knowledge, and style. For example, when you understand how your mind works, you can leverage your strengths in different environments, expand your possibilities, and increase your success and satisfaction.
- \* Maintain focus and perspective in the middle of a setback. If you are facing a “big” obstacle, is it going to matter in a year or two? If not, realize that it's not so important and be single-minded about the goal at hand.



# Virginia Schneider

Relationships are more  
important than money...

*Film, television, and stage actress*

- \* Know that perfect knowledge isn't perfect. Sometimes ignorance is bliss and in a state of blissful ignorance you never give up. If you knew the truth in advance, sometimes you wouldn't think you stood a chance of winning so you'd quit. Sometimes, it's better to remain clueless to reality—but only sometimes.
- \* Challenge yourself. I had an opportunity to study with a very famous and accomplished British actor at Oxford, but the competition was fierce and I do mean incredibly fierce. I didn't have the money and I couldn't get the time off from my work at a PR firm. I almost gave up, but I didn't. I was accepted and went—and it was a life-changing experience, personally and professionally.
- \* Relationships are more important than money (although you need both). You can make up money you lose; you can't do the same with friends or loved ones you lose.
- \* Know that it really does work out all right in the end. When I moved home to care for my parents, all I could see was a town with limited opportunities. Little did I realize I would play the role of my all-time dreams there, make lifelong new friends, and discover a family I never knew I had who are now my closest relatives. All this in what I suspected was a place of limited opportunities—but it was really limitless opportunities.
- \* You CAN make a life for yourself anywhere; absolutely anywhere. Meaning—yes, you CAN start over—mid-life, after a divorce, after a loved one's death, after a hurricane, or a loss. You CAN make a new life for yourself ANY where. It's never too late or too limited. I always remember that when I start worrying about money, or losing my partner, or anything at all.



## Gowri Selka

...build broad knowledge in  
other areas that impact you.

*Director, Pharmacy Quality Assurance at Walgreens*

- \* Network and find one or two senior/mid-level managers who will support and mentor you.
- \* Have genuine interest in people and express this interest by providing support to their work.
- \* Work hard and learn about other important activities in the organization even if you are not involved.
- \* Establish a professional relationship with all and friendships with a few. When times are tough and you need to negotiate for a critical need, the relationships help to find solutions.
- \* Build deep skills in the area of work you do, master them. Also, build broad knowledge in other areas that impact you.
- \* Always be aware of the change in your industry and learn new skills on your own even if your organization does not provide training in those areas.
- \* Plan well for your project or any work. Think well and expect all risks and problems. Develop contingencies for their mitigation.
- \* Be a change agent in your work place.



## Lori Silverman

...don't let a lack of a degree  
prevent you from pursuing your  
goals and dreams.

*Strategist, Change Agent, Organization Effectiveness Consultant and  
Owner at Partners for Progress and Ad hoc instructor at UW Madison  
Fluno Center for Executive Education*

- \* Allow things to unfold over time. The lessons came at just the right moment in time, from just the right person — exactly when I was ready to receive them.
- \* Get the degrees you feel are important early on so that you can leverage them throughout your career. I would have liked to get a PhD in organization development or some other area in business that matches my interests, but I don't even know if such a thing was available in 1979 when I applied to do my first master's degree in counseling. The reason I'd like the PhD today is so I could easily transition into a part-time professorship in the next ten years; it's never been my plan to retire.
- \* That said, don't let a lack of a degree prevent you from pursuing your goals and dreams. I haven't. Having two master's degrees hasn't stopped me from teaching in executive education or continuing education at several universities and or writing several books including [Wake Me Up When the Data Is Over: How Organizations Use Stories to Drive Results](#).
- \* Follow your dreams and take action consistently — day after day after day. If you enjoy what you do, the action (and results that come out of it) will inspire you to take the next action—and the one after that.



## Penny Steele

Know that you have the power,  
capability, and gumption to  
create any career you want  
according to your own design.



\* Your career is your career. It's not about finding a job or making a certain amount of money. It's about having the time of your life and doing what makes you feel most alive.

\* Choose what you want to do and believe that whatever you want to do you can do. Don't wait. Take your first step. Follow your own instincts, intuition, and desires and put your intellect and creativity to work to create your own career—whatever that career may be.

\* You don't have to be perfect to proceed. You don't have to:

Be a certain age.

Have certain experience, degrees, or credentials.

Do what your parents, guidance counselors, or friends think you can or "should" do

Even do what you think you "should" do.

Research the "best," "highest paying," or "hottest" careers.

Start at the bottom and work your way up.

Have a certain amount of money to begin.

Get hired to do what you want to do.

\* Be gutsy. Use your desire to fuel your courage and get started. Know that you have the power, capability, and gumption to create any career you want according to your own design. Think big and back it up with action. Do those things that made you feel most alive and use those criteria as your beacon for career development. One baby step after another.

\* The good news is, there's still time for you and me.



## Cindy Swanson

The importance of building  
relationships early on and  
throughout your career  
CANNOT be overstated.

*Director at the University of Chicago (Booth) Women's Business Group*

- \* Network. Network. Network.  
The importance of building relationships early on and throughout your career CANNOT be overstated.
- \* Establish and maintain close relationships with former classmates, managers, and colleagues and then try not to lose track of them. Reach out to them on a regular basis and routinely offer your assistance.



# Dr. Edith Taber

Acknowledge your own  
competence, skills, and value...

- \* Start your career early. This can influence when and where you go to school and where you work after receiving your degree. I would have liked to have graduated school earlier, although that probably wasn't possible, given my family responsibility and my husband's frequent moves to advance his career. Yet, getting my PhD in my 40's has given me a great career for more than forty years.
- \* Appreciate yourself as a leader. Realize your own leadership abilities and set up situations where they can be realized.
- \* Make choices as a family. Yet the decision process starts even earlier—in selecting your spouse or life partner. Be sure that you share values and that your career aspirations are well known and have the same significance as your spouse's. Mine were not. Please note he is now my Ex.
- \* Recognize your own power and do not defer to others, thinking they are smarter and more capable than you. Acknowledge your own competence, skills, and value—do this from the start and expand this over time. If you don't, no one else will.



## Christina Trampota

Carve out time to continue learning both within and outside your field.

*Founder at CGM Squared*

- \* Take risks early. Be open to accepting a lower compensation now for equity in the future. Know your risk profile and see if a start-up, while less secure, could be the right move. You are more likely to take risks earlier in your career before you have a mortgage and other family responsibilities.
- \* Stay current on issues, trends, and especially people. Carve out time to continue learning both within and outside your field. Make an extra effort to network and build your relationships. The more you do these things, the more opportunities you will be presented with.



# Marcy Trojak

Go out of your way to meet  
and acknowledge each  
member of your team...

*Airline Pilot (Captain) at United Airlines*



\* Understand how important it is to work as a team. On the airplane, a door separates the Flight Deck from the cabin. In the past there was often little interaction with the Flight Attendants other than the one working in the front. Sometimes I never even met the Flight Attendants who worked in the back of the airplane. But since 9/11, (maybe the only good thing to come from it for me,) I make a point of thoroughly briefing and getting to know all of my crew members. That way everyone knows exactly what is expected.

\* Be a gracious leader. Go out of your way to meet and acknowledge each member of your team—even those you do not manage directly. It will have a positive impact on your organization and also on your customers/clients. Today, I feel more connected to my crew and even my passengers. There is a much better rapport among the whole crew when we work as a team.



## Doug Webb

...take time to understand  
how to navigate a widely  
diverse team.

\* You cannot do it alone. Regardless of how great you are, you will need others in order to succeed. You will come to depend on others to accomplish tasks and projects. Leaving college, I was confident in my ability to learn and get things done.

\* Know the difference between your priorities and your team's priorities. You will need to rely on others and even if your priorities are not necessarily their priorities. Spend at least 25% of your day developing social capital with others. This will also help you to understand their priorities and this will increase the chances that they would be willing to understand yours as well.

\* Develop an appreciation for how differences can make a team stronger. It's relatively easy amongst people from the same background or environment. You will likely never experience a homogenous team in the "real world." So, take time to understand how to navigate a widely diverse team. You likely won't be perfect. Just remember that you can and will get better at it—and the benefits are enormous. It was difficult for me at first, but this is now what keeps me engaged in my work.



# Melissa Giovagnoli Wilson

The best relationships are  
exchanges.

*Founder and Business Growth Strategist at Networlding, and bestselling author of many books, including [Networlding](#)*

\* Find mentors early in your career. Be gracious, yet bold and ask them specifically, to be your mentor.

\* The best relationships are exchanges. While you may have relationships where you take more than give, do your best to find things that you can provide. Use your creativity and imagination —forward a link to an article, recommend a restaurant, send a handwritten note. Choose something you enjoy.



## Cali Yost

Learn to risk, fail, and succeed  
bigger earlier.

*CEO & Founder at Flex+Strategy Group / Work+Life Fit, Inc. and  
author of [Work+Life](#)*

- \* Stand up for your own career. You need to be your most vocal and passionate career advocate. It takes courage to do this, so understand why your career is important to you and how to best communicate your value.
- \* Find mentors inside and outside of your field. Connecting with someone who has already been where you want to be is incredibly important. Be open and appreciative to others who can help you. This doesn't mean that your mentor will be just one person—it's likely to be different people at different stages in your career. Having advisors can help you understand what your career path looks like in action. This cuts down your having to figure it out by trial and error on your own.
- \* Take calculated risks. Learn to risk, fail, and succeed bigger earlier.



## Lois Zachary

Expand your knowledge,  
experience, and perspective.

*President, Leadership Development Services, LLC and author of  
[The Mentor's Guide](#)*



- \* Know that your career development is a journey. Over a lifetime, you will have multiple career options and that you don't need to do everything all at once. Like me, you are a work in progress.
- \* Expand your knowledge, experience, and perspective. The key lies in developing yourself so that you can be open to recognizing and taking advantage of new opportunities. At the core is building strong support networks that will enable you to achieve your goals, dreams, and aspirations.



## Julie Danis

U-turns in a career can lead  
to a better position.

*Essayist, [www.juliedanis.com](http://www.juliedanis.com), Contributing Editor at [www.womensvoicesforchange.org](http://www.womensvoicesforchange.org) and Adjunct Lecturer at Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism. Media Integrated Marketing Communications*

## It's All in Your ABCs

- \* Anticipating the next step, the question that will be asked, the resistance that will be met is part of thorough preparation.
- \* Bullet points make good business briefs.
- \* Career management, starting with career counseling and regular career assessment.
- \* Doing versus trying. Dreams become true once you show up and share them.
- \* Elevator speeches for every occasion. Create them.
- \* Fashionable footwear leads to future foot faults.
- \* Good girls often finish last because being good and doing a good job isn't good enough.
- \* Horn playing. To succeed you need to know how to play well in the orchestra as well as toot your own horn.
- \* Integrity cannot be assumed on behalf of others.
- \* Joy comes from paying attention to your life, of which your career is only one part.
- \* Karaoke can be a CLM (Career Limiting Move.)
- \* Listening. To my gut. To those who know me well. To my gut (worth repeating.)
- \* Mentor. How to find and nurture and leverage a mentor.
- \* Negotiation and networking skills. Develop and hone them.
- \* Oprah and all her tips for living your best life. Employ them.
- \* Personally. How to not take things.
- \* Quitting what is not right for you is not a failure. On the contrary, it may be the key to future success.
- \* Reading the tea leaves of office culture and politics.
- \* Salesmanship. Life is nothing but a series of successful sales pitches.
- \* Teamwork means different things to different people.
- \* U-turns in a career can lead to a better position.

- \* Vision is not always the same as mission. And sometimes it is.
- \* Work-life balance. An oxymoron worth fighting for.
- \* Xerox machine maintenance skills are necessary for survival.
- \* Yes, and, is better than No, but.
- \* Zed is another word for zilch or zero, which is a characteristic of many a game in business...zero-sum games always have a loser.